HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

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India Before Christ

In order to understand the History of Indian Christianity it is necessary to look into the environment in which Christianity developed in India. At the time of Jesus, India had a very flourishing civilization. It is normal for any country to claim a civilization, which started from the beginning of creation. But this is just a feature of nationalism. The reality is that there had always been civilizations in regions, which sustained life all over the world. Trade and relations between these civilizations molded the religious atmosphere of every civilization and country. India was no different.

At the time of Jesus, the Aryans were practically all over India. They had a very weak presence in South India where the Dravidians were more concentrated. By the second century BC Aryans must have reached even Sri Lanka. Aryan religion was essentially Vedic Religion. Though for the sake of pushing the date of the origin of Hinduism, Vedic religion is erroneously equated with Hinduism. Vedic religion in fact has nothing to do with Hinduism.

Vedism is a polytheistic religion brought to India around 1500 B.C.E. by the Aryans. It was the faith of nomadic warrior tribes whose gods were heroes of war and this reflected in their Scriptures. Thus, Vedic Religion was essentially a worship of the forces of nature. The famous triad gods are Indra, Agni and Varuna. Indra, the god of thunder was the king of gods. Agni, the fire god was the giver of energy and life. Surya or Varuna was the sun god. There are thirty-three gods mentioned in the Vedas. Today they are relegated to the level of secondary gods. There was no concept of Brahman. This concept of the ultimate God is nowhere found in
the Vedas. It would require extreme allegory to impose the later concepts of Para Brahman into Vedic treatments as Swami Aurobindo has done. (1). One will have to manipulate and wrench out the secret meaning and the mystic wisdom couched in allegory and parables if at all they exist. “But all cannot enter into its secret meaning.” At any rate it totally lacked the concepts of karma and reincarnation, which dominate Hinduism, as we know of today. (2)(3)

Vedism came from Persia and is a branch parallel to Zoroastrianism and Mithraism. Vedas are written in a language similar to Old Iranian, the language of Zoroastrianism's scriptures, the Avesta. (4) For lack of writing skills, these were not written down till the 2nd C BC. “The Rig Veda, the oldest of the four Vedas, was composed about 1500 B.C., and codified about 600 B.C. It is unknown when it was finally committed to writing, but this probably was at some point after 300 B.C.” (5) (6) (7)

The Vedic language is often erroneously referred to as Sanskrit. Vedas are written in Vedic language, which is very close to the Iranian languages and is almost identical with the Avestan language in which the scriptures of Zoroastrianism are written. Sanskrit on the other hand has close affinity with the Dravidian languages and was developed during the early second century AD. All the three religious branches, Vedic, Zoroastrian and Mithraism grew separately after branching out. Vedism emphasizes, nature worship and rituals involved in offering of sacrifices, magic and witchcraft.

Buddhism and Jainism developed in India around fifth century BC and are atheistic religions. They were essentially materialistic religion of action. The basic teachings of karma and reincarnations or transmigration of souls, brought into India probably by the Greeks, form the background of these religions. Under Emperor Asoka (ca. 273–232 B.C), the third Mauryan emperor, Buddhism spread far and wide; not only in India but also into neighboring countries. The Emperor Asoka built monolithic pillars with carved epigraphs crowned by capitals, rock-cut architecture, and stupas to spread the gospel. By the first century BC, Vedism, Buddhism and Jainism were the religions of the whole of India. There must have been also the Dravidian religion all over Southern India. We know very little about the nature of this religion. They had the concept of
the “God Most High” – “El Elyon” – the Parameshwara or Maheswara. Most scholars believe that the Dravidian Civilization in Moahen-Jodero and Harappa worshipped Siva as the great God who ruled the heavens and the earth. Their religion included animal sacrifice and was very similar to Judaism. Like Judaism under the judges, early Dravidians did not leave any symbols or idols or temples. Almost all sophisticated art and architecture were either Jain or Buddhist origin until 300 AD. Under the influence of other religions, Buddhism developed later into two branches - Theravada or Hinayana (Lower Vehicle) and Mahayana (Higher Vehicle). Hinayana found mostly in Sri Lanka is still atheistic in content, and Mahayana (Higher Vehicle) found in China and neighboring countries is theistic in content. Theravada Buddhism sees Buddha as a man. Gautama never claimed to be deity, but rather a "way shower." Mahayana Buddhism, however, worships Buddha as a manifestation of the divine Buddha essence. The later sect came into existence by the early second century AD and crystallized by the third century. It emphasizes salvation of sentient beings through the assistance of bodhisattvas, which later became the dominant form of Buddhism in most of Asia. (8)

Socio-Political background

Inter continental trade played a major role in the political, cultural, religious, and artistic exchanges between civilizations. These land routes were in existence for centuries. The trade routes provided much needed luxury and exotic items to other lands. Some areas controlled monopoly of certain goods, like silk by China, Spices by Western coast of India and incense by Northern India and the Arabia. Thus there were Silk routes, Spice (cloves, cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg) routes and Incense routes. The ancient port of Muziris was described by the Roman historian Pliny (A.D. 23-79) as the most important port in the East, and Vanji (Thiruvanijikulam) was the capital city of the Cera people. While discussing the dealings of the Phoenicians with Muziris, Pliny mentions that every year large sum of money was going to India for silk, pearls, gems and spices. He states that Malabar ships were visiting the Persian Gulf, Aden, the Red Sea and Egypt regularly. Ptolemy's mid-second century map of India (9)(10) and the apparent third century (11) Tabula Peutingeriana or Peutinger Table. (A.D. 100-160) and the Periplus (the list of ports with distances) (12) of the Erythraean Sea (AD 90) include Malabar and its port Muziris.
Diplomatic relations between India and Roman Empire existed even before the Christian era. Conquerors followed these routes to control them. The land routes were dangerous due to the presence of robbers, and later, sea routes became favorites due to its speed of transport and safety. Land transport was incredibly expensive in comparison with the sea routes. (13)

One such route was the spice route connecting Malabar Coast to Yemen, Egypt and to rest of Europe. In A.D. 45 Hippalus discovered the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean and this discovery reduced the time of transit to less than forty days. It was this route that St. Thomas took. (14) (15)

**Indo-Parthian Kingdom of Takhashila**

Following the Aryans, other invasions came along the same land route. Persian emperor Darius established two provinces in India – Gandara and Hindush. This was followed by the conquest of Alexander the Great (331 BC). The Indo Greek King Meanader I established a kingdom in Taxila in 170 BC. Sakas (Scythians), Kushans and Huns came in from Central Asia. In due course, the Parthians ended up controlling all of Bactria and extensive territories in Northern India, after fighting Kushan Emperor Kujula Kadphises, in the Gandhara region. Taxila was the meeting place of the four great civilizations of the time -- Greco-Roman, Persian, Indian, and Chinese. At that time it was the capital of Hindus – The Indus Valley.

Around 20 AD, Gondophares, one of the Parthian conquerors, declared his independence from the Parthian empire and established the Indo-Parthian kingdom in the conquered territories. The kingdom barely lasted one century. It started to fragment under Gondophares’ successor Abdagases. The northern Indian part of the kingdom was retaken by the Kushans around 75 AD. (9)

**Enter Thomas**

Judas Thomas was one of the disciples of Jesus. He is also known as Didymus, which means the Twin. Thomas means Twin in Aramaic and
Didymus means Twin in Greek. He is generally known as the Doubting Thomas since he refused to believe the resurrection unless he has verified it himself. If we apply the criteria of Rom. 10:10 Thomas was the first Christian, since he was the first person to confess that Jesus was indeed God.

His acts are not found in the Acts of the Apostles. But an apocryphal book written around 300 AD called “Acts of Thomas”, describes it with embellishments and exaggerations. It was probably written in Greek and was translated into Syriac. (16). It is also found in Latin, Armenian, Ethiopic (Coptic), and Arabic. These were written by Gnostic writers in Edessa and some scholars ascribe it to Bardaisan (155-223 AD) of Syria. Apart from embellishments and exaggerations typical of these types of writings, the context and historical facts are true. Archeology and Indian traditions substantiate the basic historic and geographic context in this book.

“This Pseudepigraphic text relates the adventures of the apostle Judas Thomas as he preaches an ascetical or encratite form of Christianity on the way to and from India. Like other apocryphal acts combining popular legend and religious propaganda, the work attempts to entertain and instruct. In addition to narratives of Thomas' adventures, its poetic and liturgical elements provide important evidence for early Syrian Christian traditions.” (17)

One of the reasons for doubting the story was the absence of any King by the name of Gondophores in India. During the last few decades a large deposit of coins turned up which clearly showed Gondophores as the Indo-Parthian King with a brother whose name was Gad as mentioned in the Acts of Thomas. The coins from Taxila with the seal and inscription of King Gundophorus read: "Maharaja - rajarajasamahata -dramia -devavrata Gundapharase". Rock stone called Takhth-i-Bahi Stone of size 17" long and 14.5" broad has this inscription: "In the twenty-sixth year of the great King Gudaphara in the year three and one hundred, in the month of Vaishakh, on the fifth day" (18)

Kerala traditions are encoded in oral traditions handed down through generations as folklore, music and drama.
• Rambaan Paattu or Thomma Parvom is a song about the Acts of Thomas written around 1600 by Rambaan Thomas. Rambaan Thomas of Malyakal Family descends from the first Bishop whom St. Thomas is said to have ordained. The poem is the oral tradition handed down through generations. It is said to have been originally written by the Rambaan Thomas, the Bishop.

• Margom Kali (Drama about the Way) and Mappila Paattu (The Songs of the Children of the King) are series of songs of the Acts of Thomas and the history of the Malabar Church. They are sung in consonance with dance forms that are typical of the Syrian Christians. Some of them are dance dramas performed in the open as part of the festivals of the church. These have no specific origin, but grew up in the course of history.

• Veeradian Paattu is sung by a local Hindu group (called Veeradians) in accompaniment of Villu - a local instrument (a stringed instrument like the bow) - during Christian festivals. This form of art also dates back to unknown period handed down through generations and modified in that process.

According to Kerala tradition Thomas landed in Cranganore in Mali Island on the present Alwaye coast in Malabar Coast, in 52 AD. It is also called Muchiri – three lips – cleft lips - as the River Periyar splits into three braches before reaching the Sea to form this island. This came to be known Muziris to the seafarers. The ruler of the Chera kingdom at that time was Udayan Cheran Athen I (page 44 of Cochin State Manual). Other names of this port are Kodungaloor, Cranganore and Maliankara. There were Jewish colonies in Malabar in the first century. Here he preached to a Jewish community who accepted Jesus as mesia and their synagogue became a Christian church. It is said that Thomas ordained one Prince Peter to be the head of the church of the Jews and left for Takshasila, (Taxila, a University City in the Indus Valley) the capital of Gondaphorus Kingdom. He established a church in that region before he traveled to other areas of India. These churches were annihilated during the invasion of Kushan and Moghal dynasty and the Christians went underground.

He returned to Kerala where he established seven and half churches with 12 Brahmin families as teachers and over 3000 converts from Kshatriyas,
Nairs and Chettiars. These new converts were called St: Thomas Christians. This church is one of the most ancient churches in Christendom. The seven churches are at Malankara, Palayur, Paravoor, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Chayal and Kollam. Apostle Thomas was martyred in Mylapore near Madras. (Tradition calls this place Kalloor - the place of rock) in Tamilnadu State, India.

“There are other facts which seem to indicate a northern locus for St. Thomas’s work. Bardaisan in his Book of Fate (AD 196) speaks of Parthian Christians living among pagans, which might be a result of the destruction of the Indian Parthian empire by Kushan invaders about AD 50. There are also said to be Christian tribes still living in north India, but holding their faith a secret from all others. For example, at Tatta in Sind (the ancient port of Pattiala at the mouth of Indus), there is a fakir community which calls itself by an Aramaic name, something like ‘Bartolmai’(Beth Thuma), and claims to have been descended from St. Thomas’s converts and to have books and relics to prove it. Unfortunately no outsider has ever been allowed to see this alleged proof.” (19)

The Problem of Brahmin presence in Kerala

One of objections of this traditional story raised recently is the problem of the presence of Brahmins in Kerala who were converted and were given the responsibility of teaching the gospel. The Namboodiri traditions of the present day traces their origins back only to the sixth century AD. That does not mean, there were no Brahmins in the first century in Kerala region. We know for certain that the Aryan conquest reached as far as Sri Lanka long before the Christian era. However the Aryans were never a controlling force economically or even intellectually until eighth century AD. There must have been a few Brahmin families, (as is true even today in the central Travancore area where Christians are concentrated) who were probably small businessmen in various parts of South India. As in all countries, it was the poor and the persecuted communities that came to faith first. I would assume that the Brahminic community of that time accepted Christianity en masse in Kerala. Conversion in early days was in community groups and families. Thus if 12 Brahmin families accepted Christianity in Malabar it cannot be an exaggeration or an impossibility. The tradition says that Thomas met these Brahmins while they were
worshipping the Sun in their traditional way. Other than that it does not directly or indirectly ascribe power or prestige to these people. By the third century when the Syrian immigration took place, since Aryans are also of the same ethnicity, their status became more pronounced. Notice that they were not the only people who were converted. The majority of the converts were Dravidians with a Dravid to Aryan ratio of 3000 to 12.

Other References to Thomas Christian Tradition

There are several references to Thomas' acts in India, which corroborates the general validity of the story.

- A Syriac document "Doctrines of the Apostles", (2nd Century AD) states, "India and all its own countries and those bordering on it, even to the farthest sea, received the Apostle's Hand of Priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was the Guide and Ruler in the Church which he built there and ministered there."

- St. Gregory of Nazianzen (AD 329-390) refers to Thomas along with other Apostles work in Contra Aranos et de Seipso Oratio
- Ambrose of Milan (AD 333-397) wrote thus: "Even to those Kingdoms which were shout out by rugged mountains became accessible to them as India to Thomas, Persia to Mathew...." Ambrose De Moribus. Brach.
- Jerome (AD 342-420) wrote thus: "Jesus dwelt in all places; with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illyricum, with Titus in Crete with Andrew in Achaia, with each apostolic man in each and all countries." epistles of Jerome. He mentions the mission of Pantaenus, a Christian philosopher sent by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria, "to preach Christ to the Brahmins and to the philosophers of India" in A.D. 190. Born a Jew, thoroughly trained in Greek philosophy, Pantaenus converted to Christianity, and was the most outstanding Christian scholar of his time. He probably was the first head of the theological college of Alexandria. He was the teacher of the great Clement. (20)
- Jacob of Sarug (451 - 521) was a Syriac ecclesiastical writer. He was educated at Edessa and became bishop of Batnæ in the year 519. He wrote hymns, - but his principal writing is a series of
metrical homilies and his contemporaries gave him the name of honour: "The flute of the Holy Ghost". Two homilies are on the Ministry of Thomas in India and repeats the evangelization of Thomas as in Acts of Thomas.

