

HERALD OF THE EAST

Dharmaram Journal of Chavara Studies

Volume 15, Issue 1, January-June 2023

**SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA,
FATHER OR DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH?**

Published by
Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK)
P.O. Dharmaram College
Bengaluru 560029, India
Telephone: +91 80 41 116333; Fax: +91 80 41 116000
Email: dharmaramjournals@gmail.com
www.dharmaramjournals.in; www.dvk.in

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial:	
Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Father or Doctor of the Church? <i>Naiju Jose Kalambukattu CMI</i>	3
Criteria for Declaring a Saint 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church <i>Sui Iuris</i> ' and 'Doctor of the Universal Church' and their Application on Saint Chavara <i>Francis Thonippara CMI</i>	9
Kuriakose Elias Chavara: Antiquity in His Ecclesial Contributions <i>Benny Thettayil CMI</i>	53
Doctors of the Church and Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara <i>Thomas Kollampampil CMI</i>	67
Kuriakose Elias Chavara: A True Son of the Church <i>Jossy Maria CMC</i>	79
Milestones in the Life of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara	91
Book Review	95
Book Review	101
Book Review	103

Editorial

**SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA,
FATHER OR DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH?**

Naiju Jose Kalambukattu CMI
Editor-in-Chief

The Fathers of the Church are mostly known by their saintly lives and faithfulness in receiving and imparting the deposit of the living faith to the generations. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they irrigated, built, fed, and directed the Church to the truth. At their vigilant and tireless service, the Christian practices have been shaped and the Church has been able to grow. Their lives and writings are treasures of immense spiritual value, and they are the vital source of inspiration. The study of the Fathers of the Church, their life and context helps us get acquainted with the Christian doctrine as it developed in the early centuries. We come to know the history of the Church in its formative years and the challenges it confronted. The study provides a comprehensive and integrated vision of the development of Christian theology and inspiring models of spiritual life.

The Doctors of the Church are saints whose writings or preaching are outstanding for guiding the faithful in all periods of the Church. Being open to the Spirit, they gave constant guidance to the Church and brought in renewal. They were catalysts of spiritual and ascetical life. Their lives were *classrooms* that instructed and explained the faith and traditions very vividly and witnessed the universal solidarity, reconciliation and renewal. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of “Metz Yeghern” and the proclamation of St Gregory Narek as a Doctor of the Church, Pope Francis in his message highlighted Gregory’s great sense of universal solidarity, and urged the whole humanity to take up again the path of reconciliation and peace. The current list of the Doctors of the Church up to 2019 has thirty-six of them who taught and

illuminated the minds of the faithful, guided the Church and brought in renewal.

In line with the Fathers of the Church who were the irrigators, builders and feeders of the Church, Kuriakose Elias Chavara with his apostolic zeal and pastoral vision was vigilant and prudent to nurture the faith and traditions of the Church in general and the Syro-Malabar Church in particular. His apostolic zeal and integral pastoral vision were evident as the founder of religious congregations, formator of priests, pioneer of Catholic print media, champion of education, social reformer, multi linguist, literary contributor, collaborator of women empowerment, guiding light to the families, defender of church unity, apostle of eucharist and Holy Family and above all a man of union with God who exemplified sanctity through his life.

As the author of many spiritual and liturgical works, Chavara's life and writings are priceless treasures of immense spiritual value for the generations. As the Chronicles that Chavara kept give the details of the contemporary historical details of the Church and the society, he could be compared to Eusebius of 4th century whose writings supplies the details of the writers and writings of the early centuries. Like Ephrem, the poet-theologian of 4th century, Chavara defended the orthodox faith through his poems; and he had written from an inner urge to build up the communities he founded and the Church at large. Hence, Chavara could be compared to St Paul who wrote letters to the fledgling congregations as a mechanism for further instructing and strengthening them in Christian faith.

With deep faith, he took refuge in the providence of God, and it enabled him to be creative in responding to the needs of the times with the intention of handing over the 'flame of faith' to the coming generations and thus attaining the, "sanctification of self and salvation of all". With a comprehensive pastoral vision, he was totally committed to revamp and transform the Church and the society, and he could involve in every aspect of Christian life, and the light he lit continues to shine through and beyond the ages. In all these, he gave top priority to obedience to and communion with Rome and cherished a filial attachment and great devotion to the Church as mother. In the words of Pope St John Paul II, "Today the Church solemnly recalls with love and gratitude all his efforts to resist threats of disunity and to encourage the clergy and faithful to maintain unity with the See of Peter and the

universal Church."¹ His fidelity to the Lord, for sure, commensurated with his love for the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

With a firm sense of duty towards his mother Church, without ceding to any compromise to her faith and traditions, St Kuriakose Elias Chavara with deep prayer and apostolic zeal brought in renewal and revitalization in her. Chavara was called up and anointed by the Holy Spirit with specific charisms to build up, mold and reform the Church with his orthodox teaching and orthopraxis. As the Vicar General of the Catholic Thomas Christians at the time of Roccas Schism that caused the disunity of the community, Chavara could reestablish the lost unity and instill a sense of identity in them and promote and deepen their spirituality. Chavara who laid a firm foundation for the Syro-Malabar Church, which was still in its evolving phase, has a unique position in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church, and he continues to be an inspirational model for all the generations, for his contributions are vital and outstanding. He not only renewed the Church by many spiritual pursuits and enhanced the status of the society of his time by various humanitarian projects, but also could shape and give right direction to both by his many innovative ways and activities for the times to come.

The present issue of the *Herald of the East* investigates the possibility and criteria for declaring St Kuriakose Elias Chavara as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church and a Doctor of the Universal Church. In all the entries, we make a journey through the immense and outstanding contributions of Chavara for the Church.

Francis Thonippara in his article delves on the criteria for declaring a saint as Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui iuris* and Doctor of the Universal Church and their application on St Kuriakose Elias Chavara. He presents Chavara as the second founder of the Syro-Malabar Church. He gives the details of the historical setting of the St Thomas Christians and thus provides a clearer understanding of the SMC in four periods of its development. Thonippara highlights the unique role and immense contributions of St Chavara in the SMC for its development and growth. He proves the eligibility of St Chavara to be proclaimed a 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church', for he was a servant and strong pillar of the Church. Thonippara highlights the outstanding features of the Fathers of the Church in St Chavara. In his capacity as the Vicar General, he

¹ https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19860208_stadio-kattayam.html; accessed on 02.03.2023.

promoted indigenous ecclesial leadership, and emerged as a leader of spiritual and social renaissance in Kerala. His numerous literary works nurtured the spirituality of the Malabar Church. Section B of the article seeks the criteria for declaring a saint as Doctor of the Church in the Universal Church and how to proceed with it in the case of St Chavara. In all these, the author strongly emphasizes the role of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church and urges it to exercise its role fully.

Benny Thettayil, in his article, highlights the feature of 'antiquity' in the life and ecclesial contributions of Chavara. He expounds the role of Chavara in the ecclesial formative period by becoming an exponent of pastoral awakening and ecclesial revitalization when it needed a spiritual revival. His zeal for the Church made him a strong defender of the Church for he knew its apostolic faith, traditions and history. Chavara was convinced of the apostolicity of the Syro-Malabar Church and was proud of the antiquity of its faith and tradition, and as a patriarchal figure he defended the Church and protected it from possible divisions and disputes. Nothing thwarted him from accomplishing it. Delineating the immense contributions of Chavara in spiritual, educational, ecclesial and literary realms, Thettayil urges the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church to declare Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Thomas Kollampampil depicts the Doctors of the Church as the persons guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church. Their vital contributions accelerated the organic growth of the Church in struggles and opportunities. As champions of divine wisdom and knowledge, they made the face of Christ visible at various times and places. Anointed by the Holy Spirit they transmitted the Christian faith and Tradition and built up and even reformed the Church with orthodox teachings and orthopraxis. The Doctors of the Church are the visible face of Christ to the world at all time and cultures and catalysts of spiritual and ascetical life, for they guided the faithful to Christ as the 'Star of Bethlehem' (Mt 2:9) guided the Magi to the Babe in the manger. Kollampampil affirms the exemplary life and great contributions of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara in line with the Doctors of the Church, for through him, the Holy Spirit molded the Church in its turbulent times and kept the unity of the Church. Being open to the illuminating actions of the Holy Spirit, he taught and illuminated the minds of the faithful.

Jossy Maria makes a reflection on the immense contributions of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara for the Church and its unity and growth, and

she presents him as a true son of the Church. The author situates Chavara and his contributions for the integral welfare of the Church and the society in the nineteenth century ecclesial and social background. Jossy discusses the special situation of the Kerala church at the time of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara who believed that the society would become prosperous when the families are integrated, and women's welfare has been assured and those who are at the periphery are thoroughly motivated for development. This article forms the first part of her study, and it reflects on the social vision of Chavara and the ecclesial situation in the nineteenth century Kerala, his contributions as the Vicar General of Saint Thomas Christians, and Chavara as a man of wider ecclesial vision. The author expounds how well Chavara was accepted and recognized by the people as their valiant leader and understood what he was for the Church and what he did for its growth.

In his address before the thanksgiving Holy Qurbana at St Peter's Basilica on the following day of the canonization of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara and St Euphrasia Pope Francis said, "Kuriakose Elias was a religious, both active and contemplative, who generously gave his life for the Syro-Malabar Church, putting into action the maxim 'sanctification of oneself and the salvation of others.'"² St Chavara who walked ahead of his time, in great generosity of heart and with a spirit of love, *gave his life for the Syro-Malabar Church*. As he had become a true guide and a great reformer at her service, he could be called a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church. By his outstanding contributions for the spiritual, social, cultural and educational development of the local church of his time and the times to come, he is also worthy to be proclaimed a Doctor of the Universal Church.

² *Footprints of Holiness, Souvenir of the Canonization of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara & St Euphrasia Eluvathingal (23 November 2014)*, Kakkanad: CMI Prior General House & Thaikkattukara: Mount Carmel Generalate, 2015, 10.

CRITERIA FOR DECLARING A SAINT 'FATHER OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH *SUI IURIS*' AND 'DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH' AND THEIR APPLICATION ON SAINT CHAVARA*

Francis Thonippara CMI*

Abstract: Francis Thonippara presents St Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family as the second founder of the Syro-Malabar Church. Chavara is worthy to be honoured with the title 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui iuris*' and 'Doctor of the Universal Church'. The present article has two sections; and section A presents the historical setting of the Syro-Malabar Church and the unique position of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Church. This section also analyses the criteria for declaring a Saint 'Father of the Church' in the SMC and explores the possibility of conferring the title 'Father of the SMC' on St Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Section B presents St Kuriakose Elias Chavara as an eligible candidate to be declared a Doctor of the Universal Church. The author persuades the Holy Synod of the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church to exercise its privilege and power by declaring St Kuriakose

* In preparing this paper, I am indebted to late Fr George Thanchan CMI, Fr Thomas Kollampampil CMI, Fr Benny Thettayil CMI, and Sr Sophy CMC. We, as a team, prepared a document and submitted to the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod. The present paper is a modified version of the same.

* **Fr Francis Thonippara CMI** obtained his Licentiate and Doctorate in Church History from Gregorian University, Rome. He also holds a Diploma in Archival Sciences from Vatican. He teaches Church History at DVK, Bengaluru and other theological centres. He authored and edited 14 books and published more than 100 articles. In 2019, Pope Francis nominated him as a member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, Vatican, for a period of five years. He is an active member of the Church History Association of India (CHAI) and held offices at the national and regional levels. In 2015, he organized the Catholic Historians of India and was instrumental in the formation of the Association of the Catholic Historians of India (ACHI). He was the President of DVK and Provincial Superior of CMI St Thomas Province, Kozhikode.

Elias Chavara as Father of the SMC and by recommending him to be declared a Doctor in the Universal Church.

Keywords: Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Syro-Malabar Church, Father of the Church, Doctor of the Church, Universal Church, Second Founder, Synod of Udayamperur, Vicar General, *Pazhayakoottukar*, *Puthenkoottukar*, Archdeacon of All-India, Church *sui juris*, Synod.

Introduction

Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family is a great saint of the Apostolic Church of the Saint Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church. Members of the Syro-Malabar Church preserve their Catholic faith despite the historical vicissitudes of the two thousand years. They retained and further developed communion with the Roman Pontiff and had to pay a big price to prove the orthodoxy of their faith and communion. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was a great champion of the unity of the community and Roman communion. By the canonisation of this great son of the Syro-Malabar Church on 23 November 2014, the Universal Church officially recognised his sanctity. However, his contributions to the Syro-Malabar Church in general as its second founder and his theological contributions in particular are yet to be recognised both by the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris* and by the Universal Church, which may be duly rectified by declaring him as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris* and Doctor of the Universal Church. The present work is an attempt to highlight these two possibilities in the case of Saint Chavara. As the title indicates, the presentation will have two parts, namely, Saint Chavara as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church and, as a Doctor of the Universal Church, with a clear focus on laying down certain criteria for both.

Section A

SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA, FATHER OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Criteria for Declaring a Saint Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*

1. Historical Setting of the Syro-Malabar Church

For a better understanding of our discussion on the procedures to declare Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church (SMC) or a Doctor of the Universal Church, it is good to have a clear perception of the history of the Saint Thomas Christians from which the saint hails. SMC is an ancient apostolic Church founded by Apostle Thomas and is the largest Oriental Catholic Church next to the

Ukrainian Church, numbering around five million members. It is the most vibrant Church in the Catholic communion blessed with innumerable religious and priestly vocations and many members of this ecclesial community are at the service of the Universal Church, transcending the ritual boundaries. SMC is a Church *sui juris* with Major Archiepiscopal status and, in 2017, recognising its missionary potential the all-India jurisdiction was restored to this Church. However, due to certain historical vicissitudes the Church could not produce many theological genius, till Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara who lived in the nineteenth century, may be with an exception of Mar Joseph Cariattil who lived in the second part of the eighteenth century.

Hence, the possibility of declaring a member of the SMC as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church and a Doctor of the Universal Church should be contemplated, explored, and analysed in the wider context of the tradition of the Universal Church and the adaptation of the same could be made in the context of the unique historical trajectories of the SMC. In order to enumerate the norms for declaring a member of the SMC as a Father of the Church or a Doctor of the Universal Church, we need a clearer understanding of the SMC, which may be facilitated by exploring the history of the Saint Thomas Christians in four periods of its development.

1.1. Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Period

The time limit of this period is between the first and fourth century from which we do not have many written documents regarding the history and ecclesial life of this ancient Christian community. However, the oral tradition of the apostolic origin, which is a living tradition and which is handed over from generation to generation, is associated with places, families, customs, and celebrations.

1.2. The Persian and Chaldean Period

This period spans between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries and the Church was ruled by bishops from Persia and the effective temporal administration of the Church was in the hands of Archdeacon chosen from among the native priests by the Church Assembly. He was the common head of the community and his title was Archdeacon of All-India. It was a period of rather peaceful ecclesial existence.

1.3. Latin or Western Period

Latin or Western period comprises of years between 1498 and 1896, precisely from 1599 with the Synod of Udayamperur. With the arrival of the Latin missionaries from Europe, the Indian Christians came in

contact with the Western Latin Christians. In the beginning, the relationship was cordial. However, conflicts emerged due to the high-handed interferences of the European missionaries in the day-to-day affairs of the Indian Church. The identity, individuality, and autonomy of the Apostolic Church of India had been jeopardized by the consequences of the Synod of Udayamperur in 1599 and the subsequent Coonan Cross Oath in 1653, which led to the division in the Church. The saga of efforts and struggles for protecting and living the apostolic and liturgical heritage, protest against the high-handedness of the missionaries, efforts to obtain Syrian bishops, efforts of Mar Joseph Cariattil and Fr. Thomas Paremmakkel for the reunion of Churches and to regain autonomy and identity of the Syrian Christians are prominent developments during this period. During the last phase of this period, under the able leadership of Saint Chavara as the Vicar General of the community, gave a new life to the Apostolic Church by introducing all-round reform in the Church and by founding two indigenous religious congregations, one for men and the other for women. Members of the men congregation played a pivotal role in creating in the Community a new consciousness of the need for native leadership and regaining the lost identity and autonomy of the Community.

1.4. Syro-Malabar Period

The two Vicariates, Trichur and Kottayam, were erected by the Holy See in 1887 exclusively for the Syrian Christians, but administered by the Latin bishops. This jurisdictional arrangement was altered by the subsequent establishment of Trichur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry Vicariates in 1896 and the administration was fully entrusted with the native bishops. Furthermore, in 1923, the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was re-established in view of regaining the identity and autonomy of Thomas Christians of India. Meanwhile, the life of the Church was revitalized by the foundations of various religious congregations, both for men and women. This led to the missionary expansion of the SMC outside Malabar where several Syro-Malabar centres and dioceses were established. The life of the Church during this period was marked by enhanced liturgical renewal, pastoral apostolates, educational services, seminary education, theological developments, social ministries, etc. In December 1992, the SMC was raised to Major Archiepiscopal status with the Synodal structure and other canonical provisions. Taking the national and international migration of the Syro-Malabarians into consideration, pastoral care arrangements were extended to them resulting in the consequent establishment of Syro-Malabar dioceses

within India and abroad. After long waiting and continuous requests, the All-India Jurisdiction was restored with the historic letter of Pope Francis on October 9, 2017 to the Indian Catholic bishops and with the establishment of the Eparchy of Shamshabad on 10 October 2017.

2. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and his Unique Position in the History of the SMC¹

At this juncture, we need to consider the appointment of a native clergy as Vicar General in 1861 exclusively for the Catholic Thomas Christians, which was the most crucial turning point in the evolution of the ecclesial identity of the SMC. This appointment was in the context of the Roccas Schism, which practically caused the loss of unity of the community and majority of the members of the SMC followed Mar Roccas, presuming that he was sent with the proper approval of the Pope. Saint Chavara, through his charismatic leadership, could regain the lost unity of the community. This leadership of Saint Chavara created among the members of the community a new sense of identity and a new phase of life. It is in this context that the seminal contributions of Saint Chavara, the first Vicar General of the SMC, in view of regaining autonomy, identity, and overall unity of the Syrian Christians become vital. Reviewing the further major developments in the nineteenth century in the context of the Malabar Church, Chavara's rudimentary pastoral, ecumenical, and administrative steps are considered the foundations of the future SMC, which continues to evolve. It is by taking these critical, significant, and creative ecclesial developments into consideration that we identify the nineteenth century as the formative period of the SMC as we have it today, with the Synodal structure and the Major Archiepiscopal status. Thus, there is a strong ground for recognising Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara as a Father of the SMC and his unique leadership in the theological, pastoral, ecumenical, and spiritual realms may pave the way for declaring him a Doctor of the Universal Church.

Following points make St Kuriakose Elias Chavara a unique personality in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church and based on these points we argue that St Chavara is the Second founder of the Syro-Malabar Church and thus worthy to be declared a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church and Doctor of the Universal Church. The Syro-Malabar Church of our discussion period was practically under the Varapuzha

¹ For a detailed discussion of the same topic, refer part 3 of the same article, subtitled *Eligibility of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara to be a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church* from point 1 to point 2.2.8.3.

jurisdiction of the Propaganda missionary system and the Carmelites were the Vicars Apostolic and missionaries.

In order to consider St Chavara the second founder of the Syro-Malabar Church, one should understand the unique role of St Chavara in the establishment of the Mannanam monastery in 1831. One of the intentions of St Chavara during the celebration of his first Holy Qurbana in 1829 was the earnest prayer for the realisation of monastic life among the St Thomas Christians.² The establishment of the monasteries reawakened the identity consciousness of the Syro-Malabar Community and the members of the CMI Congregation took the leadership in preparing the people to demand native bishops. One could with full certainty assert that the actual re-founding of the Syro-Malabar Church took place with the establishment of the monasteries under the charismatic leadership of St Chavara.

Experiencing the urgent need of enlightened priests in the SMC, the founding fathers of the Mannanam monastery started a seminary at Mannanam in 1833 even before an organized community life was begun. Later on, seminaries were started at Vazhakulam in 1866, at Elthuruth in 1868 and at Pulinkunnu in 1872. Thus, monasteries became centres of learning and spirituality.

In the caste-ridden society of Kerala no proper attention was given to the mission work among the low castes till the nineteenth century. The Syrian Christians in general were not very much for undertaking mission work among the low castes, Dalits, etc. The catechumenate at Mannanam established in 1853 was a breakthrough for the missionary apostolate of the Syro-Malabar Church among the low castes. Even before establishing a monastery in Chethipuzha, efforts have been made to accommodate the new converts in the same premises³. There were catechumenates attached to the monasteries and through them the dormant missionary zeal of the Syro-Malabarians found new life and the rays of this enkindled missionary zeal is found among the members of the Syro-Malabar Church even today as we come across them all over the world as missionaries.

² *Positio super Introductione Cause et super Virtutibus ex Officio Concinnata*, Vatican, 1977, 401, fn.40.

³ Bernard, *CMI Sabha Adhya Dashakangalil*, 1908, Reprint 1989, Kochi: P.G. House, 181.

St Chavara understood the importance of education in transforming the society and he was aware of the negative impact of the lack of English education for the members of the SMC. He had great desire for establishing a university college for promoting English education. He could be satisfied for the time being with the establishment of a Sanskrit school in 1846 at Mannanam. He sent circulars to all the parish priests to establish schools attached to the churches and thereby popularised the education.

To deepen the knowledge of the faithful in the Sacred Scripture and to spread the devotional literature, it was decided to start a printing press at Mannanam. The establishment of the printing press at Mannanam in 1846 and the publication of books and pious literature really helped the spiritual renewal of the Syro-Malabar Community. The first book printed at Mannanam was *Jnanapeeyusham*, which was a basic catechism text book for the Syro-Malabar Community.

The canonical foundation of the CMI Congregation in 1855 and the foundation of the first convent at Koonammavu for women in 1866 (CMC) by Fr Chavara assisted by Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD had been landmarks in the history of the Christian religion in India.

St Chavara was aware of the importance of the reunion of all the churches of St Thomas tradition as is clear from one of the letters he had written to the Prefect of the Propaganda Congregation in 1859. Here he suggested to separate the Syro-Malabar Catholics from Propaganda jurisdiction of Varapuzha Vicariate. One of the reasons he alluded to, was that it would facilitate the reunion of the separated communities.⁴ The CMI fathers after sixty-two years took the lead in bringing back a section of Jacobites into the Catholic Church and finally in 1930 they reunited with the Catholic Church under the leadership of Mar Ivanios and thus the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy was established in 1932. Here it is worth quoting the popular saying among the St Thomas Christians: "If the Congregation (CMI) had been started two centuries earlier, the division of the Community into *Pazhayakoottukar* and *Puthenkoottukar* would not have taken place as a result of the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653."

St Chavara himself had started a charitable organization in 1869 with the cooperation of the people of Chennankary parish at Kainakary and

⁴ Bernard, *CMI Sabha Adhya Dashakangalil*, 22.

developed an institute called *Upavishala* (House of Charity) for the service of the poor, destitute and old people.⁵

The arrival of the Chaldean bishop Roccas in 1861 divided the Syro-Malabar Community and a good number of churches followed bishop Roccas believing that he was sent by proper ecclesiastical authorities. The Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha understood the unique influence and undisputed leadership of St Chavara on the Christian Community and he was made the Vicar General to fight against Roccas and to bring unity in the Church. St Chavara succeeded in his mission and in appreciation of his great achievement, there was move even to make him the bishop of the Syro-Malabar Community, which remained as a dream.

The aim of the founding fathers of the CMI Congregation was the spiritual renewal and the reawakening of the spiritually and socially dormant Syro-Malabar Church. For this purpose from the very foundation of the Mannanam monastery, the CMI fathers visited the parishes and preached the Word of God on Sundays and days of obligation and explained to the faithful the basic Christian doctrines and clarified their doubts. Bishop Ludvic Martin, the Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha, appointed St Chavara and the priests from the Mannanam monastery as retreat preachers both in the Syriac and Latin parishes. As the Vicar General, St Chavara took keen interest in visiting the parishes and instructed to establish catechism school attached to each parish. Parishes were divided and put under different districts and a member of the CMI Congregation was responsible for each district.

