



**A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
SYRIAN CHURCH  
IN INDIA**

**BY**

**Rev. F. E. KEAY, M.A., D.Litt.**

**S.P.C.K. in India**

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## PREFACE

A RESIDENCE of three years in Travancore as chaplain of Trivandrum and Quilon brought me a good deal into contact with Syrian Christians and one could not but be deeply interested in the history and development of the Church in that part of India.

One has found that even in India the majority of Christian people know very little about the Syrian Church, and this is still more marked amongst those outside India.

In these circumstances I felt led to try and put together the leading facts in the long story, because I found that there was no book up to date which dealt with the whole period.

There are many controversial points in connection with the history, but I can honestly say that I have tried to approach them impartially and be fair to all concerned. That I shall have succeeded in satisfying everybody is, however, too much to expect.

I am grateful to several friends in Travancore who helped me in obtaining information. Especially I must express my thanks to Mr. T. I. Poonen of Alwaye Union Christian College, who read the whole book in manuscript and made many corrections and suggestions.

In these days when the re-union of the Church is being so much discussed, it is important for us all to have more knowledge than we had in the past about Churches other than our own, so that we may understand their problems and become acquainted with their point of view. If this book can help in some measure in this respect with regard to the Syrian Church of Malabar I shall be very glad.

F. E. KEAY.





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## CHAPTER I

### ST. THOMAS AND INDIA

WHO first brought the Gospel to South India and planted the Christian Church there? The tradition which has come down from ancient times, and which is accepted by almost all the Syrian Christians of Malabar, to whichever division of the Church they may belong, is that it was St. Thomas the Apostle.

According to the commonly accepted tradition St. Thomas landed in the year 52 A.D. at the port of Muziris (now Cranganore, not far from Cochin) and began to preach the Gospel. He was successful in winning many converts and established churches in seven different places. After ordaining two presbyters to continue the work he passed over to the East coast of India. Here also his efforts met with encouragement and the king of that region and many people were baptized. After this the Apostle paid a visit to China and preached the Gospel in that country. In due course he returned to the East coast of India. But the Brahmans were filled with envy on account of the progress of Christianity in these parts, and stirred up opposition against him. A riot took place in which St. Thomas was pierced with a lance and won a martyr's crown. This is said to have taken place about the year 72 A.D.

The places where St. Thomas planted churches are said to have been Pālūr, Cranganore (the ancient Muziris), Parūr, Gokkamaṅgalam, Chāyal, Niraṇam and Quilon. From Pālūr in the north to Quilon in the south the distance is 130 miles. Except Chāyal all the places are on the coast or close to it. Niraṇam probably represents Nelacynda which was the chief port

of the Pāndya kingdom. The other places were in the kingdom of Kerala.

What is the truth of this story? Is there any evidence by which it can be corroborated?

In the first place it must be said that there is nothing inherently improbable in the account.

There was from very early times trade between India and Ceylon and countries in the West. The 'ivory, apes and peacocks' which Solomon imported (2 Chron. ix. 21) may have come from this region. At all events it has been shown that the names for these in the Hebrew have a clear connection with the names in old Tamil.

Herodotus says that the Red Sea trade in myrrh and frankincense, cinnamon and cassia was in the hands of Egyptians and Phœnicians, and there is evidence that some of these commodities came from India.

The Greeks became great traders and under the Ptolemies their trade with the East had greatly developed. Ptolemy Philadelphus gave it a further impetus by founding the city of Bernice on the West coast of the Red Sea, from which port ships sailed to India.

When Augustus reduced Egypt to submission in the year B.C. 30 there took place a revival of Eastern trade. In fact for some two centuries before the date when St. Thomas is believed to have visited India trade had been increasing and Roman coins have been found in Calicut, Coimbatore and other places in South India.

The route generally taken to India from Alexandria was first of all to sail up the Nile to a place called Koptos. Then travellers had to march across the desert to the Red Sea. Here, just outside the Gulf of Suez, was a port called Myos Hormos. Pliny's *Natural History*, completed in 77 A.D., contains an account of the voyage from this place to the coast of India. In the small craft of those days the voyage must have been full of danger and most unpleasant. At first ships only

ventured as far as Aden and there exchanged their cargoes for merchandise from India. Then they began to venture further, creeping along the coast of Arabia, passing across the mouth of the Persian Gulf and then sailing along the coast again till the mouth of the Indus was reached. About the year 45 A.D., however, a Greek captain named Hippalos, did something more daring. He had come to know the way the monsoon wind blows and boldly made use of the monsoon to sail straight across the ocean to the mouth of the Indus instead of creeping along the coast. Further experience enabled him and others to sail eventually direct to Muziris on the Malabar coast. If St. Thomas came this way during the monsoon one must hope that previous experience on the Lake of Galilee had made him a good sailor, for it would have been a most uncomfortable journey even for a hardy seaman.

In view of all these circumstances there would be nothing so very extraordinary in St. Thomas having made a journey to India, and if we think of him as inspired by the love of Christ and the desire to spread the Gospel we find an adequate and compelling motive to account for his willingness to face the difficulties and dangers involved in the journey.

When we turn to the records of early Church history, if we do not find that the tradition receives such clear confirmation as to prove beyond question its truth, yet it certainly receives more support than has sometimes been admitted.

Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, the great historian of the early Church period, died in 338 A.D. His History of the Church is carried down to the year 309 A.D. In the division of the Gentile world among the apostles he assigns Parthia to St. Thomas. This is also referred to by Socrates who continued his history. Both these historians mention also a tradition that St. Bartholomew preached in India. Socrates describes India as situated upon the confines of Ethiopia and says that it was

inhabited by several barbarian nations who spoke various languages. In another place however he says that India was not enlightened with the Gospel before the reign of Constantine the Great. Eusebius gives no details of any work of St. Thomas in Parthia.

It will be seen that St. Bartholomew also has come to be connected with India. Eusebius does not mention St. Bartholomew in his account of the division of the heathen nations, but Socrates, who continued the history of Eusebius, says that India was assigned to St. Bartholomew, and both these historians as we have seen mention the tradition that he visited India. In the middle ages both St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew were connected with India by writers in Europe. In the Anglo-Saxon chronicle for the year 883 A.D. it is written that, 'This year Sighelm and Aethelstan carried to Rome the alms which the king' (that is Alfred the Great) 'had vowed to send thither and also to India to St. Thomas and to St. Bartholomew.' This is also mentioned by William of Malmesbury. It is not recorded whether these two Englishmen actually visited India or whether they left the alms at Rome to be passed on. The tradition that St. Bartholomew preached in India is mentioned by other early writers, such as Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus, about 220 A.D. But there is no local tradition which connects St. Bartholomew with India. If he had laboured there, there is no reason why the Malabar Christians should have preferred one apostle to the other. Some writers have suggested that 'Bartholomew' may have been a mishearing of 'Mar Thoma' which became 'Bar Tolmai'.

With regard to the visit of St. Thomas to India we find references to this tradition in several other writers of early times.

Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre (254 to 313 A.D.), refers in a work, of which a fragment has survived, to the acts and journeyings of the apostle. He seems however to connect him with Parthia also, saying that after

having preached the Gospel to the Parthians he suffered martyrdom at Calamina,<sup>1</sup> a town in India.

St. John Chrysostom (347-407) writes that from the earliest days of Christianity, the tomb of St. Thomas was as much venerated in the East as that of St. Peter at Rome.

St. Gregory Nazianzen (fl. 370-90) in answering the reproach of his being a stranger exclaims; 'What? Were not the apostles strangers? Granting that Judæa was the country of Peter, what had Paul in common with the Gentiles, Luke with Achaia, Andrew with Epirus, John with Ephesus, Thomas with India?'

Rufinus, who went to Edessa in 371 A.D. and lived there for 25 years, says that the apostle's remains were removed from India to Edessa. The chronicles of Edessa assign 394 A.D. for this event.

St. Jerome (fl. 300 A.D.) speaks of the mission of St. Thomas to India as a fact universally known, and believed in his time, and mentions Calamina, a town in India, as the place of his martyrdom. In one of his epistles to Marcella he writes, 'He (the Son of God) was present in all places, with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illyria etc'.

Theodore, another church historian (fl. 430 to 458 A.D.) refers to the tradition about St. Thomas being the apostle to the Indians. He is followed by later historians such as Nicephorus and Gaudentius. The latter, as well as another writer Sophronius, mentions Calamina as the place of his death.

St. Gregory of Tours (544-95) spoke about the existence of a 'monastery and temple of great size and excellent structures and ornament in that place in India where the body of St. Thomas lay long before it was transported to Edessa.' 'This' says St. Gregory 'Theodore who had been to the place, narrated to us.'

<sup>1</sup> This name has been interpreted to mean 'Little Mount'.



All these references show that there was a continuous tradition in the West connecting St. Thomas with India, but it has been doubted whether early writers meant the same by India as we do. There is evidence that there was a good deal of confusion in the minds of some writers at least with regard to the whereabouts of India. It was sometimes confused with Ethiopia and might be applied to all the regions southward and eastward of the Roman and Parthian Empires. It is this which makes uncertain the meaning of statements that St. Thomas or St. Bartholomew preached the Gospel in India. But some at least of the old writers may have had a more accurate idea. This seems to have been the case with Pliny. He and another writer (author of *The Periplus*) seem clearly to have recognized that India lay to the east of the Indus with the Southern or Indian ocean also as its boundary.

From Eastern sources there comes a good deal of support to the tradition of St. Thomas having preached the Gospel in India.

There is an ancient apocryphal work written in Syriac called *The Acts of Judas Thomas*. It was written probably between 180 and 230 A.D. and its author, who was connected with Edessa, was an advocate of the view that marriage was unclean and unspiritual, and that Christians ought not to marry. The writer calls Thomas the twin brother of our Lord and gives him the name of Judas. 'Thomas' of course means 'twin', and the apostle must have had some other name. In all literature which is connected with Edessa the apostle is always called Judas Thomas.

The story begins by telling how the apostles, after they had been some time in Jerusalem, cast lots to decide where each should go and preach. India fell to the lot of Thomas, but he was most unwilling to go. But Christ appeared to a merchant from India named Habbān, who was in the employ of King Gūdnaphar, and offered to sell him a slave who was a carpenter.

Habbān then bought Thomas for twenty pieces of silver and took him off to India. After certain adventures on the way they reached India, and Habbān brought to the king the carpenter slave he had purchased. The king took the apostle outside the city and showed him a meadow where he wanted a palace built. He also gave into his hand a large sum of money for the work. But Thomas instead of building the palace gave away the money for the benefit of the poor. When the king discovered this he was very angry. Thomas, however, declared that he had in this way built a heavenly palace for the king. King Gūdnaphar then shut up both Habbān and Thomas in prison. The brother of the king, whose name was Gad, became ill, and during his illness he had a dream. In this dream he saw the wonderful palace which St. Thomas had built. When he told Gūdnaphar about this both the king and his brother were baptized and St. Thomas was given freedom to preach the Gospel in their kingdom. After performing some miracles there St. Thomas was one day visited by Sifūr, the general of King Mazdai, who besought him to come and set his wife and daughter free from a demon who was tormenting them. St. Thomas, having left his work in charge of a deacon named Xanthippus, went with Sifūr to the kingdom of King Mazdai, and the demons were cast out from the royal ladies. Some time after a noble lady named Mygdonia, wife of Kārīs, who was a relative of King Mazdai, was converted by St. Thomas and persuaded to live a celibate life. Her husband complained to the king, who had St. Thomas imprisoned in the house of Sifūr. In spite of all efforts to make her abandon her new faith Mygdonia remained firm, and Sifūr and his family also became Christians. Even Tertia, the wife of the king, was converted and also Wīzān the king's son and his wife too. The king however was greatly enraged, and condemned St. Thomas to death, and he was killed by four soldiers with their spears. Before

his death St. Thomas had ordained Sifūr and Wizān. The bones of the Apostle were subsequently secretly brought away from the place where he died by one of the believers and buried at Edessa. But when some time after even some dust from the tomb where the body of the Apostle had lain set free from a demon a son of the king, King Mazdai himself became a Christian and asked Sifūr and the Christian brethren for forgiveness.

While no one will be prepared to accept this story as it stands the question arises as to whether it does not contain some substratum of truth and thus help to confirm the historicity of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas. It is remarkable in the first place that King Gūdnaphar and his brother Gad, of whom nothing otherwise was previously known, have of recent years been proved to be historical persons. History did not know even their names until archæological research in the Punjab brought to light coins and inscriptions showing that they were actual persons who belonged to a Parthian dynasty which ruled at that time in North India. In the Parthian dynasty the names appear as Vindapharna and Guda. Their chronology fits in with the time of the supposed visit of the Apostle. Moreover it has been proved that for centuries even before the time of Gūdnaphar Indian kings had engaged in trade for revenue purposes and employed a trade agent or royal merchant. Thus Habbān might have been the trade agent of the king and have met the Apostle when on a visit to Alexandria. In the story we find that after a time St. Thomas goes to another kingdom. Now within a few years of the date when St. Thomas is believed to have visited King Gūdnaphar the whole kingdom was overthrown by the invasion of the Kushāns. The destruction was so thorough that even the memory of the dynasty was obliterated until brought to light again by archæology. This overwhelming cataclysm would have necessitated the

flight of the Apostle from the realm of King Gūdnaphar.

In view of all this and other corroborating evidence many think that the apostolate of St. Thomas in North India can well be established. The tradition which some early western writers preserved that St. Thomas preached in Parthia is in line with this, for, as we have seen, the kingdom of Gūdnaphar was a Parthian kingdom. The story would also explain how India as well as Parthia came to be connected in the minds of western writers with the Apostle.

But is the visit of St. Thomas to South India supported by this story? This of course is a separate question.

It must be noticed in the first place that the names Mazdai, Sifūr, Mygdonia, Wīzān, Tertia and others used in the legend do not belong to South India, nor even to India at all. The South Indian tradition speaks of the Apostle being put to death by the jealousy of the Brahmans and with the thrust of a single lance, whereas in *The Acts of Judas Thomas* we find his death ascribed to King Mazdai and carried out by four soldiers with their four lances. The South Indian tradition may in this matter be the original one from which the story in *The Acts of Judas Thomas* has been derived.

The late Dr. J. N. Farquhar, who was a cautious and careful scholar, while rejecting the details of the story, believed that there was a basis of truth behind it. He has endeavoured to reconstruct the story. Accepting the North Indian apostolate as probable he shows how the invasion of the Kushāns would have necessitated a withdrawal from the Punjab. From there the Apostle might have returned to the island of Socotra. This island also has a tradition that St. Thomas made a visit there. While waiting for another ship he spent some months in Socotra preaching the Gospel. Then when a ship bound for India arrived

he went across to South India, landing at the port of Muziris, now Cranganore. After establishing churches on the West coast he passed across to the East coast and did the same thing. Dr. Farquhar does not think that St. Thomas went as far as China, but thinks it possible he may have gone across to Burma landing at Temala, the port corresponding to the modern Bassein, and that afterwards he returned to India and was martyred there.

In early Edessene literature there is reference to letters having been received from the Apostle St. Thomas. Dr. Farquhar suggested that these were written in the first instance at the request of Habbān. It is clear that Edessa came to regard itself as having a special connection with the Apostle.

According to *The Acts of Judas Thomas* the bones of the Apostle were secretly taken away by one of the believers and brought to the West. Dr. Farquhar regards this as having been carried out by some visiting merchant, who, anxious to secure the valuable relics for his own church at home, stole these at night. The Eastern Church commemorates St. Thomas on the 3rd July, which may be the day on which his relics arrived at Edessa, whereas in the West the day of his death, 21st December, is observed. Dr. Farquhar suggested that the removal of the remains took place about 165 A.D. A hymn written by Ephraem Syrus (about 363 to 373 A.D.) runs as follows:—

‘Thomas, whence thy lineage,  
That so illustrious thou shouldst become?  
A merchant thy bones conveys;  
A pontiff assigns thee a feast;  
A king a shrine erects.’

As there were no bishops in Edessa till the second century the mention of the pontiff in the hymn seems to confirm the date of the removal of the relics as belonging to the second century.

Ephraem Syrus refers to St. Thomas in other hymns

also, for example, 'Lo! in India are thy miracles, O Thomas'. 'The sun-burnt India thou hast purified.' 'The cross of light has obliterated India's darkened shades.'

An earlier Eastern writer, namely the Edessene author of *The Doctrine of the Apostles* (250 A.D.) writes, 'India and all its own countries and those bordering on it even to the furthest sea received the apostles' hand of priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was guide and ruler in the church which he built there.'

With regard to the relics of St. Thomas one account says that they were at some later time removed from Edessa to Chios, an island of the Ægean Sea, and later still to Ortona in Italy where they now repose.

When the Portuguese came to India they professed to find the relics of St. Thomas at Mylapore (or Mailapur). This place is three miles south of Fort St. George. The Portuguese renamed it San Thomé. It is now part of the city of Madras. The present Roman Catholic Cathedral at Mylapore was completed in 1896. In the nave of the Cathedral are steps going down to a small chapel which is said to be the site of the grave of St. Thomas. In the year 1517 some Portuguese adventurers were visiting this place. In the midst of ruins on the spot they discovered a chapel which had many crosses carved on it, both inside and outside. At that time there were no Christians living in the neighbourhood. A Muhammadan whom they met told them that the chapel covered the place where St. Thomas had been buried. It was not however till 1522 that the Portuguese made further investigations. Underneath the church bones were found which they believed to be those of the Apostle and of the king whom he had converted. The bones of the Apostle they professed to distinguish by their superior whiteness. At the same time the head of a lance was found and was regarded as that which had been used to kill St. Thomas. These relics were reverently transferred to

Goa where a shrine enriched by silver was built for them. Some of the ashes and bones, however, as well as fragments of the spear are still kept in a reliquary at the church at Mylapore.

It will be noticed that the story of the remains of St. Thomas being found at Mylapore in 1522 is in disagreement with the tradition that they were carried off to Edessa in the second century.

Two other holy places near Madras connected with St. Thomas may be mentioned here. One is St. Thomas's Mount about eight miles south-west of Fort St. George. In 1547 while the foundations of a chapel were being dug a slab of stone was found with a bas-relief cross. This stone was said to sweat blood annually on the 18th December, and Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, in 1599 instituted a festival in honour of this miracle. The annual miracle did not continue it seems for many years and has long since ceased to take place.

At the Little Mount, six miles south-west of Fort St. George, is another holy place. There is a rock in which is a cave. Here, it is asserted, St. Thomas took refuge from his pursuers. A cleft on the top of the rock is shown which was miraculously made by the Apostle to supply himself with water while hiding in the cave. Those who are credulous can also see the Apostle's footprints on the surface of the rock.

Another story of the martyrdom of St. Thomas exists which is really in contradiction to that already given. The peacock is regarded as a symbol of St. Thomas and the origin of it is explained as follows. One day while St. Thomas was praying in a grove, a fowler, who was shooting peacocks with a bow and arrow shot the Apostle by mistake. This is the story as Marco Polo heard it. Another traveller named John de Marignolli, about the middle of the fourteenth century, tells a similar story, but in it the Apostle appears riding on an ass and wearing a mantle of

peacock's feathers. Still another version tells how the hunter went out to shoot peacocks and seeing a number of them on a hill aimed at a specially handsome one in the middle of them, and pierced it with an arrow. All the birds rose up but the wounded one turned into a man and fell down to the ground. When the body was examined it was found to be that of St. Thomas. Impressions of human feet also were found on the slab from which the bird had risen when wounded.

These silly stories seem to have been invented with a purpose. The Hindus also had a peacock story connected with Mylapore. They said that it derived its name from *mayil*, a peacock, and a Purana of the temple there tells how Siva's wife appeared to her lord at that place in the form of a peacock. Perhaps it was when the number of Christians had grown less there and no help came from elsewhere that the Christians invented these stories to add to their prestige and to try to represent the town as of Christian and not of Hindu origin. When Christian faith had sunk so low as to resort to such practices we cannot wonder that it died out for a time in this region.

There are some who have been willing to accept the North Indian apostolate of St. Thomas as historical but who have regarded his supposed visit to South India as lacking in sufficient evidence. They would explain the South Indian tradition as an example of a wandering legend, that is to say a legend which is connected with another region which has been transferred to South India.

One writer, who holds that the story is really connected with North India, suggests that Mazdai is a corruption of Vasudeva (Mazdai =  $\beta\alpha\zeta\omicron\delta\epsilon\omicron$  = Vasudeva) a historical king who reigned about 180 to 226 A.D. (Others say 152 to 176 A.D.) Siforus or Sifūr is said to be a corruption of Sitaphernes. The anachronism is explained as due to confusion with the time when the relics of St. Thomas were conveyed from the



Indo-Scythian kingdom in India to Edessa which may have been during the reign of Vasudeva by the help of a Parthian satrap named Sitaphernes. Even amongst those who would connect St. Thomas only with North India there are some who hold that the church in South India may have been planted at an early date during the time of the Pallava dynasty, which was itself Parthian, and may have had a connection with the Parthian kingdom in the North.

As militating against the tradition that St. Thomas visited South India it is sometimes said that there were no Brahmans there at that date and the story connects his martyrdom with the jealousy of Brahmans. Others claim that there is abundance of evidence that Brahmanism was established in South India before the commencement of the Christian era.