- Gregory, the Bishop of Tours (AD 538-593) in his In Gloria Martyrdom writes: "Thomas, the Apostle, according to the history of passion, is declared to have suffered in India. After a long time his body was taken into a city which they called Edessa in Syria and there buried. Therefore, in that Indian place where he first rested there is a monastery and a church of wonderful size, and carefully adorned and arrayed."

- Mar Solomon in 13th C wrote in his Book of the Bee as follows: Thomas was from Jerusalem of the tribe of Juda. He taught the Persians, Medes and the Indians; and because he baptized the daughter of the King of the Indians he stabbed him with a spear and died. Habban the merchant brought his body and laid it in Edessa, the blessed city of our Lord. Others say that he was buried in Mahluph (Mylapore) a city in the land of Indians.

**Enter Bartholomew**

There is also a tradition that the Apostle Barthemew came to India in AD 55 and preached the Gospel in the area near Kalyan, Bombay and was martyred in AD 62. (22)(23)(24)

Bar Thalomew is not really a full name. Most people think it is Nathaniel bar Thalomew – Nathaniel son of Thalmo. Tradition makes North India his missionary field and Armenia the place of his martyrdom by flaying. The only references to this effect is found in the writings of Eusebius and Jerome (340-420 AD) where they say that Pantaenus the Philosopher of Alexandrian School was asked to go to India as a teacher in the Third Century and found in India some Christians. They showed him a copy of St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, which had been brought there by St. Bartholomew.

Some scholars strongly believe that the reference of India in terms of Pantaenus is to the generic use of India, which could mean any where between Arabia Felix to Armenia. (25)
Dr. Miguana says: “… the India they refer to is without doubt Arabia Felix. The fact has been recognized by all historians since Assemani and Tillemont, and has been considered as established even by such conservative writer as Medlycott.”

However the second reference of Jerome says:

“Pantaenus, on account of the rumor of his excellent learning, was sent by Demetrius into India, that he might preach Christ among the Brahmins and philosophers of that nation” (26) (27) The mention of Brahmins certainly settles the place as India.

The area of his work is thought to be in Konkan in Maharastra. Research Historian Mascarenhas in ‘Konkanachem Christaunponn’-1929 - [Apostolic Christianity in Konkan] says: “In Tulunadu, in South Kanara, there is Kallianpur. Here Bartholomew, then popularly known as Bhetal, preached the Gospel……….. There are many names and places, words and usages in the coastal Konkan region going up to Bombay and beyond which have originated from his name Bhetal and his preaching and that Barkur which is close to Kallianpur sprung after his name Bartholomew i.e. Bar + Thulami + Ooru = and so BARKURU” (28)

“Christianity has been long established in South Kanara and its adherents are more numerous here, than any other district of India. It is certain that, foreign Christian merchants were visiting the coastal town of Kanara and during that period of commerce some priests also might have accompanied them for evangelical work. According to tradition Kanara had its first missionary the Apostle St.Bartholomew, who landed on the shores of river Swarna at Colombian or Colombo village an ancient maritime port adjacent to Kallianpur, stayed there to preach. He was popularly called Bethel and so the origin of the place Barkur……..” (29) Barkur is located in Udupi Taluk of Karnataka, India.

Bar Thalomew’s ministry extended over several regions including Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Armenia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, and on the shores of the Black Sea. He was martyred in Armenia. So it is possible that Bartholomew’s work was only for a limited time in the Konkan region.
The alternate possibility is that the name of Bar Tholomai is simply an intonational corruption of the tribal memory of Mar Thoma. This is supported by the presence of the fakir community in Sind which calls itself ‘Bartolmai’ and claims to have been descended from St. Thomas’s converts. (30) I would think this is a real possibility.

Possible route of Thomas.

Taking all the traditions and documents into account we can vaguely trace the route of Thomas in India. It covers almost all areas of India as far as China. Thomas must have traveled from Jerusalem to Yemen and must have taken a ship to Muziris in Malabar Coast. After a short initial stay, he must have traveled along the west coast of India to the city of Taxila. Here he must have stayed for at least a year or more and then proceeded to the Northern regions even unto China. At some point he returned to Ephesus to the deathbed of Mary, Mother of Jesus and then returned. I assume that this must have been around this time and so he must have traveled along the spice route from and back to China. He seems to have returned from there to the North India along Ganges area to the Kaveri River area and to Coromandel – the land of Cholas. The capital of Chola Kingdom was Urayar with its port Kaveri and the Capital of Pandian Kingdom was Madurai with its port Korkai. It is during the second visit Thomas converted the local Brahmins and Dravidians and established seven and a half churches in Chera (Kerala). There was also another minor kingdom known as Ayr (probably the present Ayroor) ruled by Vel (from which we get the word Venad.) where Thomas established his church at Nilackel. Ptolemy mentions this Kingdom as Aioi in the second century. Ayr Kingdom lasted for over a thousand years from the time of Thomas. Even today most people in this area are Christians. (59) He then returned to Coromandel Area which was probably his head quarters. We have evidence to show that he made trips between Chera, Chola and Pandya regions during this time. Dr. Farquahar gives an alternative probable route: "Apostle St. Thomas, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus sailed from Alexandria to the Indus and reached the Kings capital 'Taxila' (Presently known as Punjab) about A.D 48-49. He left Taxila when the Punjab and its capital were seized by the 'Indo-Scythian Kushans' from China about A.D 50 and went from there to 'Muziri' (Presently known as Kodungallur in Kerala) on the Malabar coast via Socotra, reaching Muziri in AD 51-52."
Evidently Thomas’ ministry covered the entire land of India over twenty years until his martyrdom in Mylapore. In AD 72 he was speared at Mylapore, Madras. The legend has that spear was inflicted on his side. He did not die instantly but crawled while bleeding through a tunnel and reached Chinnamalai and died there. His followers took his body and buried him in the tombs of the Chiefs. A merchant from Edessa in Syria who visited that region exhumed his body and took it to Syria where it was entombed in about AD 200. We could see these tombs in Mylapore and in Edessa. They were later translated from Edessa to the island of Khios in the Aegean, and from there to Ortona in Italy, where they are now.

What form of Church did Thomas Institute?

The question now is, what happened to these churches? Looking at the story of Thomas as a rationalist doubter turned believer, who unhesitatingly declared Jesus as “My Lord, and My God “, we should have no doubt about the theology of the churches he established. He certainly emphasized the God incarnate as the Jesus ben Joseph, the Carpenter, his Lord and Master. He was no Gnostic. Jesus of Nazareth was indeed God and Lord.

The first Council of the Churches at Jerusalem (49 AD) under James set the standards for gentile churches. It was Paul of Tarsus who proposed the model for Gentile Churches. The Council decided that the central core of the Gospel is not to be confused with the cultural forms of worship and life of the Christians. The Church was to interpret the Gospel, which was revealed in the Jewish cultural context to the other cultures in a culturally relevant manner. Paul illustrated the working of the model in transferring the gospel in Greco-Roman culture. This was already in process before Thomas left Jerusalem and Middle East. Thomas therefore knew the Apostolic mission and must have established norms and standards, which were culturally relevant to the Indian context. Hence we should not expect Thomas Churches of India to have the ritualism and structures of Greco-Roman or Asia Minor. There would be no church building with a cross on the top, no altars nor candles and candle stands. We should expect a replication of the events of the early Christian Churches in Jerusalem soon after the resurrection. These emphasized communal living, fellowship, sharing, singing, worship, common meals and symbolic Prasadams as
Holy Communion with God and Man. For a very long time Christianity left no artifacts. Institutionalization came most probably after a century of Christian existence. Symbols and temples came into existence as a means of communication. By AD 150 we can see abstract symbols – Siva Lingam and Omkhara etc. Sanskrit came into existence as a liturgical language.

Thomas found a people who were very similar to the Hebrews in the Dravidians who were at that time concentrated in the Southern States. We have reason to believe that at least a part of the blood of Dravidans came from Abraham through his second wife Keturah. They worshipped a God of love who was willing to die for his creation and practiced animal sacrifice for the propitiation of sins. So it was easy for Thomas to preach to the Dravidian population rather than to the Aryans. There are some who believe that one of the wise men who visited baby Jesus was from these people. Compared to the Dravid, Aryans were still pagans, worshipping the elementary forces of nature and involved deep in magic and witchcraft. This shows why Thomas had greater success in supplanting the Buddhism, Jainism and Vedism in the South rather than in the North.

The introduction of Christianity in the Indian religious arena brought forth an explosion of change, which can be easily seen by comparing the religious theology and practice before and after the arrival of St.Thomas. For some strange reason the history of religion is totally erased for the first three centuries except for few stray documents, reports of travelers, archeological and architectural evidences, artifacts and traditions. We have a lot of mythological stories in that place. History then starts only after 3rd century in Chola and Pandya regions and only after 8th century in Chera region. We can check up on any time line and see silence for this period.

Original Thomas Christians of Dravid.

In Kerala itself the first Christian Church was established among the Jews. Hence at least for these Jewish Christians, historians are of the opinion, that Thomas established the early liturgy in Aramaic (Syriac) the language spoken by Jesus and the Jews of that period. But for the Churches that he
established in his second visit among the Indians he must have used local cultural modes of worship.

**God and Trinity in Indian terms**
How would you translate the concept of God and incarnation into Indian context which never had that concept defined? Except for Dravids, there probably was no name for God. For Dravids the word translated as Isa or Maheswara – El Eylon. That was exactly the experience of Thomas when he said “My God”. How would the Apostle translate the holy Trinity, Father, Spirit and the Son in Dravidian language? Father is evidently Appan. The Aramaic female gender Holy Spirit that gives life is best translated as Amma and Son, evidently as Makan. And the original true Saiva Siddhantha was born. The correlation goes much deeper.

**Siva Kovils – Early Indian Christian Churches**
Those of us who have been collaborating closely with the Bible Translators in Africa know the innuendos of the translation. There are occasional traps in translation. It can go at a tangent and the concept can be misconstrued and misinterpreted. All the places associated with Thomas are Saivite Temples. Those who place “Hinduism” - whatever that means - to have been in existence millions of years has it that this indicate the destruction of Temples and take over of temple sites by Christians. One such series is elaborated in “The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple” (31). Mylapore Shiva Temple was most probably one of the Kovils established by Thomas and was probably his seat in the Southern India. For all probability the Saivite temples were really the original Christian Churches. They flourished for at least three centuries when Gnostics and Brahmins took over these temples and converted them to “Hindu” temples.

In the same way it is not difficult to see the distribution of the Jyotirlingas all over India fall on the route of Thomas and its density proportional to the number of years Thomas labored in those areas. Thus we have a large number of Jyotir lingams near Taxila and Tamil Nadu. All along the route of Thomas schools of theologies developed and major teachers arose from these schools in the years that followed as attempts in revival of original Christian theology.
At any rate after a million years of “Hindu” existence in India, (as is claimed) something happened in Indian religions that drastically changed its content and form during the first century. The concept of God changed completely. The lower nature gods and their worship were replaced with the concept of Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman. Nirguna Brahman is the ultimate God who cannot be comprehended, who resides in the darkness, cannot be seen or known. This God revealed himself as Saguna Brahman, who can be comprehended, seen, heard and touched and is a person, not just a force of nature. He is a person with a purpose and so created the cosmos. The concept of Trinity and the concept of Om – the Logos as the creative force of universe became part of the later Upanishadic theology. Kovils with tripartite separations of Outer Court, Inner Court and the Holies came to be prevalent. It took only two to three generations after the advent of Thomas for these to appear all over India. All these were alien concepts to Indian soil. There can be no doubt that these are the results of efforts of Thomas.

Dr. M. Deivanayagam and Dr. Devakala in their studies on “Hinduism – Dravidian Religion” - The Revival Movement of Dravidian Religion (32) mentions five new doctrines that appeared all of a sudden in the Indian religious scenario in the first century:

- **Doctrine of Avatar** - God becoming a man in order to redeem human beings. (Unborn Prime God was born in order to give us eternal pleasure)
- **Trinity or Triune doctrine** - God in triune stage - Appan, Ammai, Makan (Saivism); Siva, Vishnu, Brahma (Vaishnavism)
- **Doctrine of fulfillment of sacrifice** - The offering of sacrifice has ceased even though there is sacrificial altar in the temple. People do not offer sacrifice while they worship God.
- **Doctrine of forgiveness of sin** - There is forgiveness for the sins of human beings by the grace of God and this doctrine is totally controversial to the saying that ‘the actions of one person would definitely yield its fruits’.
- **Doctrine of bhakthi** - Appreciating the bhakthi which is in one’s heart irrespective of one’s appearance, color, culture etc. (Kannappa Nayanar)
The five doctrines mentioned above are the basic doctrines for the religion of the Tamils or the religion of the Dravidians or for the Hindu religion. These doctrines are the Taproots for Hindu religion (Saivism, Vaishnavism)."

These form the back bone of the St.Thomas Christianity or Hindu Sanadhana Dharma, the Indian Catholic Church. Thus just as Roman Catholic Church developed in the cultural context of Greco-Roman culture, Indian Catholic Church was developed in the Indian cultural context just as Thomas expected it to be. Just for the fun of it, if you remove Jesus from the Roman Catholic Church, you will probably be surprised to see the modern Hindu Sanadhana Dharama. Dr. Alexander Harris puts this as follows: (33)

“In its section on the history of the Indian Subcontinent, the Encyclopedia Britannica (1982 edition) describes major changes in the religions of India. For instance the Vedic religion underwent changes with the gradual fading out of some of the Vedic deities, and further they state that,

"The two major gods were Visnu and Siva, around whom there emerged a monotheistic trend perhaps best expressed in the Bhagavad Gita . . ."

"Sacrificial ritual was beginning to be replaced by the practice of bhakti (personal devotion), positing a personal relationship between the individual and the deity"

Thus we see a new religion arise based on a monotheistic doctrine, and God who is first called Isa.

"The cult of Siva or Saivism emerged first, and the Vishnu-Krishna cult or Vaishnavism came afterwards as an imitation or duplication. The earlier appearance of Siva is indicated in the first instance by the fact that it is he alone who is called Isa or Isvara."

and
"This peculiar character of the cult makes it permissible to infer that Siva was probably the first and only god of the monotheistic Hinduism which replaced Vedic polytheism as the highest expression of the religious sentiment of the Hindus. That is to say, originally the monotheism was unitary. In fact, even in recent times the Saivas of the south maintained that Siva was the only supreme deity."

Just as various theological stands produced various denominations and sects in the Western World in the later period, various sects were also developed in India emphasizing one or the other aspect of God and or ritual.

Saivism and Vaishnavism developed as a Bhakti movement around 6th, 7th c. A.D. in South Indian Thomas Churches. Yet in years to come these were disfigured and manipulated by Gnostics and the Aryans from Persia under the influence of Mani. Thus the modern Hinduism is an outgrowth of the Gnostic Christianity, and is a heresy of Christianity.

We can only make guesses regarding the original form of Indian Catholic Church prior to the 3rd century.