Chavarul, Testament of a Loving Father, was written by St Chavara in 1868 and it was addressed to the parishioners of Chennankari and its content is relevant to all the families. It is a *magna carta* of the theology of family life and it lays a solid and sound foundation to the family life of the children of God and for the renewal of families and the upbringing of the children. It offers a programme for the renewal and sustenance of Christian families. This Testament is relevant even in contemporary societies.

It is worth mentioning the titles given to St Chavara by different authorities. "*Innu Malayalathinte Kodi Veenu*" (the flag staff of Kerala has fallen today). With these introductory words the prominent preacher of Kerala, Fr Mathai Kappil began his funeral oration of St Chavara. In the

⁵ 175 Years, 1831-2006, *Carmelites of Mary Immaculate*, Kakkanad: Chavara Hills, 2007, 24.

CMC Chronicle at Koonammavu St Chavara is described as the "pillar of the Catholic Church". In the same Chronicle again we read "St Chavara as light and mirror". In the words of Bishop Marcellinose, St Chavara is a "flower that blossomed at Mannanam". Elthuruth monastery Chronicle describes St Chavara as *Jnanadeepam*, beacon light of wisdom. Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD, the confessor of St Chavara writes the following on the day of the death of St Chavara: "O! Holy and beautiful Soul! Pray for me". One biographer describes him as the "unordained bishop of the Syriac Christians". Fr Kuriakose Eliswa Porukkara, the successor of St Chavara depicts him as the "Ark of Noha of the Syro-Malabar Church". The main reasons for these qualifications are the great work done by him to send back bishop Roccas and the resulting unity in the Church.

Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, the former Archbishop of Kottayam, compared St Chavara to St Benedict and Mannanam to Monte Cassino, and affirmed St Chavara as the pioneer of Indian monasticism and Mannanam monastery as the first Indian Christian monastery. On the occasion of the national thanksgiving ceremony held at Kakkanad, on November 29, 2014, Major Archbishop George Cardinal Alencherry said: "St Chavara played a unique role in the process of the restoration of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy and the constitution of the Major Archiepiscopal Church. In this historical evolution St Chavara is the last link."⁶ Joseph Kallarangatt, an ecclesiologist and bishop of Pala, concludes his evaluation of the contributions of St Chavara in the following words: "St. Chavara, holy, ascetic and scholar, is a great gift to the Syro-Malabar Church. He gave the leadership to the Church at a time when the Syro-Malabar Church was undergoing a crisis and it was a critical period in its history. St Chavara was a great bible scholar, linguist and an expert in liturgical matters. He was the first one to codify the breviary of the Syro-Malabar Church. Let us wish and pray that this great scholar and saintly religious may be declared a Doctor of the Church in the immediate future."⁷

⁶ *Footprints of Holiness, Souvenir of the Canonization of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara & St Euphrasia Eluvathingal (23 November 2014)*, Kakkanad: CMI Prior General House & Thaikkattukara: Mount Carmel Generalate, 2015, 16-17.

⁷ Joseph Kallarangatt, "Ella Mekhalakalilekkum Kathipadarnna Atmeeya Tejassu," (Mal.), in *Footprints of Holiness, Souvenir of the Canonization of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara & St Euphrasia Eluvathingal (23 November 2014)*,

In the light of all these developments, as we enquire the criteria for declaring a member of the SMC as a Father of the Church, we may deduce the following conclusions as norms. Surprisingly, I never come across either in the Latin Code of Canons or in the Oriental Code any reference to the norms of declaring one a Father of the Church. In the *Pastor Bonus* of Pope John Paul II of 1988, Article 73 states: "The Congregation (for the Causes of Saints) is also competent to examine what is necessary for the granting of the title of Doctor to Saints, after having received the recommendation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning outstanding teaching." In the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Francis *Praedicate Evangelium*, which replaces *Pastor Bonus* in Dicastery for the Causes of Saints Article 102 we read: "The Dicastery is also competent to make a determination regarding the granting of the title *Doctor of the Church* to a given saint, after having received the *votum* of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning his or her outstanding teaching." In the *Particular Laws* of the SMC there are provisions for conferring honorary titles to the deserving candidates of the members of the SMC like *Vaidikaratnam* (for the priests who have rendered meritorious services in pastoral ministry), *Malpan* (for those priests who have made remarkable contributions in the field of sacred theology, ecclesiology, history, etc.), and Syro-Malabar *Sabhatharam* (for the laity who have done dedicated service and outstanding ministry for the Church).⁸ There is, however, no mention of someone declaring a Father of the Church or Doctor of the Church. It is the privilege and duty of the Synod of the SMC to exercise its real power as a Church *sui juris* with Synodal structure to declare Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara as a Father of SMC. Since Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara had contributed uniquely to the re-founding of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*, there is every reason to appeal to the Holy Father to declare him a Doctor of the Universal Church.

3. Criteria for Declaring a Saint as 'Father of the Church' in the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris* and Exploring the Possibility of Conferring the Title 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church' on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara

The letter of His Beatitude George Alencherry, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, dated 22 February 2016, to Mar Kuriakose

Kakkanad: CMI Prior General House & Thaikkattukara: Mount Carmel Generalate, 2015, 95-96.

⁸ *Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Mount Saint Thomas: Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, 2013, 172.

Bharanikulangara, Convener of the Committee instituted by the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod held in January 2016, gave him the mandate "to explore the possibility of conferring the title, *Father of the Syro-Malabar Church* on Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and to define the criteria for declaring a saint 'Father of the Church'."

Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, in his letter, dated 23 March 2016, asked a sub-committee consisting of a few members of the CMI and CMC congregations to prepare a dossier, consisting of a set of criteria and its possible application upon Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara to be presented for the perusal and revision by all the members of the Synodal Committee consisting of Mar Andrews Thazhath, Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Mar Antony Kariyil, Malpan Mathew Vellanickal, and Dr Joseph Pamplany. In the same letter, it was suggested that these criteria could be identified by dwelling on (1) the theological and doctrinal bases of identifying and declaring the Fathers of the Church, (2) identifying the canonical aspects of the process of declaring a Father of the Church, and (3) the Fatherhood of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara. In response to this mandate, the following text was prepared for the consideration of the committee members.

Part 1: General Norms for Declaring a Saint 'Father of the Church'

In this part, we explore the general theological and doctrinal norms on the basis of which a saint, recognized by the Universal Church, is declared a 'Father of the Church'.

1. Process of Declaring the Fathers of the Church in History

Today, the Catholic Church is blessed with many Fathers of the Church and 38 officially declared Doctors of the Church. 'Father of the Church' is not an officially conferred title and there is no definitive list as is the case with those who are honoured with the title 'Doctor of the Church'. 'Early Church Father' is a title that gradually came to be applied to certain Christian leaders distinguished by antiquity, holiness, orthodoxy, and ecclesiastical approval.

In understanding the title 'Fathers of the Church', a note is provided by Saint Clement of Alexandria: "Words are the progeny of the soul; hence we call those that instructed us 'fathers'."⁹ Since the principal teacher of any early Christian community was its bishop, the title 'Father' was first applied to them. In fact, the bishops who gathered in the various councils of the Church were referred to as 'council fathers'.

⁹ *Stromateis* 1.1.2-2.1; see also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.41.2.

This is a reflection of the Pauline New Testament tradition: "For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel" (1 Cor 4:15). However, since many of the important early Christian teachers were laymen (e.g., Saint Justin), deacons (e.g., Saint Ephrem), and priests (e.g., Saint Jerome), it became customary from the fourth century to reckon these eminent teachers among 'the Fathers'.¹⁰ Later, when there were disputes about the interpretation of the Scripture, all the early exegetes sought 'consensus of the Fathers' in support of their points of view. The 'Fathers' here denoted the teachers of an earlier era who demonstrated how the apostolic writings in the Scripture were applied by the apostles and understood by their immediate successors. While all early Christian pastors and catechists 'fathered' their particular portion of the flock during their lifetime, only those 'Fathers' who put their teaching in writing could continue to serve as guides to the whole Church in every age.

Hence, the 'Fathers of the Church' came to refer to those important Christian writers after the New Testament era who, because of their closeness to that era, bore witness to the authentic apostolic way of interpreting the Scripture handed on to them by the Apostolic Tradition.¹¹ These writers played a crucial role in articulating and transmitting the Christian doctrine and bringing them to more mature expressions, at least in their most fundamental features. While the Church's understanding of revelation will continue to deepen until the Lord returns, the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which stand at the centre of the "Hierarchy of Truths" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 11), were defined during the period of the Fathers (i.e., the patristic era). It is significant that the age of the Early Church Fathers, commonly regarded as closing with Isidore of Seville in the West (+636), Saint John Damascene in the Greek Church (+749), is roughly co-terminus with the period of the first six great Ecumenical Councils which defined these two central mysteries of faith and drew out their most important implications. However, no such clear limit is assigned to the Syriac Fathers.¹²

¹⁰ J. H. Crehan, "Fathers of the Church" in *A Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, vol. 2, Melbourne: Nelson, 1967, [288-289], 289.

¹¹ J. Chapman, "Fathers of the Church" in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. VI, New York: Gilmary Society, 1913, [1-18], 1.

¹² Crehan, "Fathers of the Church," 288.

In short, the Church looks for four major characteristic features in the life and works of an early Church leader who made his contributions to defend, expound, and develop Christian doctrines, in order to be considered a 'Father of the Church'. These are antiquity, doctrinal orthodoxy, personal sanctity, and approval of the Church.¹³

2. Basic Categories of the Fathers in the Early Church

The early Church Fathers fall into three basic categories: Apostolic Church Fathers, ante-Nicene Church Fathers, and post-Nicene Church Fathers. The Apostolic Church Fathers, like Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch, were the immediate successors of the Apostles and were probably taught by them. They were concerned about the proclamation of the Gospel just as the Apostles themselves proclaimed it. Although most of them were not bent on formulating theological doctrines, they were zealous in rooting out and exposing any false doctrine that cropped up in the early Church based on the Gospel taught to them by the Apostles.

The ante-Nicene Fathers also remained true to the Gospel, but they had an additional concern. Several spurious writings were in circulation claiming to have the same authority as the established writings of Peter, Paul, and Luke. Many of the Fathers in this era spent their time defending the Christian faith against false doctrines that were in vogue. In several of these defences we have the beginnings of the doctrine of the Church.

The post-Nicene Fathers carried out the mission of defending the gospel against all kinds of doctrinal heresies. They articulated the tenets of faith based on the Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition. However, the Fathers in this era were engaged more in developing methods of defending the Gospel and less in transmitting the same in its true and pure form.

3. Outstanding Features of the Fathers/Doctors of the Church¹⁴

The foundations of Christian theology are the Scripture and the Tradition. The Tradition is rooted in the activities of the Apostles and ancient Christian teachers, who set up models of exegesis, theologizing, and pastoral guidelines for the future generations as well as for their

¹³ J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, Westminster: Christian Classics, 1984, 10.

¹⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition (English), 15 January 1990, 8-15.

own communities. In this respect, the ancient Christian writers in general, and the Fathers of the Church in particular stand as foundation and models for posterity.

3.1. Privileged Testimonies of the Tradition

The Fathers handed down faithfully what they had received, learned, and practised to the subsequent generations either in their oral or written teachings. In the early Church, the bishops were called 'Fathers' (see 1 Cor 4:15) as successors of the Apostles, on account of their teaching authority, which is the *Magisterium* of the Church to which is given the official duty to interpret the Word of God (*Dei Verbum* 10).¹⁵

3.2. Love of the Scripture and the Tradition

The Fathers of the Church represent the true interrelationship between the Scripture and the Tradition.¹⁶ According to them, the Sacred Scripture represented the ultimate source of religious truth. They venerated, studied, explained, and defended it with loving submission to it in faith. It became the foundation of their faith, subject of their preaching, nutrition for their piety and the soul of their theological undertakings.

3.3. Originality of Christianity

The Fathers of the Church were convinced of the fundamental transformation that occurred and was occurring in the world brought about by the Christ event. This transformation was something initiated by the divine power, giving a new vision of the reality, a new hermeneutic of humanity, world and God. The Fathers of the Church have reinterpreted all good achievements of humanity with their new Christian vision.¹⁷

3.4. Masters and Promoters of Dogmatic Development

The Fathers of the Church, while defending the truth against various heresies, formulated and established the basic dogmatic teachings of the Church. From these basic teachings, the Church began to make her dogmatic progress.¹⁸ It was the Fathers who, with their intuition of faith,

¹⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 9.

¹⁶ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 9.

¹⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 10.

¹⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 9.

propounded the formula for various articles of faith as guidance for the growth of faith and dogmatic teachings.

3.5. Sense of Mystery and Experience of the Divine

The sense of the Mystery and awareness of the Divine Economy among the Fathers overshadowed their theological reasoning and led them to cultivate an attitude of piety, asceticism, humble and deep faith, as well as assiduous prayer and contemplation. These attitudes of the Fathers gave them the facility to experience the Divine in their life of faith and practice. They synthesized their mystical experience and the luminosity of theological activity. The result of this synthesis was a happy blend of faith and reason, knowledge and charity that enhanced the Christian life of faith in them and in their communities.¹⁹

3.6. Pastors and Interpreters of Salvation History

The theological articulations of the Fathers were aimed at the pastoral care of the faithful. Their writings were responses to the questions of their times, be it catechism for the instruction of the faithful, homilies for the nourishment of life, exposition of the scripture, confrontation of the errors, exhortations for perfection, or defence of the identity as Christians. They approached the realities of life in the light of the history of salvation.²⁰ At the same time, they defended orthodoxy and promoted orthopraxis, which, in their understanding, were inseparable.

Fathers of the Church recognized the centrality of the mystery of Christ. All other mysteries within the salvation history are subsumed into this central mystery, the mystery of Christ. They exposed the mystery of salvation stressing the unity of the present, in the activity of the Holy Spirit, with the tradition of the past and pointing to the expectation of the eschatological future.

4. Criteria and Norms to Declare Someone a Father of the Church

1. The title 'Fathers of the Church' was not applied to any one based on a canonical process or a set of previously approved norms.
2. The fourfold criterion of Fathers of the Church (antiquity, holiness, orthodoxy, and ecclesiastical approval) does not reflect any previously approved norms, but evolved through what had

¹⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 10-11.

²⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers*, 9.

happened in the history of the Church and in and through her lived faith.

3. The universal Church considers only those persons who lived during the formative period of Christianity (i.e., until the eighth century). They contributed to the spiritual, doctrinal, theological, and pastoral building up of the Church.
4. The most important norms based on which one is canonically recognised 'Father of the Church' are based on the holiness and doctrinal orthodoxy of the person.

Part 2: Criteria for Declaring a Saint as Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*

In the light of all these developments as we enquire the criteria for declaring one as the Father of the Syro-Malabar Church, we deduce the following conclusions as norms:

1. Just as the Universal Church considers only those persons during the formative period of the early Church as Fathers, the SMC also can consider those persons of crucial importance throughout its *formative period* in modern times (*Antiquity*).
2. Only a canonized saint who took rather an outstanding leadership in the spiritual, pastoral, and doctrinal realms in the SMC could be declared a Father of the Church (*Holiness and Leadership*).
3. The one who had the firm belief in the apostolicity of the SMC and showed much enthusiasm to take substantial efforts to protect the faith, received from Saint Thomas, the Apostle, even amidst oppositions and difficulties, and to safeguard the unity of the Church. However, he should have shown the courage to fight for the lawful rights of the SMC (*Defender of Apostolic Faith*).
4. He should be a person who stood for the cause of the SMC, which are the unity of the SMC, communion of Churches, and faithfulness and obedience to the Holy See (*Cause of the Church*).
5. A Father of the SMC should be a person who has contributed uniquely, substantially and far-sightedly for the building up of the Church and the renewal of the people at large (*Building up of the Church*).
6. He should have the zeal for the salvation of souls and the readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of Christ and the Church (*Zeal for Souls*).

7. He should have taken radical steps for the proclamation of the Word of God relevant to the people at all times (*Proclamation of the Word of God*).
8. He should be capable of disseminating faithfully what he had received, learned, and practised to the later generations through his authentic writings (*Writings*).
9. He should have a sense of the Divine Mystery which led him to lead a life of holiness, cultivating an attitude of piety, asceticism, humble and deep faith, as well as assiduous prayer and contemplation (*Mystical Experience*).

Part 3: Eligibility of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara to be a 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church'

The main concern of this part is to study the life and activities of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a faithful and Spirit-filled son of the SMC, and to explore the possibilities of conferring on him the title 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*' in the light of the criteria and outstanding features described above. The whole analysis is divided into two parts. In the first part, the profile of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and his socio-cultural and ecclesial background are explored. The second part constitutes the core of the analysis underlining his ecclesiastical, spiritual, and socio-cultural contributions. His insightful teachings and services enabled the SMC not only to keep up her own apostolic faith and traditions, but also to renew her life in accordance with the signs of the times. An overview of the profile of Saint Chavara is very pertinent since the saint was a strong pillar who spearheaded the formative period of the SMC in the nineteenth century, a crucial time in the quest to regain her identity and autonomy, while keeping intact the unity of the Church Universal.

1. A Profile of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family

Saint Kuriakose Elias was born on 10 February 1805 in the Chavara family at Kainakary. At the age of 13 he joined the Seminary at Pallipuram. During his seminary life he lost his parents and his only brother, leaving him the sole stem of his family lineage.²¹ Although he was forced to leave the seminary in order to care for the family for a short

²¹ Kuriakose Elias Porukara, *Karmalitha Nishpaduka Munnam Sabhakarude Adisthanakaranum Onnamathe Priorumaya Chavara Kuriakose Malpanate Charitram* (Life of Chavara), *StapakaPithākkannmar Mannanam*, 1905, 31.

period of time, he made arrangements for the maintenance of the family and resumed his priestly studies.

1.1. Saint Chavara: A Servant of the Church

Kuriakose Elias Chavara was ordained a priest by Bishop Maurelius Stabilini at Arthunkal on 29 November 1829. Along with Malpan Thomas Palackal and Father Thomas Porukara, Chavara was involved in the establishment of a religious community for men at Mannanam on 11 May 1831. After the death of Malpan Palackal and Malpan Thomas Porukara in 1841 and 1846, respectively, Saint Chavara was the only survivor responsible for the canonical erection of the religious community at Mannanam on 8 December 1855. The life and activities of the members of this religious community under the leadership of Saint Chavara, providing pastorally oriented services revitalized the Church and society in Malabar, which, in turn, enhanced the regaining of her identity and autonomy in the formative period of the Syrian Christians in the nineteenth century. Apart from the monastery at Mannanam, seven more monasteries²² were started (1857-1870) during the time of Saint Chavara in different parts of Malabar as requested by the parish priests and people of those areas.²³

The arrival of a Persian bishop named Thomas Roccas from Bagdad created much confusion and turbulence in the Church. To tackle this situation, on 8 June 1861, Archbishop Bernadine Baccinelli, the then Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, appointed Chavara Vicar General of the Syrians.²⁴ In his capacity as the Vicar General, Chavara maintained not only the unity within the Malabar Church, but also had proper accord with the Vicar Apostolic and with the Holy See.

The foundation of the Third Order of Carmelites Discalced (TOCD), the first indigenous religious congregation for women in Kerala, at Koonammavu in 1866 by Saint Chavara, with the help of Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD, was another milestone in the history of the Malabar Church.²⁵

²² Koonammavu, Elthuruth, Plassanal, Vazhakulam, Pulincunnu, Ampazhakkadu, and Mutholy.

²³ A. Mathias Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2008, 110-126.

²⁴ *Positio*, 216f.; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

²⁵ Chavara Kuriakose Elias, *Complete Works of Chavara (CWC)*, vol. I: *Nalagamam*, Ernakulam, 1981, 126; English translation (1990), *Chronicle*, 194; see also Mundadan, *Chavara*, 281.

On 3 January 1871, after a dynamic and fruitful life of 65 years, Chavara was called back for his heavenly reward. After completing the due canonical processes, on 23 November 2014, the Universal Church recognized the sanctity of Kuriakose Elias Chavara through his canonization in Rome by Pope Francis. In order to have a better understanding of the contributions of Chavara towards the spiritual and material rejuvenation of the Malabar Church, an overview of the state of the society and the Church in Kerala in his days is inevitable.

1.2. Socio-Cultural and Ecclesial Background of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara

In the nineteenth century, the Thomas Christians were living in a caste-ridden society of Kerala, which was not based on the principles of social freedom and equality. Untouchability, social marginalization of women, economic inequality, and illiteracy deeply affected the social and religious life of the Kerala society.²⁶ It is in this context the social reforms initiated by Saint Chavara stand as insightful and impactful with a prophetic resonance in the Malabar society.

Though the Church in Malabar was very proud of her apostolic origins, in her existence for nineteen centuries, she had made no significant progress in establishing her individuality. Saint Chavara enumerated the reasons for the same: (1) The unfortunate status of the local church deprived of bishops of their own Rite or nationality to lead their priests and the people in accordance with their own apostolic faith and tradition.²⁷ (2) The lack of consecrated men and women who practised religious virtues and the absence of monasteries and convents caused the omission of immense good. (3) Spiritual blindness and lack of committed personnel to impart education by means of sowing the seeds of wisdom and nurturing the saplings of virtue through the glow of education, as a result of which the Church produced no canonized saints like some other Churches that received faith much later.²⁸ With this critical state of the Church in mind, Saint Chavara prayed, practised mortification, worked extensively, and laboured day and night very zealously for her spiritual and temporal welfare.

²⁶ Navya Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2014, 89-156.

²⁷ CWC, Vol. I, *Chronicle* (1990), 146.

²⁸ CWC, Vol. I, *Chronicle* (1990), 146.

2. Saint Chavara: A Strong Pillar of the Malabar Church

Although a man of the nineteenth century, a great prophet, Saint Chavara had awakened not only that era but also the twentieth century. Certainly, he continues to enliven the twenty-first century. Throughout his life, he laboured zealously for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Church. Since all his apostolic services had the endorsement of his mystical experience, they still remain relevant to the Church and the society.²⁹

2.1. A Man of God and a Mystic

Ecclesiastical history has recorded the fact that only those men and women who led a life encircled by the Divine Spirit could make remarkable and lasting contributions to the Church and society. The mystical experience of Chavara stems from his personal and unique vision of God and the humankind. For him, God is a loving father; he himself is a son of this loving Father and the fellow beings are his siblings. *Dhyanasallapangal*, one of his literary works, stands out to be the most expressive channel of his God-experience and contemplative dimension. In the work, he continuously addresses God and Jesus as *appa* (father), *enteappa* (my father), which has the endearing and intimate meaning of 'father' reserved exclusively to the children. Consequently, the Saint acclaimed with a gentle heart: "my heart, however, tells me to call you by no other name than my Father (*enteappan*)."³⁰

The inner joy and serenity that Chavara experienced from this *abba* experience enabled him to spend long hours in the divine presence of the Eucharist without any interruption.³¹ However, his God-experience did not keep him away from his fellow beings; rather, it made him listen to their cries, see their sufferings and understand their hardships.³² The longer the time he spent in mystical union with God, the greater was his dedication in selfless service to uplift the flock of the Father. His works

²⁹ The well-known Kerala historian, M.G.S. Narayanan, in his article "Navōthāna Pathayil Munpe Nadanna Nāyakan" (*A Renaissance Leader Who Walked before Time*) in *Chavarayachan*, John Mannarathara, ed., Kozhikode: Mathrubhoomi Books, 2014, 16-20, regrets that he did not make an elaborate study on Chavara's person and contributions. He writes that the life and achievements of Father Chavara cannot be restricted to the Catholic Church. They are relevant to all communities and to all times. It can be said that Chavara was a great personality born before the times.

³⁰ CWC, Vol. III, *Colloquies*, 5.

³¹ *Positio*, 541.

³² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 252.

were natural expressions and extensions of his intimate God-experience and lived-mysticism. Mystical experience is a mark of a person who is close to God in sanctity. It is worth noting that all the fathers of the Church in both the East and the West were men of God although not all of them were mystics.

