

“A Good Christian Family Is the Image of Heaven”
FAMILY ETHICS IN THE *CHAVARUL* OF
SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

Dharmaram Publications

No. 548

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Ann Mary Madavanakkad CMC



Dharmaram Publications

Dharmaram College
Bengaluru 560 029, India
&

Chavara Central Secretariat
CMI Prior General's House
Kakkanad, Kochi, Kerala, India
2023

Theological studies on Saint Chavara, No. 10
Dharmaram Moral Theology Series, No. 7

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FAMILY ETHICS IN THE *CHAVARUL* OF SAINT KURIAKOSE
ELIAS CHAVARA

Author

Ann Mary Madavanakkad CMC

First Edition, 2023

Published by Dharmaram Publications
& Chavara Central Secretariat

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ISBN: 978-93-92996-36-8

Printed at: Viani Printings, Kochi

Price: Rs. 450.00; USD. 10.00

Dharmaram Publications

Dharmaram College, Bengaluru - 560 029, India

Tel. 080/4111 6137; Mob: +91 9538909803

E-mail: dpoffice3@.com

Web: www.dharmarampublications.com

&

Chavara Central Secretariat

CMI Prior General's House

Kakkanad, Kochi, Kerala, India

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES ON SAINT CHAVARA	15
MESSAGE	17
Thomas Chathampampil, CMI	17
MESSAGE	19
Grace Therese, CMC	19
FOREWORD	21
Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI	21
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	25
ABBREVIATIONS	27
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	29
CHAPTER ONE	
SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF KERALA IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE LIFE OF KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA	37
1.1 Socio-Cultural Context of Kerala in the Nineteenth Century	39
1.1.1 Social, Economic, and Educational Scenario	41
1.1.1.1 Social Scenario	41
1.1.1.1.1 Caste System	42
1.1.1.1.2 Patriarchal System	47
1.1.1.2 Economic Scenario	50
1.1.1.3 Educational Scenario	51
1.1.2 Family Systems	55
1.1.2.1 Marriage	55
1.1.2.2 Family in the Nineteenth Century	59

1.1.2.3 Syrian Christian Family	60
1.2 Life of Kuriakose Elias Chavara	63
1.2.1 Family Background	63
1.2.1.1 Spiritual and Moral Formation	66
1.2.1.2 Intellectual Formation	68
1.2.2 Seminary Life	69
1.2.3 Priesthood	71
1.2.4 Foundation of the Religious Congregation for Men (Congregation of the Servants of Mary Immaculate)	72
1.2.4.1 The Founders: Frs. Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukara, Kuriakose Elias Chavara, and Bro. Jacob Kanianthara	73
1.2.4.2 Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara	75
1.2.4.2.1 An Eminent Pastor	75
1.2.4.2.2 Vicar General	76
1.2.5 Kuriakose Elias Chavara's Contributions	78
1.2.5.1 Activities for Strengthening the Church	79
1.2.5.1.1 Sunday Sermons and Retreats	79
1.2.5.1.2 Liturgical Renewal and Devotional Practices	80
1.2.5.2. Activities for the Uplift of Society	82
1.2.5.2.1 Sanskrit School and Public Education	83
1.2.5.2.2 Print Media	88
1.2.5.2.3 Charity Home in Kainakary	89
1.2.5.2.4 The Literary Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara	90
1.2.5.2.4.1 The Chronicles	90
1.2.5.2.4.2 Literary Works	91
1.2.5.2.4.2.1 Compunction of the Soul	91

Table of Contents

1.2.5.2.4.2.2 Dirge (<i>Parvam or Pāna</i> —Song of Mourning)	92
1.2.5.2.4.2.3 Martyrdom of Anastasia	92
1.2.5.2.4.3 The Colloquies with the Father (<i>Dhyanasallapangal</i> — Spiritual Writings)	93
1.2.5.2.4.4 The Letters	94
1.2.5.3 Women Empowerment Activities	95
1.2.5.3.1 Foundation of Women TOCD	95
1.2.5.3.2 Boarding House for Girls' Education and Training	99
1.3 Conclusion	101
CHAPTER TWO	
FAMILY ETHICS IN THE <i>CHAVARUL</i> OF SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLICAL VISION OF FAMILY	105
2.1 An Overview of the <i>Chavarul</i> and the Definition of Family Envisioned by Chavara	106
2.1.1 An Overview of the <i>Chavarul</i>	107
2.1.2 The Definition of Family Envisioned by Chavara	109
2.1.2.1 A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven	110
2.1.2.2 Unity of Mind and Heart	111
2.1.2.3 Bond of Blood and Affection	112
2.1.2.4 Respect and Obedience to Parents	114
2.1.2.5 Harmony with God and the People	115
2.1.2.6 Seeking Eternal Salvation	117
2.2 Family Ethics in the <i>Chavarul</i> in the Light of the Biblical Vision of Family	120
2.2.1 Family Ethics in the <i>Chavarul</i> —An Overview	122

2.2.1.1 Trans-Personal Relationships in Family Life	123
2.2.1.1.1 Fear of God: The Most Valuable Possession	123
2.2.1.1.1.1 Relationship with God-Fearing People	125
2.2.1.1.1.2 God-Fearing Persons as Friends	127
2.2.1.1.1.3 God-Fearing Servants	129
2.2.1.1.2 Submission to the Will of God	131
2.2.1.1.3 Sacraments and Devotional Practices	135
2.2.1.1.4 Days of Obligation	140
2.2.1.2 Intra-Personal Relationships in Family Life	143
2.2.1.2.1 Chastity and Modesty	144
2.2.1.2.2 Self-Discipline and Time Management	146
2.2.1.2.3 “Do not Steal or Keep Stolen Things”	149
2.2.1.2.4 Healthy Reading Habit	151
2.2.1.2.5 Work with Dignity	154
2.2.1.3 Inter-Personal Relationships in Family Life	158
2.2.1.3.1 “Love One Another”	158
2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity	161
2.2.1.3.3 Justice to the Poor	165
2.2.1.3.4 Unchristian Conversation and Gossiping	168
2.2.1.3.5 Meddling in Others’ Affairs	170
2.2.1.3.6 Ethical Finance Code for Families	172
2.2.1.3.6.1 Extravagance and Miserliness	172
2.2.1.3.6.2 Business Ethics	174
2.2.1.3.6.3 Borrowing Money	176
2.2.1.3.6.4 “Be Content with One’s Possessions”	179
2.2.1.3.6.5 Partition of Family Property	180

Table of Contents

2.2.2 Parents' Role in their Children's Upbringing	183
2.2.2.1 Faith Formation	183
2.2.2.1.1 Formation in Prayer Life	184
2.2.2.1.2 Importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation	187
2.2.2.2 Intellectual Formation	191
2.2.2.3 Psychological Formation of Children	194
2.2.2.3.1 Discipline	194
2.2.2.3.2 Setting a Good Example for Children	197
2.2.2.4 Moral Formation of Children	198
2.2.2.4.1 Modest Dressing	199
2.2.2.4.2 Formation of a Right Conscience	201
2.2.2.4.3 Obtain God's Blessings by Respecting Parents	204
2.2.2.4.4 Freedom to Choose the State of Life	206
2.2.2.4.5 Maturity in Sexual Matters	208
2.3 Conclusion	210
CHAPTER THREE	
THEOLOGICAL VISION OF FAMILY IN THE <i>CHAVARUL</i>	215
3.1 Vision of Family in the <i>Chavarul</i>	218
3.1.1 Family as the Image of Heaven	219
3.1.2 Family Initiated in the Sacrament of Matrimony	221
3.1.2.1 Basic Aspects of Marriage	223
3.1.2.1.1 Love and Interpersonal Relationships	224
3.1.2.1.2 Sexual Life of the Couple	225
3.1.2.1.3 Procreation	228
3.1.2.1.4 Sexual Pleasure	229
3.1.2.1.5 Unity and Indissolubility	231

3.1.2.2 Family and the Church	233
3.1.2.2.1 Covenantal Christ-Church Relationship in Marriage	234
3.1.2.2.2 The Family as the Domestic Church	236
3.2 The Family as a Means of Sanctification	240
3.2.1 Family: The Foundation of Faith	242
3.2.2 Family: The Sanctuary of Life	243
3.2.3 Family: The Sacramental Sign to the World	243
3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect	245
3.2.5 The Eucharist Nurtures the Family	247
3.2.6 Family: The Arena of Reconciliation	248
3.2.6.1 Sin-Confession-Reconciliation	249
3.2.6.2 Christian Forgiveness	253
3.3 Family: The Cradle of Love and Life	254
3.3.1 Unique Features of Christian Love	255
3.3.1.1 Love is Patient	255
3.3.1.2 Love is Humble	257
3.3.1.3 Love is Forgiving	258
3.3.1.4 Love is Sincere and Transparent	259
3.3.1.5 Love is Listening	260
3.3.1.6 Love is Suffering	260
3.3.1.7 Love is Doing the Will of God	261
3.3.2 Love as the Key to Marital and Familial Relationships	262
3.3.2.1 Different Facets of Marital Love	263
3.3.2.2 Children: Love of the Couple and Love Between the Couple	266
3.4 Family: The Abode of Virtues	267

Table of Contents

3.4.1 Theological Virtues	267
3.4.1.1 Faith	268
3.4.1.2 Hope	270
3.4.1.3 Charity	272
3.4.2 Moral Virtues	274
3.4.2.1 Prudence	274
3.4.2.2 Justice	276
3.4.2.3 Fortitude	278
3.4.2.4 Temperance	279
3.5 Family: The School of Integral Formation of Children	281
3.5.1 Integral Formation of Children	281
3.5.1.1 Faith Formation	282
3.5.1.2 Psychological Formation	285
3.5.1.3 Intellectual Formation	287
3.5.1.4 Moral Formation	289
3.5.1.4.1 Inculcation of Values	290
3.5.1.4.2 Fostering Respect for Others	291
3.5.1.4.3 Culture	292
3.5.1.4.4 Formation of Conscience	294
3.5.1.4.5 Sex Education	296
3.5.1.4.6 Media Education in the Family	299
3.6 The Role of the Woman in the Family	301
3.6.1 Dignity of Woman	302
3.6.2 Woman as Mother	305
3.7 Business Ethics in the Family	307
3.8 Work Ethics in the Family	308

3.9 Ecological Ethics in the Family	310
3.10 Conclusion	312
CHAPTER FOUR	
FAMILY ETHICS IN THE <i>CHAVARUL</i> AND THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY LIFE TODAY	317
4.1 Families Today: A Few Positive Aspects	319
4.1.1 Equality in Gender-Based Roles	320
4.1.2 Economic Independence of Married Women	321
4.1.3 Openness to Different Cultures	323
4.1.4 Increase in Intimacy between Parents and Children	324
4.1.5 Equal Participation in Shouldering Responsibilities	325
4.2 Challenges and Problems Faced by Contemporary Families	326
4.2.1 Problems in Spousal Relationships	327
4.2.2 Deterioration of Faith and Moral Values in Families	333
4.2.2.1 Issues with Mixed Marriages	334
4.2.2.2 Issues with Marriages of Disparity of Cult	336
4.2.2.3 Suicide in the Face of Crises	338
4.2.3 Dowry	341
4.2.4 Issues with Patriarchy and Gender Inequality	344
4.2.5 Issues Confronted by Elderly Parents	348
4.2.6 Economic Factors Affecting Families	351
4.2.7 Influence of Globalization on Families	356
4.2.8 Problems Parents Face in Raising up Children	357
4.2.8.1 Problems Caused by Nuclear and Working Parents' Families	358
4.2.8.2 Problems Faced by Single Parent Families	361

Table of Contents

4.2.8.3 The Preciousness of Children	363
4.2.8.3.1 Abortion	363
4.2.8.3.2 Child Abuse	365
4.2.8.4 Impact of Media and Information Technology on Family Life	367
4.3 The <i>Chavarul</i> and the Present Challenges of Families	371
4.3.1 Theo-Centric Family	372
4.3.1.1 Fear of God as the Basis of the Christian Family	373
4.3.1.2 Love of God as the Wealth of the Family	375
4.3.1.3 Devotion to God as the Strength of the Family	376
4.3.2 Love-Centred Ethics in the <i>Chavarul</i>	378
4.3.2.1 Love as the Core of Family Ethics	379
4.3.2.2 Strengthening of Family Relationships	381
4.3.2.3 Love-Based Justice	383
4.3.2.4 Forgiveness for Fostering Communion	386
4.3.2.5 Charity as the Channel of Love	388
4.3.3 Parents' Role in the Integral Formation of Children	390
4.3.3.1 Children: The Precious Gift of God	390
4.3.3.2 Character Formation of Children	392
4.3.3.2.1 Correction and Discipline	392
4.3.3.2.2 Formation of Conscience	396
4.3.3.2.3 Sex Education	398
4.3.3.2.4 Respect and Care for Parents	402
4.4 Conclusion	405
GENERAL CONCLUSION	409
BIBLIOGRAPHY	417

APPENDIX	493
CHAVARUL OF SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA	
INDEX	507

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES ON SAINT CHAVARA

Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805-1871)—a Carmelite religious priest and professor of theology (*Malpan*), who pioneered consecrated life in the Syro-Malabar Church by founding the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI in collaboration with Thomas Palackal and Thomas Porukara, in 1831, the first indigenous religious congregation for men, and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC in collaboration with Leopold Beccaro OCD in 1866)—is widely recognized for his pioneering efforts to reform the Catholic Church in Kerala and broader nineteenth-century society. His credible Christian witness, along with the leadership he offered to the St Thomas Christians, at a time when they were undergoing multiple jurisdictional crises, a spiritual and disciplined growth in the Kerala Church.

Canonised on 23 November 2014, Chavara's personal sanctity and Christian wisdom have been identified as unique. While secular society admires his contributions to uplifting those existing on the margins and who were socially ostracised through educational and social initiatives, the fundamental core of all his achievements is solidly established in his filial discipleship to Jesus Christ, whom he addressed '*ente nalla appa*' (my beloved father).

Chavara had a firm foundation in Christian faith, which is clearly visible throughout his life and is testified by those who knew him. He articulated his views and perspectives primarily based on his personal encounter with Jesus and only secondarily based on his readings and theological reflections. They are available to us through his extant writings, which are published in the four volumes of the *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*. Some of these works, recognized as efforts hitherto unprecedented in Indian literature, offer us a goldmine of rich and sound theological insights. Although his access to scientific Christian literature was minimal (if not completely absent), his writings draw from the biblical as well as other Christian traditions, which he had faithfully and creatively interpreted for the enhancement of the faith of the Christian community that he had catered to throughout his life.

Theological Studies on Saint Chavara, a joint effort of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), attempts to promote and publish the fruits of scientific investigation

into the unique and varied theological insights of Chavara in the form of monographs. These theological investigations will be instrumental in appreciating and popularising the sound and solid theological contributions he made toward enhancing Catholic faith in the nineteenth century, which, in turn, indicate that he deserves titles such as ‘Father of the Syro-Malabar Church’ and ‘Doctor of the Church.’ As the publication of this series is undertaken with the blessings of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church, which has also benefitted from the eminent theological acumen, pastoral insights, and ecclesiastical leadership of Chavara, these studies will hopefully bring to light the multifarious theological heritage that he had bequeathed to the Church and the subsequent generations of faithful in India.

The present number in the *Theological Studies on Saint Chavara* titled, “*A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven*”: *Family Ethics in the Chavarul of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, by Ann Mary Madavanakkad CMC unveils the ethical vision hidden in *Chavarul (Oru nalla appante Chavarul/The Testament of a Good Father)* and propounds the values and insights for the family ethics in line with the biblical vision and the magisterial teachings, especially that of Vatican II. *Chavarul* is a code of family behaviour and functional fabric presented in the form of principles and guidelines, and therefore it has the potential for the renewal of families and consequently the society at large. It envisages the vision of building up a virtuous family and to impart the integral formation to children and to transform the families into the image of heaven. At a time when families go beyond the traditional framework and understanding and their design and functions get clouded, the present volume links the pastoral perspective of Saint Chavara with ethical perspective, provides a profound family ethics based on *Chavarul* and establishes a close relation between pastoral theology and moral theology. The work has a special merit of presenting the family ethics of *Chavarul* with a theological vision of marriage paying due attention to the existing milieu.

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MESSAGE

Thomas Chathamparampil, CMI

It is noteworthy that scientific research on the *Chavarul* of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara—his testament to the Families—is undertaken by Sr. Ann Mary CMC and is being published by CMI Chavara secretariat and Dharmaram Publications together under the series of Theological Studies on St. Chavara and Dharmaram Moral Theology Series. Though *Chavarul* is originally addressed to the families of Kainakary village—the birthplace of St. Chavara—he offers precepts and guidelines for all the families to support the family life grow steadily rooted deeply in Christian values and principles. This study presents St. Chavara as a champion and patron of families who believed that families constitute the fundamental unit in the Church (the domestic church) where evangelization primarily takes place.

As *Familiaris Consortio* emphasizes: “to what extent the family receives the Gospel, lives it and grows in faith, so it becomes a community proclaiming the Good News.” It follows that the family is to be a teacher of faith for their children. It is parents who are to be the masters of spiritual life for their children. Parents not only have a moral obligation to raise children in faith but also, they are the most important formators of faith for their children. The correct process of evangelizing children leads to the future and they will be the carriers of the Gospel.

The family as St. John Paul II says is a place where life is properly protected and can develop as a community of parents and children. As the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes, the family is referred to as the domestic church where the functions of the Church are fulfilled: priesthood, royal and prophetic.

Although *Chavarul* was written by St. Chavara in the nineteenth century in a different context, his precepts presented in *Chavarul* are still pertinent and essential to face the current challenges like growing individualism, secularism, narcissist trends, violence in the family especially towards children etc. and to have a sincere retrospection at the way the family life is being led in today’s society.

This study has sincerely attempted to present family ethics in the *Chavarul* to build up a virtuous family and impart an integral formation of children. An integral outlook of the family which has to make it heaven on earth inspired him to induce in the minds of the people the awareness to become conscious of their obligation to work together for the communion among the members that is at the very constitution of the family. This communion between husband and wife, between parents and children, and among all members of a family would enable the family to reflect the life of heaven on earth. Therefore, communion in the family becomes the prime concern in the *Chavarul*.

Therefore, the present study undertaken by Sr. Ann Mary CMC on *Chavarul* has succeeded to contribute to proposing ways and means to maintain the stability and resilience of Christian families which are theocentric emphasizing love and fear of God becoming the cornerstone of a stable family. While congratulating the author for undertaking such an in-depth, systematic study on *Chavarul* which will be a relevant and timely guideline for contemporary families, my wish and prayer is that this research work shall be a great source for exploring the vision and insights of St. Chavara on Christian family building a strong foundation for the Church in the society today.



Fr. Thomas Chathamparampil CMI
Prior General



MESSAGE

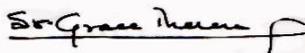
Grace Therese, CMC

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a visionary saint of the 19th century Kerala, was a promoter of the family values, and tried to give an ethical vision, helpful for the families through his “*Chavarul*.” Chavara visualized the family as the most vital edifice of humanity whose inbuilt tradition would have immense influence in nurturing mature individuals and in turn building a stable society. Being the daughters of St. Chavara, it is our obligation to pass the spirituality of family envisioned by Chavara on to future generations. Sr. Ann Mary made a significant contribution by bringing the *Chavarul* out in its unique form for the new generation through her doctoral thesis: “*A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven*”—*Family Ethics in the Chavarul of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, the product of her research and study. I am sure that this book, the scientific and excellent work on the Family Ethics in the *Chavarul*, is the result of her perseverance and hard work, which will serve as a beacon of hope for many people and provide a solution to the various problems families are currently facing in their family life and child rearing.

Chavara had the great vision that a society will remain healthy, stable, and energetic to the extent that it is imbued with moral values of peaceful family life. A nation can remain strong even in the midst of crushing economic and political burdens, provided that its families are strong. Accordingly, Chavara’s concern was to prepare members of society for healthy marriages and good and stable family life. But today families are in a chaos due to the rapid developments. Pope Francis argues that the influence of mass media and globalization have rendered modern society more susceptible to vices and their effects. As a result, the role of the family in building up a just, emotionally stable, and healthy society, has gained attention, and is a topic of concern for people of all religious backgrounds, particularly of the Catholic Church. It is very well evident from the convocation of two synods of Bishops on the Family: III Extra-ordinary General Assembly, 5–19 October 2014 and XIV Ordinary General Assembly, 4–25 October 2015 by Pope Francis. Both St. Chavara and Pope Francis, prophetic and pastoral visionaries of the time, are well aware of the challenges and possible evils within the context of marriage and family life. Therefore, every instruction in the *Chavarul* is a reminder to the husband

and wife, parents, youth, and children in the family calling their attention to take on social and moral responsibilities. It refers to the minute aspects of rearing the children and their spiritual, intellectual, psychological, moral, and social development irrespective of their religious, cultural, and social affinities.

In the context where there are not many detailed theological studies have been conducted on Chavara's writings on the family, this research on *Family Ethics in the Chavarul* carried out by Sr. Ann Mary CMC is remarkable. In the name of the CMC Congregation, I extend my hearty congratulations and best wishes to Sr. Ann Mary for completing this study scientifically and effectively. Let this research achieve all of its goals and be a blessing to numerous families as they struggle to live a peaceful and harmonious family life.



Sr. Grace Therese CMC

Superior General

FOREWORD

Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI

Family is the basic cell of the society and the Church. Family is rightly called the domestic Church. It is also the cradle of the formation of children. In spite of all these, family faces unprecedented challenges today and sometimes we may feel that family gets the least attention today. This does not mean that family did not have to face challenges in the past. Though gravity and magnitude may vary, as in our time, during the time of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara as well, family had to face several challenges. *Chavarul (Testament of a Loving Father)*, a letter written by St Kuriakose Elias Chavara to his parishioners on 13 February 1868, continues to inspire the Church's vision of the family. Its significance has to be understood in light of Chavara's profound knowledge of the challenges that families had to face at that time, and his fatherly concern and love for families. What is noteworthy is that his instructions and advice to families are relevant and helpful for families today though the context is different, and the problems faced by today's families may look diverse. Moreover, we may be amazed to see how the *Chavarul* reflects modern theological insights on the family. Thus, without hesitation we can say that the *Chavarul* goes ahead of its time in many respects, though it is deeply rooted in its historical and socio-cultural context. The *Chavarul* can be called a unique document in many ways: it presents the Christian theological vision of the family and indicates various challenges and problems families face; it offers guidelines to lead a family life rooted in love; it inspires families to be nourished by prayer and spiritual practices.

'A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven': Family Ethics in the Chavarul of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara by Ann Mary Madavanakkad, CMC, is a unique contribution, the fruit of hard work and dedicated research, analysing the theological, ethical, and pastoral insights of the *Chavarul*. It is fitting that the author has made use of Chavara's theological vision of the family as the first part of the title of the book: "A good Christian Family is the image of heaven..." (*Chavarul*, Introduction). There are many works on the *Chavarul*, but a thorough analysis of such a magnitude, attempting to identify its possible biblical and theological foundations are rare, or rather are not there. That makes the contribution of this book more valuable and unique. That also gives an idea of the

painstaking work the researcher has undertaken. The work is interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary, spreading out the area of research to biblical theology, moral theology, psychology, pastoral theology, history and sociology. At the same time, the author has kept the focus of the study, that is, family ethics in the *Chavarul*.

In the first chapter Ann Mary Madavanakkad offers a description and analysis of the socio-cultural context of Kerala. This gives us an idea of the historical, socio-cultural, political, economic and religious background of Chavara, and thus enlightens us on the possible rationale and influences behind the family vision and the precepts in the *Chavarul*, as well as in his other works. The author then proceeds to the family ethics in the *Chavarul* in light of the biblical vision of family. She has succeeded in identifying the scriptural inspirations behind the precepts of the *Chavarul*. It is not an easy task since direct biblical quotations and references are not many in the *Chavarul*. She has hence made a thorough analysis of the works of Chavara, who had a profound experience (*anubhava*) of and devotion to the Word of God, to identify similar views and concepts and the biblical references and inspirations in those works as well. Reflecting on the biblical foundations of the *Chavarul*, the author identifies three types of relationships within the family, namely, trans-personal, intra-personal and inter-personal—an original perspective presented by the author. The third chapter, discussing the theological vision of family in the *Chavaul*, is yet another contribution. The author elaborates upon possible theological sources and foundations of the *Chavarul*. Though references to the sources are not given in the *Chavarul*, the researcher identifies the influence of Alphonsus Liguori and other Western theologians, with whom Chavara was familiar through the European missionaries. The theological vision of the *Chavarul* is enunciated situating it in the theological tradition of the Church in light of the magisterial teaching on the family and the works of great theologians until the present times.

The final chapter, based on the biblical and theological foundations discusses how the *Chavarul* can become a basis for developing a family ethics for today. The chapter presents the positive and negative aspects of families today. Challenges faced by families today, and in particular by Indian families are analysed. The author convinces us that Chavara's vision of building up virtuous families and to impart the spiritual, intellectual,

Foreword

moral, and psychological formation to children can transform Christian families into “the image of heaven.”

This book is also an excellent contribution for contextual theology, developing family ethics based on the cultural resources of India/Kerala, relating it with universal magisterium and theology, and applying it to the context of today, especially that of India. The extensive bibliography bears witness to the depth and breadth of the research that the author has done.

As mentioned above, the *Chavarul* goes beyond its times. It is basically ethical and pastoral in nature, offering guidelines to the married for leading a life founded on Christian virtues, instructing parents on the upbringing of children, and giving practical advice for a healthy socio-economic life of families. The ideal vision of the family is presented, but it is contextual and practical taking into account the actual problems and difficulties that families face. Although the *Chavarul* was not intended to be a complete theological treatise on the family, it visualises the family in its entirety—family as a communion of husband and wife, of parents and children, and family in the web of ecclesial, social, cultural and economic relationships. This study on the *Chavarul* by Ann Mary Madavanakkad has succeeded in bringing out its profound theological, pastoral and ethical vision and its relevance for our times.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘Thank you, O Lord’ is the only prayer which wells up from my heart for helping me in completing my doctoral dissertation on *‘A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven’: Family Ethics in the Chavarul of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*. I fondly remember my beloved parents, Devassy (deceased) and Mariamma, whose blessings, fervent prayers, and sacrifices helped me to remain focused on accomplishing my task. They are my first and best teachers who fostered in me the spirit of St. Chavara. I dedicate this book—originally my doctoral dissertation—to them as a token of my love. I thank my elder brother Sabu and family, my sister Saji and family, dear brother Dr. Saju Madavanakkad CMI, and my youngest brother Sunny and family, whose love, affection, and constant support have always been an immense source of inspiration to realize this goal.

This book would not have reached its present shape without the guidance of Rev. Dr. Shaji George Kochuthara CMI, the director of my doctoral research. I am deeply indebted to him for his expertise, treasure of great wisdom, and insightful guidance that sharpened my reflections. A special note of thanks to Rev. Dr. Augustine Keemattam CMI who read through the manuscript of my thesis, Rev. Dr. Francis Thonippara CMI, Rev. Fr. Benny Nalkara CMI, Rev. Dr. Jipson Edapulavan, and Sr. Nirmal CMC who helped me in different ways. I owe my gratitude to Rev. Fr. Sebeesh Vettiyadan CMI for designing a lovely and beautiful cover page for this book.

I am grateful to my superiors and my religious community who gave me the opportunity to pursue research in theology, and in a special way to the Jnanodaya community in Bangalore where I stayed during the years of my study and research. I owe a lot to Sr. Edward CMC (former superior general) and Sr. Annette CMC who instilled in me a desire for theological studies. I express my sincere gratitude to the professors of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram who have been an enduring source of inspiration for me. I gratefully remember the constant prayer and support of the research students of the Faculty of Theology at DVK, well-wishers, friends, and all those who helped me in the completion of my work. I owe sincere gratitude to all who have helped me through their valuable prayers and encouragement.

Sr. Ann Mary Madavanakkad CMC

ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
ACE	After Common Era
AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i>
AMSJ	Archives of Monastery of St. Joseph
<i>Ātmanutāpam</i>	<i>The Compunction of the Soul</i>
Bl.	Blessed
BCE	Before Common Era
Bro.	Brother
c.	Canon
cc.	Canons
CBCI	Catholic Bishop's Conference of India
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CCEO	<i>Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium</i>
CBE	<i>Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia</i>
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith
<i>Chavarul</i>	<i>Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul</i> or <i>The Testament of a Good Father</i>
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i>
CKC	<i>Chronicle of Koonammavu Convent</i>
CMC	Congregation of the Mother of Carmel
CMI	Carmelites of Mary Immaculate
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSK	<i>Chavarayachante Sampoorana Krithikal</i> (Malayalam)
CWC	<i>Complete Works of Bl. Chavara</i>
CWKEC	<i>Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara</i>
DVK	Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram

et al.	et alia
Fr.	Father
GPS	Global Positioning System
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
HNTC	<i>Holman New Testament Commentary</i>
HOTC	<i>Holman Old Testament Commentary</i>
IBC	<i>International Bible Commentary</i>
IPC	<i>Indian Penal Code</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
LMS	London Missionary Society
NIDB	<i>The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
OCD	Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum
<i>Positio</i>	<i>Positio Super Introductione Causae et Super Virtutibus ex Officio Concinnata</i>
Prof.	Professor
Sr.	Sister
St.	Saint
Vol.	Volume

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

According to Vatican II, “family is the first and vital cell of society.”¹ Pope John Paul II says, “the strength and vitality of any country will only be as great as the strength and vitality of the family within that country. No group has a greater impact on a country than the family. No group has a more influential role in the future of the world.”² The mutual love, union of mind and heart, and fidelity of a couple offer stability and hope to a world torn by hatred and division. By their lifelong perseverance in lifegiving love Catholic couples show the unbreakable and sacred character of the sacramental marriage and promote the dignity and worth of human life.

But today, families are at crossroads due to rapid changes. According to Pope Francis, contemporary society, with the explosion of the media and globalization, has made itself vulnerable to various vices and their consequences. As a result, the role of the family in building up a just, emotionally stable, and healthy society has gained attention and is a topic of concern for people of all religious backgrounds. The metaphor of “domestic church” stands as one of the sources of renewal for a Christian theology of family. St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a visionary saint of the 19th century Kerala, was a promoter of the family values and tried to give an ethical vision helpful for the families through his “*Chavarul*.”³ This research work is an attempt to make an elaborate study of the family ethics in the *Chavarul* and to expound its historical background, biblical vision, theological insights, and contemporary applications in order to strengthen families to meet today’s challenges by instilling Christian values in them.

¹ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11 (AAS 58: 848).

² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 42 (AAS 74: 134).

³ *Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul* (Malayalam) or “The Testament of a Good Father,” or *Chavarul* was written by St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family (1805–1871), on 13 February 1868 to his native parishioners at Kainakary. He was an ardent devotee of the Holy Family and the founder of the CMI and CMC Congregations. *Chavarul* gives concrete suggestions and proposals as to how to lead a good Christian family life in the context of Kerala society. It was published in English in 1910 under the title “Testament of a Good Father.” The title *Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul* though not formally given to the letter by the author himself, affirms that this letter should be accepted as coming from a loving father, as his Testament. See Leo, trans., *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara*, Vol. IV: *The Letters*. Hereafter *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara* is referred to as *CWC* and *Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul* is referred to as *Chavarul* and St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara as Chavara.

Background

As the joint and extended family is steeped in history, the nuclear family pattern has emerged in the contemporary times with the advent of industrialization, migration, inter-continental communications, etc. Equal career opportunities for men and women emerged as a result of new avenues to uphold the dignity, equality, and integrity of the individual. The traditional understanding of the family is challenged by changes in values, morals, trends, styles, and other areas that came along with it. Despite all these changes, the families in India, nuclear or otherwise, are persisting to knit their members together to forge ahead. It is in this background we make a detailed analysis of the *Chavarul* to strengthen families to face the challenges of today.

Relevance of the Work

The family ethics in the *Chavarul* of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara which envisages his vision of building up a virtuous family and to impart the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and psychological formation to children is relevant for the contemporary families and gives insights for the transformation of Christian Families into “the image of heaven.”

The global scenario of family life does not present a glowing picture but rather a bleak and grim reality. The number of dysfunctional and broken families is on the rise compared to yesteryears. This disturbing as well as unfortunate trend is alarmingly on the increase. The direct impact and the tenacious influence of these changes are glaringly conspicuous in the lives of individuals and families. The conventional saying, “healthy family, healthy society,” and the vice-versa has proved the test of time, and their indisputable wisdom speaks volumes.⁴ “There is a pattern in the rise and fall of great societies. When these societies were at the peak of their power and prosperity, the family was strong and highly valued. When family life became weak in these societies and the family was not valued, the society began to deteriorate and eventually fall.”⁵ Thus, the role of the family in building a just, emotionally stable, and healthy society has gained attention and is a common concern among individuals from all religious backgrounds.

⁴ Poovathumkudy, “*Amoris Laetitia*—A Loving Family Exhortation of Pope Francis,” 887.

⁵ Bernard, “The Asian Family’s Struggle for Life,” 263.

The future of the human person, his or her happiness, capacity for giving meaning to life, and destiny all depend on the family. In a similar way, the future of the Church depends on the healthy existence of Christian families. It is in families that Christian values and traditions are shaped and transmitted to the following generation.⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* states that the well-being of the Christian society is intimately connected with the healthy state of marriage and family.⁷ However, in the present world, the dignity of this institution is not guarded as it should be and the marital love is often degraded by selfishness, pleasure seeking, and disrespectful practices. In addition, the modern, economic, socio-psychological, and community circumstances are seriously disrupting the traditional values and destroy the web of the Christian families.

According to Pope Francis, extreme individualism, secularization, narcissistic attitudes, intolerance and hostility, lack of personal discipline, economic uncertainties, violence in families, exploitation of children, migration, and decrease in marriage and increase in cohabitation are some of the contemporary challenges facing families. Moreover, modern society, with the explosion of the media, migration, globalization, and modernization has made itself vulnerable to various vices and their consequences, like addictions to social media, nuclear family, single-parent family, mixed marriage, sexual abuse, deterioration of faith and morals, and so on.⁸ In such a context, the *Chavarul* of Chavara would enable the families to have a close examination of their ways of functioning as the family and their modes of bringing up children.

In the context of today's rapidly changing and challenging world, the ethical vision contained in the *Chavarul* can contribute to and positively influence family life. Chavara visualized the family as the most vital edifice of humanity whose inbuilt tradition would have immense influence in nurturing mature individuals, and in turn, building up a stable society. The image of the Holy Family was the inspiration for him to envision the model of the ideal family where all members lived in perfect harmony, in an atmosphere of love, faith, and discipline. Chavara divided the 40 precepts in the *Chavarul* into two parts. The first part consists of 24 precepts, which he considered vital for them in ordering the family structure and interpersonal

⁶ John, "Marriage and Christian Family," 14.

⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47–52 (AAS 58: 1067–73).

⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 45 (108: 328).

relationships. In the second part, in 16 precepts, the *Chavarul* highlights the value of children and gives practical guidelines. Every instruction in this document is a reminder to the husband and wife, parents, youth, and children in the family calling their attention to take on social and moral responsibilities.⁹ It refers to the minute aspects of the upbringing of children. Perhaps no literature on parenting has covered so many aspects, big and small that deal with the sociological, psychological, spiritual, and moral development and upbringing of children and youth.¹⁰

Although, addressed to a small group of families, the practical directions and guidelines given by Chavara are welcomed by countless families, irrespective of their religious and social affinities. The ethical vision of the *Chavarul* is also useful for value education of children and youth in schools and colleges, as well as for retreat preachers and animation teams in their renewal programmes related to family, youth, and children. In the marriage preparation courses, the *Chavarul* will help to prepare the young couples to imbibe ethical values in their lives and impart them to their children. Therefore, the study on family ethics in the *Chavarul* of Kuriakose Elias Chavara is significant to contemporary families.

Scope and Limitations, Methodology and Sources of the Study

The purpose of this research is to bring out the relevance of the *Chavarul*, which unveils the ethical vision of Chavara on family and the upbringing of children. So far, not many detailed theological studies have been conducted on Chavara's writings on the family. The topics covered in the *Chavarul*, like the virtues that must prevail in Christian family, prayer, reception of sacraments, faithful observance of Sundays and other days of obligation, punctuality, home economics, healthy relationships, justice to the poor, education of children and their upbringing in Christian values, and the responsibility of children towards parents and society, etc. are analysed in light of biblical scholarship and theological vision of the family. Through this study, we aim at the renewal of families in general, with a special focus on Christian families.

In this research, we limit our study to the ethical foundation of family life in the *Chavarul* of Chavara. Although we make an analysis of the theological

⁹ Thomas Panthaplackal, ed., *Testament of a Loving Father: St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 23.

¹⁰ James, "A Precious Source of Reference and Assurance," 138.

development of the concept of marriage and family life, the socio-cultural context of the nineteenth-century family of Kerala, and the problems faced by the contemporary families, they are not analysed in a detailed manner. The use of magisterial documents and other theological books would be limited to the main concepts related to the family ethics found in the *Chavarul*.

This study is analytical, historical, reflective, critical, explorative, comparative, and descriptive. It is based on books and articles from historical, theological, ethical, biblical, psychological, and sociological points of view. Hence, this study is interdisciplinary in nature. In order to achieve its goal, we pursue a descriptive method to the extent that we expose the family situations in the socio-cultural context of the nineteenth-century as well as that of the twenty-first century.

In this study, we rely on the *Complete Works of Chavara*, which form the primary source of research. *Chavarul*, though originally a monograph, is part of the fourth volume of the collected works of Chavara, namely, *The Letters*. Besides these, various works on his life and contributions are referred to as the secondary sources. For the first chapter, the main sources are the various historical documents and works on Chavara which are referred to in the supplement for the collection of information and analysis of the socio-cultural context of families in Kerala in the nineteenth century and for the brief biographical sketch of the life and activities of Chavara. For the second chapter, the Sacred Scripture, biblical commentaries and dictionaries, and the *Chavarul* are the main sources. For the third chapter, through various prospects of moral theological discipline, magisterial documents, the teachings of Fathers of the Church, and theologians on marriage and family, deeper and analytical study is sought. For the fourth chapter, books and articles on social sciences are sourced along with the sources of the first three chapters, for the study of the challenges and problems faced by the families today and to determine the significance of the *Chavarul* in the present scenario. Although our focus is on Indian Christian families, a vast number of theological, ethical, cultural, and psychological sources from the East and the West are referred to. However, special attention is given to the theological sources from India. The New Revised Standard Version of the *Holy Bible* is used for the biblical references. In the appendix, an English translation of the *Chavarul*'s original Malayalam text is included.

Structure of the Work

The work is designed in such a manner as to portray the importance of family ethics and the relevance of Chavara's vision of family today. Along with the general introduction and conclusion, it consists of four chapters.

The first chapter is entitled as "Socio-Cultural Context of Kerala in the Nineteenth Century and the Life of Chavara." It makes an attempt to depict Chavara as the visionary of Catholic families in Kerala in the nineteenth century. It traces the socio-cultural context of the family at the time of Chavara. It also portrays a short biographical sketch of Chavara, his activities for the uplift of society and the strengthening of the Church, and his vision for Christian families. Here, the socio-cultural background is elicited in order to understand the family situation of that time. It intends to prepare the basis of the study and to highlight the cultural milieu in the time of Chavara when he envisioned the *Chavarul*.

The second chapter, "Family Ethics in the *Chavarul* of Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Light of the Biblical Vision of Family" is a systematic study of various precepts in *Chavarul* based on the Bible. Although there are not many direct references to the Word of God in the precepts in the *Chavarul*, they are profoundly influenced by the biblical vision and teachings. This rootedness in the Word of God is explicit throughout all his writings. This chapter is developed in two parts, namely, guidelines for families in general, and for the upbringing of children. The former is divided into three-fold relationships, namely, trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal, while the latter entails the rubrics for the upbringing of children in an upright manner. The chapter employs the following methodology: On the one hand, it shows how the precepts in *Chavarul* are Chavara's reflections inspired by the Word of God. This is also an attempt to explain how the instructions of Chavara, who was well-versed in the scripture, are rooted in the biblical teachings. On the other hand, Chavara's instructions to the families can be elaborated in light of the biblical teaching and vision of the family. Thus, this chapter attempts to explore the *Chavarul* in the light of the biblical vision of family ethics.

The third chapter explores the "Theological Vision of Family in the *Chavarul*." In the nineteenth century, Liguorian moral theology formed the core of Catholic moral teaching. Obviously, this would have been a theological source for Chavara in formulating the *Chavarul*, which includes the spiritual, psychological, social, and moral formation of Christian

families. Later, we can find that many of these principles of Christian families are resounded in the Second Vatican document. This chapter analyses the *Chavarul* against the background of the relevant topics of Vatican II, Magisterial documents, the teachings of the Church fathers, and other theologians. An elaborate study of the family ethics of *Chavarul* in the context of its theological reflection is carried out under nine headings that highlight the theological vision of family in *Chavarul*.

The fourth chapter, “Family Ethics in the *Chavarul* and the Challenges of Family Life Today,” is the focal point of this dissertation. In this session, we will try to explain the significance of the precepts in *Chavarul* in the frame work of present-day challenges and problems that are faced by families. The discussion begins by delineating the positive aspects of modern families. Then, the challenges and problems of modern families are discussed to understand the areas of our concern and renewal. Having understood the gravity of various factors eroding the spirit of the ideal family, an attempt is made to look at these problems through the viewpoint of the guidelines in *Chavarul*. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the positive aspects of modern families. This is followed by the second section, which alerts us about the challenges and problems faced by contemporary families. The third section deals with *Chavarul* in connection with the contemporary challenges and problems of the families. The *propositum* of this research is realized in presenting the *Family Ethics in the Chavarul* of Chavara as a handbook to actualize the vision of good Christian families in the image of heaven. Thus, this dissertation is an effort to have an in-depth study of the Family Ethics in the *Chavarul* and its relevance in the contemporary families.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF KERALA IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE LIFE OF KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

The scientific study of any literary work remains incomplete without studying the text's historical and social contexts. With this view in mind, in order to have a better understanding of the meaning and nuances of the *Chavarul*, the structuring of the first chapter has been carried out in light of the historical findings of the time-space in which this literary work was accomplished. The author of the *Chavarul*, Kuriakose Elias Chavara, was born in the nineteenth century, which marks the beginning of the modern literary movements in Malayalam literature. The socio-cultural background in which Chavara was born and worked has greatly influenced all his writings. The demand for his literary works points us towards the desire for Christian discipline and order in the families of that time. Therefore, it is very befitting to start the research with an exploration of the socio-cultural context of his birthplace, Kerala, along with his biographical account.

From the very early times, Kerala was an independent geographical and political entity. Its peculiar geographical position helped the Keralites develop a cultural social pattern that gave rise to social developments from the very beginning, continuing up to the present time. However, the nineteenth-century scenario of Kerala was not always the same as it is today. Kerala society, till the late nineteenth century, was not based on principles of social freedom and equality. There was a deep gulf between the high-castes and the low-castes.¹ The social stratification of Indian society, which existed since the time of the Vedic period (1500–500 BCE), showed its repercussions in Kerala society too. It was stratified into four hierarchical classes or *varnas*—*Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Nayars*, and *Sudras*—with a large subpopulation of untouchables excluded from this system entirely. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Nayars continued to enjoy several privileges. St. Thomas Christians, who trace their origins back to

¹ Thonippara & Chennattuserry, "Family in the Nineteenth Century Travancore–Kochi: Socio–Religious Context," 54.

Apostle Thomas,² stood next to Brahmins in the social scale.³ The Brahmanical supremacy and the emergence of caste and caste proliferation with various kinds of social customs and religious rites and rituals prevailed in Kerala society during the 19th century. Social institutions and relations were based on the caste system that divided the people with extreme disparity. In the caste ridden society, untouchability was prevalent even among St. Thomas Christians. Caste played an important role at every stage of the people's life, particularly in the social, political, and economic structures. The clear distinction maintained by artificial barriers between classes, as well as the irrational customs they sanctioned, were the sources of social unrest. Slavery in its primitive form existed in the Malabar coast.⁴

The second part of this chapter presents the life of Chavara. The Catholic Church, acknowledging his heroic spiritual life and innovative humanitarian services, which were done for the uplift of his fellow human beings, elevated him to the altar of sanctity on November 23, 2014. As a spiritual leader, the major focus of his life and activities was on the empowerment of the people. He worked relentlessly as a frontier soldier to defend the dignity of every individual. Against the backdrop of unjust rules and discrimination that persisted in society, Chavara's heroic efforts to eradicate vices became very important and relevant. Chavara's aching heart resonated with compassion towards the poor and the needy, from whence evolved his words and deeds. To comprehend Chavara's contributions to the Church and society, we begin with the exploration of the socio-cultural background of nineteenth-century Kerala society.

² Although, the research has not yet established most of these traditions as truth, because Syrian Christians were very slack in recording their history in a formal way, they had a system of passing on their history from one generation to another through folksongs and other forms of folk arts. One such folk art was *Margamkali*, which exists in Kerala even today. Much of this folk art is woven around the mission of St. Thomas the Apostle. The original *Margamkali* describes the arrival of St. Thomas in India with the merchants in 52 ACE, approximately twenty years after the death of Jesus, the miracles he performed, friendship as well as hostility of the people among whom he worked, the persecution he suffered, the churches and crosses he put up in various places, etc. These details are incorporated in the various stanzas of *Margamkali* songs. Yrjola, "Early Christina Missionaries to India Based on Biblical Criteria for Christian Missions," 43.

³ Munshi, "Caste and Indian Economy," 782–83.

⁴ Mencher and Unni, "Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala," 122–23.

1.1 Socio-Cultural Context of Kerala in the Nineteenth Century

Kerala, traditionally known as the Malabar Coast, is a long, narrow territory bounded on the west by the Arabian Sea and on the east by the Western Ghats.⁵ It extends from Kanyakumari in the extreme South, to Gokarnam in the North for about 580 kilometers. The coastal belt lies between 8 to 13 North latitude and 74 to 78 East longitude, with the longitude of the Western Ghats to the East and the Arabian Sea to the West.⁶ This narrow strip of land is considered “a gift of the sea,” which is symbolized in the legend of Parasurama.⁷ The mountains also possibly played a role in its formation. Geologists and soil scientists testify that this stretch of land, once under sea, might have been formed as a result of the operation of volcanic or seismological factors.⁸ Another contributing role is played by the rivers and the sea. The numerous rivers originating in the Western Ghats may have brought down in their course large quantities of mud, while ocean currents deposited immense quantities of sand on the shore.⁹ The steady accumulation of silt and sand, in turn, created a vast stretch of land.

Etymologically the word *Keralam* is derived from two Malayalam words *Keram* (coconut) and *Alam* (land), which means land of coconut trees. Again, it is a composite word formed by *Chera* (sand) and *Alam* (region), or *Cher* or *Chernta* (added) and *Alam* (land), indicating land that was added on to the already existing mountainous country.¹⁰ The Arab navigators called this region *Male*, which in later centuries assumed Arabic equivalents like *Malibar*, *Manibar*, etc. In Malayalam, the equivalents are *Malanadu*, *Malavaram*, or *Malayalam*, meaning the hill country.¹¹ The Portuguese called it *Serra*, also meaning “hill country.”¹² At present, north Kerala is known as *Malabar*.¹³ Kerala today is made up of the former provinces of

⁵ Mencher and Unni, “Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala,” 121.

⁶ Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 1.

⁷ According to this legend, Parasurama, one of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, received the land of Kerala as a gift from the Arabian Sea. According to the legend, Parasurama hurled his axe across the sea from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari, and the water receded up to the spot where it fell. Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 10.

⁸ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 2.

⁹ Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. 1, 3.

¹⁰ Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 12.

¹¹ Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 12; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 3.

¹² Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 3

¹³ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 5.

Travancore in the South, Cochin in the Centre, and Calicut (Malabar) in the North.¹⁴ The language that developed as separate from Tamil was perhaps called *Keralabhasha*, which, in the course of time, became *Malayalam*, *Malayma*, etc.¹⁵

Since Kerala is situated on the edge of the Indian peninsula, it has been the meeting place of ancient religions, cultures, and traditions,¹⁶ which shaped the culture of Kerala with its original beauty. Kerala has a composite and multicultural nature to which numerous people and races have made significant contributions. Its salient feature is unity in diversity. The culture has been influenced by Christian and Muslim cultures that thrived under the patronage of tolerant Hindu princes. Over the centuries, Kerala has remained a living museum of ethnology, culture, religion, and biodiversity.¹⁷

The peculiar geographical position of Kerala has guarded it against intruders from the neighbouring kingdoms and states, and thus it has emerged as a unique culture and heritage on the face of the nation. It also brought up the people with noticeable virtues of unity and solidarity in every sphere of life and activity. This culture is known for its antiquity, unity, continuity, and universality because of the richness and variety of its content. Kerala's millennia-old foreign contacts helped in the evolution of a way of life and culture characterized by catholicity and universality. It represents the collective achievement of a people in the fields of religion and philosophy, language and literature, art and architecture, education and learning, and economic and social organization.¹⁸ The system of joint families, caste and religious practices, and rules and rituals about purity and pollution bound the people of Kerala together.¹⁹

Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar were the three primary administrative units of Kerala territory in the nineteenth century. Travancore and Kochi will be closely looked at because the topic under discussion primarily concerns the first two administrative units. All three administrative units were under

¹⁴ Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 3: *Eighteenth Century*, 15.

¹⁵ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 3.

¹⁶ Pillai, "Coalition Politics: The Kerala Experience," 99.

¹⁷ Pillai, "Coalition Politics: The Kerala Experience," 99.

¹⁸ Sreedharamenon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala: An Introduction*, 2.

¹⁹ Gulati, *Gender Profile: Kerala*. [Online]

British rule, and Malabar was part of the Madras Presidency.²⁰ Travancore covered the modern-day civil districts of Kottayam, Idukki, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, and portions of Alappuzha and Trivandrum, whereas Kochi included Ernakulam and parts of Alappuzha. Travancore became a protectorate of the English East India Company in 1805 and was administered indirectly by the British. Kainakary, the home village of Chavara, is located on the Alappuzha-Changanacherry route. It is in lower Kuttanad, which is today a popular tourist destination. Because of its enormous paddy production, Kuttanad is known as Kerala's granary. Kuttanad was dubbed "Venice of the East" because of its attractive and intricate rivers and water transportation.²¹ Rural settlements in Kerala were not villages as in most of India, but rather residential clusters focused around large Nayar houses, with their fortress-like appearance, and wealthy Nambudiri households (*illam*). Each Nayar house had its own area of influence, often coinciding with its area of economic dominance. Thus, traditionally, there was no nucleated village as may be found in other parts of India.²²

1.1.1 Social, Economic, and Educational Scenario

The social structure of Kerala is defined by the caste system. It was a complex, deep-rooted, and highly organized system that had suffocated the masses for centuries. The economic order was affected by the emergence of the European political powers—the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British—which also resulted in an economic boost in certain fields. In the aftermath of the stringent caste system, the monopoly of the high-caste marked the education system. Owing to Kerala's separate and distinct history, religious composition, and demographic diversity, the socio-economic-political-educational development was very unique.

1.1.1.1 Social Scenario

Kerala or Malabar has existed as a separate geographical and political entity since ancient times, and its unique geographical location has aided the Keralites in developing a distinct social structure. The social structure of Travancore-Kochi during the 19th century was quasi-feudal, with numerous

²⁰ Thonippara & Chennattuserry, "Family in the Nineteenth Century. Travancore-Kochi: Socio-Religious Context," 52.

²¹ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 33.

²² Mencher and Unni, "Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala," 120.

castes or social groups, each with its own specific profession. As a result, Kerala society was not based on the principles of liberty, secularism, and equality until the late nineteenth century. The deep chasm separated society into high-castes and low-castes. In spite of the centralization of authority in the hands of kings in Tavancore and Kochi and the direct administration of the English East India Company in Malabar, the upper castes like the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, and the Nayars continued to enjoy several privileges and immunities. They continued to be landowners and freely oppressed the tenant class.

In the social hierarchy, St. Thomas Christians were placed alongside the Brahmins. They were known as *Nasrani Mappilas*, which translates to Christians of noble status. With the introduction of the caste system, the political and social systems became increasingly convoluted. Untouchability was endemic in the caste ridden society, even among the St. Thomas Christians. The caste system had a significant role in determining the economic status of an individual. Kerala's caste system was far more oppressive than that which prevailed in other parts of India. Untouchability and unapproachability were highly common in society, and government offices, schools, and courts were not open to the lower castes. As a result, social mobility was halted, which caused loss of individual initiatives and enterprises.²³ The law that governed society was extremely severe as far as the lower castes were concerned. Slavery in its most primitive form prevailed in the land, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There were a series of unjust taxes,²⁴ which imposed a heavy burden on underprivileged sections of society.²⁵ Consequently, the poor became poorer still. Child marriage and polygamy were common in the caste ridden society.