**Sivlinga – Form of the Formless**

The development of the symbols of Sivlinga and the development of Makan as Ganapathy are interesting studies in the concept developments. They also show how symbols can be misinterpreted by later generations and an edifice of myths and legends can come out of something very simple and direct. Today Sivlinga has been given a sexual interpretation assuming that it represents the penis. However any Saivite will be horrified by such a reference and will tell you that this is a misrepresentation of the concept by people who wanted to denigrate the Saivites. Since the God of creation do not have a form, the best visible representation of Invisible formless form is a formless form - the lingam. All symbols are meant to convey some deep mental and spiritual concept. These may be in sound as in languages and music, or form as in icons, idols and artifacts and architecture. Later in order to represent that this
incomprehensible God incarnated in human form a face was added to the lingam. The earliest Ekmukh lingams (Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh) are still in existence. (34)

Later another interesting representation was the placement of the Tamil Om on top of the lingam, which later led to the form of Ganapathy, the elephant faced. None of these symbolisms are found earlier than the first century AD.

Om as Logos

The study of the sacred sound Om indicates that it is the representation of the Logos concept. In fact John 1:1 is replicated in exact form in the later Indian scriptures. Surprisingly the Om is not found directly or indirectly in any document or Vedas before the advent of Thomas. The earliest direct references are found in *Prashna Upanishad* and in *Mandukya Upanishad* which were written after 150 AD. On the other hand Om is inscribed in all Kerala Christian Churches of antiquity at the entrance.

Development of Sects and Gnostic infiltration – Enter Mani

As time went on evidently new thought patterns and theologies brought in varying sects emphasizing the various aspects and rituals of the Church. This resulted in competing and practically opposing groups. Gnostic infiltration into Christianity started early - even during the Apostolic era. Simon Magnus who is revered as a saint in the Gnostic Church is referred to in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 8:9ff.). While they were thwarted off by collective churches that emphasized the historical Jesus, the Gnostics thrived in many countries, especially in Persia.

Gnosticism is a philosophical and religious movement, which started in pre-Christian times. The term is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means "knowledge". It introduced novel beliefs and new gods and goddesses who exist in “divine dimension”. They insisted on universal revelation and insisted on considering all religions as equal and the ultimate salvation being achieved through the inner knowledge or enlightenment. Some of the early Gnostics include, Simon Magnus and Simonians, Nicolaitans, Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, (130-150 AD),
Theodotus (140-160 AD), Valentinus, (140-160 AD), Heracleon, (170-180AD), and The Sethians. All these were dealt with by the early church. However, the idea that Man can become God had always been a tender spot and temptation for man from the beginning with Adam and Eve. The Gnosticism always revived.

The land route to India brought in Gnosticism into India from its homeland of Persia and impacted it to the utmost. It transformed Buddhism and Christian Churches of Inner India. Even though Gnosticism practically died out in Persia, it still survives in China and India. It is told that Bardaisan came to Kerala during AD 154 – 222. (35). We have no details about this visit. But there are evidences that indicate that Bardesai met Mani in Kerala. It was after this visit he wrote the Acts of Thomas to present Thomas as a Gnostic. Apparently his labors were not fruitful in Kerala. Since at the end of his life Bardaisen returned to Christian faith, his followers probably returned to faith or merged with Manicheans.

Mission of Bardesai was followed by the ministry of Manichean (Mani or Manes) (c.216-300 AD). “About the year 242, he undertook an extensive journey as an itinerant preacher, proclaiming himself as the "Messenger of Truth," the Paraclete promised by Christ. Traveling throughout the Persian Empire and as far as India, he gathered a considerable following.” (36). Manicheanism was centralized in Kanchipuram Pallava Dynasty of Dravidia with its capital in Kanchi known to be of the Persian race. Mani is associated with peacock and he is said to have had the ability to fly as a peacock. Probably the city of Mylapore was the headquarters of Mani also. He practically took over Thomas Churches. Some people think that it is probably this concept of Mani the Ambassador of Light, that crystallized later in the Subramaniam myth associated with Saivism.

He called himself the Prophet of Jesus and Jesus was one of the first emanations from godhead. In Mani’s own words: “At the close of King Ardashir’s years I set out to preach. I sailed to the land of the Indians. I preached to them the hope of life and I chose there a good selection.” And what did Mani teach? “The Bride is the Church, the Bride Groom is the Light Mind; the Bride is the soul and Jesus is the bridegroom! If he rise in us, we too shall live in him, if we believe in him, we shall transcend death and come to Life” (37). Mani’s work were in Chola region where he had a
great following. He removed the Jesus of Nazareth as an incarnation and replaced him with a teacher who showed the inner path to realization. (38) As a result the historical Jesus was of no consequence nor his life and death and resurrection. Gnostics differentiated Jesus from the Christ. The experience of the divine within each person was only important. As a result Inner Indian Churches became Gnostic Churches and dropped off Jesus as a whole. After returning to Persia, Mani sent his Father and one of his disciples called Thomas to India to continue to evangelize the nation. Mani was executed for heresy in Persia and all his followers in Persia went to the East – to India and China. All his apostles and his mother Mary were buried in Kashmir in a place called Barmulla. It is this last Aryan Brahminic migration that made a great difference in Indian Religious scenario. Mani’s version of the Christianity is still seen in the Gnostic Churches of America and the Church of the East which presents the Yoga of Jesus. Thus Indian Christian Churches took a new form. - the form of Sanadhana Dharma, meaning Eternal Religion – Religion that started even before Man. In the process of historic growth it became the “Hinduism” as we know today.

The early Gnostic Hidutva unleashed a war on historic Christianity - ideological, social and physical. In the North India the believers went underground as a group of Fakirs, who were sworn in secrecy as to their true identity. These Fakirs surface occasionally. Sadhu Sunder Singh report to have seen them on his journey to the Himalayas. When the poor Indian missionaries need help, they always appear from nowhere. Among the Sindhi’s of the North India there is a group called Tatanagar Fakirs, who venerate Thomas as Thuma Bhagat. (39)

It was probably during this time Pantaneus was sent to India from the School of Alexandria to counter the teachings of Mani. The Manigramakkar, a sect of Hindu Nairs found in Quilon and Mavelikara, still preserve certain Christian customs. They are said to be the descendants of those apostatized early Christians.(40)

When the cloud clears off we have a large number of sects of varying faith and practices all over India. The Inner India Churches became Gnostic (“Hinduism”) since they had little or no contact with the Christian Churches elsewhere. The Malabar Churches however because of its
geographic position was in constant contact with other churches in Alexandria, Ethiopia, Rome and Antioch through the sea route. Because of this they remained within the Apostolic traditions – the faith that was handed over once and for all at the shores of India by Apostle Thomas – as was practiced in the rest of the world especially in Alexandria, Ethiopia, Rome and Syria. By the third century while the rest of India became Hindu, Hinduism came to stay in Malabar Coast only by the eighth century. Malabar remained a safe haven for Christians for several centuries.

As a result when the Gnostic (Hindu) persecution broke out in the Chola and Pandya region, many believers fled to Malabar. One such mention is seen in the Palm Leaf documents.

“AD 293. The Vallala converts to Christianity in Kavery poopattanam were persecuted by their King. So 72 families embarked on a ship and came to Korakkeni (Kollam, Quilon) where there were Christians at that time.” (41)

This is followed by another citation, which says:

“AD 315 A certain sorcerer called Manikka Vachakar came (to Kollam) and converted back to Hinduism 116 persons belonging to eight of the 72 families from Puhur”

This story is also cited by other historians such as Moraes (42), White House (43), and Ittup (44).

Another Palm Leaf says:

“A certain sorcerer called Manikka Vachakar came to Kollam and converted back to Hinduism 116 persons belonging to 72 families from Puhur, 4 of about half a dozen families subsequently came from Coromandel Coast (perhaps from Puhur itself) and 20 families of local Christians (presumably from Quilon)” Pam-leaf quotation.

We are not sure who this Manikka Vachakar is. The mention of the term Sorcerer and the name Manikka leads us to identify this person as Gnostic.
The Manichaen cross “was brought to Kerala by Mani himself. Abandoned during the sixth century it surfaced as Marthoma Cross” (45). The impact of this Persian Gnosticism is seen in the appearance of idols and temples and an endless system of myths and legends and visions. By the end of third century most of the region beyond the Sahya Mountains became “Hindu”. It took at least three centuries more for it to reach Kerala.

The Story of Kerala.
As mentioned earlier Malabar Churches developed independent of the rest of the Indian Churches. Kerala remained unconquered by any outside forces because of its geographical position. Recent Archeological and documentary studies by Prof. George Menacheril, indicates that Aryans came to prominence in Kerala, only by 4th century or later and Hinduism only by 8th century. (46)

“It may even be that the Syriac script and liturgy - surely the Pahlavi script - were in Kerala much before the Devanagari and the Vedas found their foothold here.

In spite of the many statements in Keralolpathy (47) most historians today believe that the Parasurama story is only a legend and Brahmins arrived in Kerala for all practical purposes only in the 4th century or later, and the Brahmins or Namboodiris established dominance only around the end of the first millennium C.E”

Parasurama legend says that the seventh incarnation of Vishnu rose up the land of Kerala from Gokarnam to Kanya Kumari and gave them to Sixty-four Brahmin families. This must have been around the 4th century or even later, if the Namboodiri traditions can be trusted. This legend therefore speaks only of the historical situation of the later centuries how the Aryan Brahmins came to dominate Kerala probably as advisers to the Kings of Chera, from the Tulunad. Who were the Kings of Chera is difficult to ascertain. Until the first century till the coming of Thomas, it is certain that Buddhist Kings ruled Chera. But Buddhism disappeared from the Kerala scene altogether. Vaishanavites or Aryan Brahmins came into power only by the 6th century. Islam came into existence only by the 6th century and was never a power in Kerala. Then what was the religion of the Chera Kings? The only alternative is that they were Christians. It
points to the possibility that Mahabali whom the fifth avatar of Vishnu defeated by cheating was none other than the Christian Dravidian King “The Great Sacrifice”. This name evidently fits only Christ and Christians. His Kingdom evidently extended over three regions of India (the three worlds). Most probably the name is a generic name for Christian Kings. (The Chera King Kuru Varman-1 also known as Vyakrasenan who ruled Kerala from 40 AD to 55 AD was a Christian.) It is interesting to note that Mahabali was the grandson of Prahalada who was a staunch Vaishnavite (Brahmin?). Prahalada was the son of King Hiranyakashipu a Dravidian. Hiranyakashipu was killed by the fourth incarnation of Vishnu the Lion-Man. His brother Hiranyaksha was killed by the earlier incarnation of Vishnu, the Boar. Vishnu threw both these brothers out of the heavens where they were the gate keepers of Heaven. We know for certain that Mahabalipuram was Mahabali’s resort since every other attempt to explain the name fails. Mahabalikkara – Mavelikkara is traditionally associated with Mahabali. Incidentally Onam is the only festival, which is celebrated both by the Christians and the Hindus. If the Onam songs handed down to us from the 8th century are true, there was an egalitarian society – virtual Kingdom of God fashioned out of the early Christian Fellowship Community experiment Jerusalem. The Jerusalem experiment failed with the deceit of Aninias and Saphira and the Kerala experiment with the deceit of Vamana. With the long period of innocence Mahabali could not discern the deceit of Vamana. Kerala, during the Tamil Sangam Age (1-500 AD) was a very egalitarian society. Untouchability was unknown, manual labor was respected and women held in high esteem. The first Brahmin missionaries moved into Kerala through Tulu-naadu (Mangalore area). Thus Chera Kingdom continued as a Christian Kingdom from the first century onwards until the sixth century. Gradually the influence of the Hinduism from Chola and Pandya dislocated the Christian dynasties of Chera. With the cunningness of the Brahmin dominated Vaishnava advisors of other Kingdoms, Chera Kingdom was taken over by the Vaishnava cult finally. However one Christian Dynasty continued till the 15th century – the Villar Vattom Pana.

Even today Christians are respectfully addressed as "Nazarani mappilas", "sons of kings who follow the Nazarene" or "of the first Christian kings" (49) (50) It is actually a direct translation of the word “Israel”. If this is the intent, it means the idea of Kingdom of Priests was introduced most
probably by St. Thomas himself. Alternately, such a position came into existence because Christians were Kings in early period. The special position of Nazrani in relation to Hindu temples itself speak of the origins. Even today as a tradition, some old temples cannot open their gates, or open the holy of holies or raise the flag to start a festival without the physical presence of a Nazrani in the temple ground.

The Mahabali myth had created sensation even in the West, during the Middle Ages, as the myth of the Prestor John – a Priest King who ruled a powerful vast kingdom in India – ruling over 72 countries in three Indias. This legend says that St. Thomas travelled to India and there established a Christian community that retained many of the ideals of the original church, and which blossomed into an almost perfect Christian kingdom, ruled over by this legendary king, Prester John. A second century Peutinger Map indicates a temple not far from Muziris as “Temple Augusti” or “Temple of the Great King”. Around the middle of the 12th century, a series of letters (forged?) found their way to the court of Pope Alexander III. These letters were from the Prester himself. Apparently an emissary was sent to the King Prestor John, but he was never seen again. This mythical (mystical?) figure certainly came from Chera Kingdom as Meir Bar-Ilan points out. India is mentioned several times in these letters and the city of Kalicut is mentioned in one of the letters specifically. It specifies that he was in the land of India where the body of St. Thomas the Apostle was buried and they celebrated the memorial of Thomas on July 3rd. The letter also mentions that it is the land of the pepper and elephants.

When history finally opens, it was with Kulasekara Alwar who ruled Kerala in the 8th century. He became a devotional Vaishnavite poet. The earliest document, which tells us about the Onam festival, comes from this period. A last Perumal, Cheraman Perumal abdicated his throne in 825 AD, (some documents give it as 642-643 AD) converted to Islam and went to Mecca and died in Yemen. He divided the kingdom and gave it to his Nephews.

**AD 325 The Council of Nicea Indian representation through Bishop Johannes**
At this time the Christological discourse and controversies were raging in the West. The Council of Nicea was held to draw up the Nicean Creed in order to establish the cannon of faith. 318 bishops attended it among them was a Bishop Johannes, the Persian, for the churches of the whole of Persia and Greater India.

The Indian Church had ties with the Persian Churches right from early period. It is assumed that Indian Churches invited Persian priests to teach the Bible. The earliest bibles translated from Greek are found in Syriac. Malayalam did not have bible until recently. So it was necessary to have priests from Syria to publicly read, teach and explain the Bible to the believers. However the church administrations were completely controlled by the local elders while the clergy who were brought into the country provided the ecclesiastical services and doctrinal teachings.

**Persian Immigrations**

In AD 340 the Suraya Christians from Persia (now known as Syrian Christians) came to Malabar Coast under the leadership of a bishop by name Dawood. Later a group of immigrants under the leadership of Thomman from Persia landed in Cranganoor in AD 345. They included about 400 persons of seventy-two families of seven clans. A bishop named Mar Joseph, four priests and a few deacons were also with them. It is assumed that they came because of the Persian persecution under Zoroastrianism. There are scholars who believe that at least some of them were actually Mani followers (60) who came as a result of persecution. Other sources indicate that they were sent by the Catholicos of Jerusalem to get information about the state of the Church in Malabar. Whatever is the reason, they were received kindly by the Cheraman Perumal who gave him permission to buy land and settle down. The King also offered special privileges to him and his group. This group kept their social identity and forms the Kananaya Christians. Thomas is said to have married a local woman and hence had two groups - known as Eastern Group and the Western Group.