2.2. A Zealous Pastor and a Servant Leader

The life of Saint Chavara, who started his pastoral life as an ordinary parish priest, made extraordinary achievements for the Church by means of his dynamic activities. He dedicated his life for the faith formation of the people of God. He fostered their faith, assured its protection, and served the people and brought about their spiritual revival. He was convinced that as an anointed priest, his primary concern was to be involved in the ministry of the Word of God. He initiated or reformed several aspects of the ecclesial life of his time. Some of these are the formation of the clergy, opening of catechumenates for the newly converted, foundation of religious communities for men and women, liturgical reforms,³³ starting of schools for public education of all sorts of people irrespective of caste and creed,³⁴ development of print media,³⁵ and charity home³⁶ for the destitute. As a zealous pastor, he focused on the building up of the Church as well as the social, cultural, and economic development of the society based on the Gospel values.³⁷ A detailed note on some of such efforts will disclose the love and dedication of Saint Chavara to the Church in Malabar.

2.2.1. A Preacher of the Word of God

Saint Chavara was convinced that his fundamental mission, as a pastor, was the proclamation of the Word of God. He intensified the practice of sharing the Word of God on Sundays by means of sermons, which was initially started by Porukara.³⁸ He organized retreats in parishes as a

³³ Thomas Kochumuttom, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bombay: St Pauls, 2014, 239-248.

³⁴ Kochumuttom, *Chavara*, 249-250.

³⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 346-354.

³⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 161.

³⁷ The letter that Archbishop Baccinelli wrote to Rome recommending the consecration of Chavara as the bishop co-adjutor attests to the pastoral zeal of Chavara that made the Archbishop to propose him as his successor. See Mundadan, *Chavara*, 229.

³⁸ Joseph Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1986, 51.

common feature in Kerala, which could not only reinvigorate their faith life but also facilitate settlement of many family disputes and quarrels between neighbours. This resulted in the conversion and renewal of life.³⁹ Impressed by the effective proclamation of the Word of God preached by Saint Chavara and his confreres, and seeing the fruit that they bore, the Vicar Apostolic appointed the religious priests at Mannanam the formal preachers of the Word of God in his Vicariate.⁴⁰

Saint Chavara was not only a preacher of the Word of God. He meditated over it, interiorized it so as to live and articulate its message powerfully for the common good of the faithful. As the Word was his food and drink, life and consolation, his preaching and writings were inspiringly saturated with the Word of God.

2.2.2. Seminary Formation and the Renewal of the Clergy

Saint Chavara had received spiritual and intellectual discipline and directives for an effective pastoral life from Malpan Palackal. Based on his personal experience, he was aware of the importance and implications of an adequate seminary formation. He realised that “an uneducated priest was not only inefficient to do anything worthwhile in his pastoral work, but may be even detrimental to the salvation of souls.”⁴¹ He insisted that wisdom coupled with sanctity was inevitable for a fruitful priestly life. He knew that if priests were empowered by means of a suitable training and formation, they would contribute immensely towards the growth and spiritual uplift of the people of God.⁴²

The pioneering members of the monastery at Mannanam had established a seminary attached to the monastery in 1833.⁴³ Later, since the seminary at Mannanam was insufficient to cater to the needs of the Church, Saint Chavara, with the permission of the Vicar Apostolic, established seminaries attached to the monasteries at Vazhakulam (1866) and Elthuruth (1869).⁴⁴ It is notable that those priests who had their

³⁹ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 52.

⁴⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 119.

⁴¹ Leopold Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Mannanam: Saint Joseph's Monastery, 2003, 6; *Ciriaco Elia Chavara*, Postulator, Roma, 1974, 10.

⁴² Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 38.

⁴³ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 68-76.

⁴⁴ Valerian Plathottam, *Vannya Divyasree Chavara Kuriakose Elisachan*, Mannanam, 1936, 87.

education in these seminaries were the ones who co-operated with Saint Chavara to confront the schisms. He reformed the ecclesiastical education according to the need of the hour.⁴⁵ It is a historical fact that at a time when the Malabar Church had no effective native leadership or headquarters of its own, the monastery at Mannanam and Saint Chavara stepped in to fill this ecclesial vacuum.

Hand in hand with the reformation of ecclesiastical education, the renewal of the clergy was also a pressing need of the time. Their on-going formation was ensured by him with special retreats preached for them. In addition, he made spiritual books and other literature available to them. Annual enlightenment retreats for the priests were organized at Mannanam every year.⁴⁶ In special cases, the bishop sent his priests to the monastery to make their retreats.

Saint Chavara was hailed as the ambassador of reconciliation between the bishop and the priests and between priests and the people of God.⁴⁷ His life and example were instrumental for many vocations to monastic priesthood and the foundation of many a formation centre. In short, as priests are obliged to relentlessly strive to seek the good will and salvation of others, Saint Chavara considered their personal salvation and growth in virtue as his primary concern.

2.2.3. Founder of Indigenous Religious Congregations

Chavara often lamented the barren status of the Church in India, which despite its antiquity and apostolic connection, had not produced even a single saint, whereas lands that received faith much later have produced them in great numbers.⁴⁸ Moreover, he was aware of the fact that "many a good thing was not done owing to the want of a religious house."⁴⁹ It was in order to fill this spiritual vacuum that Chavara longed for a special arrangement in which individuals could withdraw from the society and lead a life that would nurture holiness. This dream of Chavara which he shared with two of his mentors, who had cherished

⁴⁵ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 38-39.

⁴⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 343-345.

⁴⁷ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 463.

⁴⁸ CWC, vol. III: *AdhyatmikaKruthikal* (1981), 173f.; English translation (1990), 146.

⁴⁹ CWC, vol. III: *AdhyatmikaKruthikal* (1981), 1; English translation (1990), 1.

similar dreams,⁵⁰ resulted in no less than three religious congregations – one for men and two for women.

2.2.3.1. Religious Congregation for Men

Despite the fact that Indian Church historians find several references to the existence of monastic life in India⁵¹ and among Saint Thomas Christians,⁵² the founding fathers of the indigenous religious congregation for men (CMI) had no extant monastic or religious models to build on;⁵³ they had to begin from the scratch. The initiatives for founding a religious congregation came from Fathers Palackal and Porukara.⁵⁴ They were mostly responsible for obtaining the necessary permission⁵⁵ and laying the foundation for the first religious house for men at Mannanam in 1831.⁵⁶ Regarding the event of the foundation of the religious house, Saint Chavara noted: “It was these two fathers who laboured most for this endeavour. But this writer, Chavara Kuriakose, who had decided to live according to the will of this Malpan... offered the first mass with the bishop after his ordination at Arthunkal for the fulfilment of this work.”⁵⁷

Chavara’s role in the formal establishment of the new religious community became prominent after the death of Thomas Palackal and Thomas Porukara in 1841 and 1846, respectively.⁵⁸ As the leader of the community, Chavara made several requests to the Vicar Apostolic for the canonical approbation of the community. Finally, the Primitive Rule of the Carmelite Order was given to the community with some changes made to suit the life in the land.⁵⁹ With this ecclesiastical recognition of the first indigenous religious community in place, on 8 December 1855, Chavara, the leading member of the community, made his first religious profession before Father Marcelline Berardi, the Delegate of the Vicar Apostolic, and the newly founded religious community was named

⁵⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 109. He notes that “these two were the first to have the inspiration and start work on the foundation.”

⁵¹ A.M. Mundadan, *History and Beyond*, Aluva, 1997, 157ff. See also *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I (revised edition), Bangalore, 2001, 187ff.

⁵² Mundadan, *History and Beyond*, 158-161.

⁵³ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 67.

⁵⁴ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 75.

⁵⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 77.

⁵⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 67.

⁵⁷ CWC, Vol. I, *Chronicle*, 26.

⁵⁸ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 112-113.

⁵⁹ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 103.

"Servants of Mary Immaculate of Mount Carmel."⁶⁰ On the same day, the remaining members of the community made their profession before Chavara, as he was made the superior of the community and was called Prior and he continued in that office until his death in 1871.⁶¹

2.2.3.2. Religious Congregation for Women

With the religious community for men established and having relished the positive influence this community had on the Church and the society in Kerala, Chavara began to harbour thoughts about the possibility of a similar arrangement for women who might desire to live a life of consecrated commitment.⁶² However, a few attempts at such a venture did not have any lasting effect⁶³ and the attempts of Baccinelli himself seemed to have failed.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, on a certain occasion, Father Leopold Beccaro OCD, who was the spiritual director of Chavara, brought up the question regarding the possibility of a few women coming together to lead a life of prayer. Since the idea was a pleasant coincidence, Chavara wholeheartedly declared his support to the proposal. Leopold presented the matter to Archbishop Baccinelli, the Vicar Apostolic, and sought his permission for such a venture.⁶⁵

The episcopal permission having been granted, they turned to the practicalities. Owing to the scarcity of funds, they built a temporary bamboo shack in a small plot of land at Koonammavu, and sisters began to live there from 13 February 1866 onwards.⁶⁶ Kuriakose Porukara, the successor of Chavara as the Prior General and his first biographer, testifies: "As there was no opportunity in this region for women to dedicate their virginity to God and to live in prayer, he (Chavara) wished them also to this happiness. Therefore, with the Provincial (Leopold) and others, trusting in God, received some women who were prepared to

⁶⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 102, note 44.

⁶¹ CWC, Vol. I, *The Chronicles*, 57, 77-78.

⁶² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 281 indicates the possibility that the request that was placed before Archbishop Baccinelli included a vision for religious life both for men and women.

⁶³ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 343.

⁶⁴ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 283, 289-290.

⁶⁵ *Positio*, 558; P. Koyipallil, *A Short Biography of Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family: The First Prior General of Our Congregation* (Malayalam manuscript AMSJ), 1929, 57.

⁶⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 67; see also Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 66-73.

live this kind of life and accommodated them in a temporary house.”⁶⁷ Eventually, thanks to the hard and tireless efforts of Chavara and Leopold, a permanent and proper house was built for the women to live in and to pursue their life of consecration.⁶⁸

The purpose of the foundation of the religious community for women was the empowerment and wellbeing of women of the area in general as well as the spiritual realization of its members. This was a time when women were largely denied even the basic rights of education, property, and proper clothing. They had no role in decision making in the family, the Church, and the society.⁶⁹ In this context, the founding of a religious congregation for women was certainly a step towards the empowerment of women through education and various other welfare activities that helped raise the status of women.⁷⁰

2.2.4. Liturgical Renewal and Faith Formation

Saint Chavara realized that a real renewal of the Malabar Church is possible only based on the Word of God and the Liturgy. He learnt Syriac and Latin, the liturgical languages, with great zeal and enthusiasm. Ordering the rubrics of the Holy Qurbana, the codification of the Divine Office for the clergy, introduction of several para-liturgical practices such as Eucharistic adoration, way of the cross, rosary devotion, novenas to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, etc., brought about a revival in the spiritual life of the ordinary faithful of the Malabar Church.

2.2.4.1. The *Tukasa*

Saint Chavara prepared the *Tukasa*, the ‘Order of the Mass’ to ensure the celebration of the Eucharist with devotion, attention, and order.⁷¹ He prepared and got it printed in 1868.⁷² It was a remarkable work, which was used by the Church for almost a century as the only means to bring about uniformity in the rubrics of the liturgical celebration.

⁶⁷ Kuriakose Eliseus Porukara, *Stapaka Pithākanmar*, Mannanam, 1905,

⁶⁸ CWC, Vol. III: *Adhyatmika Kruthikal* (1981), 138; English translation (1990), 115f.

⁶⁹ CWC, Vol. I, 84-85; Navya Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 145-146.

⁷⁰ Joseph Pathrapankal, *An Iconoclast in His Own Right*, in Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, John Mannarathara, ed., New Delhi: Viva Books, 2015, [234-241], 241.

⁷¹ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 56.

⁷² *Positio*, 308; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 267-268.

2.2.4.2. Divine Office for Priests

The compilation of the Divine Office recited by priests was another notable service of Chavara. The prayers that were in use were gathered from four different sources, namely, *Hudra*, *Kaskol*, *Gaza*, and *Kala* and it was not easy to recite it in an orderly and uniform manner. The priests were inclined almost to ignore its use. Chavara took up the challenge of preparing a handy Divine Office.⁷³ Later, when he became the Vicar General, he revised it and sent it to Rome for approval, printed it, and made it available for the use of the priests.

2.2.4.3. Divine Office for Sisters

Chavara was conscientious also in compiling the Divine Office for the use the sisters at Koonammavu. The Chronicle of the Convent at Koonammavu records that he compiled it in his own hand, marked it with different colours of ink to make them understand the order in which it was to be recited and gave them practice accordingly.⁷⁴

2.2.4.4. The Holy Saturday Service

Since there was no special liturgical service on Holy Saturday in the Syrian rite, he translated the Holy Saturday service of the Latin liturgy into Syriac for the use in Syrian churches. In this regard he wrote to Cardinal Simeon, the head of the Propaganda Congregation, in 1864: "Our churches remain closed on that day like the Jewish Synagogues. So, I request you to approve it for us and send it back as early as possible."⁷⁵

2.2.4.5. Forty-Hour Adoration

Saint Chavara's love for liturgy emerged from his personal love and profound faith in the Eucharistic presence. He aspired intently that all should know the merciful love of Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist and that all should love him. As a great devotee and an apostle of the Holy Eucharist, with the permission of the Vicar Apostolic, he introduced the practice of Forty-Hour Adoration in various monasteries. It was initiated at Koonammavu in 1866.⁷⁶ Soon it became very popular in the Malabar Church as a powerful source of spiritual nourishment.

⁷³ Porukara, *Stapaka Pithākkannmar*, 30; Podipara, *Nammude Ritu* (Our Rite), Mannanam: Saint Joseph's Press, 1943, 132f.; Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 57.

⁷⁴ CWC, Vol. IV, *Letters*, 22.

⁷⁵ CWC, Vol. IV, 1990, 11; 1982, 22f.; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 277.

⁷⁶ *Positio*, 282ff.; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 278.

2.2.4.6. Devotional Practices for Spiritual Revival

Popular devotions played a significant role in the spiritual revival of the Malabar Church. In order to revitalize the ecclesial life of the faithful, he adapted several popular devotions in the model of the ones found in the Latin tradition. He translated these devotions both from Latin and Tamil into Malayalam. The Way of the Cross, Eucharistic adoration, the rosary devotion, devotion to the Carmelite scapular, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph are some of the devotions that he promoted.

2.2.5. Revolutionary Educationist

With the arrival of the CMS, LMS, and Basel missionaries in the nineteenth century, English education became popular in Kerala.⁷⁷ However, Catholics were not allowed to learn English language as the Catholic missionaries feared that study of that language would be an occasion for the Protestant ideas to infiltrate among the Catholics.⁷⁸ Chavara would not let this prohibition to shut the door of literacy before his people.⁷⁹ He would set in motion a process of literary formation of the people beginning with the foundation of a Sanskrit school at Mannanam in 1846; he introduced innovative educational methods like establishing schools attached to all the parishes in his jurisdiction, which appealed to the general public and revolutionized the educational scenario of Kerala and, eventually, led to the spread of literacy in the state.

2.2.5.1. Education to the Deprived Classes

Chavara was born and lived in an era when education to the lower classes remained a far cry.⁸⁰ Chavara's social vision evinced that the integral development of a society can be brought about only by means of a common outlook on life by all members of the society. It was with this aim that he gave an impetus to the education of the deprived classes,

⁷⁷ V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol 2, Trivandrum: Asian Educational Service, 1989, 474; *LMS Report, The Report of the Directors to the Members of the Missionary Society*. London: 1823, 70.

⁷⁸ K. S. Mathew, "Introduction," in *Indian Constitution, Education and Minorities in Kerala*, eds. K. S. Mathew and T. K. Sebastian, 1-29, Tellicherry: Institute for Research in Social Science and Humanities, 2009, 9.

⁷⁹ J. Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 2, 83.

⁸⁰ K. S. Padma, *Study on the Status and Role of Women in the Public Life of Kerala from 1850-1956*, PhD Dissertation, Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 2002, 34.

which included even the untouchables.⁸¹ A school established solely for the Dalits, in 1865, at Arpukara,⁸² an area where the upper and lower classes could not be brought together, is an example of this kind of a venture of Chavara.⁸³

2.2.5.2. Mid-Day Meal to Promote Education

The Dalits and the untouchables were so bound to the basic exigencies of life that they could never dream of an education. Even if they did, most of them could not afford it on their own.⁸⁴ It is for such willing, but deprived children that Chavara came up with a scheme of mid-day meal. The children from a deprived background who were willing to come to school, were not only encouraged with education free of charge, but also were given mid-day meal as a perk.⁸⁵

2.2.5.3. The Sanskrit School

In the days of Chavara, the prospect of teaching the untouchables was unthinkable.⁸⁶ However, Chavara who would not leave any stone unturned when it came to the question of the common good of the society, would tactically find a way out. He established a Sanskrit school at Mannanam where children from all social classes were taught.⁸⁷ He appointed a *savarna* to teach Sanskrit that the teacher would act as a shock absorber between the two classes of the society.⁸⁸

2.2.5.4. The *Pallikkoodam*

As an ecclesiastical leader, Chavara opened the door of education to his people. However, his universal outlook on the extended ecclesial

⁸¹ K. C. Chacko, *Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Mannanam, 1959, 72.

⁸² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 257; John Paul, ed., *IdayaNatakangal (Ecologues: Shepherd Plays) by Chavara Kuriakose Elias*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Academy, 2014, 133.

⁸³ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 256; V. Plathottam, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte OruVeera Santhanam*, 37.

⁸⁴ H. Wingram, *A Commentary on Malabar Laws and Customs*, Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1900, 100.

⁸⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, p. 259.

⁸⁶ Mateer Samuel, *Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Service, 1991 (Reprint), 29; V. Parappuram, *The Chronicles of the Monastery at Koonammaavu*, ASJM, Mannanam, 1474.

⁸⁷ Plathottam, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Veera Santhanam*, 137.

⁸⁸ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 256; *Alochanapusthakam* (Book of Consultation in the Monastery at Mannanam), 1864-1871, ASJM, Mannanam, 94-95, 26-27, 159.

ministry to others impelled him to open the opportunity to the deprived classes too.⁸⁹ As a viable tool available to him to implement his educational scheme, he roped in all the parish churches and made them forums of education where all could pursue their education.⁹⁰

2.2.5.5. The Publications

With the assistance of a carpenter, Chavara prepared and installed a hand-made printing press at Mannanam. The modest proliferation of the materials in print that came out of the rudimentary printing devise (1846) that Chavara established, and eventually developed into a full-fledged printing press. This press brought in a publication revolution in the life of those people who would otherwise have neither opportunity nor resources to have access to such literary facilities.⁹¹ Home-made reading materials presented to them at an affordable cost gave this populace an opportunity to come in contact with letters.⁹² Moreover, those partially privileged ones, even among Christians, who were deprived of literature found a literary solace in the prayer books and other catechetical publications that Chavara eventually brought out from the press at Mannanam.

2.2.6. Social Apostolate

The Church can never be looked at as a monad that is detached from the world or apart from the society that the Church subsists in. It is in this perspective that the contributions that Chavara made to the society have to be taken into account. He considered his social life as an integral part of his religious life. Hence, he said: "The days in which you have not done a service to someone else will not be counted among the days of your life."⁹³ There are many more pieces of advice of this kind that Chavara gave his confreres and parishioners. His concern for the elderly and terminally ill from among the poor and deprived groups was materialized in the *Upavisala* at Kainakari (1869) and the Confraternity of Saint Joseph for Good Death at Kainakari (1869).⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Kochumuttom, *Chavara*, 250.

⁹⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 257. Mundadan also refers to the controversy regarding the origin of the idea and the circular enjoining the parish priests to establish a school adjacent to the churches.

⁹¹ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 86-87.

⁹² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 353.

⁹³ CWC, Vol IV: *The Letters*, IX/6, "Kudumbachattom," No. 13.

⁹⁴ CWC, Vol IV: *The Letters*, IX/7.

2.2.6.1. Social Implications of *The Testament of a Loving Father*

The testament that Chavara wrote to the parishioners of his home-parish is a code of conduct for the family, which, among other instructions, in a special way emphasized the need of an orderly upbringing of the children.⁹⁵ The testament and the instructions positively influenced the society both directly and indirectly:⁹⁶ directly, by means of the dissemination of the instructions among the Catholics throughout Kerala enhanced by the two wings of the Carmelites – men and women – that he co-founded; indirectly, the reflexive benefit that the society had through the social intercourse among the Christian children and their fellow students in the schools and neighbourhood emerged slowly, but certainly made significant advancement.

2.2.6.2. Empowerment of Women

The social action that Chavara set in motion was so comprehensive and ground-breaking for his time that it touched all possible aspects of social life. Life of women in Kerala in the nineteenth century was far from a dignified one and education was far from realised.⁹⁷ This was the case both with the women who were *savarnas* and *avarnas*.⁹⁸ The tentacles of gender discrimination remained biased: all women of all religious allegiances were denied the basic rights and were deprived of the opportunities to become independent in any way.⁹⁹ Chavara addressed this dehumanizing issue in two ways: Firstly, he empowered the women of the religious congregation that he founded in such a way that, in turn, as agents of change, they would, by means of various skill development programmes,¹⁰⁰ empower their fellow women in the society. Secondly, the convents that he established would have centres (*educandat*)¹⁰¹ for girl children to live and pursue their studies unhindered by the social pressure of whatever tag they bore.

⁹⁵ CWC, Vol. IV: *The Letters*, X/6, "Rules for a Family," Nos. 10, 22.

⁹⁶ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 76-79.

⁹⁷ K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, 4 vols. (Reprint), New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982, 294.

⁹⁸ L. E. Sahanam, *The Contributions of LMS Missionaries in the Field of Education in South Travancore: A Historical Enquiry*, Bangalore: United Theological College, 1976, 24.

⁹⁹ K. K. N. Kurup and E. Ismail, *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*, New Delhi: Standard Publishers, 2008, 52.

¹⁰⁰ CWC, Vol. IV: *The Letters*, VII/6 (language) and CKC, Vol. I, 11-12 (fine skills in handicrafts).

¹⁰¹ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 308.

2.2.7. In the Service of the Malabar Church

Chavara had the profound conviction that the Church was built on the precepts the Apostles and the ensuing apostolic origin of the Malabar Church. Referring to the historical origin of monasteries and convents in Kerala, Chavara wrote: "This Malabar which had received the faith from Saint Thomas, the Apostle, confesses the true faith from ancient times." Chavara continued: "We, the Nazarenes, are Christians of ancient origin..."¹⁰² The zeal with which he advanced to keep the Church from Roccas and to protect it from the possible division makes him an avid defender of the Church. He was very proud of the antiquity of his faith and tradition.

2.2.7.1. Promoter of Indigenous Ecclesial Leadership

Although the Malabar Church was an apostolic Church, at the time of Chavara, it was under the jurisdiction of foreign prelates and the desire for a native leadership was acute among the faithful. After the appointment of Chavara as the Vicar General, the efforts for a native bishop gathered momentum. Enumerating the benefits of such an arrangement, especially for the sake of the stability of the Church, Chavara appealed to the Holy See to appoint native bishops in the Malabar Church.

Chavara wrote to Cardinal Alexander Bernaba, the head of the Propaganda Fide: "We are Mar Thoma Christians who have received our faith from Saint Thomas. For the past many years we had no bishop of our own. But those who have received their faith in very recent times have a bishop of their own. Provoked by such envious thoughts when they get an opportunity they will go to Babel, saying 'Let us resort to Babel for getting a bishop of our own rite.' Hence, Your Eminence, I am placing before you a suggestion... It is good to have two bishops here: one for the Latin Church, and the other for the Syrian Church."¹⁰³

2.2.7.2. Chavara, the Vicar General

On 8 June 1861, Monsignor Bernardine Baccinelli, the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, appointed Chavara the Vicar General of the Malabar Church.¹⁰⁴ It was a recognition that Baccinelli gave Chavara for the leadership that he was giving already to the faithful. Ever since the canonical inception of the religious community at Mannanam, he was

¹⁰² CWC, Vol. IV, *Letters*, 1990, 14.