The visit of St. Thomas to South India cannot be positively proved. The question has been much discussed and there seems little prospect that a final verdict can be given. The local tradition with regard to his visit is very strong and there is no other rival local tradition as to the origin of the church in South India. The tradition has been held also outside India both in the West and in the East from very early times. There is nothing improbable in the story that the Apostle should have travelled as far as India to preach the Gospel. If the story cannot be proved it is certainly by no means unlikely.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA

IF the history of the foundation of the church in India is obscure and uncertain its history during the subsequent period is also largely unknown. At the most it is exceedingly scanty.

In the second century A.D. Demetrius was bishop of Alexandria. It is said that he received a message from people in India asking him to send to them teachers to instruct them in the faith of Christ. At that time the catechetical school of Alexandria was presided over by Pantaenus. He was formerly a Stoic philosopher but had become a Christian. When this message was received he offered to go to India. This was in the year 189. He is said to have found in India a Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew which St. Bartholomew was supposed to have taken there. Pantaenus brought this back to Alexandria. He does not seem to have remained long in India. In any case he returned eventually and resumed his work at the catechetical school. In course of time he was succeeded by his famous pupil, Clement of Alexandria. In one place in his writings Clement refers to the inhabitants and customs of India in such a way as to shew an acquaintance which he might have derived from his teacher Pantaenus. He mentions, for example, the Brahmans, Buddha, and Indian hermits who wear clothes made from bark and who live only on fruit and water. This is strengthened by a reference in Jerome where he speaks of Pantaenus being qualified to argue with Brahmans, because before his conversion he too had been a heathen philosopher. But Clement may have got his information from other sources than Pantaenus, and Jerome is not by some considered a very reliable witness. Still many who feel unable to regard the visit to India of St. Thomas as historical are inclined to believe that Pantaenus did make a visit and that he found Christians there.

There is a story that a certain Thomas, who was a disciple of Manes, the founder of the Manichæan heresy, visited Malabar in the year 277 A.D. Manes, who was a Persian, had been brought up, before he became a Christian, in the Zoroastrian religion, and carried over some of the ideas of that faith into Christianity. He asserted that Christ had left His

system incomplete and that his own mission was to lead Christians into full truth. Dr. Burnell, a noted orientalist of the last century, claimed that this must be the Thomas who first brought Christianity to India. In one of the copper plate charters referred to below, we learn that certain Christians were called *maṇigrāmakkar*. This, according to Dr. Burnell, means belonging to the village of Manes. But the derivation is fanciful. *Maṇi* means a jewel, and in the copper plates the word *maṇigrāmakkar* seems to be a term conferring honourable distinction upon Syrian Christian merchants. It is probably the old designation for a trade guild, or a community of jewellers. The term occurs in inscriptions found in Siam, Trichinopoly, Cranganore, and Talikkad in Cochin. It is also found in an old Malayalam song of North Malabar and even in some Tamil works. It is true that there is a Malabar Christian tradition of the coming of a certain sorcerer to Quilon in 315 A.D., who induced many Christians of that place to secede to the Saivite form of Hinduism. There is a class of Nayars found in and near Quilon who are supposed to be the descendants of these apostates. The sorcerer has been identified with Mānikka Vāchakar, a Tamil Saivite poet and Hindu religious leader. But there is no etymological connection between Mānikka and *maṇigramakkar*, and Mānikka Vāchakar lived only in the tenth century A.D.

The story of the sending of Thomas the disciple of Manes to India rests on the authority of a passage in Theodoret who died in 457 or 458 A.D. But the *Acta Disputationis* and Epiphanius, both older authorities, in speaking of the disciples of Manes, agree that 'Adda was destined to the East, Thomas went to the land of Syria, and Hermes to Egypt.' According to Epiphanius the mission of Thomas was to Judæa. It has been suggested that Theodoret misread Ioudaion for India. There is therefore no reason to believe that Thomas the Manichæan visited India.

During the Patriarchate of Shahlupha and Papa (about 295 to 300 A.D.) it is recorded that a certain Dudi, or David, who was bishop of Basra on the Persian Gulf, who was famous for his learning, left his own see and went to India where he brought the Gospel to many people. This is the first bishop of 'India' mentioned by name in history. But it cannot be proved that he went to the land which we now call India or whether he visited Malabar.

At the great council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. one of the bishops who was present was named John. He subscribed as Metropolitan of Persia and of Great India. This does not prove that he resided in or had visited India but may be taken to show that his jurisdiction extended so far, and it is well-known that later on the church in India regarded itself as subject to the Patriarch who dwelt in Edessa or Babylon.

A story is related by Rufinus, and repeated by other Church historians, which was supposed to account for the establishment of Christianity in India during the time of Constantine the Great. It was said that a Christian philosopher named Meropius visited India in company with two young relatives named Frumentius and Oedesius. When he was about to return the natives of the place for some reason murdered him and all on board his ship except the two young men, who on account of their youth were spared. The king of the place took them into his household and made Frumentius his secretary and Oedesius his cupbearer. The king after some time died but bequeathed to them their liberty. Such confidence however had they won that the widowed queen requested them to stay and help in the government of the country till her son was old enough to rule. Frumentius made use of his position to advance the Christian faith and encouraged the few Christians already found there. When at last he was able to leave the country Frumentius visited Alexandria and reported the matter to Athanasius,

who had recently become bishop. He urged that help should be sent to the Christians in the land he had just come from and missionary work undertaken. Athanasius urged Frumentius to become bishop and so in this capacity he returned, it is said, to India in 356, where he carried on a successful work, winning converts and building many churches. Was it however the India we know to which Frumentius went? Athanasius mentions a certain Frumentius who was bishop of Auxunius, the capital of Ethiopia. There may have been two bishops of the same name, but it seems likely that this was the same Frumentius and that the country he went to was not India, but Ethiopia. We have in fact here an illustration of the confusion which existed in the minds of many ancient writers with regard to the whereabouts of India. It is this uncertainty which throws doubt upon the meaning of statements as to St. Thomas or St. Bartholomew, Pantaenus or others having preached the Gospel in India.

Another Thomas who came to India was Thomas the merchant, who is sometimes called Thomas of Cana. By the Syrian Christians he is called Knaye Thomas and by the Portuguese Thomas Cannaneo. The designation simply means a Canaanite, which may only be a term to indicate a merchant. Gibbon and others called him an Armenian which may be a mistake for Aramoean. He is thought by many to have come from Persia.

According to a Malayalam tradition Joseph, Bishop of Edessa, in a dream heard a call from the poor Christians of Malabar. He went to the Katholikos of Jerusalem who requested Thomas the merchant to report on the condition of the Christians of Malabar when he made his next voyage to India. When Thomas returned he reported that the Christians in Malabar were in much need of help, being ignorant and requiring clergy to teach them. The Katholikos then sent Thomas with Joseph, Bishop of Edessa,

several priests and deacons and many other men, women and children who came from such places as Baghdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem. They were received kindly both by the Christians of Malabar and by the local Rājā who allowed them to settle and granted them certain social privileges. It is said that they numbered about four hundred persons, and landed at Cranganore which was then called Mahādevapattam. This took place, it is said, in 345 A.D.

In those days a terrible persecution of Christians was taking place in Persia and many were suffering martyrdom. A good number of Christians from Persia fled to other lands and this company of people who came to Cranganore may have been a band of such refugees.

The king of the country around Cranganore at the time when Thomas the merchant arrived is said to have been Cheraman Perumal, although some writers state that the time when Perumal reigned was four and a half centuries later. Some, however, say he died about 346, while Day in his *Land of the Perumals* says that he reigned from 341 to 378 when he went on pilgrimage and disappeared. It is claimed that he gave a charter of privileges to the Christians at that time consisting of three copper plates inscribed on one side only. In a Portuguese version of the inscription the name or title of the king is given as Cocurangon. It records how Thomas Cannaneo arrived in a ship at a place called Carnellur on the 7th day of March before the full moon, and how the king to honour him gave him his own name, the possession of a town, and a number of other privileges. The copper plates on which this charter was inscribed, if they ever existed, have long since disappeared. The Malabar Christians of Tevalikara in 1599 complained to Archbishop Menezes about the loss of the Cranganore plates, which it is believed meant those given to Thomas the merchant, and Francisco Roz, Bishop of Cranganore,

writing in 1604, says, 'The last emperor of Malabar, called Xaram Perumal was the one who gave land for a church and a settlement to the St. Thomas Christians, and great privileges, as is seen from their *ollas*, the copper original of which was taken to Portugal by the 'Religious' of St. Francis a copy of them remaining there'. 'This Perumal,' he adds, 'died on the 1st March, 1258 years ago' (this would be in 346 A.D.). The Jesuit Father Hostein, believed that the plates, having been taken to Portugal by the Franciscans, are now either in the Tome de Tombo of Lisbon, or in some old Franciscan monastery in Portugal. At all events they, and any copy of them, have quite disappeared. Copper plates belonging to a later date are still in existence and there is a doubt whether there may not have been some confusion in the public memory with regard to them. It seems certain that there has been some kind of confusion with regard to the details of the traditions about this supposed immigration of Christians and the later one hundreds of years afterwards.

There is a story that Thomas the merchant had two wives, by each of whom he had a family. The wife who came from his own country lived south of the river at Cranganore. The other, who belonged to India and who is sometimes described as originating from the Nayar caste, lived north of the river. The family of the 'southern wife' kept themselves aloof and did not intermarry with the other family who became mingled with other Christians. Whatever lies behind this story it is certain that there is still to-day a small section of Syrian Christians who are called Sudhists or Southern Christians. They do not intermarry with other Christians, and have their own churches and their own bishop. Amongst those Syrians who joined the Roman Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the distinction was preserved and still remains.

In the year 356 A.D. it is said that the Emperor Constantius sent out a mission to Arabia Magna or Arabia Felix. The authority for this is the Arian writer, Philostorgius, a native of Cappadocia, who was born about the year 364. The work of this historian only exists in an epitome compiled in the ninth century. He says that the leader of this mission was a certain Theophilus the Indian. The story is that as a youth he was sent to Constantinople where he had become a Christian. After visiting the people called Homeritae, who according to Philostorgius were also called Sabaeans or Indians, he went to 'other districts of India'. It looks as though we have here a case of the confusion often made in the West in those days with regard to the location of India, and that the India from which he came, as well as the India which he visited, were not India at all according to our ideas. Some think that Theophilus was a native of Socotra.

We are on surer grounds when we come to the record of Cosmas. He was a merchant from Alexandria who had sailed in the Indian seas. On this account he is called Indicopleustes, or the Indian Voyager. In later years he became a monk and between 535 and 550 he wrote in his monastery in Greek a book called *Universal Christian Topography*. It was written to prove the strange theory that the world is formed after the pattern of the Jewish Tabernacle, and that the earth, like the table of shewbread, is a rectangular plane, its length being double the breadth. In this book amidst much that is wearisome and meaningless to modern minds, Cosmas has enshrined some references to his voyages, which throw light on conditions in those days. Amongst other things he refers to the existence of the Church in India when he visited it about the year 522 A.D.

Cosmas says that in Ceylon he found a Church of Christians with clergy and a congregation with a



presbyter appointed from Persia and a deacon, and all the apparatus of public worship. He did not know if there were any Christians further on than this, but he says he found Christians also in the land called Malabar, 'where the pepper grows'. At Caliana, he says, there was a bishop appointed from Persia. This piece of evidence from an eye-witness is the first unchallenged testimony to the existence of the church in South India. It proves that at least by the first quarter of the sixth century it was well established there, though there is much to indicate that its establishment was much earlier. It is not certain what place is meant by Caliana. Some have taken it to mean Kalyan and others Quilon. It may be a name to include the whole of the Malabar coast.

Cosmas was a Nestorian and seems to have been on friendly terms with the Metropolitan of Persia. Rae in his *Syrian Christians of Malabar* claims that the church found in India by Cosmas cannot have been of long standing. The maritime spirit of Persia, he says, became active about this time and was probably accompanied by a spirit of missionary enterprise. If however the immigration of Thomas the merchant in 345 A.D. is historical, Persian Christians came to Malabar long before Cosmas visited it, and the ecclesiastical connection may have been older still. The church which Cosmas found in Ceylon possibly consisted only of Persian Christians, and as they did not mingle with or evangelize the local inhabitants of the country the church there eventually died out. In Malabar the Persian immigrants in course of time became amalgamated with the Christians of the country.

About 470 A.D. a certain Ma'na, Bishop of Riwardashir, a scholar of the school of Edessa, wrote in the Pahlavi form of Persian various religious discourses, articles and hymns, and also translated from Greek into Syriac the works of Diodorus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. These it is said he sent all to 'India'.

An earlier writer, Isho'dad, wrote as follows in a colophon to his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 'This Epistle has been translated from Greek into Syriac by Mar Komai, with the help of Daniel the priest, the Indian'. The date is said to be about 425 A.D. But nothing is known about this Daniel the 'Indian'.

There is extant a letter of the Nestorian Patriarch, Isho-'Yahb III (650-660) which is addressed to Mar Simeon, Metropolitan of Riwardashir in Persia. In it he refers to India which was in the jurisdiction of this Persian Metropolitan as 'India that extends from the borders of the Persian Empire to the country which is called Kalah, which is a distance of twelve hundred parasangs.'<sup>1</sup> What is meant by Kalah is not known, but the distance is large enough to include Malabar.

It is well known that the Nestorian Church spread to many distant places in Asia, and even as far as China at an early period, though in a great many of them the light was afterwards extinguished. Osorius and Jarricus who wrote centuries after Cosmas, and are quoted by the Roman Catholic writer, Assemani, mention numerous Nestorian communities on the river Ganges and also in central and eastern India.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHURCH IN INDIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

WHATEVER may be said about the immigration of Persian Christians to Malabar in the fourth century the immigration which took place in the ninth century is well substantiated.

<sup>1</sup> A *parasang* is a Persian measure of length, varying in different places from 30 to 60 stadia. According to Herodotus it was 30 stadia, that is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  English miles.

A Persian merchant named Marwan Sabrison came to Quilon with a large party which included two bishops named Mar Sapro (or Shapur) and Mar Prodh (Aprot). The latter is generally identified with Afras who is mentioned in the copper plates where he is called Afras-i-Chaharbukht-i-Suryaya, that is Afras son of Chaharbukht the Syrian. The date is believed to be 825 A.D. the year from which the Malabar era is reckoned.

The king of those days in Malabar is said to have been Cheraman Perumal. There is evidently some confusion in the history as other accounts place him in the fourth century as we have seen above. According to tradition he disappeared from his kingdom about the year 825, and went to Arabia where he became a Muhammadan. He never returned to his kingdom but died in Arabia. For a long time his death was unknown or concealed, and his officials carried on his government in his name, on the supposition that he was still alive. But in course of time his dominion became divided and the Zamorin of Calicut, the Rājā of Cochin, who was a lineal descendant of Perumal, and the Rājā of Travancore, became the chief independent rulers of the Malabar region. The Malabar era is reckoned from the 25th August, 825, which is thought to be the date of King Cheraman Perumal's departure. He is called the last of the Perumals.

Marwan Sabrison built a new church at Quilon, although there was probably another older church there. Neither now exists, nor can their sites be identified. To this church of Marwan Sabrison grants were made on two sets of copper plates. Of these two sets five plates are still in existence, while not less than two are lost. Three of the plates which have been preserved are now at the Jacobite Seminary at Kottayam. The other two are at Tiruvalla in the possession of the Mar Thoma Church. The date of

these charters is believed to be about 878 A.D., though there is a difference of opinion with regard to the date.

The king who granted these charters is called Ayyan, King of Venad. This country covers roughly the southern portion of modern Travancore. His heir-apparent, Raman, is also mentioned in the plates. The date given is the fifth year of Sthanu Ravi of the Chera family, who was the overlord of King Ayyan and ruled at Cranganore.

In one of the charters the grant is made to the Tarisa church at Quilon which had been built by Marwan Sabriso. The word Tarisa seems to mean orthodox. It was no doubt the designation claimed by the community, just as the Jacobite Church to-day is often known as the Orthodox Syrian Church. There is still a very small Syrian Christian community at Padmanabhapuram, an old capital of Travancore, which bears the name of Tarutayakkal, which means Tarisas, and it was in use in other parts of Travancore till about a hundred years ago. It is also said that the Nestorian Christians in China and Tartary were known as Tarisas.

The charter granted to the Christian community certain rights and privileges. Certain menials were handed over to them for service and they were given jurisdiction over them. The Church was made the custodian of the steelyard, the seal, and the weights, which were previously in the king's possession. The Church was allowed to take certain dues and others were remitted in its case. The privilege of fixing prices and controlling trade, in co-operation with the government officials, was granted. The Christian community was given seventy-two privileges which related to social customs. In the charter however only the privilege of bringing on an elephant water for sprinkling in connection with the marriage ceremony is mentioned. The other privileges are assumed to be

well-known and may have been enumerated in some previous charter.

The second set of plates is believed to be a little later in date than the first set. They also were granted by King Ayyan of Venad, but the donees mentioned included not only the Quilon Church as in the first set, but the Jews living at Quilon, and also the *maṇigrāman*, who are presumed to be the leaders of the indigenous Christians of Quilon who were there before Marwan Sabriso arrived. The rights granted are similar to those in the first charter. Besides this extensive lands within specified boundaries are given and the protection of the Church and its lands is to be undertaken by the Venad militia called the six hundred. This protection is also given to the Jewish and *maṇigrāman* leaders.

There is also a third charter which was granted at Cranganore to a certain Iravi Korttan of that city. It has been assigned to the year 1320, though Dr. Burnell placed it in the eighth century. The donor in this case is a king named Vira Raghava Charavartti. Iravi Korttan is described as the Lord of the city, and is also called the Great Merchant of the Chera Kings, supreme in the whole world. The charter grants the office of *maṇigrāman*, which means probably the leadership of the Cranganore merchants. Besides the usual privileges he is given the monopoly of the overland and also the seaborne trade. All the merchants as well as five menial classes are placed under his jurisdiction. He is allowed brokerage on all sorts of goods and also certain duties and tolls. His children and grand-children and their descendants were granted these rights as a hereditary possession.

With regard to the seventy-two social privileges granted to the Christian community an anonymous manuscript of a Carmelite missionary of the seventeenth century gives a list of them. They are mostly of a trivial nature. The Syrian Christian community claims

that they were originally granted to Thomas the merchant in the fourth century. The community was until recent times most tenacious of these privileges and they still speak of them with pride. The effect of the special position which these privileges conferred upon them was that they were practically recognised by the Hindu rulers as forming a high caste. Their work as traders was no doubt valuable to the state and it was no doubt on this account that these privileges were granted. It is noteworthy that of the numerous banks which nowadays exist in Travancore and Cochin a very large proportion are in Christian hands. The unfortunate result of the grant of these privileges was that the members of the Christian community came to look down upon the lower castes, and in matters of food and ceremonial pollution to have a similar point of view to that of high caste Hindus. While jealously guarding their social privileges they became indifferent to the spread of the Gospel, and for centuries spiritual life was at a low ebb amongst them.

It was about the same time that the Quilon copperplate charters were granted that, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, King Alfred sent Sighelm and Aethelstan to Rome to convey the alms which he had vowed to send thither, 'and also to India to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew'. This was in the year 883. But there is no evidence that they actually went to India. William of Malmesbury, a chronicler of the twelfth century, gives an enlarged version of the story. He turns Sighelm, who was probably a Kentish ealdorman, into the tenth century bishop of Sherborne, and says that he penetrated to India and brought back gems which were still to be seen in the church at Sherborne. Little reliance, however, can be placed on this late version.

The oldest monuments of the Christian Church in India are some ancient Persian crosses. One of them was discovered at St. Thomas's Mount, Madras, by

the Portuguese in 1547, and as we have seen in a previous chapter, was credited with miraculous powers. A monument which is practically a duplicate of this is in the old Jacobite church at Kottayam. These monuments are of black stone with a cross carved upon them, and at the top of the cross a dove. The design is in the form of an arch and on the two sides and at the top of the arch there is an inscription in the Pahlavi language, which was the language of the Persian Empire during the Sassanian Dynasty. The deciphering of this inscription has proved a great difficulty to scholars. Pahlavi is written only with consonants and hence it has been possible by suggesting different vowels to make it mean many different things. The translation which used to be favoured was one by a well-known orientalist named Dr. Burnell.

It ran as follows :—

‘In punishment by the cross (was) the suffering of this one;

He Who is the true Christ, and God above, and Guide ever pure’.

This was considered to have a deep theological meaning and there has been much discussion as to its bearing on the doctrinal position of the Syrian Church, that is whether it was Nestorian in its views or not.

But more recent scholarship has found a much simpler meaning in the inscription. Mr. C. P. T. Winckworth translated it as follows :—

‘My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukht, the Syrian, who preserved this.’

This translation was discussed at the International Congress of Orientalists, held at Oxford in 1928, and generally accepted by the Iranian scholars present there.

If this translation is correct it seems to connect the crosses with the same Afras, son of Chaharbukht, who is mentioned in the copper plates.