These Royal grants given by Cheraman Perumal, who was the ruler of Malabar, were inscribed on copper plates (Knai Thomman Cheppedu), giving Knai Thomman and his descendants seventy-two royal privileges,
in AD 345. In some places they are referred to as “Manigrama Nivasikal”. These privileges are all Royal privileges indicating equal status of the Knai Thomman with the Kings of Chera. They include: Royal robes, Royal Crown and head dress and other ornaments, authority to exact all types of taxes and act as judges over several groups of people.

This was followed by several other immigrations from Persia. In 880 AD, some Syrian Christian families led by Sabar Iso, a merchant from Persia, immigrated to Quilon. Two holy men named Mar Sapor and Mar Proth were also with them. They were twin brothers.[57]

The presence and the powers of the new comers from Persia added a new dimension to the local Christians who were already in contact with their counterparts in Persia. These ties were now strengthened. The Aryan Brahminic elements within the church itself got a privileged status within the caste system which began to appear. They now began to exchange priests, who brought with them the documents known as the bible, which were only available in Greek and Syriac. They soon incorporated the Persian way of church institution, worship and other ritualism. This gave them a unique culture, under the influence of the Syrian Church which came to be known as Syrian Christian culture. Kerala Christians came to be known as Syrian Christians not because they are from Syria, but because they followed the liturgy and customs of the Syrian Churches.

**Theophilus, The Indian**

Theophilus was a native of Maldives Islands, off Kerala coast. Emperor Constantine took him as a hostage so that the Maldives people will not plunder Roman ships as it passed that way. In Rome he became a Christian and became a Bishop. He visited India in AD 354 and noted that their worship practices differed considerably from those of other parts of the world. Particularly he noticed that Indians sang, heard the gospel and worshipped sitting down. He thought they were outrageous and ordered it changed. Probably the practice of worship standing was introduced from that time onwards.

**AD 425 Daniel, The Priest, Indian**
It may be assumed that Indians sent their priests for training and studies to Syria. There was one Daniel who translated the commentary on the Epistle to the Romans from Greek to Syriac in Edessa. He signed it as Daniel, the priest, the Indian. Ecclesiastical language of India was probably Greek and Syriac as the teaching of Bible came from there. Greek inscriptions are found on the bells of several churches.

**Cosmos Indicopleustes and Universal Christian Topology**

Around AD 522, Cosmos a rich Christian merchant from Alexandria, visited India and wrote a book called Universal Christian Topology. He describes his visit thus:

"We have found the church not destroyed, but very widely diffused and the whole world filled with the doctrine of Christ, which is being day by day propagated and the Gospel preached over the whole earth. This I have seen with my own eyes in many places and have heard narrated by others. I as a witness of truth relate: In the land of Taprobane (Srilanka), Inner India, where the Indian sea is, there is a church of Christians, with clergy and congregation of believers, though I know not if there be any Christians further in this direction. And such also is the case in the land called Male (Malabar), where the pepper grows. And in the place called Kallia (Kollam) there is a bishop appointed from Persia, as well as in the island called Dioscores (Socotra) in the same Indian Sea. The inhabitants of that island speak Greek, having been originally settled there by Ptolemies, who ruled after Alexander of Macedonia. There are clergy there also ordained and sent from Persia to minister among the people of the island, and the multitude of Christians..."

**A.D. 431 Council of Ephesus  A.D. 451 Council of Chalcedon : Nestorian Schism**

Soon after the formation of the Church, heresy and variations in teachings were in existence in one form or other, all over the world. During the Apostolic Period, they were settled with the mediation of the Apostles and Apostolic Synods and Councils. The first of the council was the council of Jerusalem where the question of gentile inclusion in the church was discussed. However after the apostolic period this continued. Even today
we have a large number of theological systems varying ever so slightly. These movements arose powerfully around 400 A.D when Christianity became free from oppression and when being a Christian became a prestige. In the year AD 425 Nestorius, a presbyter of the Church of Antioch became the Patriarch of Constantinople. He legitimately objected to the epithet of "Theokotos" or "Mother of God" as applied to Mary; since Mary was only the mother of the incarnation and not the mother who produced a God. This would imply that Mary was a Goddess. In this sense he was indeed right. However he was understood to have propounded the concept that the Logos of God indwelt Jesus the man. Thus there were two natures in Jesus at the same time. If we are to judge by the Nestorian churches of today this was a misunderstanding.

Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria opposed this dual nature concept and insisted on the unity that Jesus was perfect man and perfect God without inconsistency. The controversy reached a climax when these Patriarchs excommunicated each other. However the conduct of the Ephesus council was totally deplorable that Nestorius was not even given a hearing. By the time Nestorius arrived at Ephesus the council had voted against him and he was excommunicated and exiled. Its decision though universally accepted, the way the issue was treated is still considered deplorable. Nestorius, a genius theologian of the time was derided without even giving him a hearing.

The fight went on and in AD 451 the Nestorians claimed a victory in the council of Chaldeons. In this council it was declared that in Christ the two natures were hypostatically united, without mixture, confusion and divisibility. Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria and John the Patriarch of Antioch finally reconciled. Nestorians adopted the name Chaldeon Church and the Patriarch took the title of Patriarch of Babylon. These in fights in the Middle East and Europe had its repercussions in India too. There exists a Chaldean church with few followers even today, though majority of the Christian churches remained faithful to the declarations of Nicea and Ephesus. A copy of the pre-Diampur liturgy shows that Thomas churches considered Nestorius as one of their bishops and revered him.

A.D 510 – 1439 The Christian Dynasty of Villarvattom
By this period, the great Empire of the Chera Kingdom came to ruins and an immense number of small independent Kingdoms came into existence. Thus those areas where Christians were in prominence established themselves into Kingdoms. Christians were traditionally good statesmen and warriors. One such Kingdom was the Villarvattom Pana. This Kingdom Villarvattom Pana extended from the coastal islands of Chennamangalam, Maliankara and others to the north of and south of Udayamperoor. The capital of this kingdom was at Mahadevarpattanam (Maha Thevar = Great God = El Elyon) in the island of Chennamangalam and later it was shifted to Udayamperoor when the Arab invaders attacked the island. The Udayamperoor Church - which stands even today - was built by Raja of Villarvottam in A.D 510. There are several inscriptions in this church that supports this including the mention of one Raja Thomas who ruled in AD 900. In A.D 1330, Pope John XXII in a letter sent with Friar Jordan to the king of Vellar Vattom, address him as the successor of Raja Thomas. Pope Eugene IV addresses a Raja Thomas in A.D 1439. The papal record mentions "that there is a Kingdom twenty days journey from Cathay, of which the king and all the inhabitants are Christians, but heretics, being said to be Nestorians." "Historia de Variatate Fortunae, liv. IV, Poggi Bracciolini, Secretary to Pope Eugenius IV). It all indicates that Kerala was predominantly Christian in the First Century and was ruled by Christian Kings.

Reformation and Revival attempts in Inner Indian Churches

In the 8th c A.D, Sankara a Brahmin born of an itinerant Aryan priest, from Kerala became the champion of the philosophical system known as Advaita which became the core of Gnostic Hindu thesis. As Gnosticism took its grip on Indian Christianity, saints from both the Vaishanavite and Saivite sects made several attempts to thwart all syncretization and to bring the God of incarnation and sacrifice back in the culture. The theology presented by Ramanujam (Vishista Advaita – Modified Monism) (1011-1137 AD), Madhava (Dvaita Vada – Dualistic theism)(1197-1273 AD) and all the works of saints of the 7th to 12th century were bold attempts in reformation opposing Sankara. All the sixty three Nayanmars of Saivite persuasion, and twelve Alwars of Vaishnavite persuasion came from the Dravids. But the coming in of the Theosophical Society in the
wake of Independence Movement practically took over Hinduism away from the reach of redemption.

However we can still see the worship of Jesus embedded in the temple worship and symbolisms. One such Namavali, worships the one who was born of a virgin, circumcised, died on a cross and resurrected. It was this faith that the Tamil saints were trying to revive. (58) For other embedded mythological symbolism and theological expressions see Deivanayagam and Devakala (59)

**AD 1498 Arrival of Vasco Da Gama and Roman Catholic Mission**

Vasco Da Gama landed in Calicut in AD 1498 and this started the Colonization process of India by the Western Nations. Along with this came the religious domination of Roman Catholic Church over the independent churches of Malabar. By this time Hinduism has lost Christ. Portuguese being of Roman Catholic persuasion wanted to bring the Malabar Christians under the pontificate of Rome. According to the Roman concept the Pope of Rome is the heir to the throne of Peter and is the Vicar of the Church Universal all over the world wherever it may be. The Roman Catholicism claimed that Pope of Rome was the supreme head of all the churches of the world and Indian Churches should also submit to this supremacy if they are to remain true as Catholic Church. The first such claim came with Friar John, whom Pope John XXII ordained as Bishop of Quilon in AD 1330 when he was sent him with a letter. Friar John is reported to have come to Quilon and founded a church in Latin rite. However historically there is no evidence that he ever came to Quilon. He is said to have been martyred at Kalyan in Bombay. There were similar visits from other legations from Rome. Though these were received with Christian courtesy it did not lead to acknowledgement of Papal supremacy as expected.

**AD 1599 Synod of Diampore**

The Portuguese became powerful in certain areas of India especially in Goa and Bombay. In Jan. 1599, Alexiyodi Menessis, the Archbishop of Goa came to Cochin. Geevarghese Archdeacon was in charge of the churches in Kerala at that time. Menessis Archbishop with the colonial
power behind him used the power to get Geevarghese Archdeacon arrested and put in prison under the orders of the King of Cochin. Then he traveled extensively and influenced the leaders and people. In July 5, 1599, he called the famous Udayam Perror Council (Sunnahadose). There were 153 leaders and 660 laymen were represented in that council. Under the yoke of the Portuguese Colonial force they, accepted the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. However the sailing was not smooth for Roman church. This domination continued for over five decades. Through political influence the Synod of Diamper (Portuguese name for Udayamperoor) was held in 1599 and most of the St: Thomas Christians were brought under the Pope. During this period the Malabar Church assimilated many of the teachings and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. They burnt almost all available documents as heretic.

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“There are indeed no references to reincarnation in the Rig Veda. Or for that matter in the other Vedas (Sama, Yajur and Atharva).”

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(6). Richard K. Hines:
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(10) Ptolemy and the Southeast Coast of India http://www.nfobase.com/html/ptolemy_and_the_southeast_coas.html “The great trading post here was Muziris, Ptolemy has it connected by the Psuedostomus River to the Chera capital of Karur. The Cheras controlled the interior of the southern part of the peninsula and the lower West Coast.”

(11) http://www.nfobase.com/html/the_peutinger_table.html “What is really interesting here is the centrality of Muziris. It is marked with a big red circle. It is, indeed, the most important city east of Antioch. Yet it is not connected to anything in the interior, much less across the peninsula. To the left of Muziris is an "Augustinian temple." Many have taken this to be an old Roman structure. But that would seem odd on this decidedly Christian map.” Peutinger's Tabula was originally a long parchment map 6.80 metres by 34 centimetres.


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St. Thomas

Thoma Sleeha
Thomas was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

Mat 10:2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Mat 10:3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Mat 10:4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Thomas in Hebrew means "The Twin". So he was also known as "Didymus" which meant 'The Twin' in Greek.

The Gnostics considers Thomas as the twin brother of Jesus. We have no evidence for this in the Bible.

Early Church historian Eusebius in his "Ecclesiastical History" gives the story of how Edessa came to be Christian. Edessa was a small Kingdom in Syria and at time of Jesus Abgar Ukomo was its king. Abgar wrote a letter to Jesus as follows:

Abgar Ukomo, the toparch, to Jesus the good Savior who has appeared in the district of Jerusalem, greetings. I have heard concerning you and your cures, how they are accomplished by you without drugs and herbs ... And when I heard of all these things concerning you I decided that it is one of two things, either that you are God and came down from Heaven to do these things, or are the Son of God for doing these things. For this reason I write to beg you to hasten to me and
to heal the suffering which I have ...

Our savior replied to Abgar and the reply was sent through Ananias. The letter says as follows:

Blessed are you who believed in me, not having seen me ...
Now concerning what you wrote to me, to come to you, I must first complete here all for which I was sent, and after thus completing it be taken up to Him who sent me; and when I have been taken up, I will send to you one of my disciples to heal your suffering and give life to you and those with you.

After the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus did sent Thadues, one of the Seventy disciples to Abgar and healed him. This Thadeus was the twin brother of Thomas..

John 11:16 Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Thomas is also known as "The Doubting Thomas", because he demanded an objective proof of evidence for resurrection.
Thomas was the first disciple who confessed, Jesus as

"My God and My Lord"

In terms of Rom. 10:10 Thomas may be considered as the first Christian.

John 20:24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.
John 20:25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"
But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."
John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"
John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my
hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
John 20:28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Even though the references to Thomas are few, they are sufficient to give us insight into this great rationalist scientist. One committed he was willing to die for the cause.

So when Jesus was planning to return to Jerusalem where people waiting to kill him, Thomas volunteered and encouraged his fellow brethren to dare to accompany Jesus even to death.

John 11:16 Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus began to speak of a heavenly abode, Thomas wanted a clearer explanation of where, when and how?
John 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.
John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
John 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going."
John 14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"
John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
AD 52

Arrival of Apostle Thomas in India

Thomas was one of the disciples of Jesus. He is also known as Didymus, which means the Twin. Thomas means Twin in Aramaic and Didymus means Twin in Greek. He is generally known as the Doubting Thomas since he refused to believe the resurrection unless he has verified it himself.


But archeology and Indian traditions substantiate the basic historic events in this book.

The fragment of Acts of Thomas in Coptic
A merchant Ambassador Habbanes (This is probably a Greek pronunciation of the name Appana) bought him. If so he was probably from the Kingdom of Pandhya Empire) being sold to him by Jesus the carpenter. He was the ambassador for King Gondaphores the Indo-Parthian Kingdom of Indus Valley Area (Sind, Pakistan, Baluchistan and Afghanistan).

A 17th Century drawing of St.Thomas going with Abbanes found in Denmark

He attended the banquet at the marriage ceremony of the daughter of Cheraman Perumal (the King of the Chera Kingdom) where he came across a
Jewish girl in the King's court. During the period of seven days of his stay there, several Jewish people were converted to Christianity.