1.1.1.1.1 Caste System

The society in Kerala in the nineteenth century was hierarchically structured and territorially fragmented. The caste system existed in Kerala with the utmost seriousness and, in all its ritual rigour of purity, was more

²³ Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 321; Thonippara & Chennattuserry, "Family in the Nineteenth Century. Travancore-Kochi: Socio-Religious Context," 54.

²⁴ Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 291–294.

²⁵ Nadar, *History of Kerala*, 264.

oppressive than the way it had existed in other parts of India.²⁶ The word “caste” is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word *casta* meaning “breed” or “lineage.” The Portuguese used the term “caste” first to denote the divisions in the Indian caste system. The word “caste” also signifies “race” or “kind.” The Sanskrit word for caste is *varna*, which means “colour.” The popular equivalent of caste is *Jati*.²⁷ The fundamental characteristic of the caste system is the hierarchical division of status and power. The very principle of hierarchy is the opposition of pure and impure, which merges with the opposition of superior and inferior. Moreover, it also governs separation. It is the way in which caste is shaped.²⁸

The caste stratification of Indian society has its origin in the *Chaturvarna* system. According to *Chaturvarna* doctrine, Hindu society was divided into four main *varnas*, which were mainly based on the division of labour and occupation as the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders and artisans), and Sudras (workers).²⁹ Due to this, the values of equality, freedom, and brotherhood were negotiated in society. Apart from these four hierarchical classes or *varnas*, there was a large subpopulation of untouchables who were excluded from this system entirely. Within each of these classes, and among the untouchables, are thousands of castes or *jatis*. The central rule in Hindu society was that individuals had to marry within their own caste.³⁰ Most of the rites and practices observed at the time of birth, marriage, pregnancy, death, etc. were absolutely absurd, irrationally class-structured, and exceptionally rigid. Frequent outbreaks of revolts in the name of caste and religion have shaken the foundations of society’s peace and communal harmony.

²⁶ Cherian, ed., *Perspectives on Kerala History: The Second Millennium Kerala State Gazetteer*, Vol. 2, Part II, 460. Also quoted in Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Noottantile Keralam (Kerala in Nineteenth Century)*, 265.

²⁷ Rao, *Sociology: Primary Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*, 363; Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste*, 4. It is necessary to see where the concept comes from. The Portuguese seafarers who traded mainly on the west coast of India in the 16th and 17th centuries described groups they called castes, from which derive the English and French words caste, meaning ‘species’ or ‘breeds’ of animals or plants and ‘tribes,’ ‘races,’ ‘clans,’ or ‘lineages’ among men. Marriott and Inden, “Toward an Ethnosociology of South Asian Caste Systems,” 228.

²⁸ Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste*, 26.

²⁹ Mullatti, “Families in India: Beliefs and Realities,” 12; Rao, *Sociology*, 363.

³⁰ Munshi, “Caste and the Indian Economy,” 782.

The Brahmins were considered the traditional custodians of the *Dharmasāstras* (A Brahmanical collection of rules of life, often in the form of a metrical law book). They were the lawgivers and interpreters. By the laws created by the Brahmins with the help of kings, the Sudras were created in the service of the Brahmins. In spiritual matters, including matters of worship, the Brahmins were the masters. They enjoyed a monopoly on scriptural knowledge. Hence, the Sudras were prohibited from reading sacred books and performing religious ceremonies.³¹ The rule was that if a Sudra heard the *Vedas*, they would pour molten lead down his ears, and if he uttered a line from the holy book, they would cut his tongue off. The understanding was that if the Sudra acquired knowledge of the *Vedas*, he would challenge the authority of the Brahmins.³² European travellers who came to India in the Middle Ages mention the presence of slaves and remark on the rigour with which untouchability was imposed. They write that slave people never used highways but trudged along through marsh and bush, shouting to warn caste-people of their presence. If any Nayar was to see their footprints or meet any of them on the way, they could kill them immediately with impunity. If one were, by any misfortune, to touch a Nayar lady, her relatives would immediately kill him and all his relations.³³ Another example is that the *Pulayan*, who was considered as “slave,” was subject to execution for disobeying cast laws. As complete authority was wielded by the Nayar aristocracy and wealthy Nambudiri Brahmins, it goes to show the position of the “slave castes” as late as the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³⁴

Syrian Christians had good status and economic advantages in society due to their proximity to high-caste groups. The early Christians were of high-ranking and, like the Nayar landlords, owned untouchable “slaves” who worked on their land.³⁵ They earned the respect of rulers and people. The inscriptions tell us that seventy-two rights and privileges, usually granted only to high dignitaries were conferred on Christians and they were exempted from import duties, sale and slave taxes. As in the case of Hindu

³¹ Simon, *State and Society in Kerala*, 6.

³² Nadar, *History of Kerala*, 199.

³³ Hunt, “Slavery in Kerala,” 278.

³⁴ Mencher and Unni, “Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala,” 123.

³⁵ Mencher and Unni, “Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala,” 123.

temples, the responsibility of safeguarding the Church and Church land was entrusted to the representative assembly of the people of Kollam. The good will and tolerance shown by the rulers and people of Kerala to people of other faiths are exemplified by all these facts.³⁶

The Sudras were seldom considered human beings. The Ezhavas and Thiyyas were lower-ranking matrilineal castes of Brahmins,³⁷ below the Nayars. Some of the groups below the Ezhavas were the Shanars, the Cherumas, the Pulayas, and the Parayas, who were agrarian slaves maintained by their masters. They were tenants or sub-tenants of the Brahmins, Nayars, or Christians. They did menial jobs, and the members of the higher castes considered that they would be polluted if a Thiyya or Ezhava came ten or fifteen metres close to them. They were not permitted to enter temples.³⁸ A close similarity in social practices is noticeable between the Syrian Christians and the high caste Hindus. Only men of same status or caste were admitted to eat with the family. Law castes could not enter the houses of the Syrian Christians.³⁹

Occupation was determined on the basis of caste, which prevented intermingling. Public roads were few, and the outcastes had no access to them. The use of public highways, wells, post offices, schools, law courts, government offices, and markets was forbidden to the lower classes.⁴⁰ Anyone belonging to the lower caste who polluted temples, houses, tanks, or roads by their presence or touch was awarded corporal punishment by the Brahmins and their agents.⁴¹ The Sudras had to keep a little away from the Brahmins. A Brahmin had to have a wash in order to become clean if he touched a Nayar. An Ezhava had to keep a considerable distance from a Brahmin. Ezhavas could not be approached by Pulayas and Parayas or else they would be polluted.⁴² To secure immediate identification of such lower classes, they were required to be uncovered above the waist. The law that existed in the land was not egalitarian. The penal code was extremely

³⁶ Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 226.

³⁷ *Nambudiri Brahman*, *Encyclopedia*. [Online]

³⁸ Kunjuraman, *Thiyyarude Avasthakal (The Rights of Thiyyas)*, 11.

³⁹ Ferrol, "Social Practices," 124.

⁴⁰ Mateer, *Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People, Special Reference to Missionary Labour*, 32.

⁴¹ Rajayyan, *History of Tamil Nadu—1565–1982*, 182–89.

⁴² Sanu, *Narayana Guru Swami*, 7.

severe as far as the lower castes were concerned.⁴³ There were unjust taxes⁴⁴ that imposed a heavy burden on the underprivileged sections of society.⁴⁵ Thus, the caste system was an issue that affected a great number of people in India, particularly in Kerala. The human dignity of low-caste people was denigrated in such a way that it resulted in caste discrimination in the workplace, social space, political fortunes, and religious practices. It is in this context that the contribution of the British enlightened approach and the empowering educational programmes of the missionaries, particularly the unique role played by Chavara, in the building up of modern Kerala society, become significant.

With the spread of education and liberal ideas in the nineteenth century, the members of backward communities became more aware of discrimination. Naturally, a number of social and socio-religious movements emerged. The first of these campaigns was started by Vaikunta Swami (1809–1851), who challenged the social discrimination in the society towards the low castes, by digging common wells which were free for anyone irrespective of caste, began the practice of inter-dining, etc.⁴⁶ Chattambi Swamikal (1853–1924) was a *Nayar* reformist who revolted against the existing social structure, in which the Brahmins enjoyed a monopolistic position. Though he worked closely with Sri Narayana Guru (1856–1928), his main focus was the social and spiritual reformation of the *Nayars*. Narayana Guru, an *ezhava* by caste, also revolted against Brahmin dominance and fought to lessen the harshness of caste discrimination. He consecrated shrines in several parts of Kerala for the use of the *ezhavas*, but also permitted *pulayas* and other low castes members to worship in these shrines. In the shrines, the *ezhavas* themselves performed the rituals. This, along with other social reforms he introduced among the *ezhavas*, helped that community to emerge as a decisive factor in Kerala society and politics.

The reforms of Chattambi Swamikal and Narayana Guru were carried forward by the organizations called NSS and SNDP. Ayyankali (1863–1941), a member of *pulaya* caste, served as the movement's leader for the social advancement of the *pulayas* and other oppressed castes.⁴⁷ These

⁴³ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 9.

⁴⁴ Mateer, *Native life in Travancore*, 291–94.

⁴⁵ Nadar, *History of Kerala*, 264.

⁴⁶ Inter dining (*samapanthibhojanam*), where people collected and cooked rice, cereals and vegetables and dined together, irrespective of their caste.

⁴⁷ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 9–10.

leaders' tireless efforts contributed to the complete emancipation of the lower classes of the Hindu fold. However, it was impossible to ignore the drastic steps taken by Chavara, such as starting a Sanskrit school that was open to everybody and founding a printing press⁴⁸ to popularize literacy, etc. One should remember that, with the exception of Vaikunta Swami, practically all of Kerala's socio-religious reformers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries began their reform initiatives only after the death of Chavara. Chavara might thus be regarded as the indigenous pioneer of Kerala's renaissance in the nineteenth century.

1.1.1.1.2 Patriarchal System

Another feature of the society of nineteenth century Kerala was the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a social system of privilege in which men are the primary authoritative figures, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, control of property, and authority over women and children. In India, with a few exceptions of some matrilineal traits,⁴⁹ most of the societies are dominated by strong patriarchy and patrilineal customs. The worldview of patriarchy lies deep in the cultural and religious subconscious minds of Indians. It dominates the political, economic, and social rights of individuals. This patriarchal attitude altered the views of people regarding human relationships and childbearing, leading to increasing female infanticide and a tremendous sex ratio imbalance in the population.⁵⁰ Violence in its various forms against women, such as physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their spouses; innumerable incidents of abuse, and denial of basic rights in the public space, workplace, and even at home, is often recognized and defended as strands of this cultural weave. These incidents of female harassment deprived them of their right to freedom and identity.⁵¹

In general, women were considered the property of men, and the meaning of women's existence was understood in terms of their usefulness to men.

⁴⁸ Kuriakose, "Ka. Ni. Mu, Sabhakkāruḍe Ādisthānakkāranum Onnāmathe Priyōrumāya Chavara Pe. Ba. Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 32–33. Hereafter, it is referred to as Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram.

⁴⁹ There are some castes or groups that follow matriarchal structures in India, for example, the Khasi in Meghalaya state and the traditional Nayar in Kerala state.

⁵⁰ Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002 to 2006*, Vol. 4, 10.

⁵¹ Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002 to 2006*, Vol. 4, 10.

Manusmriti, the most authoritative moral code of Hinduism, written by Manu, is unequivocal on the inferior status of women: “A girl, a young woman, or even an old woman, should not do anything independently, even in her own house. In childhood, a woman should be under her father’s control, in youth, under her husband’s; and when her husband is dead, under her sons.’ She should not have independence.”⁵² In other words, a woman’s status is always considered in relation to a male: either as the daughter of her father, or the wife of her husband, or the mother of her son. Sadly, beyond these relational terms of identification, no other social designation was important or significant as she was considered as a mere addition to men.⁵³ It may sound inconceivable that women in nineteenth-century Kerala had to pay breast tax, known as *mulakkaram* in Malayalam, to be allowed to cover their breasts.⁵⁴

Women had no freedom in the patriarchal society, whether at home, in society, or in the Church. They were negatively bound by the rules and customs of both society and religion and were treated as mere sexual objects and denied education.⁵⁵ Often, women’s education ended with the *Kalari*⁵⁶ under the supervision of an *Āsān* (Master). Having no role in family or social affairs, they contributed little towards societal growth.⁵⁷ Low-caste women were forbidden to have even a *Kalari* education.⁵⁸ They suffered abuse and violence at the hands of the mighty. They were viewed as weak, submissive, and subordinate beings. To govern the behaviour of men, women, boys, and girls, society generally established a partial

⁵² Manu, *The Laws of Manu*, 5, 147–48, 115; Kochuthara, “The Sexual Abuse Scandal and a New Ethical Horizon: A Perspective from India,” 935; Saraswathi Govindarajan, “Caste, Women, and Violence,” 154.

⁵³ Govindarajan, “Caste, Women, and Violence,” 154.

⁵⁴ Raveendran, “Daring to Dream,” 161. Breast tax was one of the worst taxes ever imposed on the lower caste women of Kerala by the erstwhile Travancore kingdom at the beginning of the 19th century.

⁵⁵ Raveendran, “Daring to Dream,” 161.

⁵⁶ Kerala in those days was a land of family schools known as *kudipallikkūdam* and learning centres under single tutors known as *āsānkāleri*. Though the state was divided into over 20 principalities and later known as Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar, there was no noticeable change in the educational system followed by the people in the different regions. Chathamparampil & Kureethara, “Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society,” 121.

⁵⁷ Raveendran, “Daring to Dream,” 161.

⁵⁸ Cleopatra, “Blessed Chavara’s Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century,” 41.

approach. For instance, the infidelities of a husband against his wife and his irresponsible behaviour towards his children are more likely to be condoned and tolerated than those of the wife.⁵⁹ Even worse were the inhuman social customs that enslaved women, such as *pulappedi*,⁶⁰ *sati*, and *smarthavicaram*.⁶¹

The St. Thomas Christian community, as a socially integrated group, observed strictly patriarchal customs and practices in religious and social fields. The Syrian Catholic girls were married off at an early marriageable age and the dowry given to them became the property of their husband. The modesty of Syrian Christian women in their dress and behaviour contributed much to the sanctity and solidarity of family life. Women were confined to their houses, and they were renowned for their modesty, nobility, and chastity.⁶² In religious matters, they assumed a lower place. Girls were not allowed to participate in feasts, weddings, or other ceremonies. Women were not represented in the Parish Council or in any other policy-making or decision-making bodies, not only among the St. Thomas Christians but throughout the world.⁶³

Following the local tradition of the Hindu religion, Syrian Christian women did not appear before strangers and they did not eat with their husbands. Children never sat in the presence of their father. “Women were expected only to work and do their duties as daughter, wife, and mother; they had no rights and no voice either in the family or in the society.”⁶⁴ Moreover, consecrated life for women was unknown in the 19th century. For these reasons, Syrian Catholic women, like all other women, were backward socially, economically, educationally, and spiritually. Their potential to serve humanity in various ways lay hidden within themselves as

⁵⁹ Eilers, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002 to 2006*, Vol. 4, 10.

⁶⁰ *Pulappedi* was one of the brutal practices that allowed lower-caste men to defile upper-caste Nayar women who were found alone outside their houses or were left unprotected at home, by touching them. Once defiled, she could only either run away from home, let herself be adopted by the defiler, or become a beggar. Otherwise, she is liable to be killed by her own people or sold off. Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 411.

⁶¹ *Smarthavicharam*, the trial of a Brahmin woman charged with infidelity and adultery, did not try nor punish the men involved, while the women were excommunicated. See Raveendran, “Daring to Dream,” 161.

⁶² Mateer, *Njan Kanda Keralam*, 249.

⁶³ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 96–97.

⁶⁴ Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 408.

circumstances did not permit it to be realized.⁶⁵ Several of the European travellers and Christian missionaries who visited Kerala between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries have left written records about the patriarchal system and the condition of women in the family during the period. According to these records, all women were expected to obey unjust laws and customs, and they were viewed as mere tools for men's happiness.⁶⁶ All these customs and practices made the lives of women unbearable.

It is essential to look at the economic and educational environments when attempting to comprehend the caste system as it existed in traditional Kerala.

1.1.1.2 Economic Scenario

Caste played a vital role at every stage of an Indian's economic life.⁶⁷ It was the same with Keralites too. The economy of the land revolved around the private ownership of landlords. Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, ownership of land from landlords and local chieftains was passed to landholders.⁶⁸ The rights over land were structured in such a way that the owners were the *Janmis*, who were Brahmins. A few aristocratic Nayars owned lands but did not cultivate them. Because all their land was cultivated by tenants, and they themselves did not know anything about farming.⁶⁹ They leased it to the *Kanams*,⁷⁰ who were drawn mainly from Nayar communities, for twelve years. They leased it to the Ezhavas for a period of three years. These were the actual cultivators of the land. The Cherumas, Pulayas, and Parayas were below these castes, who had no right to own the land but formed the majority of agricultural labourers.⁷¹

According to the *Janmi* system, the slave class comprised the tenants who worked on the soil, but the landlords (*janmi*) had ownership of the land. These workers were frequently treated as slaves with no rights, not even to

⁶⁵ Cleopatra, "Bl. Chavara's Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women," 41–42.

⁶⁶ Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 209.

⁶⁷ Munshi, "Caste and the Indian Economy," 781.

⁶⁸ Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 325.

⁶⁹ Thomas, "The People of Kerala," 126.

⁷⁰ *Kanam* is the *panayapattam* system. According to this, the person who took the land on lease (*kana kudiyan*) used to give an amount as security to the landlord when he leased the land for cultivation. They were mostly from Nayar families.

⁷¹ Aloysius, *Interpreting Kerala's Social Development*, 6.

their own bodies. This social agrarian system caused a steep decline in the moral life of the people.⁷² They lived on the generosity of the landlords and masters who fed, clothed, and sheltered them.⁷³ The huge gap that existed between the rich and the poor badly affected the intellectual, psychological, and mental development of the people in Kerala. Christians and Muslims followed the practice of the class dominated variants of the same social hierarchies and were accommodated in the overall system.⁷⁴

In the nineteenth century, the trade of pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, and other spices⁷⁵ with Europe thrived and led to the flow of wealth into the country. It also introduced European fashions and luxuries to Kerala. Though there were developments in various areas of life, the caste system and slavery, which were prevalent in society, remained largely untouched. It was in this context, Chavara came forward with the vision to bring enlightenment to the people, regardless of class or wealth, and to grant them the freedom enjoyed by the children of God. He believed that his contributions would reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

1.1.1.3 Educational Scenario

India, rich in human and natural resources, is the second most populated country in the world. The country's educational system is the second biggest in the world, with the world's third largest pool of educational human-power.⁷⁶ Among the Indian federal states, Kerala stands at the forefront in matters of literacy. Through constant efforts, India had a literacy rate of around 12% at the time of independence and has now attained a literacy rate of 77.7% as per the census of 2021. However, Kerala has the highest literacy rate at 97.4%, with a male literacy rate of 95.2% and a female literacy rate of 96.2%.⁷⁷

⁷² Sreedharamenon, *A Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 268.

⁷³ Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 325.

⁷⁴ However, Aloysius claims that there were important differences in the various regions of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Aloysius, *Interpreting Kerala's Social Development*, 6

⁷⁵ Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 394. Pepper was in great demand in European markets. It was used in various ways, such as for flavouring food and preserving meat in the cold season. It was considered as of medicinal value. It was also exported to China. Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 394–95.

⁷⁶ Kariyil, "Education Mission of Syro-Malabar Church; Vatican II and Present Challenges," 55.

⁷⁷ National Statistical Office (NSO) Data, "Literary Rate of India 2021." [Online]

Education was universal in Kerala and there was a high level of literacy during the Sangam epoch.⁷⁸ The Sangam works make clear that Vedas, Puranas, and so on, were entitled to higher education. Even female education was not neglected. As a result of this, we hear of several scholarly women who contributed much to the cultural life of their times. But, with the spread of Aryan ideology,⁷⁹ education became the monopoly of a privileged few. Women, as well as the low castes, gradually lost their high status in society and the right to education. Thus, during the age of Nambudiri dominance, Kerala society underwent a radical transformation. Education of the masses was opposed to the principle of *Chaturvarna*. Because of the increasing influence of the caste system, mass education gradually declined. When we read of education in ancient Kerala, we read about education being prevalent among the higher classes of the society.⁸⁰ Although the exact statistics about the literacy rate of the population of Kerala at the beginning of the nineteenth century are unavailable, it is generally concluded that the literacy level was high among Brahmin boys. Other castes below the Brahmins have gained a certain level of education from village schools called *Kalari*.⁸¹ There were also institutions like *Ezhuthupalli* under *Ezhuthachan* and *Āsān*. Education in the *Ezhuthupalli* received a boost in the seventeenth century under Thunchath Ezhuthachan, the “Father of the Malayalam Language.”⁸² *Ezhuthupalli* continued to function actively in Kerala until the advent of the British.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the education scenario in Kerala began to shift. While Jesuit missionaries were doing active evangelizing work in Kerala, Protestant missionaries were engaged in educational work as well. In Travancore and Cochin, several Protestant missions, such as the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Church Missionary Society (CMS)

⁷⁸ Sangam age is the age of literature. A noteworthy portion of it was written in Kerala. This literature gives us a broad picture of the life of the people. Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 15.

⁷⁹ The name Aryans, Sanskrit for noble or ruler, originally applied by the Hindus to Indo-European invaders who moved into the Indus Valley and India about 1500 BCE. It later became a loosely used linguistic term denoting people who speak an Indo-European language. *Harver World Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, 434. Greek and Latin are Aryan languages. Arvidsson, “Aryan Mythology as Science and Ideology,” 341.

⁸⁰ Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, 267.

⁸¹ Tharakan, “Socio-economic Factors in Educational Development: Case of Nineteenth Century.”

⁸² Sreedharamenon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala*, 163–69.

and the Basel Evangelical Mission, started functioning in the nineteenth century under the patronage of local rulers.⁸³ Under the influence of foreign missionaries and the British government, several educational institutions were opened. But as the ecclesial administration of the Syrians was in the hands of the Portuguese Jesuits and Italian Carmelites, who were not much interested in the English-medium schools started by Protestant missionaries, they discouraged local Catholics from studying in these institutions for fear of Protestantism. On the other hand, the government started many schools in competition with the missionary schools for those who disliked studying in Christian institutions, which were largely attended by Hindu children. As these schools lacked Christian religious teachings, Catholics were discouraged from attending these schools also.

Ultimately, Syrian Catholics could not get access to the prevailing educational facilities and marked a low quotient on the graph of literacy. In 1819, Rani Gouri Parvati Bai of Travancore set up vernacular schools.⁸⁴ Subsequently, a large number of schools were opened and many of them were closed down in a short span of time.⁸⁵ As the horizon of human development in the Kerala society of the nineteenth century was darkening, the limited openings that were available to certain individuals like Chavara, Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru, and Ayyankali paved the way for personal and societal transformation through the imparting of basic education to all and social uplift.⁸⁶

When we trace back to the lives of Syrian Christians of the time, we see that the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperoor), which was convened by Alexis de Menezes, the Latin Archbishop of Goa, from June 20 to 26, 1599, in the parish church of Diamper, near Ernakulam, Kerala, altered the course of the history of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. In addition to making many basic changes in the worship and liturgy of the native Christians, the Synod also made several decisions on various aspects of life, including education. In a

⁸³ Sreedharamenon, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 297. The first school in Kerala was established in 1816 by English Protestant missionaries at Kottayam, which later evolved into the present C.M.S. College. Kariyil, "Education Mission of Syro-Malabar Church: Vatican II and Present Challenges," 56.

⁸⁴ *Sarvavijnāna Kōsam (Encyclopedia)*, Vol. 8, 390. Quoted in Chathamparampil and Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 123.

⁸⁵ Sreedharamenon, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 298–99.

⁸⁶ Chackalackal, "Igniting the Minds to Transform the Society," 38.

precautionary move, the Synod prohibited Syrian Christians from learning from the people of other denominations and religions.⁸⁷ It also insisted that Syrian Christian tutors should not attract children of other faiths.⁸⁸ The consequences of these restrictions on the community were too severe and negative in the context of the limited educational opportunities that were available at the time.

Those who headed the Church after the Synod did succeed to a great extent in implementing the Synodal decisions. However, the educational activities among Syrian Christians were totally ignored until the foreign missionaries left the administration of the Church. It is recorded in the historical report of Ignatius Persico that “the Carmelites who rule the Syrian Christians have not done anything considerable in the educational field.”⁸⁹ Charles Payngot observes that, in general, “the missionaries have not done anything remarkable for the education of the priests and Christians who were entrusted to their care. The Syrian Christians, who were experts in agriculture and business, were not encouraged to tread on a changed path.”⁹⁰ This is the basic reason for the absence of any leading literary figure or academic genius coming from among the Syrian Christians before Chavara. The letter to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* by the assembly of Syrian Clergy on October 5, 1884, refers to the situation: “There is no one from among the Syrian Christians who has completed college education and

⁸⁷ *Udayamperoor Soonahadōsinte Kānōnakal Session*, 111, Decree, 12. Quoted in Chathamparampil and Kureethara, “Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society,” 122. The schools were started by Portuguese and Spanish missionaries. But the Catholic Church, having inherited the dislike that her missionary leadership nurtured toward the English language, due to its association with the Anglican rebellion against Roman Catholic supremacy, was initially inactive in education. The Catholics began to open English medium schools in Kerala only when, starting in the 1880s, the Syrian Catholic leaders were admitted into the higher realms of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Kariyil, “Education Mission of the Syro-Malabar Church; Vatican II and Present Challenges,” 56–57.

⁸⁸ *Udayamperoor Soonahadōsinte Kānōnakal Session*, 111, Decree, 11. Quoted in Chathamparampil and Kureethara, “Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society,” 122.

⁸⁹ Payngot, *Kerala Sabha Pathonpathām Noottāndil*, 41. Translated by Chathamparampil and Kureethara, “Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society,” 122.

⁹⁰ Payngot, *Kerala Sabha Pathonpatham Noottandil*, 70. Translated by Chathamparampil and Kureethara, “Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society,” 122.

secured a degree. There is more than a hundred degree-holders among the Jacobites. While there were many lawyers, doctors, and judges in other communities, there were none among us.”⁹¹ At this juncture, despite the mounting difficulties, Chavara addressed this pathetic condition by taking a historic step to start schools attached to every parish⁹² in order to spread education in the Catholic community, and even today, this effort by Chavara remains a milestone in the history of Kerala.

1.1.2 Family Systems

The family was more stable because the husband and wife were actively involved in operating it. The early basic traits of a person’s personality are formed in the family, which transmits the cultural heritage and ensures continuity between an individual and society. A child encounters its first experience as well as the new stimuli of life in the family. In fact, the child’s family environment has such a strong influence on him that it helps develop the personality and character traits that will become visible in them as adults from a young age. A healthy family is the only environment in which social aptitudes can develop.⁹³ Therefore, it is essential to make an analysis of the family system that was prevalent in nineteenth-century Kerala to have a better understanding of the *Chavaryl*.

1.1.2.1 Marriage

Marriage is the institution that gives birth to the family, the foundation of society. It comprises parents and children.⁹⁴ In Kerala, among the *Nayars* and other castes, except for the Brahmins, marriage was not considered to be a sacred alliance as found among Christians. They enjoyed some freedom in the selection of their mates and in separation.⁹⁵ St. Thomas Christians strictly followed monogamy and divorce was prohibited to them. Despite being a privileged class, Brahmin women were not free from these social taboos.⁹⁶ Dowry, polygamy, and family traditions were means

⁹¹ *Archives of Oriental Congregations of Syro-Malabar Catholics 1878–1889*. Quoted in the footnote, Payngot, *Kerala Sabha Pathonpatham Noottandil*, 103.

⁹² *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 1864–1871, 90.

⁹³ Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol. 1: *The Pre-Dravidians*, 164.

⁹⁴ Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol. 1: *The Pre-Dravidians*, 78.

⁹⁵ Kurup, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture*, 41–43.

⁹⁶ Yesudas, *A History of Women’s Education in Kerala*, 18.

employed by men to keep women under subjugation.⁹⁷ For this reason, the community in general welcomed the birth of a girl child without much celebration. This discontent later took the form of various restrictions as the child grew. Her movements, deeds, words, and even thoughts were so restricted as to make her life worse than that of a slave.⁹⁸

The Brahmins developed a very specific custom of marriage within their caste. In their anxiety to preserve the *Brahmaswam* lands undivided, only the eldest son of the head of the family was permitted to contract an official marriage. Permission was extended to the second son when it was necessary to secure the succession. The practice of *sambandham* (concubinage) of the younger siblings of the Brahmin family was observed as they entered into relationships with women from the lower castes but not below the *Nayars*. They could not bequeath property to their children or even maintain their families.⁹⁹

In Brahmin society, the marriage of girls immediately after attaining puberty, and even at an earlier age, was very common. According to the custom, a very heavy dowry had to be given to every bridegroom. Hence, girls from poor families, having no money to be given as dowry, suffered from frustration.¹⁰⁰ Those who were economically less privileged found it impossible to give their maidens in marriage, and as a result, they remained unmarried.¹⁰¹

Sexual taboos were observed only in the case of women.¹⁰² They were not free to engage in marriage alliances of their choice. Poor Brahmin women were often forced to marry old men and live as co-wives, as the elder son in the Brahmin family could have more than one wife. Even teenage girls were given in marriage to old men consequently, there were many young widows in Brahmin *illams* (houses). The total denial of education and their social narrow-mindedness made Brahmin women totally submissive to their men. They had no opinions or beliefs of their own other than those spelt out by

⁹⁷ Rose, *Polity, Society, and Women: With Special Reference to Travancore 1700–1900*, 66.

⁹⁸ Rose, *The Polity, Society, and Women*, 66.

⁹⁹ Rajeevan, “Cultural Formation of Kerala,” 9.

¹⁰⁰ Logan, *Malabar Manuel*, Vol. 1, 155–56.

¹⁰¹ Padma, *Study on the Status and Role of Women in the Public Life of Kerala from 1850–1956*, 37.

¹⁰² Padma, *Study on the Status and Role of Women in the Public Life of Kerala*, 38.

their men.¹⁰³ In brief, they had absolutely no right to property and had neither legal nor social status in society.

Among St. Thomas's Christians, marriages of their children were arranged by their parents, and not much attention was paid to the wishes of the boy or girl. The couple generally met each other for the first time at the time of marriage.¹⁰⁴ According to their custom, only a boy's family could search for a bride.¹⁰⁵ The search had a communal nature involving parents, relatives, and a mid-man called *Edakkaran*. Since the youngsters have the conviction that the parents will desire only the good and happiness of their children, they put their unconditional trust in the good will of the parents, which is the basic attitude in the ongoing journey of faith in their Christian marriage.¹⁰⁶ The dowry system was prevalent among St. Thomas Christians and it was a sacred ceremony. The transaction of dowry in the presence of fire (*agni*), representing Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world, an imperishable witness, was a religious act among them. Rather than material wealth, they sought deeper security from the imperishable witness symbolised by the lighted lamp.¹⁰⁷ Through this transaction of dowry both the families were united forever and this union was exercised symbolically by the two responsible elders, who embraced each other after the handing over the dowry.¹⁰⁸ It was given in the form of jewellery, money, or property signifying the parents' hope that their daughter will be secure in her new family. The one-tenth of the dowry was given to the parish which adds the sacredness of the dowry transaction and signifies the families' gratitude to the mother Church.

Syro-Malabar Christians have adopted many signs and symbols of profound significance, particularly from Hindu culture for their marriage celebration. Catholic marriage is a sacrament and covenant, more than just a social event, therefore, signs and symbols are inevitable to reveal the hidden truth. "Marriage is a mystery in the sense that it is an actualization and

¹⁰³ Ayer, *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, 206.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander, *Social Mobility in Kerala*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 188.

¹⁰⁶ Koikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of St. Thomas Christians*, 107-108.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 198.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 189.

manifestation of the divine love and life.”¹⁰⁹ At the beginning of the marriage celebration, the couple holds their hands together and the priest blesses them both. It is a cultural adaptation from Hindu marriage called *Pânigrahana*.¹¹⁰ It is the sign of their mutual acceptance and symbol of unity and indissolubility of marriage.¹¹¹ It also implies their willingness to live as one body and soul, and the husband’s responsibility to protect his wife. When the priest blesses their hands with the sign of the cross, it shows that the cross joins them together until the end of their lives. The pledge of marriage touching the Bible is another significant marriage symbolism. The bride and bridegroom place their right hands on the Bible, and as the celebrant prompts the pledge, the couple repeats the words after him. The Holy Bible symbolizes the words and commandments of God. “In touching the Bible and pronouncing the words of the marital pledge, the couple proclaim the faithfulness to God through their marriage.”¹¹²

There are mainly three sacred and permanent symbols in Syro-Malabar marriage rites such as *tâli or minnu*,¹¹³ *mantrakōdi*,¹¹⁴ and wedding ring, symbolizing the sacramentality, covenant, and love-relationship of marriage. *Tâli kettu* (tying *tâli* around the neck) originally a *Namboothiri* ritual, was later adopted by all Hindus and Christians in Kerala. The *tali* tying round the neck of the wife signifies that these two (man and woman) are now husband and wife, married, joined legally and spiritually. Since it is a sign of their union and faithfulness, the wife wears it as long as her husband is alive and loss of it is considered as a disgrace in her life.¹¹⁵ St. Thomas Christians were strict monogamists. “In the matter of matrimony, there could be among them in no case, separation except at the death of man

¹⁰⁹ Kochappilly “The Covenantal Love and Life: Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage,” 171.

¹¹⁰ *Pânigrahana* is a Sanskrit compound consisting of the term *Pâni* and *grahana*, which means taking or accepting of the hand.

¹¹¹ Kochappilly, “The Covenantal Love and Life,” 187.

¹¹² Kochappilly, “The Covenantal Love and Life,” 191.

¹¹³ *Minnu* and *tâli* are interchangeably used by the Christians in Kerala. It is the marriage emblem for St. Thomas Christians with the design of the cross at its centre, which is the symbol of Christ’s love towards humankind. Koikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of St. Thomas Christians*, 124.

¹¹⁴ *Mantrakōdi* comes from two Malayalam words, *mantra* means blessed and *kōdi* means new cloth.

¹¹⁵ Koikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of St. Thomas Christians*, 124–25.

or the wife, otherwise, they have to live together for good or bad.”¹¹⁶ Although widows could remarry, very seldom did widows in respectable families with children think of a second marriage.¹¹⁷ So, we could understand from the analysis that many of their rituals and customs bring out the idea of indissolubility in a marital relationship.

1.1.2.2 Family in the Nineteenth Century

The family system of Kerala in the nineteenth century enjoys a long history of stable family life within the structural pattern of India.¹¹⁸ The family was a centre of spiritual strength with family devotions and prayers. The family was patriarchal in character. The role of women was restricted purely to the four walls of the house by being a moral guide to the children and managing the household. The ideal of chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage was valued highly by the family. The classic type of Indian family is that of joint family, which is a system where members are bound together by ties of common ancestry and common property. The joint family administration prioritises family stability over personal growth of the family members.¹¹⁹ Iravati Karve defines joint family in the following words: “A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as one particular type of kindred.”¹²⁰

The joint family system was prevalent in Kerala until recently. Large joint families lived in a common residence called *taravad*. The property of a *taravad* was the joint property of all descendants of a common ancestor. Among the Nayers, it was only in the female line.¹²¹ The property belonged to all the members of that particular *taravad*. Partition of the property was very rare, although it was possible with the mutual agreement of all the members. The eldest male member, called the *karanavar*, managed the common property.

¹¹⁶ Mundadan, *Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, 175.

¹¹⁷ Alexander, *Social Mobility in Kerala*, 79.

¹¹⁸ Kapadia, *Marriage and Family in India*, 245.

¹¹⁹ Koikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of St. Thomas Christians*, 137–38.

¹²⁰ Karve, *Kinship Organization in India*, 11.

¹²¹ Jeffery, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance Society and Politics in Travancore*, 15; Innes & Evans eds., *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol. 1 and 2, 98.

Generally, Nayers followed the matriarchal familial system of inheritance, called the matrilineal system or *marumakkathayam*, and lived in joint families.¹²² The patriarchal system, or *makkathayam* of inheritance, in which the son inherits the property from the father's possessions,¹²³ was followed by Christians, Muslims, Brahmins, and the majority of Ezhavas and tribal castes. However, the Brahmins and a few other caste groups also practised the joint family system. Under the joint family, even the distant relatives lived together, sharing the fruits of the *taravad* property.¹²⁴ As the property of the joint family would be passed on to the eldest member, the other members would have no interest in developing it. Moreover, the *karanavar*, in many cases, was not keen on the welfare of an estate that would be passed on to the niece or nephew. This attitude affected the prosperity and economic development of the *taravad* negatively. In spite of several advantages, a joint family, the development of a nuclear family and healthy human growth often remain neglected.¹²⁵

St. Thomas Christians followed the *makkathayam* system. As the head of the family, the father was the supreme authority in the daily running of the family. All sons inherited their father's property, but the daughters were provided with a dowry. In order to keep up their family traditions, if a couple had only female children, they would adopt as their heir a boy related to the father in the male line, and they would not make their daughters heirs to their properties.¹²⁶ Hence, in the patrilineal community, sons were preferred over daughters. Sons were given preferential treatment, education, etc.¹²⁷

1.1.2.3 Syrian Christian Family

The family is the catalyst for transmitting the rich and noble traditions and spiritual legacy of India.¹²⁸ According to Christian understanding, family is a sacramental sign in the world. The Christian family is a living act of worship to God due to its sacramental grace. Christian marriage is an

¹²² Kurian, *The Caste-Class Formation: A Case Study of Kerala*, 8–9.

¹²³ Mateer, *Njan Kanda Keralam*, 249.

¹²⁴ Kurian, *The Caste-Class Formation: A Case Study of Kerala*, 8–9.

¹²⁵ Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. 2, 364.

¹²⁶ Zachariah, ed., *Randu Prāchēna Gathyakritikal: Udayam Peroor Soonahadosinte Kānōnakal, A. D. 1599*, 90.

¹²⁷ Alexander, *Social Mobility in Kerala*, 77.

¹²⁸ Kidangen, *Family and Priesthood in the Syro-Malabar Church*, 18.

effective means of sanctification, and families participate in the divine plan of God to sanctify the world. Here we discuss the family values that the Syrian Christian tradition has incorporated into its socio-cultural setting.

Although the Syrian Christians lived in the midst of a multi-religious context, they made an effort to preserve their Christian identity by being faithful to Christian teachings such as marital fidelity, unity and love in the family, and proper faith formation of children amid the not very favourable Christian social setup. According to the patriarchal context, the role of father was given prior importance in the family. Hence, in general, unity in the family was maintained to some extent through the strong leadership and commitment of the husband. Contrarily, Chavara lavishly praises his mother, claiming that she was the one who taught him to pray, dedicated him to Mother Mary at the Vechoor church, disciplined him through her look assisted him in discerning his vocation to priesthood, and so on.¹²⁹ In the same way, the Syrian Christians tried to preserve property in the male lineage.¹³⁰ Therefore, the *makkathayam* was in practice.¹³¹ Contrary to the existing practice, Chavara allowed his brother's daughter to inherit the property and continue his family line, an ideal that has not yet been fully assimilated and honoured by the Syrian community to this day.¹³²

Syrian Christians were good neighbours who were able to enlist the assistance of their entire community in problems of mutual concern. Children were raised with discipline, obedience, and humility. The houses of Syrian Christians were modest and neatly organized. They placed a high value on religious tolerance and communal harmony. The local rulers built Christian churches in some locations, which is proof of the social acceptance and status that Christians attained.¹³³

St. Thomas Christians used to maintain a joint family system. They followed the patriarchal system, where the father was the head of the family. Children were brought up in the Christian faith and elderly parents were looked after by children. Parents choose partners in marriage for their

¹²⁹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 44–60, 2–3.

¹³⁰ Thonippara and Chennattuserry, "Family in the 19th Century Travancore-Kochi," 56–57.

¹³¹ Mateer, *Njan Kanda Keralam*, 249.

¹³² Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samoohyaparivarthanam*, 54.

¹³³ Thonippara and Chennattuserry, "Family in the 19th Century Travancore-Kochi," 57.

children.¹³⁴ The contribution of Chavara in this regard is significant when he speaks about the importance of children choosing their vocation. He says, “when they come of age, children should be given full freedom to choose their state of life...Their consent must be specially ascertained before marriages are arranged.”¹³⁵ The main occupation of Syrian Christians was farming, and they were very good traders and proprietors of pepper. They were also very good warriors. Agriculture and trade were their main occupations, and other traditional occupations were ayurvedic treatment and priestly service.¹³⁶

The Syrians were lighter-skinned than the other locals and generally far superior to the local gentiles in various aspects. However, they were prone to intoxication and quarrelling. The women were modest, reserved, and kept a distance from socially unacceptable evil practices that went against Christian morality. According to the custom of those days, when two men would meet on the road, the inferior uncovered his head and inclined his body a little forward, and this mark of respect was always shown to the clergy of St. Thomas Christians.¹³⁷ Chavara observed several family customs that fell short of the ideal, and by writing the *Chavarul* he sought to rectify some of the customs and practices that were not conducive to the Christian living. His ideal family was a heaven on earth, and he hoped to restore the lost or imperilled identity of Christian families by following the precepts in the *Chavarul*.

The environment in which one is born and brought up in the early years of one’s life plays a definite role in shaping one’s personality. Keeping in mind the background of nineteenth-century Kerala, which was a society at a crossroads with a confused and often wounded social order let us turn our focus to the life of Chavara, whose powerful presence, vision, and action made a remarkable impact on the lives of the people during the nineteenth century.

¹³⁴ Joseph, *Marriage Among Indian Christians*, 68.

¹³⁵ *Chavarul*, II:14, 199. Since the *Chavarul* has got two parts, hereafter, the references to the first part will be the *Chavarul*, I:10, instead of *Chavarul*, part 1, paragraph 10, and if it is the second part, the *Chavarul*, II:10.

¹³⁶ Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samoohyaparivarthanam*, 54.

¹³⁷ Day, *The Land of Perumals or Cochin*, 257–265.

1.2 Life of Kuriakose Elias Chavara

The biographical sketch of Chavara is principally explained in three areas: his family background, which covers his spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation; the probationary period of seminary life; and his priestly life. Chavara was an eminent pastor, renowned preacher, vicar general, and the founder of religious congregations for both men and women. His contributions to the Church include the introduction of retreat preaching in parishes, Sunday homilies, liturgical renewal, devotional practices, the fight against schisms and divisions, and the establishment of the media or press, among other things. He also undertook various activities for the uplift of society, including the establishment of the Sanskrit school, public education institutions, and a charity home at Kainakary, to name a few. The women empowerment endeavours of Chavara comprise the foundation of a women congregation (TOCD), a boarding house and school for girls' education, and training centres for various skill developments.

1.2.1 Family Background

Kerala witnessed a great sage, Chavara, in the nineteenth century, who left indelible marks on the religious, social, educational, and cultural fields and transformed families to tread the greater heights of the horizon.¹³⁸ He was born on February 10, 1805 to Kuriakose and Mariam, a middle-class pious and devout Christian family, in the village of Kainakary¹³⁹ in Kuttanad, in

¹³⁸ Chathamparambil & Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 121.

¹³⁹ Kainakary village is the embodiment of serene beauty. Tall coconut palms skirt limpid lagoons and canals that crisscross lush stretches of green paddy fields. At the far end is the Vembanad Lake, into which five rivers from the Western Ghats, including the Pamba, drain. Glimpses of rustic Kerala can be seen here. Kainakary is part of the Kuttanad region, one of the few places in the world where farming is carried out at or below sea level, using a unique backwater paddy cultivation method. The region is famed as the rice bowl, or granary, of Kerala. Kuttanad has been given the honourable name by a great scholar, Fr. Paulinus of St. Bartholomew OCD as 'Venice of the East.' Kuttanad became all the more famous and blessed by the fact that Chavara was the first among men in Kerala to be elevated to the honours of the altar by the Church. The Chavara home, which is now being turned into a shrine on this tiny island, has raised the status of Kuttanad beyond a tourist haven into a place of pilgrimage. See Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 32–33; Jacob, "Multifaceted Life of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara," 5; Paulinus of St. Bertholomew, *Viaggioalle Indie Orientali*, Roma, 1796, 69. Quoted in *Positio*: 21.

the parish of Chennamkary, as their sixth and youngest child.¹⁴⁰ The family line of Chavara descends from the famous Pakalomattom family, which was converted to the Christian faith in the first century of the Christian era by St. Thomas, the Apostle.¹⁴¹ He was baptised at Chennamkary Parish church on February 18, 1805, and was christened after his father, Kuriakose. In the same year, on September 8, 1805, he was dedicated to the Blessed Mother at the Marian Shrine at Vechoor, a ceremony that was often renewed during his life that helped him accept Mother Mary as his own mother. His parents were firmly grounded in faith, which, in fact, made the child, little Chavara, grow in faith. In the *Compunction of the Soul*,¹⁴² Chavara goes on singing how his mother taught him piece by piece the rudiments of the holy faith: the Trinity, the incarnation, the passion, death, and resurrection, and the devotion to the Holy Family. He sings,

Mixed in her sweet milk, she regaled me
With thoughts of heaven and words of grace so pure!
And when reason grew strong, my little mind
Patiently, informed, to lisp holy names.

Huddled close to her feet, I learnt aright
Gently, of matters sublime, of my faith
As at midnight she rose and knelt at prayer
Warding off sleep and petty dullness to the air

Long hours, on her knees in prayer she stayed
Leaning on her then I would seat myself
While devoutly a string of pious words
To Mother of God and the Christ, King of Kings.¹⁴³

The above cantos are an example of Chavara's vivid explanation of how he was taught the lessons of faith by his beloved mother. His devout mother fed him with the sublime truth and basic elements of faith along with her tender milk. In fact, it was her deep prayer experience, which was observed

¹⁴⁰ Kuriakose and Mariam had six children, two boys and four girls.

¹⁴¹ Chacko, *Blessed Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 13; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 34.

¹⁴² Though *Āthmanuthapam* (Malayalam) is the original version of Chavara's writing, in this study we have referred to its English translation *Compunction of the Soul*. So, hereafter, it will be referred to as *Compunction of the Soul*.

¹⁴³ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 44–60, 2–3.

by little Chavara even in the late hours of the night, that became the source and inspiration for his spiritual life.

From the age of five to ten, he attended the village school called *Kalari* to study languages, different dialects, and elementary sciences under the guidance of a Hindu teacher (*Āsān*).¹⁴⁴ Everybody admired him on account of his unusual piety and good qualities at this tender age. When Chavara was eleven years old, he met Fr. Thomas Palackal, an erudite and devout priest from the parish of Southern Pallipuram. Impressed by his character and piety, Fr. Thomas invited him to join the seminary.¹⁴⁵ He was sent to his parish priest at Chennamkari for preparation for joining the seminary and received primary training under the good pastor.¹⁴⁶ In 1818, at the age of 13, Chavara joined the seminary at Pallipuram and committed himself to the care and guidance of *Malpān*¹⁴⁷ Thomas Palackal. His austere and disciplined life of prayer and study greatly influenced young Chavara and contributed much to his spiritual and intellectual formation.¹⁴⁸

At his very young age, Chavara learned to submit himself wholly to the will of God. When he was thirteen, he received the tonsure (*āstapāḍupattam*) from the hands of the Most Rev. Peter Alcantra, the then Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha (Verapoly), and later received the minor order.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Chavara lost both his parents and his only brother in the epidemic that swept through the region, particularly in Kainakary. Chavara's sister-in-law and her daughter were the only ones who were spared in the Chavara family. In this critical situation, his uncles and relatives advised him to leave the seminary and take care of the family. But the young cleric, certain of his divine calling, refused to leave the seminary and made plans with his

¹⁴⁴ Vithuvattical, trans., *Perspectives of a Heroic Christian Life*, 2. At that time, there was no elementary school. The first government elementary school was started in the Thiruvithancore (Travancore) State in 1817. Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 49.

¹⁴⁷ *Malpān* is a Syriac word that means "Professor" or "Teacher." It is an honorary title conferred on learned priests by the bishop, known for their learning and sanctity of life. Formerly, there existed many parochial seminaries under the '*Malpāns*.' In the course of time, most of them disappeared. Kallarangattu, "St. Thomas Christians of India: Ecclesial Heritage and Perspectives," 32.

¹⁴⁸ Kadankavil, *Chavara: A Multidimensional Saint*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 5; Porukara, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 30; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 61.

elder sister and her husband, who were in Edathva, to settle in Kainakary and to care for the orphaned family.¹⁵⁰ In life, Chavara faced many trials and tribulations. In all such situations, he could submit his will to God's will, proclaiming that "tribulations are blessed treasures in which the saints find such stores of merit. We cannot give greater glory to God than by conforming ourselves in all things to His holy will."¹⁵¹

1.2.1.1 Spiritual and Moral Formation

The family and the environment of a person exert tremendous influence, particularly in childhood. The essential traits a person manifests in adult life have their foundation in family and childhood experiences that leave deep and indelible impressions on the mind. The fundamental pattern of a human being's relationship with God is also formed in his or her early years.¹⁵² His family background was one of the important factors in proving himself as an eminent pastor in his later life. Chavara was blessed with very pious and virtuous parents who hailed from traditional Catholic families.¹⁵³

The most important factor that influenced Chavara's priestly vocation, formation, and later life was the education he received as a child from his mother. He speaks at length about his Catholic formation in the book *Compunction of the Soul*, which he wrote towards the end of his life (1869). Chavara says that his mother sowed the seeds of the spirit of prayer in the mind of little Chavara, forming him into a man of prayer. As Chavara grew, his mother fed him with spiritual food in addition to physical nourishment, and he gradually began to lisp the sacred names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which his pious mother tried to put on his lips.¹⁵⁴ Thus, he imbibed an ardent devotion to the Holy Family, which exercised a great influence on his spiritual life, as he himself narrates: "I kept always the memory of the Holy Family in my mind and revered them."¹⁵⁵ When he embraced the

¹⁵⁰ *Positio*, 57; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 56.

¹⁵¹ Liguori, *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, 366.

¹⁵² Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 7.

¹⁵³ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 1.

¹⁵⁴ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 49–51, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Moolayil, *Short Biography of the Last Years (from September 1869 to January 1871) of the Venerable Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the First Prior of the Congregation of the Carmelites of Malabar*; Quoted in Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 9–10.

religious life, he took the name “Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family.”¹⁵⁶

With reference to his mother’s prayer to Mother Mary, “accept him as your humble slave, to your maternal love I entrust him my impure womb’s tender fruit,”¹⁵⁷ Chavara describes his consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Shrine of Vechoor, close to Vaikom.¹⁵⁸ She entrusted the child to be raised under the spiritual protection of the Mother of God. Chavara received strict discipline from her, and she gently corrected him when he erred. Chavara narrates this: “When she was displeased with me, she corrected me with a merciless and terrifying look. She would never beat me, either with a stick or with her hand. With her eyes, she made me weep as well as laugh. She did everything with her eyes. Under such motherly care, I grew up as a child pleasing to God.”¹⁵⁹

His mother also taught him catechism and the mysteries of the Christian faith, such as the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord.¹⁶⁰ Thus, here we can see how Chavara was given the preliminary training of religious faith and practices in “the first seminary,”¹⁶¹ his home, which is “a domestic sanctuary of the Church,”¹⁶² “the domestic church.”¹⁶³ In Pope John Paul II’s letter to women, the mysterious plan of God regarding their vocation and mission in the world is described. The letter portrays the woman as the one who shelters human beings within her in a unique experience of joy and travail. Her smile becomes God’s own smile upon the new-born child. She is the one who guides her child’s first steps, helps it to grow, and is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.¹⁶⁴ Chavara’s mother is an explicit example of this great vocation of womanhood discoursed in the Papal letter. The faith that Chavara acquired right from his infancy gave him spiritual strength throughout his life. He discerned his call to the priesthood, accepted it, and persevered in it with firm determination. Chavara sings on

¹⁵⁶ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 45–60, 2–3.

¹⁵⁷ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 49–51, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 41.

¹⁵⁹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 81–84, 3.

¹⁶⁰ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 69–80, 3.

¹⁶¹ Vatican II, *Optatam Totius*, 2 (AAS 58: 714–15).

¹⁶² Vatican II, *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, 11 (AAS 58: 847–48).

¹⁶³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 58: 15–16).