Experts, of whom one must always beware, have dated the crosses as belonging to the seventh or eighth century. Afras, as we have seen, belongs to the ninth century. Did he erect these monuments, or was he only 'preserving' monuments, which he found already existing?

There is in the old church at Kottayam also a smaller cross which is of later date and has been assigned to the tenth century. It has part of the Pahlavi inscription repeated, and also in Estrangelo Syriac a quotation from Gal. vi 14, 'Let me not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

This smaller cross has one interesting addition. The slab on which it is carved has a second, or upper, panel with a cross like the one below, but having on each side the figure of a peacock. The legendary connection of St. Thomas with the peacock has already been referred to in a previous chapter.

Two other similar crosses have been discovered in recent years. One was found in 1921 at a place called Katamattam in North Travancore, and another in 1924 at Muttuchira a village near the north border of Cochin State.

According to Christian tradition the power of the Christian community extended so much that in course of time they claimed the right to elect from among themselves their own king. His jurisdiction was to be over them all though scattered in the dominions of various kings, and he was to defend them from violence and tyranny. Their first king is said to have been called Beliarte or Villiyarvatta, and to have founded a dynasty which lasted a long time. A letter of Pope John XXII to the Christians of Malabar in 1330 mentions the lord (*dominus*) of the Christians there. It is said that when the last Christian king died without any heir the king of Diamper (Udayamperur) inherited his position, and that when the kings of Diamper failed the king of Cochin claimed to have more jurisdiction



over the Christians of St. Thomas than the other kings in whose lands they dwelt.

The position of a king ruling over subjects who were scattered about in the territory of other kings must have presented many problems, and it would be interesting to know more details about this Christian kingship. The records however have long since perished leaving only this vague and uncertain tradition. When Vasco da Gama came to Cochin in the second fleet, which left Portugal in 1502, the Christians sent to him an embassy asking him to take them under his protection and that of his king. They sent to him a red staff, garnished at the ends with silver, and having at the top three silver bells, which had been, they said, the sceptre of their kings whom they formerly had. They presented this in token of the vassalage which they now wished to give to the King of Portugal.

The history of the Syrian Church of Malabar is for several centuries almost a blank, but we have a few glimpses of it which are given to us by travellers from the west.

Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveller visited India on his return from China in the year 1293. Possibly he had also visited India before. He saw the shrine of St. Thomas in the Church at Mylapore which he said was frequented both by Christians and Muhamadans. The Christians were in the habit of taking some of the red earth from the tomb and giving it to one who had fever, and this was said to bring about a cure. Marco Polo mentions also that the Christians in charge of the shrine were supported by the income derived from cocoanut trees on the site.

A visitor of about the same time was John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan Friar. He was on his way to China being the first missionary from the Roman Church to that country. The date of his visit was somewhere about 1292 or 1293, though apparently he

did not meet Marco Polo. He carried letters from the Pope to the famous Kublai Khan, who was then reigning in China, but probably reached the end of his journey after the old Khan had died. In 1307 John was made archbishop of a place called Cambalec in China with full powers of a patriarch, and seven suffragan sees were created to be placed under him to be filled by men of his own order. Only three of these bishops however reached their destination. On his way to China he stayed in India. Writing from China in 1305 he says that he had left Tabriz in 1291 and proceeded to India. He had remained in India, 'wherein stands the Church of St. Thomas', for thirteen months and in that region had baptised in different places about a hundred persons. A companion of his journey, a Dominican named Nicholas of Pistoia, died there and was buried in the Church. The archbishop remained at his post at Cambalec till his death in 1328.

Friar Jordanus was a Dominican. He was a Frenchman who was born at Severac. He visited the East in the years 1321 to 1323. After returning home he started out again in 1330. Two of the letters which he wrote are still extant.

The first, which is dated October, 1321, was addressed to his fellow Dominicans and also to the Franciscans in Persia. He advocates the establishment of mission work in India, and recommended as centres Surat, Baroch and Quilon.

Another letter dated January, 1324, related how he had started out from Tabriz with four Franciscans. They were on their way to Quilon but a storm drove their ship to Tana on the island of Salsette. The Nestorian Christians here received them in a friendly manner, but while Friar Jordanus was away his four companions were put to death by the governor at the instigation of the Muhammadans. The story of their heroism is garnished with miracles. Friar Jordanus was able to recover the bodies of his companions and

have them buried at Surat where there was a church. After this he set out for Quilon. He mentions in his letter that he had baptized large numbers and that with more help the results might be much greater.

When Jordanus started out again from Europe in 1330 he carried with him a bull of Pope John XXII dated the 5th April of that year. This was addressed to the Christians of Quilon and was intended to be delivered to them by Jordanus, who had now become a bishop, and was appointed to that place by the Pope. In the bull Jordanus and his companions are recommended to the goodwill of the Syrian Christians in India, who are also urged to give up their schism and enter the unity of the Catholic Church. This was the first claim made by the Pope to jurisdiction in India. There is no record of the result of this mission of Jordanus, and we do not know how long he stayed or whether he had any successor.

Another Franciscan, named Oderic of Pordenone, in the district of Friuli, Italy, left Europe for work in other lands about 1315 or 1316, when he was about thirty years of age. He laboured for some years in Armenia and Persia but afterwards went to India and visited Tana where the four Franciscans had been martyred in 1321. He is said to have removed their bones from there, but it is not quite apparent what is the relation between this account and the account given by Friar Jordanus of his having buried the martyrs at Surat. Oderic afterwards went to Quilon which he calls Palumbum. There he took passage with the sacred relics in a ship going to a town, which he calls Zayton, in China in order to deposit them with the Franciscans who had two houses there. From Malabar, he said, it was a journey of ten days to another realm where was laid the body of St. Thomas. He says that near the church, where the relics of St. Thomas were buried, there were fifteen houses of Nestorians whom he calls vile and pestilent heretics.

John de Marignolli was a native of Florence and belonged to a noble family of San Lorenzo. He was sent on an embassy to China by Pope Benedict XII after the death of Archbishop John of Cambalec. He travelled with two companions and left Avignon in December, 1338. After visiting China he sailed for India and reached Quilon 'where the whole world's pepper grows' about Easter, 1348. Here he stayed for about a year and four months, when he left to visit the shrine of St. Thomas at Mylapore. He gives no information of the state of the Christian church in South India in those days. He speaks of a church of St. George belonging to the Latin Communion at Quilon, which he says he adorned with fine paintings and where he taught during his visit.

About a century later another traveller from Europe, Nicolo de' Conti, set out from Italy and travelled in many countries of Asia, returning home after an absence of twenty-five years. He visited Mylapore probably somewhere between 1425 and 1430. In speaking of his visit he says that the body of St. Thomas lies honourably buried in a large and beautiful church and that it was venerated by Nestorians who inhabited that place to the number of a thousand.

In the year 1504 four Nestorian bishops who had been sent out by the head of the Nestorian Church wrote to him concerning their visits which had awakened religious activity amongst the Syrians in Malabar. They also visited the shrine of St. Thomas at Mylapore, which seems to have fallen into some neglect before their visit.

There are evidences that the Nestorian Church was at one time established at various places in north and central India. Patna is mentioned as the seat of a metropolitan bishop in 1222. But at some time it died out in those regions leaving no history or traces behind.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE PORTUGUESE PERIOD

IN the year 1497 Vasco da Gama left Lisbon on his famous voyage to India. Sailing round the Cape of Good Hope he reached Calicut on the Malabar coast in May, 1498. The account of his discoveries led the Portuguese, who were at that time one of the chief maritime nations, to follow up his visit and establish regular trade with India.

One of these Portuguese navigators, named Pedro Alvares Cabral, landed at Cranganore and came into contact with the Christians living in the neighbourhood. Two of them who were brothers, named Matthias and Joseph, arranged to sail with him to Europe. They wished, after visiting Portugal, to go to Mosul and visit there the one whom their Church acknowledged as patriarch. Matthias, who was the elder, died after their arrival at Lisbon, but Joseph visited Rome and then went on to Venice. While here he gave a description of his travels which was published in Latin under the title of *Voyages of Joseph the Indian*. His subsequent history and adventures are unknown. But in this way information with regard to the Christians living in India began to spread in Europe.

Vasco da Gama started on a second voyage to India in 1502. This time he arrived at Cochin. The Christians of this place, knowing that he was the subject of a Christian king, sent a deputation to him asking him to take them under his protection. As a token of their submission to the King of Portugal they presented to him a staff which they said had formerly been the sceptre of their own Christian kings who had now ceased to be. This was accepted by the navigator in the name of his sovereign with many promises of help.

The power of the Portuguese spread rapidly in India. At the time of their arrival there were many petty Rājās in Malabar, some of them being descendants of the great Perumal. The Muhammadans were the chief traders and therefore great rivals of the Portuguese. After establishing factories on the coast Alphonso de Albuquerque, in the year 1510, besieged and took the town of Goa. It has ever since remained the captial of the Portuguese Dominions in the East. By the year 1531 they were also in occupation of Diu, Choul, Salsette, Bombay, Bassein and Damaun, and had besides factories at several other places including Mangalore, Calicut, Cranganore, Cochin and Quilon.

In May, 1542, the famous Jesuit Missionary, Francis Xavier, arrived at Goa. He first of all spent five months working amongst those who dwelt in the city and then for fifteen months he laboured amongst the Paravas, who belonged to a community engaged in the pearl fishery. After a return to Goa he passed on to Travancore. There he is said to have founded no fewer than forty-five Christian settlements and in one month to have baptized over ten thousand people. His converts were chiefly amongst the fisher-folk who to this day all down the coast are to a large extent adherents of the Roman Church. Such rapid 'mass movement' work gave little opportunity for teaching, and it is to be feared that the majority of his converts had little conception of the implications of the Christian faith. Xavier next visited Ceylon and Mylapore (on the East coast) where St. Thomas is believed to have been buried after martyrdom. He reached Mylapore in April, 1544. He journeyed from there on to Malacca and Japan. While at Malacca he wrote to the King of Portugal urging that the Inquisition should be set up at Goa. It was not however till 1560 that this was done.

After working in Japan Xavier returned to Goa in February, 1552, but he left again in April on a mission

to China. Here however he was attacked by fever, and died on the island of Sancien off the coast of Kwangtung in November of the same year. His body was brought to Malacca and afterwards to Goa where it lies in a magnificent tomb. Francis Xavier was a man of attractive personality and zealous devotion to the cause for which he had given his life. If missionary success is to be judged by numbers he was certainly most successful, though judged by our standards much of his work was of a shallow nature. But his enthusiasm and zeal will always be an example, and if he did little to follow up his own success he was no doubt blazing a trail for others to follow.

The first Bishop of Goa was Don Juan d'Albuquerque. As the Pope's representative he regarded himself as holding supreme ecclesiastical authority in India. He belonged to the order of the Cordeliers, a branch of the Franciscans, and in 1545 he sent a brother of this order named Vincent to enquire into the state of the Syrian Church, and if possible to bring it to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope.

Father Vincent came to Cranganore and at first he was well received by the Syrian Christians, but when they found that his object was to win people over to his own church they turned against him. But having obtained permission from the Bishop of Goa he established a college at Cranganore. His object was to train as priests a number of Syrian Christian young men who might then go amongst their own people and bring them over to Rome. He instructed them in the Latin tongue and ritual. But when their course of training was completed, and they began to go amongst the Syrian Christians, they would not recognize them as clergy and they refused also to allow the Portuguese priests to enter their churches.

Later on the Jesuits came and made a fresh attempt. In 1587 they established a college at Vaipicotta, not far from Cranganore. In this college besides other sub-

jects they taught the Syriac language, which was used in the Syrian Church, and allowed the customary dress of the Syrian priests to be retained. But though young men were educated and even ordained they were still found to be loyal to their ancient church and unwilling to remove from their liturgy respectful mention of the Patriarch of Babylon.

At that time the Syrian Metran was Mar Joseph and the Jesuits sought to undermine his influence. This Mar Joseph had been consecrated by the Metran Mar Abdichio. The latter had even attended the Council of Trent in 1562 and had handed in a confession of faith which did not differ much from that of Rome. The plan adopted by the Jesuits was to use as spies some Portuguese young men whom they had persuaded Mar Joseph to take into his service. One day while he was urging them to be devout in their supplications to the Virgin he warned them against calling her the Mother of God, saying that they should rather call her the Mother of Christ. When this was reported Mar Joseph was arrested and brought to Goa and from there sent to Portugal. In Portugal he was made to promise to cleanse his church from all error and bring it into subjection to Rome. Then he was sent back with orders that he should be restored.

When Mar Joseph had gone away the Syrian Christians had little hope of his return. So they sent to Mar Simeon, Patriarch of Babylon, for a bishop. Mar Abraham was sent in response to this request and though the Portuguese tried to stop him he reached Malabar in disguise. But as Mar Joseph also in course of time returned safely a schism arose. The Portuguese supported Mar Joseph, and Mar Abraham was arrested and brought to Goa from where he was sent to Portugal. The Portuguese ship ran into a heavy storm and had to take shelter at the port of Mozambique. Here Mar Abraham managed to escape. He went to the Patriarch of Babylon at Mosul and got his title



to the position of Metran confirmed. After this however he went of his own accord to Rome. Here he submitted to the Pope, and having been reordained and reconsecrated he was sent back with the title of Archbishop of Angamāli. Meanwhile Mar Joseph having fallen out with the Portuguese had again been arrested and sent to Rome where he died.

When Mar Abraham reached Goa, although he had submitted to Rome, the Portuguese authorities did not trust him. They made a plausible excuse for his detention and placed him in the Dominican convent. But eventually he escaped and arrived in his diocese. Here he reordained those whom he had formerly admitted to holy orders, thus professing his adherence to Rome. But he made no attempt to change the Syrian customs in his diocese.

Mar Abraham was again summoned to Goa where he was once more made to promise obedience to Rome in all respects. It seems that in reordaining his clergy he had not put wine in the chalice which he delivered with the host into the hands of the priest. In the eyes of Rome this invalidates the ordination, and so on his return to his diocese his clergy had to be ordained for the third time. On this occasion two Jesuit fathers from the college of Vaipicotta, who were acquainted with Syriac, were present to see that everything was properly done. But still Mar Abraham made no other changes. In reality he was playing a double game and wrote to the Patriarch of Babylon excusing his actions as being due to his fear of the Portuguese. He also asked the Patriarch of Babylon to send him another bishop to help him on account of his advancing years, and who might eventually succeed him.

In response to the request of Mar Abraham, the Patriarch sent a bishop named Mar Simeon. Unfortunately he disagreed with Mar Abraham whom he attempted to supersede. A schism took place, but Mar Abraham appealed to the Portuguese for help, accus-

ing Mar Simeon of being opposed to the Roman Church. On the advice of certain Franciscans Mar Simeon went to Rome to obtain briefs to establish his position. But at Rome the validity of his orders was denied. He was compelled to anathematize his errors and sent to Portugal where he died in confinement. Before Mar Simeon had left India he had appointed a priest named Jacob as his Vicar-General. He would not submit to Mar Abraham and so the schism remained.

When Mar Abraham was again summoned to Goa in 1590 he refused to go. On this occasion he openly avowed his adherence to the church in which he had been brought up. This greatly incensed the Romanists against him.

In the year 1595 there arrived in Goa as Archbishop a man of great ability named Alexio de Menezes. He came armed with authority from Pope Clement VIII to enquire into the alleged errors of Mar Abraham. Not long after his arrival Menezes found Mar Abraham guilty and would have arrested him but he had retired to Angamāli where he was out of reach of the Portuguese. Orders were also given to all ports, where the Portuguese had any control, to stop any person suspected to be a bishop sent by the Patriarch of Babylon from coming to Malabar, as it was known that Mar Abraham and his followers were still making efforts in that direction. At Ormuz in the Persian Gulf a bishop in disguise was arrested just as he was about to start for India and others also were stopped.

Efforts were also made by the Archbishop of Goa to win over Jacob, the priest whom Mar Simeon had left as his Vicar-General. But he was proof against all enticements. He remained faithful to his church but died not long afterwards. Mar Abraham also passed away in 1597. Though at an earlier period he had, on account of the pressure brought to bear upon him, been willing to compromise, yet in the end he adhered

faithfully to his church. When he was dying a Jesuit father from Vaipicotta was sent to visit him but he refused his ministrations.

After the death of Mar Abraham the Syrian Church in Malabar was left without a bishop. Before his death however he had appointed the Syrian Archdeacon George to look after the church until an episcopal successor could be appointed.

Archbishop Menezes was away at Damaun, north of Bombay, when he heard the news of the death of Mar Abraham. Thinking that the moment had now come to get control of the Syrian Church the Archbishop nominated the Jesuit, Francisco Roz, who was acquainted with both Syriac and Malayalam, as governor and vicar-apostolic of the diocese of Malabar. But on his return to Goa, after consultation with the Council there, and as the council feared that the appointment of Roz would greatly disturb the Syrians, this arrangement was altered. It was decided to appoint Archdeacon George as vicar-general, but to associate with him Francisco Roz and also the rector of the Jesuit College at Vaipicotta. These three were to form a commission to manage the affairs of the church. The Archdeacon however was required to subscribe to the doctrines of the Roman Church. When the Archdeacon objected to these arrangements and said he had no need of anyone to help him, consent was given to his acting alone on condition that he made the profession of faith. But the Archdeacon boldly refused to subscribe and asserted that the Pope had no authority over the Syrian Church.

After this Archdeacon George went from parish to parish and warned the people of the danger that was threatening their church. He called a synod of clergy and laity at Angamāli. Here they all promised to stand by the Archdeacon in defence of the faith of their fathers and to allow no alteration in the doctrines of their church, nor to receive any bishop unless sent

by the Patriarch of Babylon. The whole of the Syrian Church was greatly stirred by these proceedings. They drove the Roman priests away from their villages and two of them barely escaped with their lives.

When Archbishop Menezes heard of this he proposed to visit the Archdeacon himself and urge him to submission. Owing to war in that region between two local rājās this was not possible just then, but he wrote a letter entreating the Archdeacon to make the submission required.

The Archdeacon now unfortunately, like some before him, began to play a double game. He wrote an apology and promised to make the subscription if it could be made to someone other than a Jesuit. This eventually was allowed. A Franciscan friar was sent to receive his confession of faith but the Archdeacon managed to make it agree for the most part with his own views. This did not satisfy Archbishop Menezes however and he was persuaded to visit the Franciscan church at Vaipin and make a public profession there. There a confession was read to him in Portuguese. When he was asked if he accepted all that it contained, although he did not understand Portuguese, he answered in the affirmative. This confession was hailed with rejoicing by those present, although the Jesuits were still suspicious of his sincerity.

On reaching home the Archdeacon explained away his submission. He claimed that he had not understood what was read to him, and that in acknowledging the Pope as the head of the Church he had meant only the Latin Church and not his own Church. When Archbishop Menezes came to know this he was angry at being trifled with and, determined to have his end accomplished, he started off to visit Malabar in person.

The Archbishop arrived at Cochin in January, 1599. Here he was received with great honour. He managed to win the favour of the Rājā of Cochin and to secure

his support in his efforts to win over the Syrian Christians to the Roman Church.

First of all the Archdeacon was invited to visit the Archbishop at Cochin and when he hesitated to come a promise of safe conduct was sent to him. It was difficult for the Archdeacon to know what to do. He did not wish to provoke the Archbishop and incur the hostility of the Portuguese. The Syrian Christians had great interest in the pepper trade, which the Portuguese could easily ruin. It was known that the influence of the Archbishop was great with the Hindu rājās. It was thought wise, therefore, to temporize. The Archbishop would not stay long in their country and when he returned to Goa they could carry on as before. So it was agreed to allow him to say mass and preach in their churches. But they also made up their minds to try and put all the obstacles they could in his way if he tried to interfere in their church affairs.

The Archdeacon and his clergy, with a guard of three thousand men, went to Cochin where they were courteously received by the Archbishop and knelt to kiss his hand. They were asked to attend the next day at the church at Vaipicotta. The Archdeacon and his clergy did not arrive in time, but before their coming the Archbishop entered the pulpit and preached a sermon from St. John x. 1, 'He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' None, he said, were true pastors who had not entered by the door of the Roman Church, and the Patriarch of Babylon was a schismatic. The congregation were asked to attend the next day to receive confirmation at the hands of the Archbishop.

The Archdeacon and his clergy at length arrived and the Archbishop told the Archdeacon about certain plans he had for reforming things in his church. The Archdeacon made no objection but it was found that he and his clergy were still in their daily services

praying for the Patriarch of Babylon as the Universal Pastor of the church. The Archbishop then called for them and showed to them a sentence of excommunication against anyone, whether clergyman or layman, who should in future call the Patriarch of Babylon Universal Pastor. This was in Latin and he had it explained to them in Malayalam and required the Archdeacon and his two senior clergymen to sign it. After much hesitation they signed the document. This greatly incensed the other clergy and Syrian laity. But the Archdeacon pacified them by saying that he had only signed by compulsion.

The Portuguese feared that the strong action taken by the Archbishop would lead to serious trouble and wished him to give up his journey and return to Goa. But the Archbishop was determined to carry out his plan and started out from Cochin to visit various places where Syrian Churches were situated. His reception was at first most unfriendly. If it was not always hostile it was certainly cold. In some places he found only women in the church and in other places the church doors were locked against him.