It is said that Thomas ordained one Prince Peter to be the head of the church of the Jews and left for Takshasila, (The English version of the name is Taxila which was a University City in the Indus Valley) the capital of Hondaphorus Kingdom. He established a church in that region before he traveled to other areas of India. These churches were annihilated during the invasion of Kushan and Moghal dynasty.
Traditional site where St. Thomas landed - Cranganore in Malabar coast - in 52 AD. Here he preached to a Jewish community who accepted Mesia and their synagogue became a Christian church.
The Ruins of Taxila, the Capitol of the Indo-Parthian Kingdom of Gondaphorus - now in Pakistan

The coins from Taxila with the seal and inscription of King Gudophorus as "Maharaja - rajarajasamahata -dramia -devavrata Gundapharase"
This Takhth-i-Bahi Stone 17" long and 14.5" broad has the inscription 
"In the twenty-sixth year of the great King Gudaphara in the year three and 
one hundred, in the month of Vaishakh, on the fifth day"

He returned to Kerala where he established seven and half churches with 75 Brahmin families as teachers and over 3000 converts from Kshatriyas, Nairs and Chettiar. These new converts were called St: Thomas Christians. This church is one of the most ancient churches in Christendom.

The seven churches are at 
Malankara, Palayur, Paravoor, 
Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Chayal 
and 
Kollam.
Apostle founded another church at Malayattur which is accorded the status of half church. Another tradition claims this half church as the one founded in Thiruvimuthamcode. When the christians in east coast suffered persecution St.Thomas took 64 families with him across the ghats over Aruvamozhi Pass into Venad. These were mostly converts from Chettiers of Nagercoil. The King of Thiruvimuthamcode offered them refuge. The tradition says that when the King offered them sacred ash (Vibhuthi) they refused and so these Christians came to be known as Vibhuthi Dharia Chettikal.

AD 72

Apostle St: Thomas martyred

Apostle Thomas was martyred in Mylapore near Madras. (Tradition calls this place Kalloor - the place of rock) in Tamilnadu State, India. The traditional date of martyrdom is 19th of December, 72 AD. His followers took his body and buried him in the tombs of the Chiefs. A merchant from Edessa in Syria who visited that region exhumed his body and took it to Syria where it was entombed in about AD 200. We could see these tombs in Mylapore and in Edessa.

The Church in St. Thomas Mount, Mylapore, Chennai
The tomb is found inside this church
Other References to Thomas Christian Tradition

There are several references to Thomas' acts in India, which corroborates the general validity of the story, though the Acts of Thomas is Gnostic embellished apocryphal book.

- St. Gregory of Nazianzen (AD 329-390) refers to Thomas along with other Apostles work in Contra Aranos et de Seipso Oratio
- Ambrose of Milan (AD 333-397) wrote thus: "Even to those Kingdoms which were shouted out by rugged mountains became accessible to them as India to Thomas, Persia to Mathew...." Ambrose De Moribus. Brach.
- Jerome (AD 342-420) wrote thus: "Jesus dwelt in all places; with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illyricum, with Titus in Crete with Andrew in Achaia, with each apostolic man in each and all countries." epistles of Jerome
- Gregory, the Bishop of Tours (AD 538-593) in his In Gloria Martyrdom writes: "Thomas, the Apostle, according to the history of passion, is declared to have suffered in India. After a long time his body was taken into a city which they called Edessa in Syria and there buried. Therefore, in that Indian place where he first rested there is a monastery and a church of wonderful size, and carefully adorned and arrayed."
- Mar Solomon in 13th C wrote in his Book of the Bee as follows: Thomas was from Jerusalem of the tribe of Juda. He taught the Persians, Medes and the Indians; and because he baptized the daughter of the King of the Indians he stabbed him with a spear and died. Habban the merchant brought his body and laid it in Edessa, the blessed city of our Lord. Others say that he was buried in Mahluph (Mylapore) a city in the land of Indians.
Local Traditions

- Local traditions among the Christians include the Rambaan Paattu or Thomma Parvom - a song about the Acts of Thomas written around 1600 by Rambaan Thomas. Rambaan Thomas of Malyakal Family descends from the first Bishop whom St. Thomas is said to have ordained. The poem is the oral tradition handed down through generations. It is said to have been originally written by the Rambaan Thomas, the Bishop Bishop.

- Margom Kali and Mappila Paattu are series of songs of the Acts of Thomas and the history of the Malabar Church. They are sung in consonance with dance forms that are typical of the syrian Christians. Some of them are dance dramas performed in the open as part of the festivals of the church. These have no specific origin, but grew up in the course of hisotry.

- Veeadian Paattu is sung by a local Hindu group (called Veeradians) in accompaniment of Villu - a local instrument - during Christian festivals. This form of art also dates back to unknown period handed down through generations and modified in that process.

AD 293
Immigration of Cauverypoopatanam Christians at Kollam

The Christians in the rest of the India suffered [ersecution. They therefore migrated to Malabar . One such mention is given thus: "The Vallala converts to Christianity in Kaveripoopatanam (The Puhur City of Cavery River) were
persecuted by their king. So 72 families embarked on a ship and came to Korakkeni (Kollam), where there were Christians"

From the Palm-leaf manuscript entitled Keralathil Margam Vazhiyute Avastha, The Affairs of Christianity in Kerala. This copy of the Manuscript is dated around 1806

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD 315</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reconversion of 72 families to Hinduism by Manikka Vachkar at Kollam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“A certain sorcerer called Manikka Vachakar came to Kollam and converted back to Hinduism 116 persons belonging to 72 families from Puhur, 4 of about half a dozen families subsequently came from Coromandel Coast (perhaps from Puhur itself) and 20 families of local Christians (presumably from Quilon). “

Palm-leaf quotation.

We are not sure who this Manikka Vachakar is. The mention of the term Sorcerer and the name Manikka leads us to identify this person as Manicaen, a prince of Persia and a Gnostic Chrisitan heretic. He is known to have come to India and was influenced by the Hindu and Budhist theosohies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD 325</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Council of Nicea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian representation through Bishop Johannes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

At this time the Christological discourse and counteroversies were raging in the West. The Council of Nicea was held to draw up the Nicean Creed in order to
establish the cannon of faith. 318 bishops attended it among them was a Bishop Johannes, the Persian, for the churches of the whole of Persia and Greater India.

The Indian Church had ties with the Persian Churches right from early period. It is assumed that Indian Churches invited Persian priests to teach the Bible. The earliest bibles translated from Greek are found in Syriac. Malayalam did not have bible until recently. So it was necessary to have priests from Syria to reach and explain to the believers. The church administrations were completely controlled by the local elders while the clergy who were brought into the country provided the ecclesiastical services and doctrinal teachings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD 345</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration of Knai Thomman and his retinue from Persia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A group of immigrants under the leadership of Knai Thomman from Persia landed in Cranganoor. It is assumed that they came because of the Persian persecution under Zorastrianism. Other sources indicate that they were sent by the Catholicos of Jerusalem to get information about the state of the Church in Malabar. Whatever be the reason, they were received kindly by the Cheraman Perumal who gave him permission to buy land and settle down. The King also offered special privileges to him and his group. These include all the honors to speak and to walk like a king. This copper plate was in existence till 1498. Copies of it are still found though the plates themselves are missing. This group kept their social identity and forms the Kananaya Christians. Thomas is said to have married a local woman and hence had two groups - known as Eastern Group and the Western Group.
First Tradition: Emissary

The story as stated briefly in a letter written by Mar Thoma IV, one of the bishops of the Syrian church in the eighteenth century is as follows:

"From this date (i.e. St. Thomas's death) the faithful diminished little by little in our country. At that time (4th century) St. Thomas appeared ill a vision to the Metropolitan of the town of Edessa, and said to him: "Wilt thou not help India?" and he also appeared to Abgar, king of Edessa, who was the king of the Syrians; and then by order of the king and the bishop three-hundred and thirty-six families composed of children and grown-up people, clerics, men and women, came to India under the leadership of Thomas, the Canaanite, from Canan, which is Jerusalem. All these sailed in the sea and entered Kodugalloor (Cranganore) our country. They inhabited it by special permission from the King Cheraman Perumal, who was ruling the country at that time. All this took place in A.D. 345. From that time the church of our country spread in all directions, to the numbers of 72 churches."

Another and a more detailed account of the arrival of Thomas Cana given by a 19th century writer belonging to the Syrian Christian community is given below: --

Christians of Malayalam (i.e. Malabar') were in a state of disorder for about 300 years from the time that Apostle Mar Thomas (i.e. St. Thomas) visited Malayalam and established the Faith, as it had neither head nor shepherd. But by the Grace of the Lord, the Episcopa
of the Syrian land called Uraha had a vision in his sleep, in which a person appeared to him and said, Grieve ye not for the flock that suitor and collapse in Malayalam, which I won even at the sacrifice of my life”. The Episcopa hereon awoke and at once announced the important tidings to the holy Catholic a of Jerusalem He thereon called together learned real arts (i. e., priests who are theological teachers) and others, and consulted them; and it was resolved that the respected Christian merchant Thomas of Canae residing in Jerusalem should be sent to Malayalam and the particulars ascertained through him. And thereon, lie was sent to Malayalam on a trading enterprise,

"This Thomas of Canae arrived at the Cranganore Bar and landed and saw and, from the cross they wore round the neck, recognized the Christians who were brought to follow Christ by the exertions of the apostle Mar Thomas, and who in spite of the oppressions of the heathens and heathen sovereigns continued to remain in the True Faith without any deviation. He struck their acquaintance and asked them about their past particulars and learned that their grievance was very hard on account of the want of priests and that the Church was, owing to that reason, in a tottering condition. On learning these particulars he thought delay was improper and landing his ship with the pepper etc., which he then could gather, sailed off, and by the Divine Grace, reached Jerusalem without much delay, and communicated to the Venerable tile Catholica of Jerusalem in detail all facts he had observed in Malayalam. And thereon, with the sanction of Eustathius Patriarch of Antioch, and odd persons, comprising men, women and boys, with Episcopa Joseph of Uratta and priests and deacons, were placed under the orders of the respectable merchant, Thoma of Canae, and sent off by ship to
Malayalam, with blessing. "By the Grace Almighty God all these arrived at Cranganore in Malayalam in the year our Lord, without experiencing any inconvenience of distress on the way. On this, they were received by the people of Kottakkaya I Community .... They acknowledged allegiance to Joseph Episcopa who came from Jerusalem as their metropolitan. And the affairs of the church continued to be regulated by Thoma and others. "Thoma went and obtained an interview of King Cheraman Perumal, the then ruling sovereign, who was pleased and said that he, the Lord of the land, would undoubtedly render all help. Not only was command issued to have all aid rendered to the Christians, but privileges of honour were also bestowed under title deeds with sign manual and engrossed on copper plates, the sun and moon bearing witness, to be enjoyed without any demur from any quarter as long as the sun, the moon etc. shall exist.

(quoted by Judge Ormsby in the famous Syrian 'Seminary Case.' It was produced in the Seminary Case as Exhibit)

Second Tradition: Persecution in Persia

King Shapur ruled over Persia during AD 309-379. He wanted to bring back the old Zoroastrian religion into the country. The first order was that the Christians should pay double tax in lieu of services in war. Mar. Shimum, the Catholicos of the time refused to take the order on ground that the Christians were poor and that the Bishop is not a tax collector. Consequently on Good Friday of AD 339 Mar Shimum and five bishops along with 100 clergy were executed at Susa, the capital of Elam. This was followed by severe massacre of
The colonisation of Malabar.

The Text of the Copper Plates of Cheraman Perumal, Ruler of Cranganor

conferring of privileges to Thomas Cana and the Christians

May Coquarangon be prosperous, enjoy long life and live one hundred thousand years, servant of God, strong, true, just, full of good works, reasonable, powerful, over the whole earth, happy, conquering, glorious, rightly prosperous in the ministry of God, in Malavar, in the great city of the great idol. While he reigned at the time of Mercury of February, on the seventh day of the month of March, before the full moon. The same king, Coquarangon being in Carnelur, there arrived in a ship Thomas Cananeo, a chief man, who had resolved to see the uttermost part of the east. And some men, seeing him, as he arrived, went to inform the King. And the King himself came and saw and called the said chief man Thomas, and he disembarked and came before the King, who spoke graciously to him. and to honour him he gave him in surname his own name, calling him Coquarangon Canneo. And he received this honour from the king and went to rest in his place. And the king gave him the city of Maggodayarpatanam for ever. And the said king, being in his great prosperity, went one day to hunt in the forest, and the same king surrounded the whole forest. And he called in haste for Thomas, who came and stood before the King in a lucky hour. And the king questioned the soothsayer, and the king afterwards spoke to Thomas, saying that he would build a city in that forest. And he answered to the king, first making reverance, and said, "I desire this forest
myself." And the king granted it to him and gave it fore ever. And at once, the next day, he cleared the forest and cst his eyes on it i the same year, on the eleventh of April, and gave it as an inheritance to Thomas at the time and year aforesaid, in the king's name, who laid the brick for the Church and for the house of Thomas Cananeo, and made there a city for all of them, and entered the Church and there made prayer the same day. After these things, Thomas himself went to the king; s palace and offered him presents, and afterwards he asked the king to give that land to him and to his descendants; and he measured two hundred and sixty four elephant cubits, and gave them to Thomas and his descendants for ever; and at the same time sixty two houses which immediately were erected there; and gardens and tress, with their enclosures, and with their paths and boundaries and inner yeards. And he granted them seven kinds of musical instruments, and all honours, and to speak and walk like a king, and that at weddings the women may give signal with their finger in the mouth, and he granted him distinct weight, and to adorn the ground with carpet and he granted the royal fans, and to double the dandal mark on the arm, and a royal tent in every part of the kingdom forever, and besides five tributes to Thomas and to his lineage and to his confederates, for men and for women, and for all his relatives, and his children of his law for ever. The said king

Signed

Witness these people

Codaxeri canden
Cherucara protachaten comeren - King's Chief door keeper
Areunden counden - King's counsellor
Amen Atecoutden guerulen - Captain of the Army
Chirumalappro taitiriucramen Comeren - Registrar f East side of Malavar
Preu i ualaitiataadi - singer of the King's Court
Perubal atia tacottocoude - Guard of the Gate
Bichremen Chinguen -King's Chamberlain

72 privileges
granted
by
Cheraman Perumal
to
Knai Thommen
in the Cheppedu
These Cheppeds were grants inscribed on copper plates, of several privileges, given by the ruler of malabar of the time Cheraman Perumal to Knayi Thomman in AD 345.
This Cheppedu consisted of two copper plates each about one foot long and two inches wide inscribed on both sides and tied together at its left with chains in iron. This Cheppedu was in the possession of the descendants of the Syrian colonists till the arrival of the Portugese in 1498. But it disappeared with the Portugese mysteriously soon after the Coonan Kurisu Sathyam.
* Ambari (Howdah on an elephant)
  * Ankaram (courtyard)
  * Antholam (palanquin)
  * Ammoolam (tax gathering)
    * Arpu (cheers)
* Aala vattam (Peacock feather fan)
* Aana savari (Elephant riding)
* Uchippoovu (Head Turban)
  * Kacha (Robes)
  * Kacha puram (Over coat)
  * Kankanam (Bangles)
* Kaal thala (Anklet Rings)
* Kaal chilambu (Anklets Bells)
  * Kurava (Tongue Cheers)
* Kuthirasavari (horse ride)
  * Kuzhal (Bugles)
  * Kodi (Flag)
* Kaikara (Hand Ornaments)
  * Kaithala (Bangles)
  * Cheli (a kind of tax)
* Chemkombu (another tax)
  * Chenda (Drum)
* Thamburu (String Instruments)
* Thazha kkuda (Royal Palm Umbrella)
  * Ner vaal (Straight Sword)
  * Pattu chatta (Silk Coat)
* Patturumal (Silk Handkerchief)
  * Pattumundu (Silk dothi)
  * Pakal vilakku (Day Lamp)
* Padi pura (Entry Gate House)
  * Pathakkam (Necklace)
* Panni pudava (Embroidary Robes)
  * Paravathani (Carpert)
  * Pavaada (Royal Cloth)
  * Pallakku (Palanquin)
  * Pavada (Royal Cloth)
* Panchavadyam (Five Instrument Orchestra)
* Pandal Vithanam (Pandal Decoration)
* Pathinezhu Parichamel Kathruthwam
  (Control over the 17 Low castes)
  * Maddalam (Hand Drum)
  * Manarkolam (Platforms)
    * Mudi (Crown)
* Mudikuzhabharanam (Head ornaments)
  * Mammoolam (Tax)
  * Methi ati (Wooden Chappels)
  * Raja vaadyam (Royal Orchestra)
* Raja Sankham (Irippu) (Honour to sit in court with the King)
* Rajabogham (Honor to eat with King)
  * Veena (String Instrument)
  * Deevetti (Indigenous Torch)
* Thookku manchal (Swinging Cot)
  * Thondon
  * Thoranam (Decoration)
* Thol vala (Armpit Bangle)
* Theendalkattal (untouchability)
  * Nada (Cheers)
* Nayattuhubhogam (Privilege for hunting)
AD 354
Theophilus, The Indian

Theophilus was a native of Maldive Islands, off Kerala coast. Emperor Constantine took him as a hostage so that the Maldive people will not plunder Roman ships as it passed that way. In Rome he became a Christian and became a Bishop. He visited India and noted that their worship practices
differed considerably from those of other parts of the world. Particularly he noticed that Indians sang, heard the gospel and worshipped sitting down (which is the Hindu tradition) he thought they were outrageous and ordered it changed. Probably the practice of worship standing was introduced from that time onwards.