¹⁰³ CWC, Vol. IV, *Letters*, 1990, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206; 224-229.

leading it as its Prior.¹⁰⁵ The human qualities that he displayed at the parish church at Lalam,¹⁰⁶ the polite but stern manner in which he received Denha, a Chaldean priest at Mannanam,¹⁰⁷ and the prudence that he exhibited in refusing to kiss the ring of Roccas, an unauthorized Bishop from Babylon,¹⁰⁸ would have sent signals to the Vicar Apostolic that there was no leader in Malabar more fit to lead the Church than Chavara.

The appointment of Chavara was a result of the urgent resolve of Baccinelli "for the spiritual progress of the faithful and to fight the schism more effectively."¹⁰⁹ What is noteworthy is the reason for the appointment: "On account of the difficulties, which we feel for a long time, in the administration of the churches under our jurisdiction, and on account of our advanced age, and ... ill health, and above all, since I do not find the desired spiritual fruits either among the priests or among the laity ... hereby I nominate you vicar general ... of the Syro-Malabar Church under our jurisdiction."¹¹⁰ The personal credentials of Chavara for this unprecedented consideration are enumerated by Baccinelli: "I am convinced that you have the fortitude, ability and the virtue necessary to carry out this office."¹¹¹

2.2.7.3. Church Administration

The credit for the great uplift that Malabar witnessed in the nineteenth century is mainly to be attributed to the zeal of Monsignor Baccinelli and Chavara, his Vicar General, who was granted "the authority and privileges, which the common law acknowledges," and granted him "all those privileges, which I am entitled to impart in accordance with my patent letters ... by which you will be able to administer the spiritual matters to the priests and laity included in the Syro-Malabar Church under my jurisdiction and thus to govern the churches."¹¹² The administrative ability of Chavara was evident in the reforms that he had brought about. "It is worthy to mention that at this time, the whole of the Syrian Church was divided, by the Vicar General, into four districts,

¹⁰⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 148ff.

¹⁰⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 155.

¹⁰⁷ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 155.

¹⁰⁸ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 155.

¹⁰⁹ Kanjiramattathil, *Pastoral Vision*, 96.

¹¹⁰ *Positio*, 216; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

¹¹¹ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

¹¹² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

each being entrusted to one of the Fathers of the Congregation. These Fathers were known, so to say, as the 'plenipotentiaries' or 'deputies' of the Vicar Apostolic, each in his district. They had special charge over the clergy and the laity; they supervised school work, conducted catechetical institutions, settled naughty disputes and quarrels and transacted other works of importance. Thus, the members of the congregation, directed by Father Cyriac Elias (Chavara), visited, from the beginning, all the Churches of Malabar, preached retreats and missions, corrected abuses, and even discharged parochial work, when the peculiar circumstances of a parish required it."¹¹³

2.2.7.4. Financial Security of the Vicariate

There was a time when the Vicariate was facing a serious financial crisis.¹¹⁴ To tide over it, the members of the community at Mannanam suggested to the Prior that the problem could be solved by pooling one tenth of the income of each church into the common fund. However, the Vicar Apostolic brought it down to five per cent.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, Chavara prepared a decree, which directed each parish to deliver, together with the annual statement of the accounts, five per cent of the total income of the parish to the episcopal curia. The Vicar Apostolic signed this decree, got it printed at Mannanam and sent it to all the churches.¹¹⁶

In the same line, Chavara introduced the collection of *pidiyari*¹¹⁷ and *kettuthengu*.¹¹⁸ He asked all the families that were able to afford it, to set apart a handful of rice as they began to cook for the day and set apart the produce of a coconut palm for the upkeep of the Church. Though simple in its execution, this practice became very popular in the course of time in the whole of the Malabar Church and, to a great extent, the dioceses met some of its expenses from this contribution from the faithful.

2.2.7.5. Catechumenates

The spread of the Kingdom of God depends upon the growth of the Church and those who are willing to embrace it must be prepared

¹¹³ P. Podipara, ed., *The Carmelite Congregation of Malabar 1831-1931*, Mannanam, 1932, 58-59; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 312, 313.

¹¹⁴ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 246.

¹¹⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 247.

¹¹⁶ CWC, *Chronicles*, Vol. III, 44ff.

¹¹⁷ V. Parappuram, *Chronicle 1902-1905* (History of the Roccisian Schism, Malayalam, Vols. 1-2).

¹¹⁸ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 250.

adequately to receive the faith. However, the only school for the training of the catechumens was attached to the headquarters of the Vicar Apostolic. Considering the significant number of those who wanted to receive faith, in 1864, a catechumenate was opened at Mannanam, attached to the Monastery.¹¹⁹ The expenses incurred for the daily running of the catechumenate were sourced from the above-mentioned contributions of the faithful that Chavara had organized. This facilitated the conversion of the Dalits and the marginalized in the society.¹²⁰ Eventually, almost all the monasteries of the Congregation imitated the mother-house in opening catechumenates attached to them.¹²¹ In these, many adults and infants were cared for, instructed, and baptized every year. The effect of the ecclesial vision of Chavara, the Vicar General, was so far-reaching that between 1866 and 1931, more than 2,000 people were baptized in these catechumenates.¹²²

2.2.7.6. Defender of the Unity of the Church

In the absence of a native leadership, some of the Malabarians, dissatisfied with the Carmelite Vicars Apostolic, turned to Chaldea in the hope for a Chaldean bishop. In response, the Chaldean Patriarch Audo sent Roccas Thomas, a Chaldean bishop, as visitor. The Church in general, assuming that he was sent with official authority, gave him a warm welcome. Out of the 154 parish churches, 86 of them completely and 30 partially followed the Chaldean bishop.¹²³

When Bishop Roccas began to exercise his episcopal powers, he was asked to produce his authorization letter. When he failed to do so, and when the situation was getting out of control on account of the following that he commanded, the Vicar Apostolic, who was convinced of Chavara's fortitude, prudence, and virtues, appointed him the Vicar General. His timely intervention saved the Church from a deep division and thereby kept the communion with the Holy See intact. The unity of the Church was always Chavara's primary concern. In his circular to the members of the parish churches warning them against Roccas, he wrote: "I tell you all this, my dear brethren, being desirous of your eternal salvation and lest you fall into the schism and incur the

¹¹⁹ Podipara, *Carmelite Congregation of Malabar*, 56.

¹²⁰ CWC, *Chronicles*, Vol. III, 30.

¹²¹ Podipara, *Carmelite Congregation of Malabar*, 57.

¹²² M. M. Palakunnel, *Chronicle* (Malayalam), ed., P. J. Sebastian, Changanassery, 1971, 114.

¹²³ CWC, Vol. I, *Chronicles*, 1990, 148-176.

excommunication of the Pope and suffer the loss of your soul.”¹²⁴ Having overcome the crisis and Roccas having left for Bagdad, it was Chavara who led most of those who had followed Roccas back into Catholic communion.

This section on the leadership role of Chavara in the ecclesiastical plain can be concluded with a note on the proposal that Archbishop Baccinelli made regarding a co-adjutor bishop immediately after the appointment of Chavara as the Vicar General. In his letter to the Propaganda Fide, dated 15 June 1861, the Archbishop proposed Chavara to the post of his successor as the bishop.¹²⁵ The practical objections he would have against his own proposal notwithstanding, what is worthy of consideration here is that in the plausible event of appointing a bishop of Malabar origin at the time, there would be nobody else worthy of the proposal.

2.2.8. Apostle of Literature and Print Media

In the nineteenth century, Chavara emerged as a leader of the spiritual and social renaissance in Kerala. In order to give a momentum to this ferment, he tapped the most powerful media available, namely, the printing press. The printing press that he established at Mannanam in 1846 was a milestone in the process of the renaissance in the religious and public education.¹²⁶ The first printed work was *Jnanapeeyusham* (*Spiritual Ambrosia*), which was published from the new press in 1846.¹²⁷ The press gradually turned out to be the womb of the first Malayalam Daily *Deepika*, which shaped the social and political life of a large section of the society in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. When Chavara moved from Mannanam to Koonammavu, a branch of the press was established at Koonammavu as well.

¹²⁴ CWC, Vol. IV, *Letters*, 1990, 99.

¹²⁵ The Archbishop would also mention his minor reservation about his own proposal which was practical in nature. In comparison with the European bishops, Chavara would neither have the education nor the episcopal niceties. This is also to be read in conjunction with the objections made by Marcelline Berardi and Leopold Beccaro against the proposal (See *Positio*, 264, 265-269).

¹²⁶ P. K. Rajasekharan, “Vazhathada Revolution: Chavara and Indigenous Printing Technology” in *The Life and Legacy of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, ed., J. Mannarathara, [58-73], Delhi: Viva Books, 2015.

¹²⁷ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 353.

2.2.8.1. Apostle of Christian Literature

Chavara was a man of reading and reflection. In one of his letter to the sisters at Koonammavu, he wrote: "The time you save after your proper work and recreation should be spent in spiritual reading. Read the books that give you knowledge and devotion; if you love reading, you will love solitude. When a soul delights in solitude Jesus Christ will come to converse with it in solitude and begin communing with it."¹²⁸

Chavara was a prolific writer who wrote in the vernacular as did some of the Fathers of the Church in their time. His writings were heterogeneous, consisting of historical notes (Chronicles), Letters, Poems, Hymns, Dramas (Ecologues), Colloquies, Prayers, and Exhortations. Whatever may be the nature of the writing, one can notice in it a biblical, salvation historical, and mystical flavour. The writings reveal the very personal and spiritual experiences, outlooks and insights of the author.

2.2.8.2. Historical Writings

Chronicles that Chavara recorded throughout his life and the letters that he wrote to various individuals on various occasions are considered here. He had a very keen sense of history and the ability to record with great accuracy. These pieces of literature illustrate the socio-political life of Kerala and the history of the Church of his time. These writings reflect his historical consciousness, farsightedness, honesty in recording events, and the sense of justice.

2.2.8.3. Spiritual and Literary Writings

Some of the works of Chavara are grouped together in spiritual and literary works on account of their nature. *Atmanutapam* is a poetic work.¹²⁹ In this work, he reminisces his early life and outpours his sense of gratitude for the ineffable love and mercy of God. At the same time, he laments over his own shortcomings. *Parvam/ Pana (Dirge/Song of Mourning)* is Chavara's reflection on death, resurrection, and eternal life. A canto for the use in a bereaved family at the demise of a loved one (*Marana Veetil Paduvanulla Pana*)¹³⁰ notes the importance of a life focused on the heavenly bliss. *The Martyrdom of Anastasia*, the first Malayalam

¹²⁸ CWC, Vol. IV, *Letters*, 1990, 85.

¹²⁹ See Z. M. Moozhoor, *Atmanutapam: Gadyavishkaranam* (Malayalam), Thevara: Janata Books, 1990.

¹³⁰ CWC, Vol. II: *Compunction of the Soul, Dirge, Anastasia's Martyrdom*, 1989, 129-161.

spiritual lyric (*khanda-kavyam*), composed in 1861,¹³¹ is the story of a courageous virgin martyr of the early Church who enthused the community to remain firm in faith. In the context of the Roccas episode, it meant to encourage his people to uphold loyalty to the one Holy Catholic Church. *Dhyanasallapangal* expresses the God-experience and contemplative dimension of Chavara between 1866 and 1868.¹³²

His most intimate feelings reveal his childlike innocence. *Chavarul is The Testament of a Loving Father*, written towards the end of his life, meant to transform the family, the domestic Church, into a heavenly abode according to the plan of the Creator. He wrote it for his own parishioners as a sign of his indebtedness and concern for them.¹³³ It gives inspiration and guidelines to families and it has a lasting relevance. *Ecologues* are pastoral dramatic plays (1855-1856),¹³⁴ the first of its kind in Indian literature. These depict the Paschal Mystery in art form meant to deepen the spirituality and to impart the Gospel message among young people. All these literary works played a significant role in awakening and nurturing the spirituality of the Malabar Church.

From the above descriptions, it is clear that Saint Chavara, as in the case of most of the Fathers and Doctors of the early Church, was very much involved in the building up of the Malabar Church that was in the process of regaining her autonomy and identity in the formative period of the nineteenth century. Hence, he is eligible to be declared a 'Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*'.

Section B

SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA, DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Criteria for Declaring a Saint as Doctor of the Church

Nature and Relevance of a Doctor of the Church

"O blessed doctor, light of the holy Church and lover of God's law, pray to the Son of God for us." This antiphon - to be recited or sung at the beginning and end of Our Lady's hymn, *The Magnificat*, during vespers

¹³¹ CWC, Vol. II: *Compunction of the Soul, Dirge, Anasthasia's Martyrdom*, 1989, 163-172; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 366-368.

¹³² CWC, Vol. III: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1990.

¹³³ Chavara, *Testament of a Loving Father*, Kakkanad: Chavara Central Secretariat, 2014.

¹³⁴ John Paul, *Idaya Natakangal (Ecologues: Shepherd Plays) by Chavara Kuriakose Elias*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Academy, 2014.

for the feast of a Doctor of the Church - was one of the distinguishing marks of the common prayers of the Divine Office (in the Latin tradition) for such feasts which were introduced into the liturgy by Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) in 1298. The antiphon underscores the connection of a Doctor of the Church with light and love, with God's law, with the Church and with the Son of God.

The title 'Doctor of the Church' was given to only thirty six prominent ecclesiastical writers of the Church in the two thousand years' history of the Church and they were honoured with this title on account of the great advantage the Church had gained through the life and writings of these authors.

There are three essential requirements, besides many other things, to declare someone a Doctor of the Church: (i) great sanctity, which is recognised with the canonisation; (ii) eminent learning, and (iii) proclamation as a Doctor of the Church by a Pope or Ecumenical Council.

There are eminent writers and teachers like Origen and since they are not canonised, they are not declared Doctors. This requirement indicates that the title is not concerned exclusively with a person's ability to expound the faith. It also presupposes that one's exposition of the faith is effective in radiating the supernatural character of the faith that draws humans to God; hence, the need for sanctity in a Doctor of the Church. In this connection, the following passage from the Bible is relevant here: "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn 17:3). Their writings are true and timeless and the title 'Doctor of the Church' is an official designation in recognition of the outstanding contribution a saintly person has made to the understanding and interpretation of the Sacred Scripture and the development of the Christian doctrine. All these Doctors of the Church advanced the knowledge of God through their writings on theology, spirituality, mysticism, or through their defence of the faith in the face of heresy and schism. In his announcement that John of Avila would be a Doctor, Pope Benedict XVI declared: "The declaration that a saint is a Doctor of the Universal Church implies the recognition of a charism of wisdom bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church and evidenced by the beneficial influence of his teaching among the People of God."¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, "Apostolic Letter Proclaiming Saint John of Avila, Diocesan Priest, a Doctor of the Universal Church" (7 October 2012), 7.

A Brief Historical Note

If we go through the history of the declaration of the Doctor of the Church one notices that it was Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), in 1298, for the first time declared a few Doctors of the Church, that too belonging to the first six centuries of the Christian era. The Pope selected the best four from the West and the East, respectively, and they all were already recognised as Fathers of the Church. These Great Doctors of the Church are Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great from the West and John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Athanasius from the East. All these lived after persecution and, therefore, they were not martyrs. At present there are thirty six Doctors of the Church, twenty-seven from the West and nine from the East, out of which four are women. The last one added to the galaxy of Doctors is Saint Gregory of Narek, a monk of the tenth century from the Armenian Church. Pope Francis, in 2015, declared him a Doctor of the Church.

Interestingly, one observes the active involvement and initiative of the Popes in declaring a saint a Doctor of the Church. It is particularly true in the case of the last three, mainly because of the personal interests of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Now, two more are in the waiting, Saint Pope John Paul II and Saint Oscar Amulfo Romero Y Galdamez, martyr Archbishop of San Salvador. In October 2019, the Polish Catholic Bishops' Conference formally petitioned Pope Francis to consider making Saint Pope John Paul II Doctor of the Church in an official proclamation, in recognition of his contributions to theology, philosophy, and Catholic literature, as well as the formal documents, encyclicals, apostolic letters, bulls, *Motu Proprio* documents, homilies, speeches that he had issued. Also the Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador has petitioned Pope Francis to name Saint Oscar Romero a Doctor of the Church. Still others in the making include Saint John Henry Newman, Saint Faustina Kowalska, and Saint Theresa of Kolkata. Thus, we see fluidity in the process of declaring a Doctor of the Church. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) wrote on Cardinal Newman: "The characteristic of the great Doctor of the Church, it seems to me, is that he teaches not only through his thought and speech but also by his life, because within him, thought and life are interpenetrated and defined. If this is so, then Newman belongs to the great teachers of the Church, because he both touches our hearts and enlightens our thinking."¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *First Centenary of the Death of Cardinal John Henry Newman*, 27 April 1990.

The brief description about the Doctors of the Church is given above in the context of the proposal of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Bishops to make efforts to declare Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara a Doctor of the Church. The development in history and the positions taken in the recent past clearly indicate that the proposal of the Synod can be substantiated by the life and teachings of Saint Chavara himself.

How to Proceed?

The first pre-requisite to begin the process is to make available a critical edition of the complete works of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and the formal request to the Pope from the part of the National Bishops' Conference (CBCI) and in our case a strong endorsement from the part of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Bishops. The whole critical work together with the petition is sent to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, which Dicastery sends the writings of the Saint to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Once the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith gives *nihil obstat*, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints studies the matter thoroughly and refers the matter to the Pope for final approval. Here below I note down certain norms to declare a saint a Doctor of the Universal Church.

1. Reception of the teachings of a saint declared to be a Doctor of the Church should be quick, universal, and constant.
2. Powerful intercession of the saint and the universal character of the devotion of the saint.
3. Petition from the part of the faithful, episcopal conferences, national, regional, and Church *sui juris* to the Roman Pontiff is very important.
4. Focus and project on one dominant character of the teachings of the saint, as in the case of Saint John of God, a Doctor of mystical theology.
5. As sign of the ecclesiastical reception, the teachings of the doctoral candidate appear in the teachings of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church, like *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, teachings of the ecumenical councils, papal documents, etc.
6. Visit of the ecclesiastical higher authorities, including Pope, to the tombs, shrines, and places associated with the saint is another requirement to facilitate the official declaration of someone as a Doctor of the Church.

7. The frequency of the Papal pronouncements in public audiences regarding the uniqueness of the teachings of the saint is another norm to declare a saint a Doctor of the Church.
8. The attributions and qualifications made by ecclesiastical authorities starting with Pope about the saint. For example, in the case of Saint Therese of Lisieux, Pope Pius X said she was the greatest saint of modern times and Pope Benedict XV described her as the teacher of life. Pope Pius XII described her doctrine as the one which penetrated into the very heart of the Gospel.
9. Presence of religious societies, orders, congregations founded and named after the saint or inspired by the teachings of the saint, is another norm to consider a saint a Doctor of the Church.
10. Ecclesial movements inspired by the life and teachings of the saint (for example, the Little Way Association, in the case of Saint Therese of Lisieux).
11. Continuous petitions by the laity and group of lay associations who are great promoters of the saint to the ecclesiastical authorities to declare the saint a Doctor of the Church.
12. Another norm or criteria is the frequency of the Bible quotations, both Old Testament and New Testament, teachings of the Fathers of the Church in the writings of the saint.
13. The petitions of the study groups who dedicate themselves for the promotion of the teachings of the saint constitute another criterion to declare someone a Doctor of the Church.
14. The popularity of the writings of the saint in different languages and their dissemination is another requirement to declare a saint a Doctor of the Church.
15. The teachings of the saint should reflect a passionate love for the Word of God and a deeper and in-depth experience of the Word of God.
16. Writings of the saint in inspiring the Church teachings on Mother Mary.
17. Influence of the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church in the theological, mystical, spiritual, and doctrinal evolution of the writings of the saint.

18. Care should be taken to identify any unique reference made by Pope in the documents of beatification and canonisation and during the sermon of the Pope or ecclesiastical higher authorities in the ceremony of beatification or canonisation.
19. What is very popular or unique with the teaching of the saint has to be focussed upon and in the case Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *sentire cum Ecclesia*, to feel with the Church, is a key to interpret his life and teachings.
20. The saint becomes a living icon of that God who, according to the Church's prayer, "shows his almighty power in his mercy and forgiveness" (Roman Missal, Opening Prayer, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time).
21. Permanent communion with the Roman Pontiff and filial devotion to the See of Rome and to the successor of Saint Peter.

The arguments mentioned above in declaring Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church are valid also in the case of presenting the topic of declaring him a Doctor of the Universal Church.

Conclusion

In section one, part 1 of this study is an exploration of the evolution of the norms and criteria for declaring somebody as a Father of the Church by the Universal Church. Part 2 is an attempt to enunciate the general criteria for declaring a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris* and criteria for declaring Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church. It takes into account the four fundamental norms for the declaration of Saint Chavara as a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*. Part 3 applies the general norms to the person, life, writings, and other social and pastoral endeavours of Saint Chavara in the building up of the Church and society.

In section two, preliminary efforts have been made to highlight the not so easy task of declaring someone a Doctor of the Church. We need further study and research to go ahead with the project of declaring Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara a Doctor of the Universal Church.

When the person and mission of Saint Chavara, reviewed in the context of his socio-historical milieu and in the very historical evolution of the Syro-Malabar Church, the requirements or the criteria evolved could be seen fulfilled in him so as to consider him eligible to be declared

a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris*. The eventual declaration of Saint Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church *sui juris* will render the apostolic Church more visibility and consequently more contributive to the communion consciousness of the Universal Church. Moreover, declarations of this sort would be affirming the *sui juris* nature of the Apostolic Church of Saint Thomas Christians and her legacy.

Syro-Malabar Church being an Apostolic Church enjoying synodal structure, the members of the Holy Synod could exercise its power by declaring Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church, thereby, paving the way for the eventual declaration of Saint Chavara a Doctor of the Universal Church, taking into account his unique contributions in the building up of the Syro-Malabar Church in the nineteenth century, especially by preserving the unity of the Church, by maintaining the communion with the successor of Saint Peter and by revitalising the Christian life of the Church. In the true sense, Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara may be considered the re-founder of the Syro-Malabar Church.

KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA: ANTIQUITY IN HIS ECCLESIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Benny Thettayil CMI♦

Abstract: Benny Thettayil, in the present article, explores and emphasizes one of the characteristic features of the Fathers of the Church, i.e., 'antiquity' in the life and contributions of Chavara. He explains the role of Chavara in the ecclesial formative period by becoming an exponent of pastoral awakening and ecclesial revitalization when it needed a spiritual revival. Chavara's zeal for the Church made him a strong defender of the Church for he knew its apostolic faith, traditions and history. He was convinced of the apostolicity of the Syro-Malabar Church and was proud of the antiquity of its faith and tradition, and as a patriarchal figure he defended the Church and protected it from possible divisions and disputes. Expounding the outstanding contributions of Chavara in spiritual, educational, ecclesial and literary realms, Thettayil in his article urges the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church to declare Chavara a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Keywords: Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Mysticism, *Dhyanasallapangal*, *abba* experience, Fathers of the Church, *Chavarul*, *The Testament of a Loving Father*, *Church sui Iuris*, antiquity, ecclesiastical writers, sanctity, *Eclogues*, Father of the Syro-Malabar Church.

♦ **Fr Benny Thettayil CMI** holds a doctorate in Sacred Scripture with a specialization in Johannine writings from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He is a prolific writer and has published several books and many articles and served as the editor-in-chief of *Herald of the East*. His publications include *In Spirit and Truth: An Exegetical Study of John 4:19-26 and a Theological Investigation of the Replacement Theme in the Fourth Gospel* (CBET 46), New York: Peeters 2007; *Spiritual Insertion in the Gangakshetra: Glimpses of the Mission in Bijnor* (ed), Bangalore 2012; *God-talk in Context: a North Indian Theological Experiment*, Bangalore 2016; *Fluid Cross: Expanding Theological Horizons* (PMRS 1) Bengaluru 2000; *Fragmented Cross: Expendable Theological Visions* (PMRS 2), Bengaluru 2020 and *Versatile Cross: Mission and Visions* (PMRS 3) Bengaluru 2020. He has been the Dean of Studies at Samanvaya Theology College, Bhopal, the Programme Coordinator of Poornodaya Training Centre, Bhopal, and the Provincial Superior of St John's CMI Province, Bijnor.