Though the Archbishop would not on this account give up his tour he realised the need of being more conciliatory. He wrote again to the Archdeacon in a friendly manner urging him to come and talk things over with him, and promised him much if he would unreservedly submit to the claims of the Roman Church. The Archdeacon in company with some of his clergy accepted the invitation and a conference was held. It was agreed that a synod should be called to determine matters of faith. Meanwhile the Archbishop was to be allowed to visit any of their churches. He was however to be received merely as a visitor. Apart from giving the blessing he was not to perform any episcopal function such as confirming the people.

It was soon found by the Syrians that the Archbishop was preaching against the Nestorian views and in favour

of the supremacy of the Pope. The Archdeacon and his supporters were much grieved at this. They heard also that the Archbishop, in spite of the agreement come to, was not only saying mass in the churches he visited but confirming those who attended. The Archdeacon then began to publish an excommunication against the Archbishop and against those Syrians who should join him. He also warned the Indian princes against the intrigues of the Archbishop which were designed, he said, to make the Syrians vassals of the Portuguese. Even the Rājā of Cochin who had been friendly with the Archbishop became alarmed.

Nothing, however, could turn back Archbishop Menezes from his purpose. His next step was to arrange for an ordination at Diamper on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. The Archdeacon, though invited to be present, did all he could to stop the ordination. He called in the help of the Rājā of Cochin and even the Nayars took the part of the Archdeacon and threatened hostility. Yet in spite of all this the Archbishop carried out the service at which he had secured no less than thirty-eight candidates to accept ordination at his hands. They were required to abjure the Nestorian tenets and accept the doctrines of the church of Rome. They had also to renounce their allegiance to the Patriarch of Babylon and swear allegiance to the Pope. It is evident from this that Archbishop Menezes was now securing a party in his favour and that he would in future have a number of Syrian clergy who would advocate the claims of the church of Rome.

As the Archbishop proceeded on his tour his reception was not always the same. In some places there was marked hostility. On the other hand the pomp he displayed and his strong personality seem to have made a great impression on many. At one church where divine service was being conducted a priest from the Archdeacon entered the church with an excommunica-

tion. There was a dispute in the church but eventually he was turned out by the Archbishop's party. The same day several more Syrian clergy submitted to the Archbishop.

The Archdeacon was still holding out but the Archbishop was now threatening to excommunicate him and sent a letter to frighten him into submission. It is not surprising that the Archdeacon was alarmed. He had heard of the progress which Archbishop Menezes had made and that many of his own clergy had deserted him. There was the possibility that he might be arrested and brought before the Inquisition at Goa, and perhaps sent to Portugal never to return. So he felt it necessary to submit and wrote to this effect to the Archbishop. He was presented with a document with ten articles to subscribe to as a preliminary, and given time to consider this.

Meanwhile the Archbishop had returned to Cochin. Suspecting that the Rājā was playing a double game he demanded his active support in compelling the Syrian Christians in his territories to submit to Rome. At the Rājā's wish the Archdeacon made the submission before the Archbishop.

It was then arranged that a synod should be held at Diamper on the 20th June, 1599. Meanwhile the Archbishop ordained another fifty clergy, and thus secured a majority of votes at the coming synod.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SYNOD OF DIAMPER AND ITS RESULTS

THE Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur) was summoned to meet on the 20th June, 1599. It was attended by 133 priests, 20 deacons and sub-deacons, and 660 procurators, 813 in all. It lasted until the 26th June.

The Archbishop of Goa arrived on the 9th June to make all the necessary arrangements. He had prepared



decrees for the synod to pass. These he submitted before the synod commenced to eight leading clergy for their opinion. He made a few minor changes at their suggestion, but would not allow anything to be altered in principle. The decrees of the synod were not passed without great reluctance by many of those present. There was murmuring both open and secret. But it was apparent to all that the synod had not been summoned to give advice and deliberate but to register the decrees which Archbishop Menezes had determined to force upon them. None of those present seem to have had courage to take a strong line of opposition.

The synod established Roman doctrine and the acknowledgement of the Pope's supremacy. The authority of the council of Trent and of the Inquisition were accepted. Married clergy were to put away their wives and the celibacy of the clergy was henceforth to be insisted upon. All persons having Syriac books were to give them up to be corrected or destroyed. All priests were publicly to recant any errors they had held and no one was to preach without a licence. From the decrees of the Synod it is gathered that before this time the Syrian Church had not accepted the adoration of the Virgin Mary, masses for the dead, auricular confession, the use of images in the churches and the doctrine of purgatory. All these and other beliefs and practices were now enforced. Whatever little opposition there was in the Synod was overcome, and the Archbishop, partly by persuasion, partly by threats, induced all present to accept the decrees. This high-handed and tyrannical action has justly received the strongest condemnation. No doubt the Archbishop was actuated by motives of loyalty to his own church and was a product of his age when toleration was not understood. Yet none the less his procedure was most unjustifiable.

We may regret also that Archdeacon George and his supporters did not make a bolder stand. But when we

remember the powers which Archbishop Menezes had of putting in motion the cruel engines of the Inquisition, and that he had behind him the strong hand of the Portuguese Government, we cannot hastily condemn the Syrians.

After the Synod was over the Archbishop took care that its decrees should be carried out. The Syrian clergy who were present were instructed in the Roman ceremonial and provided with what was needed for the changes they were to make. Similar instruction was sent to those clergy who were not present. The old liturgies of the Syrian Church were either destroyed or altered beyond recognition. All the books that were laid hold of were committed to the flames. Everything possible was done to cut off the Syrian Christians entirely from the past and make their attachment to the Roman Church secure.

Archbishop Menezes did not substitute Latin for the Syriac in the services. But he revised the ancient Syrian liturgy, which was being used, as he thought fit. This revised liturgy is still used in the Romo-Syrian Churches.

Before returning to Goa the Archbishop made a visitation of the diocese and on the whole was well received. Opposition however was still smouldering under the surface. At one church a farce was produced in which St. Peter and St. Thomas were made to appear and argue for supremacy. The patron of the church was called upon to be umpire and eventually decided in favour of St. Thomas. This farce was shown in other churches also but eventually Archbishop Menezes had it suppressed. It probably represents the general feeling of the people.

Up to this time Angamāli had been the headquarters of the Syrian Metropolitan. It had three churches and here also the archives of the diocese were kept. When the Archbishop visited Angamāli he had these records destroyed. The records of the early centuries, if ever

any such existed, must have perished at this time. The Archbishop also took steps to obtain the permission of the Pope and the King of Portugal for the diocese to be transferred to Cranganore, near Cochin, where the Portuguese had a settlement and a fortress. In due course this was done. Everywhere the Archbishop saw to it that the required changes were made. Married clergy who refused to put away their wives were excommunicated.

When the Archbishop was at Idappali he received the news of the death both of his sister and also of the King of Portugal. But he did not think it wise to make known the king's death at that time, lest it should be inimical to Portuguese interests. It meant however that he must cut short his tour and return at once to Goa from which he had been absent about ten months. The Archdeacon was appointed to administer the affairs of the diocese until the Pope should appoint a bishop to take charge of the diocese. But Jesuits were also appointed to assist him and keep a watch on his movements. The Archbishop persuaded the Syrians that it would be best to nominate a bishop from the Latin Church. At first they asked him to allow himself to be nominated but when he declined this honour in addition to his other duties they were persuaded to ask for the Jesuit, Francisco Roz, who was later appointed by the Pope and consecrated as bishop.

Before he left Cochin the Archbishop did his best to persuade the Rājā of Cochin to accept the Christian faith. In this he was unsuccessful. In fairness to the Archbishop it must be said that he often took the opportunity to preach to non-Christians as well as to Christians, and that during his visit to Malabar he won over many non-Christians to the church.

The Archbishop reached Goa on the 16th November, 1599. His tour had been successful in accomplishing the purpose with which he set out, and for the next

half century the Syrian Church of Malabar was under the control of Rome. In his absence he had been appointed as Viceroy of the Portuguese dominions in India. After a few years more at Goa he returned to Europe. Though he was appointed to high offices on his return to Portugal he afterwards died in disgrace.

Francisco Roz, who had been nominated as bishop over the Syrian Church, was consecrated in 1601 and held the office until his death in 1617. He was an accomplished Syriac scholar. During his episcopacy the see was removed in 1605 from Angamāli to Cranganore and made an archbishopric.

The successor chosen to follow Roz was J. Navier, who was a nephew of the famous Francis Xavier. Before he could succeed, however, he died, and then the Jesuit, Stephen de Britte, held the see from 1618 to 1634. Another Jesuit, Francis Garzia, followed him, taking over charge from about 1636. During his time attempts were made to supersede the use of the Syriac liturgy and introduce the Latin and to make other changes in order to assimilate the customs more to those of the ordinary Roman usage. The Jesuits had meanwhile been carefully seeing to it that all the changes ordered at the Synod of Diamper were carried out and were often overbearing and harsh in their attitude. Frequent complaints were sent by the Syrians to Rome, but no notice was taken of these appeals. But there came to be a growing feeling of resentment amongst the Syrians and a desire to reassert their independence.

In 1653 an incident occurred which fanned what was hitherto the smouldering fire of discontent into a flame. The Patriarch of Babylon had made another attempt to get into touch with the Syrian Christians of Malabar by sending a bishop to them named Ahatalla. The Portuguese however came to know about this and having seized the bishop on his arrival put him on

board a ship at Cochin to be deported to Goa and there tried by the Inquisition, and eventually burned at the stake.

When the Syrians heard about this they were stirred up to great anger. Thousands of them gathered at Mattancherry, near Cochin, to make a protest. Before the large stone cross there, similar to that usually erected in front of Syrian churches, they solemnly renounced their allegiance to the Church of Rome and declared that they would no longer submit to its authority. The number being so great that they could not all touch the cross at once, they connected themselves with this sacred symbol by means of ropes tied to it.

This incident is known as that of the Coonen Cross. The word 'Coonen' means 'bent' and probably indicates that the large granite cross at Mattancherry was not perpendicular. The event is looked upon by those Syrians who have become free from Rome as an important crisis in their history. It has been said that the oath was not so much against the Roman Church as against the Jesuits and the Portuguese. But in any case the revolt was for the moment complete. Of about 200,000 Syrian Christians only about four hundred remained under the rule of Archbishop Garzia. Afterwards through the work of the Carmelites the Roman church made a great recovery, but they never regained the allegiance of the whole church.

Archdeacon George had passed away but his successor was a near kinsman of his known as Archdeacon Thomas. The Syrian Christians and their clergy who had broken with Rome arranged a provisional government for the diocese, and chose Archdeacon Thomas to be their next bishop, and meanwhile to act as their head. How he was to be consecrated as a bishop was a very difficult problem, for the Portuguese had determined that no non-Roman bishop from the west should be allowed to land in Malabar.

## CHAPTER VI

## AFTER COONEN CROSS

AFTER the incident of the Coonen Cross the Syrian Church was divided and this division has never been healed.

At first almost the whole community seems to have broken away from Rome. But the Pope sent Carmelite fathers and a bishop named Joseph to try and reconcile Archdeacon Thomas and his followers to the Jesuit Archbishop Garzia. The Archdeacon did not yield but some of his followers were ready to compromise. Amongst them was a certain Parampil Chandy, a near kinsman of the Archdeacon. Before long no less than 84 congregations had returned to the Roman allegiance, while 32 remained faithful to the Archdeacon.

The Syrian Christians who were loyal to Rome came to be known as Romo-Syrians. They are also known as the Palayakur, or old community, while the others are called the Puthenkur, or new community. Roman Catholics in Malabar to-day advance this as a proof that the Romo-Syrians represent the original church and that the others are schismatics. This, however, is a begging of the question and depends on the point of view.

The gathering at Coonen Cross had been followed by another meeting at Alengad where the Syrians had again taken a solemn oath to preserve their church and to recognize Archdeacon Thomas as their leader. He belonged to the Pakalomattam family. As there was no bishop available to consecrate him as bishop twelve priests laid their hands upon him. This was of course an irregularity which was a source of weakness to the Syrian Church, but until episcopal consecration became possible they saw no other way out of the difficulty. The Archdeacon became known as Mar Thoma I. It was not until the arrival of the Jacobite Bishop, Mar

Gregorius, in 1665 that this irregularity could be set right and the Syrian Church regain its apostolic succession.

When this took place the Syrian Church was henceforth connected with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and it is necessary to take a glance back in church history and see who this dignitary is.

The Council of Chalcedon in 451 had condemned Eutyches, who had taught that Christ had only one nature, the human nature being absorbed in the divine. Though he was condemned, the controversy still continued. A party arose, generally known as the Monophysites, which while agreeing to the condemnation of Eutyches, disagreed with the formula adopted at Chalcedon, namely that Christ had two natures in one Person. This seemed to them to favour Nestorianism, and the great theologian Cyril of Alexandria, who was fully recognised as orthodox, had spoken of the one nature of the incarnate Logos.

By the party in power they were, however, regarded as heretical, but they had numerous supporters in Egypt, Palestine and parts of Syria. In West Syria, where the patriarchate of Antioch had its seat, there was for a hundred years a contention for the office of patriarch, which was sometimes held by the upholders of the synod of Chalcedon, and sometimes by the Monophysites. The most famous Monophysite patriarch of this period was Severus. After his death in 540 there was a double succession to the patriarchate which has continued ever since.

The Emperor Justinian (527-65) regarded himself as the final authority in church matters, and though the Monophysites were supported by the Empress Theodora, he himself persecuted them and deprived them of citizenship. It cannot be denied that the question was influenced by political considerations. Justinian was anxious to regain power in Italy, and on this account did not wish to offend the Bishop of Rome, who held

firmly to the decision made at Chalcedon. For this reason though many attempts were made to bring about a reconciliation they all fell through.

At this time the Monophysites had an able leader in Jacob Zanzalus. He was commonly called Baradai or Baradaeus, which means the man in rags, because he went about disguised as a beggar. He was at first a monk, but about 555 was consecrated as a bishop by the Monophysite bishops imprisoned in Constantinople. He showed great zeal in reviving and extending the Monophysite communion, and when he died in 578 he is said to have consecrated and ordained a very large number of bishops and clergy. It was from their leader that their opponents gave to his followers the name of Jacobites. They have however accepted it, but sometimes claim that it goes back to the Apostle St. James, to whom also they ascribe their principal liturgy.

The head of the Jacobite Church claims to be the Patriarch of Antioch. By the Greek Church he is regarded as schismatical and that church also has its Patriarch of Antioch who lives at Damascus. There are also Maronite and Latin Patriarchs of Antioch. The Jacobite Patriarchs of Antioch have from time to time transferred their residence. At the present it is at Homs in Syria.

When Mar Gregorius, who belonged to the Jacobite Church, and who had the title of Metropolitan of Jerusalem, arrived in Malabar in 1665, he was heartily welcomed. The Dutch had recently in 1663 taken Cochin and driven out the Portuguese, so that there was no hindrance to his actions. By him Archdeacon Thomas was consecrated as bishop, and the two seem to have exercised a kind of joint rule until their death at almost the same time in 1685.

In accepting Mar Gregorius the Syrian Church came into communion with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and was severed from the Patriarch of Babylon. This would seem to represent a change from Nestorianism to



Monophysitism which is rather remarkable. The Jacobite Church in Malabar does not however admit that it was ever Nestorian in doctrine. It claims that the Katholikos of the East was originally subordinate to Antioch and was not Nestorian when the link between him and India began. Though it continued to receive bishops from the Patriarch of Babylon (who was the successor of the Katholikos) after he became identified with Nestorianism there is no evidence that the Syrian Church in India ever became Nestorian. In receiving Mar Gregorius it was re-establishing direct contact with Antioch with which patriarchate it was originally connected. Whether this is a correct interpretation of history or not it is certainly unlikely that these questions of Christology were ever seriously debated in the Syrian Church in Malabar. When Mar Gregorius came to India the Syrian Church had been carrying on for a long period under great difficulties. It was not a learned church and it seems that considerable ignorance was only too common. The advent of Mar Gregorius was looked upon by the leaders of the church as a godsend to bring about the solution of their problem of restoring their episcopate, and in accepting him they were probably unconscious of making any change in the recognised doctrines of their church.

The Syrian Church in Malabar, or such part of it as is still connected with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, is generally known as 'Jacobite'. But the party which follows the Katholikos in the recent dispute often refers to it as the 'Orthodox Syrian Church of the East'.

After the death of Mar Thomas I he was succeeded by a Metran who took the title of Mar Thomas II. It is not known whether he was consecrated by Mar Thomas I or by Mar Gregorius. But his rule was very short for the next year (1686) he was killed by lightning. The church was again left without any consecrated bishop at its head.

At this period Malabar seems frequently to have been visited by foreign prelates, most of whom were mere adventurers. But their arrival was sometimes useful as they were at hand to preserve the continuity of the episcopate. A prelate, named Mar Andrew, is said to have arrived in 1678. He seems to have been a drunkard, and his career ended without his having done any good to the church of Malabar. But about 1685 two other bishops appeared on the scene named Mar Basilius and Mar Ivanius. Who they were, or where they came from is not recorded. Mar Basilius did not live long after his arrival in India, but Mar Ivanius was able to be of value at an important crisis. When Mar Thomas II died so suddenly without a successor he was available to consecrate Mar Thomas III as Metran, and when the latter died after ten years, he also consecrated his successor, Mar Thomas IV. He is reputed to have been a good man who did much to purify the church from practices which had crept in during the long Nestorian period and the Roman period. He died in 1694.

It was the practice at this time for the metrans to belong always to the Pakalomattam family which, according to tradition, was one of the two families from which St. Thomas had originally selected men for the ministry. This was undoubtedly an ancient custom and it continued until the early part of the nineteenth century when the custom died out. There are still persons who claim to belong to this family. The member of the family who was the next entitled to succeed to the office of metran was known as the Anandaravan.

Mar Thomas IV had a longer term of office than some of his predecessors for he continued as metran from 1688 until his death in 1728.

When the Dutch captured Cochin in 1663 they ordered all the Portuguese and Italians to leave the country which had now come under their control, and

this meant that the Roman clergy of foreign extraction had to depart. Before Bishop Joseph, who was bishop of the Romo-Syrians, went away he consecrated as his successor Parampil Chandy, the cousin of Archdeacon Thomas, who had been the leader of those who became reconciled to Rome after the incident of Coonen Cross. Parampil Chandy took the name of Alexander de Campo. He was tolerated by the Dutch, who seem to have favoured him more than Archdeacon Thomas, who kept aloof from them. In course of time the Carmelite fathers began to re-enter the country and in 1698 the Dutch formally cancelled the order of expulsion. Though the Dutch came from a country where Protestantism was in the ascendant they adopted the policy of non-interference in ecclesiastical affairs and made no attempt to preach the Gospel to the non-Christians.

During the time of Mar Thomas IV, about the year 1708, a Nestorian bishop named Mar Gabriel came to Malabar. He was greatly opposed to the Jacobites and was not recognized by the metran. In fact he gave much trouble to him and his successor. He managed to win over some of the Syrian Christians to his side and caused a division in the church, which was not ended until his death in 1731. His remains were interred in a church at Kottayam and strange to say, although he was a Nestorian, an annual feast in his honour was held there until quite recently.

Before Mar Thomas IV died in 1728 he had consecrated his Anandaravan, who succeeded him, taking the title of Mar Thomas V. He also had a long episcopate, as he continued in office until his death in 1768.

During this period Maharājā Marthanda Varma of Travancore enlarged his dominions by the conquest and annexation of numerous petty principalities. Thus the large group of Syrian Christians, in what is now regarded as North and Central Travancore, came under his rule.

Mar Thomas V, feeling his need of help, wrote a letter about this time to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. It seems to have contained an invitation to him to send a delegation. The metran also appealed to the Dutch authorities to help in securing the visit of a bishop from West Asia.

Before an answer was received to this appeal a bishop arrived in 1747 from Basra named Mar Ivanius. He had been brought to India by a Jew of Mattancherry and according to some, was himself a Jew by race. Whether he was a Nestorian is not stated but he seems to have interfered in the matter of images and this caused resentment. It was claimed, surely not without reason, that foreign prelates in coming to the country should not interfere in the affairs of the church, but be subject to the metran and his archdeacon. The visiting bishop does not in any case seem to have been a respectable character. He was finally arrested by the Rājā of Cochin on a charge of having robbed money from three or four churches.

In 1751 a delegation of three bishops from the Jacobite Patriarch arrived in India. These were Mar Basilius, Mar Gregorius, and Mar Ivanius. There was a dispute with the Dutch authorities about their passage money which Mar Thomas V was unwilling to pay. Eventually however Maharājā Marthanda Varma of Travancore compelled the metran to pay the amount claimed.

The foreign prelates demanded that Mar Thomas V should be reconsecrated, as his consecration had not had the authority of the Patriarch. The Patriarch suggested not only that Mar Thomas V had not been properly consecrated at all, but even that his consecration had merely been the placing of the bishop's mitre on his head by a priest. There is no evidence to prove this allegation. It is believed that in spite of their efforts to convince him the metran refused to the end to accept reconsecration and that the foreign

bishops had to agree to a compromise. The metran acknowledged the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch, but the foreign prelates agreed not to ordain priests among the Syrians without his sanction.