**AD 425**

**Daniel, The Priest, Indian**

It may be assumed that Indians sent their priests for training and studies to Syria. There was one Daniel who translated the commentary on the Epistle to the Romans from Greek to Syriac in Edessa. He signed it as Daniel, the priest, the Indian. Ecclesiastical language of India was probably Greek and Syriac as the teaching of Bible came from there. Greek inscriptions are found on the bells of several churches. Until very recently the liturgy was mainly in Syriac. We maintain the flavor of this liturgy even today by retaining several Syriac phrases like Amen, Kurialaison, Brak-mar-Scoumenkalos et. and several Syrian chants.

**AD 522**

**COSMOS INDICOPLEUSTES**

**The Sailor to India**

Around AD 522, Cosmos a rich Christian merchant from Alexandria, visited India and wrote a book called Universal Christian Topology. He describes his visit thus:
"We have found the church not destroyed, but very widely diffused and the whole world filled with the doctrine of Christ, which is being day by day propagated and the Gospel preached over the whole earth. This I have seen with my own eyes in many places and have heard narrated by others. I as a witness of truth relate: In the land of Taprobane (Srilanka), Inner India, where the Indian sea is, there is a church of Christians, with clergy and congregation of believers, though I know not if there be any Christians further in this direction. And such also is the case in the land called Male (Malabar), where the pepper grows. And in the place called Kallia (Kollam) there is a bishop appointed from Persia, as well as in the island called Dioscores (Socotra) in the same Indian Sea. The inhabitants of that island speak Greek, having been originally settled there by Ptolemies, who ruled after Alexander of Macedonia. There are clergy there also ordained and sent from Persia to minister among the people of the island, and the multitude of Christians...."

A.D. 431 Council of Ephesus

A.D. 451 Council of Chalcedon

NESTORIAN SCHISM

Soon after the formation of the Church Heresy and variations in teachings were in existence in one form or other. During the Apostolic Period, they were settled with the mediation of the Apostles and Apostolic Synods and councils. The first of the council was the council of Jerusalem where the question of gentile inclusion in the church. However after the apostolic period this continued. Even today we have large number of theological systems varying ever so slightly. These movements arose powerfully around 400 A.D when Christianity became free from oppression and being a Christian became a prestige. In the year AD 425 Nestorius, a presbyter of the Church of Antioch
became the Partriarch of Constantinople. He legitimately objected to the epithet of "Theokotos" "Mother of God" as applied to Mary since Mary was only the mother of the incarnation and not the mother who produced a God. This would imply that Mary was a Goddess. (We can now see how this epithet has led to the Marialotary and all the attempts to make Mary coredemptrix and equal in status with the trinity). In this sense he was indeed right. However he was understood to have propounded the concept that the Logos of God indwelt Jesus the man. Thus there were two natures in Jesus at the same time. If we are to judge by the Nestorian churches of today this was a misunderstanding.

Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria opposed this dual nature concept and insisted on the unity that Jesus was perfect man and perfect God without inconsistency. The controversy reached a climax when these Patriarchs excommunicated each other. However the conduct of the Ephesus council was totally deplorable that Nestorius was not ever given a hearing. By the time Nestorius arrived at Ephesus the council had voted against him and he was excommunicated and exiled. Its decision though universally accepted, the way the issue was treated is still considered deplorable. The Nestorius a genius theologian of the time was derided without even giving him a hearing. Nestorius certainly foresaw the consequence of the epithet Theokotos.

The fight went on and in AD 451 the Nestorians claimed a victory in the council of Chaldeons in the year 451. In this council it was declared that in Christ the two natures were hypostatically united, without mixture, confusion and divisibility.

Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria and John the Patriarch of Antioch finally reconciled. Nestorians adopted the name Chaldeon Church and the Patriarch took the title of Patriarch of Babylon.
These infights in the Middle East and Europe had its repercussions in India too. There exists a Chaldean church with few followings even today, though majority of the Christian churches remained faithful to the declarations of Nicea and Ephesus.

A.D 510 - 1439

The Christian Dynasty of Villarvattom

By this period, the great Empire of the Chera Kingdom came to ruins and an immense number of small independent Kingdoms came into existence. Their extents were limited. Thus the areas where Christians were in prominence established themselves into Kingdoms. Christians were traditionally good statesmen and warriors. Though there might have been several such centers of strong hold of Christians in Kerala, one particular Villarvattom Kingdom is mentioned often. This Kingdom Villarvattom Pana extended from the coastal islands of Chennamangalam, Maliankara and others to the north of and south of Udayamperoor. The capital of this kingdom was at mahadevarpattanam in the island of Chennamangalam and later it was shifted to Udayamperoor when the Arab invaders attached the island. The Udayamperoor Church, which stands even today was built by Raja of Villarvottam in A.D 510. There are several inscriptions in this church that supports this including the mention of one Raja Thomas who ruled in AD 900. Pope John XXII in his letter sent with Friar Jordan address himself to the successor of Raja Thomas in A.D 1330 Later in A.D 43 Pope Eugene IV addresses to Raja Thomas in A.D 1439. The papal record mentions "that there is a Kingdom twenty days journey from Cathay, of which the king and all the inhabitants are Christians, but heretics, being said to be Nestorians." "Historia de Variatate Fortunae, liv. IV, Poggi Bracciolini , Secretary to Pope Eugenius IV) Though there are several
traditions in this regards, no details or documentation apart from scattered references and archaeological artifacts can be found.

**AD 1498**

**Arrival of Vasco Da Gama and Roman Catholic Mission**

The Arrival of Vasco Da Gama landed in Calicut and started the Colonization process of India by the Western Nations. Along with this came the religious domination of Roman Catholic Church over the independent churches of Malabar. Portuguese being of Roman Catholic persuasion wanted to bring the Malabar Christians under the pontificate of Rome. According to the Roman concept the Pope of Rome is the heir to the throne of Peter and is the Vicar of the Church Universal all over the world wherever it may be. The Roman Catholicism claimed that Pope of Rome was the supreme head of all the churches of the world and Indian Churches should also submit to this supremacy if they are to remain true as Catholic Church. The first such claim came with Friar John, whom Pope John XXII ordained as Bishop of Quilon in AD 1330 when he was sent him with a letter. Friar John is reported to have come to Quilon and founded a church in Latin rite. However historically there is no evidence that he ever came to Quilon. He is said to have been martyred at Kalyan in Bombay. There were similar visits from other legations from Rome. Though these were received with Christian courtesy it did not lead to acknowledgement of Papal supremacy as expected.
The Portuguese became powerful in certain areas of India especially in Goa and Bombay. In Jan. 1599, Alexiyodi Menessis, the Archbishop of Goa came to Cochin. Geevarghese Archdeacon was in charge of the churches in Kerala at that time. Menessis Archbishop with the colonial power behind him used the power to put Geevarghese Archdeacon arrested and put in prison under the orders of the King of Cochin. Then he traveled extensively and influenced the leaders and people. In July 5, 1599, he called the famous Udayam Perror Council (Sunnahadose). There were 153 leaders and 660 laymen were represented in that council. Under the yoke of the Portuguese Colonial force they, accepted the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. However the sailing was not smooth for Roman church. This domination continued for over five decades. Through political influence the Synod of Diamper (Portuguese name for Udayamperoor) was held in 1599 and most of the St: Thomas Christians were brought under the Pope. During this period the Malabar Church assimilated many of the teachings and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church.

Those who kept away from the Synod of Diamper continued as a small separate church in Trichur and were called the Chaldean Church. In 1653, the Nestorian church in Persia sent a bishop to Kerala. Knowing this the Portuguese authorities captured the bishop before he could land in Cochin and was imprisoned there where he died in duress. As soon as this was known, the enraged Christians in Malankara gathered under the leadership of Thomas
Archdeacon at Mattanchery Church in Kochi and the nearby market on 1653 (Makaram 3rd, Friday). They took an oath proclaiming that "We or our children and their children to all generations to come will have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church nor the Pope of Rome from now on." There were over 2000 Christians at the (Church compound. They took the oath touching the cross in the front yard of the Church. Since all the people could not touch the cross, they tied ropes from the church and every one of the 2000 held the rope or touched the cross to take the oath. Since the cross had a slight bent, this historic oath came to be known as the Koonan Kurisu Sathyam. Thus ended the five decades of supremacy of the Roman church in Malabar.

This shaking away of the yoke of Roman Catholicism was accelerated by the fact that Portuguese supremacy in the Indian Ocean was broken by the Dutch. Dutch were Protestants and gave their full support to this change over. As a result Thomas Archdeacon was ordained as the Bishop of Malabar under the name of Mar Thoma I by Mar Gregoroius the Patriarch of Jerusalem on May 22 1653 on the Day of Pentecost. (The Patriarchate of Jerusalem was part of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Mar Gregorious was the last of the Non-Chalcedonian Patriarchs of Jerusalem. He came to Malankara for this ordination. He is still remembered in the first dyptych of the Orthodox Liturgy along with Mar Ignatius, the Patriarch of Antioch, and Mar Baselius the Catholicos of the East.) Since the Antiochian Patriarchate was known to have believed the theology of Jacob Burdhana, the church came to be known as the Jacobite Church of Malabar. A minority faction still remained faithful to the Roman pontiff.
In 1772 Mar Gregorios consecrated Abraham Mar Koorilose as bishop. This was not appreciated by his fellow bishop, who hindered his ministry. Mar Koorilose eventually retired to Thozhiyur where he led a life of prayer. This church continued as an independent church since then. Three times during its lifetime the main Malankara Syrian Church found themselves without a bishop. The Thozhiyur Independent Church provided bishops for it to maintain its apostolic succession. Later it also provided a bishop for Mar Thoma Church when it found itself without a bishop even though the doctrines of Mar Thoma Church and the Thozhiyur Church are different. In return when the Thozhiyur Church was without a bishop, Mar Thoma Church provided a bishop for it. Thus Thozhiyur church became an instrument of maintaining the apostolic succession without break within the sister Malankara churches.

Until recently Thozhiyur was the only church under this Bishopric. With the increased membership additional churches are being built. Cochin currently has a new church.
The next wave of colonizers came in the East India Company. Later when the colonization became wide, the crown took over with Viceroy at New Delhi. This opened up a wave of British missionaries to India. Kerala, which now formed three Kingdoms Thiruvithamcore, Kochi and Malabar also, came under the influence of the British. There was a resident at the capitals of these states. Along with them came the Missionaries. One of the firsts to be involved with the Malabar Churches was Claudius Buchanan. Mar Divanyous was the Metropolitan of the Jacobite Church at that time. He gave a copy of the Syriac Bible to Buchannan (one of the chaplains of the East India Company employees) who got copies of it reprinted and distributed them mainly among the clergy. Finding the impact of the Bible Mar Divanyous I translated the gospels into Malayalam which Buchanan got printed in Bombay. William Baily translated the New Testament by 1829 and the whole Bible was available in Malayalam by 1841. The word of God in the hands of the common people made an impact and a surge of revival and reformation took place. This was accelerated by the presence of the British Missionaries. Among those was Dr. Hermen Gundort (Bassel Mission) who studied Malayalam and wrote the first grammar book for Malayalam.

The European Missionaries opened up several Missions fields. They Included the Danish Mission in Tamil Nadu under the leadership of Berthealonmese Segan Balgue; Baptist Mission in Calcutta under the leadership of William Carey (who started the Serampore University); London Mission Society (LMS) under the leadership of Tingle Tob in Trivandrum area, Tamil Nadu; and Bengal; Basal Mission (1834) under Samuel Hebic and Gundort in
Mangalore and surrounding areas, and in Malabar. Church of Scotland Mission and many others.

**AD 1836**

**Formation of the C.M.S Church**

The first wave of Missionary thrust to India was by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1816. Though many of the Jacobite theology was at variance with the Protestant theology there was lot of cooperation between the two groups. Among the prominent missionaries were Thomas Norton, Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn and Henry Baker, who were famous among these C.M.S. missionaries. They started the CMS Press in Kottayam in 1821, and began to publish Malayalam Bible and Christian literature for the use of common people. 1825, they published the gospel of Matthew, and in 1828, the New Testament, and in 1841, the complete bible.

The church leaders of Malankara Syrian Christian Church and C.M.S. worked together from 1816 to 1836. The Bishops of Malankara Syrian Christian Church, Pulikkottu Mar Divannaciose (1817-18), Punnatra Mar Divannaciose (1818-27) and Cheppadu Mar Divannaciose (1827-52) along with the CMS missionaries started the Seminary now known as Pazhaya Seminary (Old Seminary) for the training of the clergy in 1818. The theological differences came to surface and in January 16, 1836 there was clear rift between the Missionaries and the Syrian Churches, and CMS and the Church separated. CMS then turned to evangelization among the Hindus.