1. Introduction

Fathers and mothers are remembered by their children. Great fathers and mothers are remembered by generations of children. Some of these fathers and mothers are made immortal in the memory for what left for the posterity to hold and to cherish in perpetuity. They influence lives beyond their geographical and temporal horizon. The main concern of this study on the life and activities of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a patriarch and a faithful and Spirit-filled son of the Malabar Church is to see how, in various ways, his life, activities, teachings and writings have left a mark in the history of the Church. Our focus in this exploration is these various aspects of his life seen from the perspective of antiquity as he/she has been part of the beginnings.

2. Chavara in the Ecclesial Formative Period

Living in the 19th century, Chavara awakened not only his time, but also the 20th century and left a legacy for the 21st century. Throughout his life, he laboured zealously for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Church. Since all his apostolic services had the endorsement of his mystical experience, they still remain relevant to the Church and the society.¹

2.1. Pathfinder of Indian Christian Mysticism

The history of the universal Church records that only those men and women who led a life encircled by the Divine Spirit could make remarkable and lasting contributions to the Church in its formative years. Standing in a great line of Christian mystics, Chavara had a unique vision of God and humankind. *Dhyanasallapangal* enshrines his God-experience and contemplative dimension. He wrote of this experience: "My heart however, tells me to call you by no other name than my Father."² The joy he experienced from this *abba* experience enabled him to spend long uninterrupted hours in the divine presence of the Eucharist.³ His works were natural expressions and extensions of his intimate God-experience and lived mysticism. Mystical experience is

¹ The well-known Kerala historian, Sreethara Menon, "Kalathinumunpe Nadanna Naōdhāna Nāyakan", (*A Renaissance Leader Come before Time*), in *Chavarayachan*, 2004, 16-20, regrets that he did not make an elaborate study of Chavara's person and contribution. He writes that the life and achievements of Fr Chavara cannot be restricted to the Catholic Church. They are relevant to all communities and to all times. It can be said that Chavara was a great personality born before the times.

² CWC, *Colloquies*, 5.

³ *Positio*: 541.

the mark of a person who is close to God in sanctity. It is noteworthy that all the Fathers of the Church in both East and West were men of God although not all of them were mystics.

2.2. Pastoral Awakening

Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who was a diocesan priest, made extraordinary achievements for the Church by means of his dynamic activities. In the formative years of the Church in Malabar, he dedicated his life for the faith formation of the people of God. He fostered their faith, protected it and brought about a spiritual revival among the people. Some of the areas that he brought about the reformation were the formation of the laity and the new converts, foundation of religious communities for men and women, liturgical reforms, schools for public education for all strata of the society,⁴ development of print media⁵ and charity home⁶ for the destitute. A zealous pastor, he focused on the building up of the Church as well as the social, cultural and economic development of the society based on the Gospel values.⁷

2.3. Formation and Renewal of the Clergy

Chavara lived at a time when the native Church was animated by a group of clergy who were ill-prepared for the ministry. He knew that "an uneducated priest was not only inefficient to do anything worthwhile in his pastoral work, but may be even detrimental to the salvation of souls."⁸ He taught that if the clergy were empowered in formation, they would contribute immensely towards the spiritual uplift of the people of God.⁹ Hence, the monastery at Mannanam had a seminary attached to it in 1833,¹⁰ and the monasteries at Vazhakulam

⁴ Kochumuttom, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Mumbai: St Pauls, 2014, 239-248; 249-250; M. Mundadan, *History and Beyond*, Aluva: 1997, 169.

⁵ A.M. Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2008, 346-354.

⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 161.

⁷ The letter that Archbishop Baccinelli wrote to Rome recommending the consecration of Chavara as the bishop co-adjutor bears attests to the pastoral zeal of Chavara that made the Archbishop to propose him as his successor. See Mundadan, *Chavara*, 229.

⁸ L. Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Mannanam: St. Joseph's Monastery, 2003, 6; *Ciriaco Elia Chavara*, Roma: Postulator, 1974, 10.

⁹ J. Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the Co-founder of CMI Congregation*, Kottayam: Deepika, 2012, 38.

¹⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 68-76.

(1866) and Elthuruth (1869) followed suit.¹¹ Special retreats were preached for them, spiritual books and other literature were made available to them.¹² In various ways, he reformed the ecclesiastical education according to the need of the hour.¹³ The alumni of these seminaries were with Chavara later to confront the divisive challenges the Church faced from various quarters. Along with his confreres, Chavara stepped in to fill the vacuum that was created in the Malabar Church by the absence of effective native leadership.

2.4. Foundation of Indigenous Religious Congregations

Chavara belonged to a Church that was in a comma. The leadership of the European missionaries maintained it but without any vigour. He had often lamented the slumber and the barren state of the Church in India, which despite its antiquity and apostolic connections, had not produced even a single saint, whereas lands that received faith much later have produced them in great numbers.¹⁴ This state of slumber had descended on the Church "owing to the want of a religious house."¹⁵ In order to level this void, together with two of his mentors, who had had shared his vision,¹⁶ he paved the way for the foundation of no less than three religious congregations – two for women and one for men.

Despite the several references to the existence of Christian monastic life in India and among St Thomas Christians, Chavara and his companions had no extant monastic or religious models to build on; they had to begin from the scratch. They laid the foundation for the first religious house for men at Mannanam in 1831.¹⁷ The Primitive Rule of the Carmelite Order was given to them in 1855, and they became

¹¹ V. Plathotam, *Vannya Divyasree Chavara Kuriakose Elisachan*, Mannanam: Publisher Unavailable, 1936, 87.

¹² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 343-345.

¹³ Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 38-39.

¹⁴ CWC, Vol. III: *Adhyatmika Kruthikal* (Spiritual Works), Ernakulam (and Mannanam): 1981 (Malayalam), 173f.; English trans. by Jose Chittilappilly, Ernakulam: 1990, 146.

¹⁵ Vol. III: *Adhyatmika Kruthikal* (Spiritual Works), Ernakulam (and Mannanam): 1981, 1; English trans. Jose Chittilappilly, Ernakulam: 1990, 1.

¹⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 109, would note that "these two were the first to have the inspiration and start work on the foundation."

¹⁷ Mundadan, *History and Beyond*, 157ff; *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I (revised edition), Bangalore: 2001, 187ff; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 158-161, 67.

“Servants of Mary Immaculate of Mount Carmel.”¹⁸ Chavara animated them as their Prior until his death in 1871.¹⁹

The Malabar Church was lopsided. With no religious life for women, and none of them in ecclesial leadership, the Church was almost chauvinistic. In order to remedy this situation, Chavara also facilitated a similar arrangement for women.²⁰ This initiative was made at a time when they were largely denied the basic rights to education, property and proper clothing, a role in decision making in the family, in the Church and society.²¹ A few attempts at such a venture in the past, including the attempts of Archbishop Baccinelli, the reigning European prelate over the whole Church of Kerala seems to have failed.²² Chavara and Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD, an Italian missionary set out for such a venture.²³ They built a temporary bamboo shack²⁴ and “received some women who were prepared to live this kind of life and accommodated them in a temporary house”²⁵ in February 1866. Eventually, a permanent house was built for them.²⁶ The first convent for native religious women came into existence.

2.5. Ecclesial Revitalization

A lethargic church with little life was reinvigorated by Chavara. He brought about a renewal of the Malabar Church based on the Word of God and the Liturgy. He learnt Syriac and Latin, the liturgical languages of the time and organized the rubrics of the Mass, codified the Divine

¹⁸ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 102, n. 44, 103.

¹⁹ CSK (*Chavara Sampoorana Kruthikal*), Vol. I, 57, 77-78.

²⁰ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 281, indicates the possibility that the request that was placed before Arch Bishop Baccinelli included a vision for religious life both for men and women.

²¹ CKC, Vol. I, 84-85; Navya Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2014, 145-146; J. Pathrapankal, “An Iconoclast in His own Right”, in J. Mannarathara, ed., *The Life and Legacy of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2015, 241.

²² Mundadan, *Chavara*, 283, 289-290, 343.

²³ Positio, 558; P. Koyipallil, *A Short Biography of Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family: The First Prior General of Our Congregation*: (Malayalam manuscript AMSJ), 1929, 57.

²⁴ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 67; Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 66-73.

²⁵ Porukara, *Stapaka Pithākanmar*, 39.

²⁶ CKC, Vol. III: *Adhyatmika Kruthikal* (Spiritual Works), Ernakulam (and Mannanam): 1981, 138; English trans. Jose Chittilappilly, Ernakulam: 1990, 115f.

Office for the clergy²⁷ and the nuns,²⁸ introduced several paraliturgical practices such as Eucharistic adoration,²⁹ Passion week liturgy,³⁰ way of the cross, rosary devotion, novenas to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph and effected a revival in the spiritual life of the faithful of the Malabar Church. In addition to these, he prepared the 'Order of the Mass' and got it printed in 1868³¹ to ensure uniformity in the celebration of the Eucharist with devotion and order.³² This remarkable work was used by the Church for almost a century.

2.6. Educational Revitalization

There was an irrational fear in the ecclesiastical authorities about English education that was introduced by the European Protestant missionaries in the 19th century.³³ The fear prevented Catholics from getting educated and it was disadvantageous to the Catholics. Opening the door of literacy before his people in his own alternative way,³⁴ he opened a Sanskrit school in 1846. He offered education to the commoners and the deprived classes like the untouchables through the parishes in his jurisdiction.³⁵ Owing to the resistance in an area where the upper and

²⁷ Porukara, *Stapaka Pithākkannmar*, 30; P.J. Podipara, *Nammude Ritu (Our Rite)*, Mannanam: St Joseph's Press, 1943, 132f.; Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 57.

²⁸ CSK Vol. IV, 22.

²⁹ *Positio*: 282ff; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 278.

³⁰ See CWC Vol. IV, 1990, 11; 1982, pp. 22f.; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 277.

³¹ *Positio*: 308; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 267-268.

³² Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 56.

³³ V. N. Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol 2, Trivandrum: Asian Educational Service, 1989, 474; *LMS Report, The Report of the Directors to the Members of the Missionary Society*, London: 1823, 70; K.S. Mathew, "Introduction," in *Indian Constitution, Education and Minorities in Kerala*, K.S. Mathew and T. K. Sebastian (eds.), Tellichery: Institute for Research in Social Science and Humanities, 2009, 1-29, 9.

³⁴ J. Kanjiramattam, *The Pastoral vision*, 83.

³⁵ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 257. Mundadan also refers to the controversy regarding the origin of the idea and the circular enjoining the parish priests to establish a school adjacent to the churches. K.C. Chacko, *Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Mannanam: The Vice Postulator, 1959, 72. See also Mateer, *Land of Charity*, 29; V. Parappuram, *The Chronicles of the Monastery at Koonammavu*, ASJM, Mannanam: 1474; V. Plathottam, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Veera Santhanam*, Mannanam: St. Joseph's Press, 1939, 137; T. Kochumuttom, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 250.

lower classes could not be brought together,³⁶ he established a school at Arpukara, solely for the Dalits in 1865.³⁷ Not only did he make education affordable to them,³⁸ and in some cases free of charge, but also provided the mid-day meal as an incentive.³⁹ As a follow up, he made print media and literary facilities accessible to the people.⁴⁰

All these accomplishments made by Chavara and his companions were initiatives that awakened a church that is still reaping the benefits of his vision. The lasting effects of the many reforms that he brought about are still felt in the Church. The far-reaching results of his innovative moves would place him in the formative period of the Church in Malabar. He was at the head of the renaissance and reformation that was happening to the Malabar Church at the time.

3. Chavara the Patriarchal Figure

Chavara was convinced of the Apostolicity of the Church in general and that of the Malabar Church in particular. He wrote: "This Malabar which had received the faith from St. Thomas, the Apostle" confesses the "true faith from ancient times... We, the Nazarenes, are Christians of ancient origin..."⁴¹ His zeal to keep the Church away from Roccas and to protect it from the possible division, come from his conviction of the apostolicity of the Church. He took this stance at a time when he could have become the leader of the dissidents, which would have brought him laurels that the missionaries found him unworthy of. His decision made him an avid defender of the Church. He was very proud of the antiquity of his faith and tradition.

3.1. Local Ecclesial Leadership

Although the Malabar Church was an apostolic Church, at the time of Chavara, it was devoid of native leadership. The European missionaries

³⁶ Mundadan, A. M. *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2008, 256: V. Plathottam, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Oru Veera Santhanam*, 37. See Mundadan, *Chavara*, 256; *Alochanapusthakam* (Book of Consultation in the Monastery at Mannanam), 1864-1871, ASJM, Mannanam, 94-95, 26-27, 159.

³⁷ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 257; J. Paul, *Idaya Natakangal, (Eclogues - Shepherd Plays) by Chavara Kuriakose Elias*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Academy, 2014. 133.

³⁸ H. Wingram, *A Commentary on Malabar Laws and Customs*, Madras: Higginbotham, 1900, 100.

³⁹ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 259.

⁴⁰ Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 86-87. See also Mundadan, *Chavara*, 353

⁴¹ CWC Vol. IV, Letters, 1990, 14.

had neither found a local leader nor did they want to hand the leadership down to any native hands. The dissent that developed within the Church in the aftermath of the arrival of Roccas forced the missionaries to find a solution in Chavara. After the appointment of Chavara as the Vicar General, the efforts for a native bishop gathered momentum. Enumerating the benefits of a native ecclesial leadership, for the sake of the stability of the Church, he appealed to the Holy See to make provisions to appoint native bishops in the Malabar Church:

We are Mar Thoma Christians who have received our faith from St. Thomas. For the past many years we had no Bishop of our own. But those who have received their faith in very recent times have a Bishop of their own. Provoked by such envious thoughts when they (believers) get an opportunity they will go to Babel, saying 'Let us resort to Babel for... a Bishop of our own rite. Hence, Your Eminence, I am placing before you a suggestion ... It is good to have two Bishops here: one for the Latin Church, and the other for the Syrian Church.⁴²

Such an appeal did not produce any immediate positive effect. On the contrary, a few of his confreres were chastised as they demanded a local leadership in the Church. However, eventually, such efforts bore fruit. Ironically, though posthumously, Chavara himself was sought after to be appointed the first native Bishop of the Malabar Church.

3.2. Vicar General for the Malabar Church

In 1861, Chavara was appointed the Vicar General of the Malabar Church. As the Prior of his religious community at Mannanam, he was already giving leadership to the faithful. He had great human qualities; he was prudent, polite but stern,⁴³ and there was no leader in Malabar more fit to lead the Church than Chavara "for the spiritual progress of the faithful and to fight the schism more effectively."⁴⁴ The reason Baccinelli gave for the appointment of Chavara as the Vicar General is: "On account of the difficulties... in the administration of the churches under our jurisdiction, and on account of our advanced age... ill health, and above all, since I do not find the desired spiritual fruits either among the priests or among the laity... hereby I nominate you vicar general... of the Syro-Malabar Church under our jurisdiction."⁴⁵ On the personal

⁴² CWC Vol. IV, Letters, 1990, 14.

⁴³ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 148ff; 206; 224-229; 155.

⁴⁴ Kanjiramattam, *Pastoral Vision*, 96.

⁴⁵ *Positio*: 216; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

credentials of Chavara, Baccinelli writes: "I am convinced that you have the fortitude, ability and the virtue necessary to carry out this office."⁴⁶

3.3. For the Unity and Growth of the Church

The European Vicars Apostolic neither had the linguistic ability to understand and converse with the natives nor the time to learn the culture. Dissatisfied with the European leadership, some members of the Malabar Church turned back to Chaldea for a bishop.⁴⁷ In response, the Chaldean Patriarch Audo sent Thomas Roccas, a Chaldean bishop, as a visitor. The Church in Malabar, assuming that he was sent with authority, gave him a warm welcome. However, when Roccas was asked to produce his authorization, he failed to do so. But, by the time, 86 out of the 154 parishes completely and 30 partially followed him⁴⁸ and he began to exercise his episcopal powers as if he had jurisdiction over Malabar Church.

In the ensuing sticky situation of prolonged rancor between the majority who followed Roccas and the minority who did not, Chavara was appointed the Vicar General. His timely intervention saved the Church from a division. Subsequently, taking his contributions into consideration, Archbishop Baccinelli proposed to nominate him the co-adjutor bishop.⁴⁹ What is worthy of consideration here is that at the time, in the plausible event of appointing a bishop of Malabar origin, there would be nobody found worthy of nomination except Chavara.

Placid Podipara would surmise the outcome of the appointment and the activities of Chavara for the growth of the Church in Malabar:

⁴⁶ Mundadan, *Chavara*, 206.

⁴⁷ Before the arrival of the missionaries, the Malabar Church was given spiritual leadership by the bishops from Chaldea, whereas the temporal leadership remained with the Archdeacon who was a native priest.

⁴⁸ CWC Vol. I, *Chronicles*, 1990, 148-176.

⁴⁹ The Archbishop would also mention his minor reservation about his own proposal which is practical in nature. In comparison with the European Bishops, Chavara would neither have the education nor the episcopal niceties. This is also to be read in conjunction with *Positio*: 264; 265-269, where the objections made by Marcelline Berardi and Leopold Beccaro against the proposal are enumerated. Also see Paul Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly and the St Thomas Christians in 1896: Kuriakose Elias Chavara Unworthy of Episcopate?*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2018, for reasons why Chavara was found an unworthy candidate by the subsequent missionaries.

... at this time, the whole of the Syrian Church was divided, by the Vicar General, into four districts, each being entrusted to one of the Fathers of the Congregation. These Fathers were known, so to say, as the “plenipotentiaries” or “deputies” of the Vicar Apostolic, each in his district. They had special charge over the clergy and the laity; they supervised school work, conducted catechetical institutions, settled naughty disputes and quarrels and transacted other works of importance. Thus, the members of the congregation, directed by Fr Cyriac Elias (Chavara), visited, from the beginning, all the Churches of Malabar, preached retreats and missions, corrected abuses, and even discharged parochial work, when the peculiar circumstances of a parish required it.⁵⁰

4. Teachings of Chavara and the Fathers

One of the reasons we study the Fathers of the Church is to have a familiarity with their life, which makes us acquainted with Christian doctrine as it developed in the early centuries. By studying their writings in the context of their lives and the times in which they lived, we learn the history of the Church in its formative years and the various challenges it confronted. Not only were the Fathers some of the greatest minds in the history of the Church, for the most part, they were also saints, and immense spiritual value is derived from their writings.

Through their writings, the Fathers speak to us with considerable authority on matters of Christian life and doctrine. St John Henry Newman writes eloquently on the significance of the teachings of the Fathers in the second of the Four Lectures on The Patristical Idea of Antichrist: “When they speak of doctrines, they speak of them as being universally held. They are witnesses to the fact of those doctrines having been received, not here or there, but everywhere. We receive those doctrines, which they teach, not merely because they teach them, but because they bear witness that all Christians everywhere held them. As honest informants, they are an authority too.”⁵¹

Similarly, Newman, in his Advent Sermon I on the Times of Antichrist speaks of the obligation of the believers to listen to the Fathers:

⁵⁰ P. Podipara (ed.), *The Carmelite Congregation of Malabar 1831-1931*, Mannanam, 1932, 58-59; Mundadan, *Chavara*, 312, 313.

⁵¹ J.H. Newman, “Four Lectures on The Patristical Idea of Antichrist” in www.newmanreader.org/works/arguments/antichrist/lecture1.html; accessed on 18.12.2019.

Doubtless, no man has any right to impose his own deductions upon another, in matters of faith. There is an obvious obligation, indeed, upon the ignorant to submit to those who are better informed; and there is a fitness in the young submitting implicitly for a time to the teaching of their elders; but, beyond this, one man's opinion is not better than another's. But this is not the state of the case as regards the primitive Fathers. They do not speak of their *own private* opinion, but in matter of fact it is held, and has ever been held, by all the Churches, down to our times, without interruption, ever since the Apostles.⁵²

Most of the Church Fathers have made immense literary contributions for which they are known today.

5. Chavara in the Light of the Fathers

The Fathers of the Church have been a vital source of wisdom and inspiration for countless saints, popes, peasants, converts and believers throughout the history of the Church. They have expressed their thoughts on a wide variety of spiritual, religious, historical and even secular themes. In the light of what we have seen above, in the following discussion, we make an attempt to see how Chavara fits into the great tapestry of the patristic galaxy.

5.1. *Didache* and the *Testament of a Loving Father*

The *Didache* is a brief anonymous early Christian treatise, dated back to the first century. The text, parts of which constitute the oldest extant written catechism, has three main sections dealing with Christian ethics, rituals such as baptism and Eucharist, and Church organization.⁵³ The opening chapters describe the virtuous way of life and the wicked way of death. Among other contents of the *Didache*, the Lord's Prayer is included in full. In a similar way, *Chavarul, The Testament of a Loving Father*, written towards the end of Chavara's life, became central to Christian life at the time. In order to transform Christian families, into a heavenly abode according to the plan of the Creator, practical teachings were explicitly formulated in order to assist early disciplinary formation in the family.

The multi-genre character of the *Chavarul* accounts for the multiple levels of interpretation that it produces. Approaching a fairly old text

⁵² J.H. Newman, "Advent Sermon I on the Times of Antichrist" in <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/tract83.html>; accessed on 18.12.2019.

⁵³ O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2010, 46-104.

like *Chavarul* through the lens of the biblical Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus enables us to hear the multiple voices encoded in them for the sake of the family and the formation of children.⁵⁴ The stories and anecdotes that are found in the *Chavarul* point to the many ideological and religious imaginations of Chavara that have produced them for the society and the Church.

5.2. Ecclesiastical History and the Chronicles

The importance of the early ecclesiastical writers was well understood even by their contemporaries. Eusebius, in his fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History*, lists all the Christian writers and writings of which he knows, including quotations, many of the sources of which are no longer extant. In many cases, we only know of these writings from the work of Eusebius. Similarly, much of the contemporary historical details regarding the Church and society in Malabar are derived from the Chronicles that Chavara and his confreres kept.

5.3. Theology and Poetry

Saint Ephrem the Syrian was a gifted and prolific poet of the fourth century. He also is a saint and Doctor of the Church who eloquently defended Christian Orthodoxy during a great upheaval. As a deacon, Ephrem taught through insightful hymns and poems for which he is famous. At Edessa, a city filled with Arians, Marcionites, Manicheans and Gnostics, he excelled in defending Orthodox, Nicene Christianity in the face of a myriad of adversaries. Hymns became one of his most effective weapons against heresy. He was a master of music and is still known as the “harp of the Holy Spirit.” Ephrem’s favourite subject in the hymns was the Blessed Virgin Mary. Like many other Early Church Fathers, he knew that a proper understanding of Mary and her role was inseparable from a proper understanding of Christ’s humanity and divinity, his relationship with the Father, and the nature of our redemption in him. Like Ephrem, Chavara engaged with contemporary religions and philosophies. He often used terms borrowed from the Indian literature to explain and illustrate Christian ideas.⁵⁵ Both Ephrem

⁵⁴ Chavara, *Testament of a Loving Father*, Kakkanad: Chavara Central Secretariat, 2014. See also George Kaniarakath, “St. Kuriakos Chavara, a Teacher of Family Theology: A Reading in the Light of Ben Sira”, *Herald of the East* 13, 2 (July-December 2017), 165-182, who makes a comparative study of *Chavarul* and Ecclesiasticus.

⁵⁵ Jojo Parecattil, *Tattvamasikkoru Chavarabhashyam*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2017.

and Chavara use the terminology of vision to describe the way in which Christ dwelt in Mary, filling her with beauty, transforming her for a great purpose.⁵⁶

5.4. Literary and Linguistic Considerations

Jerome, in addition to the biblical projects, was concerned to catalogue the existing Christian literature, in order to show the non-believers that the Christian intellectual tradition was far from negligible. Jerome included some secular and Jewish writers such as Philo, Josephus and Seneca in his list and introduced what was good in them to Christianity. In a similar way, some of the genres of literature was introduced to the society and the Church by Chavara. For instance, though, semi-spiritual, with its implicit articulations, the *Eclogues* are pastoral dramatic plays (1855-1856),⁵⁷ that were altogether a new introduction to the literary society in his context. It was the first of its kind in Indian literature.