At an earlier period in his episcopate Mar Thomas V made overtures to Rome. He agreed to unite with that church if only the local Syrians might be allowed to continue their custom of using leavened bread for the Eucharist. This was in 1748. An unfavourable reply was received in 1750.

Before his death in 1765 Mar Thomas V consecrated in 1761 his Anandaravan as his successor. The new metran also, like his predecessor, negotiated with Rome. It is said that he was even formally united with Rome in 1799, but immediately afterwards recanted. The family to which the metrans of this period belonged was connected with the Roman Church. Only those members who were to become metrans or priests in the Jacobite Church adhered to that church, and it seems that the Jacobites and Romo-Syrians at this time were closely intermingled, and were far nearer to one another in sentiments and practices than they are now. There were no fewer than eighteen churches which were regarded as common property by both parties, and in some churches the services were conducted by Jacobites or Romans indifferently. There was therefore no doubt much pressure upon the metran to become reconciled to Rome. Probably also he wished to get free from the interference of the foreign prelates and to unite the Syrians again with a sort of nominal recognition by the Pope.

Mar Thomas VI was metran from 1765 to 1808. He had many difficulties with the foreign prelates but he submitted in 1770 to a reconsecration at their hands with the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch. He then took the fresh title of Mar Dionysius I and is known also as Mar Dionysius the Great. His episcopate was a time of political turmoil. The invasion of Trav-

core was threatened by Hyder Ali and the Dutch also threatened war against Travancore and Cochin. Tippu Sultan invaded the northern parts of Travancore when various atrocities were committed and the country was ruined with fire and sword. Many churches and temples suffered. Eventually Cochin was taken from the Dutch by the East India Company. A rebellion also took place in Travancore in 1808. During the episcopate of Mar Dionysius I also Colonel Macaulay was appointed as the first British Resident in Travancore.

In spite of his vacillations between Rome and Antioch, Mar Dionysius I (Thomas VI) seems to have been an able man and exercised great influence. He had many good qualities. The Rev. Claudius Buchanan who visited Travancore in 1806 speaks of him as a man eminent for piety and devotion to his office, and as one who was superior in general learning to his clergy. It was he who gave to Buchanan the ancient manuscript copy of the Bible in Estrangelo Syriac written on vellum which is now in the university library at Cambridge. Under his supervision and before any missionaries arrived the four Gospels were translated, although imperfectly, into Malayalam. These translations Buchanan got printed at Bombay.

It was during the time of office of Mar Dionysius I that a schism took place which has continued to the present day. A certain Ramban of the Kattumangattu family persuaded the foreign bishop Mar Gregorius to consecrate him as bishop. Naturally the metran objected to this and a great dispute arose. The Dutch commodore was called in as an arbitrator and gave his decision against the new bishop. The latter, who took the title of Mar Kurilos (Cyril), went away and established the see of Thozhiyur. He and his successors have resided in the village of Anjur in British Malabar. The bishop of this independent diocese does not own allegiance to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch

nor to any other. He is regarded as schismatic by the Jacobites, but has inter-communion nowadays with the Mar Thoma Church. It is curious that one of these schismatic metrans played an important part later in the history of the Jacobite Church, having been called in to preserve the episcopal succession of the church in 1817 and on later occasions also. The first bishop of Thozhiyur died after consecrating his successor Mar Kurilos II who in his turn was succeeded by Philoxenos I. On his death in 1811 he was succeeded by Philoxenos II. It was he who consecrated Ittoop (Joseph) Ramban as the Jacobite Metran. When he died in 1830 his successor, Kurilos III, was consecrated by Dionysius IV, Metran of the Jacobite Church (Cheppat Mar Dionysius) who thus, as it were, returned the favour conferred on his church by the see of Thozhiyur.

Mar Dionysius I was succeeded in 1808 by his nephew Matthan Ramban, whom he had already consecrated in 1796. The new metran took the title of Mar Thomas VII but he died in 1810. While he was on his deathbed some people who stood about him raised a relative of his to the episcopate as Mar Thomas VIII, by having the hands of the dying prelate laid on his head. But a division took place. Some adhered to Mar Thomas VIII but others followed Ittoop Ramban of Kunnankulam. As the dispute involved the right to draw interest on certain funds, which had been invested by the British Government on behalf of the Church, an appeal was made to Colonel Munro who had succeeded Colonel Macaulay as British Resident. He decided in favour of Ittoop (Joseph) on condition that he should establish a school for the education of the Puthenkur Syrians. This was in 1813, and led eventually to the establishment of the school at Kottayam.

Mar Thomas VIII only lived till 1816, and the successor whom he consecrated as Mar Thomas IX

died in 1817. About this time the custom of choosing bishops from the Pakalomattam family died out and after that bishops were chosen who did not belong to that family.

Meanwhile Joseph Ramban had received consecration at the hands of Philoxenos II of Thozhiyur who also consecrated his two successors. Joseph Ramban took the title of Mar Dionysius II, and his successors were known as Mar Dionysius III and Mar Dionysius IV. The names of the villages from which these metrans came are often prefixed to their names for the sake of distinction. They were Mar Pulikote Dionysius (1817-18), Mar Punnatharai Dionysius (1818-25) and Mar Cheppat Dionysius (1825-52).

In the time of these metrans we enter upon a new period in the history of the Syrian Church, for new influences were brought to bear upon it which were to have far-reaching consequences.

Between the incident of the Coonen Cross in 1653 and the beginning of the nineteenth century for a period of over a hundred and fifty years this ancient church had maintained its continuity and carried on its services and the administration of the sacraments. But we look in vain for any signs of a vigorous spiritual life or any effort to spread the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in its own neighbourhood or in any other part of India.

During this period Christian Missions from the west had commenced operations in South India. Robert de Nobili, with rather strange methods, had established a strong Jesuit mission at Madura, where he laboured from 1606 to 1642 and lived on till 1656 at Mylapore. He was followed by John de Britto, Joseph Beschi and others. As a result of their work large numbers were gathered into the Roman Church. Ziegenbalg and Plütschau began Protestant missionary effort in 1706 and they and their successors, especially Schwartz, who laboured from 1750 to 1798, gathered in a large



number of converts. Ringeltaube (1770 to 1816) commenced work on behalf of the London Missionary Society in South Travancore in 1806. But new life had not yet come to the ancient church of Malabar. The awakening however was not far off and soon there were to be the beginnings of new possibilities for witness and service not only in Malabar but also in even wider fields.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ENGLISH MISSION TO THE SYRIAN CHURCH

In the early part of the nineteenth century an English clergyman who was a chaplain of the East India Company, the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, visited South India and other countries, spending much time at different places. He afterwards published an account of his travels called *Christian Researches in Asia*. He visited Malabar in 1806 and was greatly interested in the Syrian Church and anxious to help it to improve its condition. He determined to supply the churches with printed copies of the Scriptures in Syriac and in due course was able to do this. The Metran, Mar Dionysius I, gave to Buchanan an ancient copy of the Syriac scriptures, which he presented afterwards to the Library at Cambridge University. Arrangements were made at his own expense for the Bible to be translated into Malayalam, and also the liturgy. He persuaded the Syrian Church to establish parish schools for the education of its children. He seems to have cherished the hope that one day this church might be united with the Church of England though what he probably had in view was not amalgamation but intercommunion.

From the years 1810 to 1819 Colonel Munro was the British Resident in Travancore. He was a devout

Christian with evangelical convictions and he took a deep interest in the Puthenkur Syrian community. He wished to see their church purified and did all he could to further this. He was not only generous himself in giving help but he took steps to secure help from the government.

Though energetic and animated by a true Christian spirit it must be admitted that Colonel Munro was not without his faults. He was by nature somewhat dictatorial and grieved when he did not see quick results. He never seems to have understood fully the deep conservatism of the Jacobites and their attachment to their old customs. He was inclined to favour them too much and this led to a reaction after his departure.

Colonel Munro saw the great need of establishing a college for the training of the clergy and took steps to bring this about. A sum of money happened to be available for this purpose. During the time of his predecessor, Colonel Macaulay, a sum amounting to Rs. 10,500 had been recovered through the Travancore Government for the benefit of the Syrian Christian community on account of injuries which had been inflicted on them during the rebellion in Travancore by their non-Christian neighbours. The interest which had accumulated on this sum was sufficient to put up the building. The Resident persuaded the Rāni of Travancore to give the land needed for a site and also to provide an endowment. The College was in due course built at Kottayam and completed in the year 1813.

The importance of having a strong staff at the college if it was to do good work led Colonel Munro to make an appeal to the Church Missionary Society, which had been founded in 1799, to send out missionaries to help in educating clergy for the Syrian Church. The writings of Claudius Buchanan were by this time known in England and much interest had been awakened in the ancient Church of Malabar. The

appeal was therefore sympathetically considered and the society determined to respond to the Resident's appeal and enter the field.

The Rev. Thomas Norton was actually on his way to Ceylon to take up work as a missionary of the Church Missionary Society there, when he was instructed to go to Travancore on account of the invitation which had been received. He arrived at Alleppey in May, 1816, and stayed there for some time as there was no house available yet at Kottayam. Soon after his arrival he went to visit Quilon to meet Colonel Munro and also the Metran. It was at this time that Colonel Munro, realizing the many evils which often resulted from the custom of the celibacy of the clergy, tried to induce them to contract legal marriages by offering rewards to those who would be willing to take the step of departing from the tradition then prevailing.

The first Anglican Bishop in India, Bishop Middleton, had arrived in Calcutta in December, 1814, and about a year later commenced a visitation of his widespread diocese. On the 6th April, 1816, he reached Quilon. Before embarking at Cochin for Bombay he was visited by the Metran, Mar Dionysius II. In the course of their conversation the Metran spoke of the desolate condition of his church and sought the sympathy and help of the Anglican bishop. A few months later, in October, 1816, Bishop Middleton made another visit, and having landed in Cochin went to see a number of Syrian Churches, mostly in North Travancore. At Alleppey Bishop Middleton met Norton who had not long before arrived there. He advised him to make a very cautious use of the permission given to him by the Metran to preach in Jacobite churches. He seemed doubtful about the Jacobite Church being brought into conformity with the Church of England but thought it possible to bring about a friendly co-operation between the two churches.

Soon after this two other missionaries of the Church

Missionary Society arrived at Alleppey. The Rev. Benjamin Bailey accompanied by his wife came on the 10th December, 1816, and early in January, 1817, the Rev. Thomas Dawson. The Rev. Joseph Fenn arrived in 1818 and in 1819 the Rev. Henry Baker. After the arrival of Bailey, Norton had little to do with the Syrian Church. He lived at Alleppey where he carried on work until his death in 1840. He was instrumental in gathering in many converts from among the non-Christians.

The three who were specially associated with work amongst the Syrian Christians were Bailey, Fenn and Baker. After the arrival of Baker they made a division of labour amongst themselves each taking up the task most suited to his own particular gifts. Bailey, besides devoting his time to the Syrian clergy, plunged into literary work. He set up a press at Kottayam. He translated the Bible and the English Prayer Book into Malayalam and brought out two Malayalam dictionaries. Baker's work was in connection with education. He started village schools in about seventy-two different places where there were Syrian congregations. A school for higher education was established at Kottayam. The seminary at Kottayam for the training of Syrian clergy was placed under the supervision of Joseph Fenn. The instruction which was given was not only theological but included the elements of a general education. Latin, Greek and Syriac were taught. It was arranged with the Metran that all persons seeking ordination must have worked through the regular course of study at the college and have made satisfactory progress.

It was admitted by the leaders of the Syrian Church that their church was at a low ebb in many things. Ignorance was widespread and was not confined to the laity. The missionaries, being evangelical in conviction, found much in the practices and teaching of the Syrian Church with which they could have

little sympathy. They were convinced, however, that many of these things had crept in during the time when the church was dominated by Rome, and they felt that in course of time when better instructed the church itself would put many of these things away.

It is not known precisely what the customs and doctrines of the Syrian Church were before the interference of Archbishop Menezes, but in the account given of the Synod of Diamper by the Roman Catholic historian Gouvea he says that before that time the Syrian Church accepted only three sacraments (Baptism, the Eucharist, and Ordination), that images were not worshipped nor holy oil used, that confirmation and extreme unction were not the practice, and that the clergy were allowed to marry.

When, after the revolt from Rome at Coonen Cross, the church was free to resume its former ways it seems that nevertheless many of the Roman practices continued. These included the recognition of seven sacraments, invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, prayers for the dead, the use of holy oils and auricular confession. The celibacy of priests remained as the invariable rule. If transubstantiation was not formally recognised there was certainly something similar in the use of the words used by the officiating priest before he partook of the consecrated elements, 'I am holding Thee, Who art holding the uttermost bounds and limits; I grasp Thee who orderest the heights and depths; Thee, O God, do I place in my mouth'.

The evil practice of ordaining uneducated and immature boys to the ministry was very common. These ordinations were an important source of income to Metrans. Neither Rome nor Antioch was responsible for the introduction of this bad custom.

The revolt from Rome in 1653 had been more against the rule of the Roman ecclesiastics than against Roman doctrines. Very few of the laity understood anything

about doctrinal matters. Some of the practices and doctrines introduced by Rome were similar to those of the Jacobite Church and the Jacobite ecclesiastics who came to India were chiefly concerned in substituting the Jacobite liturgy for the liturgy which the Roman authorities had introduced. This involved the rejection of the *Filioque* clause in the creed, the disavowal of the council of Chalcedon, the acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, the observance of the festivals according to the calendar of the Eastern Church and the use of leavened bread for the Eucharist.

The Pope, however, was not recognised and both Colonel Munro and the missionaries looked forward to the time when this ancient church as a result of more enlightenment would undertake its own reformation.

The Syrian Metran and his leading clergy were quite aware that the missionaries wanted to see a reformation in many directions. Indeed they themselves saw the need of improvement in some things. They realized that social, intellectual and political advantages might be reaped from the work of the mission of help. The missionaries only used persuasion and there seemed no immediate fear of radical changes. Hence they were quite prepared to co-operate with the missionaries.

All the missionaries seem to have acquired a good knowledge of Malayalam and Fenn compiled a grammar of the Malayalam language for English students. They were allowed by the Metran to preach in the Syrian churches and often took advantage of his privilege. In the instructions they had received from the Church Missionary Society they had been told 'not to pull down the ancient Church and build another, but to remove the rubbish and to repair the decaying places'. They were to make it their aim that the Syrians should be brought back 'to their own ancient primitive worship and discipline rather than be induced to adopt the liturgy or the discipline of the English

Church, and should any consideration induce them to wish such a measure it would be highly expedient to dissuade them from adopting it'. In their preaching therefore the missionaries were silent with regard to those things in the Syrian ritual and customs which were contrary to their own convictions. They hoped that growth in the knowledge of the Scriptures would eventually lead the Syrian Church to reform itself of any errors which might have crept in.

With regard to the marriage of the clergy, however, they took a stronger line. Attempts to enforce celibacy since the Roman period had led to many abuses, and the missionaries pressed for the restoration to the Syrian clergy of the right to marry. The Metran not only gave his sanction to this but expressed his readiness to perform the marriage ceremony for any of his clergy who were prepared to enter the state of matrimony. Colonel Munro offered to give a sum of four hundred rupees to the first of the clergy who should be married. As a result of this action before the year 1820 out of a hundred and fifty clergy, forty had entered the state of matrimony.

Various visitors to Travancore during those days have left a record of their impressions of the work being carried on by the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in helping the Syrian Christians.

The Rev. James Hough was, like Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain in the service of the East India Company. He afterwards wrote a history of Christianity in India. His visit to Malabar was in 1820. He expressed the opinion that not only had the missionaries not interfered in the customs and practices of the Syrian Church, but that their work was held in high estimation by the Metrans and the other leaders of his church.

Bishop Middleton of Calcutta paid a third visit to Travancore and Cochin in 1821. He had at first not regarded the intervention of the Church Missionary Society with favour, and was most anxious that there

should be no interference with the internal affairs of the Syrian Church. But on the occasion of this visit he had a long interview with the Metran, Mar Dionysius III. He found that the Metran was fully satisfied with the help his church was receiving from the missionaries and that the Metran had no complaint to make with regard to any interference with the customs of his church.

A similar good testimony to the work of the missionaries was given by Dr. Mill, Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta. He visited Travancore towards the close of 1821 hoping to find (though in this he was disappointed) copies of ancient liturgies in Syriac used by the Syrians before the Synod of Diamper.

Another visitor was Major Mackworth in 1823. In conversation with the Metran the latter spoke of the ignorance and backward conditions of his church before the coming of the missionaries, and praised the work they were doing to help his church.

For the first decade at least the missionaries were happy in their work though sometimes disappointed with the slow progress of their labours. They had hoped to restore primitive purity to the Syrian Church through the clergy trained in the college at Kottayam. Yet writing home in 1823 both Bailey and Baker lamented that the results so far seemed very little. But they still had hope and were encouraged at least by the friendly support of the Metran. If Pulikote Dionysius had been a little suspicious at the commencement he afterwards gave every encouragement, while Punnatharai Dionysius whole-heartedly backed up the efforts of the missionaries. During the time of his successor, however, difficulties began to be felt.

We must now briefly survey the history of the succession of Metrans during this period. After the custom of choosing the Metran always from the same family had ceased a difficulty arose with regard



to choosing a new Metran. The plan adopted was for some of the senior priests to choose the person who seemed most fitted. As long as there was no dispute this might be satisfactory, but as there was often some malcontent trouble might arise. The Metran had a certain recognized civil jurisdiction over his own people, so it was important to know who was the rightful Metran. On the succession of Mar Dionysius II, therefore, the Resident adopted the expedient of having the person who was chosen proclaimed by the government, and declared to be the Metran who should be recognised by the members of his church.

When Mar Dionysius II died on 24th November, 1816, he had not consecrated a successor. Mar Philoxenos of the independent see of Thozhiyur was known to Colonel Munro, and as he had a high regard for him he suggested his name to those priests who had the power to choose a Metran. The missionaries also favoured Mar Philoxenos. Rather unwillingly he consented to assume the office. He very soon requested that a priest named George from Punnatharai should be appointed as his Vicar-General or Archdeacon. But Mar Philoxenos, who was failing in health, retired after eight months to his own see at Thozhiyur having consecrated Archdeacon George as Metran with the title of Mar Dionysius III (1817). The appointment was a good one as the new Metran was not only known to be a man of prayer and devotion but also possessed energy of character. He was friendly to the missionaries but at the same time loyal to the Patriarch of Antioch. His tenure of office lasted however only eight years for when only forty years of age he died suddenly of cholera in May, 1825. He also had not consecrated a successor.

Recourse was again had to Mar Philoxenos who was once more proclaimed as lawful Metran, but he felt unable to undertake the responsibility without help. There were three names suggested of persons to fill

the office, and as the Syrians could not agree, they decided to cast lots. The lot fell upon Philippos Malpan of Cheppat who was consecrated as Mar Dionysius IV. At first he was in the position of an assistant to Mar Philoxenos and this arrangement lasted until the death of Mar Philoxenos on the 6th February, 1830. Mar Philoxenos and the first two Metrans consecrated by him were universally respected as men of piety and zeal and they were all highly regarded by the missionaries. The circumstances in which Mar Philoxenos, Metran of a diocese not recognising the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, was appointed as Metran also of the Syrian Church which recognised the Patriarch, are certainly rather strange.

The new Metran, Mar Dionysius IV, was different from his predecessors. He was accused of practising simony, of ordaining mere lads, and of misappropriating church funds. He did not prove as friendly to the work of the missionaries as his predecessors and soon, though gradually, adopted a hostile policy. He did however co-operate with them in distributing the Malayalam New Testament. By this time there were some at least who had been under the instruction of the missionaries who were anxious for reform in the church. On the other hand many of the more conservative were nervous lest any changes made might go too far. The Metran adopted a conservative attitude towards reform and meanwhile his own position became insecure.

In the year 1825 the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch sent to India a bishop named Mar Athanasius. At Bombay Bishop Heber, Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, who had succeeded Bishop Middleton, received him with great kindness and friendship. But when Mar Athanasius arrived in Travancore his conduct was marked by arrogance. He demanded, even using threats and abuse, that Mar Philoxenos and Mar Dionysius should submit to reconsecration. He claimed meanwhile to supersede them and wanted them to

give up wearing their episcopal robes and carrying the pastoral staff and revert to the status of priests. As he had come with the authority of the Patriarch many of the priests were uncertain as to what their attitude ought to be. Afterwards he began to exact money from the people and on account of the difficulty which was caused the Resident stepped in and had him sent away out of the country. On his return the Patriarch was displeased that he had stirred up so much trouble and dismissed him from office.

When Bishop Heber heard of what was happening he started for Travancore hoping he might be able to settle the disputes but he died while on the journey.

The missionaries had shown their sympathy with the local metrans in the trouble through which they were passing. But they had had nothing to do with the action which the Resident, Colonel Newall, had taken in expelling Mar Athanasius. But in spite of this some of the Syrian clergy who were opposed to reform spread reports that the missionaries were responsible for the expulsion, and that they were the enemies of the Patriarch of Antioch.