So the missionaries turned to the non-Christians and started working among them. According to a panchayat court verdict, the properties and schools which were common among the missionaries and the Malankara Syrian
Church were divided following the declaration of the church commonly known as Mavelikkara Padiyola. One group of believers and priests who believed in the reformation principles joined with the C.M.S and started the CMS church. Those who came from the Syrian Christian Church retained their identity even within the new church. Another group of believers under the leadership of Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan (1796-1845) decided to stay in Malankara Syrian Church and worked for reformation from within the church.

However as the theological controversy came to a climax, the two leaders, Palakunnathu Abraham Malpaan (Malpaan means Professor of Theology) and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpaan and their followers were dismissed from the Orthodox-Jacobite church. Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan sent his 23 year old nephew who was at that time a deacon, to Syria in 1843 and got him ordained as Bishop Mathews Mar Athanasius by the Patriarch of Antioch. Immediately on return, he was declared the Malankara Metropolitan by the decree of the King. Following this Pulikottil Joseph Ramban of the orthodox tradition went to Antioch and got himself consecrated as bishop with the name Joseph Mar Dionysios. He returned to Kerala with the Patriarch of Antioch Peter III and convened the synod of Mulamthuruthy in 1876. During this synod the church accepted the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch. Mathews Mar Athanasious died in 1877, and was succeeded by, Thomas Mar Athanasious (1879-1889). The struggle between Bishop
Athanasius and Bishop Dionysious led to the excommunication of one bishop by the other and resulted in the separation of the Malankara Syrian Church into Jacobite and Marthomite Churches. Those who supported the reformation within the church organised as Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Church as an independent church without any affiliation with any foreign patriarchate. Since the Bible in the hands of the common man in Malayalam and with large number of theologically trained clergy, it was no more necessary to have any Syrian affiliation. The liturgy was translated into Malayalam with necessary changes to reflect the reformation theology.

The changes made by Abraham Malpan in the liturgy of the Holy Communion were as follows:

i. All invocations to the saints were removed.

ii. All prayers for the dead were removed.

iii. In the prayer of consecration of the bread in Holy Communion the prayer, "Thee who holdest the extremities of the universe, I hold in my hand; Thee, who rulest the depths, I grasp with my hand", and the statement at the time of partaking of the bread, "Thee, who are God, I put into my mouth", were deleted.

iv. Instead of the prayer: "We offer into Thee, O Lord, this bloodless sacrifice (referring to the Eucharist) on behalf of Thy Holy Church which is in all the world", the following prayer was inserted: "We offer into Thee, O Lord, this prayer on behalf of Thy Holy Church which is in all the world", leaving out the words "bloodless sacrifice" and inserting instead "this prayer".

v. The declaration that "Living Sacrifice is offered" (the reference is again to the Eucharist), was changed into: "living sacrifice, which is the sacrifice of grace, peace, and
vi. The declaration: "this Eucharist is sacrifice and praise" was deleted.

vii. The declaration that “the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier of the censor” was deleted.

viii. The note that the censor should be sanctified was taken away.

ix. The prayer: “Let Him (Holy Spirit) make this bread the life-giving and saving body of Jesus Christ”, was replaced by: “Let Him (Holy Spirit) come upon and make this bread to those who partake of it, the body of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and life everlasting”. (This clearly teaches the Receptionist Theory.)

x. The prayer: "Thou are the hard rock which was set against the tomb of our Redeemer" (referring to the Eucharist bread), was replaced by: “Thou art that tested and precious hard rock rejected by the builders” (converted it into a reference to Christ).

The following changes were made to the practices of the Church:

- It was decided that the Eucharist should be administered in both kinds.
- The practice of auricular confession and obtaining absolution from the priests was abolished.
- The practice of celebrating the Eucharist when there was nobody to partake of it was abolished.

The missionary oriented Marthomite Church though started as a small church grew strong in time. The Sunday school Samajam (The institution of Sunday School) and the Suvisesha Sangham (evangelism board) have played a big
role in this reformation. Punchamannil Mammen Upadeshi, Edayaranmula Sadhu Kochu Kunju Upadeshi, Pennamma Sanyasini and several preachers led the revival in Marthoma Church at the dawn of the 20th century, In 1895, the Maramon Convention was started in the sands of Pampa, which became the biggest convention in the world.

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<tr>
<th>AD 1912 - 1972</th>
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<tr>
<td>Malankara Orthodox church</td>
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<td>Malankara Jacobite Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syro-Malankara Catholic Church</td>
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Though the acceptance of the Antiochian supremacy was expedient for those opposing the reformation, not all members of the church were happy with it. This group sent a request to the Patriarch of Syria to ordain a Catholicos for Malankara. Patriarch Abdul Messiah of that time denied the request. Few years later the next Patriarch, Abdulla came to Kerala and wanted Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysios to sign a document declaring that the Patriarch had temporal powers over the Malankara Church. Mar Dionysios refused to sign this document and he was therefore excommunicated by the Patriarch.

The church consequently split into two groups, one group supporting the Patriarch and called themselves the "Bava party" and the group of supporting Mar Dionysios called themselves the "Metran party". Following a request by Mar Dionysios in 1912 to Patriarch Mar Abdul Messiah to come to Kerala and enthrone a Catholicos in 1964 a Catholicos was ordained as Catholicos Augen I. In 1972 the "Bava party" with their own Catholicos and bishops separated themselves and formed the Malankara Orthodox Church. The Other group is known as the Malankara Syrian Church. or commonly called as Jacobite Church.
Malankara Metropolitan had deposited about 3,000 Poovarahan (gold coin currency of Kerala at that time) on 8% interest, with the British government. This deposit money is known as Vatti paanam. As the Church got separated a raging court case ensued which prolonged over many years in bitterness to both groups.

In the midst of these power struggle in AD 1930 A group of people left the Jacobite church together with Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos to join the Roman Catholic following the Syro-Malankara Rites and Liturgies. This Church is commonly known as Reeth Sabha. Later two other Bishops, Mar Savarios and Thomas Mar Diyascorus also joined with the Syro Malankara Rites.

The Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostal Movement started all over the world in a spectacular way almost simultaneously. The revival of the gifts of the holy spirit and the need for progressive sanctification was the emphasis. This was
initially objected to by all churches as they were surprised by the new phenomena. However as time went on even the most orthodox churches came to terms with the reality of the experience and its power to transform. Because of the objections within the institutional churches in its early days, many Pentecostals seperated themselves to form independent churches.

In Kerala the startum for this revival came from the MarThoma Church and the CMS Church. Henry Backer (Baker Saip) and many of the CMS missionaries gave impetus and leadership for this movement.

Among the Brahmin converts from Tamil Nadu was one priest of the CMS Church called Yoosthose Joseph. He was a scholar in the Bible and was known as Vidwan Kuty Achen. His chornological studies of the Bible led him to a conclusion that Jesus was going to return before 1871. Since the Church did not support this view he along with another Priest Koodara Pallil Thommen Kathanar started a new church called Kanneettu Revival Church. Since his predictions did not come true the church declined and died out.

The present day structure and independent Pentecostal Churches are the result of American Missions. The first effective mission of the Pentecostal teaching came through the efforts of one George Burg. He came down to Kerala and held several meetings in and around Trikannamangal, Kottarakara, Mavelikkara and Adoor in 1909. His followings were mainly from Mar Thomas Church and C.M.S church. IN 1913 Burg returned to Kerala with larger financial support and missionary personal support from the All World
Pentecostal Conference held in California (1912). The independent Pentecostal churches arose due to their efforts. In 1914 several independent Pentecostal Churches joined together in America to form the Assemblies of God Church. The new church was able to reach out to India and started several bible schools among them was the Bethel Bible School in Punalur. George Burg was followed by others like Charles Commins, Miss Browncil, Al Dwingle, and Robert Cook.

Robert Cook was one of the missionaries from Assemblies of God who came to Mulakuzha in Chengannur in 1914. Latter he started the Church of God and in 1928 started the Zion Bible School in Mulakkuzha. Among those who supported him was Pastor T.M. Varughese. Again the following came from the Syrian Christian stock.

This movement is an outgrowth of Pietism - or Holiness Movement of the early 17th Century. It originated in Germany in 1708 and were known at that time as Dunkers. It was led by Alexander Mack (1679-1735) and created such giant revivalists like Darbi, Ironside and Spurgeon. In 1897 Marthoma Church invited the great speaker Grugson as a speaker to the Maramon convention. The next year he returned as a missionary and in collaboration with David amd Nagal (Basal Mission) started the Bretheren Assembly in Kunnamkulam. The early converts who gave impetus to Brethren growth were a priest from the Mar Thoma Church one Mammen from Kumbanad.
and the Poet Laureate in Malayalam (Maha Kavi) K.V.Simon. As again the main stock came from the Mar Thoma Church.

As the pentecostal churches grew in number and strength with powerful preachers and theologians, it was time to be independent of the foreign missions. Paster K.E. Abraham who came from a Jacobite family was the leader for this freedom movement and Southern India Pentecostal Church was formed in 1925. This name was later changed in 1934 to Indian Pentecostal Church as the vision of the church expanded. In 1930 he started the Hebron Bible College in Kumbanad which remained as the main theological training center for Indian Pentecostal Church.

Indian Pentecostal Churches General Council
Indian Pentecostal Churches Kerala Council

St Thomas Evangelical Church of India

Mar Thoma Church was the result of Reformation within the Malankara Church after it shook the burden of Rome. But the many teachings of the Roman and other foreign churches still remained dormant within the church. Though there were no intermarriages between "Mar Thomites" and the "Jacobites" time could not keep them separate. Intermarriage brought in the Jacobite teachings into Marthomite laity. Thus within the church an anti-
A reformist group developed. When Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma passed away in 1947, Bishop Juhanon Mar Thoma became the Metropolitan.

Bishop Juhanon Mar Thoma being brought up by a Jacobite mother directly and indirectly subverted the reformation principles. Mar Thoma laity under the leadership of a prominent scholar and theologian K.N.Daniel opposed these moves within the church.

The main controversy were centered around:

1. Transubstantiation theory of Holy Communion. In his book on "the Holy Quarbana" Juhanon mar Thoma wrote in 1947, "the Receptionist theory accepted by the reformer Abraham Malpan, cannot be justified by the Bible or by patristic writings."
2. Juhanon Mar Thoma prayed for the dead and to the dead in several public occasions against the beliefs of the Mar Thoma Church and reformers.
3. Emphasis on rituals, candles, crosses, censors etc.
4. Whether the 66 books of the New and the Old Testaments alone are the basis of its faith or does it include rituals and practices of the church. The reformists contended that the rituals and practices couldn’t be given the status as the bible as they have been corrupted through centuries of misuse and syncretism.

The controversy took a serious turn when the opposing groups formed parties which were called Sathyopadesha Samiti (The Group of True Teachings – belonging to those who opposed reformation principles) and Pathoyopadesa Samithi (the Group of Acceptable Teachings – belonging to the reformation group)

On the 26th of January 1961 30000 Mar Thomites gathered together in Tiruvalla. There were also ministers of the Mar Thoma church present. Declaration of the formation of the church was read and all the congregation took the oath of allegiance to the declaration and formed the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India as reconstituted Mar Thoma Church on the principles of reformation held by Abraham Malpan. Following the ancient tradition of the Church of Alexandria (before 328 AD) Rev. P. John Varughese and Rev. K. N. Oommen were consecrated as Bishops by the laying on of hands by the entire body of the ministers of the church.

Kerala saw a new revival and the church grew in leaps and bounds. But by 1965 power struggles within the hierarchy broke the growth. Many who were discouraged went back to the Mar Thoma Church and many others joined the Pentecostal Churches. Those who remained grouped into two parts. One group formed a church within the church called St. Thomas Evangelical Fellowship of India and even ordained their own bishops. It pained all those who loved the reformation and the evangelical thrust the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India brought within the Malankara Syrian Christians. After a long series of efforts from the laity these differences were finally ironed out and unity returned within the Church. However the damage done by the power struggle to the early evangelistic thrust of the Church into the various parts of India will take a long time to undo.

The major contribution of the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India was its emphasis on evangelization of India as a whole.
Classification of Malankara Syrian Churches

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<tr>
<th>Eastern Syrian</th>
<th>Oriental</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Catholic (Papal)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Syro Malankara Church</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Church of the East</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malankara Syrian Church</td>
<td>(Nestorian Church)</td>
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<td>(Syrian Catholic Church)</td>
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<th>West Syrian Reformed</th>
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<td>Brothren Churches</td>
<td>Independent Pentecostal</td>
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<td>The Assemblies of God</td>
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<td><strong>The St.Thomas Evangelical</strong></td>
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<td>Church of South India</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>The MarThoma Syrian Church</strong></td>
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The reformed churches have been involved in extensive evangelization process throughout India and has non-syrian components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Syrian Orthodox</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Malabar Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur</strong></td>
<td>The Indian Orthodox Church</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Church</strong></td>
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Liturigical Traditions
of the
Malankara Syrian Christians
The Liturgy of Saint James of Jerusalem

M. M. Ninan
The basis of liturgies used by all Malankara Syrian Christian Churches of Eastern origin is the Liturgy of St. James the Just. James was the Bishop of Jerusalem soon after the formation of the Church on the Pentecost. James was the brother of Jesus who was not a believer during Jesus' lifetime and to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection. But he evidently had been a scholar in the scripture and had a prestige as a rationalist and righteous man according to the law. Jacobaya Liturgy is said to have been written by James. We should assume that as time went on this liturgy had changed its form in accordance with the times, but the basic structure remained the same. The liturgy reflects James understanding of the majesty of God (his brother). The liturgy plays a double role. First it is a worship which takes the worshipper out of the mundane world into the dimensions of spirit to worship in spirit and truth. Second it is an expression of the message of salvation conveyed through all human senses.

The Liturgy of St. James is probably the oldest of the liturgies that ever existed. It is still used, occasionally at Jerusalem and is used on St. James's day by all churches of f Byzantine tradition. In Malankara (Kerala) all Syrian and
Malankara Orthodox Churches (excluding those of Chalcedonian Orthodox) still follow this great traditional liturgy. In England this was the basis of the liturgy of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The charismatic church of the Catholic Apostolic Church (Irvingites) of the 19th century borrowed many of the great symbolism in their services. During the course of its development through the ages there had been several modifications and changes because of the impact of modernism. The variations are particularly visible in the first part of the service - the ministry of the word. This portion developed as a result of the development of heresy within the church and to define the faith of the fathers. The culmination of this part of service became the recitation of the Nicene Creed. Further variations can be seen in the various churches of Malankara and in the Churches around the world. The Mar Thoma Church for some reason removed the audible accompaniment with bells and rings. The reason for this is to be found in the reformation theology where the church repudiated the transubstantiation theory. As the priest holds the bread and wine and bring it before the congregation, there is a loud peeling of bells and thundering hailing and worship and praise which led the congregation to believe that the bread and wine have miraculously turned into the flesh and blood of Jesus. The fact that it is an enactment is lost at least at this point. It is beautiful but leads practically to a sense of idol worship. To avoid this the church removed the wordings "I carry the body and blood of Christ" and the entire accompaniment. The Mar Thoma Evangelical Church further removed the veil and the holy of holies bringing the table in the midst of the people. The concept is that the incarnation was the coming of God into the midst of his people - an old beautiful concept that echoed even in the tent temple in the desert. As a result most of the pageantry of the scene is lost. The emphasis shifted from worship to memorial of the Last Supper.