¹⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 2 (AAS 87: 804–805).

how his mother helped him to discern his vocation to priesthood. It was to his mother he first talked about it. According to what he wrote in the *Compunction of the Soul* about her response, her heart was leaped with joy by hearing that God had chosen her son to be His possession, she wisely prepared him to accept God's will, and praised God for the infinite mercy He showed to her son. She supported him in this way by inspiring words and took him to the parish church. Thus, his mother played a decisive role in encouraging and discerning his vocation.¹⁶⁵

1.2.1.2 Intellectual Formation

Chavara's parents provided the boy with a correct perspective on life and faith. But according to Chavara, this good upbringing was somewhat challenging during his education under a Hindu master and companions, mostly of other faiths. He had a negative attitude towards the education he received in *Kalari*, which he might have acquired from the negative apologetic theology of the missionaries who definitely influenced his religious outlook. In his *Compunction of the Soul*, he recollects the mental agony which he experienced at the transition from his family's training to schooling under a *guru*. He explains this contrast by saying that the first few years at home under the loving tutorship of his father and mother were very blissful, whereas the later five years in the *kalari* were difficult ones, which exposed him to temptations and occasions for sin. He was relieved from such a situation when he was called to the priesthood. The lapses he enumerates are very minor ones, and yet he was full of remorse for them. For example, he says, "all my colleagues, save a few of them, held not the Christian faith, and I, marking their deeds and my master's lofty words, fell to observing rituals like ablution in tanks...indulged in deeds of pagan blindness... temptations abounded wherever I cast my looks, the scenes around me beckoned me to sin, indecent pranks, immodest words and deeds...rites and rituals fit for powers of hell."¹⁶⁶

In the five years of *Kalari* education, he was taught the languages of Malayalam, Tamil, and Sanskrit. Chavara had a special skill in learning languages, which helped him in his later life. During this period, Chavara was asked to assist at Holy Mass in the Parish church. He showed a keen interest in learning the prayers, which were mostly in Syriac. Such pious

¹⁶⁵ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 113–20, 4; *Chavarul*, II:14, 199.

¹⁶⁶ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 93–112, 4.

activities instilled in him a sense of belonging to the Church and led him to obey and respect the Church authorities.¹⁶⁷

After elementary education, as Chavara received a call from God, his parents sent him to the parish presbytery to stay with the parish priest. He considered this occasion a significant moment of grace from God and a unique privilege given to him. In the *Compunction of the Soul*, he describes his time spent in the presbytery, saying that the priest there brought me up and taught me to assist at Mass, take part in it, practice virtues, and stay away from evil.¹⁶⁸ He added that it was an immediate preparation for seminary life and the impression he got from the life at the presbytery gave him great interest and devotion in administering sacraments and helped him grow in personal holiness. Thus, Chavara was fortunate enough to grow up in favourable soil and in an atmosphere very conducive to becoming a man of God and a good pastor.

1.2.2 Seminary Life

At the age of thirteen, Chavara entered the seminary at Pallipuram where Fr. Thomas Palackal, the *Malpān* (Rector), looked after him. Fr. Thomas' personality had a great influence on him in his spiritual, intellectual, and disciplinary formation. In the first year, Chavara studied Syriac, the liturgical language of the Malabar Christians.¹⁶⁹ He took a keen interest in learning languages like Latin and Portuguese, in addition to Syriac, since he knew that an illiterate priest was not only inefficient at doing anything worthwhile in his pastoral ministry but might potentially jeopardize the salvation of souls.¹⁷⁰ He adopted his *Malpān* Fr. Palackal's reading habit, and he spent long hours reading and writing without wasting time¹⁷¹ which inspired him to become a learned person and make many literary contributions.¹⁷²

Chavara was captivated by Fr. Palackal's virtuous and ascetic life. Fr. Palackal only consumed a small amount of food twice a day. Chavara was greatly impressed by his devotion to prayer, diligence in learning, passion

¹⁶⁷ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 43.

¹⁶⁸ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 132–140, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam* (Malayalam), 31.

¹⁷⁰ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 414.

¹⁷¹ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 64.

¹⁷² Porukara, "Chavara Kuriakose *Malpānte Charitram*," 30.

for the salvation of others, and commitment to the cause of his disciples.¹⁷³ Because of this, he found that his master's life was a very effective and concrete lesson for him that motivated him to become a zealous pastor. He understood at a very young age that a pastor needed to have a strong spiritual life and be holy in order to properly serve the flock entrusted to his care. According to Pope John XXIII, if the clergy are not first animated by a profound spiritual life, if their light does not blaze upon the candlestick with a bright and all-conquering brilliance, then one cannot answer the demands of the Christian people, particularly of the more sensitive and spiritually mature among the laity.¹⁷⁴ As a result, Chavara emerged as a man of virtues who had balanced his active and spiritual life using the immense knowledge he possessed as a result of his outstanding intellectual capacities and multilingual skills.

Since the authorities discerned his genuine vocation, priestly virtues, and the knowledge he possessed, Chavara was awarded the rare chance of receiving the sacred Tonsure (*Āstapād Paṭṭam*) and cassock in 1818, at the age of 13. On this great occasion, he chose his motto as "The Lord is my portion and cup" (Ps 16:5)¹⁷⁵ and stood firm in the face of adversities, including the loss of his parents and only brother.¹⁷⁶ He made the decision to heed the Lord's call, submitting to God's will while bearing the sufferings, and he constantly gave himself in prayer to the Mother of God.¹⁷⁷ After the due course of training, he received the sub-diaconate and diaconate in 1827 and 1828, respectively.¹⁷⁸ As a deacon, in the absence of *Malpan*,¹⁷⁹ he was given charge of the seminary.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 59.

¹⁷⁴ John XXIII, *Allocution to the Superiors of the Italian Seminaries*, 29th July 1961 (AAS 53: 562).

¹⁷⁵ Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 26.

¹⁷⁶ A few years after he joined the Pallipuram seminary, a smallpox epidemic in his village claimed the lives of his father, mother, and only brother, Joseph Kunju, leaving behind his brother's wife and only daughter. Fr. Palackal, the *Malpān* comforted him and encouraged him to withstand with a renewed spirit the compulsion of his relatives to leave the seminary and take up the care of the family.

¹⁷⁷ Porukara, *Short Biography of Our Most Reverend Father Prior*, 33.

¹⁷⁸ Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Malpan* is a Syriac word meaning 'guru' or teacher.

¹⁸⁰ Koyipallil, *A Short Biography of Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family, the First Prior General of Our Congregation*, 6.

As was later made clear in his sermons and writings, Chavara showed a great deal of interest in his studies, particularly the study of the Sacred Scriptures, and he became well acquainted with them.¹⁸¹ All of these facts indicate that Chavara underwent seminary training with a definite goal in view of becoming an effective instrument in the hands of God for the spiritual upbringing of his people.

1.2.3 Priesthood

Chavara's pastoral life began with his priestly ordination. On November 29, 1829, when he was 24 years old, His Excellency Bishop Maurilius Stabilini, the then Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, ordained him as a priest in St. Andrew's church, in Arthungal.¹⁸² The main intention kept by Chavara at the first Holy Mass offered by him was to obtain a special grace to launch an indigenous religious congregation for men in light of the reformation of the Church.¹⁸³ After celebrating his first solemn Mass at his parish of Chennamkari on November 30, 1829, he served in his native parish and nearby parishes for a while. He was thereafter called to assist his *Malpān* Fr. Thomas Palackal, at the Pallipuram seminary.

Fr. Chavara held the priesthood in the highest regard. In the existing situation of his society, he considered the preaching of the Word of God as his primary responsibility. He preached in many churches, which was unusual in those days, because he felt the needs of the faithful who yearned for spiritual food. He diligently carried out a number of other pastoral activities as well.¹⁸⁴ While assisting the *Malpān*, he was also moving from one place to another as a retreat preacher. During this time, he understood that more holy priests were necessary for the spiritual uplift of both families and society.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, he believed that the two most pressing demands of his time were the formation of priests and the renewal of society. After having spent some time in these pastoral activities, as desired by *Malpān* Thomas Palackal and Fr. Thomas Porukara, he dedicated himself fully to the establishment of the monastery at Mannanam.

¹⁸¹ Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 37.

¹⁸² Beccaro, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 6.

¹⁸³ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ Porukara, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 30.

¹⁸⁵ Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 42.

1.2.4 Foundation of the Religious Congregation for Men (Congregation of the Servants of Mary Immaculate)

Since the first century, Christianity had flourished in Kerala, where nearly one-fifth of the population was Christian. Because there was no indigenous bishop from its own ecclesial tradition and no strong leadership for development in the larger society, the Syro-Malabar Church was unable to initiate spiritual growth. In this context, the founding fathers of the CMI congregation, Fathers Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukara, and Kuriakose Elias Chavara, felt the need to provide spiritual leadership to foster unity and development in the Kerala Church and society, and in families. They felt that the Syro-Malabar Church was barren (*Macchi*), lacking in saints, and the faithful were spiritually blind (*Jnānakurudatwam*), and that a great deal of good had not been done due to the absence of a house of asceticism (*Thapasu Bhavanam*) as a house of vision (*Darśana Veedu*). They desired to have a monastery, at least for priests, as a remedy for this misfortune.¹⁸⁶ They were concerned with opening the path to consecrated life not just for themselves but for all the members of the Church of Malabar, and thus providing the Church with consecrated men who would do many good things for the families that were otherwise left undone.¹⁸⁷

In fact, there were already many foreign congregations that had established their mission communities in this land and were engaged in mission work. For instance, the Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Carmelites, and other orders came to Malabar for missionary purposes.¹⁸⁸ Though Christians in India had developed a wide-range of relationships with the great European religious orders, when Frs. Palackal, Porukara, and Chavara started to implement their plan, they had no clear idea of a specific religious tradition to rely on.¹⁸⁹ But these fathers, who felt called by God to found a religious community of their choosing and were advised in this regard by the ecclesiastical authorities, reawakened the yearning for religious life in the St. Thomas Christian community, which had been dormant for a while. This was the beginning of religious life in the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala.

¹⁸⁶ Kadankavil, *Chavara: A Multidimensional Saint*, 72.

¹⁸⁷ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Mundadan, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 39–40.

¹⁸⁹ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 62.

1.2.4.1 The Founders: Frs. Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukara, Kuriakose Elias Chavara, and Bro. Jacob Kanianthara

A priest, by his vocation, has the pastoral obligation to take care of the integral development of the people entrusted to his care and to work earnestly for their salvation. At the same time, he has to strive for his own personal salvation and sanctification. Bearing in mind these twofold obligations of the priesthood, Fr. Thomas Palackal, the *Malpān*, Fr. Thomas Porukara,¹⁹⁰ and Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who were the three outstanding priests known for their scholarship, piety, and leadership, decided to start a monastery to realize the above-mentioned objectives easily and unhindered by worldly cares. Brother Jacob Kanianthara,¹⁹¹ who in 1865 became the first professed brother-co-operator in the congregation, also assisted the three founding fathers from the beginning. They approached His Excellency Bishop Maurilius Stabilini for permission to start a religious house, which was granted in November 1829. After much deliberation, they chose a hillock called Mannanam in the parish of Kudamaloor as a proper site for the new monastery and gave the place the Syriac name “Beth Rauma,” (*Beth* = a place, *Rauma* = high) which means an elevated place. The foundation stone of the first church and motherhouse of the congregation was laid with the name of St. Joseph on May 11, 1831. While *Malpān* Thomas Palackal and Fr. Thomas Porukara resumed their pastoral work and collected funds for the new monastery, Chavara remained at Mannanam and worked relentlessly for the establishment of the religious community for men.¹⁹²

From the very beginning, the founders sought the collaboration of the faithful as well as of parish priests to raise funds through donations and alms.¹⁹³ It was at this time that Chavara had to suffer two great

¹⁹⁰ Fr. Thomas Porukara was a God-fearing and pious priest from the parish of Kallurkad, who was the secretary to Mar Aurelius Stabilini, the Bishop of Verapoly.

¹⁹¹ Jacob Kanianthara was a person associated with Porukara and Palackal with the desire to serve the Church but remained in the Brotherhood. He laboured much with the other founders for the erection of the monastery at Mannanam. He made the profession of his vows as a brother-co-operator in 1865 and died in 1893. *Foundation of CMI Congregation*. [Online]; Jose Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 47.

¹⁹² Beccaro, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 7.

¹⁹³ Kuriakose, “Ka. Ni. Mu. Sabhakarude Adisthanakkaranum Randamathe Sreshtanumaya Kalloorakkattu palli Idavakakaran Porukara Pe. Ba. Thomma Malpanachante

bereavements due to the deaths of *Malpān* Thomas Palackal at Pallipuram on January 16, 1841¹⁹⁴ and Fr. Thomas Porukara on January 8, 1846. And the whole responsibility of organising the religious community fell upon the shoulders of *Malpān* Chavara.¹⁹⁵ Though the movement for a religious community in the Syro-Malabar Church was begun by these three zealous priests, the land of Kerala finally witnessed the realization of this great dream through Chavara. Chavara took up all the responsibilities of the young religious institute and carried it with vitality and enthusiasm, imbuing it with the spirit of asceticism, prayer life, and reverence for the superiors.¹⁹⁶ A good number of priests and clerics joined him in leading a devout life.

When Msgr. Bernardine Baccinelli was nominated as the Apostolic Vicar of Verapoly, he studied the mode of life embraced by Chavara and his followers, and knowing their desire to bind themselves to God by religious vows, he sent them the ancient rules and constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites.¹⁹⁷ When the congregation received ecclesiastical approbation in 1855, it was titled “The Servants of Mary Immaculate of Mount Carmel.” On December 8, 1855, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Chavara made his religious profession, taking the religious name Kuriakose Elias of the Holy Family. After the profession, he was appointed the Prior of the congregation, and all the other members took their vows kneeling before him.¹⁹⁸

The lifestyle of the founders and their colleagues in the first community points to the objectives of the congregation. They led a prayerful and austere life, carried out pastoral activities according to the needs of the local churches, and preached throughout the length and breadth of Malabar, which helped the renewal and transformation of individuals and families. In 1861, when the congregation was affiliated with the Order of the Discalced Carmelites, it received the name “Third Order of the Discalced Carmelites”

Charitram,” 26. Hereafter it is referred to as Porukara Thomma Malpanachante Charitram.

¹⁹⁴ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 66.

¹⁹⁵ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 48. *The Carmelite Congregation of Malabar, 1831–1931*, 26–28.

¹⁹⁶ Panthaplaackal, “The Progressive Realization of the CMI Charism,” 19.

¹⁹⁷ Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 33; Vadaketh, “*Aggiornamento*” of the CMI Congregation in the Light of the Spirit of St. Chavara, 97.

¹⁹⁸ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 67–68.

(TOCD).¹⁹⁹ In 1958, the congregation got the name “Carmelites of Mary Immaculate” (CMI). Meanwhile, they founded many monasteries in different parts of Kerala. Chavara was the Prior of all the monasteries of the congregation from 1855 till his death in 1871.²⁰⁰

1.2.4.2 Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara

A visionary is a far-sighted optimist who, by seeing what is in and around him, can predict what will happen in the future and find its positive outcomes. Chavara was not just a visionary who could simply suggest something good; he could also pave the way for or demonstrate the process to carry out what was visualized.²⁰¹ He realised that his calling was to serve the Church of Kerala in its actual context. Being an Indian, Chavara could delve deep into the root causes of the problems that infested the society and try to strengthen families.

1.2.4.2.1 An Eminent Pastor

Chavara was an outstanding pastor of the Syro-Malabar Church. According to the order of the Vicar Apostolic, Fr. Chavara made annual retreats for priests mandatory in order to promote their spiritual renewal.²⁰² Therefore, he laid the foundation for the spiritual and cultural advancement of the Malabar Church through his various pastoral endeavours, which also renewed the lives of the priests and faithful. The prophetic vision and courageous actions of this saintly son of the soil are largely responsible for the Kerala Church’s present envious position in the Indian Church.

Chavara and his companion priests zealously worked for a radical reform of the Christians of Kerala. Referring to the miraculous catch of fish by Jesus’ disciples in the New Testament (Lk 5:4ff; Jn 21:5ff), Fr. Kuriakose Porukara says:

¹⁹⁹ Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 33. In 1860, the name of the Congregation was changed to *Tertius Ordo Carmelitarum Discalceatorum* (TOCD), and in 1958 to Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). See Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 4.

²⁰⁰ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 67. Prior is the official title under which Chavara governed his religious community from 1855 until his death. After his death, to distinguish him from his successors and the superiors of the monasteries, he was also called *Valya Priorachan* (the Great Prior) by his brethren and the faithful. See Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 4.

²⁰¹ Panthaplackal, “Ecclesial Dimension in Blessed Chavara’s Endeavours,” 136.

²⁰² Bernard of St. Thomas, *Brief History of the CMI Congregation*, 286.

These brethren, as ordered by the bishop, proceeded to parishes having flocks of one thousand, two thousand, or even five thousand. They, by preaching retreats and delivering sermons, catechising and hearing confession, and visiting families, completely destroyed the rule of satan and netted men for life eternal. Witnessing this, the bishops, parish priests, and the faithful rejoiced and thanked God.²⁰³

As a spiritual leader, Fr. Chavara pioneered several Christian devotions and practices in the Syro-Malabar Church to inculcate an atmosphere of devotion and fear of the Lord in the families. Chavara's long-lasting innovative contributions to the Church can be traced to his efforts in introducing Sunday homilies after the Gospel reading, annual parish retreats, forty and thirteen-hour public adorations, monthly devotions, and pious exercises such as the way of the cross, rosary, various novenas, and so on. In order to promote the renewal of families, he gave special emphasis to sacraments, such as frequent reception of the Holy Communion and the sacrament of reconciliation. The most important spiritual initiatives were the formation of ideal Christian families and the fostering of major Christian values. He considered the family to play a vital role in the Church. Hence, he desired and prayed for the holistic development of the people, and his deeds made them feel that he was always available and approachable.²⁰⁴ *Chavarul* written by him is regarded as the *Magna Carta* for Christian families.

1.2.4.2.2 Vicar General

In the seventeenth century, the office of the Archdeacon of India was replaced with that of the Latin Vicar General, and often the people chosen for the office were foreign *Propaganda* Carmelite missionaries.²⁰⁵ The only exception, perhaps, was Fr. Chavara. Archbishop Baccinelli had already appointed Fr. Philip, an Italian Carmelite, as his Vicar General in 1853. Fr. Chavara was made Vicar General²⁰⁶ in 1861 exclusively for the St. Thomas Christians, for the spiritual progress of the faithful and to fight the Roccas

²⁰³ Porukara, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 33–35.

²⁰⁴ Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 42,

²⁰⁵ Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 2, 75–9; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 203.

²⁰⁶ Kuriakose, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 34.

schism²⁰⁷ more effectively. This special appointment was just a month after Roccas' arrival.²⁰⁸ The record shows that he continued in his office as Vicar-General until his death in 1871.²⁰⁹ In this period, Chavara played a decisive role in safeguarding the Church in Kerala from the threats of division and disunity.²¹⁰

In his special capacity as Vicar General, with the necessary permission of the local ordinary, he initiated the reform and renewal of the Syro-Malabar Church. The main activities of his reforms are found in the fields of the formation of priests, liturgy, education, and the building up of ideal Christian families.²¹¹ In order to instruct the faithful, Sunday homilies were introduced in the churches, and annual retreats for the faithful were made a regular feature in the parishes. In order to overcome the financial difficulties of the Vicariate, Chavara, with the order of the Vicar Apostolic, introduced new means of collection. In order to meet the needs of the vicariate, Chavara in consultation with Vicar Apostolic Baccinelli, proposed the scheme of five percent tax on the excess income (total income minus expense) of every parish to the Curia.²¹² Another scheme which was used for augmenting the income of the vicariate was called *Pidiyari* system²¹³ for the construction of the church which was suspended from

²⁰⁷ The Catholic St. Thomas Christians were in the final stages of their struggle for autonomy when Roccas arrived, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, in communion with Rome, they found Patriarch Joseph VI Audo (1848–1879) as an able leader for them. They started sending complaints and petitions from Kerala to Rome and Baghdad, in which they asked for a bishop of their own rite to lead them. As a consequence, the illegal entry of the Chaldean bishop, Thomas Roccas, into Kerala took place, which led to great confusion and turmoil. In history, it is known as the Roccas Schism and Fr. Kuriakose calls it a 'religious rebellion' (*vēdakalāpam*). Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 164–65.

²⁰⁸ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 187.

²⁰⁹ Sebastian ed., *Palakunnel Valiachante Nālāgamam (The Chronicle of Senior Father Palakunnel)*, 102–103; *Positio*, 511–14. Quoted in Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 226.

²¹⁰ Kuriakose, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 34.

²¹¹ Bernard of St. Thomas, *Brief History of the Third Order of the Carmelites Discalced Congregation*, 286.

²¹² Parapuram, *Chronicle*, 1181-82; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 225.

²¹³ Every family had to deposit a handful of rice in a box each time they prepared a meal for the family, reciting the prayer to Infant Jesus to bless them. It was a system of raising the fund. See Maniakunnel, "Contribution of the Catholic Clergy to the Church and State—Kerala," 331.

1861 to the end of 1865.²¹⁴ It is also recorded in the *Chronicle of Mannanam*:

On Sundays and feast days many boys came to study catechism and remained here till five o'clock in the evening. Some of them came from distant places. Some of them were poor. In order to improve more effectively this so wholesome and fruitful work, they thought that it was necessary to feed the boys at noon with *kanjni* (rice gruel). They were also given clothes and pious articles like rosaries, scapulars, etc. TO meet the expenses involved for this as well as for the conversion of *pulayas* and for conducting the catechetical school, the means decided was collection of *pidiyari* (handful of rice) every Sunday.²¹⁵

Kettuthengu—reservation of one of the coconut trees of a family for church purposes—was another means he used to collect money for the vicariate. Though in the beginning the practice of *kettuthengu* was intended for a particular purpose, in course of time it became more common and spread all over Kerala.²¹⁶ Some of these practices are still kept alive in churches according to their specific needs.²¹⁷ All these exertions explicitly express his leadership, love, and commitment to the Church, which is attained through the renewal of family life. His sanctity and zeal for souls make him a champion of the Catholic faith in the families of Malabar.²¹⁸

1.2.5 Kuriakose Elias Chavara's Contributions

The contributions of Chavara are radically ecclesial, down to earth, people-oriented, exceptionally prophetic, and integrally and ultimately spiritual. He initiated several projects and plans, all of them original and unique, to update the spiritual, intellectual, moral, educational, and social lives of the people at large, particularly Christians. He touched all the major components of reformation, like educational uplift, spiritual nourishment, bridging social divisions, empowering the poor, the Dalit, and women, and

²¹⁴ Parapuram, *Chronicle*, 1098, 1182-1190.

²¹⁵ *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 30.

²¹⁶ Bernard, *Malayālahile Ka. Ni. Mu. Sabhayude Charitra Samkshēpam*, 157. Though in the beginning the practice of *kettuthengu* was intended for a particular purpose, in course of time it became more common and spread all over Kerala.

²¹⁷ *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 30; *Positio*, 276, 271; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 226.

²¹⁸ Lucas, *Perspectives of A Heroic Christian Life*, 14.

even bringing media innovation.²¹⁹ The arena of his contributions crossed the ecclesial horizon and included people of every walk and religion.

1.2.5.1 Activities for Strengthening the Church

Chavara, one of the pioneers of the Congregation, and his colleagues burnt with zeal for the salvation of souls. Through their strenuous preaching of the Word of God, they brought about a tangible renovation in the Malabar Catholic families. The most important forms of preaching used by them were sermons, spiritual exercises, catechisms, and personal instructions. Chavara also strengthened the Syro-Malabar Church by renewing the Liturgy and by initiating various devotional practices.

1.2.5.1.1 Sunday Sermons and Retreats

Chavara and his colleagues were aware of their duty to announce the Word of God to the faithful and to nourish them with spiritual food. It was a time when Sunday sermons or homilies were almost uncommon in the Malabar Church, and the result was visible in the lives of the faithful.²²⁰ Chavara and his colleagues spent a lot of time in prayer, assimilating the Divine Word through reflection and preparing themselves through meditation, reading, and arduous study.²²¹ As a result, their sermons were delivered from the heart rather than just the mouth, which touched the hearts of the listeners and facilitated the renewal of their families accordingly. Along with Mannanam, they preached across Malabar. Chavara had actually preached in almost every church in Malabar. His sermons brought about the conversion of many sinners. His *Malpan*, Fr. Palackal used to praise his powerful preaching in these words: “When he is aloft the pulpit, he is like a lion.”²²²

Chavara organized a preaching mission, realizing that preaching retreats were a very effective means of religious and moral renewal in the Church. So, four or five priests went and “preached in different parishes, having a thousand, two thousand, or even five thousand or more faithful, spiritual retreats, teaching catechism, and hearing confessions. Thus, they rooted out

²¹⁹ Marangattu, “Editorial,” 2.

²²⁰ Kuriakose, “Porukara Thomma Malpanachante Charitram,” 20.

²²¹ Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 38.

²²² Njallampuzha, *Azhakulla Atmavu* (Mal.), 31; Rose, *A Pillar and Guiding Light: Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a Theologian of the Church*, 63.

the reign of the devil and brought salvation to the people.”²²³ When the fathers went to the parishes to preach, the church-bells were rung to announce their arrival, and the people gathered in the churches to hear them preach the Word of God.²²⁴ After preaching, they used to assist people in being reconciled with their enemies, establishing peace in their families, and giving individual instructions. About twenty to thirty such retreats were conducted every year.²²⁵ These retreats were often followed by the pastoral visit of the Vicar Apostolic. Seeing the spiritual benefits of the sermons and retreats, the Vicar Apostolic, Ludovic Martini (1844–1852), by a letter on January 8, 1849, nominated the priests at Mannanam as the preachers of spiritual exercises in the whole Vicariate of Verapoly.²²⁶ As a result, more and more young men came forward to embrace religious life. This preaching mission was intensified during and after the Roccas Schism. Consequently, many parishes returned to the unity of the Church. Children were taught the Word of God through catechism. Chavara started special schools for teaching catechism to the new converts from low castes, both children and adults.²²⁷ The intense proclamation of the Word of God under the leadership of Chavara resulted in the reawakening of Christian life in the families of the Malabar Church.

1.2.5.1.2 Liturgical Renewal and Devotional Practices

Liturgy is another area where Chavara rendered his great service to the Malabar Catholic community. Liturgy is central to the Christian life, where the mysteries of salvation are re-enacted. The Christian life originates, grows, and is ultimately perfected through the liturgy. Chavara, whose life was centred on the liturgy, fully realized its significance. He, therefore, desired that others live in a similar manner. His devotion and care in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice moved participants to greater devotion and piety. Besides that, he spent a lot of time daily praying on his knees before the Eucharist.²²⁸

²²³ Kuriakose, “*Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram*,” 34; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 218.

²²⁴ Mundadan and Mampuzhakal, *A Text Book of the History and Spirit of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate*, 78.

²²⁵ Chacko, *Blessed Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 77.

²²⁶ Martini, *Pastoral Letter*, 8 January 1849.

²²⁷ Bernard, *Mār Thōma Christiānikal*, Vol. 2, 246.

²²⁸ Kuriakose, “*Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram*,” 36.

At the time of Chavara, because there were no detailed written rubrics for the Eucharistic sacrifice, there was no uniformity and decorum in liturgical celebrations. The Malabar Church followed the East Syrian Liturgy, or the Chaldean Liturgy, until the Synod of Diamper in 1599. After the Synod, the Portuguese Latinised and disfigured the ancient East Syrian Liturgy of Malabar, preserving the East Syriac language.²²⁹ Though there were missals, printed in Rome in 1774 and 1844, the rubrics and calendar indicated in the missal were inadequate and unreliable. As a result, priests were celebrating Mass in accordance with regional traditions. Therefore, Chavara undertook the composition of an Order of the Mass.²³⁰ He prepared it and got it printed in 1868 with the Syriac title *Thukasa*, which means Order of the Mass (*Ordo Missae*).²³¹ In the Missal, the dates of feasts, fasts, etc. were marked out, more or less, in the Roman pattern. He wished that the liturgy be celebrated with decorum and solemnity. Chavara had also prepared the liturgical calendar, which indicated the East-Syrian tradition of calculating the various seasons or periods based on the major liturgical events of the year.²³² This calendar shows Chavara's knowledge of ancient tradition and his concern to preserve the uniqueness of the St. Thomas Christian identity.

Many priests had practically neglected to say the divine office because it was extraordinarily long. So, Fr. Chavara revised the divine office, maintaining the traditional structure, and with the approbation of the Holy See, the book was printed and introduced into the Church.²³³ The Divine Office, the Office for the Dead, and funeral services were the three books that Fr. Chavara compiled from ancient manuscripts. In addition to that, the funeral services for children, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the lectionary were adapted from the Latin tradition. Fr. Chavara also

²²⁹ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and their Syriac Treasures*, 51.

²³⁰ *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 88.

²³¹ *Positio*, 308; Kuriakose, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 35; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 241.

²³² For example, Nativity, Lent, Resurrection, and Pentecost. The seasons are Sundays after the Nativity (no name is given to the period); Period of *Denha* (Epiphany), seven weeks; Period of *Saumba Ramba* (Lent), seven weeks; Period of *Qyamtha* (Resurrection), seven weeks; Period of *Sliha* (Apostles), seven weeks; Period of *Qaiitha* (Summer), seven to nine weeks; Period of *Sliva* (Cross), seven weeks; Period of *Qudasedtha* (Dedication of the Church), four weeks; Period of *Subara* (Annunciation), four weeks. Bernard, *Mār Thōma Christiānikal*, Vol. 2, 18.

²³³ Kuriakose, "Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram," 37.

translated the Holy Saturday services and various benedictions from the Latin liturgical books into Syriac. He was the great apostle of Eucharistic devotion who translated the ceremonies of forty-hour adoration from Latin into Malayalam and introduced them in the churches with due permission. It was first conducted at Koonammavu in 1866 and the following years at Mannanam, Vazhakulam, and Elthuruth. Thereafter, it spread into many churches in Kerala.

This devotion was a great inspiration to the faithful for the renewal of Christian life.²³⁴ It made the family members well-knit recipients of the sacraments. The three-day long, forty-hour adoration was held only in the monasteries and the large parishes. Therefore, people had to come from far and wide to the places where these adorations were organized. The people who flocked to these adorations were accommodated by the families around the church with the available facilities. Thus, the days of adoration gave the experience of fellowship and sharing. The faithful considered it the day of renewal and God experience, making annual confessions and receiving Holy Communion. As a follow-up to the forty-hour adoration, thirteen hour and one-hour adoration modes were introduced in the churches. Another devotional practice of the Church in Kerala was the “Way of the Cross.” Even though the Latin Church had a long tradition of the practice of making the way of the cross, in Kerala it was started by Chavara in 1838.²³⁵ His efforts to renew the liturgy and to spread various devotional practices reveal his profound love for God and his intense desire to allure others to this ocean of love and transform their families into an image of heaven.

1.2.5.2. Activities for the Uplift of Society

Chavara’s spirit-filled farsightedness and genuine empathy made him read the signs of the times and respond to them in dynamic ways. He channelized his urge for the renewal of society, particularly families, through the initiatives taken by him to start the first monastic congregations in India, both for men and women, the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), respectively. The foundation of the first Sanskrit school and of the printing press by Chavara accelerated the momentum of the progress of Syrian Christian families and facilitated their integral development. His care and concern

²³⁴ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 250–51.

²³⁵ Panthaplackal, “Carmelites of Mary Immaculate in the Service of the Church,” 101.

towards the poor and marginalized in society are explicit through his initiatives taken for the establishment of the charity home for the destitute. Let us now briefly review the impact of these initiatives of Chavara on society.

1.2.5.2.1 Sanskrit School and Public Education

Chavara, who had never been to a formal school, was determined that the formal education that had been denied to him and his ancestors should be made available to current and future generations. The projects that he implemented to uplift his fellow human beings through education are symbols of his farsightedness and courage.²³⁶ It is an undisputed fact that the greatest contribution of the CMI and CMC congregations to the people of Kerala is the education of high standards.

Chavara realized that human civilization and empowerment are possible only with education, and without the light of education, one could not grow and achieve spiritual maturity,²³⁷ and families would remain mediocre if they did not change with the times. Fr. Chavara considered education as the fundamental process of humanization with the purpose of bringing light into darkness, illumining the mind and intellect, thereby, leading to personal as well as familial transformation and empowerment. Hence, Fr. Chavara envisaged an education that transformed children into free and mature people capable of making the right choices in life.²³⁸ As he started to establish educational institutions, he paid attention to the fact that the children should not only be initiated into the modern Malayalam language but also into Sanskrit and Tamil. While Tamil was taught in the ordinary education system of the day,²³⁹ Sanskrit was not accessible to many, particularly to those who belonged to non-Hindu communities and the marginalized. It is in this context that Chavara conceived of the necessity of instructing the students in Sanskrit and started a Sanskrit school at

²³⁶ Chathamparampil & Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Bl. Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 123.

²³⁷ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/2, 95.

²³⁸ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/6, 115.

²³⁹ It was known as *Kalari*, i.e., a school with a single teacher, along the tradition of Gurukulam.

Mannanam in 1846 and admitted the children from surrounding areas and the seminarians.²⁴⁰

This type of education system satisfied multiple objectives. Firstly, the venture was to convey the message of respect for human dignity and values that had been neglected due to the caste and other social systems in ancient India. Secondly, Sanskrit was considered to be the language *par excellence*. This would initiate children into the age-old wisdom of the land, which, in turn, would also mould and refine their character. Thirdly, English was a newcomer and there was resistance to it on the part of Catholics as it was considered to be the language brought by British Protestants.²⁴¹ Therefore, when the government and private schools were not open to lower castes, Fr. Chavara took a brave step in welcoming all the people of God and committed himself to working for their empowerment.²⁴²

Another educational contribution of Fr. Chavara is in the field of women's education. Education was denied to women and untouchables only after the *Varnasrama*²⁴³ came into full force in the eighth century. As a result, the

²⁴⁰ Chavara was an eminent educationist who was an expert in various languages, such as Malayalam, Tamil, Syriac, Latin, Portuguese, and Italian. Chavara understood that education is the most valuable wealth that cannot be taken by a robber, a monarch, or a family member. Knowing the significance of education, he established the first Catholic Sanskrit school at Mannanam in 1846, where students from the surrounding areas and seminarians attended. Varkey, *Parapurathu Varkey Achante Dairy*, Manuscript, Vol. 2, 1474; Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 137.

²⁴¹ Kaniamparambil, "Blessed Chavara and his Unique Contributions to the Church in India," 4; Jose Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 44.

²⁴² *In Search of CMI Charism and Identity*, 348.

²⁴³ *Varnasrama* is the institution of castes. During ancient India, the early Vedic period (1500–1000 BCE), women were considered with respect and dignity. They were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standards. There were many women rishis, and they were held in high esteem. In royal households, women were given respect and they even rendered a significant contribution in the making of decisions and administrative functions. They were made aware of all areas of knowledge and played an important part in politics as well. But in the later Vedic period (100–600 BCE) women were discriminated. The discrimination was observed primarily in terms of education and other rights and facilities. The position of women further experienced a decline with the prevalence of child marriage, widow burning (*sati*), polygamy, and the purdah system (Naresh Rout, "Role of Women in Ancient India.") under the pressure of caste and patriarchal systems, and the sudden advent of technology, modernization, and globalization, that somehow led to the

level of literacy among women had become deplorable. In such an awful situation, Fr. Chavara and Fr. Leopold Beccaro OCD, started a congregation for women and named it Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) and equipped its members to be spiritually enlightened and to strive for the emancipation of womenfolk of the time.

One of the reasons for the tremendous growth of education and hundred percent literacy in Kerala can be traced back to a circular issued by Fr. Chavara calling for the establishment of educational institutions attached to each parish.²⁴⁴ Being the Vicar General of the Catholic Church in Kerala, he issued a circular to all parishes under his jurisdiction instructing them to start schools attached to every church (*Pallikoru Pallikoodam*).²⁴⁵ It developed into a prophetic movement that had a profound social impact on Kerala's families and society. For him, education involved more than just studying textbook materials; it also included the complementary element of vocational training. Chavara was able to perform a miracle in Kerala's spiritual legacy by realizing the printing press.²⁴⁶ His printing and publishing endeavours were a sequel to it. As soon as he started the first printing press at Mannanam, he encouraged the local people to get trained in printing and binding.²⁴⁷

During the time of Chavara, the low-castes were denied access to education and were forced to toil in the agricultural fields of high-caste landowners. Understanding the dynamics of the life of the poor from the lower strata of

infrahumanization and objectification of women. Manu, *The Laws of Manu*, 5. 115, 147–148.

²⁴⁴ The circular, written by Chavara in his own hand, was signed with the official seal by Archbishop Bernardine. The circular ordered that “each parish should establish educational institutions, or else they will be debarred from communion.” Chavara did not remain relaxed after getting the circular issued. He delegated members of his congregation to ensure the implementation of the order and to energize educational activities. *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 90; Valerian, *Malankara Sabhāmāthavinte Oru Vērasanthānam*, 137.

²⁴⁵ The manuscript of this circular kept in the archives of Mannanam is in the recognized hand of Chavara. Many biographers of Chavara and historians of the period attribute it to Chavara. Valerian, *Malankara Sabhāmāthavinte Oru Vērasanthānam*, 137; Chacko, *Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 95; Thomas, *Malayāla Sāhityavum Kristiānikalum*, 146; Thomas, *Karmayōgi*, 210; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 232.

²⁴⁶ Pathrapankal, “Chavara: A Prophet of our Times,” 130.

²⁴⁷ Paily, trans., *Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee Memento of the Mannanam Printing Press*, 3–6.

society and considering their educational needs, Chavara implemented a mid-day meal scheme and provided required books and clothing to those who regularly attended school. Against the background of the economic backwardness of many people in nineteenth-century Kerala, this was a move in the right direction, as Chavara could convince children from nearby villages to regularly attend schools.²⁴⁸ Chavara was a driving force behind Kerala's social transformation in the nineteenth century by advancing the progress of the Church and society through parish-schools, printing press, and literature.²⁴⁹

Chavara wished to uplift society through integral education, which influenced a person's spiritual, social, moral, and intellectual realms.²⁵⁰ He used education as an instrument for social progress, not just for his own community but also for the disadvantaged groups in society, who were deprived of access to means of social mobility. The initiatives he made in the field of education originated from his own extraordinary personal charisma.²⁵¹ In his exhortation, Chavara stresses the importance of literacy: "Just as without eyes one cannot see the material things of the world, so also, without knowledge, it will be impossible for us to see or understand the reality of the world that is above and the Lord who dwells therein. As those who have no eyes are called blind, so too those who have no learning should be called spiritually blind."²⁵² While taking into account the social situation of the time, Fr. Chavara made commendable efforts to improve the living standards of women and the oppressed. He also worked to eliminate their spiritual blindness caused by illiteracy.

By starting a Sanskrit school, Chavara ensured that the marginalized members of society had access to letters and culture that were formerly thought to be the sole domain of the high-caste population. The admission of lower caste children to schools was essentially impossible at a time when untouchability was so pervasive and education was the sole birth-right of the upper castes. Chavara persistently worked for their uplift because he saw them as God's children and respected their right to education. Keeping schools open to all sections of the society was one of the most rewarding

²⁴⁸ Chackalackal, "Igniting the Minds to Transform the Society," 44.

²⁴⁹ Rajasekharan, "*Vāzhathada* Revolution: Chavara and Indigenous Printing Technology," 60.

²⁵⁰ Chacko, *Blessed Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 61.

²⁵¹ Kuriadath, *Christianity and Indian Society*, 54.

²⁵² CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/2, 95.

initiatives he had implemented. This was a revolutionary step in the fight against poverty, untouchability, and discrimination.²⁵³ It should be noted that Fr. Chavara, a learned and pious priest, began his social crusade in the middle of the 19th century. This was a century before the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution, which came into effect on January 26, 1950, and which envisioned free universal education for all. By realizing the value of education in uplifting society, he brought about the concept of universal literacy. In this sense, he is considered Kerala's first reformer, who broke the unjust taboos of the caste system and liberated people from it.²⁵⁴

Fr. Chavara was fully aware of the fact that the progress of a community greatly depended on the growth from within. As Christians are concerned, due to their lack of education and spiritual blindness, they did not have the vitality and the wisdom of the sages. In order to make up for this deficiency, it was decided to build a seminary to prepare priests who will be responsible for teaching the faithful and instructing parents to instil moral values in their children.²⁵⁵ He, therefore, launched a process of education at various levels, including theological education and the systematic formation of clergy through seminaries²⁵⁶ and the education of children through schools attached to all the parishes.²⁵⁷ It was a challenging and

²⁵³ Chackalackal, "Igniting the Minds to Transform the Society," 44.

²⁵⁴ Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 137.

²⁵⁵ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/2, 96.

²⁵⁶ In Europe and other Western countries, several renowned learning centres have come into being along with seminaries. Though the Western missionaries had started a few seminaries in Kerala, the majority of the Syrian priests, including Fr. Chavara, had their basic learning from religious tutors called *Malpāns*. However, there were very few of them who were knowledgeable and scholarly. Fr. Chavara, who understood these ground realities, took the lead in establishing seminaries along with monasteries. He was aware that only erudite and scholarly priests could lead the community and society to progress. In 1833, he established the first seminary for Syrian Christians at Mannanam. This was followed by the establishment of seminaries at Vazhakulam in 1866 and Elthuruty in 1868. Chavara taught his disciples both by words and deeds. His zeal for the salvation of others and the different pastoral activities ensuing from it, such as preaching and administering the sacraments influenced the seminarians. Chathamparampil and Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 126; Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 23–25.

²⁵⁷ Pathrapankal, "Chavara: A Prophet of our Times," 130.

transformative vision that sparked significant historic revolutions in society.²⁵⁸

Fr. Chavara's contribution towards education is not determined by the number of schools established by him, rather, it is the new paradigm, he introduced into society by instilling the idea that education is inevitable for its overall growth and development.²⁵⁹ He established the system of *pidiyari* to feed the poor children who attended school. This marked the beginning of the cultural and social renaissance that Chavara inaugurated among the Catholics of Kerala and in Kerala society as a whole. It is paradoxical that the secular public has only recently and reluctantly accepted Chavara's contribution to the Kerala Renaissance.

Kerala's unique position on India's educational map is not the result of a recent burst of activity in the field of education, but rather of wise policies implemented by its rulers and the intellectual pursuits of its people spanning several centuries.²⁶⁰ Chavara is the bright star in the galaxy of these enlightened people, who through his farsighted vision and mission, strived hard to eradicate the darkness of illiteracy.

1.2.5.2.2 Print Media

Chavara realized that the best way to communicate knowledge, Christian doctrines, and values to people was through print media. His vision had a blend of spirituality and modernity. He contributed to the progress of the Church by establishing parish schools, printing house, as well as through his various literary works. The history of Kerala's journey to modernity starts with the print media. Chavara was convinced that print media was an effective tool for education. In 1846, keeping this vision in mind, he undertook the great endeavour of setting up a printing press at Mannanam for the Church in Kerala. At that time, there were only two printing presses in Kerala, one was owned by the Protestant missionaries, the CMS Press, located in Kottayam; and the other was by the government, located in Thiruvananthapuram.²⁶¹ He obtained permission to see the press at Thiruvananthapuram, where he meticulously sketched down every minute

²⁵⁸ Mollykutty and Thomas, "Chavara—Apostle of Education," 74.

²⁵⁹ Chathamparampil and Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Bl. Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 126.

²⁶⁰ Sreedharamenon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala*, 160.

²⁶¹ Paily, trans., *Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee Memento of the Mannanam Printing Press*, 3–6; Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 291.

detail of the press in his mind. He then made a miniature version of the press out of plantain pith and had a carpenter to construct a large version of the press using his model. The carpenter was successful in carrying out the plan of Chavara. By establishing St. Joseph's Press at Mannanam in Kottayam, Chavara became the first Indian to start a printing press under his private ownership.

By initiating the press with great pain and struggle for the awakening of the Kerala Church through literature and the deepening of faith through the printing of devotional prayer books, Chavara demonstrated his interest in the printing press and publication. The greatest fortune was that the *Nasrani Deepika*, the first extant Malayalam newspaper, was born in the womb of Mannanam press on January 10, 1896, proving the lofty ideal set forth in that publication's first issue: "To represent the atrocities, injustices, and cruelties meted out to the poor folk before the court of the rulers and ministers and to voice the grievances of the mass like a faithful messenger."²⁶² This press proved to be a blessing for many people since it allowed them to access the wisdom and current information of the Church and various other sectors in their own mother tongue.

1.2.5.2.3 Charity Home in Kainakary

Chavara's compassion for the underprivileged took on other more concrete forms in various ways. The House of Charity (*Upavisāla* or *Dharmaśāla*) for the sick and elderly, started on December 12, 1869, in Kainakary, has served as a monument of his love for the poor and destitute, and it continues till today.²⁶³ The purpose of this house was to provide refuge to the sick and destitute who had no one to look after them and to prepare the dying to face a happy death. This was the first home of charity in Malabar to help and support the poor and elderly members of the family.²⁶⁴ It was managed by the members of the Confraternity of the Happy Death of St. Joseph, a lay charitable organization.²⁶⁵ Fr. Chavara wished to have houses of the same

²⁶² Paul, *Chavarayachan*, 115–17; Aykara, "The Deepika," 91; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 319.

²⁶³ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 126.

²⁶⁴ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 126–27.

²⁶⁵ Chavara was inspired by the salutary thought on death and found 'The Confraternity of Happy Death of St. Joseph, the Patron of Happy Death'. 'The Confraternity of Happy Death' is a pious association that Chavara devised for the dual purposes, spiritual and material. Spiritually, to help others to die a good death; and materially, to help the poor. In 1843, Chavara began to give food and clothes to the poor who came for the feast of

kind attached to other churches as well. He gave parishioners the instruction to run the home exclusively with the funds they received from the Confraternity of St. Joseph by selling the coconuts from the tree belonging to the church instead of burdening others.²⁶⁶ These homes that were established by Chavara and his followers were a refuge for the poor, the neglected, the despised, and the destitute.²⁶⁷ This gave a familial atmosphere to abandoned fellow human beings.

1.2.5.2.4 The Literary Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara

Chavara's original and personal traits can be traced from his prose and poetic writings, mainly in Malayalam. All the literary works of Chavara were written between 1829 and 1870. The prominent works of Chavara have been published as the *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara (CWC)* in four volumes, namely, Vol. 1: Chronicles or historical works; Vol. 2: Literary Works; Vol. 3: Spiritual Writings; and Vol. 4: Letters.

1.2.5.2.4.1 The Chronicles

Chavara, who enlightened the Malabar Church in the 19th century, extended his dreams to the 20th and 21st centuries and the ages to come, penned down the history of his time in Chronicles. The Chronicles (*Nalagamangal*) is a narration of the historical events in the Malabar Church from 1829–1870 from the monasteries of Mannanam and Koonammavu. Chavara's Chronicles record, with the precision of time and place, the roads that he trod, the initiatives and challenges that he took up, and the miseries that he conquered.²⁶⁸ The pages of the Chronicles are beautified with the human qualities of Chavara as an undisputed leader, adorned with humility,

St. Joseph on March 19 at Mannanam. To meet these expenses, the faithful and priests who would join it needed to obtain their membership by paying 100 chakrams, five chakrams each in twenty instalments. With this, food and clothes could be given to three members of a family once a year. The association continues today, and following the example of Chavara, many Catholic families in Kerala even now perform this act of charity. See CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 127–28; P. Koypally, *Short Biography of Reverend Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family*, 56.

²⁶⁶ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 127.

²⁶⁷ Thenamkalayil, "The 19th Century Kerala Church and the Leadership of Bl. Chavara," 118.

²⁶⁸ Vasudaevan Nayar, "Chavara: The Solitary Star of Excellence," 53. In his introduction to the biography of Palackal Malpan, Chavara affirms that he has recorded only those things that he has seen or come to know from credible people and those things that he is able to remember. See CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 53.

farsightedness, honesty, kindness, courage, love of the Church, love for enemies, respect for others, hard work, and so on.²⁶⁹

1.2.5.2.4.2 Literary Works

The literary works of Chavara include the following: *Compunction of the Soul (Atmanuthapam)*, *Dirge (Parvam or Pana)* and *Martyrdom of Anastasia*. Though they have a special literary flavour, they are also very spiritual in content.

1.2.5.2.4.2.1 Compunction of the Soul

In the *Compunction of the Soul*²⁷⁰ Chavara relishes the sweet memories of his childhood, particularly the devotion his parents handed over to him towards the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The Holy Family was the ideal family, which should inspire all families.²⁷¹ He ardently longed and prayed to see Emmanuel in the centre of his heart and found his fulfilment in seeing, hearing, and experiencing the Messiah, who is his love, breath, food, fortune, and consolation.²⁷² In the Holy Family, Mother Mary is the star who leads us to Jesus.²⁷³ Since his childhood, Chavara has declared himself the servant of the Holy Mother.²⁷⁴ With the freedom of a son, he reminds the Holy Mother that he is a servant and repeats it more than twenty times in the *Compunction of the Soul*.²⁷⁵ In his poem, he sings very affectionately and gratefully of the fond memories of his loving family and the ways in which his parents, particularly his loving mother, brought him up.²⁷⁶ All of this helped him understand the importance of family life

²⁶⁹ Saly, “The Humanity of Chavara in the Chronicles,” 325–26.

²⁷⁰ The original manuscript has 143 pages containing 3000 metric verses, running into 4023 lines. It is divided into 12 cantos and follows various Malayalam poetic meters. The book covers two topics: (1) life of Jesus from the birth to ascension into heaven, and (2) life of Mary from the ascension of Jesus to her assumption into heaven. The narrative is interwoven with continuous self-reflection and lamentations about his sins, especially in the first part of the book. Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 327.

²⁷¹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I:56–72, 3.

²⁷² Rose, “Christ Experience in *Atmanuthapam*,” 267.

²⁷³ Therese, “Marian Vision of *Atmanuthapam*,” 280–81.

²⁷⁴ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, II: 251–52, 13.

²⁷⁵ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, IV: 205, 29 says, “Mary my mistress, remember now your servant; IV: 209–10, 42 says, “Remember me, intercede with your Son, grant me a happy death and salvation.”

²⁷⁶ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 45–84, 3. Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 262.

and to conceptualize the various factors that contribute to a happy and blessed home, which inspired him to come up with the idea of a profound spirituality of family life. These poems evoke devotion and compunction of heart in the souls of readers, drawing them closer to a deep union with God.²⁷⁷ Through the *Compunction of the Soul*, Chavara illustrates how a family can have a significant impact on their child's mind to lead a God-oriented life.

1.2.5.2.4.2.2 Dirge (*Parvam or Pāna*—Song of Mourning)

In Kerala, it is customary for the Christian family, relatives, and close friends to keep vigil over the dead body of a family member. This poem was written with the intention of being sung aloud on such occasions. The poem's original title, *Maranaveettil Pādunnatinulla Parvam (Canto to be Sung in the Home of a Dead Person)* was changed to *Pāna* in a later version. It has 1162 verses that underline the Catholic faith in the communion of saints, that is, the communion among the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church suffering in purgatory, and the Church militant on earth. This poem places more focus on our attitudes towards the dead than the undue emphasis on the suffering in purgatory.²⁷⁸ Ten episodes make up the poem, all of which are meant to inspire the listeners to show compassion for the deceased. With playful strains and humorous episodes, the poet leads readers to the deeper realms of Christian eschatology that deal with the ultimate destiny of a person. Through its vivid portrayal of the sufferings of the dead in purgatory, the poem inspires readers to reflect on their own lives and make a decision to live a meaningful life that pleases God in order to avoid the agony of life after death.²⁷⁹

1.2.5.2.4.2.3 Martyrdom of Anastasia

The beautiful poem, *The Martyrdom of Anastasia*, is a minor epic (*Khandakāvya*), perhaps the first of its kind, which was to become very popular among the Malayalam poets. The poetic rendering of the story of St. Anastasia is that she suffered martyrdom in the third century in Rome

²⁷⁷ Thomas, *Malayalam Sahityavum Kristianikalum*, 241. Experts and critics of Malayalam literature have made various comments on *Atmanuthapam*. What P. J. Thomas had to say is given above.

²⁷⁸ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 329.

²⁷⁹ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 330.

under Emperor Valerian. Towards the end, there is a reference to a certain Cyril, who too fell victim to the sword of the persecutors for giving her water to drink. The poem, containing 182 verses, is written in the style of a boat song (*Vañcipāttu*). The emotional drama of courage and sacrifice articulated in this poem moves the listeners to heroic action and selfless sacrifice.²⁸⁰ It emphasises that a Christian's greatest duty is to persevere in faith during this life in spite of sufferings, persecutions, or even death. Just as the *Pāna* describes the sufferings of the Church in purgatory, so does this poem describe the sufferings of the militant Church on earth. This poem was composed at a time when the Kerala Church was surrounded by the chaos created on account of the self-declared bishop Roccas and his misleading teachings. Thus, perceiving the need to unite the faithful in the true teachings and loyalty to the Church, Chavara used the story of this martyr to remind them of their fidelity to the Holy Catholic Church.