The primitive language of the patristic literature was Koine Greek. The Greek Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the 4th and 5th centuries were outstanding representatives of Atticism, which is a form of elegant Greek. Basil and John Chrysostom were admired by Libanius, the great Sophist for their style and content of writing. Greek was gradually supplanted in the East by the national languages, especially Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian. Ephrem the Syrian wrote his hymn and the bulk of other materials in Syriac. This ancient language came to Malabar Church through the Chaldean Church and was still in use at the time of Chavara. Most of the correspondence that he had, especially with Rome, was in Syriac, the ecclesiastical language of St Thomas Christians of Malabar at the time.

6. Conclusion

The insightful teachings and services of Chavara enabled the Malabar Church not only to keep up her own apostolic faith and traditions, but also to renew her life in accordance with the signs of the times. In these testing times, when the Malabar Church is in need of another renewal, an overview of his life profile is very pertinent since the saint was a strong pillar who spearheaded the formative period of the Malabar Church in the 19th century, a crucial time in her quest to regain her

⁵⁶ Cf. Ephrem, *Hymns on the Church* – 112; Chavara, *Kanakenam*.

⁵⁷ J. Paul, *Idaya Natakangal (Eclogues – Shepherd Plays) by Chavara Kuriakose Elias*, Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Academy, 2014.

identity and autonomy, while keeping intact the unity of the Universal Church.

Syro-Malabar Church is a Church *sui Iuris* with a synodal structure and it has many powers that it can exercise canonically because it has autonomy, for which Chavara and his confreres worked. Since the Syro-Malabar community does not have an officially declared Church Father,⁵⁸ and there is no other contender in the community who deserves this title, and as the Syro-Malabar Church Synod has the power to do it, the Synod ought to declare Chavara *a Father of the Syro-Malabar Church*.

⁵⁸ In this context, St Thomas the Apostle who brought to the Church in Kerala the gift of faith deserves our consideration. There are opinions raised that St Thomas is *the* Father of the Syro Malabar Church. However, we need also to consider the fact that there is no Apostle called Father of the Church because the Apostles cannot be relegated to such a rank. Even Paul who claims that in Christ Jesus he became the father of the Corinthian church through the gospel (1 Cor 4:15), is never referred to as the Father of the Church.

DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH AND SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

Thomas Kollampampil CMI♦

Abstract: Every age has inspired people for the building up of the Church. Among them the 'Doctors of the Church' are prominent. So far there are 36 declared Doctors of the Church. Holy Spirit has moulded the Church through them. They were prophetically gifted people even to guide the Church hierarchy. For the organic growth of the Church, the Doctors of the Church made vital contributions in the life of humanity. Thus, they are 'wise scribes' (Mt 13:52), who could bring renewal of Christian life by updating the teachings and practices based on the older sources of biblical teachings. They make the face of Christ visible at all times, places and in all developments of the world situations. The length, breadth and depth of the Word of God are so unfathomable and the Word needs interpretation at different levels and at all times of the history of humanity. The Holy Spirit provides gifted people as guides and interpreters for all times. Their enlightenment and Christian witness generate a 'new Pentecost' from time to time. In that respect, the life and witness of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara amounts to that of a Doctor of the Church in many ways.

Keywords: Doctors of the Church; Fathers of the Church; building up of the Church; People of God; new Pentecost; Thomas Christians of India; St. Chavara, *Darsana veedu*, *Thapasu bhavanam*.

♦Fr Thomas Kollampampil CMI is a Professor of Theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), Bangalore. He served in the International Theological Commission (CTI) of Vatican, from 2014. He is reappointed to the same CTI from 2021. He is also a member of the Theological Commission for the Synod of Bishops (2021-2024), Vatican. He serves in the 'Office of the Theological Concerns (OTC)', Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC). He is on the Editorial Board of the *Eastern Catholic Studies and Texts (ECST) Series*, Catholic University of America, Washington, USA. He holds ThD from Patristic Institute, Augustinianum, Rome. His doctoral dissertation, *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh* (Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 2001), has two US Editions (2010 and 2014) and an Internet Edition (2016) from Gorgias Press, New Jersey (USA).

1. Introduction

The progress of the history of salvation is guided by the Holy Spirit according to the varying needs and levels of the reception of the divine economy by human communities in every age. In view of the continued realization of the promised salvation in every context, the divine economy provides inspired people for the building up of the Church through their teaching, guidance and exemplary active life patterns. These providential gifts of individuals are acknowledged and accepted officially as ‘Doctors of the Church’ from time to time.

Initially the great ‘Doctors of the Church’ in the West and East were acclaimed by the public than by any Church pronouncement. Thus, originally eight Doctors of the Church were accepted, four each from the West and the East; the four from the West are St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the great and St. Jerome;¹ the four from the East are St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Chrysostom.² Later, in addition to these eight doctors, others were added by Popes, starting with the addition of St. Thomas Aquinas by Pope St. Pius V in 1568. In the 20/21 centuries four female doctors were also added to the list. They are St. Catherine of Siena (by Pope Paul VI on 4 October, 1970), St. Teresa of Avila (by Pope Paul VI on 27 September, 1970), St. Thérèse of Lisieux (by Pope John Paul II on October 19, 1997) and St. Hildegard of Bingen (by Pope Benedict XVI on 7 October, 2012). The latest additions were that of St. John of Avila (by Pope Benedict XVI on 7 October, 2012) and St. Gregory of Narek (by Pope Francis on 21 February, 2015). Thus, at present there are 36 Doctors of the Church declared by the Catholic Church.³

2. Current List of the Doctors of the Church (up to 2019)

No.	The Doctors	Life	Year of Declaration
1	Athanasius	296 - 373	1568 by Pius V
2	Ephraem the Syrian	306 - 373	October 5, 1920 by Benedict XV
3	Hilary of Poitiers	315 - 367	May 13, 1851 by Pius IX
4	Cyril of Jerusalem	315 - 386	July 28, 1882 by Leo XIII
5	Gregory of Nazianzus	325 - 389	1568 by Pius V

¹ Officially these four were declared by Pope Boniface VIII on 20 September, 1295.

² Officially these four were declared by Pope Pius V in 1568.

³ The up-to-date full list of the ‘Doctors of the Church’ is given below.

6	Basil the Great	329 - 379	1568 by Pius V
7	Ambrose	339 - 397	September 20, 1295 by Boniface VIII
8	John Chrysostom	347 - 407	1568 by Pius V
9	Jerome	347 - 419	September 20, 1295 by Boniface VIII
10	Augustine	354 - 430	September 20, 1295 by Boniface VIII
11	Cyril of Alexandria	376 - 444	July 28, 1882 by Leo XIII
12	Peter Chrysologous	400 - 450	February 10, 1729 by Benedict XIII
13	Leo the Great	400 - 461	October 15, 1754 by Benedict XIV
14	Gregory the Great	540 - 604	September 20, 1295 by Boniface VIII
15	Isidore of Seville	560 - 636	April 25, 1722 by Innocent XIII
16	John of Damascus	645 - 749	August 19, 1890 by Leo XIII
17	Bede the Venerable	672 - 735	November 13, 1899 by Leo XIII
18	Peter Damian	1007 - 1072	September 27, 1828 by Leo XII
19	Anselm	1033 - 1109	February 3, 1720 by Clement XI
20	Bernard of Clairvaux	1090 - 1153	August 20, 1830 by Pius VIII
21	Anthony of Padua	1195 - 1231	January 16, 1946 by Pius XII
22	Albert the Great	1206 - 1280	December 16, 1931 by Pius XI
23	Bonaventure	1221 - 1274	March 14, 1588 by Sixtus V
24	Thomas Aquinas	1226 - 1274	April 11, 1567 by Pius V
25	Catherine of Siena	1347 - 1380	October 4, 1970 by Paul VI
26	Teresa of Avila	1515 - 1582	September 27, 1970 by Paul VI
27	Peter Canisius	1521 - 1597	May 21, 1925 by Pius XI
28	John of the Cross	1542 - 1591	August 24, 1926 by Pius XI
29	Robert Bellarmine	1542 - 1621	September 17, 1931 by Pius XI
30	Lawrence of Brindisi	1559 - 1619	March 19, 1959 by John XXIII
31	Francis de Sales	1567 - 1622	November 16, 1871 by Pius IX
32	Alphonsus Ligouri	1696 - 1787	July 7, 1871 by Pius IX
33	Therese of Lisieux	1873 - 1897	October 19, 1997 by John Paul II
34	John of Avila	1500 - 1569	October 7, 2012 by Benedict XVI
35	Hildegard of Bingen	1098 - 1179	October 7, 2012 by Benedict XVI
36	Gregory of Narek	951 - 1003	February 21, 2015 by Pope Francis

3. On-going Teaching, Sanctifying and Governing Ministry of the Church

Humanity has been endowed with the faculties of prophecy, priesthood and kingship in creation in view of the needed teaching, sanctifying and governing in the society. These faculties are to be developed and exercised in order to attain the desired goal of human life, individually and communally. In the communal level of the exercise of teaching, sanctifying and governing, the Holy Spirit calls out and anoints suitable persons for the building up of the redeemed humanity, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1Pet 2:9; Ex 19:5-6).

Jesus assured the assistance of the Holy Spirit to his Church. This assistance is provided also through the teachers and guides of the community of the faithful in the Church from time to time and for all peoples of all ages. Among all peoples there are individuals of wisdom and knowledge, guided by the Holy Spirit for molding the witnessful life of the Church. St. Paul speaks of various gifts and offices in the Church in 1Corinthians 12. In 1Thessalonians 5:19-23, St. Paul advises all to test everything and hold on to what is good so as to sanctify the whole human person, body, soul and the spirit.

Tertullian speaks about the teachers of the faith for the good of the community as those who cure and maintain the community properly.⁴ Isidore of Seville, a Doctor of the Church, writes: “Just as skilled Physicians treat the body’s varied illness with different medicines, there being diverse cures for the varieties of wounds, so too a doctor of the Church uses the fitting remedy of teaching for each and all, and will proclaim whatever is needed for each person, according to age, sex and profession.”⁵ Doctors of the Church have the duties of teaching and illuminating the minds of the faithful. For this purpose some receive special interior illuminating action of the Holy Spirit.⁶

From the early Church onwards, the bishops lived a life of witnessing, exercised their teaching commitment as well as good administration of the community with the help of gifted people as guided by the Holy Spirit. In the Church, the gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit, the

⁴ cf. Tertullian, *Against the Heretics*, 8

⁵ cf. Isidore of Seville, *Book of Sentences*, Book, III.

⁶ cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Suma Ia-IIae*, III. 4; cf. *Commentary on 1Corinthians 12*, Lesson 2.

services are guided by the Lord Jesus and all varieties of activities are activated by God, in and through the single economy (1Cor 12:4-6). So the teaching authority of the Church cannot be restricted to the institutional authority alone. There were people with specific charisma in the Church. The best medieval example is St. Francis of Assisi who was called to reform the Church in the 13th c. There were many such gifted and charismatically blessed individuals of the community. There were male and female members, both from the clerical and the lay states, who guided the community and built up the Church in their own periods from time to time (Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Sienna, Robert Bellarmine, Thérèse of Lisieux, and others). Sometimes such teachers might have stood against some orientations of the official bishops also by their prophetic utterances and stance, in view of the radical renewal in the Church.

4. The Transmission of Christian Faith and Tradition by the Doctors of the Church

The period of the Fathers of the Church gave the basic foundation to the modes of Christian life. Even after that period the faith had to be transmitted and Christian tradition had to be molded appropriately according to the needs of the times and contexts of the world situations. It is because the history of salvation is ongoing and needs apostolic continuity and correct teachings. In such situations of the world, eminent people were called up and were anointed by the Holy Spirit with specific charisms and functions among the peoples of various Christian traditions from time to time. Those inspiring and illuminating leaders with their orthodox teachings and orthopraxis built up the Christian community, the Church, and they became inspirational models for the posterity as well. They have even reformed the Church traditions, as done by Theresa of Avila, Alphonse Ligouri, and others.

In the organic growth of the Church, the Doctors of the Church made vital contributions. They shaped Christianity in their own historical, cultural, social, ecumenical, dogmatic settings. The Church was raised in the inclusive patterns of human life, in embracing the whole humanity for the Kingdom of God. As Christianity spread far and wide from Jerusalem (cf. Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8), there emerged the need for preaching the Word of God in various social and cultural contexts for molding the needed modes of Christian witnessing life. Some prominent models for such witnessing life are given below:

St. Augustine (354-430) by his refutation of Manichaeism, Donatism and Pelagianism, laid foundation for solid Christian soteriology (against Manichaeism), sacramentology and ecclesiology (against Donatism) and anthropology (against Pelagianism). He is also a pioneer of Western monasticism on account of his way of ascetical life. He composed the monastic rules for the priests who lived with him. He also composed similar rules for the women ascetics. The book, *City of God*, by Augustine was the solution he found for the prolonged tension between the 'secularizing world and the sanctifying Christian way of life', he himself confronted in the Roman Empire. He found 'two loves', in two cities, the earthly love of self even unto the contempt of God and the heavenly love of God unto contempt of self⁷ that are in need of integration. Finally, he established that true history is the unseen but real building of the 'City of God' by assuming and getting nourished by the salvific mystery of Christ, the centre of history. *Confessions* report the personal spiritual combat and growth of Augustine.

Pope Gregory the great (540-604), by his teaching, preaching and action, laid the foundation of *Christianitas*, the medieval foundation for the Christianity in Europe.⁸ Gregory had a deep inner balancing between compunction and contemplation. The inner urge for tuning to God in contemplation and the outer fulfillment of the love of neighbour in actions that guided Gregory for his witnessful life.⁹

Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380) mediated between the warring city states and the papal authority. Her illuminated mystical experience and realistic perception on social and political life, gave her the power and wisdom to counsel the Pope. Her vision of signs and symbols, such as, tree, book, river, etc., and the wider use of allegory and symbols in describing the mystery of redemption are famous. She is an icon of women enlightenment in the Church, especially in the context of Avignon papacy.

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was an empowered Carmelite woman of the 16th century. By her active and contemplative life, Teresa enriched the world of spiritual realization by way of the ecstatic mystical way of Christian life. In the active sector she was a reformer of religious life, founder of convents with reformed orientation, and a prolific writer of mystical treatises and letters. She is an example of how God illuminates

⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.28.

⁸ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Doctors of the Church*, Crossroad, NY 1999, 85.

⁹ Cf. McGinn, *The Doctors of the Church*, 86.

and guides people of specific generations through reform and contemplation.

Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897) brings in a specific aspect of the building of the Church and Kingdom. She opened the 'Little Way' of perfection by way of total surrender to the love of God. Her mission in her own terms was to love God and make others love God. Her way was love of God and prayer for all. Her vocation of love and apostolate of prayer for all made her a role model to common people who live their faith in ordinary situations of life. She opened a new way of being Christian amidst rationalism, hedonism and material affluence.

5. Doctors of the Church as 'Scribes Trained for the Kingdom of God'

The Word of God is multifaceted with power and energy for all times. Hence, the Church is blessed with charismatically gifted people to interpret and unveil the power and energy of the Word of God in all ages and circumstances for Christian action. Only by such Christian action, propelled by the power and energy of the Word, the transformation of the world into a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Rev 21:1) would take place. A Doctor of the Church can be described, as taught by Jesus in Mathew 13:52, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." The Doctors of the Church are 'wise scribes' who could bring renewal of Christian life by updating the teachings and practices from the older sources of biblical teachings and updating the Christian vision for the building up of the Church as required in their times.

With their charisms, the Doctors of the Church reflect over the needs of the Church, society and the human culture, so as to bring about the needed social transformation as salvific transformation for the world. They redefined the doctrines and traditions of the Church in the new contexts of the evolving world situations for the guidance of the believers. The on-going guidance of the Spirit through the Doctors of the Church are visible in the history.¹⁰ The questions raised to Jesus and the old questions against Christian faith are reappearing in the modern world, in new age groups and other circumstances.¹¹ Such issues need purification, rectifications and proper solutions. Thus, they become

¹⁰ Christopher Rengers, *The 33 Doctors of the Church*, p. xxvi.

¹¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19 March, 2018, Chp. II; Nos. 37 & 40.

‘Pastors of the New Heaven and the New Earth’ by their translation of the Word of God into human and social actions by obeying the command of Jesus by ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ (Mt 28:20).

6. Doctors of the Church as the Visible Face of Christ to the World

Making Christ visible, at all times, in all cultures, in all developments and at all times of crises, is the ministry of the Doctors of the Church. Here one must remember the prophecy of Simeon in the temple when Jesus was presented. He is set for the rise and fall of many (Lk 2:34). The ministry of Jesus was to preach the good news to the poor, release of captives, liberty to all who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19). In this respect the new interpretations given by Jesus to the Law in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ stand as an ever-dynamic paradigm. While keeping the spirit of the law, the body of human action has to be given shape. It is in the mode of ‘old wine in new wineskins’ (Mt 9:17), old wine of Christian doctrines has to be preserved and further given out with proper renewed interpretation in the new situations of the world.

The length, breadth and depth of the Word of God are so unfathomable and are not for one interpreter alone to comprehend totally. Word of God gives needed specific resources to each generation. Hence, there is the need of teachers and guides proper to each generation. Here, we are reminded of the teaching of Saint Ephrem:

Who is able to understand, Lord, all the richness of even one of your words? There is more that eludes us than what we can understand. We are like the thirsty drinking from a fountain. Your word has as many aspects as the perspectives of those who study it. The Lord has coloured his word with diverse beauties, so that those who study it can contemplate what stirs them. He has hidden in his word all treasures, so that each of us might find the needed richness in what he or she contemplates.¹²

The universal divine salvific will and plan for the world has to be made visible by teaching, preaching and Christian action in the world situations.

¹² St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 1, 18; cf. Pope Francis, *Motu Proprio, Aperuit Illis*, 30 September, 2019, § 2.

7. Doctors of the Church as Catalysts of Spiritual and Ascetical Life

The 'indwelling of the Spirit' in all generations has to be made effective as a 'new Pentecost'. Only by the guidance and work of the Spirit the embodiment of the will of God would take place. Mary prepared herself and the Holy Spirit came upon her and the embodiment of the Word took place (Lk 1:35). On the day of Pentecost when the apostles were assembled with Mary, the Holy Spirit came upon them in tongues of fire. They were empowered by the indwelling of the Spirit for preaching the good news everywhere. Likewise, the Doctors of the Church prepare the people and the society for the coming of the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost.

In developing and widening the consciousness of the people, the presence of Christ who is the way, the truth and the life, has to be made discernible (Jn 14:16). This has to be taught, experienced and lived in the society. Doctors do this and enhance the doing of this by their witnessing life and mission. From time to time, God has selected champions, leaders, teachers and models for the People of God. This factor has to be discerned, acknowledged, and accepted by all, especially in the case of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. This acceptance itself is a model of growth. The Doctors of the Church were tuning the tradition by their noble vision, way of life, and thus opened new modes of life for the building up of the Church. So Doctors of the Church, as true guides, may be compared with the 'star of Bethlehem' (Mt 2:9) that guided the Magi to Bethlehem, to Christ Jesus, the embodied Saviour.¹³

8. Norms for the Declaration of a Doctor of the Church

In the initial stage, the doctors of the Church in the West and East were acclaimed popularly and subsequently they were recognized by the universal Church. But later, some general norms were set to identify and recognize the Doctors of the Church. In the search for the earliest guidelines for identifying the Doctors of the Church, one finds the work of Prospero Lambertini, *The Beatification of Servants of God and the Canonization of the Blessed* (in 4 volumes).¹⁴ In the second book, he proposes three conditions required for a Doctor of the Church: *eminens doctrina* (eminent teaching), *insignis vitae sanctitas* (outstanding sanctity), and *Ecclesiae declaratio* (declaration by the Church).¹⁵ It was for the first

¹³ Christopher Rengers, *The 33 Doctors of the Church*, p. xxx.

¹⁴ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Doctors of the Church*, Crossroad, NY 1999, 14.

¹⁵ Lambertini had a long period of work experience in Vatican, in the Congregation for the Saints, dealing with canonization process and related

time that these norms were proposed. According to Lambertini (Pope Benedict XIV, pope from 1740-1758) the last norm is the declaration by the Pope or by a general council. But till date, no general council has declared any one a Doctor of the Church (Book 2, Chps. 11-12). But General Councils have taken the teachings of many Doctors of the Church as norms for their teachings.

Naming of female Doctors of the Church made the norm clear that no ecclesiastical office was needed for someone to become a Doctor of the Church. In 1997 Pope St. John Paul II declared St. Thérèse of Lisieux a Doctor of the Church. Then he declared that the love-centered teaching of St. Thérèse was an answer to the rationalism, materialism and hedonism of the modern period. According to John Paul II, the 'Church Teaching' in its wider context incorporates "contemplative study to which theologians are called", the "*magisterium* of pastors", and the "profound understanding of spiritual things given to saints". There are enlightened and inspiring individuals in the Church who have created effective history of the course of the Church in their own times. By their life and mission, they have taken seminal steps that were aimed at the current and later fruitfulness in the community of Christians and in the course of the history of the Church.

The case of St. Francis of Assisi is a concrete example of salvific tuning of the history of the Church. Doctors of the Church have many ways of teachings other than being mere doctrinal teachers. Hence, the recent perspectives on the Doctors of the Church are leaning to the power and modes of their work (in many respects) for the building up of the Church. This new perspective opens attention to the needed plurality in the aspects of teaching, sanctifying and governing modes of the Church as presented by eminent theologians, saints and pastors of the Church. Pope Paul VI once made it clear that it is not the Pope who creates the Doctors, but the Pope recognizes the ways of the Holy Spirit who works through such people in a distinguished way for the good of the Church.¹⁶ In this respect, the working of the Holy Spirit through St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara among the Thomas Christians of India, and more specifically, in the formation of the present Syro-Malabar Church, has its own uniqueness, identity and specific contributions.

issues. Thus his proposals have contextual significance and higher discernments.

¹⁶ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Doctors of the Church*, Crossroad, NY 1999, 21.

9. Conclusion

The nature and function of the history of salvation makes it evident that Christianity in India, and within that spectrum, the Thomas Christians of India, had the guidance and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in their history. Such guidance and empowering were embodied and realized through the enlightened teachers and leaders of the land. One such instance and evidence is the appointment of St. Chavara as the Vicar General of the Syrian Thomas Christians at the time of the tragic ordeal and challenge from Roccas schism in 1861. The power and energy of the Holy Spirit in the Church worked through St. Chavara for the good of the Church, precisely in keeping the unity of the Church.

There were many such vicissitudes in the history of Thomas Christians of India. During all those times, the divine providence had supplied leaders, teachers, preachers and illuminated brave sons of the Church for the faithful. Among them St. Chavara stands as a prominent one in many respects. His spiritual realization is acknowledged by the Universal Church through the canonization. Now his powerful inspiration and the relevance of his teachings as well as his personal witnessing power and energy are to be acknowledged locally ('Father of the Church' in the Church *sui iuris*) and in the universal Church, as 'Doctor of the Church'.

The ministry of Chavara became fruitful through the pastoral (kingly) services; the religious/sacramental level ministry became fruitful through the priestly services; the spiritual level ministry became fruitful through the prophetic vision attained from the life in *darsana veedu* (house of vision) and *thapasu bhavanam* (house of austerity). Thus, St. Chavara had exercised his prophetic, priestly and pastoral (kingly) faculties/duties to the maximum possible, depending upon the divine providence with full cooperation to the divine call. In quite Indian terms, in the Indian context, St. Chavara became a highly sublime *Yogi* (one who has realized integration), by bearing witness to the Indian way of Christian life, through *Jñāna-mārga* (path of knowledge), *Karma-mārga* (path of action), and *Bhakti-mārga* (path of devotion).

KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA: A TRUE SON OF THE CHURCH

Josy Maria CMC♦

Abstract: Narrating and reflecting on the immense contributions of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara for the Church and its unity and growth, Josy Maria presents him as a true son of the Church. In the present article, the author discusses the special situation of the Kerala church at the time of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara who believed that the society will become prosperous when the families are integrated and women's welfare has been assured and those who are at the periphery are thoroughly motivated for development. Therefore, all these four aspects are unfolded gradually. The present essay forms the first part of her study, and it reflects on the social vision of Chavara and the ecclesial situation in the nineteenth century Kerala, his contributions as the Vicar General of Saint Thomas Christians, and Chavara as a man of wider ecclesial vision. This article has a second part which would appear in the next issue.

Keywords: St Thomas Christians, Eastern Church, Individual Church, Syro-Malabar Church, Roccas Schism, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII, Just wages, Ecclesial Heritage, Identity Consciousness, Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD, Carmelite Missionaries.

1. Introduction

Being a social reality, the Church is deeply involved in the day-to-day affairs of the people of God. She cannot distance herself from these realities, as she is concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of her children

♦ **Sr Josy Maria CMC** belongs to Pushparam CMC Province, Dehradun. She had her theological studies at Dharmaram, Bengaluru and her doctorate at Angelicum, Rome. She has authored and published two books on Saint Chavara: 1. *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara the Founder of Women TOCD*, 2. *Fostering Feminine Genius: Saint Chavara's Theology of Women*. She has also written a book on the Servant of God Mother Mary Celine. Recently she has published the biography of Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD with the title *Malabarinte Manassarinja Mahamissionary*. Currently, she makes research on Saint Chavara's Contribution as Social Reformer and attempts to bring out the picture of Saint Chavara in the Manuscript sources.

as well as their concerns and anxieties of daily living. *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII is the first great social encyclical letter in which the social commitment of the Church is articulated with clarity and focus. It reads: "It must not be supposed that the Church is so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness and better their condition in life."¹ Here the specific and indispensable role of the Church in social change is very well expressed. The Pope was convinced that religion can avail itself to destroy the evil in the society at its roots. The key to reading Pope Leo's *Rerum Novarum* is the dignity of the worker and, therefore, the dignity of work, which he defines as "to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life."² Work is personal in as much as the energy expended is bound up with the personality and is exclusive property of him who acts. The social condition of the Church at the end of the nineteenth century to which *Rerum Novarum* addressed was entirely different from that of Kerala society which was far from the concept of the dignity of work and of the worker. Kerala's working class was mainly *Pulayas* and other lower caste people who were treated as animals; they were meant to work hard, but were considered to have no right for just wages and proper living conditions.

In the present paper, we analyze how did the social vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and the programs he initiated in Kerala led to the integral welfare of the Church and the society. As a true disciple of Christ, Chavara was committed to carry on the liberating mission of Jesus and, as a lover of the Church, he was guided by the social teachings of the Church. The state of affairs of the nineteenth century Kerala society challenged him to initiate various programmes for the less privileged and the marginalized of the society. His dedication opened up new ways of showing solidarity with the marginalized and working for their advancement. By doing this, he became a sign of contradiction of his time for the authorities or, in other words, he proved himself as a man ahead of his time. Chavara's capacity to respond meaningfully to the social issues of Kerala has brought forth integral development of the Church and society.

¹Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 15 May 1891, no. 23. AAS XI (1892), 97-144.

²Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, no. 6.

2. Nineteenth Century Kerala Church of "Master and Slaves"

A clear understanding of the ecclesial situation of the Saint Thomas Christians of Kerala would be necessary to understand the circumstances in which Chavara had been working for the integral welfare of the Church and the society. According to a report of the vicariate of Varapuzha sent to the prefect of Propaganda Fide, Rome, on 25 March 1859, the Catholic population of Latin Christians was 10,000, and that of Syrians 160,000. Indigenous priests and seminarians of the Latin Church stood at 28 and 29 and that of Syrians amounted to 340 and 240 respectively. Parishes of the Latin community were numbered at 23 and along with 37 chapels; Syrians had 115 parishes and 120 chapels. The number of missionaries in Varapuzha was five. In the vicariate of Mangalore the number of Catholics was 40,000 and had 24 indigenous priests and six missionaries.³ This report clearly depicts the uniqueness of the vicariate of Varapuzha which was in an anomalous situation, since it was governed by a Latin bishop, although the Eastern Christians formed the vast majority of the faithful. In fact, more than two-thirds of the Christian faithful and parishes in the vicariate of Varapuzha belonged to the Eastern Church. They had every right to obtain a bishop of their own rite and nation.

Chavara was well aware that in India all the vicariates put together had less number of Christians than that of Saint Thomas Christians of Varapuzha vicariate. It pained him that this ancient apostolic church with 160,000 Catholics and 340 priests and 115 parish churches was combined with and treated as an appendix to a church of recent origin, with another Rite, that too with very few faithful and meager infrastructures.⁴ Chavara stated it in no uncertain terms: "Such discrepancy of the rites is not found anywhere in the world except

³AG OCD., Plut. 444, *Registro delle Cose*, 362; 181c.

⁴AG OCD., Stato delle Missioni Estere dell'Ordine de Carmelitani Scalzi nel 1863, 448r, 448v. Indie Orientali Costa Malabarica. According to the report sent to Rome in 1863 the number of priests in Syrian Rite has been reduced to 300 and parishes 113. Is it because the statistics went wrong or because of the disturbance caused by Roccas schism many left their priesthood? There were 340 priests and 240 seminarians in 1859; within four years how is it possible to have considerable change in the number of priests? On 18 May 1876 when Monsignor Leo Meurine, apostolic visitor, wrote to Rome the number of priests 328, seminarians 124, parish churches 158 chapels 10. TOCD monasteries 6 in which priests 37, lay brothers 24, novices 33 (ACO, *Ponenze* 1876 ff. 725-730).

among the Syro-Malabarians.”⁵ In the Report of 1867 the vicar apostolic openly admitted that nine Syro-Malabar priests were appointed to serve in Quilon vicariate: “Because of great scarcity, with my permission nine priests serve the vicariate apostolic of Quilon as vicars or assistant vicars.”⁶ It means that vicariate of Quilon, which was exclusively for the Latins, was erected at the expense of another individual Church or Rite. A vicariate was installed even without having sufficient priests of their own. This is true about the vicariate of Varapuzha which could not provide Latin priests for the Latin parishes.⁷

Chavara saw the basic reason for the lack of identity consciousness, growth, unity, poor quality of priestly formation, and all other problems related with the Church was the difference of rites and the lack of local ecclesial leadership of their own rite. It saddened him that they were like fatherless generation and there existed no cordiality between the bishop and the priests. He expressed his views clearly:

In Malabar our priests know only the Syriac language which they use for liturgical purposes. Their bishops and missionaries use a different language and follow a different rite. This situation stands in the way of unity and the mutual understanding that should exist between the Father and his spiritual children which is entirely missing here... The language used by the bishop to ordain priests is not the same as the one used by the priests. Hence, there is lack of devotion and the existing bond between them is not that of father and children, but that of master and slaves. This gives rise to a slavish fear in the priests and in the common people...⁸

3. Sign of Contradiction for the Carmelite Missionaries

When Chavara had longed for the self-government for the Saint Thomas Christians, the Carmelite missionaries thought that it was an act of

⁵ Chavara, CWC., vol. 4, *Letters* VI:4.

⁶ Archives of the Congregation of the Oriental Churches (ACO), Rome, *Ponenze* 1873, 681-709. See also Paul Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly and the Saint Thomas Christians in 1867: Kuriakose Elias Chavara Unworthy of Episcopate?* Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2018, 71. Hereafter referred to as *Baccinelli Report 1867. Q.*, 57. p. 71.

⁷ Persico report mentions about the lack of sufficient number of Latin priests for the Latin Parishes. Also, Persico says that Syrian priests are appointed in Latin parishes as assistants. ACO., *Ponenze* 1877 pp. 595-637. Persico Report, para. 54.

⁸ Chavara, CWC., vol. 4, *Letters* VI: 4.

usurpation, which was illogical and illegitimate; naturally, they could not digest the idea. In the course of time, Leonard Mellano, the vicar apostolic showed much dislike towards Chavara for his legitimate suggestion to have an exclusive ecclesial leadership for the Saint Thomas Christians, a church with a large number of Christians and better infrastructure and resources. Moreover, this Malabar church was a *swadeshi* church, a national church, a church rooted in Kerala, but the ecclesial authorities were Europeans. Unlike other vicariates of India this Church was not the fruit of the missionary work of European missionaries. Chavara's motivation was pure and determination strong. He took courage and persisted boldly to let the higher ecclesial authorities know the real situation of Malabar Church. He was clear about the apostolic origin and identity of Saint Thomas Christians. He wrote clearly to the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide: "We are Mar Thoma Christians who have received our faith from Saint Thomas. For the past many years we had no bishop of our own. But those who received faith in very recent times have bishops of their own."⁹ He offered his humble suggestion as to how they can overcome this handicap so that people will stay contented:

Hence, Your Eminence, I am placing before you a suggestion which I consider good. It is good to have two bishops here: one for the Latin Church and another for the Syrian Church. Then their longing to have a bishop of their own will cease.¹⁰

From the second half of the nineteenth century the Syrians got fed up with the Carmelite missionaries and their dissatisfaction grew in leaps and bounds. Realizing the sentiments of the people with regard to the lack of native leadership of this apostolic Church, Chavara joined with like-minded priests, informed the proper authority in the Church, namely, Propaganda Fide, through a letter sent on 22 July 1861. Realistically, but with genuine concern, he wrote: "Lastly we wish to inform you of one more fact. For quite some time now, our laity and priests have been alienating themselves from the Archbishop [Bernardine]. The reason for this alienation, according to them, is that his

⁹ Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters II*: 4. Letter to Alexander Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda Fide.

¹⁰ Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters II*:5. Letter to Alexander Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda Fide.

orders are harsh to accept and his directions are excessive.”¹¹ From the time of the appointment of Latin bishops in 1599 the St Thomas Christians ardently desired bishops of their own rite, because they wanted sacred ordinations and other Episcopal ceremonies in their own rite and liturgical language. If they had been given a bishop of their own rite and nation even according to the provisions of Fourth Lateran Council as a vicar general of the vicariate of Varapuzha, Roccas schism would not have taken place.¹²

Chavara was aware of the ecclesial identity of this individual Church and feared that the seminarians and deacons who were trained and ordained by a foreign bishop will gradually lose their ecclesial heritage and identity consciousness. He saw the need to have bishops of their own rite and to have liturgical celebrations in Syriac language in view of an ecumenical outlook. Hence, he wrote: “This would be very opportune and useful. There are also many non-Catholics in our midst who are our own kith and kin, now known as Jacobites. The above solution will help them renounce schism and to return to the unity of the Catholic fold.”¹³ He experienced an agony; his agony was to be alive to the mission of the Lord in his time. We could see in him a keen search for the vision for the Indian Church that would enhance her being as a true local church.

Chavara wrote to Rome for getting a bishop of our own on another occasion, which was carried by Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD who accompanied Monsignor Mellano to Italy on 10 September 1869.¹⁴ Along with Chavara many other priests had put their signature in that letter. When Monsignor Mellano came to know about this letter in which Saint Chavara also has put his signature, he was displeased with Chavara and he complained to Rome against Chavara regarding this matter.¹⁵ When Chavara died on 3 January 1871 Monsignor Mellano did not make himself available for his funeral ceremonies.¹⁶ The priests and faithful

¹¹Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters* II:1. Letter to Alexander Cardinal Barnabo on 22 July 1861.

¹² Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, p. 120.

¹³Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters* II:5. Letter to Alexander Cardinal Barnabo.

¹⁴Parappuram, *Nalagamangal*, p. 1380-81 [MSS, Malayalam]. The Chronicler gives a detailed explanation regarding this letter and what happened to it later. Cf. also Jossy Maria, *Malabarinte Manassarinja Mahamissionary, Fr Leopold Beccaro, OCD*, Aluva: CMC Publications, 2023, p. 183.

¹⁵ Letter written by Monsignor Mellano to Propaganda on 19 September 1875.

¹⁶ *The Chronicle of Mannanam Monastery*, vol. 3, p. 138 [MSS, Malayalam]

looked at his absence as an expression of his dislike for the person of Chavara for standing for self-government and they feared dire consequences in the future.

Another cause of grief for Chavara was lack of theological treatises or other systematic books. He lamented, "Greeks and Latins have excellent theological books and good treatises, and when we ask ourselves why we, the Syrians, have not produced so far good books or treatises and how this situation can be improved, the answer we find is that all nations and people have their own bishops and missionaries who are well-versed in sacred sciences and that they have produced in the course of years good literary works and theological treatises."¹⁷

In the report sent by Monsignor Baccinelli to Rome in 1867, Question 57 read: "Whether amongst the priests there are alumni of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, or of Saint Athanasius College in Rome ... whether they accomplish their work satisfactorily?" To this, Baccinelli gave the following answer: "There are not any."¹⁸ When the above-mentioned report asked about convoking provincial and diocesan synod, the vicar apostolic openly admitted that the Carmelites never convoked any synod.¹⁹ Saint Thomas Christians felt the disregard of the Carmelite missionaries that they did not work for the growth of the local church so that they did not send any priest for higher studies. Moreover, they did not show interest even to teach them Syriac and Latin language; they did not show respect for their local culture and they had many other grievances.

4. Chavara, Vicar General of Saint Thomas Christians

On 8 June 1861, within a month after the arrival of the intruder bishop Thomas Roccas in Kerala from Baghdad, Chavara was appointed vicar general. Being aware of the magnitude and the seriousness of the problem caused by the arrival of bishop Roccas, Baccinelli openly admitted his inability to have control over the situation. And he explained the reason for this appointment in the following words:

On account of the difficulties which we experience in the administration of churches under our jurisdiction for a long time, because of our advanced age and subsequent exhaustion and indisposition, and moreover, since through our administration we do

¹⁷Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters* VI: 4.

¹⁸ Baccinelli Report 1867. Q. 57.

¹⁹ Baccinelli Report 1867, Q.14, 59.

not see spiritual fruits both among the priests and among the laity, in the present circumstances of things, according to the decree of the council of Trent, it is necessary to constitute a vicar general. Hence we appoint you as vicar general, so that you govern, as regards spiritual affairs, priests and lay people in the parishes of Syro-Malabar Church under our jurisdiction.²⁰

On 15 June 1861, Baccinelli wrote to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide informing him of the appointment of Chavara as the vicar general, in which he listed very many good qualities of Chavara: "The Prior of the old and principal monastery, and head of the whole congregation, a man truly Christian, virtuous, very prudent, very well-versed in Sacred Scriptures, most proficient in Syriac language, who in this circumstance with his deeds proved himself to be very faithful to the Catholic religion and to the Holy See, even though the Intruder and his seditious group from Baghdad itself endeavored to draw him to their side...²¹

Here it is worthwhile to recall that Baccinelli had even contemplated consecrating Chavara a bishop in order to satisfy the people in the context of the then Roccas schism!²² With all these great expectations and blessings Chavara was appointed as vicar general. But we do not see any document signed by Chavara as vicar general. It was ten days after his appointment as vicar general that Chavara wrote letters to the Holy Father to know the truth about bishop Thomas Roccas; even in those letters he did not introduce himself as vicar general; instead he signed as the Prior of the TOCD.²³ This was true about his five letters to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide and to other bishops, priests, and lay people.

One year after his appointment, in 1862, in the second and third weeks of September (12-22 September), the three vicars apostolic of Varapuzha, Mangalore, and Kollam and their respective vicars general assembled at Varapuzha to discuss and determine important

²⁰ ACO, *Ponenze* 1865, 687-690. See also Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 17-18.

²¹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1865, 687-690. See also Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 18-21.

²² ACO, *Ponenze* 1865, 687-690. See also Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 18-21.

²³ Even then he knew that his position as the Prior of the monasteries was far higher than that of a vicar general of a vicariate! Moreover, I am also glad that this little 'political' appointment did not affect him much.

disciplinary laws of their vicariates.²⁴ The decisions taken at the Conference were sent to the Propaganda Fide on 5 October 1862, under the signatures of the vicars apostolic and their respective vicars general. Father Philip of Saint Joseph, a Carmelite missionary, represented the vicariate of Varapuzha as vicar general.²⁵ Though Chavara was the vicar general, his signature is found missing in the report and, accordingly, we do not have any evidence for his participation in the Conference while many discussions and deliberations of the Conference were regarding the Saint Thomas Christians. It leads us to think that when the immediate problem of the arrival of bishop Roccas was settled and Roccas went back to his country, Chavara was forgotten within one year by the bishop himself who appointed him as vicar general for the Syrian Christians. But his convictions and his inner tranquility remained the same as before. During his tenure he gave the vicariate a firm foundation with seminary and houses of formation where he guided his charges with kindness, firmness and patience. He wrote to his priests: "The priest who is not united to God is a stream that is disjointed from its source."

5. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara Unworthy of Episcopate?

We see another anomaly in the question of consecrating him as bishop. In the letter informing the prefect of the Propaganda Fide the appointment of Chavara as the vicar general, Baccinelli had made a request to consecrate Chavara as bishop. "... my opinion, my request to Your Eminence (is to consider), whether it will be convenient to consecrate him as coadjutor bishop for the Surianis, in case the sole dignity of vicar general is not enough to hold back (arrest) the multitude from following the Intruder, and to divert them from him and from the Chaldean Patriarch." Baccinelli also informed Rome: "If they [Roccas party] could have obtained his consecration, all or almost all would have followed him, since he enjoys great esteem, respect, and authority among all."²⁶

But, in 1865, when the Propaganda Fide considered the question of his Episcopal consecration, Monsignor Baccinelli and his missionaries were not in favor of it and according to them all Syrian priests were

²⁴ACO, *Scritt. rif. nei congressi Chaldei* (1862-1866) f. 114.

²⁵ACO, *Scritt. rif. nei congressi Chaldei* (1862-1866) f. 118.

²⁶ACO., *Ponenze* 1865, 687-690. See also Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 18-21.

unworthy of episcopate.²⁷ Studying the Roman documents of that period Paul Pallath made the following observation. If Chavara had been consecrated bishop and the permanent office of a native vicar general with Episcopal character had been established as desired by Propaganda Fide the Mellus schism and its consequences could have been avoided. History proves that the Western missionaries always strived their best, utilizing the entire arsenal at their disposal, to jealously preserve the episcopacy and jurisdictional power for themselves and this was the main cause of troubles, divisions and schisms among the St Thomas Christians in India, whose forefathers had embraced Christianity even before the Christianization of Europe.²⁸ We see Chavara's reflections were on the same line that he evaluated the reason for the Syrian Christians turning to Babel to get bishops of their own rite.²⁹

6. A Man of Wider Ecclesial Vision

Although Chavara had no authority he worked for the integral growth of the Church. His timely intervention saved the Church from division. He nurtured the faith of the people by conducting retreats in the parishes, by introducing forty hours adoration, by making several books available for them, by introducing liturgical reforms and many other renewal programs. The conviction, that only the learned and saintly priests can effectively lead the people of God, was very deeply inscribed in him that enabled him to focus his attention on forming the leaders; he focused his attention on the priestly formation from 1833 onwards, namely, roughly two years after the foundation of the CMI at Mannanam. Valuing his contribution in the field of seminary formation on 16 February 1844, Monsignor Francis Xavier, the vicar apostolic of Varapuzha appointed him as the 'Examiner of all the priests of Syro-Malabar Church' and the Malpan. He was authorized to give sanction to priests to preach and hear confession, and recommendation to the deacons for priesthood. He continued this service till his death.

Monsignor Baccinelli entrusted him with the responsibility of settling disputes of the parishes, priests and individuals from the time he was appointed as the vicar apostolic of Malabar. His predecessor Monsignor Ludvic also was confident of Chavara's creative problem solving method. The ten letters that he wrote to the bishops, during the period

²⁷ACO, *Ponenze* 1873, 668-669. See also Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 39-52.

²⁸ Pallath, *Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly*, 120.

²⁹ Chavara, *CWC*, vol. 4, *Letters*, VI: 4.

of 1848-1856, tell of the stories of his wise method of reconciling people by bringing peace in the parishes. In those letters he put his signature as Chavara *Kathanar*; he was simply a priest of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Prior of TOCD monasteries.³⁰ What he was proud of was his priestly identity. He saw the hand of God in everything that happened in his life.³¹

Chavara was the recognized leader of his time. On certain occasions people thought Chavara's interventions were necessary. For an example, in the month of November 1869 when some problems occurred in Anakallunkal parish, though Chavara was sick and unable to travel, people wanted him to be present to solve the matter amicably and he reached there.³²

People rightly understood what he was for the Church and what he did. Getting the news of his death the sisters of Koonammavu convent wrote in their chronicle, "This father was a mirror and lamp to all the Christians in Kerala. Moreover, he was a strong pillar that supported the holy Church in protecting its faith. With zeal, he worked for its growth and expansion."³³ He could hold the whole universe in his heart; at the moment of his death he made a touching prayer joining with the priests of the whole world, especially with the Church in Asia and America:

"... Even though I was not able to celebrate Holy Mass after my illness increased, I remain one in spirit with the priests, who offer to God the Father the divine lamb every hour continuously during day and night in the four parts of the world, in Asia and America, etc."³⁴

He instructed the members of his congregation to open up monasteries, convents and boarding houses for girls in the vicariates of Kollam and Varapuzha. Although Kollam vicariate was exclusively for Latin Christians he was concerned about their growth and development as well. He was a man beyond geographical, liturgical or any other boundaries. When he printed the first book from the Mannanam press, *Jnanapiusham*, in 1847 he printed 'the rite of the Holy Mass' of both the Latin Church and of the Syrian Church.

...*To be concluded*

³⁰ Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 4, *Letters*, III:1-10.

³¹ Chavara, *CWC.*, vol. 3, *Dhyanasallapangal*, p. 13 [1981].

³² *CKC.*, 1:152-53.

³³ *CKC.*, II:23.

³⁴ *Mannanam Nalagamam*, vol. 3 [MSS] (1864-72), p. 133.