Mar Philoxenos and Mar Dionysius not only successfully resisted the demand for reconsecration, but when Mar Philoxenos died Mar Dionysius consecrated a metran who took the title of Mar Kurilos (Cyril) for the diocese of Thozhiyur without reference to, or obtaining sanction from, the Patriarch. He thus repaid to that independent see the debt which his own church owed to its metran for preserving its episcopal succession at a time of difficulty.

Hitherto in their plans and hopes for reform the missionaries, and in his time also Colonel Munro, had ignored the connection of the Syrian Church of Malabar with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. The awe and respect which the people showed to a bishop who was a delegate of the Patriarch must have been an eye-opener to them. It showed also that the local

metrans could not always rely on the loyalty of all their clergy and people in any dispute which might arise with Antioch.

In 1826 Fenn had been obliged to retire from India on account of the failing health of himself and his wife. He intended to return but this was not considered advisable by his medical advisers. He lived in England till his death in 1878.

The Anglican Prayer Book had been translated into Malayalam. It had been in use for the services held at Alleppey, but one main object of its translation was to give the Syrian church an idea of the Anglican mode of worship. The missionaries had no intention of trying to introduce their own liturgy into the Syrian Church. Some of the Syrian clergy did, however, sometimes use parts of it in addition to the liturgy of their church. But apart from this it was undoubtedly one of the influences which gave to some of the Syrian clergy a desire to reform their own services.

It was not till 1828 that the missionaries at Kottayam began to have services in Malayalam. These services were held in their school there.

When Archdeacon Robinson of Madras visited Travancore in the year 1830 he was in favour of the missionaries building a church of their own. No steps however were taken with regard to this, nor were any converts baptized into the Anglican Church until after the rift came between the missionaries and the leaders of the Syrian Church in 1836.

In the year 1830 Bailey went on furlough and left Baker single-handed at Kottayam. Before his return in the latter part of 1834, Baker, compelled by ill-health, went on leave in the early part of 1833. Thus the trio which had made such a successful start with the work was now broken up, and other younger missionaries who arrived had not the experience or the patience of these older men. These were the Rev. Joseph Peet who arrived in 1833, and the Rev. W. J. Woodcock

who came in the middle of 1834. It was only at the end of 1834 that Bailey and Baker returned and during their absence relations between the missionaries and the Metran were beginning to be strained.

Mar Dionysius IV had never had very cordial relations with the missionaries and he was quite opposed to the reforms which he knew they wished to see introduced. The desire of the missionaries that his church should be awakened to missionary zeal and begin to undertake the work of evangelisation found no sympathy on his part.

Cholera broke out during this period in Travancore and this gave to the Metran the excuse for reviving the evil practice of ordaining uneducated boys which had been a source of gain.

When it was possible to re-open the college Peet had much to do besides supervising its work, as he was for a time single-handed, and was also studying Malayalam. Both Woodcock and he often suffered in health and both seem to have had much less tact than the famous trio. Woodcock had a special fondness for indulging in doctrinal controversies, which he began as soon as he reached Travancore, and before he had had time to study the conditions and circumstances of the Syrian Church. Peet was apt to be hasty and rash in his actions. Both of them had come from England when the Oxford movement was causing a stir, and they were apt to be intolerant in their attitude towards those who, they found, were practising some of the ritual, the introduction of which had caused so much controversy at home. They probably thought that after eighteen years with so little result in the way of reform the time had come for a bolder policy of denunciation of what was considered to be error.

The copper plates of the Syrian Church and other documents were kept at the seminary in a strong room of which both the Metran and Peet had a key, both keys being necessary to unlock it. Peet heard a

rumour, which he believed, that the Metran was plotting to get these documents into his sole custody. To forestall such action he himself had the strong room broken open and the documents taken to his own bungalow. This high-handed and unjustifiable action naturally led to trouble, and a visit of the Rev. J. Tucker, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society at Madras, was unsuccessful in settling matters.

With the permission of former Metrans the missionaries had sometimes preached in Syrian churches. Mar Dionysius had not yet formally withdrawn the permission in spite of growing estrangement. Peet unwisely insisted on preaching in Syrian churches in spite of serious opposition and this was viewed with great resentment by large numbers of the Syrian laity as well as the clergy.

Things were thus rapidly approaching a climax when Bishop Wilson of Calcutta paid a visit to the country towards the end of 1835. He sought to approach the Metran in a friendly manner and to act as a peacemaker. He suggested six points for the consideration of the Syrian church. They were as follows:—

(1) The Metran should as a general rule only ordain those who had passed through the College at Kottayam and had obtained certificates of proficiency in learning and of good conduct.

(2) Accounts showing the produce of the land and other property belonging to the Church should be submitted annually to the British Resident, so that none should be misappropriated, alienated or lost.

(3) A permanent endowment should, if possible, be substituted for uncertain fees.

(4) Schools should be established in connection with every parish church.

(5) The clergy should expound the Gospel each Sunday to the people during Divine Service.

(6) Prayers should be in Malayalam instead of in Syriac.

The third point, suggesting the establishment of an endowment fund, was connected with the dependence of finance on bad customs. Metrans received fees, as we have seen, for ordaining immature boys while one of the chief sources of income for the priests was from fees for saying Kurbanas for the dead. As a token of good will and friendship the Anglican bishop made a donation of a thousand rupees to serve as a nucleus for this endowment fund.

The Metran promised to consider the suggestions made and for this purpose called together a synod to meet at Mavelikara in January, 1836. But the result was that the bishop's suggestions were all emphatically rejected. One priest who ventured at the synod to support the suggestions made by Bishop Wilson was excluded.

After the synod a circular was issued by the Metran forbidding Syrian deacons to study at the seminary and notifying that those who did so would not be raised to the priesthood. Both clergy and laity were forbidden on pain of excommunication from associating with the missionaries.

All this meant the termination of the mission of help and in due course the property was divided by a board of arbitrators mutually agreed upon.

When the partnership was dissolved the Church Missionary Society diverted the activities of its missionaries into the work of evangelization. Such a policy was bound to lead to the formation of Anglican congregations in the area occupied by the Syrian Church.

In 1836 a body of Syrian Christians at Mallapally feeling unhappy about the unreformed state of their church approached the missionaries with a request to become an Anglican congregation. The missionaries were very hesitant at first and only after being again and again earnestly entreated did they consent at last to help. In March, 1836, the foundation of a new

church was laid in this place and in other places also there were soon formed Anglican congregations which included Syrian Christians.

The Church Missionary Society have been blamed for this action but it would have been difficult in the circumstances for any other course to have been adopted. Eventually in 1878 an Anglican diocese of Travancore and Cochin was formed. It came into existence with the full approval of the authorities of the Church of England. But it is a matter of distress to many of the Syrian Christians of the Jacobite Church that such a diocese was formed which they feel meant creating another rival church in addition to the Roman Church which also has its bishops in this area. But however much it is to be regretted it was inevitable when congregations of Anglican Christians had come into existence in many different places.

There was certainly, after the closing of the mission of help, a good deal of feeling aroused. Syrian Christians were excommunicated for joining Anglican congregations and the C.M.S. missionaries discouraged intercourse between their congregations and other Christians.

The presence of the Anglican Church alongside of the Syrian church has in many ways greatly affected the latter. Its example in evangelising the non-Christians, its efficient organisation, its educational institutions, its well-educated clergy—all these and many other factors exercised enlightening and stimulating influences on the Syrian church, which have stirred it to the depths. These influences are still being felt, and though it is to be greatly deplored that so much division has come in the Church in Malabar, yet one wonders whether without the division fresh life and renewed activity would have been possible. It is however a matter for thankfulness that there are signs of a closer co-operation amongst varying Christian churches in Travancore to-day.



## CHAPTER VIII

## THE MAR THOMA SEPARATION

ALTHOUGH the mission of help had come to an end and might be regarded by many as ending in failure the work of the missionaries in the seminary at Kottayam had impressed upon many of the Syrian clergy the need of reform in their church, and they were supported by a good many of the laity. In spite of the disapproval of the Metran large numbers still continued to send their children to the mission schools which were the only ones indeed in those days where a proper education could be obtained.

The leading advocates of reform within the Syrian church were Abraham Malpan and Marcus Kattanar, both of whom had been on the staff of the college at Kottayam, and they gathered round them a body of sympathizers. Active steps were soon taken to spread the reform movement.

One of the first signs of activity on the part of the reform party was the presentation in September, 1836, of a memorial to Colonel Fraser, the British Resident, accusing Mar Dionysius IV of bad conduct and asking for his removal from office. The Metran was accused of avarice and misappropriation of funds, of not acting according to Scripture or the canons of his church, and of being the cause of the rupture with the missionaries. The memorialists expressed their readiness to accept in place of Mar Dionysius IV, Mar Kurilos of Thozhiyur as their Metran. Though no attack was made on the doctrines of the Jacobite church certain practices were denounced as superstitious. This memorial is therefore regarded by those who sympathize with the work of the reforms as the starting point of the reformation in the church, and the centenary of this was observed in September, 1936, by the Mar Thoma Church.

No notice was taken of this memorial by the Resident who was no doubt reluctant to interfere in the internal affairs of the church. But after some months, that is early in 1837, the Metran issued an order to all congregations under his jurisdiction instructing them that in future the missionaries were not to be allowed to preach in their churches.

Although many of the reform party became lukewarm, others under the leadership of Abraham Malpan pressed forward the work of reformation. Their first task was to revise their liturgy so as to make it free from what they had come to regard as unscriptural errors.

Amongst the chief alterations made in the liturgy were the following. All prayers for the dead and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints were omitted. Before receiving the communion, in the old liturgy the priest says, 'Thee I am holding Who holdest the bounds, Thee I am grasping Who orderest the depths, Thee, O God, do I place in my mouth.' This prayer was removed. In another prayer the priest says, 'We offer Thee this unbloody sacrifice for Thy whole church all over the world.' Here the word 'prayer' was substituted for 'unbloody sacrifice'. At one place the priest lifting the veil or covering addresses it as follows, 'Thou art the hard rock which was set against the tomb of our Redeemer.' This prayer was replaced by one addressed to our Lord, 'Thou art the tried and precious stone which was set at naught by the builders'. A rubric enjoining the priest to bless the incense and the declaration that the Holy Ghost will bless the incense were removed.

With regard to practice also certain changes were made. The communion was to be administered in both kinds. It was not to be celebrated when there was no one to partake. The service was to be conducted in the vernacular and not henceforth in Syriac.

These changes were not at all acceptable to a large

party in the church, and the Metran, Dionysius IV, strongly opposed them. They were introduced in the first place for the benefit of the two or three small groups who felt unhappy about using their old unreformed services. The missionaries had advised them to reform their own liturgy and discouraged them from introducing the Anglican liturgy. Abraham Malpan used this revised liturgy in his own church at Marāman but the other reforming clergy were not able at first to introduce the changes in their own churches.

Abraham Malpan, who was the guiding spirit of the reform party was born at Marāman in 1796. He was ordained while still only a boy by Mar Thomas VIII, and when only sixteen years of age was raised to the priesthood. He was one of the Syrian clergy who on the encouragement of Colonel Munro had married. His two sons afterwards became bishops with the titles of Mar Thomas Athanasius and Titus Mar Thoma. Abraham Malpan had joined the college at Kottayam as a student and had become a Malpan, or Professor of Syriac at the college. He was always an earnest young man and under the inspiration of the missionaries he became an ardent advocate for reform in his own church. Towards the close of his life he became somewhat despondent about the prospects of reform and advised those near to him to join the Anglican Church rather than remain in an unreformed church.

Abraham Malpan was in charge of the parish of Marāman but it was only when he gave up his appointment in the college in 1840 that he was able to give more time to the work of reform in his own parish. Already he had destroyed a wooden image of some sacred personage in honour of which an annual festival was held. Later on he abolished the festival also. He introduced the changes in the liturgy which the reforming party had made and passages from the Old Testament and New Testament as well as the

Epistle and Gospel were read in Malayalam. He had a number of young deacons who helped him in his parish who were loyal to him.

The Metran, Mar Dionysius, was not pleased with the activities of Abraham Malpan. He excommunicated the entire congregation at Marāman and said that he would not raise to the priesthood any of the deacons who were followers of the Malpan. The Malpan was still loyal to the idea of proper order in the church and this action of the Metran caused him great anxiety. He felt the desirability of having a Metran consecrated who should be favourable to the reforms.

The nephew of Abraham Malpan, who was a deacon, after studying at the college at Kottayam had gone to study at the institution of the Church Missionary Society at Madras. In 1841 the young man encouraged by his uncle, set out on a journey to visit the Jacobite Patriarch at Mardin in Syria. He was graciously received by the Patriarch and won his good opinion. He stayed with him for several months. Letters had come from disaffected persons in India complaining against Mar Dionysius and asking that a new Metran should be sent to them. The Patriarch therefore decided to send his guest to fill this position. He ordained him to the priesthood and afterwards consecrated him as metropolitan bishop with the title of Mar Athanasius Matthew. This took place in the year 1842. It meant the putting aside or ignoring of Mar Dionysius.

Mar Athanasius Matthew arrived in Travancore in 1843, and his arrival was the beginning of a long dispute resulting finally in litigation and separation.

When the young Metran reached home he found his uncle, Abraham Malpan, though only forty-seven years of age had become an invalid. Mar Athanasius Matthew keenly felt the need of establishing his position by ousting Mar Dionysius, before he could effectively push forward the reform movement, which

consequently at first did not receive all the support it deserved from him. This caused much anxiety and sorrow to the Malpan. He passed away not very long after in September, 1845.

It was not to be expected that Mar Dionysius, who had not only been long in office, but who had obtained the usual recognition of the civil authorities by a royal proclamation, would readily vacate his see in favour of this new comer. Mar Athanasius Matthew appealed to the British Resident. He claimed the authority of the Patriarch and also that a majority of the people were in his favour. But the British Resident was unwilling to interfere in this ecclesiastical dispute.

Mar Athanasius Matthew was in favour of the reforms in the church and it was not therefore difficult for his opponents to bring charges against him of being unorthodox which tended to prejudice the mind of the Patriarch against him. At such a distance it was exceedingly difficult for the Patriarch to understand the situation. He therefore sent in 1846 a bishop named Mar Kurilos to visit Malabar and make inquiries. He entrusted to him blank documents with his signature to be used as the occasion might demand. When Mar Kurilos arrived and had seen Mar Dionysius he declared himself to be appointed Metropolitan, using the papers given to him by the Patriarch to show the necessary authority. Mar Dionysius concurred in this action and informed the British Resident that Mar Kurilos had succeeded him.

It had now become necessary for the government to take action to decide who was the rightful claimant and a committee was appointed to examine their respective claims. The committee decided in favour of Mar Athanasius Matthew, and he was subsequently by royal proclamation recognised as Metropolitan. Mar Dionysius resigned his position on account of old age and died shortly after. So after ten years of

waiting and dispute Mar Athanasius in 1852 entered upon his office.

Unfortunately the troubles were not ended. Even before the committee had finished its deliberations the Jacobite Patriarch, who had received reports from Mar Kurilos and others, had sent a letter to Mar Dionysius introducing a bishop called Mar Athanasius Stephanos. The Patriarch gave instructions in this letter that this new comer was to rule the church along with Mar Dionysius and Mar Kurilos. With this letter he sent service books and holy oil which he had consecrated and also asked that the *Rasisa*, an ecclesiastical tax, should be collected and sent to him.

On his arrival Mar Athanasius Stephanos reported himself to the British Resident, but received no encouragement from him. He entered many Syrian churches however, and this led to disturbances which the Dewan of Travancore had to take steps to put down. Mar Athanasius Stephanos then appealed to the Directors of the East India Company in London, but their reply was to state their policy of non-interference in religious matters. The dispute, they said, must be settled by the Syrian Church itself. After this despatch in 1857 Mar Athanasius Matthew was firmly established for many years.

But more difficulties were still to come. In the year 1865 another visitor from Malabar was with the Jacobite Patriarch at Mardin. He was a nephew of Mar Dionysius II. As usual the opponents of Mar Athanasius Matthew had sent complaints about him, and the Patriarch, without any judicial inquiry, appointed his visitor to supersede Mar Athanasius Matthew. He was connected with the Pulikottil family and had been sent to the Patriarch by a family which played a large part in fomenting quarrels between the Syrian Christians and the missionaries. He took the title of Mar Dionysius Joseph.

On his return in 1866 to Travancore he notified the

government of his appointment and of the deposition of Mar Athanasius Matthew but the government could only advise the parties to settle their dispute in the courts.

Meanwhile in 1869 Mar Athanasius Matthew consecrated his young cousin Thomas as his successor. He invited Mar Kurilos of the independent see of Thozhiyur to join with him in the consecration, which was attended by large numbers from all over Travancore. But the dispute still went on and in 1874 Mar Dionysius Joseph made an appeal to the Jacobite Patriarch. The latter felt that the question of his own supremacy in Malabar was concerned with the case of Mar Dionysius Joseph and resolved to take action. First of all he visited London in 1874 hoping through the Archbishop of Canterbury to persuade the civil authorities in India to accept his nominee. But the Archbishop had made careful enquiries through the Anglican bishops of Calcutta and Madras and it did not seem to him fitting to encourage the attempt to depose Mar Athanasius Matthew in favour of Mar Dionysius Joseph. He therefore cited the practice of the Anglican church in allowing its daughter churches overseas independence in administration and suggested that the Patriarch would be well advised to make some adjustment which would give more autonomy to the church in Malabar.

But the Patriarch, Moran Mar Ignatius Peter III, paid little attention to this advice and at the beginning of 1875 arrived in Travancore. His visit was the occasion to establish his power more firmly over the local church. The government withdrew the proclamation it had made in favour of Mar Athanasius Matthew leaving the church to settle its own affairs or if necessary to bring them to a court of law. In June, 1876, the Patriarch held a synod at Mulanthuruthu which was attended by his supporters. At this synod certain regulations were made for the future govern-

ment of the church which were calculated to bring it much more closely under the control of the Patriarch. The province of Malankarai, as it was called, was divided into seven dioceses named after the following places, namely, Quilon, Thumpaman, Niranam, Kottayam, Cochin, Kantanad and Angamāli. Mar Dionysius Joseph was put in charge of the diocese of Quilon, and six more Metrans were consecrated for the other dioceses. All these Metrans were to be equal in authority and each directly responsible to the Patriarch, but the seniority of Mar Dionysius Joseph gave him a precedence which the other bishops recognised and which was probably intended by the Patriarch. Besides this each bishop on consecration was required to sign a document registered under the law of Travancore wherein the Metran agreed to hold himself in submission to the Patriarch and acknowledged the authority of the Patriarch to dismiss him from office. Patriarch Peter was on this visit accompanied by Mar Gregorius Abdulla of Jerusalem who at a later period became Patriarch.

At the end of 1876 the Patriarch went home and in July, 1877, Mar Athanasius Matthew died. For twenty-five years he had held the position of Metran though it had been a stormy period full of dissensions. His attitude had not been altogether consistent. Before 1852 he had claimed that he had a right to the office in virtue of his consecration by the Patriarch, but later, when the Patriarch wished to set him aside, he denied the Patriarch's authority. The character and achievements of Mar Athanasius Matthew have been very adversely criticised. He did much, however, to free the Syrian Christian community from many social disabilities and he was throughout an advocate of reform in the church. Besides the changes in the liturgy and worship which the reformers advocated he encouraged the reading of the Scriptures, the spread of Sunday schools, as well as



preaching and other forms of active Christian enterprise.

After the death of Mar Athanasius Matthew there were ten years of litigation. His cousin Mar Athanasius Thomas succeeded him but Mar Dionysius Joseph declared that he himself was the rightful Metran and claimed in the courts to be put in possession of the Syrian church seminary and its endowments. This was followed by a series of law suits regarding nearly all the individual churches in possession of the reformed party. In the end the reformed party were left with only a few churches. From that time forward the reformed church, known as the Mar Thoma Church, has had a separate existence.

An ecclesiastical dispute carried on for many years in the law courts in which most of the judges were non-Christians is a melancholy spectacle. The question at issue was a difficult and complicated one. In the court of Final Appeal of Travancore, where the main case came up for hearing, the two Hindu Judges decided in favour of Mar Dionysius Joseph but the English Judge, Mr. Justice Ormsby, dissented from their finding. But even if the decision had been otherwise it could hardly have prevented the schism which from that time forward has divided the Syrian church into two separately organized churches.

The Mar Thoma Church which became separated from the Jacobite Church claims that it is the true representative of the ancient apostolic church founded in India by St. Thomas and that the reforms it has introduced have meant the casting out of erroneous beliefs and practices most of which had crept in at the time of the Portuguese domination and that neither Babylon nor Antioch ever had any established supremacy over it, although there had admittedly existed some sort of loose relationship between them and the Malabar see. It is certain that the Mar Thoma Church has been characterised by much zeal and

earnestness and is to-day strong and active and full of good works.

Mar Thomas Athanasius died a few years after the loss of the cases in court and was succeeded in 1893 by Titus I Mar Thoma. During his term of office the foundations were laid of most of the present activities of the Mar Thoma Church. In 1911 he was succeeded by the present Metran, Titus II Mar Thoma, who had already for many years been assisting his predecessor as suffragan. He has not only continued the activities which already existed but has started many new ones. In this he has been loyally and ably supported by the suffragan whom he consecrated in 1917, Abraham Mar Thoma. The latter who was trained at Wycliffe College, Toronto, has proved to be a most energetic and spiritually-minded leader.