1.2.5.2.4.3 The Colloquies with the Father (*Dhyanasallapangal*—Spiritual Writings)

Dhyanasallapangal (*The Meditative Colloquies*), one of Chavara's writings, appears to be the most expressive of the author's God experience and contemplative dimension. He kept it as a form of spiritual journal between 1866 and 1868, and it discloses his mastery of spirituality and the spiritual growth as he attained the highest levels of mystical experience.²⁸¹ His meditations unveil his portrait as a gifted hermeneut of the Bible and shed light on his radical discipleship in following Jesus. His entire being was an expression of the Word of God.²⁸² This can be traced out in his spiritual writings, which are the result of his contemplative colloquies, which teach readers the contemplative method of prayer.

Chavara gives a new hermeneutical explanation of the biblical passages, giving a new dimension to prayer. For example, the event of Sinai Theophany and the sojourn of Moses on the mountain narrated in the Exodus (Ex 19:16–20, 24; 15–18, 33; 18–23) about which Chavara says, "I am struck with fear to enter this chapel, the mountain of your abode, like the Israelites who were frightened to get near the mountain."²⁸³ He is not

²⁸⁰ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 330.

²⁸¹ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 332.

²⁸² Kalluveetil, "Chavara: The Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word," 294.

²⁸³ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 9. Though Chavara's original work is *Dhyanasallapangal*, in this study we have referred its English translation *Colloquies*

merely comparing the chapel to Sinai; instead, he asserts that the chapel itself is the mount of the revelation of God. He identifies the prayer room as Mount Sinai. The world of Chavara is a world of metaphors. He is not satisfied with comparisons and similes. This aspect speaks about Chavara's interpretation of the Bible.²⁸⁴ In interpreting the story of Zacchaeus, he identifies himself with Zacchaeus. "I, your slave, am the poor Zacchaeus."²⁸⁵ You deigned to come to the house, i.e., the heart of your servant, who is more wretched and sinful than Zacchaeus'.²⁸⁶ In the hermeneutical application of the parable of the lost sheep of Lk 15:1-7,²⁸⁷ Chavara considers himself as that strayed sheep. Jesus, the good shepherd, says to him: "In search of you, I wandered along forests and hilltops, seas, and mountains because I loved you and had resolved to take you to my royal house."²⁸⁸ In the colloquies, Jesus is in pursuit of Chavara. He wanders and wanders. The resolute shepherd climbs up hilltops and mountains. He goes through every nook and corner of the forest. The very touching translation of the passion of Jesus becomes the climax of Chavara's biblical interpretation.²⁸⁹ These interpretations help the family read the Word of God meditatively and innovatively, drawing them closer to God.

1.2.5.2.4.4 The Letters

Chavara's letters express all the aspects of his personal relationships. In him we see different traits of humanness, such as those of a loving father, a righteous superior, a brother who enjoys a vision of equitableness, a psychologist who understands each one in his or her uniqueness, a broadminded person who does not take into account caste, creed, or colour

with the Heavenly Father. Hence, hereafter *Dhyanasallapangal* is referred to as *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father.*

²⁸⁴ Kalluveetil, "Chavara: The Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word," 298.

²⁸⁵ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 11.

²⁸⁶ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10. See also Kalluveetil, "Chavara: The Dynamic Hermeneut of the Word," 298.

²⁸⁷ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 27.

²⁸⁸ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 27.

²⁸⁹ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 11-12. Chavara says, "O my Lord, it pains me greatly to raise my eyes towards your holy body. Your knees with the skin there on removed and bones visible are indeed awful to behold. They are hurt because you came to fall down often on your way to Calvary, carrying the burden of my sins. You bore the pain caused by those repeated falls to the ground in reparation for my frequent transgressions..." CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 11.

differences, a *karma yogi* who has dedicated his life to the cause of the Kerala Church, and a humble person who behaves as a servant of everyone.²⁹⁰ This man of God found a divine milieu in every relationship. The attitude and aptitude of Chavara disclosed in the letters proved him as an authentic human being.

The *Chavarul* is one of the public letters penned down by Chavara in the year 1868 as a set of precepts to the Christian families of Kainakary parish, but its relevance to the families resonates even today. This insightful and down-to earth document is the first of its kind in the known history of the Church. This letter provides practical guidelines to families on living a God-fearing and socially commendable life. We shall have an elaborate study of the family ethics of the *Chavarul* in view of its biblical and theological vision, along with its relevance as a response to the challenges of contemporary families.

1.2.5.3 Women Empowerment Activities

Chavara had a long-cherished dream of establishing a religious congregation for women in Kerala. Being a man of vision and action, he was a blessing for the country, particularly for the people of Kerala, and more specifically, for women and children. Long before Mahatma Gandhi declared, “if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family,”²⁹¹ he had the same goal in mind. With this noble vision for women, Chavara worked for their uplift. His primary intention in founding the women congregation was to empower women in order to bring about family renewal.

1.2.5.3.1 Foundation of Women TOCD

It is remarkable to note that Chavara was a pioneer in the Kerala Church in visualizing the empowerment of women. Chavara aimed to elevate women’s dignity and make them self-reliant. Education was the most important tool he relied upon. With this objective in mind, together with Fr. Leopold Beccaro OCD, Chavara founded the first religious congregation for women in Kerala, TOCD,²⁹² in Koonammavu, in 1866.²⁹³ The reasons

²⁹⁰ Santhi, “Behold the Man! The Person of Chavara in His Letters,” 313.

²⁹¹ Murthy, “Status of India: Improved or Deteriorated?,” 148.

²⁹² At the time of the foundation, the congregation was known as the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites, which included both Syrian and Latin members. Both the Latins and Syrians, after the establishment of a separate vicariate for Syrians in 1887, formed

behind the founding of the congregation were primarily born out of an ecclesial need, namely the lack of women religious congregations among St. Thomas Christians. Chavara envisioned that these women religious, “besides striving for their spiritual well-being, could teach young girls prayers and virtuous practices and train them in various handicrafts.”²⁹⁴ In other words, the mission of the congregation was to promote salvation and redemptive uplift through the Christian formation of the people of God, particularly women and children, through catechism, faith formation, intellectual and vocational training, and other apostolic activities carried out in accordance with the needs of the Church and the people of the locality.²⁹⁵ It was Chavara, in collaboration with Fr. Leopold, who worked to build the Koonammavu convent and successfully established it on February 13, 1866.²⁹⁶

Chavara founded this congregation for women at a time when education and empowerment of women were not even dreamt of. With the foundation of TOCD, he opened a new pathway for the emancipation of women, which is marked as the first step towards the self-realization of women in the annals of Kerala. He aimed at the renewal of families and the larger society through the empowerment of women. He is best remembered for uplifting women and the downtrodden sections of society. As the founder of TOCD, Chavara had the vision that through empowering oppressed women and bringing them to the front, they could effectively reach out to the larger society. His dream regarding dedicated women of a religious community was to mould them as spiritual leaders in the Church rather than just living

separate communities and adopted new names. The Syrian religious are called The Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) and the Latins took the name as The Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (CTC).

²⁹³ *Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent*, Vol. 1, 8–11. Hereafter *The Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent* is referred to as *CKC*. Kalluveetil and Kochappilly, eds., *The Lord of Heaven and Earth*, 81.

²⁹⁴ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 4; Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 35.

²⁹⁵ *CMC Constitutions*, 014§2, 49.

²⁹⁶ Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 35. The chronicles show that it was the long-cherished dream of the founding fathers of TOCD, Frs. Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukara, and Kuriakose Elias Chavara, to establish a convent for women. The founding fathers of the CMI congregation desired to open a path to religious living in general, both for men and women, but due to their limitations, they wanted to begin at least with one for priests (*darśanaveedu*, ‘house of vision’). *Chronicles of Mannanam Monastery*, 1.

a pious life in a monastery. They had to master different languages in order to get acquainted with various spiritual traditions of the Church and to equip themselves for the task ahead. With this in mind, Chavara made arrangements to teach the members of the community Latin, even during the infant stages of their formative years in the Congregation.²⁹⁷

When we think of the womenfolk of the time, those of lower castes suffered abuses and violence at the hands of the mighty and were denied education. It may sound inconceivable that lower caste women of the 19th century in Kerala had to pay breast tax to be allowed to cover their bosoms.²⁹⁸ Nothing else is necessary to comprehend the situation of Kerala women at the time. Chavara's farsighted vision of women has to be examined against this background. He held women in high regard and believed that they could play a vital role in society's development. He started convents for the sisters to empower women to live a life with dignity and holiness and to lead others to do the same. The Fathers trained the first members to serve as leaders for future generations. They made the effort to travel to various places and contacted people to train the sisters in a variety of crafts. It is recorded in the *Chronicles of the Koonammavu Convent* that the Fathers placed the following items in each sister's room before they arrived at the convent to stay: "For sewing: a box of needles, a ball thread, card thread, silk thread...pairs of scissors, pen knife, stylus (a pointed tool for writing on palm leaves), wire and plier to make rosary and penitential girdles."²⁹⁹

The training in handicrafts for girls was one of the activities of the convent that Chavara and Beccaro envisioned. Women of Kerala in the nineteenth century were economically dependent. Syrian Christian women had no right to property, receive inheritance, or work for a living. Women's pursuit for economic independence continued. Since the income of their husbands was insufficient to maintain the family, women had to work for their livelihood.

²⁹⁷ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 32.

²⁹⁸ The low caste women in Kerala were prohibited to cover the upper parts of their bodies. The Shanars who were enlightened under missionary influence rose against this practice. During the diwanship of Col. Munro an order was issued permitting the Shanar women who had converted to Christianity to cover their bodies with jackets. Soon conflict arose between the Shanars and traditional Hindu high castes. The agitation ended only in 1859 with a royal proclamation abolishing all restrictions in the matter of covering the upper parts of Shanar women. Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 9.

²⁹⁹ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 11.

Because agriculture is a seasonal industry, women spent the most of their days at home doing the household work. This issue mostly affected wage workers in agriculture. Hence, Chavara decided to teach the ladies some handicrafts so that they could support their families.³⁰⁰ Chavara and Beccaro carefully gathered and set up the items required for this task. They travelled together in search of some experienced persons to bring to the convent to instruct the Sisters in handicrafts.³⁰¹ Chavara recorded that on their way back from Thiruvananthapuram they met an elderly woman who could teach crape-net, thread-work, etc. and they convinced her to visit the convent in Koonammavu. She arrived later and started instructing the Sisters in various needle-works technique.³⁰² Again, to train the Sisters in embroidery, needlework, stitching, flower-making, etc., he took special interest in bringing two European Sisters from Fort-Kochi to the Koonammavu convent.³⁰³ Chavara's intention was that sisters who have received vocational training will be able to mentor and empower other women.

It was once expected that a woman's duty was to serve her husband and stay within the confines of the kitchen. Besides this, the level of literacy among women was very deplorable. They were obliged to gratify all the desires of men, particularly those of high-caste men, and keep them happy.³⁰⁴ The condition of the members of the backward communities and outcastes was miserable, and nobody showed any interest in their education. The absence of a well-organized education system, caste, and communal barriers in the field of education compelled a large number of people to live in illiteracy and ignorance. The actualization of the great dream of the establishment of a congregation for women in Kerala has brought a praiseworthy upliftment in the state of women. Prof. Achuthan praises these attempts by Chavara in the following words: "The greatest help the Kerala

³⁰⁰ Archives of Koonammavu Convent, *Letter*.

³⁰¹ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 60; *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 139–40.

³⁰² *Chronicle of Mannanam*, Vol. 3, 139–40.

³⁰³ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 178.

³⁰⁴ It was a strict rule in Kerala that non-Brahmin women should not cover their breasts. Portuguese writers like Archbishop Menezes (1600) and Dutch writers like Nieuhoff (1644) have recorded the royal decree which was obeyed by all. The decree promulgated by Karthikapalli was that "If there are in our kingdom any women so immoral that they will not submit to men of their own or higher castes, they should be immediately killed." Quoted in Kunjanpillai, *Studies of Kerala History*, 295; Rajeev, *Kerala Mahatmyam*.

women obtained for their empowerment was through educational institutions and training centres for handicrafts run by women religious. They took an interest in beginning secure boarding facilities for women too, which inspired other groups and communities in the near future.”³⁰⁵ Today, many committed women religious of this millennium are at the forefront of this noble mission, dedicating themselves to the uplift of fellow human beings, particularly of women and children, through education, healing ministry, and other social activities according to the needs of the time.³⁰⁶ There are various vocational training centres where instructions are given to make religious articles, bag, umbrella, bouquet, lace, etc., as well as tailoring and computer centres, etc. for the uplift of women.³⁰⁷

1.2.5.3.2 Boarding House for Girls’ Education and Training

Chavara’s great vision for women was that they should become the agents of their own progress. For the purpose of educating and forming girls, Chavara started the first boarding house (*educumdat*) in Koonammavu, attached to the first convent on January 2, 1868.³⁰⁸ He opened a school for girls in Koonammavu the same year, 1868. The boarding house was aimed at the spiritual as well as intellectual development of the girls to become good, holy, and educated members of the society.³⁰⁹

The great vision of Chavara was that, women themselves should become agents of their own progress. He was convinced of the fact that the family was the source of an ideal education. Education and proper training of women would ensure the proper formation of children in the families.³¹⁰ This vision of Chavara played a crucial role in the starting of a boarding house attached to the convent for the residential studies of young girls. Many girls from different parts of Kerala were admitted there. They were taught languages such as Malayalam, Tamil, English, and Latin, as well as

³⁰⁵ Avila, Dhanya & Mareena. *Arivinte Vazhiye Thaapasamanssu*, 19–21.

³⁰⁶ Raveendran, “Daring to Dream,” 161.

³⁰⁷ Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 317.

³⁰⁸ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 79.

³⁰⁹ *CWC*, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 84–85; *CKC*, Vol. 1, 79–81. Sr. Clara was appointed as the boarding mistress by Fr. Leopold. In the chronicle, there is no proof of giving this post to someone else until 1888. The number of girls in *Edukantāt* increased day by day. It seems that they had a special charism for carrying out this mission in education. Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 286.

³¹⁰ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/6 “Upbringing of Children,” II, 1–16.

handicrafts, cooking, music, mathematics, needlework, catechism, and so on.³¹¹

He brought efficient teachers from faraway places to give them training, and urged the sisters to learn handicrafts in order to train girls. The sisters taught embroidery, rosary-making, flower-making, stitching, sewing, knitting, cooking, and other handicrafts to both the boarding girls and the local women.³¹² In other words, attention was given to their overall development in their intellectual, mental, social, and spiritual realms. They were disciplined and taught to pray and practice virtues like humility, obedience, piety, etc.³¹³ Of these girls, most of them joined the convent and became religious sisters. Others went home, married, and became good wives and mothers, and brought up their children in a good family background. Thus, the women were empowered, and through them, their families and society as well.

As we conclude this section, we realize that under the direction and guidance of Chavara, seminaries were provided for the education and formation of the clergy, the apostolate of the ‘Word of God’ was promoted through preaching and through the press, measures were taken for the reform of the divine office and of the divine liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church,³¹⁴ schools were started for the promotion of Indian culture and for the education of the youth. Besides, he also founded a congregation for women at Koonammavu as another branch of the Carmelite family, providing scope for the instruction and education of girls.³¹⁵ These tiny seeds, CMI and CMC, in the course of time, have grown into two huge trees, spreading their branches all over the country and across the globe. Due to his illness, Fr. Chavara died on January 3, 1871 at St. Philomina’s

³¹¹ Annie, “Women Religious Congregations and the Empowerment of Women,” 246. Archives of St. Teresa’s Convent, Koonammavu, *Letter* written on 8 April 1882 by some women of Koonammavu, thanking Signora Marchioness Fanny Anguissola Viscouti for providing materials for their handicrafts. This letter speaks of the development of this apostolate and the attitude of the beneficiaries towards it. A copy of the letter is kept in the archives of the Koonammavu Convent. Cf. Veliyan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 347–48.

³¹² *CKC*, Vol. 1, 178.

³¹³ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 8/11; *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 8/8; *CMC Koonammavu Kanyakamattom*, 38–39.

³¹⁴ Kuriakose, “Chavara Kuriakose Malpānte Charitram,” 35.

³¹⁵ Vithuvattical, trans., *Perspectives of a Heroic Christian Life*, 3.

Monastery in Koonammavu.³¹⁶ His priestly ministry of forty years was really a spiritual saga. During his life, and also after his death, he certainly enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity and “he could declare before his death that he had never lost the baptismal innocence”³¹⁷ leaving behind the legacy of an indomitable spiritual power enhancing the Church, the bride of Christ. On February 8, 1986, Pope John Paul II beatified him and placed him for public veneration, at Kottayam in Kerala. On November 23, 2013, Pope Francis canonised him as a saint and raised him to the altar.

1.3 Conclusion

The traditional society of Kerala underwent continuous changes throughout the ages, which brought fundamental reforms in the socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres of the state. The activities of Chavara strived to put an end to social evils such as caste discrimination and the patriarchal system through organizational initiations like educational institutions, print media, women religious congregations, and charity homes, which were aimed at ensuring equal opportunity to all in every stratum of life. In this way, Chavara could bring radical changes in the basic nature of traditional society.

The biographical sketch of Chavara points to the fact that various factors, such as the formation he received from home and from the seminary; the mystical experiences that stemmed from his personal and unique vision of God and humankind; and so on, became the fundamental elements in making him a pastor *par excellence*. Chavara was convinced that a real renewal in the Syro-Malabar Church was possible only through the power of the Word of God and the Liturgy. In this regard, Chavara’s long-lasting innovative contributions to the Church can be traced back to his efforts to introduce Sunday homilies after the Gospel reading, annual parish retreats, forty and thirteen-hour public adorations, monthly devotions, and pious exercises such as the way of the cross, rosary, various novenas, and so on. As a part of the renewal in families, he gave special emphasis to the sacraments, such as the frequent reception of the Holy Communion and the sacrament of reconciliation.

His contributions to shaping the liturgy of St. Thomas Christians are exemplary. He learnt Syriac and Latin, the liturgical languages, with great

³¹⁶ Punayar, “Biographical Sketch of Chavara,” 93–96.

³¹⁷ Beccaro, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 17.

zeal and enthusiasm, and being well-versed in oriental liturgy, he translated many liturgical and spiritual books into Malayalam and brought order to the rubrics of the Holy Qurbana and codified the canonical prayers for the clergy in order to revive the spiritual life of the ordinary faithful of the Malabar Church. Besides Chavara's unique contributions to the spiritual renewal of the people, Chavara's acumen as a passionate educationist has brought greater momentum to society. Chavara's farsighted vision of education made him convinced that only education could remove the blindness of people and eradicate a number of vices from society. This realization and farsightedness led him to the establishment of the first Sanskrit school at Mannanam and issued a decree to open a school attached to all parishes. These schools, which were open to all, became the social haven of a renaissance in Kerala, crushing down the social taboos of caste and gender. The beginning of Chavara's initiation into the field of print media by the starting of the first Catholic printing press became a great milestone in the history of the arena of Catholic mass media. He became the herald of Christian renewal through the publication of various books on spirituality, liturgy, and other miscellaneous topics.

Chavara became the pioneer of the two great movements (religious congregations) of the Kerala Church, the CMI and CMC congregations, that stirred up the society with their great involvement in the uplift of people in various walks of life. They picked up his momentum of serving humanity by making themselves available according to the needs and signs of the time, particularly through their pastoral care, education, health services, media, and social apostolates. Chavara popularised the concept of vocational training among women, thereby making them self-reliant. He liberated Christianity from its cultural and institutional constraints and saved the Church from fragmentation. He was a literary genius with an incredible range and depth who propagated vernacular literature and prayers. The indigenous printing technology, which Fr. Chavara developed, catalysed the state's modernisation. He organized *pidiyari* collections to provide free meals, clothes, and study materials to students and facilitated study opportunities for the poor and untouchables. He opened a house called *Upavisala* for the welfare of the elderly and destitute.

In a note sent to the Department of Research and Documentation, Chavara Hills, Kerala, Professor A. Sreedharamenon, the noted historian and Padma Bhushan awardee, wrote as follows: "I feel sorrow for not having been able to study more deeply about Fr. Chavara, whom I have often met in studying

and writing about Kerala history. This note is meant, at least in part, to remove that sorrow. People like Chavara should be given the place they deserve.”³¹⁸ Yes, Chavara was a person with an extraordinary measure of spiritual stamina, which he applied to re-energizing the families by empowering every individual, particularly the women and children. That led to the rebirth of Kerala society.

Fr. Chavara’s God-orientation germinated in the family, it grew in his community, and finally, its effect was felt by the whole Church and the country at large. He has left behind us his will and testament for families, a code of conduct and a science of good manners that touches various aspects of life. As this research study has got a significant focus on Chavara’s vision of the formation of good Christian families, which is enshrined in his *Chavarul*, the next chapter is intended to explore the biblical vision of family ethics in the *Chavarul*.

³¹⁸ Sreedharamenon, “A Renewal Leader Who Walked Ahead of Time,” 19.

CHAPTER TWO

FAMILY ETHICS IN THE *CHAVARUL* OF SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLICAL VISION OF FAMILY

The nature and scope of ethical issues pertaining to families are numerous in contemporary society. In the case of Indian scenario, people are confronted with the heart-breaking realities of society on a daily basis. Therefore, it is important to consider how we might start making real changes in the lives of the individuals, families, and communities to which they belong; as well as who will be available to take on these challenges to act proactively.

The *Chavarul* of Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Holy Family, a letter that he wrote to his parishioners as his testament, presents a series of answer keys to the problems that modern families are currently dealing with. Going through the testament, one might infer that Chavara's exhortations to the families are based upon profound reflections of the Word of God. He was a man of the Word of God. Reading the signs of the times, Chavara played a prophetic role in the reformation of families and societies in the light of the divine Word. Although there are not many direct references to the Word of God in the precepts in the *Chavarul*, they are profoundly influenced by the biblical vision and teachings. This deep-rootedness in the Word of God is explicit throughout all his writings. His writings, including *The Chronicles*, *Compunction of the Soul*, *The Colloquies with the Father*, and *The Letters* are illustrations for this.

Having been born and brought up in a devout Christian family, formed and shaped by his pious parents, Chavara himself was a well-disciplined person who lived a life of principles. The articulation of the *Chavarul* was developed at a time when the age-old spiritual practices and the way of life were starting to find their way out from the Christian families. Chavara therefore wrote these statutes to revitalize the lost fervour in the families. Chavara wrote this set of precepts as a letter to his own parishioners in Kainakary. Even though this work was addressed to his own native parishioners, it was intended for the revival of all Christian families.

In the two synods convoked on the families,¹ Pope Francis has urged us to rediscover the power of the Word of God, saying, “the Word of God is the source of life and spirituality for the family. It is the criterion of judgement and a light in discerning the various challenges that married couples and families encounter.”² Chavara was well aware of the vicious snares invading the families. As a result, he visualized the *Chavarul* the precepts for families based on the Word of God, which can be perceived as the practical applications of the Ten Commandments. His vision was that as families are basically divine institutions, they should have its life flowing forth from the plan of God and function accordingly to transform into the image of heaven on earth. In order to assist families in reaching this goal, Chavara thereby envisaged the *Chavarul*, which includes major concerns about the mission of families and its fulfilment in accordance with the plan of God.

Through the *Chavarul*, Chavara illustrates how members of a family can coexist in true joy and harmony. He divided the *Chavarul* into two parts: general precepts for families and specific guidelines for child rearing. In the first part, he exhorts families to maintain three-fold relationships, namely: trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal relationships, while the latter entails the rubrics for the upbringing of children in an upright manner. As the *Chavarul* is knit through the thread of the Word of God and is founded upon the Sacred Scripture, this chapter envisions unveiling the family ethics of the *Chavarul* in the light of the Bible. It demonstrates how Chavara’s precepts in the *Chavarul* are influenced by the Word of God. This chapter proceeds in two steps. The first part provides an overview of the *Chavarul* and explains the definition of family as visualized by Chavara. The second part pays attention to the content of the *Chavarul*, in which the family ethics of the *Chavarul* in the light of the Bible is discussed in detail.

2.1 An Overview of the *Chavarul* and the Definition of Family Envisioned by Chavara

The first part of this study deals with an overview of the *Chavarul* and the definition of the family given by Chavara.

¹ Synod of Bishops on the Family, III Extra-ordinary General Assembly, October 5–19, 2014 and XIV Ordinary General Assembly, October 4–25, 2015. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 227 (AAS 108: 402–403); *Relatio Synodi*, 34.

² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 227 (AAS 108: 402–403); *Relatio Synodi*, 34.

2.1.1 An Overview of the *Chavarul*

Chavara had written many letters to different groups of people including the ecclesiastical authorities, priests, sisters, families, and individuals. Among them, eighty-eight letters are available, of which one is known as *Chavarul*. The *Chavarul* is one of the most significant contributions of Chavara to the family. It contains a set of guidelines based on the Christian concept of the family as well as practical wisdom that mirrored the vision he had for a truly happy, peaceful, and blessed family life. The *Chavarul* contains forty precious instructions addressed to the parishioners of Kainakary. It remains as a relic of the sacred memories of the saintly life of Chavara. It comprises an introduction and the main body of forty instructions in two parts. Twenty-four precepts in the first part discuss the characteristics and mode of conduct of a good family, while sixteen precepts in the second part are solely dedicated to the spiritually balanced and morally healthy upbringing of children. Although there is no proper conclusion, an appendix serves that purpose.

In the introduction, Chavara gives a brief description of the Christian family, and in the appendix, he notes that he was impelled by a sense of justice and love to his relatives by flesh and entrusted this work to them, saying, “this is my last testament [Will or *Kudumbachattam* or family code] given to you”³ and “this script will not perish even when I am dead and gone.”⁴ Chavara instructs them that this family code should be read every first Saturday of the month.⁵ Here the author makes reference to his death, though not imminent, and describes the letter as the ‘Testament.’ A majority of the forty exhortations are elaborated with a good number of didactic stories, allegories, historical episodes, and biblical events or words.⁶

Chavara believed that a family that functions according to its original vision must strive to be impeccable. The original divine plan for marriage and family is clearly outlined in the creation account of Genesis. In it, we understand God’s purpose for marriage as one of companionship, marital

³ *Chavarul*, “Epilogue,” 201–202.

⁴ *Chavarul*, “Epilogue,” 201.

⁵ *Chavarul*, “Epilogue,” 202.

⁶ Nalkara, “The Guidelines for the Formation of the Youth as Reflected in the *Chavarul* (*Testament of a Loving Father*) by St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara,” 35.

union, indissolubility, and procreation (Gen 1:27–28; 2:23–24).⁷ Taken up by this biblical understanding of family, Chavara took a keen interest in developing healthy relationships in families and penned down this letter, the *Chavarul*. The uniqueness of the *Chavarul* lies in the fact that, the *Chavarul* is notable for being a treatise on family, issued by an ecclesiastical leader,⁸ directly addressing Christians for the upbuilding of God-fearing families and the upbringing of children.

The theology of marriage and family evolved over the centuries from the time of Fathers of the Church to later theological development and the magisterium. Ephrem (306–373 ACE) exalts the intimate relationship of the first couple.⁹ Following St. Paul, John Chrysostom gives instruction to parents and children. He exhorts that the husband should respect wife and *vice versa*. He says, “as the partner of one’s life, the mother of one’s children, the foundation of one’s every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper. For, what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband?”¹⁰ Chrysostom advises parents to discipline their children gently without provoking them.¹¹ Augustine teaches that marriage is good.¹² He believed that marriage is good *a priori* as it is instituted by God,¹³ and it is also good *a posteriori* because of its three observable goods such as *proles* (offspring), *fides* (fidelity), and *sacramentum* (sacrament).¹⁴ In Augustine’s opinion, *bono fides* refers to marital faithfulness. He encourages the spouses to refrain from engaging in sexual activity outside of their marriage. *Bono proles* refers to the acceptance of a child in love, nurturing in affection, and upbringing him or her in the Christian formation.¹⁵ In his words, “no

⁷ Mathias, “No to Divorce (Mt 19:3–9),” 35.

⁸ On June 8, 1861, the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, Msgr. Bernardino Baccinelli, appointed Chavara as the Vicar General for the St. Thomas Christians, and he continued in this office until his death in 1871. See Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 224–26; Mundadan, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 81. During the time of Chavara, there was no appointed bishop for the Syro-Malabar Church.

⁹ Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2:12.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Ephesians,” 20.

¹¹ John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Colossians,” 10.

¹² Rist, “Augustine: Virginité and Marriage–2,” 57.

¹³ Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 9.2.

¹⁴ Augustine, *De Genesis ad litteram*, 9.7.12.

¹⁵ Augustine, *De Genesis ad litteram*, 9.7.12.

relationship which lacked this intent could be called marriage.”¹⁶ He gave priority to *proles* than the other two.

Thomas Aquinas, one of the leading theologians of medieval period, discusses the essence of marriage. According to him, developing an intimate relationship between the couple is the essence of matrimony, and monogamous indissoluble marriage is the demand of human nature.¹⁷ For him, their intimate and inseparable union leads to their mutual affection, by which they enter into the intimate sexual expression of their mutual love through which God blesses them with children. The responsibility of the upbringing of children is a divine assignment to the spouses, which should be accomplished with mutual help.¹⁸ There are several prominent figures from eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Alphonsus Liguori and Chavara. Alphonsus Liguori has given comprehensive instructions on how to lead a good life which is applicable to all families.¹⁹ Since this work is an in-depth analysis of the *Chavarul* of Kurikose Elias Chavara, his teachings on marriage and family are studied in detail. It consists of spiritual instructions, theological visions, moral principles, psychological insights, social norms, corrective measures, and practical suggestions for the sound growth and development of the family toward its original vision in the plan of God—“the image of heaven.”²⁰ Exhortations to Christian families are presented in the form of family catechesis embedded in the Word of God, as well as a practical interpretation of the Ten Commandments on how to live the family life as envisaged by God the Father. In the following section, we will discuss the definition of family given in the *Chavarul*.

2.1.2 The Definition of Family Envisioned by Chavara

In the introduction of the *Chavarul*, Chavara gives a sound definition of a Christian family involving its social, spiritual, and interpersonal dimensions. According to Chavara, “A good Christian family is the image of heaven. The *raison d’être* [purpose] of a family is that the members live together by the bond of blood and affection, with children duly respecting and obeying their parents, walking peacefully before God and each one,

¹⁶ Rist, “Augustine: Virginité and Marriage–2,” 59.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Supplementum*, q. 44, art. 2.

¹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 29, art. 2.

¹⁹ Liguori, *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, 355–56. This will be dealt with in details in the introduction of the third chapter of this book.

²⁰ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

seeking eternal salvation according to his or her proper state of life.”²¹ This definition of family in the *Chavarul* is simplified under six clauses.

2.1.2.1 A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven

The divine dimension of the family is stressed in calling it an image of heaven.²² A family resembles heaven when its members are intimately related to each other and are ready to fulfil their responsibility with respect and loving service to each other.²³ Here the importance is given to the divine dimension.²⁴ Chavara believed that the family is the *sanctum sanctorum* of society.²⁵ His definition of the ideal family is based on a theological vision of the family. For him, God is the Father of the family of humankind. However, when he addresses “My Father,” he refers to both God the Father and Jesus Christ.²⁶ In the spiritual family of Chavara, the mother’s place was taken by the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom his earthly mother had dedicated him²⁷ and the entire humankind as his own brothers, sisters, and children.²⁸ Thus, a Christian family is envisioned to be a kingdom where Christ reigns supreme—for Jesus has come to take us into the family of God (Jn 14:1–3). He gives us a share in the sublime communion of the Trinity. We are called to be in communion with God and

²¹ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184. *Chavarayachante Sampoorana Kruthikal*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal* (Mal.), 133. Nalla Kristyānikudumbam ākāsmōkshathinte sādrisyamākunnu. Kudumbathinte nyāyam enthenāl chōrayālum, snēhathālum thammilthammil kettapetta pala ālukal kāranavanmārude nēre āchāravum kēzhvazhakavum anusarichu thampurānōdum manusyarōdum samādhānamāyi nadakayum, avaravarude anthasinu thakathinvannam nithyagathiye prāpikunnathinu prayatnam cheythu kūtamayi jeevikukayum cheyyunnathākunnu. *Chavarayachante Sampoorana Kruthikal*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal* (Mal.), 133. The *raison d’être* of family means the purpose or aim of the family. Hereafter *Chavarayachante Sampoorana Kruthikal* is referred to as *CSK*.

²² *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal* (Mal.), “Introduction,” 133. The *raison d’être* of a family means the purpose or aim of the family.

²³ Mampra, “*Chavarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 10.

²⁴ Mampra, “*Chāvarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 10.

²⁵ Latin word *sanctum sanctorum* refers to ‘holy of holies.’ See Ann Elizabeth, “Chavara: Visionary and Karmayogi of Families,” 124.

²⁶ *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 9–12. “Father, I did sin against your goodness. Punish me as you will. The love of my corrupt body was instrumental in disfiguring your whole body.” *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 11. Here, Chavara calls Jesus as Father.

²⁷ *CWC*, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, 4–8, 6. See also Kochumuttam, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 390–93.

²⁸ Kochumuttam, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 396.

one another in imitation of the communion of the Divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Jn 17:11–21). This active and dynamic communion is seen in its deeper sense in the Holy Family.²⁹ Therefore, Chavara puts forward the Holy Family as the role model of an ideal family united in mutual love, respect, and self-giving—the transformed image of heaven.

2.1.2.2 Unity of Mind and Heart

In the definition of family in the *Chavarul*, Chavara exhorts “that the members live together”³⁰—“*kūtamāyi jēvikukayum cheyyunnathākunnu.*”³¹ He focused his attention on the fact that the supreme rule of the Christian family is mutual love and the consequent unity of mind and heart. When we reflect on unity based on biblical texts, the Yahwistic account of creation (Gen 2:24b–25) clearly affirms that the union of man and woman as husband and wife is the basis for any human family. The Priestly account of God creating man and woman equally in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:27) entails the purpose that they live in harmony as husband and wife, by respecting their equality and celebrating their differences. Every marriage needs to be centred on this reality of communion and companionship. The first man Adam gazed at the first woman and said, “This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). This physical commonality is the reason for which the Scripture says, “a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Firstly, becoming one flesh points out clearly the purpose of God for marriage, namely the union of man and woman as husband and wife, as ordained by God Himself.³² Secondly, the aspect of procreation and the continuation of human race is an important part of marriage. After the creation of man and woman, God blessed them saying, “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). This is yet another purpose for which God has ordained marriage right at the beginning of creation itself. Thirdly, the creation of the woman from man’s ribs (Gen 2:21-23) is a symbolic gesture, which reveals the intimate relationship between man and woman and their union. Man and woman are made for each other.³³ Since

²⁹ Athappilly, *Christian Images of Salvation*, 33.

³⁰ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

³¹ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184. The word unity is not mentioned in the English translation. But it is cited in the original Malayalam version. *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal* (Mal.), 9/6, “Introduction,” 133.

³² Mathias, “No to Divorce (Mt 19:3–9),” 35.

³³ Mathias, “No to Divorce (Mt 19:3-9),” 35.

marriage is originally designed by God, it is intended to be heterosexual and monogamous.³⁴

When Chavara focused on the need to have the union of heart and mind, it can be understood in such a way that he wished to have the union of the spouses and the intimate relationship between the parents and children in the family life as one of its most important virtues. Chavara's special devotion to the Holy Family led him to understand the secrets of unity in the family. In the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had certainly personal differences in terms of age, gender, temperament, needs, likes, and dislikes; but despite that, they were perfectly united by love.³⁵ Chavara's focus on the requisite of living together in the union of mind and heart necessitates the union of the spouses and the intimate relationship among all the members of the family as one of its most imperative virtues.

2.1.2.3 Bond of Blood and Affection

The definition of family as “living together” of the members is complemented by the “bond of blood and affection”: “The *raison d'être* of family is that the members live together by the bond of blood and affection.”³⁶ For Chavara, family is a *koinonia* (communion) of members bound together by blood and love. This explains the importance of communion in the family; an incredible and unbreakable bond created by those who are related by blood.³⁷

In the context of consecrated life, Chavara has a beautiful instruction to his confreres regarding the kind of love that should exist among them. He advises them to be like the children born of the same mother. He says, “the number of monasteries be any, you must have a genuine love for one another, as if, born of the womb of the same mother, nurtured by the milk of the same mother. This should never weaken instead, it should become stronger daily. Remember this as a special piece of advice.”³⁸ It indicates the kind of love that the members should adopt in their relationship with one another. They ought to be like siblings who know how to make the happy times even better and hard times easier. Although there can be a lot

³⁴ Gangal and Bramer, *Genesis*, 30.

³⁵ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 54–55.

³⁶ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

³⁷ Thekkekara, “Degeneration of Family and Familial Bond Today,” 69.

³⁸ *CWKEC*, Vol. 4: *Letters*, 6/5, 115; *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/3, 71; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 6/3, 100.

of friction between them, they can play a unique role in one another's lives to strengthen the bond and celebrate life. He continues, "the strength of a monastery does not consist in the thickness of its walls, but in the virtue and religious zeal of the monks who dwell in them."³⁹ Here, Chavara implies that the community is strengthened by the virtuous life of the monks lived in mutual love and communion. It is fraternal love that gives us a sense of belonging to our community. Pertaining to this family spirit in the religious life, Chavara constantly addressed his fellow members at the monastery as "beloved brethren," "loving sons," and "sons"⁴⁰ and he addressed sisters as "my dear little children."⁴¹

In Catholic sacramental theology, the highest meaning of marriage is love.⁴² Marital love affects all the other aspects of marriage, including marital sexuality and procreation. The love between married Christian partners is a reflection of God's love towards humankind. For this reason, Walter Kasper says, "the love that exists between man and wife is an epiphany of love and faithfulness of God that was given once and for all time in Jesus Christ and is made present in the Church."⁴³ In marriage, the communion of persons occurs when two people freely give themselves to each other and accept one another in love. The fruit of this union is their offspring.⁴⁴ This communion is found in its most sublime form in the Holy Trinity. According to the Christian belief, God is the Trinity, a community of persons, and each of the three persons in the Trinity is said to be related to each other in boundless charity and unites them together to be a single unity.⁴⁵ It is this pattern that is replicated in a finite and limited way, in the community of humans, particularly in the community of the family. True love consists precisely of spouses' mutual self-gift.⁴⁶

According to Chavara, the ideal of unity in the Holy Trinity is the ideal that is to be replicated, realized, and personalized in our families. True love

³⁹ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/1, 65.

⁴⁰ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/1, 61; 65; 66.

⁴¹ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 7/2, 76; 7/7, 83.

⁴² Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, II, 534.

⁴³ Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, 30; Kochuthara, *Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 387.

⁴⁴ Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, 164–65.

⁴⁵ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 54–55.

⁴⁶ Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, 164–65.

consists precisely of spouses' mutual self-gift to one another.⁴⁷ This self-giving love begins in the sacrament of marriage, which is understood as a communion of life and love experienced as a covenant for the realization of total personal completion.

2.1.2.4 Respect and Obedience to Parents

Chavara affirms that a good Christian family is a community of a few people joined together “with children duly respecting and obeying their parents.”⁴⁸ This clause—‘respect and obedience to the parents’—of the definition of the family is a reflection of the fourth commandment of our Lord. Chavara’s obedience to his parents and to the authorities he was entrusted with can be traced in his writings addressed to his fellow religious. He instructed them: “The only mark of a religious is that one totally giving up one’s will and obeys as if one does not have eyes and ears. One who does so is a true religious. Those who practice perfect obedience [to ecclesiastical authorities, major superiors, local superiors, and one another] will enjoy heavenly peace already here in the monastery which is a miniature heaven.”⁴⁹ For Chavara, obedience to his parents, superiors, and equals was his hallmark. This obedience is explicit in his life as we see him submissive to his authorities even when his health was deteriorating towards the dusk of his life. In that situation, when he was asked about whether he would be shifted to Mannanam or stay at Koonammavu, he responded, “do I have a will of my own? I do not wish to do anything according to my own will. I am ready to do only what I am asked to do.”⁵⁰ This is an edifying example of his spirit of humble submission to superiors, which remains as a source of inspiration to his fellow religious and each one of us.

According to the biblical perspective, respect and obedience to parents are connected with the fourth commandment in the Decalogue. Similar norms

⁴⁷ Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, 164–65; Kochuthara, *Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 434.

⁴⁸ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

⁴⁹ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/3, 70–71; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 6/3, 99–100.

⁵⁰ *CKC*, Vol. 1, 10. Another example of Chavara’s obedience on his sickbed was marvellous. During his last illness, as insisted by Fr. Philip OCD, Pro-Vicar Apostolic in the absence of Vicar Apostolic Mellano, he was shifted from his living room to an out-house on the campus. Though it was painful for him, he quietly obeyed the order of his superiors. *Positio*, 546–547, Moolayil, “An Account of the Illness and Death of Chavara,” 5; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 142.

with regard to respect and obedience to parents exist in all cultures and religions because the relationship between parents and children is one of the most fundamental and universal relationships experienced by human beings.⁵¹ Unlike other commandments, it has a specific promise attached to it, namely, “long life and general well-being” (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16).⁵² It explains the basic reason why one must be particular in their faithful observance. Children and adults are both obliged to their parents (Mk 7:9–12). Hence, this command is meant not only for children but also for adults. The commandment required adults to provide physical and material support, honour, love, and care for the elderly.⁵³ Chavara advises children: “You are bound by the commandment of God to respect your parents and to ensure that their minds are not burdened or aggrieved. If you violate the fourth commandment of God, it would bring down God’s curse not only in afterlife but also in the present.”⁵⁴ The book of Sirach outlines the ways and means that children must follow to care for their parents (Sir 3:1–16). Respecting or honouring parents implies giving them their rightful place and honour in return for their significant role in God’s continuation of life by giving birth to the children, nurturing and educating them, and providing material and spiritual support to them. The children too when they are grown up, are obliged to help parents with their material and spiritual necessities, look after them in times of sickness and affliction, provide for their healthcare whenever necessary, and make them feel happy and contented.

2.1.2.5 Harmony with God and the People

The definition further explains the purpose of the family as the members who “walk in peace before the Lord and the people.”⁵⁵ The longing of Chavara to be at peace with God can be seen in his meditations: “Here I come before you, O my Heavenly Father, with a heart full of repentance and firm purpose of amendment to feel your peace in my heart.”⁵⁶ Chavara’s distress about the lack of peace in the families is tangible through his letter, wherein he expresses his grief on the families that become the cause of sin, dissensions, conflicts, destruction, and death. The ultimate

⁵¹ Sequeira, *Living Christian Life: Christ, Law and Ten Commandments*, Vol. 3, 165.

⁵² Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics*, 156.

⁵³ Collins, “Ten Commandments,” 385.

⁵⁴ Chavara, *Chāvarul*, II:16, 41.

⁵⁵ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/6, 102.

⁵⁶ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 3.

purpose of writing the *Chavarul* to the families was to enlighten them from this gloom of tumult and give them divinely inspired clarity and peace of mind.⁵⁷ In one of his letters to his confreres, Chavara ascertains: “Those who practise perfect obedience will enjoy heavenly peace already here in the monastery, which is a miniature heaven.”⁵⁸ It implies that submission to God’s will as well as that of the will of parents and elders will bring true peace in the family, and such families will become heavenly abodes.

Through the life of Chavara, it can be comprehended that he is a role model for everyone to imitate, both in family and religious life. Chavara, himself a peace-loving person, took all the care to ensure that this peace and harmony were always maintained in his community. Whenever he gave any directions, he never used an authoritative tone. Each one felt that they were equally loved and respected by him. His gentleness and sweet temper made him easily approachable by all. He was exceptionally kind to the sick and oppressed. He lightened the burdens of all who suffered by demanding nothing of them that was beyond their capacity. He could win the hearts of many with his affectionate, compassionate, quiet, and simple nature.⁵⁹

In ordinary usage, peace denotes the absence of conflict. In Christian understanding, it refers to a positive state of life, both individual and communal.⁶⁰ The concept of peace in the Old Testament is derived from the Hebrew word *šālôm* which comes from the root *šlm*, meaning to be complete or whole. It denotes the social and personal well-being of everyone in the widest possible sense. It refers to the prosperous and harmonious functioning of the whole personality, its well-being, and keeping up good relations between persons or groups.⁶¹ A prominent teaching in the Old Testament is that God is the giver of peace in all its fullness (Lev 26:6; 1 Chr 12:18). The common greeting of the time was “peace be to you” (1 Sam 25:6; 1 Chr 12:18), which desired every kind of good for the person being greeted. Peace reigns in a community when there is harmony between God and His creatures (Isa 27:5) and among His creatures themselves (1 Sam 16:4–5; Job 5:23). A community is active when people treat one another with goodwill and love, but no peace is

⁵⁷ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184–85.

⁵⁸ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/3, 70–71; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 6/3, 99–100.

⁵⁹ Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, 105.

⁶⁰ Childress and Macquarrie, eds., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 460.

⁶¹ Rodri’guez, “Peace in the Bible,” 37.

possible where there is malice (Gen 37:4; 2 Sam 3:21–23; 1 Kings 2:13; 2 Kings 9:17–22; Ps 120:6–7). When a community is at peace, its members can experience safety and prosperity (Isa 26:3). Peace is found by doing good. The Psalmist puts it, “seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps 34:14).⁶² It includes correct speech and action and the pursuit of peace.⁶³

In the New Testament, peace is considered a gift from heaven, brought to earth by the angels: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours” (Lk 2:14). It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22) that enables us to become children of God, for Jesus Himself said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” (Mt 5:9). Just like the angels gave the good news of peace by announcing the birth of Jesus, so too His departure from this world with the mandate of spreading the good news was accompanied by his memento of “peace be with you” (Lk 24:36–43; Jn 20:19–22, 26); “peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (Jn 14:27); “I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace” (Jn 16:33). It helps us to enjoy the fruit of the Holy Spirit and makes us partakers in the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). Therefore, we are exhorted to pursue this peace (Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 3:11) and allow the sovereignty of Christ in our hearts (Col 3:15), and maintain the unity that we have in Christ, the “one body,” that is controlled by Christ’s peace.⁶⁴

When Chavara advises the families to maintain peace with God and people, he intends that the family members should respect and love each other by sharing the burdens, accepting the differences, guiding and directing each other gently; simultaneously keeping a clear conscience and leading a disciplined and orderly life, which would bring peace and harmony to the families. In a world full of sorrows, Chavara desires for families to be an abode of sweet consolation, peace, and order.

2.1.2.6 Seeking Eternal Salvation

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara stressed that each one should “seek eternal salvation according to one’s own proper state of life.”⁶⁵ He further penned down his sorrow over the family’s ignorance towards the pursuit of their

⁶² Youngblood, “Peace,” 732.

⁶³ Schaefer, “Psalms,” 679.

⁶⁴ McDonald, “The Letter to the Colossians,” 1712.

⁶⁵ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

own salvation as: “It is most distressing for members to live in a family where no one is concerned about the service of God and their own eternal salvation.”⁶⁶ Throughout Chavara’s writings, we find that the primary purpose of all his activities was driven towards the intention of the salvation of souls. Chavara’s spiritual father Fr. Leopold Beccaro testified that Chavara never held himself back from any kind of work, for he was always prompted by the salvation of souls.⁶⁷ Chavara, in his testament to his fellow priests, exhorts the purpose of founding the congregation that “God has willed to found this congregation for the salvation of our Christian brethren.”⁶⁸ Aiming at the salvation of souls, Chavara founded the Confraternity for Happy Death.

From his discourse on discernment, we can understand Chavara’s quest for the salvation of souls and the means to attain it. He says,

The body is more precious than the clothes it wears; the soul is more precious than the body. If both the body and clothes are threatened with danger, save the body and let the clothes perish. If both the body and the soul are in danger, sacrifice the body and save the soul. The body will perish today or tomorrow, but the soul will live forever. Hence, all the work done in the world should be directed towards the benefit of the soul.⁶⁹

Chavara reminds us to keep two important things in mind. The first one is that we must not forget at any time that we will die at the most unexpected moment and that death will creep on us like a thief, and so we must remember the words of our Lord: “Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt 25:13). And the second is to keep away from mortal sin that engenders fear of death. When we realize that we have sinned mortally, we must at once make a perfect act of contrition and seek pardon for our sins through confession before going to sleep.⁷⁰ Another quote from Chavara’s writing sheds light on this understanding of salvation. Regardless of how great a sinner is, if a person repents of their sins at the moment of death, like the good thief who was hanged on the right side of the Lord, the gates of heaven will automatically be opened to them. This is

⁶⁶ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

⁶⁷ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Chavara*, 12.

⁶⁸ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/3, 71.

⁶⁹ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 120.

⁷⁰ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 119.

the greatest happiness a person can have. Of all the help given to a person, the greatest is that given to them at the moment of their death.⁷¹

Salvation is one of the key concepts of God's revelation to humanity.⁷² In the song of confidence, the psalmist praises God's providence. Based on the faith in God, "my rock and salvation, my fortress" (Ps 62:3), the psalmist exhorts the faithful to trust God and divine *hesed*.⁷³ It is therefore crucial to be united with God.⁷⁴ The core of apostolic preaching was that Jesus alone saves (Acts 4:9–12; Lk 4:17–21). Jesus, the good shepherd, came to seek and save the lost, to heal the sick, to cleanse and wash away sins through His blood, to enlighten the confused, and to correct the wrong (Jn 10:11; Mt 8:7; Rev 7:14; Jn 8:12). He is the victorious liberator who defeated death, the world, and Satan through His death and resurrection to liberate humankind (Acts 26:18; Rom 5–8; 1 Jn 3:8; Col 1:13; 1 Tim 2:5; Rom 5:10). The human beings are redeemed and purchased by His blood and entitled to be the heirs of heaven, His children (Rom 8:17; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18; 1 Cor 6:20).⁷⁵

Chavara instructs the people to entrust themselves to God Almighty and strive for their salvation by preparing themselves to receive the effects of Christ's earthly acts. He continues this mission in each individual soul through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church, particularly through the sacraments, the liturgical re-enactment of His sacrifice and confession, the preaching of His Word, and the personal inspirations of His Spirit in the hearts of every human being.⁷⁶ In order to be saved, everyone must respond with faith and reception of baptism (Mk 16:16), detachment (Mt 16:25), good works (Jas 2:14), and the practise of the virtues (1 Thess 5:8). Chavara exhorts parents to serve as role models for their children by practicing detachment, charity, kindness, and faith in God. So that they might set a good example for children and live virtuously. If not, they may be lost in

⁷¹ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 118–19.

⁷² Walker, "Salvation," 1435. "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10).

⁷³ Schaefer, "Psalms," 687.

⁷⁴ Athappilly, *Christian Images of Salvation*, 27.

⁷⁵ Topmoeller, "Salvation," 995.

⁷⁶ Topmoeller, "Salvation," 995.

hell due to the negligence of their parents. If this is the case, the parents may be punished and their own salvation might even be threatened.⁷⁷

In short, the *Chavarul* gives a precise definition of family taking into consideration the relationship with God, with one another, and with oneself, that is, trans-intra-inter-personal relationships. Our aim in the following discussion is to explore family ethics in the *Chavarul* in the light of the Bible by approaching them from different perspectives.

2.2 Family Ethics in the *Chavarul* in the Light of the Biblical Vision of Family

The concept of family is remarkably important in the Bible. The theme of the family reaches back to the primordial beginnings of humanity. The theme of family is presented in the Old Testament in the first two chapters of Genesis (1:28; 2:15–18, 24). The two narratives of the creation demonstrate with God’s original plan of creation with regard to the family. The human being, with its two sexes, is God’s good—indeed, very good—creation. The human being is not created as a single entity.⁷⁸ “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Gen 2:18). Man and woman are given to and for each other as a gift from God. They would form “one flesh” (Gen 2:24), namely, an indissoluble union through marriage. Abraham and Sarah (Gen 12:5; Isa 51:2), Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 24–27), Jacob, Leah and Rachel (Gen 29), the Song of Songs, and book of Hosea, all these books depict the Jewish conception of the human couple, their love, life, and intimacy, and portray the ideals of love and bonding between husband and wife.⁷⁹ The love between man and woman transcends and objectifies itself in children, who proceed from their love. The passing on of life stretches beyond the biological birth, it carried forward in the social and cultural birth, in the introduction to life and by passing on life’s values. Children in turn, strengthen and enrich the bond of

⁷⁷ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

⁷⁸ Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, 7.