**The Scene**

Before we start looking at the details of the liturgy it is necessary to look at the settings. The whole purpose of the liturgy is worship. The worship is replicated in the image of the heavenly worship of which we have a glimpse in the book of revelations.
The setting evidently is a regal setting.

Rev 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."
Rev 4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.
Rev 4:3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.
Rev 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.
Rev 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.
Rev 4:6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.
Rev 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the
third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Rev 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Rev 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

Rev 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Isa 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

This is not the Old Testament temple worship, but the worship in heaven after the enthronement of Jesus. The madhbaha (the Holy of Holies) is usually decorated elaborately to replicate this scene. They include the Seraphim and Cherubim representation and elaborately carved candle stands etc. The thronose - the seat of God is intricately inlaid with flowery motifs and gold and silver.

**The Priest and his vestments**

The priest wears the brightly-lit royal robes and the crowns or golden covering on head because all worshipping community is a royal priesthood, King and Priests. In the Revelation picture we have the 24 elders wearing the golden crowns. As the bishops enter into the presence on behalf of the church, he covers his head. This is often criticized on the basis of the statement that a man should not cover his head. The symbolism here is far different. Bishops do not represent himself as man. He represents the church. The church is the bride of the lamb and the bride covers her head as a mark of respect to the groom - Christ. Notice that
the bishops do that only when he is facing the throne and at occasions representing the church as a whole.

He can stand before the throne of grace only because he wears the robe. This robe is not his usual human robe. It is a royal robe. No one can enter into the holy of holies with their own righteousness. Remember the parable of the King's wedding where a man entered without wearing the royal robe. This robe is the imputed of righteousness given to each believer by faith in Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
1 Pet 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Underneath these robes are the dress of the priesthood which actually represents the dress of the servants. The white robe and black string with tassels were the traditional dress of the servants of the royal household. The Christian concept of greatness is measured by the service.
Mark 9:34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.
Mark 9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

The rest of the worshipping scene is completed with the incense and the bells. As you can see what is presented here is an image of the heavenly worship in which we are taking part. This worship requires the totality of man. This can be realized only through our five senses. These five senses of communications are: Eyes that sees, Ears that hear, Nose that smells, tongues that taste and the skin that feels. In the St.Jame's liturgy we use all these five senses to communicate to us the meaning and the feeling of worship. It is for this purpose the incense, the music; the bells are all the visible symbols are emphasized. Many reformed churches like the Mar Thoma Church and the St.Thomas Evangelical Church of India have removed many of the rich symbolism. The whole purpose of the symbolism is to convey the message. The hallowness of the worship is actually enhanced through all the five senses with these additions. A deep sense of the majesty of God and the awesomeness of the Holy Mysteries which we are privileged to celebrate pervades the whole liturgy. In the Pentecostal and charismatic services, the congregation raising their hands in adoration and chanting together remedies this absence. These are different ways of experiencing the presence of God. Setting the right setting for worship is what is emphasized in the James liturgical procedures. The traditions are different. When the East meets the West, when the Orient meets the Occident, When the Orthodoxy meets Modernism they bring modifications. But let us not miss the true meaning. Let us not compromise the core.

Priest stands before the throne of God as the representative of the entire congregation. It is not only the congregation present but all the believers as one universal church are present. It is also a part of the multidimensional existence. Though we are aware only of the dimension we are in, the concept indicates the
presence of all creatures redeemed from eternity being present in the worship. What James tries to portray is the same picture as we see in Revelation. This worship is an ongoing fact in the heavenlies and we are entering into it at the worship service. We can do that because of the right we have received through the body and blood of Jesus. These are represented in the center of the table - the bread and the wine clothed in majesty.

Heb 10:17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."
Heb 10:18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.
Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,
Heb 10:20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,
Heb 10:21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
Heb 10:22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

The Heavenly Vision of Worship and Adoration
The Ministry of the Word

The Liturgy of St. James begins (after the celebrant's Prayer of Preparation) with the glorification of God as one in Trinity. It starts with the definition of God and identifies Jesus as God incarnate. It is followed by the Kauma that weaves the thread through the entire liturgy. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.." As these words are intoned, the veil of the Holy of the Holies bursts opens and we are at once aware of the majesty of God in the words of the invocation. And we are brought in the presence of the throne of Grace. The adoration of the trinity runs all through the ceremony.

The deacon reminds the congregation that the true faith had been given to the saints once for all and any alteration or change will be an anathema quoting St. Paul. Thus the congregation affirms that the Bible alone is the authority for doctrine. The reading of the epistle follows this. It is imperative that the
congregation stand to receive the gospel and the congregation responds "So we do believe and affirm." before receiving the gospel narration or teaching. After the chant of eulogy of the Word of God and adoration of the Trinity the whole congregation end in a common confession of faith in the Nicene Creed.

Here the liturgy breaks to give space for the Ministry of the Word

This is followed usually by the public confession of sins as a preparation for the Lord's Supper. In Orthodox churches private confession is required. Private confessions to the Priest is not required in the Mar Thoma Church. This was done to emphasize the fact the Priest is only a brother set apart for service. The true confession is to God. Confession should be encouraged between and within the members of the believers, which has a therapeutic value as is now known. The confession to the priest based on standard terms did not do that job. The priest can only give absolution on the basis of the word of God not on his authority.

**The Ministry of the Broken Body of Christ.**

**The Kiss of Peace – Reconciliation**

The second part of the service is the preparation for the communion. It starts with the kiss of peace. This part is important in that in forgiving each other the whole congregation becomes one body, the body of believers, the body of Christ. Before we can come together at the Lord's table we need to be reconciled with each other. So the Kiss of peace intonates "May be Peace of Christ Our Lord be with us and abide with us." As the children of God we are before the altar to
present our sacrifices of praise. If it has to be acceptable reconciliation is a pre-requisite.

Mat 5:23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,
Mat 5:24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Once the reconciliation is complete the congregation is an organic unity and forms the bride of Christ and we can "present to the Lord of all creation, the Father God, the sacrifice of grace, peace and praise in reconciliation and peace"
It is at this time the covering of the bread and wine is removed. We are now ready to partake of the table.

**Institutional Statements**

In the Anaphora, or great central prayer of the Liturgy, we are reminded of the glories of God's creation and our bounden duty to render thanks for it and for all the many blessings He showers upon us. And we join the myriad many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim singing the Hymn of Hosanna.

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the Highest !"
There is the reenactment of the institution of the Eucharist:

"This is my Body which is broken for you and given for the remission of sins"
and then the blessing of the cup :
"Our Lord on the day he was betrayed took the bread in his hands, gave thanks, hallowed, blessed and gave it to His disciples saying: Drink ye all of it; this is my Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins"

The meaning of this proclamation is interpreted into the life of the congregation as: "Thy death, we proclaim and Thy resurrection we confess !" The great prayer continues with the remembrance of the saving events of our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection, and as we contemplate His glorious second coming to judge both the living and the dead. We ask God to spare us and to receive this
sacrifice of Jesus on the Calvary as my sacrifice. The recurring call for mercy on the basis of this sacrifice in the rhythmic kurielasion continues till the end.

Then follows the Epiklesis, or invocation of the Holy Spirit, which came down upon Jesus at Jordan River, and upon the disciple on the day of Pentecost. "Send down, O Lord, elf-same Spirit, upon us and upon these gifts that this bread may be the holy Body of Christ ... and this cup may be the precious Blood of Christ" It is the indwelling of the Holy spirit that makes these common elements that are set apart to be the body of blood of Jesus for those who believe. Some churches do believe that they become in reality body and blood of Jesus. But it is not inherent in the liturgy itself. Others believe them as symbolic as the whole liturgy is a symbolic reenactment.

As the Liturgy proceeds, the priest elevates the Bread and says, "Holy things for holy persons!" This would imply that these holy elements are only for the holy people. But the response is "Only God the Father is Holy, Only God the Son is Holy, Only God the Holy Spirit is Holy." It is confession of the fact that we are all unworthy to sit at the Lord's Table. But the Priest goes on to say; "The God the father who created the universe is with you." "God the son who has redeemed us with his body is with you" "God the Holy Spirit which gives life to all is with you" It is in this presence of God in the believer that makes him worthy to receive the communion. We do not come before the throne of grace or to the Lord's Table by our own strength, but because of the presence of God within us.

**The Great Intercession**

This is followed by the great intercession. The prayers include basically church of God in all parts of the world and in particular to the church, which celebrates this memory, and in particular the congregation concerned. It then takes up the people in authority in the church its Patriarchs (Metropolitan), bishops, priests, deacons and all the people and for the needs of all. We then remember Martyrs, Saints and all our fathers who had departed in faith and ask God to give us strength to follow their footsteps.

**The Communion of Saints**

Then follows the partaking of the bread and wine as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. The form of reception varies. The traditional Malankara style is
to receive them into the mouth directly. But in other parts of the world other methods are employed. Some receive the bread in hand and some drinks the wine directly from the cup. St.Cyril's interpretation even the reception of the bread wine is symbolic of the Lordship of Jesus. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386), who was bishop of Jerusalem from 349-386, gave his famous Catechetical Lectures. According to Cyril the Holy Body is received in the hand, with the left hand making a throne for the right hand, "as for that which is to receive a King". The Precious Blood is received from the Chalice directly.

Once the communion is over the whole congregation bursts into hallelujahs. In the Last Supper Jesus himself have sung the alleluia with the disciples before they went out. In the same way the congregation carries the message with them into the world.

As one enters into the spirit of worship in the liturgy, there is a transforming effect in the believer equipping them for the world. The faith is confirmed, energy is restored, and the rite of intensification is now concluded. Looking from outside, it may look like a drama and so it is. The whole Eucharistic celebration is a message unto all that partake of it and also to those who sees it. The message of salvation is expressed through all the five senses.

The Holy Communion as a whole is a memorial of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and an affirmation of faith in looking forward to his Second Coming. It is also an act of worship wherein the 'Lamb slain before the creation' is being worshipped by the church universal in spirit and truth along with the myriad of heavenly hosts and the rest of the creations. To the partaker it is a rite of intensification. For the on looker it is a statement of the gospel - the good news of Jesus Christ delivered through all the faculties and senses. All these are attained through the ancient liturgy handed down to us by our forefathers.

**The relevance of liturgy in worship**

During the reformation, especially under the influence of Pentecostal and charismatic movement, liturgical worship had been criticized and practically abandoned by many. The influence of this can be seen in the dilution of liturgical procedures of the Mar Thoma and the St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India. These churches while holding on the core liturgy has taken out some of the visual and audible procedure. The Pentecostal churches on the other hand have rejected
the liturgical style as whole. In its stead new worship rituals have been used. Even though the original intention was to remove all rituals and rites, effectively what it did was to replace the old rites and rituals with some other form of rituals and rites. There are no bells, no incense and no colorful royal clothes. These are replaced by mesmerizing repeated chanting of music - repeated over and over again - a technique, which is familiar to the Hindu bhajans. Pastors replace priests, white flowing shirts and tongues and prophecies replace the royal robes. Thus we notice that actually nothing has changed. They both have the same purpose and structure. They are achieved in different ways. This is essentially a cultural difference and nothing else. As is well known to sociology, each culture achieves their purpose through rites and rituals and practices consciously or unconsciously in their own ways.

In all forms of worship and communication we have to use symbolism. We cannot communicate with each other and express ourselves without symbols. New and varied forms of symbols, pertaining to the senses are being developed as need arises. In all cases there lies a danger of the symbol becoming an idol. This is more so in the case of the visible symbols. All ancient religions employed these symbols.

Rom 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.
Rom 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools
Rom 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
Rom 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.
Rom 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

So Yhvh stipulated through Moses:

Deu 4:14 And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.
Deu 4:15 You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully,
Deu 4:16 so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an
image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman,
Deu 4:17 or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air,
Deu 4:18 or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below.
Deu 4:19 And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars--all the heavenly array--do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

If a symbol becomes an idol, it is time to destroy or replace it. Though this danger is less in the case of audible and verbal symbols with the exclusion of others, the damage that these symbols misunderstood is far more serious and long lasting. Just when we thought that we have found a way to worship God in Spirit and Truth, it turned out to be a false alarm too. We do not need to look far than to take a look at the damage the modern faith movements did in emphasizing this verbal and yogic worship form. The Christian Research Institute has amply documented this damage (Counterfeit Revival by Hank Hannegraph)

Evidently the mistake is not in the symbols, but in the misuse of symbols. From the Indian philosophical point of view God is Sat-Chit-Ananda Murthy - One God the embodiment of Truth, the Logos and the Joy. In Christological point of view this is the expression of God the Father, Son and the Spirit - One God who is in all and through all. Man was indeed created in the image of God. He is also a trinity - Mind, Body and Spirit. So when man worships God, he worships him in all these three dimensions. So Jesus indicates the worship to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit thus:

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.
John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

But there is also God the Son. There is also another worship - worshipping in the body to Jesus.

Christ Jesus:
Phil 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, ........
Phil 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
Phil 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
Phil 2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So we owe Mental worship in Truth to Father, Worship in the Spirit to the Holy Spirit and Bodily worship to God the Son and all these in organic unity. Only when we do that will our whole person is involved in the worship. How can the whole person be involved in the worship? When all the senses and the mind are involved we can realize it much more easily. It is this concept that is realized in the liturgy of St. James.

Not all people are able to worship in all three dimensions with their full person. Thus we see the temple worship in four stages. You can stay outside the temple premise and look at the temple. You are not a part of the worship but an alien. Then you can enter into the outer courts of the temple, make your sacrifices and wash yourself in the laver and remain there. You are saved but still did not enter in full fellowship with the congregation. This is the bodily aspect. rituals have been performed. But then you can go into the holies where the congregation is and have fellowship with the members. Even then the worship is not complete. Only when you enter into the spirit of worship and enter the holy of holies do we finally culminate the worship. So it is with liturgical worship. You can remain outside the church campus alienated and remain in the world. You can enter into the church campus and talk with those who remian there. Or you can enter into the church and be part of the congregation and take part in the worship ritual. But yet this is incomplete. Once you enter into the spirit of worship, the worship is complete.

Apart from all these, rites and rituals have a greater significance in life. They form the anchor on which traditions can be built up and values can be transferred. We build our rites and rituals ourselves. The way we celebrate, the way we pray, the times, the postures and the routines etc form a traditional pattern which is transmitted through generations. Even when they loose their content, the outer case often remains and eventually filled. If we remove the casket when we encounter the content missing, we loose the possibility of it being filled eve. The
purpose of the church service and all rituals and rites are only to provide the avenues of opportunities to worship and to grow. It provides the casket to be filled. One can go away from a church service without being touched. To remove the casket is to reduce this chance. This is the relevance of liturgical services. This need was known to Jesus when he instituted the memorial supper - the Eucharist. The Israel had festivals ordained. Early churches relied on festivals and sacraments as anchors.