MILESTONES IN THE LIFE OF SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

- 10-02-1805 Born at Kainakary, Kerala, India
- 18-02-1805 Baptized at Chennamkary parish church
- 08-09-1805 Dedicated to Blessed Virgin Mary as her servant at Vechoor Church
- 1810-1815 Primary education at Kainakary
- 1818 Joined the parish seminary at Pallipuram
- 29-11-1829 Ordained priest at Arthunkal church
- 11-05-1831 Foundation of the First Indian Religious Congregation for Men, Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), along with Fr Thomas Palackal and Fr Thomas Porukara
- 1831 Popularized Sunday Homilies and introduced Retreats for priests and laity in the Kerala Church
- 1831 Saint Joseph's Ashram, Mannanam was established
- 1833 Establishment of the First Syro-Malabar Common Seminary at Mannanam
- 1838 Introduction of 'Way of the Cross' devotion at Mannanam
- 16-02-1844 Appointed *Malpan* (Tutor of sacred subjects) and examiner of scholastics with authorization to issue patents to the newly ordained to hear confession and preach in the Church
- 03-07-1846 Foundation of the First printing press and publishing house of the Syro-Malabar Church at Mannanam
- 1846 Foundation of the First Catholic Sanskrit School at Mannanam
- 1849 Appointed official preacher for the Church in Kerala by Bishop Ludovico Nartini

- 1853 Foundation of the First Syro-Malabar Catechumenate at Mannanam
- 08-12-1855 First priest to profess as religious in the Indian Church
- 1855 Religious community was named 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'
- 1856-1857 Wrote 10 Eclogues (Shepherd Plays) on the nativity events of Christ
- 1857 Saint Joseph Ashram, Koonammavu was established
- 1858 Saint Mary's Ashram, Elthuruthu was established
- 1859 Carmel Ashram, Vazhakulam was established
- 1859 Started the arrangements for the convent at Puthenpally
- 27-07-1861 OCD Affiliated the Congregation as third Order of Carmelites Discalced (TOCD)
- 08-06-1861 Appointed as the First Vicar General in the Syro-Malabar Church after the time of Archdeacons
- 1861 Fought for Syro-Malabar Church against schismatic intruder bishop Roccas
- 1861 Saint Sebastian's Ashram, Pulinkunnu was established
- 1862 Wrote the First Malayalam Narrative poem, *Anasthacyayude Rakthasakshyam*, an inspirational story of a martyr
- 1862-1869 Edited the Divine Office for priests, Compiled and Composed Liturgical Rubrics, Liturgical Calendar, Office for the Dead, Little office of Immaculate Mother etc., in the Malabar Church
- 1864 Introduced the 'May Devotion of Blessed Virgin Mary' at Mannanam
- 1864 Implemented the concept, 'A school for a Church' (*Pallikkudam*), in the Syro-Malabar Church as Vicar General
- 13-02-1866 Foundation of the Indian Religious Congregation for women now known as Congregation of Mother Carmel (CMC) at Koonammavu together with Fr Leopold OCD, an Italian Missionary

- 15-02-1866 Introduced 40 Hours Eucharistic Adoration in Kerala at Koonammavu
- 1866 Saint Teresa's Convent, Koonammavu was established
- 1868 Saint Teresa's Ashram, Ambazhakad was established
- 02-01-1868 Started the first boarding house and school for girls in Kerala at Koonammavu together with Fr Leopold OCD
- 13-02-1868 Wrote the first instruction manual, '*A Testament of a Loving Father*' for Christian families, the first of its kind in the Church
- 1869 Foundation of the first lay charitable organization, the 'Confraternity of St Joseph for Happy Death' at Kainakary
- 1869 Foundation of the first Home of Charity, *Upavisala*, for the sick, old and destitute at Kainakary
- 1869 Initiated Catholic re-union movement
- 1870 Saint John of the Cross Ashram, Mutholy was established
- 3-01-1871 Slept in the Lord at St Philomina's Monastery at Koonammavu
- 24-05-1889 Mortal remains reinterred at St Joseph's Monastery, Mannanam, the Mother House of the CMI Congregation
- 21-12-1936 Canonization process started at the congregational level
- 09-12-1955 Official permission to start the process of Canonization
- 03-01-1958 Diocesan process started with the title Servant of God
- 07-04-1984 Declared Venerable by Pope John Paul II in Rome
- 08-02-1986 Beatification at Kottayam, Kerala by Pope John Paul II
- 20-12-1987 Release of the postal stamp by the Government of India in recognition of the social commitment of Saint Chavara
- 04-05-2006 Portrait of Saint Chavara unveiled in the Literary Academy Hall of Thrissur by Government of Kerala for contribution to Malayalam literature

- 19-10-2014 Publication of Eclogues by Kerala Sahithya Academy
- 23-11-2014 Canonization of Kuriakose Elias Chavara at Vatican by
Pope Francis

Book Review

Jossy Maria, *Fostering Feminine Genius: An Empowering Theology of Women from Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, (Theological Studies on Saint Chavara 7), Kochi: Chavara Central Secretariat & Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2020, pp. xxxii + 294; ISBN: 978-81-946576-3-7.

In the traditional theological circles, feminist theology in general has been a bit considered as something too liberal or rebellious. It must be at the same time frankly admitted that feminist theology can also be part of an authentic Christian theology of liberation, in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ. The above-mentioned book by Sr Dr Jossy Maria CMC, is a case in point. She has brought out in this work the vision of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805-1871) on women. He was an Indian Carmelite religious priest from Kerala belonging to the Syro-Malabar Church, canonized on 23 November 2014. He was one of the founding fathers of the first indigenous religious congregation for men, the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) in 1831 and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) for women in 1866. He had pioneered a set of revolutionary changes to uplift the marginalized and the ostracised people of the society through educational and social activities. One among such activities is his attempts at promoting the dignity of women and fighting against discrimination and injustice towards them. This social uplift of women was an urgent need of the times in India in general and in Kerala (Malabar) in particular, then in the nineteenth century, just as it is still today in many parts of the globe. Although the Church in general is often unfairly/mistakenly and sweepingly accused of patriarchal hegemony and male chauvinism against women, Chavara emerges very clearly as a champion of feminism, as is evident from his contributions towards empowering the women genius, which is clearly demonstrated by the well written work of Sr Jossy.

In order to scientifically understand and present Chavara's vision on women Sr Jossy analyses his thoughts, writings, instructions and ministry, which contain his deep reflections upon the role and place of women in the whole economy of salvation. The book consists of five chapters. The first chapter gives us a glimpse of the biblical and recent magisterial/papal writings regarding feminine genius. To begin with, the author briefly touches upon the contributions of the Second Vatican

Council in this area and of the Pope St Paul VI and then elaborately discusses the valuable contributions of Pope St John Paul II, who authored two important documents about women, namely, the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988) and *Letter to Women* (1995). The author then gives us an interesting and eye-opening discussion on the theological anthropology contained in the creation stories of the book of *Genesis*. Here she highlights the new theological insights that speak for women vis-à-vis the traditional interpretation, which tended to uphold the inferior status of women.

The chapter has also a section about Jesus' attitude towards women and on St Paul's theology of women, with both the positive and negative aspects of St Paul's theology, although some of the texts selected to highlight the negative aspects could be actually understood positively in the light of a different interpretation, as for instance, 1 Cor 14:36 ("Or did the word of God originate with you?") as St Paul refuting the opinion (of some men) that women should be silent in the churches! In other words, verses 33b to 35 reflect the prevailing attitude of some men, and the verses from 36 as St Paul's own response to it! A comparable text is 1 Cor 8:1. Verse 1a ("all of us possess knowledge") is the opinion of a few, while verse 1b ("Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up") is St Paul's response to it. Again 1 Cor 11:10 can be seen as St Paul permitting women to have authority (*exousia*, meaning veil as a symbol of authority) over her head! In this connection it may also be observed that what is described in Gen 3 about man ruling over his wife has to be seen as speaking for women, for this situation of male domination is depicted there as a consequence of the *sin*, i.e., not as the ideal situation willed by God! Towards the close of the first chapter there is also a section on the pro-woman statements of Pope Francis, of the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (2020) and of the CBCI Gender Policy for India (2010).

Chapter 2 is the main chapter, in which the author elaborately discusses the feminine genius in the writings of St Chavara. She observes there that the integral formation Chavara received from his mother Thoppil Mariam and the powerful image of his mother "enabled him to see God as Mother" (p. 55). As an explicit text in support of this she cites the statement from *Atmanutapam* in which Chavara addresses Jesus Christ as "my father, my mother, my joy, my food and drink and everything in my life" (p. 61, foot note 1). In this poem *Atmanutapam* Chavara pens more than 100 lines directly on his mother and more than 300 lines on mothering experiences. Sr Jossy also observes that "while body-denying spirituality was praised in the Catholic tradition Chavara

has full praise for pregnancy, childbirth ... and thus, he developed a theology of women's body" p. 77). Although one may wonder here how this can be understood as developing a "theology of women's body", it is true that Chavara's above-mentioned writings implicitly contain a positive theology of woman's body, in that St Chavara had tried to break the taboos and myths of uncleanness attached to a woman's body and its processes. He picturized colourfully Blessed Virgin Mary's dominant life experiences such as pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, nurturing, care giving, etc., which were all experiences through her body. One may at the same time also remark that the body-hostile spirituality was not an essential and general feature of Catholic tradition as such, although in the West there was a time when such a negative view was prevalent reflecting the Gnostic-Manichean-Augustinian influence.

It is interesting to note that according to Sr Jossy "Chavara presents Mary of Magdala as a person who fell in love with Jesus" (p. 91). The close friendship Jesus had with Martha and Mary of Bethany, whom Chavara calls "my mothers" is another theme, which the author deals with in this connection. Another such mother of Chavara is Saint Teresa of Avila, whom he calls *Amma Thressia*. He has also another particular group of mother saints comprising of three Marys, namely, Saints Mary of Egypt, Mary of Cortona and Mary Magdalene, whom he calls "Penitent Mothers". He also joyfully accepted the contributions of women in completing his projects, allowed them to co-operate with him with his projects and made them his collaborators. The author further brings out that in Chavara's writings there are many stories on women to illustrate his teaching. The terms '*punya sthree*' (virtuous woman), '*punya kanya*' (virtuous virgin), etc., are often repeated to denote the nature of these women. These stories reveal Chavara's mind-set that women are generally more devoted and virtuous than men and that the women are closer to God and their prayers are more readily heard (p. 108). Also in his *Chavarul* the Saint often includes inspirational stories of widows. All this serves to bring to light Chavara's positive assessment of women.

Chapter 3 deals with the different means St Chavara adopted to foster feminine genius, to encourage women and to develop their skills. He did this mostly through the first indigenous religious institute he co-founded for women at Koonammavu, Kerala. He intended thereby a thorough reform of the Kerala Church of the nineteenth century. He did his best to develop the artistic and literary talents and skills of the

candidates and sisters in the convent and the girls in the boarding house. They were trained in flower setting, embroidery, singing, writing poems, playing musical instruments, etc. In order to encourage the girls their artistic works were exhibited when prominent guests visited the convent and boarding house. The chapter illustrates beautifully how St Chavara tried to uplift the women of Kerala by promoting their skills in dramatics through Eclogues (shepherd dramas), teaching Tamil and also some hymns in Latin and Syriac, imparting vocational training and higher education for girls, inculcating in them the reading habits, training in accounts keeping, and introducing rosary making as cottage industry.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Blessed Virgin Mary, as the highest expression of feminine genius. The author observes in the opening pages of the chapter that “Chavara’s Mary of Nazareth, as he had presented in the *Atmanutapam*, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman; on the contrary, she was a woman who courageously stood at the foot of the cross when her son was disowned and deserted even by his closest disciples” (p. 203). Sr Jossy makes a very important observation that “Chavara presented Mary’s relationship with God and humans as rooted in her womanly experiences” (p. 204). The chapter offers an analysis of Chavara’s relationship with Mary. Here Sr Jossy gives us some glimpses of Chavara’s first relationship with Mother Mary; the event of his being offered at her feet at Vechoor Church; his celebration of the feast of her nativity as “a day of grace”; his understanding of the Rosary as an important item of the family prayer (*sandhya namaskaram*). In the *Dhyanasallapangal* Chavara makes many references to Mary, about her relationship to Joseph and her sufferings. Sr Jossy also highlights that Chavara presented Mary as the “Woman promised”, who lived her womanhood as “daughter, wife, leader, and mother of the community” (p. 210). He addressed her as “supreme lady”, “crown of womankind”, “my mistress”, etc. At the same time Chavara views Mary also as a true disciple and constant follower of Jesus (pp. 225-229). He considered Mary also the first consecrated person and the model of perfect consecration to God and the mother of consecrated persons. Sr Jossy elaborates on this point in pages 230 to 239. Chavara portrays Mary also as a courageous woman. This was shown at the foot of the cross and when the dead body of Jesus was brought down from the cross to her. In Chavara’s poetic imaginations, Mary is also depicted as a merciful mother who filled with compassion justifies the actions of the disciples

saying to herself “that it was because of their fear of death that the disciples deserted Jesus, their master” (p. 242).

Chavara depicts Mary also as a privileged mother, in that he portrays a unique scene of Jesus’ appearance to her after his resurrection. A unique encounter! Graced by divine power she was privileged to see then the godly scene and rejoiced. The further epithets of Mary according to Saint Chavara are: a caring mother of Christ’s disciples, protector of women, mother of the church, loving daughter of the heavenly Father, beloved mother of Jesus and the lovely bride of the Holy Spirit.

It is also noteworthy that Sr Jossy has a very interesting section 7 with the subtitle “Mary: in Harmony with Mother Earth” in chapter 4. There the author deals with what St Chavara wrote in the twelfth Canto of the *Atmanutapam* about what happened when it was time for Mary to depart from this earth. Sr Jossy mentions there that according to Chavara the first title of Mary was ‘Mother of the Creator’, and now she gets the titles of ‘Mother of all humanity’ as well as ‘Mother of the universe’. Chavara venerated her as the mother of all the living. In the above poem he also envisages that Mary had prepared her Testament, asking permission from her Son.

The words of Sr Jossy on Chavara’s poem *Atmanutapam* are insightful and deep in meaning. She writes: “Looked at from a Marian perspective, *Atmanutapam* was “Her-story, story of Mary. ... It was Jesus’ story seen through the eyes of Mary; it is also Chavara’s story, meditated by and intertwined with the lives of Jesus and Mary. It was the story of every woman who looked up to Mary” (p. 266).

The concluding chapter 5 deals with Christian anthropology regarding the promotion of women’s equal dignity and presents St Chavara as a model after the “Jesus’ model” of empowerment. In this context Sr Jossy speaks of “Chavara Model” of Empowering and “Koonammavu Model” of Empowerment. The author then pleads for a Gospel-based feminism. She is full praise for Chavara, for he initiated social feminism in the nineteenth century and he was the supporter of feminine holiness; he had personal relationship with women in deep interior freedom. As Sr Jossy has beautifully demonstrated and rightly concludes, Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara’s “person and contributions affirm the fundamental dignity [of women] and their equality with men in being persons” (p. 286).

We hope that the work of Sr Jossy would be an incentive to promote women empowerment in the society and the church on the one hand and as an appeal and reminder to all those, who work or tend to work against the empowerment of women by encroaching upon and disregarding the rights of women/women religious guaranteed to them by civil law and canon law, as the case may be, on the other. At the ecclesiastical level, many of the superiors of women religious institutes are apparently either not aware of their rights or are frightened to protest against their violations, fearing eventual (although unlawful) reprisals from the authorities concerned.

I sincerely congratulate the author Sr Dr Jossy on this admirable work and wish this volume would get wide circulation and attract a large readership.

Sebastian Athappilly CMI

Book Review

Christi Thekkumpuram CMC, *Deep Calls to Deep: A Daring Ride to Interiority for the Youth*, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2023; pages 392; ISBN: 978-93-912968-6-5.

The book under review is originally a dissertation for doctorate in Theology with a specialization in Youth Ministry submitted and successfully defended at the Faculty of Pastoral Theology in the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. Under successful life, one usually thinks of a life with a long list of activities as achievements. What someone has done counts here more than what someone has become interiorly. This is all the more valid especially of the young in general, who are usually fascinated by *doing* rather than by *being*. Activities rather than contemplation capture their minds. The beauty of interior life is hence foreign to the youth. The “blind and uncritical dependence” on the mass media communication makes the youth, linger on superficial lives. India can boast of an ancient tradition of spirituality and contemplation. The dimension of interiority becomes uninteresting and unwanted. The religious and spiritual milieu of India is traditionally oriented to silence, solitude and interiority. In the Indian religions in general, especially, in Hinduism and Buddhism, and in the major religions there such as Islam and Christianity, there are numerous elements supporting interiority. Nevertheless, the present status of interiority among the youth is not that supportive, but rather challenging owing to manifold factors. The present book of the author Sr Christi is an attempt to inspire the youth of India for a life of interiority with the help of the classical work *The Interior Castle* of a great Catholic mystic of the Middle Ages, the Carmelite St Teresa of Avila. It is very fitting and praiseworthy that Sr Christi, being a religious in the Carmelite family, has undertaken this venture. By means of this research, she does justice to her own religious genius on the one hand and contributes substantially to the youth ministry in general and Indian youth in particular.

In her book, *The Interior Castle*, St Teresa introduces the readers to the beauty of the interior world she has experienced personally. She wrote the book for an intense growth in the intimacy with God. From this book of St Teresa of Avila, Sr Christi extracts several elements of human,

psychological and moral interiority. She explains how St Teresa of Avila depicts interiority as an inner journey through six mansions culminating in the seventh mansion with the spiritual marriage of the soul with God.

The author develops her theme of research in four parts in fifteen chapters. Part I is on interdisciplinary approach to interiority. In five chapters, the author deals with the anthropological understanding of interiority, psychological perspectives of interiority, moral insights of interiority, biblical vision of interiority and ecclesiastical aspects of interiority. In Part II, the author exposes in four chapters the work of St Teresa of Avila with a short biographical sketch of the saint, brief outline of the book *The Interior Castle*, Teresian expressions of interiority and the progress of spiritual interiority of a soul in the mansions. Part III is on the multiple dimensions of interiority in the classic. The author brings out in three chapters the anthropological, psychological and moral dimensions of interiority in the book of the saint. Part IV deals with the transformative education of interiority in the Indian Youth Ministry. In this part, she describes in three chapters, borrowing the Teresian terminology, the “silkworm phase” of the youth as infusion of interiority, “cocoon phase” of the youth in internalization and finally the “butterfly phase” of the youth in enchanting the world. In the General Conclusion, the author proposes five recommendations to enrich the Indian youth ministry with the aspects of interiority. There is a long bibliography of thirty-nine pages, including the primary sources and relevant Church documents.

The author, Sr Christi, deserves praise and recognition for having interpreted the personal spiritual journey of a sixteenth-century saint for the spiritual benefit and integral growth of today’s youth in India. Sincere congratulations on this great work! I wish the book wide readership and serious reflections.

Sebastian Athappilly CMI

Book Review

Francis Kanichikattil CMI, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara: The Wise Liturgical Reformer of the Thomas Christians of Malabar*, (Theological Studies on Saint Chavara 5), Kochi; Chavara Central Secretariat & Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2020; pages: x+149; ISBN: 978-81-944061-3-6.

The book under review is the fifth number in the series of the theological studies on St. Chavara, which is a collective attempt of CMI and CMC congregations to promote and publish the unique and varied theological insights of Saint Chavara in the form of monographs. The present book by Kanichikattil stands out in the contemporary liturgical context of the St Thomas Christians as it presents St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara as the wise liturgical reformer of the Thomas Christians of Malabar. When Kuriakose Elias Chavara was the Vicar General of the Thomas Christians, he revised the liturgy in view of awakening the sacramental life of the clergy and the people and to have a spiritual renewal within the Church. It is heartening to see that the work of Francis Kanichikattil CMI fills the vacuum of a serious study of the liturgical contributions of St. Chavara to the St. Thomas Christians.

The present work is well researched. Besides a general introduction and conclusion, it is broadly divided into two parts with eight chapters. The first part provides a brief account of St. Chavara's liturgical contributions to the Malabar Church of Thomas Christians; and the second part is a detailed study of *Thukasa* and divine office.

The first chapter delineates the liturgical contributions of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara to the Church of St. Thomas Christians. According to an account of Fr. Placid J. Podipara CMI, a scholar of St. Thomas Christian community, Chavara's liturgical contributions consists in the organization of the liturgical books, the rubrics of the Eucharistic celebration, the book of divine office, the office for the dead, and the liturgical calendar (P. 24). Though St. Chavara is falsely accused of a follower of Roman tradition, he was never a liturgical reformer with western thought patterns. He had borrowed certain practices from Latin

tradition, for he thought that it would enrich the spiritual life of the faithful of Malabar Church.

Chapter two portrays the context of St. Chavara's liturgical reformation. The Synod of Diamper very much latinized the liturgy of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese missionaries introduced many Latin additions in the then existing *taksa* and Latin rubrics for the celebration. The Syro Malabar priests were asked to use the Latin liturgical calendar and Latin vestments. There was no uniformity in the celebration of Divine liturgy in the Malabar Church. This adversely affected the clergy and the people and their spirituality was declining (P. 43). At this juncture, St. Chavara did everything possible to bring forth a renewal in the sacramental life of the Thomas Christians of Malabar. He wrote *Thukasa* for the clergy to ensure a fruitful celebration of the Divine liturgy, compiled the Divine office for the clergy and the people in oriental patterns, edited the office for the dead from the existing manuscripts in Syriac style and especially the 40-hour adoration in the monasteries for the spiritual awakening of the Malabar Christians. The CMI monasteries established by St. Chavara at Mannanam, Koonammavu, Elthuruth and Vazhakulam remained as the liturgical centres from where a spiritual renewal spread all over Kerala (P. 47).

The author discusses in detail *Thukasa* the 'Order' of the Eucharistic liturgy in the chapters three to seven. The third chapter deals with how St. Chavara explained the preparation of the priest for the Holy Qurbana. He insisted that the priest should spend sufficient amount of time in mental prayer and recite certain prescribed prayers as a preparation for the celebration. He uses the Holy objects with utmost respect, and sufficient care should be given to the liturgical vestments which help the priest to put on Christ, so that the liturgical celebrations would be very meaningful and appealing to the people (P. 63).

Chapter four elucidates the *Enarxis* (introductory part) and liturgy of the Word in the *Thukasa*. St. Chavara gives the content, meaning and detailed instructions for performing each ritual. Regarding the *slotha* after 'Our Father' St. Chavara makes a very minute mention: "On praying the celebrant extends his hands in a modest way and the palms of hands in a 'face to face' position and at the end he places the folded hands on his breast" (P. 68). His explanations on how to read the Gospel is admirable and relevant even today.

Fifth chapter gives an account of the Offertory till the anaphora prayer in the *Thukasa*. St. Chavara meticulously explained the rituals,

prayers, symbolism and the disposition of the priest and the community for the preparation and presentation of the body and blood of Our Lord. He further clarifies the ritual of the washing of hands and approaching the altar (P. 81-83).

Chapter six describes the structure, features, historical and theological developments pertaining to the anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari (P. 86, 88). The content and meaning of various prayers in the *Gehanta* prayers are unfolded in this section. St. Chavara's instructions to the priest regarding 'Epiclesis' highlighted the pneumatological aspect of the liturgy (P. 104).

Chapter seven precisely deals with the central and concluding part of the liturgy that includes consecration of the Bread and Wine, Fraction, Consignation and the Holy Communion and concluding prayers. The most important part is consecration. St. Chavara in *Thukasa* explains the rite of consecration meticulously. It highlights the significance of the celebrant priest spending time meditating on the 'Passion of Christ' (P. 106).

Chapter eight throws light on the effort of St. Chavara to prepare the divine office for the St. Thomas Christians. He faced two problems in its course: first the breviary was going out of practice and second there was lack of proper integration. In order to bring conformity in the recitation of the divine office St. Chavara with the consent of the Vicar Apostolic assembled many *Malpans* (scholars) in the monastery at Koonammavu for consultation and correction. He transcribed the whole breviary in his own hand with the intention of getting it printed. It manifested his interest and desire in serving the Church and its spiritual nourishment and wellbeing (P. 122).

This present volume, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara: The Wise Liturgical Reformer of Thomas Christians of Malabar* indubitably proves that St. Chavara is a liturgical luminary, a Doctor of the Church and Father of the St. Thomas Christians. The book highlights the liturgical contributions of St. Chavara with a special emphasis on *Thukasa* (order of the mass) and divine office. It is greatly significant to have a profound understanding of the efforts of St. Chavara to preserve the identity and traditions of St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. This book is an answer to St. Chavara's critics who blame him as a blind follower of the Latin tradition in liturgical matters (P. 47-49, 141, 211). This book affirms not only the strenuous efforts of St. Chavara but also of the monastic community he founded to promote unity in the church (P. 49-51). The

immense contributions of Chavara and his confreres is a paradigm for the members of the Congregation to follow in the current crisis of the Syro- Malabar Church. The book is a good reference material on the liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar in the nineteenth century.

The general editor of the 'Theological Studies on Saint Chavara' at the beginning of the book clearly communicates the purpose, and the elaborate introduction sets the historical background of the book. Most of the chapters are framed with introductions and conclusions to facilitate the reading. The bibliography at the end establishes the fact that the book is well researched and grounded on reliable sources. The book addresses many liturgical questions (P. 105, 108, 117) and also presents different perspectives of the debated matters. The author has incorporated in it certain prayers from both the then *taksa* and the present one; and makes a comparison between them. The minor language errors (P. 50, 58, 61) do not diminish the value of the book. Though there are some such limitations, the book deserves a wider readership. I congratulate the author of the volume for bringing into light the liturgical contributions of St. Chavara, which were undermined for years, due to some or other reason.

Jamin James Kaippanplackal CMI