⁷⁹ The book of *Tobit* emphasizes loving relationships between parents and children (Tob 4:3–4; 1:12; 14:13), the purity of marriage (Tob 8:5–8), decent burial even for the condemned (Tob 1:17–18; 2:3–4; 12:13), the value of almsgiving, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and praying and fasting (Tob 1:16–17; 2:2; 3:16; 4:8–11; 12:8–9). The significance of family is visible in the precepts given in the Mosaic covenant, particularly the Ten Commandments. See Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, xvii.

love between parents. They are the fruit of God's blessing. Creation's blessing continues in the promise of Abraham's offspring (Gen 12:2; 18:18; 22:18). God places the future of the people and the continuing existence of humankind in the hands of man and woman.⁸⁰

Various books of the Bible have set down principles, rules, and regulations to form a virtuous family.⁸¹ In the Decalogue (Ex 20:2–17; Deut 5:6–21), the fundamental values of family life are placed under the special protection of God including the deep respect for parents and care for elderly parents, the inviolability of marriage, the protection of new human life that proceeds from marriage, and the importance of property as the foundation of existence for the family and of honest interpersonal relationships, without which no community can exist.⁸² The Book of Sirach stresses righteous living with the concern that the people of God should grow in holiness. It is exceedingly significant and applicable to all categories of people. Judith, Ruth, and Naomi are role models for the virtues of courage, loyalty, and love for family.⁸³ Psalm 45 is a matrimonial hymn, which looks forward to the messianic fulfilment begun with Christ, so that it came to be understood that Christ weds his spouse the Church, the new Jerusalem,⁸⁴ while Psalm 128 conveys the blessings of family life based on the fear of God. The prophetic writings enlist a number of examples of the ideal family—in the book of Isaiah, we find God choosing the prophet's family as the sign and wonder in Israel (Isa 8:18); the book of Daniel echoes the cry of a faithful wife, Susanna (Dan 13); in Hosea, we find a godly man's unflinching love for his wayward wife (Hos 11:1–11). The love of Yahweh for Israel was expressed in terms of marital love. His love for Israel moved Yahweh to help, to care for, to educate his son. It is on this long and demanding process of upbringing and education that stresses here.⁸⁵

The notion of the family is continued in the New Testament as well, which validates many of the same commands and prohibitions. A fundamental statement by Jesus concerning marriage and family is found in his famous words about divorce (Mt 19:3–9). Moses had permitted divorce under certain conditions (Deut 24:1). But Jesus appeals to the original will of

⁸⁰ Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, 9–10.

⁸¹ Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 16.

⁸² Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, 7.

⁸³ Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 16.

⁸⁴ Bullough, "The Psalms," 456.

⁸⁵ Ryan, "Hosea," 685.

God: “At the beginning of creation, it was not so” (Mk 10:2–12; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7–10f). From this message, Augustine derived the teaching concerning the indissoluble bond of marriage, which continues to exist even when the marriage, on the human plane, falls apart.⁸⁶ St. Paul’s vision of family virtues is highlighted in 1 Cor 7; Eph 5:21–6:1–9; Col 3:18–4:1–6; 1 Tim 2:8–15; 6:1, 2; and Tit 2:1–10. Paul says it is good for a man to have a wife and a wife to have a husband, and that each should fulfil mutually their marital responsibilities regarding sexual relations (1 Cor 7:2–3). Stressing the mutual relationship of husband and wife, he cautions against the autonomy of each.⁸⁷ He compares the great mystery of marriage with that of the love of Jesus for the Church (Eph 5:21–33).

In letter to Colossians, Paul instructs about the submission of wives, the obedience of children to their parents, and the admonitions to husbands and fathers (Col 3:18-24).⁸⁸ In this light, Chavara’s instructions for the families can be comprehended in the light of this biblical understanding of family in the Christian tradition. The precepts in the *Chavarul* can be considered the practical interpretations of the Ten Commandments, which give logical advice and admonitions to families. This section of the study offers the biblical foundation of family ethics reflected in the *Chavarul* in two sections, the family ethics in the *Chavarul* in general and the role of parents in the upbringing of children in particular.

2.2.1 Family Ethics in the *Chavarul*—An Overview

One aspect of being a relational being is having the ability to relate.⁸⁹ Through our daily interactions, we relate to the world around us. Pope Francis claims that life is an art of encounter in all its confrontations.⁹⁰ The first part of *Chavarul* which contains twenty-four precepts governing family ethics in general, can be thus classified into three types of relationships within the family: trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal relationships.

⁸⁶ Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, 1:10, 11.

⁸⁷ Mitchell, “1 Corinthians,” 1601.

⁸⁸ McDonald, “The Letter to the Colossians,” 1712.

⁸⁹ Puthussery, *A Relational Paradigm for Pastoral Care*, 159–60.

⁹⁰ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 215.

2.2.1.1 Trans-Personal Relationships in Family Life

The trans-personal in this context refers to values of deep connectedness, of relationship, of subjective meaning, etc. Trans-personal relationship conveys a connection beyond the ego, capturing spiritual dimensions that all human share with a deeper self, others, nature, and the universe. In short, it refers to one's relationship with God. Each person's relationship with God is unique and indisputable. This spiritual relationship traces its origin right from the creation of the human being in the image and likeness of God. According to Gen 1:27, a human being is called an *Imago Dei*, a responding counterpart of his or her Creator.⁹¹ As a result, Chavara exhorts families to maintain this trans-personal relationship in order to live a meaningful, virtuous, and peaceful life.

2.2.1.1.1 Fear of God: The Most Valuable Possession

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara admonishes people to have fear of the Lord, which is the most valuable possession of a family. Chavara continues to say that a family in which the fear of the Lord pervades will enjoy the fruit of divine blessings in this world as well as in eternity.⁹² We can reasonably assume that Chavara asks people to fear God, that is, to love God with the whole heart, soul, and might (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:37–40; Mk 12:31–32) in light of the biblical teaching. For in a family, blessings can come from one member who loves the Lord and curses can come from another who does not.⁹³ Hence, Chavara cautioned the families to fear God, to walk before Him blamelessly (Gen 17:1; Eph 1:4), and to love Him in all possible ways.

When we examine the Bible, fear of God is considered a key concept that operates in biblical stories as a virtue to be possessed by all humans.⁹⁴ Theologians define fear of God as a reverential trust and awe rather than apprehension which includes love for God and hatred of sin.⁹⁵ It is an understanding of how great our God is. Hence, externally, fear of the Lord is an act of loyalty and reverence, while internally it is a sense of devotion and love. The Bible is summed up in the law asking us to love God absolutely and exclusively (Deut 6:4–5), but this love imposes upon

⁹¹ Puthussery, *A Relational Paradigm for Pastoral Care*, 183.

⁹² *Chavarul*, II:1, 196; I:19, 192–193.

⁹³ Osumi, "Deuteronomy," 497.

⁹⁴ Jindo, "On the Biblical Notion of Human Dignity: 'Fear of God' as a Condition for Authentic Existence," 433–34.

⁹⁵ Peifer, "Fear of the Lord," 864.

humans a demand which is never devoid of dimensions of the fear of God. That is, the love of God is never separated from the fear of God (Deut 6:2, 13; 10:20; 28:58; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16).⁹⁶ One of the examples of the fear of God in the Bible can be seen in Genesis 22, where we see the episode of Abraham being put to test by God. Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son, as per the real divine demand. God forbade him from sacrificing his son and commanded him to put his trust in God.⁹⁷ Deuteronomy repeatedly exhorts the people to love and fear God (Deut 10:12–13, 20). To fear God, is to keep His Commandments (Deut 5:29; 6:2, 24; Eccl 12:13; etc.); laws (Deut 31:12–13; 28:58; Jer 44:10); obey His voice (1 Sam 12:14; Hag 1:12); walk after Him (Deut 10:12; Deut 8:6; 2 Chr 6:31); and serve Him (Deut 6:13; 10:20; Josh 24:14).⁹⁸ In Ps 19:9 and 86:11, the Psalmist asks God to teach him His way that he may walk in His truth and for an undivided heart to fear His name (Ps 86:11).⁹⁹

Again, the fear of the Lord also is a moral category that motivates righteousness (Prov 2:9–10; 3:7; 16:6)¹⁰⁰ and the avoidance of evil, it is connected with departing from evil (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 28:28; Prov 8:13). The Book of *Samuel* says that those in authority who fear God will rule justly (2 Sam 23:3; 2 Chr 19:7). To withhold kindness (*hesed*) from a friend is to forsake the “fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14).¹⁰¹ Psalm 128 presents a beautiful description of the family, which is enclosed within the fear of the Lord (Ps 128:1, 4), which is a key to the understanding of a fulfilled family life. A worthy and diligent mother who fears the Lord is praised in Prov 31:10, 15, 17, 25–31. In the book of Sirach, we read: Those who fear the Lord do not disobey His words but keep His ways to please Him by preparing their hearts in humble submission before Him (Sir 2:15–17). Those who fear God will be happy and live long, bringing prosperity to their family, society, and the entire nation.

Jesus’ life and death is the supreme example of the fear of God. He warned us at every turn to fear God, not human beings. He said, “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy

⁹⁶ Terrien, “Fear,” 258–59.

⁹⁷ God said to Abraham, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now, I know you fear God” (Gen 22:12).

⁹⁸ Washington, “Fear,” 441.

⁹⁹ Lee, “Fear,” 289.

¹⁰⁰ Washington, “Fear,” 441.

¹⁰¹ Lee, “Fear,” 289.

both the body and the soul in hell” (Mt 10:28). And He confirmed it through His life and death. He spoke lovingly but frankly to all and kept silence when people came to Him heart-broken.¹⁰² But, He also demonstrated love beyond human understanding when He lived out His Words, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:18). Paul also asks us to work towards complete holiness because we fear God (2 Cor 7:1). Paul’s concept of love in 1 Cor 13:4-7 can be seen in the context of familial love. What Paul writes about Christians in general is also true of Christian families as we see in Col 3:13. Hence, it is clear from these passages, that fearing God is good because it saves us from caving into our own sinful nature. That is why we trust persons who fear God, for, those who fear God are more likely to keep their word and treat others with kindness.¹⁰³

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara urges the people to fear the Lord and to have relationships only with God-fearing people. From the above discussion, we understand that Chavara’s exhortations to promote the growth of each family into an image of heaven is based upon the biblical foundations, beginning with the Old Testament, and lingering through the New Testament.

2.2.1.1.1.1 Relationship with God-Fearing People

In another precept, Chavara counsels the families to associate with those who fear God. He instructs them, “do not contract relationship with families that lack order and fear of God, it is not the rich who bring delight into your family, but the orderly and God-fearing relatives. How many families have been distressed and ruined due to their regrettable association with rich relatives.”¹⁰⁴

Chavara explains this precept with an illustration of an anecdote that took place in France— certain man, made strenuous efforts to marry his only son to the daughter of an aristocratic family. The marriage was solemnized on the condition that all his ancestral wealth would be bequeathed to his son. After a while, his own son, along with the bride’s family, began to resent his lower status and dismissed him from the household. He went about begging and was forced to feed himself on the remains of the food thrown

¹⁰² Reardon, “What does it Mean to Fear God?” 2013.

¹⁰³ Reardon, “What does it Mean to Fear God?” 2013.

¹⁰⁴ *Chavarul*, I:8, 188.

out of his son's house during feasts and commemorations.¹⁰⁵ Through this story, Chavara wanted to instil in the families the moral that the greatest wealth on earth is the fear of the Lord and piety¹⁰⁶ which alone can make people happy and content in life. Hence, our preoccupation must not be with material things, but with true life.

In this precept Chavara speaks of entering into contract with God-fearing people. In connection with this precept, we have many bible passages where the people choose God-fearing people as their partner. The Old Testament quotes some of the key verses on the concept of establishing right relationship. The Book of *Tobit* gives us a beautiful example of a God-fearing couple in Tobias and Sarah, who implored God's mercy and safety (Tob 8:4–7). The choice of God-fearing people always brings a good name and God's blessings to their kindred: "No one speaks ill of her, for she feared God with great devotion" (Jud 8:8); Judith is described as exceedingly pious woman. "Your servant is indeed God-fearing and serves the God of heaven night and day" (Jud 11:17). According to the tradition, it is the groom and his family who go in search of the girl for marriage. Henceforth, we find many instructions on the selection of both the bride and the groom: "House and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov 19:14). "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Prov 31:30). Here woman is praised not because of her charm and beauty, which are transitory and deceptive, but because of her fear of the Lord. "A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels" (Prov 31:10). She is a woman of worth or strength, virtue, wealth, efficiency. "She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy" (Prov 31:10–31). The author praises the woman's hand symbolizing her ability. Her hands and the palms of her hands are industrious and charitable toward the poor.¹⁰⁷

There are many characters in the New Testament who feared God and received blessings. Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus, are the best examples of God-fearing people. While Joseph, the just man who feared God, did not want to defame Mary and was planning to dismiss her in secret (Mt 1:19), Mary, a favoured one of God, said yes to the will of God out of her reverential fear and faith (Lk 1:38). Her relatives, both Elizabeth and

¹⁰⁵ *Chavarul*, I:8, 188.

¹⁰⁶ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–193.

¹⁰⁷ Hayward, "Proverbs," 735.

Zechariah too, are recorded as God-fearing people (Lk 1:6). The quality of fear of God in a relationship is reflected in the exhortations: “Each of you, however, should love your wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband” (Eph 5:33). Younger women are encouraged to be model wives. It was at a time when instruction and meeting in house churches were so closely tied to the life of the family, in which the domestic and spiritual training were given.¹⁰⁸ “Let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you” (1 Cor 7:17). Remaining in whatever marital state they were, contributes to the peace to which God has called them and by association to the peace of the community. The qualities of God-fearing people are emphasised in all these bible passages.

The biblical instructions and illustrations on God-fearing people find their place in inspiring Chavara to counsel the families regarding the building up of the relationship only with God-fearing people. In essence, when we choose to contract a relationship, godly character is more important than status, power, money, etc. In other words, it is more important to be a God-fearing, faithful, honest, righteous, and integrated person than to be a person of power and wealth.

2.2.1.1.1.2 God-Fearing Persons as Friends

Chavara exhorts the families how to choose friends and which kind of guests to invite into their homes. He warns them, “do not wish to make many friends. Out of thousands, choose just one. He who does not love God will not love you either.”¹⁰⁹ “Do not entertain all sorts of people in your house, but receive only those who are well-mannered and God-fearing. As the old saying goes, “show me your friends and I will tell you who you are.”¹¹⁰

By imparting these teachings, Chavara did not intent to contradict Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies (Mt 5:44). His main concern is choosing friends who are God-fearing and devout persons who can assist them in living a life that God has designed for them. In a sense he claims that, our company declares who we are. For, it is said, “the birds of the same feather flock together.” Chavara emphasises the need to choose God-fearing people as companions and friends for they can be a great source of consolation and

¹⁰⁸ McDonald, “Titus,” 1757.

¹⁰⁹ *Chavarul*, I:16, 191.

¹¹⁰ *Chavarul*, I:9, 188.

support for us. While God-fearing friends play the role of prophet to lead us to God, a friend who has no fear of God becomes the pied-piper who would take us away from God. Chavara did not intend any discrimination among the good and bad people, but wished that we make our ties with discernment to have God-fearing people as our friends. The person who habitually walks with the wise will become wiser, but the person who associates with fools will grow like them and share the trouble that comes their way. True friendship is a gift from God, and deeply religious people will experience such friendship.¹¹¹ In other words, Chavara intends to show us the discernment to choose our friends wisely who can bring us happiness and strength.

When we look for the basis of Chavara's instruction on friendship, we can find the biblical perception of this precept in the following verses in the book of Sirach as a possible source: "When you gain friends, gain them through testing, and do not trust them hastily" (Sir 6:7).¹¹² Ben Sira teaches that fear of God is the requirement for finding true friends and achieving the blessings of friendship (Sir 6:16–17). A true friend who fears God is like a shelter, a treasure, and life-saving medicine (Sir 6:14–17). When we select friends, we must choose them through testing and must not trust them in haste (Sir 6:7).¹¹³ Here the author gives us an elaborate discourse regarding the true value of friendships and the kind of friends one must have. We must have a cautious attitude towards our friends, for a false friend would quickly fall away in times of trouble and testing (Sir 6:6–13; 13:21; Prov 14:20; 19:4, 6–7).¹¹⁴ When inviting friends into our home, we must be careful not to invite everyone who comes to our door, because they may be insane and play several tricks in the lives of others (Sir 11:29–34).

In the New Testament, friendship is wrapped in the new robe of spirituality. Jesus calls his disciples friends, "you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer...but I have called you friends." (Jn 15:14–15). Jesus says that a servant does not know the mind of his master, but the disciples are truly "friends" because Jesus has made known to them all that he has heard from the Father.¹¹⁵ The depth of Jesus'

¹¹¹ Crenshaw, "The Book of Sirach," 683.

¹¹² Irwin, "Fear of God: The Analogy of Friendship and Ben Sira's Theodicy," 551–52.

¹¹³ Irwin, "Fear of God: The Analogy of Friendship and Ben Sira's Theodicy," 551–52.

¹¹⁴ Harrington, "Sirach," 930.

¹¹⁵ Wahlde, "John," 1428.

love is shown by his willingness to die for them (Jn 15:13). True friends will be ready even to die for the other. Paul's exhortation on friendship draws our attention to the adverse effects of bad friendship: "Bad company ruins good morals" (1 Cor 15:33). Paul sternly warns about how the company one keeps can have a bad influence on his or her moral behaviour. They may even exhibit an improper knowledge of God (1 Cor 15:33–34).¹¹⁶

Here Chavara doesn't mean that in choosing friends we should have pharisaic attitude or an attitude of superiority in knowledge and morality but a real sense of the fear of the Lord that should impel us to keep away from or be at least cautious about people who do not fear God or human beings.¹¹⁷ In other words, he intends to show discernment to choose the friends wisely who can bring us happiness and strength.¹¹⁸ Chavara knew well that all people were to be welcomed and loved; but one had to be ever prudent because, our friendship can influence our values and behaviours.

The biblical analysis of Chavara's instruction on friendship draws us to comprehend that these precepts spring forth from his reflection on the Word of God. Going through his maxims, we find them to be a replica of the discourses on friendship given in the book of Sirach. In the case of friendship, being selective is underscored by making a choice of people who themselves fear God and would lead us also to fear God.

2.2.1.1.3 God-Fearing Servants

According to Chavara, choosing the servants with prudence is of great importance as many people are put into the trouble due to their wrong choice of servants. So, he urges them, "appoint only those who fear the Lord for any service at home. Ensure that their numbers are restricted to the minimum. Many are the homes in which the sway of the devil is established through the appointed caretakers. Masters should know that they are responsible for keeping track of their servants' conduct and assisting them in their spiritual welfare."¹¹⁹

The background of giving the above precept can be that, at the time of Chavara, when the joint family system was prevailing, there was a healthy familial relationship with extended families among the workers, servants,

¹¹⁶ Mitchell, "1 Corinthians," 1616.

¹¹⁷ Kaniarakath, "St. Kuriakose Chavara: A Teacher of Family Theology," 174.

¹¹⁸ Gorgulho and Anderson, "Proverbs," 861.

¹¹⁹ *Chavarul*, I:23, 195.

and even neighbours. Here, Chavara counsels that those who are in service at our homes must be God-fearing people, and they are to be chosen with the right discernment. Divine wisdom always directs the actions of a person who fears God because wisdom begins with fearing the Lord. Chavara's imagery of family as heaven implies that every person who lives in this heavenly abode should be a God-fearing one. The choice of God-fearing servants assures us of their fidelity and commitment to their master or employer. Choosing God-fearing servants is only half the task; the masters are also obliged to provide for their servants' spiritual and material needs. The servants are to be viewed as human beings with dignity and rights who require spiritual support, vigilance, and care.¹²⁰ Therefore, Chavara reminds us that the masters have a responsibility to tend to their spiritual needs and assist them in upholding moral standards.¹²¹ Chavara suggests that the families limit the number of workers in the houses. This will avoid the unnecessary space for engaging in the show of money and power that paves the way for conflicts between the workers.

The Holy Bible provides us with many excellent examples of how choosing faithful and God-fearing servants resulted in prosperity and good tidings. At the command of God, Abraham chose his servant who is God-fearing and faithful and made him to swear in the name of God and sent him to get a wife for his son Isaac (Gen 24); Joseph selected his steward who is trustworthy and entrusted him with the task of helping his famine-stricken household (Gen 44); Judith was accompanied by her maid who was faithful, on her expedition to behead Holofernes (Jdt 12–13); Queen Esther chose maids who were trustworthy, to update her about the current affairs of her people and helped her to rescue them from the plot of Hamman (Esth 3–4). Again, the Old Testament also sternly cautions us about our dealings with subordinates and demands that we reciprocate their dedication towards us with our care and compassion: “You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God” (Lev 25:43).

Faithfulness is the hallmark of God-fearing people. The importance of the God-fearing servants can be understood through Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants. Here the master's tenants were not God-fearing, their pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, egocentrism, and greediness surpasses the fear of God in them and results in the misfortune of the master (Mt 21:31–46). In

¹²⁰ *Chavarul*, I:23, 195.

¹²¹ *Chavarul*, I:23, 195.

the Gospel of Luke, we find the master and the God-fearing slave (Lk 12:42–44). The blessedness of the faithful servant, a virtue which is attributed as the quality of God-fearing people: “Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives” (Lk 12:43). The God-fearing and trustworthy servants find a way into the master’s joy. The New Testament depicts the picture of the masters who chose the God-fearing servants and were pleased with their trustworthiness. “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21; Lk 12:43; 16:11). Here we see how selection of the trustworthy servants brought joy to both the master and the servants. Additionally, Paul gives the protocol to be followed in keeping decorum between the masters and the servants. It is advisable for masters to treat their slaves justly and fairly. For masters are accountable to the Lord (Col 4:1). Although they are not mandated to free the slaves, they are prohibited from abusing their position of power.¹²² Paul says, “Stop threatening them for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him, there is no partiality” (Eph 6:9).

2.2.1.1.2 Submission to the Will of God

Chavara emphasises that submission to God’s will is a most sublime virtue by which we can maintain harmony and happiness in our family life. He instructs the family members: “Entrust yourself to the Divine Providence when you are faced with trials and tribulations, diseases, and difficulties. He is not a strong person who is patient only when he is delighted.”¹²³ Chavara urges people to entrust themselves to the divine providence and be happy and contented in adversity as well as in prosperity. One who is patient only when things go well, is not a man or woman of strong character. He explains it with an anecdote of a pious person who used to say, “in this world, everything happens according to my wish; for, I wish only that which is willed by God.”¹²⁴

It is Chavara’s submission to God’s will that held him unshaken when he was hit by the harsh darts of adversity in life. During his early days of religious life, when Chavara was left as the sole remainder of his family, he accepted this tragedy of life as the will of God, holding to Him alone as his

¹²² Paz, “Colossians,” 1782.

¹²³ *Chavarul*, I:20, 193–94.

¹²⁴ *Chavarul*, I:20, 193–94.

portion and cup.¹²⁵ Chavara's exhortation on submission to God's will comes from his lived experiences. Another instance that highlights his submission to the will of God is the delay of the erection of the convent for the women religious and the conversion of the proposed construction into the seminary.¹²⁶ Chavara did not retaliate for that but he yielded to the divine will of God in humility and patience. He communicated this same spirit of submission to his fellow-religious in his teaching on religious life, wherein he says that the genuine obedience that flows from faith and submission to the will of God is the hallmark of a religious person.¹²⁷ Such people would transform the community into a miniature heaven. In Chavara's opinion, it is obvious that the religious should obey their major and local superiors. But he goes one step further and commands them to obey one another as well. It may be a fellow-religious person or someone else who brings the God's message; we must accept and pursue it wholeheartedly. Every true religious person should strive to abide by the spirit of this kind of humble submission.¹²⁸ Even though these instructions are given to his fellow religious, the *Chavarul* possesses the same spirit that edifies us to seek solely God's Will and to obey it faithfully.

The Scripture gives us good examples of many people who lived their lives in total submission to the will of God. There are several episodes in the Old Testament where God revealed His plan to the faithful and they remained obedient to it. The Lord said to Abram, "go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1); "so Abram went, as the Lord had told him" (Gen 12:4); "Moses and Aaron...did just as the Lord commanded them" (Ex 7:6). Submission to God's will implies walking on His footprints, which holds us firm from being astray: "My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside" (Job 23:11). The Psalmist delighted to do God's will: "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8). The Psalmist asks the Lord to teach him to do the will of God: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path" (Ps 143:10). "The law of their God is in their hearts; their steps do not slip" (Ps 37:31). "Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way" (Ps 44:18). "Keep my steps steady

¹²⁵ *Positio*, 57. See also Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 62.

¹²⁶ *CWC*, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 193–94.

¹²⁷ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/3, 70–71; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 6/3, 99–100.

¹²⁸ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 202.

according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me” (Ps 119:133). “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live” (Prov 4:4). The Prophet Isaiah articulates the exile and suffering of the people of God and their subsequent liberation and restoration as the will of God (Isa 40–55). Here we find the mention of God’s chosen shepherd who would bring about the completion of God’s purpose and, at the same time, it is through the Lord’s suffering servant that the will of God will prosper (Isa 44:28; 53:10; 55:11).¹²⁹ This was true in the case of Job, who was ever resigned to the will of God; even in the midst of acute suffering, though the mystery of innocent suffering continued to puzzle him, he could say, “naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). The characteristic of the prophet’s mission consists of discovering God’s design in all events, even the catastrophic ones. “The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established” (Prov 19:21; 16:9). It reminds us to lay one’s plans down and submit to the plans of God.

In the New Testament, there are direct references to the will of God. For example, the Gospel of Luke demonstrates Jesus as a model of obedience to his earthly parents, placing himself under their charge (Lk 2:51).¹³⁰ In Matthew, Jesus teaches his followers to pray, “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10), again He Himself prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42; Mt 26:39). Jesus’ mission was to fulfil the will of His Father, who sent Him and He recurrently spoke of it: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work” (Jn 4:34); “I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (Jn 5:30); “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me” (Jn 7:17); “I always do what is pleasing to him” (Jn 8:29). Jesus’ submission to the will of God is explicit in His words, “for the Son of Man is going as it has been determined!” (Lk 22:22). In the Scripture, Jesus makes us understand God’s plan by reprimanding, “oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:25–27). In the Epistles we see Paul submitting himself to the will of God. He says, “we remained silent

¹²⁹ Green, “Will of God,” 853.

¹³⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 18 (AAS 108: 316).

except to say, the Lord's will be done" (Acts 21:14). Submission to the will of God requires discernment, which can be attained through the transformation and renewal of our minds. Therefore, Paul says, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God" (Rom 12:2). Compliance with God's will, comes from the heart: "as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph 6:6). Jesus is an example par excellence of showing total submission to God's will through *kenosis*: "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Jesus set aside his own legitimate interests and pursuit of honour.¹³¹ "The world and its desires are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever" (1 Jn 2:17). And this will of God is revealed as our sanctification (1 Thess 4:3). It also invites us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks to God in all circumstances of our lives (1 Thess 5:16–18). "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that" (Jas 4:15). James gives us a new vocabulary of putting God's will at the forefront, showing our total surrender towards the omnipotence of God.¹³²

The watchword of Chavara's spirituality was "God's will always and everywhere." The recurrent mention of accomplishing God's will in the Scripture was the motivation of Chavara's submission to the will of God. He penned down this piece of advice on submission to the will of God for the families to facilitate them to remain encouraged without losing hope in the midst of trials and tribulations of life and to accept them as the will of God. Thus, seeking God's will in all things and every time would help us to stay happy and content. Being docile to the divine will does not mean to be passive or lazy; rather, as wise and intelligent Christians, we are to act prudently praying to God and seeking his will. Being firm and strong in times of difficulties and sufferings and being happy and content with whatever happens in life is the hall-mark of a Christian. That is, a Christian has to accept everything from the hands of God Almighty and to be submissive to His will.

¹³¹ Perkins, "The Letter to the Philippians," 1697.

¹³² Green, "Will of God," 856.

2.2.1.1.3 Sacraments and Devotional Practices

Chavara used the *Chavarul* to re-evangelize the families on the need for a life centred on the sacraments. In the following precept, Chavara gives the guidelines for it. He says,

As much as possible, participate daily in the Holy Mass. If it is difficult, take part in the Masses on Mondays for the souls in purgatory, on Fridays in commemoration of the passion and death of the Lord, on Saturdays in devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. If all members from a family cannot attend daily Mass together, let them take turns, ensuring that one or two attend Mass every day. Confess your sins and receive Holy Communion at least once a month. If you cannot participate in the Novena prayers associated with major feasts and the feast of Our Lady, and the monthly devotions in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph in the church, you must recite them at home.¹³³

Chavara's ardent devotion to the Holy Eucharist is reflected in his teachings to the families regarding the sacraments and sacramentals. In this precept, Chavara speaks of the importance of the sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist and confession, along with the devotions to Our Lady and saints. He made every effort to instil in the hearts of the people a desire to remain in the state of grace through frequent confession and reception of the Holy Communion. The devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary were the two pillars of Chavara's spirituality. The admirable devotion and recollection with which he celebrated the divine liturgy made a great impression on those who participated in it. Besides the usual visits to the Blessed Sacrament enjoined by the rule, he used to spend long hours on his knees, immersed in prayer before the tabernacle.¹³⁴ Chavara shared this sublime devotion, as an inheritance, with his spiritual daughters (the members of the women religious congregation founded by him). He wrote to the nuns: "I have locked up your hearts in the tabernacle of Jesus. I have done the same with mine as well. Let us remain there until the day of resurrection."¹³⁵

¹³³ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

¹³⁴ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Chavara by Fr. Leopold Beccaro*, 13; Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 253.

¹³⁵ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/6, 85; CSK, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 9/6, 115.

The Eucharistic Lord is our food and drink,¹³⁶ the basic need of all the human beings and thus the dearest treasure, even for the poorest of the poor, for us, the Christian disciples. Chavara, an ardent devotee of the Holy Eucharist, jotted down the following cantos in an expression of his love for the Eucharistic Lord: “You are my love, my joy, and all my good fortune! If not in you, how could I live my life? You are my very breath, my food, and my drink. What solace do I have except, in you!”¹³⁷ Our loving Lord was so benevolent to serve Himself as our daily food and drink. Chavara articulated his gratitude towards the Lord’s benevolence: “O my loving God and Saviour, as a sign of your great love for me, you gave me your body and blood for my food and drink.”¹³⁸

Here the *Chavarul* further emphasises the importance of prayer for a peaceful family life. When we make an attempt to analyse based on the Word of God what prayer is and the relevance of prayer in one’s life, we understand that prayer is raising of the mind and heart to God. Through prayer human beings express their submission to God’s will and renders Him religious worship of praise, thanksgiving, and petition. The human being’s relationship with God is natural and spontaneous that it existed from the very beginning of humanity. There are certain prayers performed as part of devotional practices, which have been recited for centuries and passed on to the generations as a tradition. These prayers have been given to certain persons as messages from God in accordance with the needs and signs of the time.¹³⁹ The practise of these pious exercises maintains the fervour of our spiritual life. Chavara got these devotional practises as a precious inheritance from his family. He was the proud heir of his devote parents who shaped up his prayer life; it was his mother who sowed the seeds of the spirit of prayer in his tender heart. Chavara himself testified to this profound legacy in his own words as we read in *Compunction of the Soul*:

As she brought me up suckling me with the love you gave her, she guided me to say my little prayer as well. And as I grew up, she

¹³⁶ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, 21; CSK, Vol. 3: *Ātmānuthāpam*, 43.

¹³⁷ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, II:140–44, 10; CSK, Vol. 2: *Ātmānuthāpam*, 10; Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 262–263.

¹³⁸ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 21; CSK, Vol. 3: *Dhyānasallāpam*, 43.

¹³⁹ St. Dominic’s Rosary; Simeon Stock’s Scapular; St. Bernard’s Memmore; Margaret Mary Alaouque’s Devotion to Sacred Heart; St. Faustina’s Mercy Rosary, and so on.

taught me more and more assuredly and made me learn all my prayers. Sitting at her feet I slowly began to know God. Even when she woke up to pray at midnight and prayed on her knees, I too was beside her on my knees and learned from her lips the name of Jesus and the prayers to the Mother of God.¹⁴⁰

Chavara, the loving father, gave this precept about devotional practises in fulfilment of his desire to impart the share of his priceless treasure of prayer to his children.

The biblical vision of this precept can be understood in the light of the spiritual bread that sustains us along with the earthly bread that satisfies our temporal hunger. For, “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3); “it is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat” (Ex 16:15); “He rained down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven. Mortals eat of the bread of angels; he sends them food in abundance” (Ps 78:24–25). The Holy Eucharist is our spiritual food, provided by God Himself to meet the needs of our soul: “The angel of the Lord came...touched him, and said, “get up and eat, otherwise your journey will be too much for you. He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God” (1 Kings 19:7–8).

In the Old Testament, prayer is directed to God alone and every Israelite is encouraged to make prayer an essential part of his or her religious obligations (Ps 62:8; 88:2; 105:4; 119:62; Sir 18:22). A pious Israelite prayed daily (Ps 145:2), “seven times a day” (Ps 119:164), that is, continually. As the Old Testament tried to make every Israelite conscious of living in God’s presence, he or she could pray whenever he or she felt himself or herself moved to praise, thank, or petition to God, whether it was at midnight (Ps 119:62), at dawn (Ps 119:147; Jdt 12:5-6; Wis 16:28), in the morning (Ps 5:4; 59:17; Sir 39:6), or in the evening at the time of sacrifice (Ps 141:2; Dan 9:21).¹⁴¹ They prayed after meals and offered prayers to God for help during periods of suffering, persecution, and danger (Ps 8; 19; 33; 74; 104; 147; 148; 68; 93; 105; 111; 114–115; 136; 139; Job 26:5–14;

¹⁴⁰ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 214; CWC, Vol. 2: *The Compunction of the Soul*, 1:45–60; CSK, Vol. 2: *Ātmānuthāpam*, 1:44–56.

¹⁴¹ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 882.

36:26–37, 24; Sir 42:15–25; 1 Sam 1:10; 2 Sam 12:15–23; 22:2–7; Tob 3:1, 11–13; Ps 30:3; 50:15; 64:2; 118:5; 119:120).¹⁴²

When the *Chavarul* instructs the people to confess their sins and receive Holy Communion, Chavara intend to have the internal disposition to pray and celebrate the Holy Eucharist. According to the Jewish custom, before the offering of sacrifice the priests, the people, and the offering itself had to undergo the rite of purification (Unblemished lamb, people should cleanse themselves). These rituals were dictated by God Himself to Moses, and through him, to all the people. The Scripture tells us that when Moses was building the Tabernacle, God gave him specific instructions that necessitated that the lampstand and other items in the holy place be made “of pure gold” (Ex 25:31; 37:2, 16). Before any sacrifice “who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts” (Ps 24:3–4). The Scripture teaches us that purity is freedom from anything that contaminates us. In other words, purity is the quality of being faultless, unadulterated, or uncompromised. Each time that we talk of pure water, we mean water that is free from any other substances. Pure gold is one that has been refined to the extent that all dross has been removed. In the same light, pure life is one that sins no longer. Obviously, purity is of great importance to God, who alone is truly pure, “sanctify yourselves, therefore and be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44–45). God had clearly declared that He would purify the people (Lev 22:32) if they diligently keep all His commands (Lev 22:31), His sacrifice (Ex 8:27), and His Sabbaths (Lev 26:2).

In the New Testament times, prayers were recited at the third, sixth, and ninth hours.¹⁴³ The New Testament is filled with exhortations to pray: the Christians are to pray for their persecutors (Mt 5:44), for all people, kings and those who exercise lawful public authority (1 Tim 2:1–4), for one another, for the dead and so on (Rom 15:30; 2 Cor 1:11; Col 4:3; Acts 12:5; Rom 1:9; Eph 1:15; Phil 1:3; 2 Tim 1:16–18). The prayer should be said with the right intention and devotion (Mt 6:5–8; 15:7–9; 1 Cor 15:14), in the spirit of humility (Lk 18: 9–14; Jas 4:6), in the spirit of submission to God (Mt 26:39; 1 Pet 5:6), with great confidence, in the state of grace, with

¹⁴² Steinmueller & Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 883.

¹⁴³ Third hour—about 9 a. m. (Acts 2:15), sixth hour—at noon (Acts 10:9), and ninth hour—at the time of the evening sacrifice or about 3 p. m. (Acts 10:30). Steinmueller & Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 882.

perseverance (Mt 21:22; Jn 16:23; Phil 4:6; Heb 4:16; Jas 1:5–8; 1 Jn 3:21–22; 5:14–15). St. Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray always: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (I Thess 5:16–17).

Regarding the Eucharistic devotion, in the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels mention the feeding of the multitude by Jesus multiplying the bread (Mt 14:13–21; Mk 6:30–44; Lk 9:10–17), whereas, John’s Gospel mentions a great discourse on the bread of life: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (Jn 6:51, 41); “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35, 51, 53–57). Jesus repeats his insistence on the importance of eating his flesh and drinking his blood in order to have eternal life. Jesus describes the benefits of this sacramental communion: for the one who receives the flesh and blood, there will be a permanent union with Jesus. The believer will live because of Jesus, just as Jesus lives because of the Father.¹⁴⁴ “Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable...Examine yourselves, and only then eat the bread and drink the cup” (I Cor 11:27–28). The purity of the heart is an inevitable aspect of the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Throughout the Scripture, we see that “the sacrifices” or “the eating of the bread” is always preceded by cleansing or purification. Jesus says, “blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8). Repentance and faith or absolute trust in the coming Saviour were sufficient for God Almighty to pronounce His people righteous. In the New Testament, purity is reclaimed by placing our faith, or absolute trust, in the perfect sacrifice of the Promised Saviour, Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3–7).¹⁴⁵

Chavara’s reflection on the divine Word based on prayer and the Bread of Life made him exclaim the Lord as his chosen portion and cup, his food and drink that can satiate every hunger and thirst. Chavara regarded the sacraments of the Lord as a gift from above and held them with great reverence. The *Chavarul* gives instruction to pray always and worship God by participating in the sublime sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, which would give them the strength and courage to stand firm in trials and difficulties and to participate in their daily sacrifice in family by their self-giving and selfless love. Chavara instructed the families about the

¹⁴⁴ Wahlde, “John,” 1408.

¹⁴⁵ *Bible Verses about Purification*, Smith’s Bible Dictionary. [Online]

sacraments and devotional practises, and urged them to celebrate the sacraments with proper preparation through the sacrament of reconciliation. He also urged them to partake in the sacraments with at least one member of each family in order to collect this heavenly manna as their spiritual sustenance on their journey to eternity, even if all the members were unable to do so.

2..2.1.1.4 Days of Obligation

Chavara instructs, “Sundays and other days of obligation are our Lord’s days. It is least befitting to hold secular celebrations on such day...When anyone dies in a family, the nearest relatives may be exempted, it is not proper for others to give up their spiritual obligations and stay at the home of the dead. Such evil practice is condemned both by God and by the Church.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, he asks the Catholics to strictly observe the Sunday, the day set apart for divine worship and receive God’s blessings.

The *Chavarul* was composed during a time when the spiritual fervour of the people was beginning to diminish as a result of their indulgence in festivities. Chavara wrote these following lines of admonitions on the observance of the days of obligation, taking into consideration the then declining spiritual fervour of the Christian families.

Celebrating family festivals and other commemorations on Sundays and days of obligation is an evil practise that, finally, leads the soul to ruin. Sunday is the Lord’s Day. Such devious habits and practises are the inventions that turn the Lord’s Day into devil’s day. Moreover, it is a deplorable custom, forbidden by God and the Church, for the bereaved family members not to attend the Church and to participate in other spiritual services on Sundays and days of obligation.¹⁴⁷

In another precept Chavara mentions the practical aspect of keeping Sundays holy: “One should not be complacent with only participation in the Holy Mass on the days of obligation; instead, most of the day shall be spent in virtuous acts such as listening to sermons, reading good books, and in performing charitable acts such as visiting and caring for the sick, especially those who are very poor.”¹⁴⁸ Through his counsel of Sunday

¹⁴⁶ *Chavarul*, I:19, 186-87.

¹⁴⁷ *Chavarul*, I:3, 186-87.

¹⁴⁸ *Chavarul*, I:22, 194-95.

observance, Chavara wanted to reinvigorate the spirit of the Sabbath in the people.

The Jewish Sabbath day was observed on Saturday. Later it was changed to Sunday with the edict of Emperor Constantine in 321 CE. The Eucharistic celebration on Sunday signifies the freedom from the slavery of work and a foretaste of the promised freedom of the Lord. It was also a great example of the social justice of the Church. This liberating notion of the Eucharist is a transition from human servitude to divine service. Chavara's guidelines on keeping the Sabbath seems to walk extra-mile in his further counsels as he proposes that we should not be content with only participating in the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and days of obligation, but rather, that the most of our time should be spent performing virtuous acts of mercy. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also teaches, "Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm and the elderly... Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of mind and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life."¹⁴⁹

According to biblical scholars, the Deuteronomic text of the Third Commandment (Deut 5:12–15) is the original version, where the Sabbath (*Shamar* (Hebrew) = "keep" or "observe") is emphasised as the day of liberation, whereas, the Exodus version of the Third Commandment (Ex 20:8–11) appears to be an edited form¹⁵⁰ who used the Hebrew verb *Zakar* = "remember."¹⁵¹ In this context, the Sabbath is displayed as the day of rest, as Yahweh rested on the seventh day (Ex 20:11).

Deuteronomy commands Sabbath rest as an expression of the freedom of the Israelites from slavery to the land and to oppressive overlords (Duet 5:15). The cessation from work on the Sabbath was based on Israel's conviction that Yahweh had sovereignty over the land including its creatures. "It [Sabbath] is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money."¹⁵² Remembering the painful days in Egypt, people are to avoid putting others to suffer and should be even more empathetic to

¹⁴⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2186. Hereafter *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is referred to as *CCC*.

¹⁵⁰ Strawn, "Excerpted manuscripts at Qumran: Their Significance for Textual History of the Hebrew Bible and the Socio-Religious History of the Qumran Community and its Literature," 119.

¹⁵¹ McIntosh, *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, Vol. 3, 71.

¹⁵² *CCC*, 2172.

their inconveniences. It also signifies that each observance of Sabbath and each day of obligation is a sign of the believers' physical, mental, and spiritual renewal.¹⁵³ The message of this Commandment is that we should observe the Sabbath as a special day of rest, celebration, and gathering. It challenges us to acknowledge and celebrate our limitations as God-given gifts. The meaning of life cannot be found in the thoughtless quest of profits. We have no right to exploit the nature for selfish purposes. Sabbath is therefore commemorated as a day of social justice (Deut 5:12–15). The Third Commandment commands hospitality from the Church. According to Isaiah, keeping the Sabbath is defined by doing good things, serving Yahweh, and honouring his name, and this is something that all of His people are to adhere to (Isa 56:2, 6).¹⁵⁴

The New Testament also has got significant role in the Sabbath observance. From the New Testament times Christians remember and celebrate the new covenant on Sundays remembering the great paschal mysteries of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection in the Holy Eucharist. Sunday should be the great day of obligation as the individual worshipers gather communally to praise and thank God. We find that Jesus was an observant Jew who went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath "as was his custom" (Lk 4:16; Mk 6:1–6).¹⁵⁵ By healing the sick, forgiving sins, etc. on the Sabbath, Jesus declared the humane spirit of Sabbath, and he announced that Sabbath is the day for honouring God and helping others in need (Mt 12:10, 11; Lk 6:7; 13:14, 16; 14:5; Jn 7:23; 9:16; Mk 3:1–6).

In Mk 2:27, we have a revolutionary statement of Jesus: "The Sabbath is made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath." In the New Testament, we find no reference to the word "Sunday" but we find eight references to "the first day of the week" (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2, 9; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2–3). Of these, the first six references indicate the exact day of the resurrection, the Sunday. Jn 20:19 overtones the first encounter of the Risen Lord with the disciples as the paschal service. The seventh one speaks of the breaking of the bread "on the first day of the week when we met to break bread" (Acts 20:7) and the last one about the collections. On Sundays Christians celebrate the Holy Eucharist in

¹⁵³ Hasel, "Sabbath," 852. The way to be responsive to God's command is to live faithfully and fully into the religious traditions and practises that have nurtured us.

¹⁵⁴ Schuele, "Sabbath," 7.

¹⁵⁵ Reid, "What's Biblical about the Sabbath," 205.

remembrance of the great paschal mysteries of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

Chavara included this precept for the observance of the days of obligation in the *Chavarul* to ensure piety and charity in the families. He elaborated on this observance in order to connect the Sabbath to our acts of charity and social justice. For him, the observances had to extend beyond the walls of worship places and had to be transcended into their actions in day-to-day life. It appears that the extension of Chavara's Sabbath observance reflects the Sabbath observance prescribed in the book of Isaiah.

2.2.1.2 Intra-Personal Relationships in Family Life

Intra-personal relationship is a human being's relationship within oneself. It is the viewpoint through which we introspect the role of our thoughts, observations, decisions, emotions, and feelings in relating to ourselves. The ability to relate to oneself remains the foundation for our relational world. Being aware of our own being and actions is the psychological dimension of our relationship with ourselves. The Old Testament identifies this intra-personal relationship with the *heart*, whereas, the New Testament adds another concept, the *mind*. The heart is explained as the centre of human actions. It is the seat of moral personality. The behaviour and relationships of people are judged or evaluated according to the functions of the heart.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, the Christian perspective holds that the mind is a fundamental principle and that understanding and perception occur as a result of the faculty or operation of the mind. We make the decisions with our minds, whether they are moral or irrational in nature. The decision to embrace God and keep His commandments or reject Him and rebel against Him, is made in the mind.¹⁵⁷ Through the mind concept, the harmony between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is maintained. The following precepts of Chavara shed light on the formation of the mind by nurturing an optimistic attitude on life with the help of virtues like chastity, modesty, faithfulness, personal discipline, time management, reading habits, and hard work, all of which are inevitable for resolute Christian living.

¹⁵⁶ Puthussery, *A Relational Paradigm for Pastoral Care*, 153–54.

¹⁵⁷ Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, "Mind/Reason." [Online]

2.2.1.2.1 Chastity and Modesty

In the subsequent precept, Chavara calls the attention of the family members to uphold personal decency in their interactions with others. He says,

Be exceedingly careful to be chaste and modest in all your postures, whether sitting, walking, lying or playing. Immodesty is reprehensible both before God and the world. We would learn only on the day of judgement about how many souls have been lost in hell due to boys and girls roaming around immodestly dressed and their unchaste body contacts, which their parents do not forbid.¹⁵⁸

Chastity is defined as the successful integration of sexuality within the person.¹⁵⁹ The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love bestowed to him or her. It includes training in human freedom through an apprenticeship in self-mastery.¹⁶⁰ Chastity is considered the virtue that enables a person to transform the power of human sexuality as a creative and integrating force in one's life. It facilitates the fullest realization of one's identity as a male or female and encourages the integration of self with others in the human community.¹⁶¹ "Chastity is the virtue capable of guiding the living flow of love towards self-donation."¹⁶² As it entails sincere self-giving, it is obvious that the discipline of the feelings, passions, and emotions, which leads us to self-mastery, help us grow in love since it requires real self-giving.¹⁶³ Being modest is a moral virtue that moderates and controls a person's impulse to engage in sexual display. The English word modesty, which has the limited meaning of decency or a sense of decency, is the translation of the Latin word *pudicitia*.¹⁶⁴ It influences how we cloth, keep silence or exercise restraint in

¹⁵⁸ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

¹⁵⁹ CCC, 2337.

¹⁶⁰ CCC, 2338–39.

¹⁶¹ CCC, 2337–38; Kosnik, et al., *Human Sexuality*, 101; Coleman, *Human Sexuality*, 17; Kochuthara, "Love is Chaste," 14.

¹⁶² Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 347.

¹⁶³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 16; Kochuthara, *Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 346–47.

¹⁶⁴ The Greek word for modest is *epieikēs* which means fair, mild, gentle conduct (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2; 1 Pet 2:18), and the Greek word for modesty is *epieikeia* which denotes mildness, gentleness, fairness (2 Cor 10:1; Phil 4:5) or Greek word *praütēs* in the sense of gentleness, mildness, meekness (Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:25). See Steinmueller & Sullivan, *New Testament*, 438.

situations where there is a clear risk of unhealthy curiosity. Modesty guides our perception towards others and behaves in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.¹⁶⁵

In this teaching of the *Chavarul*, Chavara focuses the attention of the family members towards maintaining personal decorum in their interactions with others. Like a loving father, Chavara cautioned the family members to be modest in their postures of sitting, walking, lying, or playing, etc. He elaborated this precept by providing additional guidance on being modest by practising the rule of touch and dressed appropriately for the situation. Because, immodesty offends both God and human beings. For, many people have been brought to hell because of their immodest dressing and unchaste touch.

As a means of preserving chaste conduct, the Old Testament proposes the watchfulness of eyes and thoughts (Sir 9:5–9; Job 31:1), prayer (Ps 51:12; Sir 23:4–6) and temperance (Prov 20:1). As a reward for leading a chaste life, God's intimate friendship is assured (Ps 24:3–6; Prov 22:11; Wis 3:14–15).¹⁶⁶ There are outstanding individual examples of chastity in the Old Testament that include Joseph (Gen 39:9), Judith (Jdt 15:11; 16:26), Susanna (Dan 13:22–23), Sarah and Tobias (Tob 3:14–18; 8:4–9),¹⁶⁷ and so on. All these characters highlight their relationship with God as well as their faithfulness to God in leading a chaste life.

The sacredness and moral ideal of chastity are often emphasised throughout the New Testament. In the New Testament, both in the Gospels and epistles, modesty in looks, words, and general behaviour is inculcated (Mt 5:28; Lk 17:1; Rom 14:13; Eph 5:3–20; 2 Pet 2:14). Every Christian must practise chastity because they have been called by God unto sanctification (1 Thes 4:7–8, Eph 5:3); they belong to Christ (Gal 5:24); they are the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16); their body is also to be presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1), and their every kind of unchastity will exclude them from the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:16–21; Eph 5:5). For, chastity is a God-given adornment of human being, a fruit of the presence and action of the Spirit (Gal 5:23).¹⁶⁸ As means of preserving chastity, the Bible commends the vigilance of the eyes (Mt 5:29; 2 Pet 2:14;

¹⁶⁵ CCC, 2521, 2522.

¹⁶⁶ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 224.

¹⁶⁷ O'Riordan, "Chastity," 516.

¹⁶⁸ O'Riordan, "Chastity," 516.

Job 13:1–4; Sir 9:5–9), avoidance of bad company (Eph 5:7; 1 Thess 4:11), temperance (Eph 5:18; 1 Tim 5:23), prayer (2 Cor 13:7; 1 Pet 5:5), mortification (1 Cor 9:25–27), etc. The external modesty is very well explained in the epistles that teaches about the right demeanour in our appearance, expressions, and dressing (Rom 13:13; 1 Thess 4:12; Col 4:5; 1 Tim 2:9–12; 1 Pet 3:1–6).¹⁶⁹ The Epistles emphasise that the Christian woman should be characterized by her sexual modesty—“a gentle and quiet spirit” (I Tim 2:9–12; 1 Pet 3:1–6).¹⁷⁰

Chavara articulated these precepts for the families in line with this biblical understanding of the precious virtues of chastity and modesty. Like Paul who compared our body with the dwelling place of God and urged the people to maintain its dignity, Chavara admonished the families about the importance of being modest in our thoughts, words, and deeds, so that no soul would be lost in the flames of hell on account of their immodest and unchaste bearing.

2.2.1.2.2 Self-Discipline and Time Management

In order to bring discipline in the individual and family life, Chavara proposes a God-centred daily timetable for the family. He insists his people:

Ensure that you go to bed and get up in the morning punctually. Everyone shall abide by the following timetable strictly: At least by six o'clock in the morning, ensure that every member is up and recites the morning prayers. Then, all those who are able should attend the Holy Mass. Have breakfast at eight o'clock in the morning and lunch at twelve noon. In the evening, after praying the Angelus, all shall commonly recite the family prayers, which shall be followed by half an hour of meditation upon a theme based on what is read from good books. Do not interrupt the routine of family prayer even if some important guests or visitors turn up at your house at that time. For, while, on the one hand, you feel attending to the people visiting your home, you also feel the call of God, on the other; in fact, God is closely watching your choice. Hence, you should not fail in observing the virtuous act of family prayer; by strictly adhering to it, you set a good example for others. If they ridicule you, consider it to be a blessing. After supper at eight

¹⁶⁹ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *New Testament*, 438.

¹⁷⁰ O'Riordan, “Modesty,” 997.

o'clock, you shall make an examination of your conscience and say the night prayers, following which you shall go to bed.¹⁷¹

Chavara jotted down these lines of self-discipline and time management to bring order and harmony to the families. Orderliness in life is of great importance as it brings holistic well-being to one's life. The brevity of life impels us to make maximum out of it.

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara sketches out the plan of the day. *Prima facie*, one would assume that this outline solely speaks of the prayer timetable of the seminary or convent. But, when we carefully go through the lines of this extract, we discover that the author offers us the overall framework of the day. The excerpt discusses everything from rising to resting. According to Chavara, the key elements of the physical and emotional well-being of an individual are regular sleep habits, a routine maintained by self-discipline, proper food habits, prayer, meditation, introspection, and effective work habits. He received this trait of discipline and punctuality from his own home by his beloved parents.