Besides the Metran and his suffragan there are over a hundred clergymen working in two hundred and twenty-six parishes. The church has about 150,000 members.

Having lost almost all its churches and funds in the law suits the Mar Thoma Church has had a difficult financial situation to face. It has meant much suffering and sacrifice, and its clergy and other workers even to-day receive incredibly low salaries. Yet this very difficulty has brought great spiritual blessing. Thrown back upon God the Mar Thoma Church has learnt how in answer to prayer and faith its needs can be supplied. Not only has the problem been bravely faced but in divine strength overcome and the amount of work which this church maintains with its slender resources is truly marvellous.

In 1888 at the very time when the church was threatened with financial disaster the Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Evangelistic Association was formed. In the second year of its existence the income of this association was only a few hundreds of rupees. But it has steadily grown and developed until in 1932-3

its budget including the cost of its schools was nearly Rs. 60,000 (£4,500). It has not only undertaken missionary work in Travancore but has sent out its missionaries to other parts of India. In North Canara it carries on work in co-operation with the National Missionary Society, and at Palghat in the Malabar District of British India it has another mission station.

The Evangelistic Association maintains two English high schools, three middle schools, and over fifty primary schools. Besides six ordained missionaries nearly two hundred and fifty evangelists and teachers work in the various fields of its missions. The converts who have been gathered in from amongst the non-Christians number over six thousand. Most of them have been from amongst the depressed classes and the church has taken a firm stand against caste distinctions in the church.

It is the Evangelistic Association also which organizes the well-known Marāman convention. This gathering is held each year in February or March. It meets in the sandy bed of a river which is dry at that season. It is believed to be the largest Christian convention in the world. At some of its meetings more than thirty thousand persons have been present.

A ladies' auxiliary which has been started in connection with the association has made great progress. It maintains an institution for the training of women for parish and missionary work. The head of this institution is a lady missionary lent by the C.M.S. Several women trained there are now working as evangelists amongst women at Palghat and other places. The ladies' auxiliary is responsible also for two orphanages and for a mission hospital on the sea-coast near Quilon.

The Mar Thoma Church does a great deal of its missionary work by means of voluntary evangelists. These may in turn spend a week or two at some mission station and so enable the work to be carried on with

a minimum of paid workers. There is an Association of Voluntary Evangelists with a membership of over a thousand. Those belonging to a parish meet together once a week, those of a centre once a month, and all of them once a year. Besides this special classes and summer schools are held for giving them training.

In 1905 the Mar Thoma Church formed a Sunday School Association. At that time there were 52 Sunday schools, 234 teachers and 2,078 pupils. In 1933 there were 471 Sunday schools, 2,435 teachers and 27,113 pupils. All the teachers are voluntary workers. A regular staff of honorary inspectors, who now number over fifty, has been appointed for the supervision and guidance of the work in different districts which are now 34 in number. Besides this two missionaries are giving full time to this work. They go the round of the schools and parishes doing inspirational work amongst children and parents as well as amongst the teachers. The schools and lessons are graded according to the age of the pupils and a monthly magazine is issued which supplies lessons, notes and other helps for teachers. The children of the Sunday schools are taught to give, and interested in Christian service, by supporting work in a mission field where work is carried on amongst the depressed classes. This mission supported by the children has seven centres of work, five primary schools and three night schools for adults. During the short period this mission has been in existence there have been about 500 converts and several small congregations have been formed. The training of Sunday school teachers is done by means of quarterly meetings of teachers in each district at which besides devotional gatherings, lectures are given on Sunday school subjects and practical demonstration given. Plans are already made for establishing a teachers' training institution where Sunday school teachers may go for special courses.

Besides all the schools and institutions mentioned

above the Mar Thoma Church has a theological seminary at Kottayam which trains up to the standard of the L.Th. There are five other high schools, three for boys and one for girls, the latter being a purely residential school with two English ladies in charge, eighteen English middle schools, three vernacular middle schools, a hundred and eight primary schools and a training college for primary and secondary school teachers. There is a Youth League, with branches in almost all the parishes, established with the object of inspiring the young people of the church in the ideals of Christian life and service. Under the auspices of the church there is, too, a home for the aged poor which is conducted by a young man on faith lines.

The Mar Thoma Church and the Anglican Church not only work in close and harmonious co-operation but they are now in communion with one another. It has become the custom to have an annual joint retreat for clergy. On this occasion the Holy Communion is administered on the first morning by the Mar Thoma rite by the Metropolitan assisted by his suffragan and others, and the Anglican Bishop in Travancore and his clergy partake as well as the Mar Thoma clergy. On the next morning the Anglican Bishop administers using the Anglican rite and again the Metran and all the others partake. This seems to be the first branch of the Eastern Church with which the Anglican Church has full communion, and it is a real privilege to be present on such an occasion and try to visualize what greater things may yet be when the various branches of the Church of Christ are drawn together into closer unity.

Quite recently with a view to better organization a revised constitution has been adopted by the Mar Thoma Church. The Church is divided into three divisions, northern, central and southern, with headquarters at Tiruvella, Chenganoor, and Kottarakkara respectively. Each of them will be administered by

a vicar-general. It is hoped eventually to make these divisions into separate dioceses, with a bishop in charge of each. Two clergymen have already been chosen for the office of bishop and will later on be consecrated.<sup>1</sup> The Mar Thoma Church still adheres to the rule of the Eastern Churches that the bishop must be an unmarried man, and as most of the Mar Thoma clergy are married this naturally considerably restricts the choice of suitable men for bishops.

The vicars-general are invested with power to supervise the work of the parish priests; to audit accounts; to suspend or prohibit meetings with the approval of the Metropolitan; to issue marriage licenses; to impose fines not exceeding five rupees on lay members of the church and to suspend any member for a period of not more than three months. Besides these functions they are responsible for administering to the spiritual needs of the people in their respective divisions.

While one cannot but feel sorry that the Syrian Church has become divided, it is also impossible not to feel admiration for the splendid work which the Mar Thoma Church is doing. It is without doubt on the whole keen and active and, as an example of what a truly indigenous Indian church can be and do, gives great hope for the future. It is certainly trying to live up to the ideal which the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society who conducted for many years the mission of help, hoped to see eventually established in the Syrian Church.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE JACOBITE CHURCH

**THE** main body of the Syrian Church in Malabar which continued to be under the Patriarch of Antioch after the Mar Thoma separation is generally known as the

<sup>1</sup> They have since been consecrated taking the titles of Mar Timotheus and Mar Athanasius.

Jacobite Church. It is also sometimes called the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East by those who are followers of the Katholikos.

Trouble in the church was not brought to an end for long when the separation from the Mar Thoma section took place and at the present day the Jacobite Church is divided into two parties and another schism is threatening. As in the case of the previous dispute it is mainly concerned with the jurisdiction of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

Mar Joseph Dionysius died in 1909, but shortly before his death two Jacobite priests had been sent to the Patriarch for consecration as bishops. This Patriarch was Mar Abdulla who had accompanied Patriarch Peter when he visited India. The bishops took the titles of Mar Geeverghese Dionysius and Mar Kurilos. The consecration took place in Jerusalem and the Patriarch did not take from them deeds of submission nor if he had could they have been registered at that time under the law of Travancore.

When Mar Joseph Dionysius died, Mar G. Dionysius was chosen by the local church as his successor and this was confirmed by the Patriarch. Some months after the Patriarch, Moran Mar Abdulla, came to Travancore and stayed about two years. During his stay he consecrated two more bishops. Both of them he required to sign documents which were duly registered acknowledging his authority. He demanded that Mar G. Dionysius and Mar Kurilos also should execute such documents. The former however refused to do this and this was followed by his being excommunicated by the Patriarch. Mar Kurilos however gave way, and he was appointed by the Patriarch as Metran in the place of Mar G. Dionysius. Thus a split arose in the Jacobite Church which has not yet been healed. The two parties are known as the Patriarch's party and the Metran's party. Mutual recrimination took place and the struggle has been a

long and bitter one. The Patriarch's party seems to predominate generally in the northern parts of Travancore and the Metran's party in the south. A majority of those who have received a higher English education sides with the Metran. In some places where the parties are evenly matched there have been disturbances and churches have had to be closed for worship for years together.

Soon after Patriarch Abdulla left Travancore the Metran's party succeeded in bringing over to Travancore a former Patriarch named Abdulla Masiho. The Patriarch's party say that he was no longer Patriarch having for good reasons been formally deposed and set aside by a proper synod of the Jacobite Church of Antioch before Mar Abdulla became Patriarch. The Metran's party however claim that he had only ceased to act as Patriarch because the Turkish Government had withdrawn the recognition usually granted.

While he was in Travancore Mar Abdulla Masiho consecrated three priests as bishops and Mar Ivanios, the sole survivor of the six bishops consecrated by Patriarch Peter, as Katholikos. In becoming Katholikos Mar Ivanios took the title of Mar Basileios, but died some years later. One of the three Metrans who were consecrated as bishops by Abdulla Masiho was afterwards consecrated as Katholikos by the other bishops who were consecrated by Abdulla Masiho, and on his death another of the bishops consecrated by Mar Abdulla Masiho was installed as Katholikos who also took the title of Mar Basileios and this third Katholikos became the leader of the Metran's party after the death of Mar G. Dionysius in 1934. Subsequently the Katholikos consecrated a new bishop known as Mar Ivanios, who was a master of arts of Madras University, and had founded and was the head of a monastery named Bethany Ashram.

After the death of both Mar Abdulla and Mar Abdulla Masiho another Patriarch visited Travancore,



namely Mar Elias. He died while on his visit, and his tomb at Manjinakara, near Kozhanchery, has become a place of pilgrimage. Under the present Patriarch Mar Ephraim Severius the dispute has continued and all efforts so far to settle it have been unsuccessful.

It was probably in the hope of getting free from the jurisdiction of Antioch that the Metran's party got Mar Abdulla Masiho to consecrate a Katholikos. The one whom he consecrated to this office died without consecrating a successor. The Patriarch's party claim that according to the canons of the Jacobite Church of Antioch only a Patriarch can consecrate a Katholikos, though this is disputed by their opponents. The present Katholikos was not consecrated even by an ex-patriarch, but only raised to the rank of Katholikos by the two other Metrans who had been consecrated along with him. The Patriarch's party claim that this was not an ecclesiastically valid act and that the validity of the consecration of Mar Ivanios later as bishop was also affected. The latter bishop feeling unhappy about the state of affairs in the Jacobite Church, has joined the Roman Church. After a visit to the Pope at Rome, he returned as Archbishop of Trivandrum, and is in charge of that portion of the Roman Church which follows the Antiochian rite.

It was while Mar Elias was Patriarch that the late Mar G. Dionysius took the step of going to Syria to meet the Patriarch. It was hoped that a settlement had been made. Mar Julius, a bishop from Syria, came back with Mar G. Dionysius as delegate of the Patriarch to settle affairs, but trouble soon broke out again. The constant difficulty which had occurred had convinced many members of the Jacobite Church in Travancore that while they were willing to recognize the spiritual authority of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch they must try and secure autonomy for the local Church.

Negotiations have been opened again and again to bring about a reconciliation. It was on the invitation of the Viceroy, Lord Irwin (now Viscount Halifax) that the Patriarch Mar Elias visited Travancore. The late Bishop Gore, and the Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in India, did their best to bring about a settlement. But Patriarch Elias died in Travancore without anything being accomplished.

When Mar Ephraim Severius succeeded to the patriarchate in 1932 hopes were again raised that some way might be found out of the *impasse*. The new patriarch was anxious for peace and he asked the bishops of both parties in Travancore to meet and send to him proposals. Mar Athanasius, the senior bishop of the Patriarch's party, went to see Mar G. Dionysius, but no immediate settlement was arranged. In February, 1934, Mar G. Dionysius died and at once the question became urgent as to who would be the legal successor to the property of the Church. Unless an agreement was reached recourse would have to be made to litigation. Amongst the laity of the church there was a strong desire for peace and it was arranged that representatives from both sides should meet and discuss the situation. The meeting took place at Kottayam on the 13th March, 1934. The question at issue was very delicate and complicated and it looked many times as though the conference would break up without any success having been achieved. At last, however, they came to an agreement which was signed by all present. The following are the most important points of the agreement :

The Syrian Church in Malabar should have an Episcopal Synod possessing power to appoint and interdict Bishops. The president of this Synod should be the Katholikos.

The person who should be chosen by the Syrian Church Association, and approved by the Episcopal Synod as Metran and Katholikos, should be consecrated

by the Patriarch. But until such time as he should be formally consecrated by the Patriarch he should exercise the powers attached to the office.

The Syrian Church in Malabar should use the *mooron*, or holy oil, consecrated by the Patriarch.

The Katholikos should collect the tribute (*rasisa*) and forward it to the Patriarch.

When a new Patriarch has to be chosen, the Katholikos, or his deputy, should attend the Synod held for that purpose.

If a bishop should at any time be excommunicated by the Episcopal Synod he should have power to appeal to the Patriarch whose decision should be final and binding on the Syrian Church.

Thus, if this agreement should be accepted by the Patriarch, the Church in Malabar would be autonomous in matters relating to internal administration, while at the same time certain powers were reserved for the Patriarch.

One most important and delicate question remained to be settled and that was the recognition of the present Katholikos by the Patriarch. The claim of the Patriarch and his followers was that the consecration of the Katholikos was invalid. On their part however the Katholikos and the bishops who side with him were unwilling to submit to any formality or ceremony which would amount to re-consecration and thus throw doubt on the validity of their present orders.

With this matter to be decided in consultation with the Patriarch and taking the suggested terms of agreement drawn up by the contending parties in Travancore, the Katholikos, in June, 1934, left India for Syria. He was accompanied by Mar Julius the delegate of the Patriarch.

There were great hopes in India that the negotiations would lead to a settlement and at last bring peace to the Church which has so long been distracted by the dispute. The Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, with

whom the Katholikos stayed, used his good offices as a mediator, and the negotiations went on for some weeks. In the end however they broke down and the Katholikos returned to India in October, 1934, without the breach having been healed. It seems that the Patriarch wanted to claim more power than had been left to him by the tentative agreement. He claimed that the power to appoint, punish or remove bishops, should rest in his hands and that the bishops should individually sign an agreement acknowledging his power over the temporalities of the Church.

The failure of the attempt to come to a settlement was followed by a widening of the breach. The Patriarch sent to India a letter branding the Katholikos and his party as schismatics and excommunicating them from his Church until such time as they should repent and receive his pardon.

The Katholikos and his followers met at Kottayam in December, 1934, and drew up constitutions for the Archdiocese of Kerala. Before this the Katholikos had been formerly appointed as Malankara Metropolitan by the Syrian Church Association. The constitution sanctioned the formation of an Episcopal Synod which should decide all questions of the faith, order, and discipline of the Church. In the preamble the Othodox Syrian Church of the East claimed to be a part of the Universal Orthodox Syrian Church of which the Patriarch is the Supreme Head.

A few months later in August, 1935, leaders of the Patriarch's party met and unanimously elected as Metran, Mar Paulus Athanasius, Bishop of Ankamāli, who is the acknowledged head of the party in India. Delegates from three hundred parishes were present and co-trustees also were chosen.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Patriarch's party had submitted to the Agent to the Governor-General, who is the representative of the British Indian Government in Travancore and Cochin, a memorial claiming that

the interest on the Syrian Church Trust Fund, should be paid to the trustees they had chosen.

Unless, therefore, a settlement of the dispute is made, recourse will have to be had to the law courts to decide which party can legally claim the property of the Church and the schism which has so long threatened will be inevitable.

This state of affairs is so deplorable that all Christians must wish that some way out might be found. Very earnest efforts on this behalf have been made by Bishop H. Pakenham Walsh, formerly Anglican Bishop of Assam, and until lately Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta. On his way home to England he visited the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch at Homs in Syria and tried to act as mediator. The dispute had reached such an acute stage that he realized the problem could not be easily solved, and his efforts to bring about a reconciliation were unsuccessful. Nor was he more successful on his return in trying to bridge the gap which divides the two parties.

When Dr. Stanley Jones was in Travancore, in August, 1935, he also made an effort to bring about a reconciliation. He interviewed the leaders of both parties and discussed with them the possibility of effecting a settlement acceptable to both parties. But he too was unable to bring them together.

Much prayer has been offered that a settlement might be arranged and efforts are still being made to avert the catastrophe of a permanent division. At one time the outlook seemed very dark, but recently there arose again hopes of peace. Mar Julius, the representative of the Patriarch in Malabar, had an interview in October, 1936, with Moran Mar Basileios, the Katholikos. The discussions were private, no other members of the two parties being present, but it is understood that the result has been to make the situation much more hopeful, and that the leaders on both sides are anxious to come to an agreement.

The party which follows the Katholikos includes three other bishops. Mar Gregorius is in charge of Kottayam diocese, Mar Severius is in charge of Niraṇam diocese and Mar Philoxenos is in charge of Thumpaman diocese. The Katholikos, in addition to the duties of that office, is also in charge of the dioceses of Quilon, Kandanad, Ankamāli and Cochin. On the side of the Patriarch are Mar Athanasius, Bishop of Ankamāli and Cochin, who lives at Alwaye, Mar Michael Dionysius, bishop of the dioceses of Quilon, Thumpaman, Niraṇam and Kottayam, and Mar Timotheus, bishop of Kandanad in the north of Travancore, and Mar Dioscorus of the Sudhist Churches. Mar Julius, who lives at Manjinakara, is a bishop from Syria, who represents the Patriarch but is not in charge of any local diocese. It will be seen that owing to the unfortunate dispute dividing the church the jurisdictions of the bishops overlap.

The Jacobite church has over four hundred priests working in about five hundred parishes. The numbers of the clergy that belong to the two parties are about half and half.

The Jacobite church has many high schools and a large number of middle and primary schools. There is also a training college for primary school teachers. One school for girls near Tiruvella has an English lady in charge.

Sunday schools are organized in about two hundred parishes and there is a general committee to supervise this work. Missionary activity is undertaken and there are over ninety stations and outstations where this is carried on. In particular the society called the Servants of the Cross, under the earnest and active leadership of Father Patrose, has had much encouragement. This society has about eighty stations and outstations. Of recent years there have been over twelve thousand converts mainly from the depressed classes. For the most part these converts have been

given equal status with the other members of the church.

The Suvishesha Sangham, or Gospel Association, is seeking to interest members of the church in evangelization.

At Pathanapuram, eight miles from Punalur, is the Mount Tabor Mission of which the head is Father Thoma. In this mission, which is conducted on monastic lines, there are two priests and three lay brothers. There is also in connection a house where seven sisters are working. The mission has an orphanage and school and as a result of its work there have been about six hundred converts.

The Bethany Ashram was founded by Mar Ivanios, who subsequently went over to the Roman Church, but its work still continues under the leadership of Father Alexios, and there have been many converts chiefly from the depressed classes. There are also in other places similar missions and there is even one working in Ceylon.

There is an organization called the Martha Mariam Samajam<sup>1</sup>. This is a women's society which seeks to deepen the spiritual life of the women members of the church and to arouse their interest in missionary activity. It is still in its beginnings but it has already about sixty branches and a large number of members.

At Trivandrum the St. George's Association seeks to band together the young people of the Jacobite church there, and there is also a Youth League covering a wider area which was started about two years ago.

All these organizations are sufficient to show that the Jacobite church has aroused from its long period of comparative inactivity and is beginning in many ways to realize its missionary responsibility. If it were not for the serious handicap of its present divided state one cannot help feeling that its activities in this direction would be greater still.

<sup>1</sup> Or 'Society of St. Mary'. ('Martha' is the feminine form of 'Mar'.)

Many of its more earnest men are anxious to see a deeper spiritual life in their church and from time to time missions conducted by some member or other of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta have been welcomed.

Though the Jacobite church still has its Syriac liturgies there has been a growing tendency to have some parts of the service in Malayalam. The chief liturgy is that of St. James but there are also many others. The form of these differs very little though there is a variety in the prayers used. There are also forms for morning and evening prayers and for other services.

The doctrinal position is similar to that of other branches of the Eastern church. It is generally regarded as a Monophysite church, but though the formula of the council of Chalcedon, 'two natures in one Person' is not accepted, the teaching of Eutyches is also rejected, and the leaders of the church deny that they are really Monophysite.

Some phrases in the liturgy might be held to imply the doctrine of transubstantiation, but a prominent and leading priest of the church assured me that though his church believed in the Real Presence it did not teach the doctrine of transubstantiation. Exact and precise definitions of the mode in which Christ is present in the sacrament are not considered advisable. Prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints are also to be found in the liturgy, but there is nothing in this church which corresponds to the highly developed Mariolatry of the Church of Rome.

While many in the Jacobite Church deprecate any association with the Anglican Church and believe that all their troubles have come from the interference of Western churches, others do not take this view. They are ready to acknowledge that many benefits have come to their church from help received from the West and desire to cultivate a closer fellowship with the Anglican Church.



Westerners cannot but feel that the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch would be wise to grant more autonomy to this local church, just as the Church of England has granted autonomy to its daughter churches.