During Chavara's childhood, it was the customary practise of every Christian family to devout their early hours together at the feet of the Lord, participating the Holy Eucharist. In the evening they would gather together for the family prayer and introspect that day's activities. He encouraged the reading habit in order to enhance the daily meditation. Chavara is very particular to remind the people that there should be no compromise for their daily routine, particularly the family prayer. Several researchers, like Mark et al., in the fields of health psychology, positive mental health, and organizational behaviour have repeatedly pointed out the importance of sleep, personal integrity, relaxation—including meditation and spiritual practices, as means to a healthy mind and body. For health is a state of well-being with physical, cultural, psychological, economic, and spiritual attributes, not simply the absence of illness.¹⁷²

Time management is an essential element of a disciplined life owing to its delicate nature. We find many references in the Holy Bible to surmount this transient nature of time. The book of Sirach is concluded with a strong counsel on time management: "Do your work in good time and in His own time God will give you your reward" (Sir 51:30). The tradition of praying in

¹⁷¹ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

¹⁷² Marks, Murray, Evans, Willing, Woodall, and Sykes, *Health Psychology*, 4.

the early hours of the morning is continued from the Old Testament: “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch” (Ps 5:3); “satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Ps 90:14); “let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust” (Ps 143:8); “I, O Lord, cry out to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you” (Ps 88:13). “Whoever loves her [wisdom] loves life, and those who seek her from early morning are filled with joy” (Sir 4:12). My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you” (Isa 26:9). Job, the blameless, upright, and God-fearing man, rose every day early in the morning to offer the sacrifice to the Lord and pray for his family (Job 1:1, 5).

The Scripture shows that Jesus’ day was recorded with regular intervals of prayers, in the early morning (Mk 1:35); during the day (Lk 5:16; 9:18; 11:1; Mt 14:19); in the evening (Mt 14:15, 19, 23; Mt 26:36, 39, 44; Mk 6:46; 14:32); and the whole night in prayer (Lk 6:12). Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom by drawing attention towards the importance and fulfilment of time: “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mk 1:15). The main priority in our day’s daily chores must be taken by God and things pertaining to Him: “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul cautioned the saints: “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time” (Eph 5:15–16); “conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time” (Col 4:5). The apostle James elicits the momentary nature of life: “You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (Jas 4:14). Therefore, most importantly, we need to schedule time for prayer and spiritual exercises. It is He who equips us to carry out the tasks He has given us.

By these advices, Chavara, in a way conveys the message that a routine maintained by self-discipline, prayer, meditation, introspection, effective work, and regular sleep are key elements to the physical and emotional well-being of an individual. Chavara was a man of deep vision who thought and acted far ahead of his time. His vision about the family and its dignity was facilitated with the profound contemplation on the Divine Word. He sketched out the timetable for the families to bring about the personal discipline in the families after the model of the ideal family habits and rubrics given in the Scripture.

2.2.1.2.3 “Do not Steal or Keep Stolen Things”

Chavara strongly prohibits theft and hoarding in his code of conduct for families, saying that doing so invites God’s wrath. He alerts the populace, “do not allow to keep stolen goods even for a short while in your house. The Holy Spirit has warned that a house harbouring stolen goods will go up in flames. Do not mingle with those who steal; for, certainly, they will not hesitate to steal your possessions. Moreover, you will have a share in their sin as well.”¹⁷³

Chavara elaborates the Seventh Commandment “do not steal” (Ex 20:15) as “do not allow to keep stolen goods.”¹⁷⁴ Stealing or joining the theft and storing them even for a short while spoils one’s integrity. Driving home this principle, Chavara cautions us by saying that “a house harbouring stolen goods will go up in flames.”¹⁷⁵ This reminds us of a narrative from the book of Joshua, where Achan violated the covenant by his disobedience and covetousness. God had commanded the Israelites to destroy the entire city of Jericho because of its great sin (Josh 6:17). But Achan took something that was forbidden by God and the entire Jewish nation was punished. It troubled the peace of the people and their relationship with God and God troubled Achan and his family by eliminating them completely (Josh 7:10–26).¹⁷⁶

As we analyse it in detail, the Hebrew verb *ganab* (steal) refers to the “unlawful secret taking of another person’s property without the owner’s knowledge and permission.”¹⁷⁷ The usage of this verb in the Hebrew Bible is not limited to denoting taking something away secretly but includes all kinds of deceptive behaviour commonly practised in ancient Israel, namely the use of inaccurate scales and weights (Deut 25:13–16). The general goal of these practises is to become rich even at the expense of others. In other words theft is for economic gain.¹⁷⁸ The prophets used the term *gazal* (Hebrew) for a wide range of economic exploitation, robbing the fatherless (Isa 10:2; Ezek 39:10); robbing the poor (Isa 3:14–15; Prov 22:22); this too

¹⁷³ *Chavarul*, I:17, 191.

¹⁷⁴ *Chavarul*, I:17, 191.

¹⁷⁵ *Chavarul*, I:17, 191.

¹⁷⁶ Cetina, “Joshua,” 534.

¹⁷⁷ Houtman, “Exodus,” 63–64. See also Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 104.

¹⁷⁸ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 423.

represented the offence of the powerful against the powerless, which implied rejection of the moral authority of God (Lev 19:11–13).¹⁷⁹ The most famous story in the Bible is depicting the fraud in Jezebel and King Ahab's plot to take possession of Naboth's vineyard by deceit and abuse of power, and Naboth's eventual murder (I Kings 21). The commandment "you shall not steal" (Ex 20:15) concerns respect for the property of the neighbour.¹⁸⁰ It aims to preserve neighbour's property, which is needed for sustaining life and family, as well as safeguard the freedom and dignity of the Israelites without favouritism and prejudice.¹⁸¹ Hence, theft is forbidden by the Decalogue (Ex 20:15; Deut 5:19) and various penalties are imposed upon the thief for stealing.¹⁸² In Lev 19:11, this commandment is combined with the other Commandments requiring honesty.¹⁸³ When the poor Tobit heard the bleating of a goat at home, he suspected that his wife might have stolen it and he said to her, "Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen" (Tob 2:13). Indeed, it was freely given to her with her wages.

In the New Testament, Jesus quotes the commandments to exhort the young man on how and what to do to inherit eternal life. This teaching included the prohibition of theft, which is given as the seventh commandment (Mt 19:16–30; Mk 10:17–22; Lk 18:18–30). Zacchaeus, the tax collector, who defrauded others to amass wealth, restored it fourfold after his encounter with Jesus and the conversion (Lk 19:1–9). The one who steals is characterised by theft, murder, and destruction. One who stands by God and walks in His ways, on the other hand, reflects His attributes of abundant life (Jn 10:7–10). The condemnation of robbery can also be seen in the Epistles. The thieves and robbers will be excluded from the inheritance of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:10; 1 Pet 4:15). Paul offers a wise counsel for those who try to live by stealing: "Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy" (Eph 4:28).

¹⁷⁹ Jackson, "Robbery," *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*, 937.

¹⁸⁰ Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1, 848.

¹⁸¹ Chan, *The Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes*, 105.

¹⁸² Steinmueller and Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 1037.

¹⁸³ "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord" (Lev 19:11). Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*, 42.

Stealing is a serious sin that causes harm to oneself, family, household, and the entire nation. At its core, the commandment against stealing is concerned with the value of justice, one of the foundational values of human society for a harmonious existence. The *Chavarul* places a strong emphasis on the necessity to respect the dignity of people, to safeguard their property, fame, name, and status, by never robbing them of any of these things. Chavara was enlightened by this biblical theme of upholding justice in a society where stealing is prohibited. Therefore, he firmly admonished the families against the sin of theft or joining a group that is committing it, but instead to be docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in leading a just and honest life.

2.2.1.2.4 Healthy Reading Habit

Reading books nourishes one's intellect and widens the horizons of knowledge and experience in life. So, Chavara notifies, "Scientific books of non-believers spread ignorance and erroneous knowledge. Collecting pagan or heretical books or those containing lewd songs in the house is identical to hiding fire in haystacks. Parents shall procure for their children the treasure of books packed with wisdom and philosophical knowledge that enhance piety. As much as possible, you shall buy and build up a collection of such books in your household."¹⁸⁴

Our reading can have a significant impact on every aspect of our lives, serving to inform, encourage, entertain, console, and even alter our mental and emotional attitudes. Reading books, magazines, and newspapers as a pastime was popular during Chavara's day because there were no modern forms of entertainment like radio, television, mobile phones, etc. These same means were also used to manipulate people with erroneous teachings and vulgarity. Therefore, children who grasp things faster in their tender age of growth and formation should be provided with a good number of books that will enlighten their hearts and minds and mould their behavioural patterns appropriately. Chavara wrote this piece of advice in the *Chavarul* to educate the families of the importance of reading good books. Reading between the lines of this precept, we can see Chavara's concern for the children who would be ruined as a result of the harmful books that are stacked in the homes, which he rightly compares with the fire hidden in haystacks.

¹⁸⁴ *Chavarul*, I:21, 194. *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 9/6, 142.

When Chavara speaks of pagan books, it does not indicate that those books are totally wrong, but that there can be things that impair the purity of thought.¹⁸⁵ In the *Compunction of the Soul*, Chavara, recalls his childhood experience in the *Kalari*, “all my colleagues...a few of them held not the Christian faith, and I, marking their deeds and my Master’s lofty words, fell to observing rituals like ablution in tanks and what not. A miserable fool! How often have I indulged in deeds of pagan blindness!”¹⁸⁶ In this regard, one should understand what Chavara intended. Though he learned many good things from *Kalari*, he also picked up a number of unnecessary ideas and practises that made him feel guilty. One of the reasons Chavara presented this recommendation to the families on the reading of pagan books was the experience that struck in his mind. This in no way implies a bias towards other religion, as Chavara was a driving force behind the establishment of the first Catholic Sanskrit school at Mannanam, which was open to everybody.¹⁸⁷

The schisms and heresies that were prevalent during the nineteenth-century had an impact on the Church as well. The false teachings and leadership that were spread among the faithful caused them to deviate from the Catholic faith. Print media was the primary mode of communicating these deceptive teachings. He advises parents to buy a collection of good books that evoke devotion to God and right thinking because children’s earliest learning takes place at home under the watchful eyes of their parents. Chavara further highlights the significance of reading good books by giving an edifying example of a beggar who was illiterate but bought books out of the alms he received, managed to have them read to him by people those who could read, and conformed himself to the noble way of life enshrined in them.¹⁸⁸ Knowledge helps people to mould their character, life, and family. Therefore, Chavara advises families to read good books and acquire knowledge.

The biblical vision of this precept sheds light on the formation of mind which takes place by acquiring the right knowledge and understanding. In the book of Proverbs, we read the father’s instruction to his son on

¹⁸⁵ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I:49–52, 2.

¹⁸⁶ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I:92–97, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Chalil, “Chavara’s Vision on Education,” 170.

¹⁸⁸ *Chavarul*, I:21, 194.

acquiring knowledge (Prov 2:3, 5).¹⁸⁹ The two special gifts granted to the wise person as a reward for observing the Commandments are the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God that constitutes the real wisdom (Prov 2:1–4; 5–8). In order to acquire full knowledge, the individual is advised to seek and heed the teaching of the wise person (Prov 1:1–7; 5:1; 13:14; Eccl 8:1). The fool, in turn, is the person who, instead of following the arduous road to wisdom, is satisfied with the primary impressions (Prov 12:15–17).¹⁹⁰ The knowledge of God implies knowledge of oneself as related to God (Ps 51:3).¹⁹¹ “He [God] gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Dan 2:21). The Holy Scripture also hints us about the heresies and false teachings that deviate the people from true worship: “If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens or portents...and they say, “let us follow other gods” (whom you have not known) “and let us serve them,” you must not heed the words of those prophets” (Deut 13:1–4). “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name...They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds” (Jer 14:14).

The words knowledge (*gnosis*—Greek) and discernment (*aisthēsis*—Greek) are placed side by side as the expressions and functions of love.¹⁹² Both knowledge and discernment contribute to our spiritual growth in remaining pure and blameless. “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Mt 7:24; Phil 1:9–10). The New Testament gives us profound teaching on the underlying threat of being led astray by the false prophets: “If anyone says to you, ‘Look! Here is the Messiah!’ or ‘There he is! Do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Mt 24:23–24; Mk 13:14–23; Lk 17:23–24, 37; 21:20–24); “then Jesus began to say to them, ‘Beware that no one leads you astray’” (Mk 13:5; Lk 21:8; Mt 24:4).

St. Paul’s anguish about the Church being threatened by the misleading doctrines of the Antichrist is explicit in his letters to various churches: “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 11:13);

¹⁸⁹ Schütz, “Knowledge,” 391.

¹⁹⁰ Piper, “Knowledge,” 43.

¹⁹¹ Piper, “Knowledge,” 45.

¹⁹² Schütz, “Knowledge,” 391.

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” (Gal 1:6); “we must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery” (Eph 4:14); “for the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate from themselves teachers to suit their own desires” (2 Tim 4:3). This teaching regarding heresies and schisms is also found in the other Epistles: “Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers, the way of truth will be maligned” (2 Pet 2:2); “beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 Jn 4:1).

As a passionate reader himself, Chavara was well aware of how reading impacts our lives as well as the general structure of our thinking and mental processes. Chavara was inspired by the biblical vision of right teaching and discernment, which enhances our piety, virtues, and relationship with God, to motivate the families by giving input on this topic of reading good books.

2.2.1.2.5 Work with Dignity

Chavara stresses the need of hard work in the following precept by saying, “labour according to your status in life. Refusing to work is not the style of a respectable person, but would fit only the indecent, who do not have a family and progeny. Laziness is the mother of all vices; it ends up inculcating bad habits such as drinking. Alcoholism is a reprehensible evil in society and the worst act before God.”¹⁹³

The above precept of Chavara comes as a reproof to those who indulge themselves in the lethargy and slumber that give space to many vices originating from it. An idle mind is the devil’s workshop. Human beings are created to participate in God’s activity through their most ordinary everyday activities. For, while providing for their families and themselves, men and women are performing their activities in a way that serves society as a whole. They can legitimately believe that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator’s work, considering the benefits of their siblings, and making a personal contribution to the realization of the divine plan.¹⁹⁴ The most profound motive for understanding the dignity of human work in

¹⁹³ *Chavarul*, I:12, 189.

¹⁹⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 34 (AAS 58:1052–53).

various fields is the awareness that humans share in the work of creation through their labour.

*Lumen Gentium*¹⁹⁵ urges the faithful to understand the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as how it orients to the glory of God. They must therefore exert themselves actively by being competent in secular domains and by engaging in personal activity, elevating from within by the grace of Christ. So that by human labour, technical skill, and civil culture created goods can be improved in accordance with the design of the Creator and the light of the Word.¹⁹⁶ Successful people are known for their hard work. In other words, we can say that hard work and success are two faces of the same coin. Chavara explains the importance of hard work through a simile of Kathon, a Roman chieftain, who not only ordered that everyone desirous of living in Rome should show his or her toughened hands resulting from hard work to merit the disposition but also decreed that the Nobles and the Lords carry with them the tools of their respective trades when they are out on the streets.¹⁹⁷

When we turn to the Bible, the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis describes work as the mystery of the creation of human beings. Since only humans possess the unique characteristic of likeness to God, it demonstrates that what the dignity of work consists of and teaches that human beings ought to imitate God, their Creator, in their work.¹⁹⁸ Human beings are created as the keepers of God's creation. Therefore, hard work is the criterion to qualify for this purpose. It is the way we show our love and dedication to God. Through work, we use our talents and abilities to honour the One who has given them to us. We serve God by fulfilling His creation-ordained purpose for humans.¹⁹⁹ The Book of Sirach says that everybody should have the habit of working hard according to their status (Sir 7:15; 40:1); refusing to work does not make one respectable or acceptable. Society does not accept a lazy person, nor is that person entrusted with any charge. A lazy person cannot enjoy life by sitting idle on the cot. The

¹⁹⁵ Hereafter, in the text, *Lumen Gentium* is referred to as *LG*.

¹⁹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 36 (AAS 57:41–42).

¹⁹⁷ *Chavarul*, I:12, 189.

¹⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercern*, 25 (AAS 73:639).

¹⁹⁹ Irudayam, "The Ethical Value of Human Work," 531.

Book of Proverbs exhorts us to learn from the industrious ants that work to store up food for themselves (Prov 6:6–8).²⁰⁰

Laziness is the mother of all vices. David committed adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba when he was sitting idle in his palace without going to war and later killed Uriah (2 Sam 11:1–26). It gives birth to its disgraceful progeny, like alcoholism. The Holy Bible teaches us that drinking or getting drunk with intoxicating beverages brings disgrace to people and blocks the ability to reason and make proper decisions (Prov 31:4–5). “Wine and beer make people loud and uncontrolled” (Prov 20:1). Chavara was very much aware of the plight of families indulged in alcoholism, which robbed them of the peace and prosperity of life. Therefore, he strongly condemned this addiction.

In the New Testament, as Jesus said, “my Father is still working,” (Jn 15:17) God's work in the world is continuing. He works with salvific power in the hearts of those whom He predestined from the beginning for “rest” (Heb 4:1, 9–10) in union with himself in his “Father's house” (Jn 14:2) and he works with creative power by sustaining the universe that he brought into existence from nothing.²⁰¹ Jesus, the Son of God, shows approval of hard work by being born into the family of a carpenter who met their daily bread through hard work (Mk 6:3). He came not to be served but to serve (Mt 20:28). In his parables on the Kingdom of God Jesus Christ constantly refers to human work: that of shepherd (Jn 10:1–16), of farmers (Mk 12:1–12), the doctor (Lk 4:23), the Sower (Mk 4:1–9), the householder (Mt 13:52), the servants (Mt 24:45; Lk 12:42–48), the steward (Lk 16:1–8), the fishermen (Mt 13:47–50), the merchants (Mt 13:45–46), the labourers (Mt 20:1–16). He compares the apostolate to the manual work of harvesters or fishermen (Mt 9:37; Jn 4:35–38).

The Apostle Paul's teachings have a particularly strong resemblance to this teaching of Christ. Paul boasts of working at his trade (he was probably a tent-maker) (Acts 18:3) and how, as an Apostle, he was able to support himself because of it (Acts 20:34–35). “With toil and labour, we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you” (2 Thess 3:8; 1 Cor 9:6–14; Gal 6:6; 2 Thess 3:9). Considering this, Paul gives instructions on the subject of labour in the form of an exhortation and a command and he

²⁰⁰ Kaniarakath, “St. Kuriakose Chavara: A Teacher of Family Theology,” 92.

²⁰¹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercern*, 25 (AAS 73:639).

writes to the Thessalonians: “Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living” (2 Thess 3:12). In fact, the Apostle does not think twice to declare in the same context: “We hear that some of you are living in idleness...not doing any work” (2 Thess 3:11), “if anyone will not work, let him not eat” (2 Thess 3:10). In another passage he encourages his readers: “Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward” (Col 3:23–24).

Paul’s teachings are unquestionably crucial for the morality and spirituality of human work. They are an essential addition to the great though discreet gospel of work that we find in the life and parable of Christ, in what Jesus “did and taught” (Acts 1:1).²⁰² He reminds us of our duty to work for the well-being of the family and reprimands the idlers for their great sin of laziness: “And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim 5:8). Based on these teachings, Church always proclaimed through her teachings that just as human activity proceeds from humans, so it is ordered towards humans. For when a person works, he or she not only alters things and society, but he or she also develops as a person.²⁰³

Chavara counsels that idleness breeds undesirable habits, such as drunkenness. Alcoholism, one of the biggest pests that infects the family, is strictly forbidden in the New Testament: “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness” (Lk 21:34). Paul admonishes: “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery” instead “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Since idleness can lead to drunkenness and other vices like fornication, robbery, idolatry, greediness, which are known as the works of the flesh (Gal 5: 19–21), and prevent us from inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:10), no contact with such people is appreciated (1 Cor 5:11).

The teachings on hard work given in this precept of the *Chavarul* seem to be based on the source of the divine Word. Like St. Paul, who exhorted the community in his strong words about hard work and vices that originate from idleness like alcoholism, Chavara conscientized the families about the

²⁰² John Paul II, *Laborem Exercern*, 26 (AAS 73:642–43).

²⁰³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 35 (AAS 58: 1053).

value of working with dignity to meet the needs of the family and the dangers of alcoholism and vices related to it, which bring families to destruction. He says that it is the responsibility of each person to understand the dignity of work and engage industriously for the betterment of their family and society at large and participates in God's work. One should toil for one's own food.²⁰⁴ There is no shortcut to prosperity; it only comes with hard work. It is an honoured quality.²⁰⁵

2.2.1.3 Inter-Personal Relationships in Family Life

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Inter-personal relationships between family members and individuals set the trend for the quality of relationships within society. When these relationships are rooted in strong values, the links within society remain strong. This section of interpersonal relationships deals with various topics like loving and forgiving one another, honouring parents, charity, establishing justice, financial ethics, avoiding unchristian gossip, and meddling. Through these precepts on the aforesaid topics, Chavara gives us a framework of an ideal family in the image of heaven, where love is held high as the supreme value.

2.2.1.3.1 "Love One Another"

The *Chavarul* lists the succeeding precept as the first of the family codes, and it deals with forgiveness, love, and harmony in the family. Chavara gives guidelines to parents,

"Love one another" (Jn 13:34). Forgive the mistake and shortcomings of each other. If you do so, you will experience peace on earth and eternal reward in heaven. How lamentable it is to find a home where there is discord and acrimony between brothers and sisters. Our Lord himself has stated that every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined (Mt 12:25). A family that experiences discord and fight among its members will soon perish. If you are not ready to forgive the mistake and wrongdoings of your family members, how will they forgive you? If they should forgive you for mistakes you may make in future, should you not forgive them today for theirs? If you love only those who have not harmed you, then you are doing what people of other faiths and total strangers, who do not know each other, do. Should you voluntarily create more

²⁰⁴ Kurup, "A New Code for Economic Justice," 311.

²⁰⁵ Anders, *Proverbs*, 289.

woes and difficulties than what our great father Adam has bequeathed already? Woe unto those who cause quarrels in families!²⁰⁶

Forgiveness is the cord that binds them together in true love. United we stand, divided we fall. Chavara simplifies this principle of unity in the family with the help of the Word of God— “every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined.”²⁰⁷ He expressed his sorrow for the harsh and strife-filled families and urged them to take the initiative in asking for forgiveness from the other family members. The unconditional forgiveness and mutual love are the hallmark of Christianity. Forgiving our wrongdoers brings us peace and makes us worthy of eternal reward. Showing kindness and forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Chavara used an anecdote from the life of Emperor Constantine to illustrate this point, showing how his extraordinary act of forgiveness allowed him to conquer his adversary.²⁰⁸

The image of “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). This image of unconditional forgiveness and mercy is very well portrayed in the Scriptures. In the book of Exodus, we read: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:6–7). Going through the pages of the Old Testament, we understand the different facets of this forgiving love. Joseph loved his brothers and forgave them for their ill-treatment towards him and helped them in the time of their misfortunes (Gen 45–47). Abraham showed his greatness and generosity in avoiding strife with his brother Lot: “Let there be no strife between you and me” (Gen 13:8).

In the New Testament, love is presented as the criterion of the followers of Christ: “By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). This is the new commandment that the Lord has given us: “Love one another...as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34;

²⁰⁶ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

²⁰⁷ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

²⁰⁸ Once, while the Emperor was walking along the road escorted by his royal troop, a man from the street came up and slapped him. Immediately, his people sought permission to retaliate and kill the offender. The Emperor replied that if I do what even my lowest officer can do, what merit is there in it? I, however, forgive him and that is the mark of the great might I have as an Emperor. *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

15:12). Love is the fulfilment of all the laws and the prophets (Mt 22:40). The Johannine letters portray this love as an incarnation of God, for God is love, and to love God is to fulfil his commandment, the commandment to “love one another” (1 Jn 4:20–21). Jesus’ teachings on love are revolutionary. He does not stop by saying simply to love one another but demands from us to walk an extra mile to love those who cause harm to us. Love for the enemies is the most difficult and challenging element among the ethical teachings in the bible. “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Lk 6:27–28; Mt 5:44). Jesus expands on this teaching by proposing four practical ways to express love: turning the other cheek when struck, giving up the shirt when the coat is taken, going a second mile when forced to go one mile, and giving to all who beg from you (Lk 6:29–30; Mt 5:39–42). The goal of this teaching is to break the cycle of hatred and violence and to make possible a new set of human relationships in which former enemies might become neighbours. Love of enemies may require an even higher ethical stance or principle than non-violent resistance and the golden rule.²⁰⁹ This higher morality involves the genuine imitation of God: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36); and “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). God cares for both the good and evil, for both the righteous and the unrighteous. God’s love extends even to the enemies of God (Mt 5:45).²¹⁰

Unforgiveness causes deviation within the family that gradually lead to the destruction of the family itself. “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand” (Mt 12:25); “if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Mt 6:14); “whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses” (Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37). Do not repay evil for evil, but consider what is noble in the eyes of all (Rom 12:17). In a nutshell, Jesus says that if we have anything against anyone, forgive them whenever we stand to pray. For, “love is patient; love is kind...It bears all things...endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4–7). These are general characteristics of love, but they are also oriented to ethical action.²¹¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and

²⁰⁹ Harrington and Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics*, 80–81.

²¹⁰ Harrington and Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics*, 81.

²¹¹ Mitchell, “1 Corinthians,” 1612.

anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Eph 4:31–32). Here high standards are set for the virtue. The pattern for forgiveness is God’s gracious forgiveness of us in Christ.²¹² “Bear with one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col 3:13). Just as the Lord has forgiven us, so we are also to forgive. “Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels” (2 Tim 2:23–26). Paul speaks of verbal disputes and emphasises the characteristics of a Christian: patience, tolerance, gentleness, repentance, and knowledge of truth.²¹³

Chavara, who was profoundly motivated by the biblical values of love and forgiveness, was able to effectively provide an antidote to the families who were experiencing friction and disharmony in accordance with the biblical vision of family ethics. He exhorted the families that Christian family to be known for its unconditional, forgiving love that promote peace and harmony.

2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity

In his *Chavarul*, Chavara emphasises the value of charitable acts performed for our less fortunate fellow humans as the primary condition for being recorded in the daily book of life. He underlines, “days on which you have not rendered any good to others will not be reckoned in the book of life. Be desirous of others’ love and respect than they becoming fearful of you. Let no beggar leave your home empty-handed; likewise, do not hesitate, as much as you can, to give alms.”²¹⁴

The word *charity* is derived from the Latin word *caritas*, which means family affection, friendship, and patriotism. Christians used “*caritas*” to translate the Greek *agape*—impregnating the Latin word with all the meaning of the Greek term in Holy Scripture and particularly in the teachings of Jesus.²¹⁵ The Hebrew root verb *’āhēb* has got three meanings. The first one is God’s love for human beings; the second is human beings’

²¹² Gillman, “The Letter to the Ephesians,” 1683.

²¹³ Viviano, “2 Timothy,” 1750.

²¹⁴ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

²¹⁵ Scaduto, “Works of Charity,” 480.

love for God; and the third is the love between the human beings.²¹⁶ In general, *caritas* stands for a state of being in which we respond to God's love and favour in accordance with His self-revelation in the Scriptures. Charity, one of the greatest theological virtues, impels us to love our neighbours as ourselves.²¹⁷ It is about loving, about intensely loving God, neighbour, and self.²¹⁸

In this precept of the *Chavarul*, Chavara highlights the need for charity towards our needy fellow beings as the primary requisite of being enrolled in the daily book of life. Our acts of charity make us more lovable and respectable in the eyes of others. Being charitable means, being generous. Whatever we have is a gift from God and is to be shared with all our fellow beings. Hence, Chavara makes it a point that even the beggars who come to our doorsteps must not be sent back without giving them the appropriate aid. Chavara explained this precept with the example of a man who performed at least one charitable act daily. He was convinced that God the Creator had decreed it obligatory to do some good to others every day. One day, while at supper, recalling that he had not done any good to anyone on that day, he kept his food aside and went off to attend to the matter first and then came back to have his supper.²¹⁹

The *Dirge*²²⁰ begins with a quotation from Ecclesiastes: "The day of death is better than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting" (Eccl 7:1–2). Our mundane concerns, our kith and kin, and our bodies are friends who do not come to our aid when death approaches. The real friend and the friend in need are the virtues. Chavara explains it by enumerating a story of a man who was sentenced to death by the king. When he approached three of his intimate friends to save him from this agony, they excused themselves and went

²¹⁶ Gilby, "Charity," 465.

²¹⁷ Gilby, "Charity," 464.

²¹⁸ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, 49–50.

²¹⁹ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

²²⁰ *Dirge* is a poem of 1162 lines in a popular chant style called *parvam/pana*. *Maranaveettil Padanulla Parvam* (the song to be sung in a bereaved family) is the original name given by Chavara. Chavara illustrates several didactic stories to make the message clear to people and concludes with good, solid messages. There are no sections or separations to indicate each story, but they are all written at a stretch. See Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 115–116.

away. Finally, one man came forward whom he had met very rarely in his life but was not so close to him. He reassured him that he would assist him with whatever issue arose, not only in the event of death but also after death. The man felt happy and was relieved of his worry.²²¹

Chavara elucidates in the poem that the man's wealth, health, and people were his three friends who betrayed him at the time of his death. None of them is of any help at the time of death: wealth is useless, health has been lost, and people are listless. They really cannot prevent death. The fourth friend who offered to stand by him even after death, represents the few good deeds he had done during his lifetime, such as acts of charity. In other words, they accompany us even beyond death and defend us before God.²²² Through this story what Chavara wants to communicate is that the acts of charity—as he described in the *Chavarul*,²²³ follow us even after death. This story can be interpreted as a call to families to be charitable in their thoughts, words, and deeds.

The obligation to love God is our fundamental duty. This duty to love God (Ps 31:24) with filial affection (Deut 13:3; Sir 7:32) and an undivided heart (Deut 30:6) implies wholehearted service (Deut 10:12; 11:13) and the observance of the Commandments. God spoke through Isaiah: “If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday” (Is 58:10).²²⁴ Isaiah, in his oracles regarding falls and true worship, states that the kind of fasting that the Lord desires from us is to share our bread with the hungry (Isa 58:7). Chavara also instructs us to be generous in giving, for “a generous person will be enriched” (Prov 11:25). “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full” (Prov 19:17). It is the duty of the community to uplift those who are left behind by giving them whatever is needed out of generosity: “You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be” (Deut 15:7–8; Lev 25:35).

²²¹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Dirge*, Canto:120–210, 132–35.

²²² CWC, Vol. 2: *Ātmānuthāpam, Dirge, Martyrdom of Anasthasia, Dirge*, Canto:121–210, 132–35. Also see Kochumuttam, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 172–173.

²²³ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190; I:15, 190; I:16, 191.

²²⁴ Butler, *Isaiah*, 335.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus articulates the image of a true neighbour. This parable elucidates that every human being with whom we come into contact is our neighbour (Lk 10:29–37).²²⁵ Jesus declared that the two inseparable commandments are love of God and the love of neighbour. They are two aspects of the same virtue of charity, which serves as the central axis around which all of His teachings revolve. Loving God entails striving to be like Him, to replicate His universal goodness to human beings, who have a right to our love and, if necessary, our forgiveness (Mt 5:43–48).²²⁶ The ‘golden rule’ advocated by Jesus also implies love for all: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31). Even our enemies are not excluded from this love (Mt 5:43–48; Lk 6:27–28). For God does not forget works of love done in His name (Heb 6:10), and will reward charitable acts of any kind, no matter how small, such as giving someone a cup of water to drink for Christ’s sake (Mt 9:41; 25:35–40). “Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you” (Mt 5:42). “Your alms have been remembered before God” (Acts 10:2–4, 31). “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). The dominant theme is that God first loved us (1 Jn 4:9) and commends His charity toward us in the death of His Son (Rom 5:8–10). Our love, in return, springs from the New Man who is now dead to sin and born afresh to life in Christ (Jn 3:3; Rom 6:6; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10; 1 Pet 1:23). St. John sketches out the key idea of God as charity (1 Jn 4:16), whereas St. Paul puts this charity as the bond of union (Rom 12:10; Eph 4:15; Col 1:4; 3:14).²²⁷ Love of neighbour in Christ’s teaching (Jn 15:17) is not something optional, but a categorical imperative that all disciples must obey in order to belong to the Master. St. John says that anyone who says that she or he loves God and at the same time hates her or his sister or brother, is a liar (1 Jn 4:20). According to St. Paul, the man who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14).²²⁸ St. James says that our care and concern for others must be made tangible through our works. For James, work means “merciful deeds” of social concern for the less privileged (Jas 2:14–17).²²⁹ Therefore, Christians are advised to make charity their aim (1 Cor 14:1) and encourage each other to do the good

²²⁵ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *New Testament*, 404.

²²⁶ Scaduto, “Works of Charity,” 480.

²²⁷ Gilby, “Charity,” 464.

²²⁸ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *New Testament*, 402–403.

²²⁹ Felder, “James,” 1794.

works (Heb 10:24).²³⁰ By explaining the precept on love, St. Peter reminds us that the duty to love one's neighbour has its foundation in the call and the supernatural rebirth of every Christian (1 Pet 1:22–23; 3:9). According to Christian ethics, an act is considered good only after a right relationship with the neighbour is established based on the circumstances, consequences, and common good.²³¹

By explaining the precept on love, Chavara reminds us that the duty to love one's neighbour is founded on the calling and the supernatural rebirth of every Christian (1 Pet 1:22–23; 3:9). God does not forget the works of love that are performed in His name (Heb 6:10), and will reward deeds of charity, no matter how small, such as giving someone a cup of water to drink for the sake of Christ (Mt 9:41). Chavara also instructs to be generous in giving, for “a generous person will be enriched” (Prov 11:25). The precept on love, as explained in the light of the divine Word, teaches families the importance of being generous and charitable. The central theme of this precept is found in the biblical teaching on true charity and its worth before God. As a result, we can see how Chavara was motivated by the divine Word and made an attempt to instil the virtues of charity and generosity in the members of the family.

2.2.1.3.3 Justice to the Poor

Chavara, in his advice from the *Chavarul*, directs the families to treat the labourers and the poor with respect and justice. He admonishes, “Do not deny or delay just wages to labourers; for, it is a grave sin crying out before the throne of God. Do not humiliate or trouble the poor; for, God will seek retribution from you on account of their tears.”²³² This precept of Chavara is an excellent exemplar for the universality of his teachings. He reiterated that not paying wages and not paying them in time are grave sins that cannot be washed away with confessions. This sprang up from his innate sense of social justice rooted in the scriptures, and served as a warning to the rich, including Christians who paid their labourers no wages except a

²³⁰ Steinmueller & Sullivan, *New Testament*, 404.

²³¹ Meilaender and Werpehowski, *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 360.

²³² *Chavarul*, I:18, 192.

meal.²³³ Even the feelings of a hired man who was poor and needy are to be taken into account.²³⁴

Justice means impartiality or equity, which states that every human being should be treated in accordance with what it means to be human. To be human is to be one who bears the image of God and who has a divine calling to fulfil.²³⁵ The Catholic approach to justice has its roots in the Hebrew Scripture. The Hebrew words, *mišpāt* and *šēdāḳā*, are translated as justice. While *mišpāt* refers to particular duties and responsibilities of an individual, *šēdāḳā* refers to God's righteousness and hence brings judgement not on particular acts but on the person as a whole.²³⁶ The expression of justice in Greek, given as *dikaiosunē* strictly refers to the virtue which gives each one his or her due. In the general sense, justice is defined as the virtue, quality, or condition of a person or thing that conforms to the norm of honesty, to the law, or to the will of God.²³⁷

In this counsel of the *Chavarul*, Chavara advises the families to treat the labourers with respect and justice. Chavara had a soft corner for the labourers who are the sole breadwinners of their families and earn their livelihood by shedding the sweat of their brows. Their daily wage meant a lot to them, and losing it or being delayed would have serious consequences for their well-being. According to Chavara, God, who hears the cries of the impoverished and oppressed, would not stand for this kind of social injustice and harassment of the downtrodden. Oppressing the poor is a grave sin that cries out before the throne of God and melts down His tender heart. Therefore, doing injustice to the downtrodden would instigate the Lord's wrath upon us. This instruction sprang from Chavara's innate sense of social justice and served as a warning to the rich, including the Christians, who often paid their labourers no wages except a meal.

Both the Old and New Testament histories substantiate that God is the God of justice. God's ways are mysterious and may not be logical to human understanding. God is very particular about maintaining justice, because justice does not exclude anyone from the realm of His love.²³⁸ In common

²³³ Vasudevan Nair, "Chavara: The Solitary Star of Excellence," 53.

²³⁴ McIntosh, *Deuteronomy*, Vol. 3, 283.

²³⁵ Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus: Living a Christian Life*, 320.

²³⁶ Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, 19.

²³⁷ Steinmueller and Kathryn, *New Testament*, 368–69.

²³⁸ Kochalumkal, "God is the God of Justice," 67-84.

parlance, the term “justice of God,” refers to either a vindictive designation, that is, the justice by which God punishes sinners, or a distributive attribute, that is, the justice by which He punishes sinners and rewards the just.²³⁹ In its exhortation on establishing social justice for the labourers, the *Chavarul* reminds the families of the remarkable instructions given in the Book of Pentateuch regarding the payment of just wages to the workers. The book of Leviticus prohibits keeping the daily wages of the workers with us: “You shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning” (Lev 19:13). Similarly, Deuteronomy elaborates on the humane character of the deal: “You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise, they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt” (Deut 24:15),²⁴⁰ and thereby bring God’s wrath on the people who deny it.

The Old Testament also speaks of the injustice done to the employers by their masters: “Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me” (Gen 31:7). “You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning” (Lev 19:13). “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns” (Deut 24:14). The word of God preached by Isaiah presses on to “Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3). This exhortation has been very well spelt out in Zachariah: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Render true judgements, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and not devise evil in your hearts against one another” (Zach 7:8–10). Amos emphasized this fact when he said, “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Am 5:24).²⁴¹

According to the Old Testament understanding, the messianic era is the time of perfect establishment of justice.²⁴² Thus, Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, declares blessed those who suffer persecution for justice’s sake (Mt 5:10). He demands that the members of His kingdom have greater

²³⁹ Crossan, “Justice of God,” 73.

²⁴⁰ McIntosh, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Deuteronomy*, Vol. 3, 283–84.

²⁴¹ Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus: Living a Christian Life*, 322.

²⁴² Crossan, “Justice of God,” 73.

justice than the Scribes and Pharisees (Mt 5:20), that they seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, that is, the righteousness that God demands and is conformable to His will (Mt 6:33). The parable of the labourers in the vineyard gives us an idea about the sound teaching of just wages. Here, Jesus wanted to explain that justice does not seek the superficial logic of the world but prioritizes the basic needs of human sustenance. In this parable, the landowner is showing no partiality or injustice to his labourers, who were hired at different hours of the day. His principle of giving a just wage to a labourer was in the light of providing an amount sufficient for the survival of the labourer and his or her family (Mt 20:1–16). The remuneration for the work done is the right of the labourer, which must not be delayed or denied: “The labourer deserves to be paid” (Lk 10:7; 1 Tim 5:18). St. James cautions us of the wrath that can be incurred by keeping the wages of those who have worked for us: “The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (Jas 5:4).

Chavara, the social reformer of his time, was set on fire by the plight of the poor who were oppressed by the unjust system and people. His sense of justice and equality was rooted on the fear of God and the value of justice highlighted in the Scripture. Therefore, through the *Chavarul*, he desired to bring about a revolution in the prevalent structure of society.

2.2.1.3.4 Unchristian Conversation and Gossiping

Chavara instructs people not to pollute the sacred environment of their homes by speaking ill of others or gossiping about them. “Let everyone know that your house is not a place for indecent talk, unchristian conversations, grumbling, and uncharitable criticism of neighbours or anyone else. You must know that punishment will befall upon you for entertaining discussion on the shortcomings and evil deeds of others in your home.”²⁴³ The space of one’s home is sacred because God is present in their midst and it must always be kept sacred.²⁴⁴ Gossiping can be harmful not only to the one who is gossiping but also to others. It is good to find ways to limit one’s own gossiping tendencies as well as not engage in gossip with other people. Charitable and correct use of the tongue is very important in

²⁴³ *Chavarul*, I:10, 188–189.

²⁴⁴ Mampra, “*Chavarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 10.

interpersonal relationships. What we say has a lasting impact. Therefore, our speech can do great good, but it can also deeply hurt others.²⁴⁵

The Holy Scripture sheds light on several ways in which the speech of a person can become a boon or a bane. Various books in the Old Testament speak to us about the malice that lies veiled in gossip and uncharitable speech. The excerpts condemning the spread of slander and its effects can be quoted as “you shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness” (Ex 23:1), “you shall not go around as a slanderer among your people” (Lev 19:16; Prov 10:18; 11:9; 11:13); the tongue has the power of death and life (Prov 18:21); the verbal lash breaks bones (Prov 25:15).²⁴⁶ A lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked plans, a lying witness who testifies falsely, are included in the list of things that the Lord hates (Prov 6:16–19). According to the Psalmist, those who slander with their tongue would not be allowed to live in the temple of God, but only those who are blameless (Ps 15:2–3). In the book of Sirach, Ben Sira writes extensively regarding speech. According to him: “A fool’s chatter is like a burden on a journey, but delight is found in the speech of the intelligent. The utterance of a sensible person is sought in the assembly, and they ponder his word in their minds” (Sir 21:16–17).

In Sir 28:8–26, there are four sections in which destructive speech is viewed from various angles. The first section (Sir 28:8–12) points out destructive speech as the root of strife, discord, and bloodshed; it is the mouth that can either ignite the flame or put it out (Sir 28:12). The second unit on slander (Sir 28:13–16) focuses on its effects in destroying peace (Sir 28:13–16). In the third part (Sir 28:17–23) the destructive power of the tongue is illustrated by a series of comparisons (28:24–26) is the direct advice to the wise about being cautious in speech.²⁴⁷ To stop slandering others, Ben Sira stresses the need for the control of the tongue by saying, “as you fence your property with thorns, so make a door and a bolt for your mouth” (Sir 28:25).²⁴⁸ He advises us to take care not to err with our tongue, and fall victim to one lying in wait (Sir 28:26). “Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you” (Sir 3:23).

²⁴⁵ Anders, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Proverbs*, 220.

²⁴⁶ Anders, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Proverbs*, 222.

²⁴⁷ Harrington, “Sirach,” 940.

²⁴⁸ Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 5, 772.

The New Testament puts forward the pros and cons of the use of the tongue. The simile of the good tree and the bad tree and its fruit tells us about the quality of the person from his or her speech. For it is said, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). Therefore, Jesus said, “I tell you, on the day of judgement you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words, you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:36–37). Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops” (Lk 12:3).²⁴⁹ Jesus said that those who insult others are liable to the council; he even prohibits anyone from calling others “you fool” as the utterance of such words would inherit the fire of hell (Mt 5:22). The letter of St. James contains a sound teaching on taming the tongue (Jas 3:1–12). He compares the tongue with a bridle, a rudder, fire, restless evil, and deadly poison. “From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing” (Jas 3:10). This dual nature of the tongue is also explained in the letter of St. Peter. “Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit” (1 Pet 3:9–10).²⁵⁰

In the light of his biblical views, Chavara’s teachings regarding unchristian conversation and gossip can be paraphrased. Christians are expected to be known for their genuine love and compassion for one another, which motivates them to practise patience and kindness and refrain from gossip, boasting, arrogance, or rude talk (Rom 12:9; 1 Cor 13:4–5). Those who do not refrain from these practises ceased to be Christians. Therefore, Chavara counselled the Christian families to be free from unchristian talks and unkind criticism.

2.2.1.3.5 Meddling in Others’ Affairs

Chavara’s guidelines for families, stresses doing one’s own obligations in accordance with God’s will rather than meddling in other people’s affairs. “Do not go from door to door seeking news about others. For, if you were to discharge your own duties well, you would not have time to peep unnecessarily into the affairs of others.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ *Chavarul*, I:10, 188–89.

²⁵⁰ Brown, “1 Peter,” 1817.

²⁵¹ *Chavarul*, I:7, 188.

Everyone is entitled to their own personal space in life. It is forbidden to intrude on someone else's private enclosure without their consent. The aforementioned precept of Chavara is a staunch prohibition against people who ferret about in other people's matters. During his pastoral ministry, Chavara encountered numerous situations where meddling in other people's concerns paved the way for a number of problems in their family lives. Chavara himself was a person of principles. His active apostolic life did not prevent him from having interior recollection. He was always focused on his Lord, seeking His will always and everywhere. His daily schedule was jotted down with a number of chores, ranging from his monastic activities to his work in the apostolic field.

In the Old Testament, we find many places where the Scripture presages us about meddling in others' affairs. The pros and cons of indulging in others' matters are put forward as: "A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends" (Prov 16:28). "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore, do not associate with a simple babbler" (Prov 20:19). The meddlers are compared with anyone who annoys a passing dog: "Like somebody who takes a passing dog by the ears, is one who meddles in the quarrel of another" (Prov 26:17). Meddling in quarrels, deceiving one's neighbour, and making light of it are abuses of speech. Gossip is destructive (Prov 26:20–22); false and flattering speech sound fine, but are abominable and will stand revealed (Prov 26:23–26). Proverb predicts ruin for the lying tongue and flattering mouth (Prov 26:27–28).²⁵²

The New Testament gives us many references to the above edict. In the Gospel of Matthew, the evangelist articulates the words of Jesus, "why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? (Mt 7:3). St. Paul intimates Timothy about the meddlers, "they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house, and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say" (1 Tim 5:13). He urges us to aspire to live quietly, to mind our own affairs, and to work with our hands (1 Thess 4:11).

Chavara disapproved of the newsmongers who wasted their time in favour of going door-to-door collecting news and paid little attention to their own work. Through this *Chavarul*, which is in the light of the Word of God,

²⁵² Hayward, "Proverbs," 733.

Chavara intended to shed light on this darker area of life and re-educate them about refraining from interfering in other people's lives unnecessarily.

2.2.1.3.6 Ethical Finance Code for Families

In today's fast-paced world, where success is equated to 'having more' than in 'being more,' it is common to see unethical work and financial practices, extravagant spending, imbalanced use of wealth, power, and pride. Chavara's advice in this regard is praiseworthy and incredible.

2.2.1.3.6.1 Extravagance and Miserliness

Chavara reminds us that both extravagance and miserliness are unbecoming for Christian families. "Extravagance and miserliness are both sinful. Worms will devour the wealth of a miser. The luxuries of an extravagant will vanish like smoke."²⁵³ He continues,

Do not show off the status of your wealth. The person who flaunts all of his wealth is thought to be of lower social standing. Very often, the one who styles himself as rich will soon be begging. King David, being proud of his might and superiority, once ordered a census of his people. Soon after, Divine wrath descended on his people in the form of an epidemic that spread throughout his kingdom (II Sam 24:1–17).²⁵⁴

As the saying goes "virtue stands in the middle." Chavara wishes to make it clear that excessive anxiety about wealth, as well as reckless squandering of property, leads us to the ruin and makes us accountable to God. According to Chavara, someone who is miserly will see their wealth eaten up by worms, while someone who squanders their wealth on empty show-off will soon be consumed like smoke. With this instruction, Chavara warns us that greed often distorts one's priorities regarding oneself, God, and other people. The accumulation of material goods becomes an obsessive end in itself. In the same way, the superficial pomp and show of these luxuries leads nowhere but to vanity. To the one who became bankrupt after spending all his wealth on extravagant feasts and marriages, Chavara said, "brother, if you had not burned away your lamp during the day, you could have lighted it at night."²⁵⁵ He affirms it by adding an example of

²⁵³ *Chavarul*, I:15, 190–191.

²⁵⁴ *Chavarul*, I:5, 187.

²⁵⁵ *Chavarul*, I:6, 187–88.

Democritus, a renowned philosopher. Democritus was once asked about who among humans was the best. He answered that the greatest person is the one who exhibits oneself the least.²⁵⁶ Here he admonishes, “do not spend for festivals beyond what you can afford, because we do not know if we will be able to spend that much for every celebration. A small lamp that would render light steadily and for a long time is much better than a haystack that will blaze brightly forth and be put out in a moment.”²⁵⁷

The distinctive Old Testament attitude towards wealth is largely determined by religious understanding. Since Yahweh is Creator and Sovereign over all creation, all things belong to him: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Ps 24:1).²⁵⁸ Yahweh graciously gave Israel her inheritance in the Promised Land, and also, blessed the individuals with wealth. The foremost examples are Abraham (Gen 13:2; 14:23) and Solomon (1 Kings 3:13; Num 34–36; Josh 13–19). In the book of Sirach, we find sound teaching on the responsible use of wealth (Sir 14). Ben Sira asserts that God is the real source of wealth. His writings also include warnings against the false security of earthly riches (Sir 11:10–13, 14–19, 20–21, 22–24, 25–28; 18:32); that is the time to use your money to serve God (Sir 14:11), to help others (Sir 14:13), and to enjoy yourself (Sir 14: 11, 14). Book of Sirach describes the miser as someone who, despite devoting his entire life to money, never enjoys it and thus lives the most miserable of human lives (Sir 14:3–10). The miser does harm to himself (Sir 14:5–6, 9) and does no conscious good to others, when he dies, his heirs will get the enjoyment of his money.²⁵⁹ The book of Proverbs puts up with the fate of the miser and the rich. “A miser is in a hurry to get rich and does not know that loss is sure to come” (Prov 28:22). While they are haste to be rich, they are really making haste to be poor, else they would not trust uncertain riches. “Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want” (Prov 11:24). The good qualities of righteous people save them, the bad qualities of wicked people lead to their own destruction.

In the New Testament, the teaching of Jesus clearly illustrates how the riches of this temporary world would block the way to eternity. He

²⁵⁶ *Chavarul*, I:6, 187–88.

²⁵⁷ *Chavarul*, I:6, 187–88.

²⁵⁸ Young, “Wealth,” 818.

²⁵⁹ Harrington, “Sirach,” 933.

exclaims: “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mk 10:23). God addresses the rich as fools, for they find security and meaning in life in their material abundance and amassed wealth. They refuse to acknowledge that God is the author of their life and wealth, and that He has the power to demand whatever they hold as precious to them (Lk 12:16–21).²⁶⁰ ““You fool!’ This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Lk 12:20). Jesus gives us the blueprint for the heavenly treasure: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Mt 6:19–21). Luke 16 gives yet one more example of extravagances: “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day” (Lk 16:19). The Pauline letters speak to us of the futility of riches: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1 Tim 6:10).

Through the precept on extravagance and miserliness, Chavara emphasises the idea that we have no right to spend more than what we have.²⁶¹ Therefore, one should always be judicious in one’s expenditure.

2.2.1.3.6.2 Business Ethics

In the succeeding excerpt, Chavara states that he would only support the trade if it was carried out wisely and with a sense of justice. “Trading is harmful to one’s soul and even to one’s wealth. If it is not possible to find another profession there is no objection in being a merchant, but it should be carried out with great care and with a sense of justice. No merchant who lacks the sense of justice has ever become prosperous. Wealth accumulated through cunning means and stealth will melt away like snow.”²⁶²

To get the pulse of Chavara and grasp the true meaning of this precept, we must read between the lines, taking into account the background and context of the given precept. In Kerala society, during the nineteenth century, the caste system was quite prevalent and threw its dark shadows over the trading system. The trade and commerce were only open to the upper castes and the lower castes were not even given the right to cultivate

²⁶⁰ Young, “Wealth,” 818.

²⁶¹ Kurup, “A New Code for Economic Justice,” 311.

²⁶² *Chavarul*, I:13, 190.

the leased land. They were hired by the rich to work in their fields and were paid very meagre wages.²⁶³ Thus, they were forced to rely on the landlords because they had such a little amount in their hands to meet their daily expenses. On the other hand, the merchants and traders oppressed the poor by adopting unfair means. Therefore, the rich became richer and the poor, poorer.

Apparently, this excerpt from the *Chavarul* sounds like trading is something to be avoided. Chavara was not against the trade, but against unjust and deceitful means employed by traders to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. Chavara sought to bring reformation to the prevalent trade system in order to abridge the valley between the rich and the poor. In fact, Chavara only supported the trade if it was done carefully with justice.

The Holy Bible presents before us a series of quotations regarding the trade. In the Old Testament, faithfulness and transparency in trade are held in great regard. The book of Leviticus advises us to keep away from cheating and be sincere in the measurement of the quantities without manipulating the measures (Lev 19:35–36; 25:14; Deut 25:13–14; Prov 6:4). Honest traders are blessed with long life by God: “You shall have only a full and honest measure, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are abhorrent to the Lord your God” (Deut 25:15–16). The vanity of wealth acquired with false means is shown: “Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it” (Prov 13:11; Jer 17:11; Hos 12:7). The prophet Ezekiel reproves the traders for their pride in wealth: “By your great wisdom in trade, you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud of your wealth” (Ezek 28:5).

The teachings of the New Testament also tend to revolve around the trade that was prevalent in the Jewish community at the time. The historical findings claim that the Jewish people were involved in the well-established trade during Jesus’ time. The life and culture of the Jewish people were very much influenced by the trading system. Therefore, many times we find Jesus’ teaching people with the help of parables related to trade (Mt 25:14–30; Lk 19:12–28; Mt 19:16–22; Mk 10:17–31; Mt 13:44–46; Mt 19:16–22). Zacchaeus paid back the money he had defrauded from others in reparation for his sins: “Look, half of my possession, Lord, I will give to the poor; and

²⁶³ Menon, *A Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 268.

if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (Lk 19:8).

Chavara’s counsels regarding trade emerge from his profound reflections on biblical ethics about trade. Here, Chavara indirectly supports and encourages just and sound trade, which is an essential element of our day-to-day transactions. In a similar vein, he vehemently criticises the selfish motives of those traders who would never stop trying to accumulate wealth. Therefore, through this precept, Chavara suggested reconsidering the profession of business in order to curb this chain of ravaging evil in society and provided a few instructions on how to trade with a sense of justice and responsibility.

2.2.1.3.6.3 Borrowing Money

Chavara wrote down a few feasible strategies to avoid falling into difficulties as a result of money issues.

Do not make it a habit to borrow money, except for any urgent necessities; try to repay your debts as quickly as possible. Do not lend money to anyone except on the ground of charity. The wealthiest family is the one which is not in debt. If there are outstanding Mass obligations or any other debt left by parents or forefathers, hasten to fulfil them with zeal, as it is most perilous to ignore them. For, Divine wrath befalls on families burdened with such unfulfilled obligations.²⁶⁴

Money matters are the trickiest knots to be dealt with, if they are not handled appropriately, we will end up with greater complexities. From the above protocol of financial management, Chavara offers us a way out of this challenging issues. Chavara penned down a few practical strategies to avoid falling into trouble due to financial problems. He forbids us from developing the habit of occasionally borrowing money without any urgency. He instructs us to clear up our dues at the earliest. It is our common belief that the spiritual duties and obligations that our ancestors neglected to complete come to us as misfortune in our lives. Chavara therefore exhorts us to hasten our steps to fulfil any such obligations that remain unfulfilled.

²⁶⁴ *Chavarul*, I:4, 187.

Chavara's moral sensitivity regarding money matters was remarkably deep. The following incident effectively illustrates Chavara's accountability. They ran short of money when the convent in Koonammavu was being constructed. Fr. Geevarghese Thoppil was sent by Chavara to parishes to ask for assistance in order to address the urgent need. He returned with Rs. 400 that he had been given as donations from different persons. The Need was met with just half of that amount. The remaining half of the donation could have been kept for some other future purpose, but Chavara's value system did not allow for this course of action. He promptly returned the remaining amount to the donors,²⁶⁵ which set an example of his honesty and accountability. A similar example of Chavara's honesty can be decoded from the incident described in the Chronicle regarding the construction of the Koonammavu Convent.²⁶⁶

Chavara's accountability was not limited to material capital; he was all the more zealous and eager to fulfil his spiritual dues and obligations. His principles of transparency can be read from his second letter to the families. This letter captures the agony of a person on his death bed who is weighed down with the thought of his spiritual debts. His mind was preoccupied with certain spiritual debts that he was obliged to fulfil.²⁶⁷ Therefore, even though our ancestors had passed away, he recommends us to fulfil any outstanding spiritual requirements, such as Mass obligations. Chavara frequently makes mentions of this Mass obligation.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 109–111. "What could we do with the remaining Rs. 200?" they enquired of Chavara. With no hesitation, he replied: "Return it immediately to the donors!" One's usual tendency is to keep the money for some other purpose in the future. But Chavara's thought was different: that the people had generously donated the money to meet a particular need. What remains after meeting the need certainly belongs to them. We should honestly return it. In case another need arises, one should be humble enough to approach them again, and one can feel confident that they will help again. Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 162–163.

²⁶⁶ As Chavara writes, "As we planned to construct the convent, we had no money with us. But God inspired good people to contribute money. Thus, we received Rs. 8000 as donations with which the work was completed. Apart from that, there was an amount of Rs. 100 which according to the conscience of the missionary Fr. Leopold was not honest money. Hence, we refused to use it for the construction works. Instead, with the archbishop's permission we distributed it among the poor as alms." CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 111.

²⁶⁷ CSK, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 9/7, 153; CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/7, 120–121.

²⁶⁸ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 41–44; CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 10/1, 129.

In the Old Testament, we hear rhetorical testimony about the evils of debt. Psalm 37:21 says the wicked borrow and do not repay, whereas Proverbs 22:7 and Sir 18:33 warn against getting into debt.²⁶⁹ Ben Sira cautions about expensive merrymaking that leads to bankruptcy. He says, “Do not revel in great luxury, or you may become impoverished by its expense. Do not become a beggar by feasting with borrowed money, when you have nothing in your purse. The one who does this will not become rich” (Sir 18:32–33). At the same time, we have another quotation that disapproves of the act of withholding charity from those who deserve it. “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to do it. When you have it with you, do not say to your neighbour, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it” (Prov 3:27–28). It emphasises to treat others with due respect.

The New Testament gives us guidelines for money transactions. Here, we have the particular guidelines regarding borrowing money. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that no one who comes to us in need should be left empty-handed: “Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow” (Mt 5:42; Lk 6:30). “If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?...lend, expecting nothing in return” (Lk 6:34–35; 1 Tim 5:8). Regarding spiritual debts, the Lord’s prayer brings before us a prerequisite that to be freed from our debts, we need to liberate those who are indebted to us (Mt 6:12).²⁷⁰ The other side of the Lord’s prayer demands that we imitate the kindness and generosity of our Lord towards our fellow human beings (Mt 18:35). James and John connect the aspect of good deeds with faith and love. John says that love without true charity is futile: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 Jn 3:17). The further guidelines on the transaction also entail the wisdom of being detached from earthly wealth and storing treasures in heaven (Heb 13:5; 1 Tim 6:18–19; Mt 6:19).

Chavara, the prophet of his time, educated the people the proper handling of money and the importance of charitable acts, both of which appear to be in line with the reflections of the divine Word. He imparted to the families the virtues of sharing and doing good to others. He cautioned them to refrain from borrowing money. He was also very particular about repaying

²⁶⁹ Gnuse, “Debt, Debtor,” 76.

²⁷⁰ Gnuse, “Debt, Debtor,” 76.

ancestral debt and gave families specific instructions to fulfil the Mass obligations to the departed ones in the family and other spiritual debts at the earliest.

2.2.1.3.6.4 “Be Content with One’s Possessions”

The following counsel of Chavara speaks to us of our interior disposition towards the things we possess. “Do not become too materialistic and keep acquiring novel items; instead, try hard to improve the holdings you already possess. The wealth of a family does not lie in amassing innumerable possessions, but in their quality.”²⁷¹ Chavara explains his words with the help of a parable of the farmer.

An industrious man lived happily with a limited number of assets. Some envious people accused him of hiding some priceless treasures and took him to court. The king immediately ordered his assets to be catalogued and assessed. He was, however, acquitted honourably when he informed the court that his treasure was a small plot of land, which was transformed into gold as he had worked hard on it and shed his sweat on its soil.²⁷²

The farmer had a very small piece of land, but he toiled hard, shedding his sweat and blood. His hard work yielded a good harvest that made him rich. Through the moral of this story, Chavara advises the people to make the best use of the things that they hold as their wealth in order to receive God’s blessings.

The Scriptural understanding of finding contentment in life can be traced through the various nuances that speak of our disposition towards our possessions. The book of Proverbs speaks of the fortune of the industrious people: “Those who till their land will have plenty of food, but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense” (Prov 12:11). Riches and prosperity make people puffed up with a sense of self-sufficiency. They disregard the providence of God in their lives. Therefore, this is displayed in the prayer of a simple person in the book of Proverbs: “Give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or shall I be full, and deny you, and say ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I shall be poor, and steal and profane the name of my God” (Prov 30:8–9). Ben Sira exhorts us to be content with the necessities of life than lusting after our neighbour’s riches.

²⁷¹ *Chavarul*, I:11, 189.

²⁷² *Chavarul*, I:11, 189.

“The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothing, and also a house to assure privacy. Better is the life of the poor under their own crude roof than sumptuous food in the houses of others. Be content with little or much, and you will hear no reproach for being a guest” (Sira 29:21–23). A simple life in one’s own home is better than being dependent on others. The secret is to be content with what one possesses.²⁷³

As we move into the New Testament, the life of Jesus itself teaches us the lessons of contentment in our lives. Despite being the Son of God, He was born in a manger (Lk 2:1–7); at His presentation in the temple, His parents offered the humble offering of two turtle doves (Lk 2:24); and Jesus was content to be known as the carpenter’s Son (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:1–6; Lk 4:16–30). Jesus who lived a simple and contented life, desired that His disciples to do the same. Therefore, He taught His disciples to practise being satisfied with whatever they were given in life and ministry by trusting in divine providence (Lk 10:1–12; 12:22–31; Mt 5:3). The real worth of the family is judged not on the basis of the quantity but the quality of the things we have. Paul says, “I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things who strengthens me” (Phil 4:12–13). The Epistles point out to us the origin of the inordinate desires and pride in riches (1 Jn 2:16; 1 Tim 6:7). In the letter to the Hebrews, we find the invitation to free ourselves from the love of money and walk the way of contentment (Heb 13:5).

Through this precept, Chavara encourages us to benefit from having a poor spirit and become heirs to the kingdom of God. Chavara, who led a simple life and was content with the bare necessities, imparts to the families the essentials of a contented life.

2.2.1.3.6.5 Partition of Family Property

In Chavara’s opinion, the division of the property and distribution of the assets to the children is one of the most important duties the parents must get done on time. “Parents, ahead of their own demise, should take steps to settle their children in their own homes. Apportion the properties among the children when parents are in their good senses. For, discord may arise among the children on account of property division and the parents will be held responsible for the sins from such dissensions and conflicts among

²⁷³ Corley, “Sirach,” 785.

them.”²⁷⁴ “Parents shall not be indecisive or show undue regard for their children even when they are grown up and have become erudite and competent. As far as possible, do not entrust them the management of the household affairs. For, many parents have ended up in disappointment after having transferred the authority of the household.”²⁷⁵

Any negligence on the side of the parents in dividing up the property would lead to conflicts between their children. In light of his own personal experience with resolving one of the family disputes over the property, Chavara included these maxims about the partition of the family property. On his deathbed, Ittoop Kanichai from Ambazhakad, entrusted Chavara his unsettled property to be distributed among his children. Chavara counselled them and attempted to execute the partition of the property as per the last wish of Ittoop, but all his efforts were in vain. The children did not heed Chavara’s counsel, and the dispute led to quarrels and divisions among the siblings.²⁷⁶ Taking into consideration the possible conflicts and quarrels regarding the inheritance of the family property, Chavara reminded the families of the impending danger that children would face if the partition was not done at the proper time. Therefore, they must settle all the matters regarding the property and make the necessary arrangements for the proper division of their family property before their demise. Parental authority still remains even when children are grown up, educated, and experienced, and it should be prudently exercised. Otherwise, it will generate issues for parents and between siblings if children become greedy to acquire wealth and if they lack a sense of sharing. Many parents have become disappointed after having transferred the property rights of the household to their children. Chavara advises that parental authority should be used judiciously.²⁷⁷

The Old Testament comprises many stories that detail the account of the partition of land and property by parents among their children. The distribution or possession of wealth, as well as parental heritage, was always a source of strife and discord among siblings. Abraham and Lot divided the land between them to avoid strife (Gen 13:1–18). Later, in his old age, Abraham settled his property among his children while he was still

²⁷⁴ *Chavarul*, I:16, 191.

²⁷⁵ *Chavarul*, II:15, 200.

²⁷⁶ CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 189–91.

²⁷⁷ *Chavarul*, II:15, 200.

alive (Gen 25:5–6). Jacob cheated his brother Esau and deceitfully took away the blessings that were the due for the elder son (Gen 27:30–40). The narrative of Jacob’s last words to his sons is an exclusive example of the will of a father to his sons wherein he apportioned each one as they deserved (Gen 49:1–28). The book of Deuteronomy speaks of certain norms based on which the inheritance was divided among the children in accordance with their birth-right (Deut 21:15–17). The inheritance on the ancestral property was given with the aim of keeping the people from being scattered from the property (Ezek 46:16–18). Similar references to the property division and handing over the right to run the house or kingdom can be traced out in Num 27:6–11; 33:54; 36:6–9; 1 Kings 1; 21:3; Ps 2:7–8.

In the New Testament, the Gospel tells us of an incident in which someone from the crowd asked Jesus to divide the property between his brother and himself, but Jesus denied interfering in it (Lk 12:13–21). This Gospel account helps us understand that property and partition issues must be resolved among family members before enlisting the assistance of a third party. The further references to the inheritance, distribution of the property, and the criterion required for becoming the heir are illustrated by the biblical writers in—Lk 16:12; Mt 5:5; 25:34; Acts 2:45; Rom 8:16–17; Gal 3:29; Eph1:11; 1 Pet 1:4. The will that takes effect the above duties of the parents is written while they are still alive and comes into force only after their death: “For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive” (Heb 9:17). On the contrary, when the parents give up their property and authority to the children before time, they regret to see the adverse consequences it has brought about in no time. The parable of the prodigal son is a good example of illustrating the fate of the son who was given his inheritance before the proper time (Lk 15). The prodigal son squandered the share of his property on dissolute living and very soon was brought down to penury.

Chavara, the reformer of families, was well aware of the dissensions and conflicts caused by the partition of the property among the siblings. His insights about the reformation sprang forth from his fervent reflections on the Divine Word, which he preached in the parishes. Having undergone the difficulties of arbitrating the unsettled property, Chavara insisted that the parents must make their will and settle their properties in time before their demise.

2.2.2 Parents' Role in their Children's Upbringing

The second part of the *Chavarul* elaborates on the sacred responsibility of parents that is laid forth in sixteen separate precepts that serves as the guidelines for the upbringing of children in the areas of faith, intellectual, psychological, and moral formation. The upbringing of children is one of the most vital and delicate tasks a parent has to undertake in life. This endeavour becomes all the more sophisticated in today's changing times where development in various fields has brought with it several negative influences on children. In this context, Chavara's teaching on the upbringing of children is indeed noteworthy. He says that children are priceless gifts from God and that nurturing them properly is the greatest challenge of the parents. They must be brought up as God's children, pious and God-fearing. They should be taught to observe certain rituals, traditions, and devotional practices. If the foundation of the character of a child is strong, the child will be able to live responsibly and contribute to the development of their community, nation, and humanity. And if the child is weak, then it will become liable to itself and to the family, community, and nation. Therefore, Chavara emphasises that the primary duty of parents in their life is to bring up their children in a sound spirit based on Christian values.

2.2.2.1 Faith Formation

Chavara instructs the parents to instil faith into their children when they are small. He advises them to teach the children to fervently invoke the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as they grow up. Let the children familiarise with the image of the Holy Family and teach them to respect and revere them.²⁷⁸ The little children are like clay and it is parents who shape up the lives of their children in their tender age. Whatever they are taught in this age is very important to determine their future. The children born to Christian parents must be brought up according to the culture and faith of true Christians. Chavara took special interest in looking into this matter and instruct the parents regarding the upbringing of the children in Christian faith.

Faith is a right blending of God's free gift to human beings and their response to the One who reveals Himself to them in their daily life.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ *Chavarul*, II:2, 197.

²⁷⁹ CCC, 162, 166.

Christian faith formation aims to impart a strong, vital, and life-giving faith by informing, forming, and transforming every person, whether a child, youth, or adult, into a holistic person. For the purpose of our pilgrimage on earth is to experience the beatific vision, faith formation aims to facilitate this possible. Faith then serves as the foundation for our eternal life.²⁸⁰ Faith formation takes place on the platform of the family; it is from here that we begin our earthly pilgrimage to God. We grow in faith through the reading of Holy Scripture, the right understanding of our precious heritage of faith, and spirituality. As a result, we are better able to participate in the life and ministries of our faith community as well as in the service and mission of the world.²⁸¹ Through our active participation in the sacraments, observance of the commandments, family prayers, etc., our God experience deepens day by day.²⁸²

2.2.2.1.1 Formation in Prayer Life

Chavara paid particular attention to guide the parents on how to raise their children in terms of their faith. He instructs the parents,

As the children grow up, teach them to devotedly call on the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Let the children familiarise and kiss the image of the Holy Family and teach them to honour and venerate them. As they begin to speak, teach them to recite short prayers such as Our Father, Hail Mary, the Angelus, etc. How commendable it is to nourish their souls by these means along with the nutritious food that you provide for their body.²⁸³

“Ensure that all children are at home by the time the Angelus bells ring. Train them to greet and kiss the hands of the elders and parents as soon as the family prayers are over.”²⁸⁴ “Instruct them especially to be devoted to the Blessed Mother.”²⁸⁵ Prayer is the central axis around which the Christian families revolve, and the foundation of this prayer life is laid in childhood.

²⁸⁰ CCC, 163.

²⁸¹ Kehrwald, *Just What is Faith Formation?* [Online]

²⁸² Steinmueller and Sullivan, *New Testament*, 108–109.

²⁸³ *Chavarul*, II:2, 197.

²⁸⁴ *Chavarul*, II:11, 198–199.

²⁸⁵ *Chavarul*, II:8, 198.

In this precept, Chavara instructs parents to sow the seeds of the basic elements of our faith in their children from early childhood onwards. These fundamentals include teaching them to call on the names of the persons in the Holy Family, kissing and venerating them with reverence, and instructing them on the special devotion to Mother Mary. Chavara says as the children begin to speak, they must be taught to recite short prayers such as “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” “Angelus,” etc. Along with their physical growth, parents must also be concerned about their spiritual growth and development.²⁸⁶ Chavara therefore commands the parents to take heed of the spiritual needs of their children. He puts forward the good practise of acknowledging and expressing our love towards the parents by greeting the parents “praise be to Jesus” with a kiss on their hands at the end of the night prayer.²⁸⁷ This practice strengthens the loving bond between the parents and children and brings them close to each other. Chavara foresaw the benefits of the soul in communion with the Lord in prayer, which dispels all the powers of darkness and brings the inner discipline of life. The prayer acts as a shield against all the evil powers. A family that prays together stays together. Partaking in regular family prayers naturally enhances familial bonding, keeping them united in spirit.

As we glance through the pages of Chavara’s life, we can view Chavara as an heir of a prayer culture in which prayer was considered a supreme value. It was his parents who sowed in his tender mind the seed of the spirit of prayer. “By word and deed his [Chavara] mother initiated him to prayer, introduced him to the mysteries of Christian faith, and to the devotions to the Holy Family, the Holy Eucharist, and Blessed Virgin Mary”²⁸⁸ After the sudden loss of his parents, Chavara took recourse to the Blessed Virgin Mary and renewed his dedication to her. He called himself a servant of the Mother of God.²⁸⁹ In all his needs Chavara spontaneously had recourse to her and sought her guidance. He says: “Till now I have never had to draw the net empty after casting it in the name of our holy Mother.”²⁹⁰ Chavara treasured this inheritance of prayer, which he received in his childhood itself from the family, and used it to build a sure foundation for his charism of prayer. Therefore, he intended that the art of prayer must be taught in

²⁸⁶ *Chavarul*, II:2, 197.

²⁸⁷ *Chavarul*, II:11, 198–199.

²⁸⁸ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 214.

²⁸⁹ Kuriakose, “Porukara Thomma Malpanachante Charitram,” 25.

²⁹⁰ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 5/15, 55; *CSK*, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 5/15, 83.

families from childhood. Through his writings, particularly the letters, he handed over this precious heritage to his confreres and families.

Chavara's writings give us an indication of their connectivity to the divine Word. When we analyse this precept based on the Word of God, we realize that the spirituality of the family flows from the family members' relationships with themselves and with God. In the Old Testament, we read how God Himself commanded the people of Israel to teach their children the basic aspects of prayer: "Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away" (Deut 6:7). The children being taught the prayers from the mouths of the elders is evident in the Scriptures: Eli teaches Samuel to speak with the Lord (1 Sam 3:1–18). Parents have a priestly duty to teach their children to pray in all circumstances, particularly when they are in danger, in weakness, in suffering, sickness, etc.²⁹¹ The Lord answers, even to the babbling prayers of the children. "Out of the mouths of babes and infants, you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger" (Ps 8:2). A traditional basis for prayer is seen in the book of Esther, where we see faith in the execution of the promise (Esth 13:8–17). The prayer of Anna, a prayer so inward, that it surprised Eli (1 Kings 1:10–11, 20; Jdt 8:10–27, 9:1–14). Despite Jeremiah's reluctance, God was determined in His plans for him. His prayer was personal communication with God in which praise (Jer 10:10; 32:16–18), thanks (Jer 33:11; 30:19; 11), confession (Jer 15:1–21), and petition (Jer 7:16; 42:2) were blended.²⁹²

In the New Testament, we can find several references that speak about formation in prayer. Jesus says, "let the little children come to me, and do not stop them" (Mt 19:14). This formation is a continuous process that demands from us perseverance and dedication (1 Thess 5:16–17; Eph 6:18). The formation in prayer begins as early as childhood. Praying and worshipping God is done from infancy (Mt 21:15–16). The Gospels present Jesus as an exemplar in the prayer life. Right from childhood, we find Jesus' life is presented in and around the temple, His Father's house (Lk 2:22–24, 41–51). He prayed and consulted with the Father, before every important event described in the bible, before performing the miracles, healings, in temptations, for forgiveness, as praise and thanksgiving (Mt 11:25–27; 14:19; 26:39; 19:13; 26:53; Lk 9:16; 22:32; Jn 11:41–42; 17:1,

²⁹¹ Maertens, *Bible Themes—A Source Book*, Vol. 2, 125.

²⁹² Smith, "Prayer," 860.

15).²⁹³ The disciples were taken up by Jesus' spirit of prayer and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1).²⁹⁴ The Gospels entail a series of discourses of Jesus on prayer (Mt 6:5–8; Mk 11:22–25; Lk 11:1–13; 18:1–14). He teaches us to pray by calling out His name (Jn 14:13–14). The disciples of Jesus passed on this heritage of prayer to the faithful through their letters (Rom 1:9; 12:12; Eph 6:18; Col 1:9; 4:12; Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:11; Heb 13:15). In the Scriptures, Jesus speaks of the supernatural food. The Word of God is our real food that satiates our every hunger (Mt 4:4). Jesus stated in Jn 4:34 that His food was to do the will of the One who sent Him and to finish His works. The custom of greeting peace and kissing the hands of the elders in the precept of Chavara seems to have its origin in the Scriptures, particularly the letters where the apostles instruct the faithful to greet each other with a holy kiss (1 Cor 1:16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; Rom 16:16; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).

Prayer is an inevitable part of our lives in order to live in peace and harmony throughout our earthly sojourn. Chavara, the man of prayer, who was aware of this fact, gave parents instructions on how to engrave in the tender hearts of children the ideals of Jesus, who prayed constantly. Chavara unveiled this depiction of a praying Jesus in the Scriptures and desired to inculcate this prayerfulness in the families, particularly in the children. In imitation of Jesus, who prayed always and at all times, the children should be taught to pray for their overall integrity in life. For, prayer strengthens our roots against the harsh blows of life. The precept equips us with the small, doable methods for teaching prayer and Christian family etiquettes to our children. In this age of rapid growth, parents must take just as much care to feed their children with nutritious food as they must pay great attention to ensuring their spiritual nourishment.

2.2.2.1.2 Importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Chavara showed a deep interest in upholding the sanctity of his heart by constant awareness of his fragility and honest endeavour. So, he instructs the parents, "when children are seven years old, facilitate their confession after instructing them what they should know about it."²⁹⁵ The Catholic Church considers seven to be the canonical age for receiving the sacrament

²⁹³ Newman, "Prayer," 587.

²⁹⁴ Newman, "Prayer," 588.

²⁹⁵ *Chavarul*, II:8, 198.

of reconciliation.²⁹⁶ The child's skill of reasoning begins to develop at this age of discretion.²⁹⁷ A person is in the middle of childhood, commonly known as school age, when they are seven years old. At this age, the child becomes exposed to the wider world outside of their home. The child begins to think independently as he or she starts working with other students and desires their friendship and acceptance. As a result, the child attains sufficient maturity to discern between the morale of good and bad. So, Chavara instructs the families to prepare their children for the sacrament of reconciliation when they reach the age of seven, the age of discretion.

Chavara expressed his filial love towards his loving heavenly Father—calling Him in his mother tongue *Appan*—through his profound gratitude and a heartrending sense of sin.²⁹⁸ Chavara was a mystic who was gifted with a deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness before God. This facet of Chavara's spirituality is explicitly reflected in his writings. The laments of repentance are articulated in a poetic form in the *Compunction of the Soul*. In his collection of meditations, the *Colloquies with the Father*, Chavara portrays himself as the prodigal son waiting for the forgiveness of his trespasses due to selfishness and ingratitude.²⁹⁹ Again, *The Letters* display a beautiful account of reconciliation and unconditional forgiveness between Chavara and Mathan, who filed a false case against Chavara. It is edifying to see that Chavara not only forgave but took the extra mile to assure continuous support to Mathan's family.³⁰⁰ In another letter to the members of his congregation, Chavara, the then prior, reprimanded them for the

²⁹⁶ *CIC*, 989.

²⁹⁷ *CCC*, 1457.

²⁹⁸ *CWC*, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, II:361–364, 16.

²⁹⁹ *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 4–5.

³⁰⁰ Kochumuttam, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 67–68. This Mathan, once the steward of Mannanam Monastery, had unjustly appropriated some property of the monastery for which he was punished by the civil court. Later, he filed a case against Chavara in the criminal court of Alappuzha. The court met the prior in the Church of Holy Cross in Alappuzha and heard him. Dismissing the case as fraud, the Hindu judge was greatly impressed by Chavara's personality. Chavara sincerely forgave Mathan, and made vain efforts to have him reconciled with the monastery. Chavara continued to generously help Mathan in his financial needs. Finally, it is edifying that Chavara requested his fellow brethren to continue to support him and his family in their essential necessities.

discrepancies creeping into their priestly and religious life.³⁰¹ The Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent contain the teachings of Chavara on forgiveness and the instruction to make a good confession.³⁰²

Through constant awareness of his frailty and sincere effort, Chavara took keen interest in keeping up the purity of his heart. Therefore, at his death bed, he could exclaim righteously, “by the grace of God, I dare say that with their [the Holy Family’s] help I had no occasion to lose the grace I received in baptism.”³⁰³ Chavara could conquer his frailties by constantly waging war against the enemy of his soul with the weapons of humility and sincere contrition. Therefore, Chavara gives this exhortation to the children with the aim of equipping the little soldiers of Christ for their battle ahead in life.

Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit. The aftermath of sin brought a series of changes in their lives: the realization of their nakedness brought them to feel vulnerable and humiliated (Gen 3:11);³⁰⁴ they disobeyed God and left His presence (Gen 3:8); they began accusing each other (Gen 3:12–13); and the land became cursed (Gen 3:17–19). Though we divide the consequences of sin into four categories, ultimately, they fall into one category—sin against God, because everything in this world is created by God (2 Sam 11, 12; Is 59:2; Hos 11:1–2; Is 5; Jer 2:2; 3:1–5, 20; Is 50:1; 54:6; Ps 45; Ez 16).³⁰⁵ The Word of God is our guard against sin. Therefore, the Psalmist says, “I treasure your Word in my heart so that I may not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). By keeping God’s Word close to our hearts, we can avoid committing sin.

The confession of sins frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others.³⁰⁶ The background of confession can be seen in the Old Testament. In the book of Leviticus, we read that the Lord commanded the people of Israel through Moses, that, whenever they realized their guilt, they must confess the sins they had committed (Lev 5:5). It is in this regard that the Psalmist says, “when I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my

³⁰¹ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 6/1, 60–66.

³⁰² CKC, Vol. 1, 27.

³⁰³ *Positio*, 548; Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 315; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 349.

³⁰⁴ Kochuthara, *Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 24.

³⁰⁵ Lachowski, “Sin in the Bible,” 236.

³⁰⁶ CCC, 1455.

iniquity; I say, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Ps 32:5).³⁰⁷ The general principle of confession is given in the book of Proverbs: “One who confesses and forsakes transgressions will obtain mercy” (Prov 28:13). Therefore, we need not be ashamed to confess our sins (Sir 4:26). Along with mercy and forgiveness, confession also brings healing to one’s life.³⁰⁸ When God forgives, He casts away our sins as far as the east is separated from the west (Ps 103:12); He takes our sins upon Himself (Isa 38:17).³⁰⁹

The New Testament develops the concept of sin and reconciliation further. The presence of Christ in our lives brings a change of heart and leads us to true contrition and repentance: Peter acknowledged himself to be a sinful man (Lk 5:8); the sinful woman repented over her past sins through penitential acts (Lk 7:37–47); Zacchaeus made an expiation for his wrongdoing through fourfold restitution for all his offences, the publican lamented over his sins in the temple (Lk 18:13), the prodigal son confessed his sins against heaven and his father (Lk 15:21), and the repentant thief on the right side of Jesus on the cross made a general confession of his crimes (Lk 23:41). Paul asserts that sin brings down the glory of God in us and that we are justified through the redemptive work of Christ Jesus (Rom 3:23–24). John and James exhort their readers to acknowledge their sins before God and one another, respectively (1 Jn 1:7–9; Jas 5:15).³¹⁰

This precept of the *Chavarul* regarding the sacrament of reconciliation depicts Chavara’s proficiency in the field of catechesis and his profound reflections on the divine Word. He gave the instructions concerning the sacraments with their rules and norms when the official teachings of the Church on canons were not yet promulgated.³¹¹ Chavara instructed the parents to take care of the spiritual needs of their growing children by teaching them about sin and the sacrament of reconciliation by the age of seven. His penitential meditations in his writings, overtone the biblical essence. The precept also implies that children must be appropriately taught to examine themselves to know their failures in relationship with God, with

³⁰⁷ Keathley, “Confession,” 328.

³⁰⁸ Trites, “Confession,” 715.

³⁰⁹ Steinmueller and Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 373.

³¹⁰ Steinmueller and Sullivan, *New Testament*, 148.

³¹¹ The *Chavarul* was written in the year of 1868 and *CIC*, the Canon which mentions the age of receiving the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time was promulgated in the year 1983 and *CCEO* in 1990, more than hundred years after the *Chavarul*.

fellow human beings, with nature,³¹² and with themselves; and be reconciled with them in the light of the Word of God. Chavara exhorts parents to train their children to implore for forgiveness for the times they made wrong choices through menial omissions of charitable acts and instil in them the importance of having a right conscience.

2.2.2.2 Intellectual Formation

In order to elevate society out of the darkness of ignorance, Chavara desired the integral education of children. Therefore, he advises the parents, “as soon as the children come of age, they should be sent to school. From time to time, parents should enquire about their progress in studies and also about the type of friendships they cultivate. Every Sunday parents must review what they have studied.”³¹³ Chavara quotes,

Ephrem, a doctor of the Church, teaches that the second source of enlightenment is learning (knowledge). Just as without eyes, one cannot see the material things of the world, so also, without knowledge, it will be impossible for us to see or understand the reality of the world that is above, and the Lord who dwells therein. As those who have no eyes are called ‘blind,’ so too those who have no learning should be called ‘spiritually blind.’³¹⁴

Chavara desired the integral education and consequent uplift of society to eradicate ignorance from the spiritual, social, and educational spheres. He very well knew that the progress of a community greatly depends on the growth from within. And hence, he emphasised the importance of education in families which begins by educating the children when they are young. According to the then prevailing standards, Chavara was an educated man. Though he had only elementary education in the traditional manner, he was fortunate enough to obtain a good theological education and spiritual formation under one of the most reputed *Malpans* of those times. Almost all

³¹² Chavara was an eco-friendly person. His affinity towards nature can be intercepted by his special love for plants and plantations. He himself instructed the sisters about how to take care of the coconut trees. He perpetuated the movement of the plantation by often offering the saplings to his acquaintances, namely fathers, sisters, and other people, and instructing them to take care of them and flourish them further. *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 7/5, 80–81; *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 7/8, 84; *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 10/3, 130–32.

³¹³ *Chavarul*, II:6, 197.

³¹⁴ *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/2, 95.

who knew Chavara gave unstinted tribute to his intellectual acumen and continuous pursuit of knowledge. In all his endeavours, we can easily discern a person of keen intelligence, thirsting to acquire and spread knowledge. His sense of right discernment and correct judgement flowed from his intellectual acumen and wide knowledge of various aspects of life.³¹⁵

It is the duty of parents to take care of the intellectual formation of their children. In this piece of counsel, Chavara reminds the parents of their obligation to look after the children's academic future by sending them to school at the proper time. They must enquire about their children's progress from time to time and have a weekly revision of their studies. Besides taking care of cognitive development, parents must also be concerned about their integral formation and holistic development, which take place in their peer group. Therefore, he instructs them to be watchful of their children's friendship circles too.

In the Old Testament, education was essentially practical and moral.³¹⁶ When we go through the pages of the Old Testament, we find the traditional understanding of how parents, both father and mother equally contributed to the intellectual as well as practical knowledge, bringing about the holistic integrity in the child: "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise" (Deut 4:9; 5: 29; 6:4–7, 11:19; 20–25; 32:46; Gen 18:19; Ex 13:8; 10:2; 12:26–27).³¹⁷ The book of Proverbs uses familial language to emphasise the authority of parental teaching through sayings and instructions.³¹⁸ Both parents are involved in the instruction of the child: "Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching; for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck" (Prov 1:8; 4:1–4; 6:20; 13:1; 30:17). A complete book of Sirach is dedicated to the parental teaching of children on various issues of day-to-day life. The author, Ben Sirach, was led to write this book pertaining to instructions and wisdom so that his offspring and all those who read it might make progress in their living: "Listen to me, your father, O children; act accordingly, that you may

³¹⁵ Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 412.

³¹⁶ Maertens, *Bible Themes—A Source Book*, Vol. 2, 311.

³¹⁷ Steinmueller and Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 227.

³¹⁸ Crenshaw, "Education, OT," 199.

be kept in safety” (Sir 3:1); “do not disregard me, and in the end, you will appreciate my word. In everything you do be moderate, and no sickness will overtake you” (Sir 31:22). It exhorts to respect the parents, obey them, not to disappoint them, and be moderate in everything. “Do your work in good time, and in his own time God will give you your reward” (Sir 51:30). This verse promises a reward for those who live wisely.³¹⁹ “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the prosperity of your children” (Isa 54:13). The children shall be taught by God, not only outwardly, by his Word, but inwardly, by his Spirit.

Jesus received elementary education in a synagogue school (Lk 4:16) and could read (Lk 4:16–20) and write (Jn 8:6–8). As in Judaism, Christian education was primarily religious and ethical. The then prevailing education system focused its goal on enabling children to learn the law and to abide by it. Therefore, as such, we do not find many direct quotations to elementary learning to read and write as of today, but the Scripture definitely tells us about men and women who learnt and taught the religious laws and ethics: Zechariah (Lk 1:5–6); Mother Mary (Lk 1:46–55); Matthew (Mt 9:9); Scribes and Pharisees (Mt 22:15–22; 23); St. Paul (Acts 22:3); Philip (Acts 8:26–40); etc. Christ was the true educator (Jn 13:13). He imparted His knowledge and wisdom on all the realms of our life through His teaching and His life (Mt 5–7; Lk 4:31–32; Mk 6:6; Jn 13:15). Educating the children was the responsibility of the parents (Col 3:21; 1 Tim 5:4).³²⁰

This precept of the *Chavarul* is oriented towards creating awareness in parents to give importance to their children’s education at the appropriate time. From the Scriptures, Chavara, an illuminated educationist, was enlightened to formulate this precept on the intellectual formation of children. Just as Joseph and Mary, the earthly parents of Jesus, took care of His growth in wisdom and stature and thus focused on His overall development, so too, Chavara emphasized that parents should be diligent in sending their children to school when they are of age, look after their studies, and take care of their holistic development by being watchful of their friendships and the people they mingle with.

³¹⁹ Corley, “Sirach,” 796.

³²⁰ Riesner, “Education, NT,” 194.

2.2.2.3 Psychological Formation of Children

The psychological formation of children deals with the various levels of formation of the mind, such as the discipline of their thoughts, rationale, taming their innate behaviour patterns, etc. These goals are attained by adopting different techniques like counselling, disciplining, corporal chastisement, and setting examples as good models. In his autobiography, *Compunction of the Soul*, Chavara praised his mother's method of disciplining him: "Never once did she use the rod to chastise, nor with a harsh touch did she smite me. Her eyes, they wielded the mighty power to hit me or needs be, to fondle me, in approval."³²¹ Thus, he received a disciplining without having any corporal punishment such as scolding, beating, or shouting. Instead, she could discipline the child with her gaze. In the *Chavarul*, Chavara instructs the parents about the psychological upbringing of children in the light of the Word of God. The Holy Bible not only describes human behaviours, attitudes, motivations, interactions, and relationships but also the outcomes of human behaviours, such as personality, thinking processes, perception, and interpersonal interactions. In this study, we shall elaborate on the two main aspects of psychological formation, namely, the prudent disciplining of children and setting examples by respecting each other.

2.2.2.3.1 Discipline

The parents are given a series of guidelines for educating children:

Both extreme strictness and too much leniency towards children are evil. While too much affection will make them proud, excessive anger and punishment will lead to a lack of trust, shamelessness, and intellectual incompetence in them. Before inflicting corporal punishment, prudently make the children understand why they are being punished, and honourably advise them along with rationing their food and, occasionally, making them kneel down. Pouring out abuses in the process of correcting the children will not only have any positive effect on them but will only make them repeat the same to their children when they grow up.³²²

A successful life is built on discipline. Disciplining children is an integral part of parenting. It involves keeping an eye out to observe where the child

³²¹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I: 80–84, 3.

³²² *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

is headed. The constant practise of discipline in life unfolds the magnanimity of a person's character. The above excerpt of the *Chavarul* presents before us a set of instructions for the prudent disciplining of children. It emphasises the necessity to be cautious about using the proper corporal punishments with prudent discernment. These disciplines initially appear to be primarily external. However, it eventually transcends into an integral part of their personality.

The term "discipline" in the Old Testament is associated with the analogy between the physical punishment of children by their parents and Yahweh's corrective measures of hardship and distress based on God's covenant relationship with Israel.³²³ This connection is made explicit in Deuteronomy: "Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child, so the Lord your God disciplines you" (Deut 8:5). Parental discipline is seen as coming out of love, never out of anger, to save a child from destruction (Prov 13:24; 19:18).³²⁴ The book of Proverbs sheds light on our understanding of the use of corporal chastisement (Prov 23:13). "Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them" (Prov 13:24; 22:15). "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (Prov 22:6). Instructions are of more value than great riches: "Take my instructions instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold" (Prov 8:10), and submission to discipline leads to honour (Prov 13:18), while its negation leads to penury (Prov 5:12, 23; 13:18; 15:10, 32; 16:22; Job 36:10).³²⁵

In the New Testament, the Gospels present to us the teachings and practical applications of disciplining our internal and external faculties: the control of eyes (Mt 5:29; 6:22); hands (Mt 5:30); tongue (Mt 5:37); hearing (Mt 7:24–27); taming anger (Mt 5:22); loving the enemy (Mt 5:43–47); disciplining our will against retaliation (Mt 5:38–42); setting the mind on heavenly things (Mt 16:23); training the intellect (Lk 12:20), etc. It also implies focusing on our own selves with critical introspection rather than being engaged in prejudice (Mt 7:3–5). Children might make decisions that contradict their godly upbringing (Lk 15:11–31). Therefore, we need to assist children in making the right decisions and keep them on track through our persistent discipline in shaping up their lives. Our shepherding methods

³²³ Bauer, "Discipline," 132.

³²⁴ Gundry-Volf, "Children," 588.

³²⁵ Bauer, "Discipline," 132.

must reflect those of Jesus, our Saviour, who felt pity for His strayed sheep. Like Him, we need to protect and provide for our children (Mk 6:34; Jn 10).

In his letters, Paul speaks of Christian disciplining at home: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instructions of the Lord” (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Disciplining here is not just painful chastisement but it is the training of children through our actions, words, and exemplary life.³²⁶ “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). The disciplining of children is the responsibility of both the father (Col 3:21) and the mother (1 Tim 5:4). Peter explains discipline as the means to grow in prayer (1 Pet 4:7–8), taming our desires (1 Pet 1:13–14); being alert and agile (1 Pet 5:8). Jesus vehemently condemns the use of abusive language (Mt 5:22; Mt 12:36–37; Lk 6:45). The Epistles exhorted that our speech should always be seasoned with grace (Col 4:6; Eph 5:4; Jas 1:26; 1 Pet 3:10; Rom 3:13–18). “Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for building up” (Eph 4:29; Jas 3:9–12). Paul first lists vices to avoid before endorsing virtues to practice. Instead of lying, stealing, corrupt talk, and ungodly behaviour, believers are to speak the truth, work hard, speak what is good, and be kind (Eph 4:25–32).

We can infer from the above discussion that Chavara’s advice on discipline stems from his fervent reflections on the divine Word. Many instructions from the Bible were mirrored in his writings on the prudent disciplining of children. Thus, he was laying a sure biblical foundation for his work. In this precept, Chavara outlines the pros and cons of the extreme approach of disciplining the children. He also instructed parents to exercise caution, while disciplining their children verbally, in order to keep up the decorum of language we chose while correcting the children, because children pick up manners from their parents. As part of prudent disciplining, through appropriate counselling, children can be mentally prepared to accept the physical punishments. Children become conscious of their mistakes when parents speak in a calm and emphatic tone. An awareness of decent behaviour is to be created in them in a prudent manner, and punishments may be awarded to children for their mistakes. By adhering to this precept, we can help our children develop a noble character.

³²⁶ Davies, “Discipline,” 846.

2.2.2.3.2 Setting a Good Example for Children

Chavara offers a fresh viewpoint on parenting in the *Chavarul*: setting a good example for children. “The mother should set an example to the children in respecting and honouring the father; so, shall the father teach the children by his example to love and respect the mother. If parents do not love and respect each other, their children will also not respect them.”³²⁷ “Fight between children should not lead to quarrel among elders. Those elders, who cannot accept their children being slighted or hurt by someone else, are also childish in their reaction.”³²⁸ Children are diligent students of parental behaviour. They learn from the living examples of their parents. Hence, setting a good example before children becomes an important part of parenting. In the above-given guidelines of the *Chavarul*, Chavara speaks of the new dimension of parenting, setting good examples.

As seen in the first chapter,³²⁹ in the nineteenth-century, women were treated as mere commodities to be used to raise children and do household chores. They had no access to education, no place in public gatherings, no participation in the administration of society and the Church, nor any voice in their own families. Chavara initiated many movements to raise the dignity of women in their families. The given precept traces Chavara’s revolutionary ideas of respecting the dignity of the woman or wife, though basically, the context was patriarchal.

The Old Testament vividly describes how the elderly set examples for the youngsters on the path of mutual love and respect. Children must be trained in the right way at a young age by setting a good example in order to avoid straying as they grow up: “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray” (Prov 22:6). We must be very careful to put forth a good example as our inheritance to our children. The deviation from this norm leads to a distortion in their character. The book of Genesis illustrates this distortion caused due to the bad example of parents. The wrong model of Abraham’s lying was copied by his son Isaac (Gen 12:10–20; 26:7–11) as well as the manipulation of Jacob, seen in Judah, his son (Gen 27; 38). So, Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep watch on themselves and diligently keep up the things taught to them to set a good example to the children (Deut 4:9–10). It is not befitting for parents to meddle in the

³²⁷ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³²⁸ *Chavarul*, II:13, 199.

³²⁹ See reference to chapter 1, section 1.1.1.1.2 Patriarchal System.

petty issues and quarrels of their children with their neighbours. Spreading slander poisons any relationship, but it is even worse and life threatening when done in court.³³⁰

With the aforementioned precepts of Chavara, we have dealt with the practical ways of upbringing of children in families—the image of heaven—by setting good examples among the elders. Chavara’s thoughts for the formation of children through the examples set by the elders, stem from his profound reflections of the divine Word. Our mutual love and respect for one another, regardless of gender, demonstrates a good example for the children in terms of treating all the family members equally. As good parents, they must refrain from interfering in children’s subtle quarrels and petty issues with their neighbours. This serves as a yardstick for our own maturity in the interpersonal relationships.

2.2.2.4 Moral Formation of Children

Moral formation deals with the formation of conscience, sex education, respecting the parents, individual freedom to choose the state of life, and so on. A person’s conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary wherein God has inscribed His law. Its voice controls the actions of a person, leading him or her to love and do what is good and avoid evil.³³¹ Children have their own inborn temperaments, which makes some of them passive and calm, and others active and aggressive. However, no one is born with a built-in set of rules for how to behave in a society or about the manners and morals that are to be learnt, thus it is the responsibility of parents to instil these values in their children.³³² The moral formation and development of faith in children are realized in the ambience of their homes.³³³ Parents are the fundamental formators of children. Hence, it is the duty and responsibility of parents to provide moral formation to their children so that they can distinguish between good and evil, choose actions that are good and acceptable in the sight of God, and turn to God’s mercy in humble submission when they stumble and fall. Children’s moral formation involves giving them moral guidance, rewarding them for doing right and punishing them for doing wrong, as well as modelling good conduct and appropriate reactions to the conduct of others. From the experience of

³³⁰ Hieke, “Leviticus,” 299.

³³¹ CCC, 1776.

³³² Kuzhivelil, “Kuriakose Elias Chavara: A Child-Educationist and Parent-Guide,” 144.

³³³ Smedes, “Ethics: Modern Problems,” 192–93.

having their behaviour regulated, children learn to self-regulate and it becomes a habit.

2.2.2.4.1 Modest Dressing

Chavara rebukes the parents harshly for their foolish pursuit of fake fame, which will only bring many souls to the flame of hell. He claims that “proudly showing off the daughters by dressing them up in expensive costumes and ornaments beyond their status and means, as it is apparently the way of the rich and aristocratic families, ignites hellfire for many a soul. The most desirable adornment for a girl lies in her modesty, piety, silence, and control of eyes.”³³⁴ He added that it is an insidious custom that originated in hell to dress up girls for festival celebrations or to serve as bridesmaids at weddings.³³⁵

Modesty is a heart’s attitude, and it will reflect in our outward behaviour. Being modest stretches beyond our clothing choices. Modesty involves the way one behaves at work, the way one speaks, or the way one acts around others. Though modesty can take many different forms depending on the culture, it always serves as a reminder of the inherent spiritual dignity proper to all human beings. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents entails awakening in them a respect for all people.³³⁶ The words, looks, modes of action, modes of dress, and other characteristics that are considered proper for the normal display or expression of masculinity or femininity fall under the category of general sexual decency or modesty. Sexual modesty is mostly a result of social custom. It is connected to the roles that society expects men to act as men and women to play as women.³³⁷ The practice of decency and modesty in speech, action, and dress is very important for creating an atmosphere suitable for the growth of chastity, but this must be well motivated by respect for one’s own body and dignity of others.³³⁸

Chavara’s teachings on modesty shed light on the dark side of the parents’ upbringing, where they flaunt their children with expensive dresses and jewellery beyond their means to exhibit their aristocracy, wealth, and

³³⁴ *Chavarul*, II:12, 199.

³³⁵ *Chavarul*, II:11, 199.

³³⁶ CCC, 2524.

³³⁷ O’Riordan, “Modesty,” 996.

³³⁸ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 56.

family prestige. Chavara strongly reprimands the parents in this precept for their folly in pursuing false glory, which will incur nothing but burn many souls in the fires of hell. On the contrary, Chavara asserts that a person should be adorned with the ornaments of virtues like modesty, piety, silence, and control of the eyes. Parents must train children to be adorned with good works.³³⁹

The biblical definition of modesty focusses on the heart. Biblical modesty is primarily about our motivations. Similarly, modest dress is also about discernment, having an awareness of others and our environment. God tells us that we are each fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:13–16). When God instructs Samuel to go and anoint David as king, God cautions Samuel to consider the heart of the candidate for the kingship rather than only his outward attributes, such as his attractiveness and height (1 Sam 16:7).³⁴⁰ Deuteronomy calls for both men and women to avoid immodest clothing or any apparel that draws attention to themselves instead of God (Deut 22:5).

The New Testament speaks of inculcating modesty and self-control in our looks, words, thoughts, and behaviour: “If your eye causes you to sin tear it out” (Mt 5:27–28). In his instructions to Timothy about bringing order and discipline into the worshipping community, Paul gives certain precepts on modesty to be kept to maintain the decorum of the places of worship (1 Tim 2:9).³⁴¹ Instead of the extravagances, the apostle advises being wrapped in attire expressive of inner modesty and a sane outlook on life, the outlook of a Christian (1 Pet 5:5).³⁴² Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, the holy of holies, where God Almighty dwells in us. We have no right over ourselves, but we belong to God (1 Cor 6:19). Therefore, this dwelling place of God, the body, must be treated with the utmost reverence and dignity.³⁴³

The above-mentioned study of modesty in the Scriptures makes it very clear that Chavara’s precepts on modesty have a strong biblical foundation. Like a good father, Chavara desired that the children be brought up adorned with a noble attitude and a sweet demeanour. Therefore, he rectified the then

³³⁹ Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 9, 169.

³⁴⁰ Bosworth, “1 Samuel,” 439.

³⁴¹ Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 9, 168–69.

³⁴² Hendrickson and Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 106.

³⁴³ Philips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary*, 71.

trend of parents to proudly displaying their daughters in the outward attire of vanities, instead adorning them with the precious stones of piety, modesty, silence, and eye control.

2.2.2.4.2 Formation of a Right Conscience

In the given maxim, Chavara instructs parents of the value of instilling moral character in their children. “Do not train children in lying or cheating, or other shadowy tricks, saying that it is normal and that they need to be cunning to survive in the world. When you come across their mistakes, rebuke, and correct them. Teach them to hold truth and justice in high esteem.”³⁴⁴

Conscience is the voice of God who dwells in us, which urges us to love God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Through conscience, we are called to judge our past behaviour as right or wrong and to determine future courses of action.³⁴⁵ For, the CCC says, “conscience must be informed and moral judgement enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful.”³⁴⁶ The formation of the conscience is a life-long task. Right from the beginning, it awakens the child to knowledge and practise of the interior law recognized by conscience. The formation of a right conscience teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness, and pride; resentment arising from guilt; and feelings of complacency born of human weakness and falsehood. The training of the conscience assures us of freedom and produces peace of the heart.³⁴⁷

Chavara educates the parents about the importance of forming an upright conscience in their children. The upright conscience formed in them would become their guideline to living a life pleasing in God’s sight without compromising the values of truth and justice. He reprimanded the parents for justifying their children’s dishonest behaviours as a way for them to survive in the world, such as lying, cheating, or other deceitful acts. He urged them to be vigilant about the whereabouts of their children and to never compromise on their mistakes but to rectify them right away.

³⁴⁴ *Chavarul*, II:10, 198.

³⁴⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16 (AAS 58: 1037).

³⁴⁶ CCC, 1783.

³⁴⁷ CCC, 1784.

The Old Testament gives us a series of various expressions that connote the human being's conscience.³⁴⁸ The exact word for the term "conscience" is not found there. The Hebrew word "*léb*" (heart) is considered as conscience in the Old Testament. God judges us not by our external acts, but according to the profound orientations of our hearts (I Kings 16:6–11; Job 27:1–7).³⁴⁹ Here we can see how God gives the training for the formation of right conscience in the people of Israel: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33); "I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me" (Jer 32:40); "a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:26). David experienced the prick of conscience after doing the wrong: "David was stricken to the heart" (1 Sam 24:5; 2 Sam 24:10). The story of Job portrays the uprightness of his heart: "I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days" (Job 27:6). It is the conscience of the person that leads him or her on the right paths of peace and justice: "I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also, my heart instructs me" (Ps 16:7); "create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10); "keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life" (Prov 4:23). The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord which searches every inmost part of its being (Prov 20:27).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *syneidēsis* does not occur in any of the four Gospels.³⁵⁰ However, we cannot know whether the synoptic writers had encountered it in everyday speech as the word *syneidēsis*. There are several references to the interiority and heart in the Gospels, to list a few; heart is the source from where the words spring forth (Mt 12:34); heart is the seat of all our sinful deeds (Mt 15:19–20); a place where sin is committed first (Mt 5:28). In the case of the prodigal son's "coming to himself," there is an interior self-assessment of moral actions that leads him to the realization of his sin (Lk 15:17–18). According to John, the

³⁴⁸ The Hebrew word for conscience is *lēb* (1 Sam 25:31) which means heart and courage. Opperwall, "Conscience," 761.

³⁴⁹ Maertens, *Bible Themes—A Source Book*, 167.