While it would be unwise to ignore that there is a considerable difference of outlook in doctrine and practice between the Jacobite Church in India and our own church, it is desirable that we should seek sympathetically to understand its point of view, and do all we can to promote friendly relations and so far as possible co-operation between the two churches.

## CHAPTER X

### OTHER EASTERN CHURCHES IN MALABAR

#### *Nestorian or Chaldaean*

THERE is no question that for long centuries the Syrian Church in Malabar was connected with the Nestorian Patriarch of Babylon. This Patriarchate had its headquarters at Seleucia-Ctesiphon until 762 when they were removed to Baghdad. Here they remained till 1258 when they were transferred to Mosul, where they continued until 1400, after which another move was made to Qudshanis in the mountains of Kurdistan.

At one time the Nestorian Patriarch was at the head of a large organization which was spread in many distant parts of Asia. After the rise of Islam, however, there was a gradual diminution. Flourishing churches ceased to exist and many Christians were put to the sword. Now-a-days it is a comparatively small community. It is often called the Chaldaean or Assyrian church. Its present head, who has the title of Katholikos, and his followers, suffered greatly during the war and it is for this community that the League of Nations has been trying to find a home.

When the Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of Archbishop Menezes of Goa, obtained domination over the Syrian Church in Malabar there were some who all along refused to submit. According to a Roman Catholic writer there were no less than thirty thousand who kept aloof from the Roman Church. If this was really so they were probably mainly those who dwelt in the hills and were therefore less accessible. Whether those who seceded from Rome at Coonen Cross united with these thirty thousand who had refused to receive the decrees of Diamper is not certain. Possibly they did not, and in any case in 1665 they accepted as their Metran a Jacobite bishop.

Though the history is obscure it seems that there was at least a remnant that remained faithful to Nestorianism from 1599 to 1665 and which has continued to the present day. This was brought out in the judgments of the judges in the courts of Cochin in a dispute known as the Trichur church case.

The first Nestorian Bishop to visit Malabar from the west after 1653 was (as far as is known) Mar Simon. He came to India in 1701 but no details of his visit are available. Another Nestorian bishop, Mar Gabriel, arrived in 1705 and remained until 1730 or 1731. He had a great influence amongst the Syrian Christians who had gone over to the Roman church and at one time it seemed that he would persuade many to give up their allegiance to Rome. The Dutch Governor, whose name was Moens, when writing in 1781, refers to the Syrian Christians as partly Nestorian and partly Jacobite and says that the religious opinions of the bishops and clergy vacillated between the tenets of those two churches according to the arrival of new bishops from the West who were Nestorian or Jacobite. The Roman Catholic writer, Paoli, writing in 1796 says that there were sixty-four Nestorian and thirty-two Jacobite churches in the states of Travancore

and Cochin, but he does not say how many persons each church represented. It looks as though many of them came eventually under Jacobite domination.

There is, however, at present, chiefly in the state of Cochin, a community of about seven thousand persons who are in communion with the Chaldaean Katholikos and who have their own Metran living at Trichur. The circumstances which led to the present position of this community in Cochin are as follows.

The Roman Chaldaean Patriarch of Babylon, the head of a uniate church in communion with Rome, claimed that he had jurisdiction over the Chaldaean Syrian Church of Malabar. In 1874 he sent as his representative Bishop Mellus to establish his claims. This action was condemned by the Pope, and many of the members of the Church at Trichur refused therefore to recognise him any longer as bishop. A majority of the people supported the bishop and the case came into the law courts. The followers of the bishop contended that their church building at Trichur, ever since its foundation in 1810, was under the Chaldaean Patriarch of Babylon without having ever been in communion with Rome, while the seceders held that since the synod of Diamper they had always been in communion with Rome. The two factions were involved in costly and protracted litigation, each claiming the right to the possession of the church and its properties, but the suit was eventually decided in favour of the followers of Bishop Mellus. Long before the suit was ended Bishop Mellus had made his peace with Rome and left Cochin. But his former adherents chose as their bishop a Syrian priest named Anthony. He visited Syria and Palestine and was there consecrated as bishop with the title of Mar Abdisa, by the Chaldaean Katholikos who is head of the Assyrian Church, the remnant of the formerly widespread Nestorian church.

The present occupant of the see, Mar Timotheus, is

a Chaldaean by race. He has under him about five priests and five deacons and there are three other churches belonging to the sect in Trichur as well as one or two elsewhere. It does not seem to be growing in numbers and has no missionary activity. Syriac is used in the services, but the characters and pronunciation are different from those used by the Jacobites. The liturgies used are also different.

### *Independent See of Thozhiyur*

Reference has already been made above to the schism which took place in 1751 leading to the diocese of Thozhiyur becoming separated from the rest of the Jacobite churches. This independent see is Jacobite in its traditions and customs but does not give allegiance to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. Mar Kurilos, the last Metran, died in 1935, and his successor was consecrated by the Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church with which this See has inter-communion.

### *Russian Orthodox Church*

It is not generally known that the Russian Orthodox Church also is represented in Malabar. At a place called Pattazhi in Travancore, a Russian priest, Father Andronik, has established an *āshram*. He has recently been joined by another priest of this church named Father Constantine. In 1936 a Serbian Archbishop with two laymen, one a Rumanian and the other a Bulgarian visited this *āshram*. Not long ago also it was visited by Bishop Dimitri, Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church in China, who was on his way back after attending a meeting of the synod of his church held in Yugoslavia.

### *Uniate Churches*

Though about half the Christian population of Travancore and a still larger proportion of the Christian population of Cochin are adherents of the Roman

Catholic Church not all of them are under the same jurisdiction. The larger number of these are either Latin Catholics or Romo-Syrians. The latter use a Syrian liturgy which was revised at the time of Archbishop Menezes to conform to Roman requirements. The Romo-Syrians have their own bishops and are organized into what is really a uniate church in communion with Rome. When Mar Ivanios, the Jacobite bishop, went over to Rome some years ago, he was consecrated as Archbishop of Trivandrum. He is the head of another uniate church using the Antiochian rite and has a suffragan bishop to assist him. He claims to have about twelve thousand followers.

## CHAPTER XI

### FUTURE PROSPECTS

THE need of reunion must be apparent to all Christians living in Travancore and Cochin however much they may differ as to the way it should be accomplished.

In Travancore no less than 31·5 per cent. of the population at the 1931 census were members of some Christian church or other and in Cochin 27·0 per cent. This may sound encouraging when one remembers that in India as a whole only two per cent. are Christians. But the value of the Christian witness is greatly lessened by our unhappy divisions. The numbers are given in the census Report for the year 1931 as follows :—

#### PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

				Travancore	Cochin.
Hindus	...	...	...	61	64·77
Christians	...	...	...	31·5	27·79
Muhammadans	...	...	...	6·9	7·29
Others	...	...	...	·6	·15
				<hr/> 100·0	<hr/> 100·0

CHRISTIANS IN TRAVANCORE

	Totals	Percentage of Christian Population
Anglican ...	85,261	5.3
Jacobite ...	337,872	21.0
Mar Thoma ...	142,486	8.9
Roman { Romo-Syrian ...	449,173	28.0
Catholic { Latin Rite ...	360,217	22.4
Salvation Army ...	58,991	3.7
South India United Church ...	138,958	8.7
Others (including other Syrians.)	31,517	2.0
	<hr/> 1,604,475 <hr/>	<hr/> 100.0 <hr/>

CHRISTIANS IN COCHIN

Roman Catholic {	Romo-Syrian ...	183,632
	Latin Rite ...	109,503
	Chaldaeian ...	6,809
	Jacobite ...	25,849
	Unspecified Syrians ...	1,505
	Anglican ...	2,783
	Others ...	2,784
	<hr/> 332,865 <hr/>	

From the strategic point of view there is no doubt that Travancore and Cochin have a tremendous importance in connection with the extension of Christ's Kingdom in India. What might a strong, united, keen church here not mean for the evangelization of the rest of India? What then are the prospects of greater unity amongst Christians in this region?

First of all one must unfortunately exclude the Roman Church from consideration in this respect. It has not shown here, any more than elsewhere, any willingness or desire to co-operate with other churches except on its own terms.

It must be remembered also that there are divisions to be overcome which have no connection with ecclesiastical points of view. A large majority of Christians in Travancore and Cochin are Syrian Christians who, as we have seen, were in ancient times

given a high social status by Hindu kings and Hindu society. On the other hand a large number of converts of more recent times have come from the depressed classes. In spite of the efforts and desires of the leaders of the churches it has not always been possible to prevent sometimes caste feelings arising in the church, and there are often difficult and delicate problems which arise on this account.

One important way of promoting the greater unity of Christians is to create an atmosphere of friendliness and to bring together those of different races, communities and churches that they may get to know one another and thus come to realize the common bond of unity which does underlie all their differences. In some places in Travancore there exist Christian fellowships in connection with which Christians of different churches meet together for fellowship and to discuss problems of common interest. There have also been in some places united evangelistic efforts though these have generally been confined to two or three churches. Much more might be done along these lines.

The Alwaye Union Christian College is making a most important contribution towards Christian unity in Travancore. It was started in June, 1921, and is a first grade residential college. It came into existence at a time when there was a prospect of several denominational colleges being developed, each of which would have found it difficult to become thoroughly efficient. But its foundation was not prompted merely as a means to financial economy but with the definite idea that it would be of great value in many ways for Christians of different churches to co-operate in such a college. It does not aim at 'undenominationalism' which pretends that differences do not exist or are unimportant. It encourages each to be loyal to his own church, but aims at preparing the way for a union in which each church will have its contribution to make.

At present there are on its council members of the Jacobite, Mar Thoma, and Anglican churches. But provision is made in its articles of association for other churches also eventually to co-operate. The nucleus of the college staff is a body of Christian men who have definitely accepted the work as a vocation to which they are called to devote their lives. The college was due to Indian initiative and the members of the fellowship have been mostly Indians but it is realized that Europeans also have something to contribute to India's future and from the beginning Europeans have been welcome on equal terms. For many years the Rev. W. E. S. Holland was helping at Alwaye. The college has an ideal site covering forty acres on the banks of the River Periyar. Games and physical development are regarded as of great importance, and the college has done well in mental culture as judged by the results of examinations. But the Christian background and influence of the college is regarded as paramount. It is realized that religion is not a separate department of life but the pervading spirit which gives its peculiar quality to the life of men and of institutions. Christians can work out their educational ideals only in a Christian institution. When the college was first started there were 70 students. Last year there were 359 of whom 257 were living in residence on the college premises. Ideals of service are stressed and in connection with this a settlement quite close to the college has been started. In this there are living 65 small boys of depressed class origin drawn from various churches. The teachers are all past students of the college. They live with the boys who are divided into families occupying different cottages. It is planned to increase the numbers eventually to 100. The boys are trained in farm work as well as in the ordinary subjects of education. They have an excellent Scout Troop. A similar settlement for girls also has been started by women ex-students.



The fellowship in study, games, and service and other activities which is promoted at this college cannot fail to have a most important result in drawing together those of different Christian communities and thus preparing the way for a closer union of the churches to which these students belong, and of which many of them will one day be the leaders.

Associations like the Student Christian Association and the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., as well as other organizations are all doing something to bring about a closer fellowship between Christians of different churches, and it is to be hoped that many are catching the vision of what a reunited church might mean.

The attempt of Bishop Pakenham Walsh (formerly Bishop of Assam and later Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta) to act as an intermediary in trying to heal the schism in the Jacobite church has been mentioned above. On his return to India he has, with Mrs. Pakenham Walsh, commenced a missionary *āshram* for the Jacobite Church. His purpose is to devote the rest of his life to restore peace in that church and this *āshram* will help in this in several ways. It is to have workers from both sections of the Jacobite church and by trying to increase the interest of that church in missionary work will tend to draw the attention of its members away from their own problems to those of the extension of Christ's Kingdom. It will also be a centre where prayer for unity will constantly be offered. The *āshram* is situated about nine miles from Coimbatore and is thus outside the area where the Jacobite church is situated. It thus is for this church a piece of foreign mission work. The society is to be called the *Christa Sishya Sangam*, that is the community of the disciples of Christ. Besides the Bishop and Mrs. Pakenham Walsh seven men are joining the *āshram* of whom some are, or eventually will be, married. Some are priests, one a deacon, and some are laymen. All are graduates of a University.

Father Alexius, an experienced and earnest Jacobite priest, who is himself the head of a celibate *āshram* in Travancore, has offered to spend much of his time guiding the new community. The *āshram* will be entirely under the control of the Syrian Orthodox church, and the position of Anglicans who join it is simply that of fellow workers. As the two churches are not yet in communion, their members at the *āshram* will have their services of Holy Communion on appointed days all worshipping together, but not receiving the sacrament from one another; all other devotions they will be able to have in common. Their object will be to live the Christian life in united families in the midst of the non-Christians, and to make known to these the love of God in Jesus Christ; at the same time to be their friends and do everything possible for the social uplift of the villagers. The Bishop hopes to have here also a home where Christians can come and find rest and refreshment for body and soul and where those who are sick may be anointed with oil for spiritual healing.

Along the lines of practical attempts at reunion there are two in South India at present that must be mentioned.

The South India reunion scheme has been the subject of widespread interest which has in fact been world-wide. The initiation of this effort in 1919 was due to a group of Indian clergy. At first the negotiations were between Anglicans who belong to the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon and the members of the South India United Church. The latter church itself was an earlier amalgamation of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Later the British Methodists joined in the discussions. But though the negotiations have gone on for so many years the union aimed at has not yet been accomplished. The scheme has been revised again and again and there have always been some to criticise the terms of the union. But the

scheme was at last prepared by the committee in such a form as to be submitted for approval to the churches concerned. There has been strenuous opposition not only from Anglo-Catholics in our church but from those who are keen on maintaining the Free Church traditions.

The scheme could not come into operation without the formal approval of the negotiating churches. So far as the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon is concerned it has to be submitted first to all the diocesan councils, but before this takes place the bishops at their last meeting decided, in view of the strong criticisms which the scheme had received, to submit it first of all to the Lambeth Conference in 1940 for the approval or otherwise of that body. So far as the South India United Church is concerned there are eight district councils to which the scheme has first to be sent. Of these three have given a mild approval, two have not yet considered it, and three have voted strongly against it. The district council in Travancore which represents a very large proportion of the members of the South India United Church was very strong in its opposition to the scheme in its present form, and urged drastic alterations to bring it closer to Free Church ideas. The present prospects of the scheme being accepted in the near future are therefore not very bright. But those who have been promoting it are convinced that in seeking to bring about closer union they have been guided by the Holy Spirit and they are therefore still hopeful that eventually the way may be made clear and the union accomplished.

So far as Travancore and Cochin are concerned the South India reunion scheme would have affected only a small percentage of the Christian population. The Anglican church, through the C.M.S., has had its field of labour in Cochin and North and Central Travancore, and the South India United Church, through the L.M.S., in South Travancore. Their work and their

congregations hardly overlap except in one or two towns. But even if accomplished the scheme would have left untouched the great proportion of Christian people in this area. The leaders of the Mar Thoma Church indeed are in sympathy with the scheme but owing to various circumstances unable to co-operate in it.

Recently there has been a definite effort to bring into close fellowship the Jacobite, Mar Thoma and Anglican Churches in Travancore and Cochin. The Mar Thoma and the Anglican Churches have already, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter, not only recognised one another's orders and partaken in services of intercommunion, but work in close and friendly co-operation. Is it possible for these two churches to be brought into a closer relationship with the Jacobite Church and if so on what terms and in what manner? This subject has exercised the minds of some, especially those who have been connected with Alwaye Union Christian College, and conferences have been held of representatives of the three churches to consider definitely the problems involved. The unfortunate division in the Jacobite Church has been a hindrance to the negotiations and only one section, the Metran's party, has so far taken part. Three conferences have been held at Tiruvella; the first being in February, 1935. Each church was represented by a bishop as well as by clergy and laity. The aim of these conferences has been not merely to promote intercommunion and mutual recognition of orders, but to explore the possibilities of some kind of federal union of these three churches in Malankara, that is the area covered by Travancore and Cochin. Questions of difference of doctrine and of different views of the sacraments have been frankly faced. The idea of many taking part in these conferences is that a union should be formed of the three churches on a federal basis. This would have a common assembly with representatives of each of the federal churches and be presided

over by one of the bishops chosen from the federal churches in turn. Each church would however retain its own organisation and appoint its own bishops, clergy, and other workers and maintain its own faith, traditions, and practices. The federation however would control certain educational and other institutions and other joint activities agreed upon and have a common missionary society with fields of work assigned to each.

There are many difficulties to be overcome and problems to be solved before such a union could be brought about. Apart from any doctrinal questions involved there are many practical difficulties. The Anglican diocese of Travancore and Cochin is a diocese of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon and part of the world-wide organisation of the Anglican church. How would its position in this larger organization be affected by participation in the proposed federal union for Malankara? In the Anglican diocese there is a large non-Syrian element which would not be likely to favour a purely Syrian Church connection. Amongst the Jacobites there are many who deprecate any closer co-operation with Anglicans and who believe that most of the troubles have come to their church by their not holding aloof and keeping steadily to their own traditions. On the other hand there are many amongst the Jacobites who realize that the confusions and internecine feud in their church for so many years have undermined its spiritual foundations. In order that these may be reinforced they see the value of being linked up with some world-wide communion. Many have turned their gaze towards Rome and some even have left the Jacobite Church to join the Roman communion. Others however feel that the Anglican communion is the best suited to give the needed spiritual awakening to their church if only a basis may be agreed upon for the union. The question is complicated by the present dispute in the Jacobite Church itself.

If the schism is not healed would it be advisable apart from any other considerations, for the Anglican Church to unite only with one section? If however the schism is healed the question of union with the Jacobite Church in Malabar is bound up with the larger question of the relation of the Anglican Church as a whole with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

When one contemplates the opportunities of the present time in India, and also its many problems, when one thinks of the pressing need of a more united witness and the important position of the Christian church in Travancore, one cannot but long that in the providence of God the day may soon come when a closer co-operation not only amongst these three churches, but amongst all Christians may be possible. Conferences, organizations, and well-thought-out schemes are insufficient in themselves to accomplish this. What is needed most of all is an outpouring of God the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of God's people so that they may be set free from spiritual blindness and wrong prejudices and guided along the lines of His purposes and brought into that unity which is of His planning. To this end the need of constant prayer on the part of all Christians is most urgent.

## APPENDICES

### I.—THE KERALA COUNCIL OF CHURCH UNION

THE Kerala Council of Church Union has representatives from the Jacobite, Mar Thoma and Anglican Churches. Its functions are defined as follows:—

(1) To study the problem of intercommunion and organic union and to endeavour to overcome the difficulties in the way, by educating the churches with a view to promoting the cause of reunion and in such other ways.

(2) To make recommendations to the churches concerned about the work which can be carried out in common, it being understood that existing institutions are to be excluded from their scope.

(3) To study each other's principles in order to respect and uphold the discipline of each church.

(4) To consider questions concerning the comity of missions and make recommendations to the churches concerned.

### II.—PROPOSED FEDERATION SCHEME

AT the meeting of the Kerala Council of Church Union held in May, 1936, Mr. A. M. Varki, Principal of Alwaye Union Christian College, presented a memorandum which included a proposed scheme of federation of the Jacobite, Mar Thoma and Anglican Churches. This memorandum was as follows:—

'I suggest the following lines of enquiry to be pursued simultaneously:—

(a) The possibility of mutual recognition of orders.

(b) The possibility of intercommunion on the basis of such minimum agreement in doctrine as is essential to such a spiritual act.

(c) The possibility of a federal union among our churches.

I shall briefly indicate what is in my mind when I speak of a "federal union". By federal union I mean the kind of union that in the political sphere binds together the United

States of America. As I conceive of that union it will have the following among other features:—

1. A common head—to be elected by the common assembly from the federated churches in turn.

2. A common assembly and a common council—with representatives of each of the federated churches, not necessarily in proportion to the numbers.

3. Separate heads, bishops and clergy for the federated churches.

4. Separate assemblies and councils for the federated churches.

5. The common assembly and council to be supreme in all matters that are not reserved for the separate assemblies and councils.

6. The following subjects to be reserved for the separate assemblies and councils:—

(a) Faith, traditions and practices, which are outside, but not inconsistent with, the basis of doctrine on which intercommunion is to be established.

(b) Appointment of bishops, clergy and other workers in the church.

(c) All matters of internal administration which by special resolution of the assembly are left to each federated church.

7. Educational and other institutions to be managed by the common council, the ownership of the existing ones to be retained by the respective churches until they see their way to transfer them to the common assembly.

8. One common missionary society but with fields of work assigned to each.

9. The united church to be known by one common name.'

### III.—GLOSSARY

**ANANDARAVAN:** Literally, 'a nephew', used specially of the nephew entitled to succeed his uncle in former times as metran.

**KATTANAR:** A clergyman in priest's orders.

**KURBANA:** A Syriac word for 'offering'—used as the name of the Holy Communion service.



**MALPAN:** A theological instructor, usually a priest.

**METRAN:** The same as 'Metropolitan', a bishop of the Syrian Church.

**RAMBAN:** A monk—a priest who is to be consecrated as a bishop becomes a Ramban before being consecrated.

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