³⁵⁰ Opperwall, "Conscience," 761–63.

commandments of God are the source of moral knowledge (Jn 13:34–35).³⁵¹

Paul was very familiar with Greek culture. He is credited with the first and extensive use of this term among the biblical writers. But, nowhere does he give a definition of conscience—perhaps he comes closest to that in his letter to the Romans: “They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my Gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all” (Rom 2:15–16).³⁵² Here, the conscience is seen as an inner witness in all human beings, including the Gentiles who did not know the law (Rom 2:14). “While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, “brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God” (Acts 23:1; 24:16); “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 9:1); “indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God” (2 Cor 1:12). A good conscience plays a pivotal role in the faith life: “But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5); “by rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith” (1 Tim 1:19). “To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted” (Titus 1:15). Paul says that all that is not done with a clear conscience is sinful (Rom 14:23). Peter holds that the conscience examines both one’s behaviour as well as one’s motives (1 Pet 3:16).³⁵³ According to John, an upright conscience gives us boldness before God: “Little children, let us love not in word or speech, but in truth and action...Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him” (1 Jn 3:18–22). The New Testament also speaks about the importance of holding on to the values of truth and justice that come from an upright conscience as a means of attaining real freedom and peace of mind (Jn 8:32). The truth, which is the inherent quality of our conscience, proceeds

³⁵¹ Gooch, “Conscience,” 722–23.

³⁵² Oppenwall, “Conscience,” 763.

³⁵³ Freeman, Jr., “Conscience,” 333.

from the Divine Word and sanctifies us in our thoughts and actions (Jn 17:17–19).

Chavara presented in the *Chavarul*, his insights into the formation of a right conscience. From the above analysis of the biblical term conscience, we can make out that Chavara's comprehensions about the conscience and his instruction regarding the formation of the conscience of children are based on his reflections on the Word of God, the fruits of his deep contemplation. In his instructions to the parents, Chavara restrained them from supporting their children in their wrongdoings rather he insisted on training them with the temperance of pursuing the values of truth and justice.

2.2.2.4.3 Obtain God's Blessings by Respecting Parents

In order to fulfil the fourth commandment of God in the decalogue, Chavara urges the children to respect their parents as a way of showing their homage to God. He says, "dear children, you are bound by the commandment of God to respect your parents and to ensure that their minds are not burdened or aggrieved. For, you shall remember that violating the fourth commandment of God would bring down God's curse not only in the afterlife but also in the present."³⁵⁴

The above precept regarding respect towards parents is placed in the concluding part of the *Chavarul*. This precept occupies a unique place in the *Chavarul* since it is the only piece of instruction addressed directly to the children. Parents are always considered the visible image of God to their children. It is through them that the children can enjoy the God-given life, love, and care. In order to fulfil the fourth commandment of God in the Decalogue, Chavara instructs the children to respect their parents as a way of showing their homage to God. Respecting parents would beget God's blessings as longevity of life while trespassing the commandment would befall God's curse upon us.

Children are obliged to their parents for the gift of their life, love, and work, which brought them into the world and enables them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. It is out of this obligation of gratefulness that filial piety, or respect for parents, is derived.³⁵⁵ This respect demands the cultivation of the virtues of patience, forbearance, and reverence towards our parents, particularly in their old age. In this precept, Chavara cautions

³⁵⁴ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200.

³⁵⁵ CCC, 2215.

the children that they must not become the cause of their parents' grief in old age, but rather reciprocate their love and sacrifice towards us with our filial love and affection.³⁵⁶ With the example of a Japanese tale of a mother and her three children, Chavara illustrated this true love of children towards their parents.³⁵⁷ Through this story, Chavara instructs the children to love and honour their parents, even if it means risking their own life, and obtain God's blessings in abundance.

The biblical vision of the family ethics of the *Chavarul* regarding the respect towards parents in the Old Testament can be understood as a multilateral duty based upon four motives. First, the duty of respecting the parents is seen as the will of God (Lev 19:3; Sir 3:2–3). Secondly, it is our gratitude toward parents, for without them, children would have no existence (Tob 4:3–4; Sir 7:29–30). Thirdly, we see it as means to obtain the temporal and spiritual blessings that God confers upon those who observe the fourth commandment (Ex 20:12; Sir 3:4–18). And the fourth one is a precaution against the fear of incurring God's curse and judgement (Ex 21:15–17; Prov 19:26; 20:20; 28:24; 30:17). Children must show reverential fear, honour, and respect toward their parents and have the obligation to love them (Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16; Tob 4:3–4; Sir 3:2–3; 8; 7:29; Sir 3:4–11).³⁵⁸ To show hatred or dislike for one's parents by striking them (Ex 21:15), cursing them (Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9; Prov 20:20) or mistreating them (Prov 19:26; 30:17) is a most grievous crime—a sin worthy of death (Deut 27:16). Children must also be obedient to their parents and follow their instructions (Prov 1:8–9; 6:20–23; 23:22). They have the obligation to support them in their old age (Sir 3:12–18; Prov 28:24). In the book of Sirach, the Lord instructs, “my child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if his mind fails, be patient with him; because you have all your faculties, do not despise him” (Sir 3:12–13). Ben Sira encourages sympathy for an elderly parent who experience mental decline, because God will reward those who show kindness.³⁵⁹

The New Testament frequently quotes the fourth commandment in various places about showing respect towards parents. The direct citations in the

³⁵⁶ Chan, *The Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes*, 79.

³⁵⁷ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200–201.

³⁵⁸ Steinmueller and Sullivan, *Old Testament*, 227.

³⁵⁹ Corley, “Sirach,” 775.

parallel Gospels include the commandment to honour one's father and mother (Mt 15:4; 19:19; Mk 7:10; Lk 18:20). The negation of this commandment would incur God's wrath (Mk 7:10). Jesus Himself was obedient to His parents: "Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). Honouring the parents brings about God's manifold blessings: "Honour your father and mother"—this is the first commandment with a promise: "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1–3; 1 Tim 5:4). Honouring implies obedience and so we are obliged to obey our parents out of reverence towards them as our duty in the Lord: "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord" (Col 3:20). The obedience to parents presupposes obedience to the authorities: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom 13:1).

From the above citations of the Holy Scripture, we can infer that this percept of the *Chavarul* about respecting the parents mirrors Chavara's reflection of the Word of God in response to the prevailing situations in the family. Mutual love and respect in the family bring affinity for feelings, affections, and interests through their relationships. Children are indebted to their parents to show them that they appreciate, respect, obey, and care for them. This genuine fraternal love and respect fosters harmony in family life.

2.2.2.4.4 Freedom to Choose the State of Life

The *Chavarul* advises parents to give their children the freedom to decide for themselves the vocation their life should follow once they reach adulthood.

When they come of age, children should be given full freedom to choose their state of life. For, it is God who resolves on their state of life and it is the responsibility of the children to make the right choice; it is not the prerogative of the parents... Their consent must be specially ascertained before marriages are arranged. Seek in every alliance courteousness and noble qualities of conduct than wealth and social status. Otherwise, instead of joy and happiness, it may result in incessant grief for children as well as parents.³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ *Chavarul*, II:14, 199.

Traditionally, children's vocation or career in life was decided by their parents. The parents were least bothered of their children's aptitude or taste for life. Because of this, they married their children to rich and aristocratic families rather than seeking courteousness and noble qualities of conduct. Such dominance of parents over their children in making important life decisions might lead to tensions. As a result of this prevalent condition at the time, Chavara incorporated this precept on the freedom to choose the state of life in his Testament to the families. He prescribed that the children should be given the freedom to make their own decisions about the direction their life should follow once they reach adulthood. In this precept, Chavara intended both vocation to marital life and to the priesthood or religious life. In fact, he added this maxim to the *Chavarul*, particularly, to create a space for girls to embrace religious life.

In the life of Chavara, we come across a crucial point where he had to take an important step regarding his vocation. When Chavara lost his parents and his only brother due to an epidemic in their village, his uncles asked him to leave the seminary and return to the family to take charge of his home affairs; but Chavara remained unshaken in his determination to pursue the vocation to the priesthood.³⁶¹ Though his uncles strongly forced him to come back, Chavara was equally adamant about resisting his uncles' demands and chose to continue in his priestly formation with his free will. Considering the struggles, one must undergo in life about improper or false decisions about the state of life, Chavara made it a point that children, when of age, must be given the considerable freedom to discern their vocation and choose the state of life they are called to. He advised that parents must not become a hurdle in choosing their vocation by imposing their own dreams and plans about the children upon them. Regarding the selection of the bride or bridegroom for their children, Chavara instructed the parents that they must consider the consent of their children before fixing the marriage.³⁶²

In the Scripture, we find a beautiful example of giving importance to the consent of the children before sending them off to marriage. The book of Genesis illustrates the example of asking the consent of the fiancée, Rebekah, before sending her with the servant of Abraham as the

³⁶¹ *Positio*, 57. See also Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 62. This incident is described in detail in the first chapter, in point 1.3.1.

³⁶² CCC, 1641.

bridegroom of his son Isaac: “And they called to Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ She said, ‘I will’” (Gen 24:57). The Scripture also presents before us the examples of many role models who responded to God’s call out of their free will: Noah (Gen 6:9, 22); Abram (Gen 12:1–3); Moses (Ex 4:20); Joshua (Josh 1:16); Samuel (1 Sam 3:10); Isaiah (Isa 6:8); Jeremiah (Jer 2:1); Ezekiel (Ezek 3:1–2); Mother Mary (Lk 1:38); Peter and Andrews (Mt 4:18); James and John (Mt 4:20); Philip and Nathanael (Jn 1:43–51); Matthew (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27–28); the Apostles (Mk 3:13); Paul (Acts 9:20). The Word of God is a light for our path (Ps 119:105).³⁶³

Chavara’s life was guided by the Divine Word, and in its light, he was able to see God as his “chosen portion and cup.”³⁶⁴ This Word became the motto of his life and strengthened him to make firm decisions of his own free will regarding his state of life. Thus, it is evident that this precept of Chavara which deals with the freedom to choose one’s state of life is based on the Word of God.

2.2.2.4.5 Maturity in Sexual Matters

This section on sex education is put up as an amalgamation of various precepts of the *Chavarul* that shed light on this delicate and sensitive area. While such safety measures are important for all children, they are particularly critical for young children, since they frequently lack the individual resources required to avoid the dangers. Young children, therefore, rely on their parents to act on their behalf to ensure their safety and healthy development in the conducive atmosphere of the ideal family set forth by the good example of the elders.

Chavara was a great reformer of the nineteenth-century who worked for the overall uplift of the families. His vision of the ideal family as the image of heaven encompassed all the members of the family barring no one. He spoke with the same intensity and seriousness about caring for the young children at home as he did about issues regarding the elders of the family. In the time of Chavara, when the matters regarding sex education and child protection were hardly spoken of, Chavara created a space for it in the

³⁶³ CCC, 1802.

³⁶⁴ Valerian, *Malankara Sabhāmāthāvinte Oru Vērasanthānam*, 26; Chacko, *Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 22; Kaniarakath, “The Lord is my Portion” (Ps 119:57): A Key to the Spirituality of Bl. Chavara,” 250.

Chavarul to train the parents regarding the education and formation of children.

Chavara gives a set of precepts that highlight the care and measures to be taken by parents in the sound sexual formation of their children. These are the practical implications of sex education in the family. He says that the children must not be allowed to move around naked in the house. We should never underestimate the grasping capacity of children, and henceforth we should not get into indecent talk in their presence. As far as possible, parents must make every effort to ensure that their children do not share their bedroom with them or that siblings of the opposite sex do not occupy the same room. Children are unaware of their vulnerability to unsafe actions and unsafe people. Therefore, parents are recommended to set boundaries for their children as safety measures against child abuse in the hands of their friends, servants, or even relatives.

The New Testament gives special preference to children as the owners of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:14; Mk 10:13–16; Lk 18:15–17). It acknowledges their purity, innocence of heart, spontaneity, openness, and humility. The Gospels caution about the seriousness of deviating or defiling the little ones of the Lord (Mt 18:10); the persons who become the stumbling block or scandal for the children is condemned to death (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42–48; Lk 17:1–2). The parents or the elders become the guardians for their children’s protection and sound upbringing, for, “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor 6:19).

During the time of Chavara, as we have mentioned earlier, the topic of sex and sexuality was hardly discussed in public. But still, in his *Chavarul*, we find a profound discourse regarding this matter and its practical implications. The Holy Bible and the naked realities of life were his only references to all his writings. In this precept too, we find that Chavara was inspired by the divine Word and could give solutions to the various problems being faced by the families in their inner circle. He shared Paul’s understanding of the holiness of the body as the dwelling place of the Lord and exhorted the parents to take care of these little temples, which are built in children—the angels of this image of heaven, the family; they must not be defiled by any means or circumstances.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the family ethics in the *Chavarul* of Chavara in the light of the biblical vision of family using the hermeneutical method. The first part of this section explored the vision of the ideal family as the image of heaven. Here, the family locale is deliberated as the most natural environment for a child's formation and overall development. In Chavara's viewpoint, a good Christian family is the image of heaven, and he insists that every family should reflect the qualities of heaven. There should be unity of mind and heart, as well as a strong and stable bond among parents and between parents and children. They should respect and obey each other, maintain peace with people, and do everything possible to ensure the eternal salvation of all. The *Chavarul* highlights the parental responsibility to mould and shape the minds and hearts of children and build their character by acquiring virtues, norms, and manners that would enable the children to stand in good stead for the rest of their adult lives and allow them to contribute to an orderly and peaceful society. This kind of upbringing would make both parents and children worthy of the eternal salvation promised to all who remain faithful till the end.

The second part of this section is narrowed down from the general overview of the *Chavarul* to its biblical vision. Here the biblical perspective of the *Chavarul* is written in two sections, as family ethics in the *Chavarul* in general and the guidelines for the upbringing of children in particular are studied elaborately in separate sections. The first sub-division of the *Chavarul*, which deals with family ethics in general, we have envisioned it under three types of relationships: trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal. And in the second sub-division of this study, we dealt with the biblical foundation of the precept regarding the role of parents in the upbringing of children giving them spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and moral formation.

Discussing trans-personal relationship in family life, we have dealt with the family codes facilitating our personal relationship with God. It advocates fear of God as the essential requisite to growing in the transpersonal relationship. It urges family members to associate only with God-fearing people and choose God-fearing people as servants otherwise, they may hinder our relationship with God. The *Chavarul* further instructs us to lead a sacramental life. The sacraments are the heart of the Christian family. They touch on all the important moments of the Christian life. Hence, the

Chavarul gives a profound teaching on the sacramental life in the family, with a special mention of the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist, reconciliation, and other devotional practices. This classification of the trans-personal relationships in the family was concluded with the study on the observance of the obligatory days. The precept instructs the families on the observance of the days of obligation in the light of Deuteronomy, which expresses the Sabbath as the freedom from servitude to the service of God and entails the duty of the faithful to spend the day in charity and spiritual activities.

Intra-personal relationship specifies a human being's relationship with himself or herself. Here, we have seen how the *Chavarul* sheds light on the interior realm of our personality in accordance with the biblical norms, which portray human beings as the image and dwelling place of God. Chavara educated the families on the practical means of attaining various virtues and values of the Christian life. Regarding chaste and modest conduct, he prescribes the watchfulness of the eyes, thoughts, words, and actions. It is the duty of parents to save the souls of their children from being lost in the fires of hades because of their immodest dressing. Every family is given a daily timetable to promote the physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of all members, with the goal of bringing about a life of discipline modelled after the ideal family habits and rubrics outlined in the Scripture. The next point is discussed regarding the precept forbidding the theft or joining and keeping of stolen things. This precept exhorts us to respect the dignity of people and safeguard their property, fame, name, and status, without stealing any of these from others. The next exhortation promotes reading good books that encourage, captivate, console, and even transform our hearts and minds. The subsequent counsel about working with dignity incites the family to inculcate the habit of hard work and a sense of responsibility. This in turn safeguards us from harbouring the fruits of idleness, such as alcoholism, which destroys the family.

On inter-personal relationship, we have seen the various facets of true Christian love that build up our relationship with our neighbour. The first precept on loving one another is given as an antidote to the families that suffer from discord and acrimony, with the invitation to practise the forgiving love explained in the Gospels in their own lives. The following precept which also deals with charitable deeds, elaborates on the idea of true charity and its worth in God's eyes, helping us to fulfil the requirement for being reckoned in the book of life. The following teaching of Chavara

on justice and equality resembles the biblical concept of justice, which impels us to be fair in our dealings with labourers and seek their uplift rather than trampling their right to basic amenities of life.

The subsequent counsels of the *Chavarul* that is discussed here help us in our comprehension of the sacredness of the home, which must not be defiled by improper use of our tongue, such as non-Christian discussions, reproach, gossiping, etc. And we are not supposed to be preoccupied with running errands from house to house, collecting other people's news and dumping it in our homes. We should instead focus on discharging our own duties properly. The concluding precept discussed here on financial ethics for families is elaborately analysed by further classifications. Chavara insists the people neither be extravagant nor stingy; both are sinful. Hence, we must have a balanced position and be generous in sharing with others what we have received from God. He further instructs to be careful in dealing with money matters and to keep a clear conscience in trade and other businesses.

Unaccountability and lack of transparency in our financial matters would lead to the damnation of our souls. He says that we must avoid borrowing money from others unless it is inevitable, and if we lend money, we must give it as charity. Chavara cautions us to utilise the resources we have wisely. When we examine each of these family precepts one by one, we perceive a picture of the problems and difficulties that families were dealing with at the time of Chavara. The mention of these virtues and practises as exhortation in the *Chavarul* also hints at the diminishing spirit of the ideal Christian family, which might have urged Chavara to pen down this family code as his testament.

The second part of the *Chavarul*, entitled "the upbringing of the children" takes up the last part of this chapter, Chavara gave parents a set of sixteen precepts to be followed in the upbringing of their children, which can be divided into the different levels of formation like faith, intellectual, psychological, and moral formation. These guidelines focus on the upbringing of children and the formation of youth. The Christian faith formation of the children aims to impart a strong, vital, and life-giving faith to the children by informing, forming, and transforming them into holistic persons. Therefore, parents are instructed to teach their children prayers and inculcate faith and trust in God from infancy.

Regarding faith formation, a study of the precept regarding teaching children the prayers and preparing them for the sacraments was carried out. A child's early belief systems and values pave the way for shaping his or her personality and behaviours throughout the rest of their lives. Along with spiritual upbringing, parents must also make sure to send their children to school at their proper age, monitor them in their studies and friendships, protect them from all harm, and spend time observing them at work and play. The *Chavarul* insists parents to be concerned about their children's moral formation by forming a right conscience in them and training them to be modest in their attire and behaviour. The exhortations regarding the psychological formation of children comprised the instructions to parents to discipline their children prudently and setting good example for them by acting as good role models. As a result, the children would respect their parents and, in their old age, lovingly and joyfully provide for their spiritual and temporal needs. According to the *Chavarul*, we obtain God's reward by upholding the fourth commandment of God, which is to honour our parents. Observation of this commandment also includes taking care of the parents in their old age.

The dictates state that when children come of age, they must be given full freedom to make their own decisions about the kind of vocation they are to follow in life. It is noteworthy to see that in Chavara's time, when matters regarding sex and sex education were hardly spoken about in public, Chavara made it a point to include the instructions on the formation of children about sex and sex education. Chavara stressed the importance of parents' constant accompaniment of their children in order to ensure their safety and security and protect them from threats and misfortunes that may come in the disguise of relatives, friends, and servants.

In short, this chapter proves that the precepts in the *Chavarul* are based on the reflections and insights derived from the Holy Scripture, and therefore, the family ethics in the *Chavarul* of Chavara are in line with the biblical vision of family. When it is scrutinized and discerned in the light of the Word of God, it is discovered that the all-pervading dictates of the *Chavarul*, carefully compiled by Chavara, assume relevance in the modern milieu too, where the very existence of the family is at stake, as never before. This comparative study of the family ethics in the *Chavarul* and the biblical vision of family lead us to draw the inference that the family ethics given in the *Chavarul* of Chavara are based on the biblical vision of family.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL VISION OF FAMILY IN THE *CHAVARUL*

In this chapter, we proceed further to explore the theological vision of family in the *Chavarul*. The family has been at the centre of the Church's theological reflection and pastoral care. The family is named as the *domestic church* by the Fathers of the Church. This theological reflection of the family is continued in the later centuries with the emphasis on family and its functions mainly through the Church teachings such as, the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII (1880) *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*; the apostolic letter of St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), and *Letter to Families* (1994). Latest responses of the Church concerning the challenges faced by the families in the changed context of today are brought forth through the two Synods on the Family¹ and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.²

The theological dimension of family envisioned in the *Chavarul* comprises of many exhortations and anecdotes centred on the fear of God and love towards God and neighbour. The author, Chavara seems to have referred to a number of books in this genre to bring out this *magna carta* as a code of conduct for a God-fearing family. Even though we do not find any direct mention of Alphonsus Liguori (1696–1787) in the *Chavarul*, we can trace his ideas lingering in the writings of Chavara.³ The *Chavarul* also hints us

¹ The theme of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family held in 2014 was *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*. The Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place in 2015 with the theme: *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*.

² Hereafter, in the text, *Amoris Laetitia* is referred to as *AL*.

³ For example, St. Alphonsus Liguori's rules for leading a good life: "1) In the morning, on rising from bed, make the Christian acts. Every day, make mental prayer for half an hour; read at least a quarter of an hour some spiritual book; hear Mass; say the Rosary. And in the evening, make the examination of conscience, with the act of contrition, and the Christian acts, together with the Litany of the Ever-Blessed Mary. 2) To go to confession and communion at least every week. 3) To choose a good, learned, and pious confessor, and to be directed by him. 4) To avoid idleness, bad companions, immodest conversations, and above all, the occasions of sin. 5) When you commit any sin, repent of it at once, and resolve to amend. 6) To hear sermons as often as you can and to belong to some fraternity. 7) In adverse circumstances, as in sickness, losses, persecutions, you

about Chavara's acumen on the Catholic theological tradition of the family in Europe and his acquaintance with the European Carmelite missionaries of his time.⁴ Moreover, Chavara, a shepherd with the smell of the sheep, could read the pulse of the Christian families entrusted to his pastoral care. As already mentioned, all these make the *Chavarul* to have a continued relevance even after one and a half century. However, one should acknowledge that this work has been seldom brought out on this account.

Having given this background, we discuss the following issues: (1) What are the implications of explicit family ethics inscribed in the *Chavarul*? (2) What is the relevance of the theological vision of family exposed in the *Chavarul* against the background of the theological development of family ethics by Church fathers, theologians, and magisterial teachings?

The answer to the above questions is synchronized in this chapter as it is unfolded in nine sub-divisions followed by a conclusion. We begin with the discussion on the theological vision of family in the *Chavarul*. Here, the topic is studied under the headings of—family as the image of heaven and

must unite yourselves in all things to the will of God, and be resigned, saying always, "This is (or has been) the will of God; may his will be done." Alphonsus De Liguori, *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, 355–56. These advices can be traced in various precepts of the *Chavarul*. Chavara, having served as *Malpān* (professor) in the seminary gives the impression that he was influenced by the teachings of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who is known as the patron of moral theology, for moral theology was one of the main subjects of the seminary curriculum at that time.

⁴ There are a few geographical references in the *Chavarul* regarding it. For instance, twice it refers to France (*Chavarul*, I: 8), once to Leuven (*Chavarul*, I:18), Belgium (*Chavarul*, II: 16), and Japan (*Chavarul*, II: 16). Aside from the biblical figures of David and Jonathan, the names mentioned in the *Chavarul* include Emperor Constantine, Philosopher Democritus, Kathon (A Roman Chieftain), St. Ambrose, and Origen (*Chavarul*, I: 8; I:18; II:16). He also mentioned in other letters, several places in Europe, such as Genova, Rome (*Chavarul*, I:12), Naples, etc. where people render special help to the sick and the dying. He says that there are asylums for the mentally sick, hospitals for the lepers, and houses to give refuge to the destitute who have no one to look after. There are volunteers to do the works of mercy, and both their bodies and souls are being taken care of. He also cited an incident in the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who once while riding on a horse back, met a miserable man with festering wounds all over his body, who begged for charity. He at once offered money, but refused to accept it. Instead, he asked him to bring him some relief from his pain by licking his wounds. Though he first hesitated, he took courage, got down from horseback, put out his tongue to lick the wounds, and then the wounds of the beggar disappeared. It was this incident that showed him the way of sanctity. See CWC, IV: *The Letters*, 9/7, 124–25.

family initiated in the sacrament of matrimony, which is further divided into subtitles explaining the basic aspects of marriage such as love and interpersonal relationships, sexual life of the couple, procreation, sexual pleasure, unity, and indissolubility. The succeeding topic deals with family and the Church. Here, the communion between family and the Church is compared with Christ's relationship with the Church. Thus, the family is rightly called as the domestic church. With this, the discussion continues the understanding of the family as the means of sanctification and underscores the value of the family as the foundation of faith. It is the sanctuary of life brought to the world as the sacramental sign.

Family is also school of mutual love and respect. We also discuss the bond between family and the Eucharist, and how family becomes an arena of reconciliation. Thus, showing family as the cradle of love and life an elaborate explanation of the unique features of Christian love, we understand love as the key to marital and familial relationships. The next point explains the family as an abode of virtues. Here, the virtues to be practised in the family are classified and studied under the headings of the theological and moral virtues. The following topic, family and social values, deals with the ethics of the family in a social context.

This discussion is followed further through the theme of family as the school of integral formation of children incorporating spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and moral formation and the role of women in the family. From a general point of view, the *Chavarul* gives importance to economic, ecological, and work ethics as well. This chapter analyses the *Chavarul* against the background of the relevant documents of Vatican II, Papal Encyclicals, other documents of the Catholic Church such as the CCC, the teachings of the Church Fathers, and other theologians.

In the nineteenth century, Liguorian moral theology formed the core of Catholic moral theological reflections.⁵ And obviously, this would have been a theological source for Chavara to write the *Chavarul*, which includes the spiritual, psychological, social, and moral formation of Christian families. Later, many of these principles of Christian families are resounded in the Second Vatican document, wherein it reinstates the family as a school of deeper humanity where the lessons of life and mission, the communion and deliberation of spouses, the painstaking upbringing of the children, and

⁵ Vereecke, "Alphonsus Liguori," 341.

mature and responsible discernment of one's vocation are sought after.⁶ Another document, *LG*, written on the Church describes the family as the domestic church where parents become the first teachers of faith to their children and take care to foster the vocation proper to each child.⁷

Pope Francis draws our attention to the Trinitarian aspect of the family. He says that the family is the living reflection of the communion of love of the Triune God.⁸ Pope John Paul II points out that the interior strength that shapes and animates the family communion and the community is constituted by the love that animates the interpersonal relationships of the different members of the family. He says that every family is called by the God of peace to have a joyous and renewing experience of "reconciliation" which reunites and restores the communion among the family members.⁹

As the years pass by, the families evolve into newer forms according to their needs and conveniences. In these changing times, it is sad to note that the changing scenario of families is filled with the vacuum of the missing age-old traditions and principles of a noble family. In these circumstances, the co-existence of Christian families in a world that even denies the presence of God owing to their proud boasting of scientific advancement in techniques and technologies has hampered their spiritual life. This distortion in Christian families has resounded, a clarion call to re-form and re-shape. Chavara's work on the formation of Christian families namely the *Chavarul* touches all the realms like personal discipline, family prayer, good etiquettes, social justice, charitable work, love for one another, sense of responsibility, etc. that are required to form a good Christian family. Chavara's advice to families resonates with the heartbeat of the Church's teachings. His teachings mirror the teachings of the theologians and the Church Fathers. Thus, the *Chavarul* is relevant today to bridge the gaps and fill up the vacuum created in modern families due to the absence of the ethos.

3.1 Vision of Family in the *Chavarul*

Chavara claimed that a good Christian family is a replica of heaven. The fundamental goal of a family is to have members who live in bond of blood

⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52 (AAS 58:173–74).

⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 57: 15–16).

⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 11 (AAS 108: 315).

⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 21 (AAS 74: 104–106).

and affection, who respect and obey their parents, who walk before God in peace, and who each seek everlasting salvation in accordance with their proper stage of life.¹⁰ Chavara must have put forth this definition of family out of his own personal experience. He desired that all the families enjoy the heavenly experience of a good Christian family formulated in the *Chavarul*. He also handed over a set of guidelines to the parents to prepare a spiritual ambience for the children. Let us try to analyse Chavara's vision of family as the image of heaven from a theological point of view.

3.1.1 Family as the Image of Heaven

Chavara, on his deathbed, looking at the picture of the Holy Family, confessed,

Throughout my lifetime I have spent the life in this Holy Family. I have put on the name Kuriakose of the Holy Family for this memory. My devout parents made me remember the great family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and I have always seen it in my heart, remembered it, and venerated it. Because, their grace has always protected me, I could, by the divine grace, dare to say that I have not lost the baptismal innocence."¹¹

Vatican II exhorts that God's eternal plan (Eph 1:3–13) for all men and women are to participate and share in the divine life (Jn 1:3; 2 Pet 1:4). The Father summons people to realize this plan in union with their fellow human beings to form the wider family of the People of God.¹² The mutual love between the couples that results in procreation explicitly portrays a true and living image of God, the Creator and Saviour.¹³ This fruitful love which represents God's inner life helps us to understand and describe the mystery of God himself; for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son, and Spirit of love.¹⁴ Pope Francis' insights on the Trinity and family give us the same idea: "The Triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection."¹⁵ In this respect,

¹⁰ *Chavarul*, "Introduction," 184.

¹¹ *Positio*, 548; Valerian, *Malankara Sabhā Māthāvinte Oru Vēra Santhānam*, 315; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 349.

¹² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 9 (AAS 57:12–14).

¹³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 11 (AAS 108: 315).

¹⁴ Himes and Himes, "Rights, Economics, and the Trinity," 139; Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 65.

¹⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 11 (AAS 108: 315).

with a gaze of faith and love, grace and fidelity, we need to contemplate the relationship between human families and the Holy Trinity. Pope John Paul II sheds light on this when he said, “our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love. That love in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶ The family is thus related to God’s very being;¹⁷ His presence in the family makes it an image of the Holy Trinity in the world.

A Christian family is blessed by sacramental grace, and it is because of this sacramental grace that the family becomes a witness of the presence of the mystery of the Trinity. The dynamism of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source of the love and communion within family life.¹⁸ Thus, this Trinitarian dimension, which is found in the Pauline theology of family, expresses the mutual love between the couples as the “mystery” of the union of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21–33).¹⁹ Pope Francis says,

The Word of God tells us that the family is entrusted to a man, a woman, and their children, so that they become a communion of persons in the image of the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the Word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion, and thus to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells.²⁰

This same aspect of the Trinitarian family is reflected in Chavara’s definition of family in the *Chavarul*. It invites families to witness heaven in their lives by growing in love, compassion, and human virtues to find fulfilment and self-actualization.²¹ It recommends that the families reflect on God’s creative work by praying together, meditating on His Word, and sharing in the Eucharistic communion to nourish the family bond. This in turn will enable the families to serve as the temples where the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling place. The Spirit transforms it into an ever more authentic image of the Holy Family of Nazareth, directing everyone in the

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration in Puebla de los Ángeles*, 184.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration in Puebla de los Ángeles*, 184.

¹⁸ Chundelikkat, “Sacrament of Marriage and Family as Domestic Church,” 54.

¹⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 11 (AAS 108: 315).

²⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 29 (AAS 108: 321).

²¹ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

world evangelistically towards Jesus. In this way, the family becomes a true and living image of heaven.

After a short description of the definition of family as the image of God, let us turn our attention to the initiation of a Christian family in the sacrament of matrimony. The relationship between the family and the Church is described as the covenantal Christ-Church relationship and its role as the domestic church.

3.1.2 Family Initiated in the Sacrament of Matrimony

According to the Catholic understanding, marriage is a sacrament by which the spouses are fortified by its invisible grace and receive a consecration befitting to the duties and dignity of their state. “Matrimony is a sacrament because it is a sacred and efficient sign of grace and the image of the mystical marriage of Christ with the Church.”²² Thus, through the sacrament of marriage there begins a Christian family. Vatican II affirms that, “from the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries.”²³ In the *Chavarul*, Chavara emphasised the bond of marriage by his maxims that encourage the husband and wife to be exemplars of their mutual love and respect for each other.²⁴ The Christ-Church image is expressed by the bond of marriage, the most intimate union by which man and woman bind themselves together. Therefore, every valid marriage between Christians is a sacrament.²⁵ The sacredness of marriage is attributed to the will of God, the Creator. It is a prophetic symbol of the union of God with His people. St. Paul explains this matrimonial union as the image and reflection of the covenant between Christ and the Church.²⁶

The historical evolution of marriage as a sacrament, traced back to the beginning, shows that marriage was not always a liturgical event, even for Christians. In the first thousand years of the Church’s existence, marriage was viewed as a civil affair, a secular reality, a contract between two

²² Leo XIII, *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, 24; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1067–68); Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 1823.

²³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 57:15–16).

²⁴ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

²⁵ Neuner and Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, 1823.

²⁶ Neuner and Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, 523.

partners; in which the main event was the transfer of the bride from her father's house to her groom's home. Christians solely followed their local customs with regard to marriage.²⁷ But gradually, marriage became a sacred part of Christian life.²⁸ Though Augustine, titled marriage as a *sacramentum*²⁹ with the explanation that marriage is a visible sign of the invisible union between Christ and the Church,³⁰ it was only in the late 12th century marriage was enlisted among the sacraments.³¹

Finally, through the Council of Trent (1563) the Church officially declared marriage as a sacrament and decreed that all Christians who wished to have a valid and sacramental marriage must marry in the presence of a priest and two witnesses.³² It claimed that a validly contracted marriage was permanent and the marriage bond could not be dissolved for any reason other than the death of one of the partners.³³ Pope Paul VI's comment on marriage drawing our attention to its sacramental sign: "For baptised persons, marriage invests the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, in as much as it represents the union of Christ and of the Church."³⁴ The fundamental task of marriage is described as the "determined effort to perfect each other through the mutual interchange and sharing of life as a whole. Thus, sexuality in marriage is human and moral to the extent and degree that it serves and promotes this fundamental task of marriage."³⁵ The research into the biblical understanding of marriage and family in the second chapter has enabled us to understand the fundamental truth that marriage and family are unique realities.

²⁷ Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*, 31–32.

²⁸ Martos, "Marriage," 43.

²⁹ Boff, "The Sacrament of Marriage," 23; Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 4 (AAS 57: 6–7).

³⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, 10.5; Mack and Blankenhorn, eds., *On the Book of Marriage*, 83.

³¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 60, art. 2.

³² Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 438, 425; Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*, 32.

³³ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, 22; Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*, 75; *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Priests*, 641, 643, 661, 653; Lawler, *Secular Marriage and Christian Marriage*, 43.

³⁴ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 8(AAS 60:484).

³⁵ Kosnik, Carroll, Cunningham, Modras, and Schulte, eds., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*, 109.

3.1.2.1 Basic Aspects of Marriage

Marriage is a life of love, and the “vocation and fundamental option of couple is to love each other in the most complete and most profound way.”³⁶ However, in the Christian tradition, the meaning of marriage and marital sexuality has been understood differently, mainly in terms of procreation, love, and pleasure, but giving emphasis on the procreation dimension.³⁷ Augustine’s inventory of its three goods is the basis of all later Christian teachings.³⁸ Augustine explains that marriage is divinely blessed and he speaks of the three goods of marriage: procreation, fidelity, and sacrament (*proles, fides, sacramentum*).³⁹ Thomas Aquinas explains the two ends of marriage: procreation, the primary end, and the good of the spouses or mutual aid, the secondary end.⁴⁰ The terminology of primary and secondary ends continued up to Vatican II. *Gaudium et Spes*⁴¹ does not make the distinction between the primary and secondary ends, but speaks about the purposes of marriage, namely, love and procreation, which are inseparable.⁴² Vatican II calls marriage and the family as a “community of love”⁴³ and thereafter emphasizes the supreme importance of love in its life. Here, the emphasis on personal love is balanced by the concept of procreation. In Thomas Aquinas’ later writings, he describes the union between husband and wife as *maxima amicitia*, the “greatest friendship.”⁴⁴ Pope John Paul II built an entire theology of sex and marriage around the concept that sex in marriage is first and foremost a total self-gift of

³⁶ Kochuthara, “Love is Chaste,” 15–16.

³⁷ Kochuthara, “Sexual and Family Ethics: Future Prospects,” 177.

³⁸ Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, 188.

³⁹ Augustine, *De bono conjugali*, 24.32. *Fides* is also translated as sexual fidelity and sacrament as the indissoluble bond. See Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, 188.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, *Supplement*, q. 41, a. 1.

⁴¹ Hereafter in the text, *Gaudium et Spes* is referred to as *GS*.

⁴² Kochuthara, “Love is Chaste,” 16. “Marriage is not merely for the procreation of children: its nature as an indissoluble compact between two people and the good of the children demand that the mutual love of the partners be properly shown, that it should grow and mature. Even in cases where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and preserves its value and indissolubility.” Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50 (AAS 58: 1070–72).

⁴³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47 (AAS 58: 1067).

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 123, 6; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 123 (AAS 108: 359).

spouses.⁴⁵ Here we shall discuss the basic aspects of marriage which shed light on the love and interpersonal relationship, sexual life of the couple, procreation, sexual pleasure, unity, and indissolubility of marriage.

3.1.2.1.1 Love and Interpersonal Relationships

Chavara's instruction to the parents in the *Chavarul* to love and respect each other⁴⁶ is the indication of the love and interpersonal relationship that is to be harboured between the couples. In his reflection on marriage and family, Pope John Paul II exhorts that God created human beings in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26–27) calling them into existence through love and for love. Pope continues that God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.⁴⁷ Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. Human beings, having a body and a soul, are called to love in their unified totality. Therefore, love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love.⁴⁸

In a similar vein, Pope Francis teaches the characteristics of marital love in the light of Gen 2:24 which is quoted in Mt 19:5: “The man shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.” The expression “to be joined” or “to cleave,” in the original Hebrew denotes a profound harmony, a closeness both physical and interior, to such an extent that the word is used to describe our union with God: “My soul clings to you” (Ps 63:8). The marital union is thus referred not only in its sexual and corporal dimension, but also in its voluntary self-giving in love. The result of this union is that the two “become one flesh,” both physically and in the union of their hearts and lives, and eventually, in a child, who will share both genetically and spiritually “in one flesh” of both parents.⁴⁹ In a broader sense, two persons in one flesh, three persons in one divine reality, these are related mysteries of similar profundity and splendour.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74: 91–93); Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, 196.

⁴⁶ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

⁴⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 12 (AAS 58: 1034); John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74: 91–93).

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74: 91–93).

⁴⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 13 (AAS 108: 316).

The *Chavarul* states that the purpose of a family is that the members live together in the bond of affection.⁵⁰ In accordance with *GS*, the bond arises out of the “covenant of irrevocable personal consent”⁵¹ whereby the couple pledges to live as husband and wife. It is the relationship of husband and wife that gives life to the bond, and as such, the bond inbuilt in the human beings who make up the relationship.⁵² So, when the *Chavarul* speaks of the reality of the bond between the members, it can be considered the marriage bond, which means the reality of a man and woman who have given an entire orientation to their lives by pledging that they will live together as husband and wife. In brief, the inner essence of marriage is the human relationship rooted in sexual difference and human oneness. It is the one relationship that two people on every human level: emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical. So too, this relationship can break down at any of its levels, not just through sexual unfaithfulness. Fidelity to a marriage is therefore a steady commitment to the fragile network of communication between two partners. Hence, fidelity is an all-embracing moral call to devote our energies to the growth, enrichment, and repair of the tender relationship of two people within the personal union of marriage.⁵³

3.1.2.1.2 Sexual Life of the Couple

When Chavara advises children that “out of respect...not to sleep in parents’ bedroom,”⁵⁴ he implicitly points to the fact that children should not be a hindrance for their parents’ marital relationship. It is the context where they exchange their total mutual love, acceptance, and commitment through conjugal sexual intercourse. It is a moment of intense interpersonal communication and dialogue; a communication of the total person to each other.⁵⁵ Sexual intercourse is an encounter between persons and its ultimate meaning is interpersonal. It is a communication of love that shifts the individual from egoism to a mutuality of sharing, from the technology of

⁵⁰ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

⁵¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1067–69).

⁵² Himes and Coriden, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Reconsider,” 485.

⁵³ Smedes, “Respect for Covenant,” 349–350.

⁵⁴ *Chavarul*, II:4, 197.

⁵⁵ Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 390.

pleasure to mutual commitment, and from potentially meaningless pleasure to meaningful interaction.⁵⁶

Sexuality is an integral element of God's creative plan for the human person, and it is basically good. According to Schillebeeckx, sexuality is an expression of interpersonal love which is valued as the very essence of marriage.⁵⁷ In marriage, a man and woman commit themselves to one another in love with the God-given gift of sexuality. Marriage is the context of sharing this gift of God and at the same time it shoulders the spouses with the responsibility to "become one" and live together in mutual fidelity and love. In other words, a life-long and committed relationship is integral to God's design for marital sexuality.⁵⁸ The goal of sexuality in the married couples is the unity, which is expressed in their sexual act. Thus, it confirms to the fact that sexuality concerns with the realm of relationship and not merely the biological.⁵⁹ The exclusive fidelity of the spouses to each other is the plan of God, and any attempt to destroy this spousal union is against the will of God.⁶⁰

God endowed humans with the power of love through their sexuality.⁶¹ Sexuality which has its supreme origin in God is revealed in conjugal love. According to Thomas Aquinas, conjugal love is the love between a husband and a wife,⁶² which is sanctified, enriched, and illuminated by the grace of the sacrament of marriage. It is an affective, spiritual, and sacrificial union⁶³ that is combined with warmth of friendship and erotic passion, and endures long after emotions and passions subside.⁶⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill explains that sexuality is not an end in itself, but an expression of human relationship.⁶⁵ It is not just physical and reproductive but expressive and relational power.

⁵⁶ Dominian, *Let's Make Love*, 64.

⁵⁷ Schillebeeckx, "Christian Marriage and the Reality of Complete Marital Breakdown," 90.

⁵⁸ Himes and Coriden, "The Indissolubility of Marriage," 453–99; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 97.

⁵⁹ Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love*, 41–42.

⁶⁰ Himes and Coriden, "The Indissolubility of Marriage," 453–99; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 97.

⁶¹ Nelson, *Embodiment*, 8.

⁶² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q.20, a. 1.

⁶³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q.27, a.2.

⁶⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 120 (AAS 108: 358).

⁶⁵ Cahill, *Women and Sexuality*, 49.

Above all, sexuality is a relational capacity⁶⁶ that draws us out from our own self to interpersonal bonds and commitments with others. Relationality helps the sexuality to be lived meaningfully through a life of love, compassion, tenderness, and relationship.⁶⁷

Sexual love and sexual pleasure become reasonable or sensible only in the context of the exclusive fidelity and love of the spouses.⁶⁸ Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians gives us the longest discourse on sexuality in the entire Bible (1 Cor 7).⁶⁹ "Sexual desire, according to Paul, is a fact of human life that must be reckoned with intelligently and faithfully; it is not to be ignored or rejected."⁷⁰ The important point he makes is that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with sexual intercourse in marriage. To the unmarried and widows who are unable to control their sexual passions, Paul says, "it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor 7:9). Here, "Paul is actually arguing against those who regard sexual intercourse as inappropriate for Christians. He convincingly affirms the necessity of mutual sexual satisfaction within marriage."⁷¹ In a nutshell, Paul is trying to explain that sexual relationship is a meaningful part of marriage, and that it is meaningful only within marriage. According to him, both partners have the conjugal rights and responsibilities. The basic concept is mutuality, which does not allow one to sexually exploit the partner. It is the deliberate, active commitment implied by love that lies at the core of conjugal bliss.⁷² In the Catholic sacramental theology, conjugal love, which is the reflection of God's love is the essence of marriage. The self-giving that conjugal love demands is not only on the carnal level of sexuality but it also involves the whole, total person, including the affections and emotions, the mind and the will, and personal freedom.⁷³

Clearly, the *Chavarul* does not undertake a detailed discussion on marital sexuality as St. Paul. That is beyond its scope. Moreover, in the then cultural context, such a discussion would not have been much appreciated.

⁶⁶ Cahill, *Women and Sexuality*, 56.

⁶⁷ Kochuthara, "Love is Chaste," 10.

⁶⁸ Himes and Coriden, "The Indissolubility of Marriage," 453–99; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 97.

⁶⁹ Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 102.

⁷⁰ Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, 206.

⁷¹ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 51.

⁷² Carey, "In Defence of Marriage," 29; Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love*, 152.

⁷³ Attard, "Can Marriage Make You a Saint?," 217.

But Chavara's emphasis on the need of the privacy of the couple indicates his awareness of the need of educating the couples of their sexual intimacy and the importance he gave to that.

3.1.2.1.3 Procreation

The *Chavarul* expounds that children are sacred treasures entrusted to the parents by God and that bringing up the children is their primary duty in life.⁷⁴ Here, the traditional understanding of procreation and upbringing of children is highlighted as the primary good of marriage. Pope Pius XI calls marriage as the "sacred partnership,"⁷⁵ of which children are the greatest blessing and fruit.⁷⁶ The encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, ranks procreation and fidelity as primary and secondary ends of marital sexual relationship.⁷⁷ It dwells on the thought that any sexual act which "is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offence against the law of God and nature."⁷⁸ Procreation is completed in the education of offspring, in which parents give one another in "mutual help."⁷⁹ The *CCC* affirms that "by its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory."⁸⁰ *GS* asserts,

Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves. God himself said: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 21:18), and "from the beginning [he] made them male and female" (Mt 19:4); wishing to associate them in a special way in his own creative work, God blessed man and woman with the words: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Without intending to underestimate the other ends of marriage, it must be said that true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it is directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day.⁸¹

⁷⁴ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

⁷⁵ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 9 (AAS 22: 543).

⁷⁶ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 11, 12 (AAS 22: 543–44).

⁷⁷ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 17, 19, 54 (AAS 22: 546, 547, 559).

⁷⁸ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 56 (AAS 22: 559).

⁷⁹ Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 16 (AAS 22: 545).

⁸⁰ *CCC*, 1652.

⁸¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50 (AAS 58: 1070–71).

Bernard Häring describes the fundamental nature of marriage in the light of *GS* as the covenant of love that is not merely a subjective supplement to the objective, divinely established ‘ends’ but the root or stem from which truly human and generous fecundity is to be expected.⁸² Pope Francis states that every child is a gift from God, entrusted by the Lord to a father and a mother, and their task begins with total acceptance of the child joyfully and continues the same with lifelong protection and reaches its final goal, the joy of eternal life.⁸³ For a Christian, the good of offspring means the generation of members of Christ. It does not signify merely procreating children, but that “children are to be lovingly received, brought up with tender care, and given a religious education.”⁸⁴

Chavara’s emphasis on children as the sacred treasure from above goes in line with the theological teachings of the Church at that time wherein the primary end of marriage was considered procreation and responsible upbringing of children. Through this precept, Chavara intended to focus the attention of the parents’ participation on the creative work of God.

3.1.2.1.4 Sexual Pleasure

Chavara’s instruction to the parents about the privacy of their bed room⁸⁵ can also be interpreted as an acknowledgment of the importance of their sexual intimacy. The wider meaning of sexual pleasure can be understood in the light of sexual love and interpersonal communion. These dimensions of sexual pleasure are related to the whole phenomenon of human sexuality.⁸⁶

When we delve deeper into the Christian tradition, we can find that for a long-time sexual pleasure was considered a suspicious entity. On the one hand, the goodness of sexuality and procreation was defended and on the other hand, sexual pleasure, which was understood as uncontrollable and irresistible, was a confusing element that made the Christian tradition consider sexuality as a mixture of good and evil.⁸⁷ It was Augustine who gave a definite shape to Christian moral reflection on sexuality and sexual

⁸² Häring, “Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and Family,” 237.

⁸³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 166 (AAS 108: 376–77).

⁸⁴ Augustine, *De Genesis ad litteram*, 9.7.12; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 168.

⁸⁵ *Chavarul*, II:4, 197.

⁸⁶ Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 416–17.

⁸⁷ Kochuthara, “Sexuality: Changing Perspectives,” 509.

pleasure. But he was often accused of having fortified a pessimistic view of sexuality and sexual pleasure.⁸⁸ Augustine perceived that sexual pleasure was irresistible, and hence considered it as a sign of the weakening of the will due to concupiscence that resulted from the original sin. Procreative intention was the criterion to discern whether the pleasure involved was sinful or not.⁸⁹ However, it was unavoidable in marital act, and hence was to be tolerated.

The CCC teaches that “sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.”⁹⁰ Although Thomas Aquinas holds upon the Augustinian teaching which says that sex for pleasure’s sake is a sin, he does not see the enjoyment of pleasure itself as wrong, as long as it is properly contained within the marital and procreative union.⁹¹ Since, God ordained pleasure as one of the primary ends of sex humans have an ethical responsibility to mutually pursue it.⁹² Pope John Paul II locates the goodness of sex in authentic self-giving. The Pope states that “sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another...is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such.”⁹³ Thus, in the statement of Pope John Paul II we find his deep respect for marital union. He gives a deeper meaning to sexuality by placing it in the centre of one’s self-giving.

Sexual pleasure has to be seen in the context of the relationship between the couple. Their relationship and sexual fulfilment in pleasure reciprocates each other in their function. Pope Francis rightly says that the erotic dimension of love must not be considered simply as a permissible evil or a

⁸⁸ Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 125. It was his experience of illicit unions prior to his conversion that tainted the concept of sexual pleasure. For, sexual pleasure had such an attraction for him that he had great difficulty in giving it up and only succeeded in doing so by condemning it. He held that intercourse was only justified by the intention to procreate; intercourse for any other purpose was sinful. Augustine, *The City of God*, 14. 18, 466; Marshall, “True Meaning of Marriage,” 306–307.

⁸⁹ Kochuthara, “Sexuality: Changing Perspectives,” 509.

⁹⁰ CCC, 2351.

⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 26, a. 11–12; Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics*, 193.

⁹² Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 154.

⁹³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74: 91–93).

burden to be tolerated for the good of the family. Rather, it is to be seen as a gift from God which enriches the relationship of the spouses.⁹⁴

The mention of this precept in the *Chavarul* helps us to understand the broad mindset of Chavara regarding the sexual life of the couple. He dared to speak on this topic in the time when even the mention of these words was looked upon with contempt. Chavara was much more enlightened on this matter to direct the families in this regard even before the official theological teachings of the Church came into light.

3.1.2.1.5 Unity and Indissolubility

Chavara, in the introduction to *Chavaraul*, gives a comprehensive definition of family in which he mentions one strong point that the goal of a family is that the members live together in union.⁹⁵ Here, Chavara focuses on the marital bond between husband and wife, which is exclusive and, at the same time, permanent and unbreakable. The *CCC* teaches that “from a valid marriage arises a bond between the spouses which by its very nature is perpetual [indissoluble] and exclusive [unity]; furthermore, in a Christian marriage, the spouses are strengthened and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state by a special sacrament.”⁹⁶

Unity is understood as an expression of exclusive, self-giving love between husband and wife who are committed to a life-long union according to God’s design. Equal dignity of man and woman is the basis for unity. *GS* states: “The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection.”⁹⁷ Though the unity is understood in terms of exclusivity, it does not exclude everyone else from their life. On the contrary, the couple must share together their love and affection in the community in which they live and work. It is important for them to have an awareness of the social dimension of conjugal life as they live together in the community.

Pope John Paul II strongly defends the sanctity and indissolubility of the marriage bond. Like each of the seven sacraments, marriage also is a real symbol of the event of salvation in its own way. The spouses participate in

⁹⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 152 (AAS 108: 370).

⁹⁵ Chavara, *Chāvaraul*, Introduction, 9.

⁹⁶ *CCC*, 1638; *CIC*, 1134 (AAS 75: 198).

⁹⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 49 (AAS 58: 1070–71).

it together as a couple so that the first and immediate effect of marriage is not supernatural grace itself, but the Christian bond, a Christian communion of two persons which represents the mystery of Christ's incarnation and the mystery of His covenant. The unity in married life deliberates specifically the conjugal love that involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—the influence of the body and instinct, the power of feeling and affectivity, the aspiration of the spirit and the will, etc. These elements aim at deep personal unity, the unity that is beyond union in the flesh and leads to the formation of one heart and soul. It also demands the indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual self-giving.⁹⁸

Augustine, visualizing marriage as a *sacramentum*,⁹⁹ gives a theological significance to marriage, placing a moral obligation on the spouses to realize the perpetuity of marriage that involves life commitment and stability, which later referred to the indissolubility of marriage. This required that the spouses live their married life in a manner that the bond of marriage was never broken.¹⁰⁰ At the very heart of marriage lies the fact that it is a sacrament, in which the couple encounter Christ through their unity, indissoluble commitment, and creativity.¹⁰¹ The CCC defines indissolubility as follows: “The marriage bond has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved.”¹⁰² Bernard Häring points out that the Church never tires in her effort to defend and proclaim the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage against the modern state and the errors of the times.¹⁰³ According to *FC*,

Being rooted in the personal and total self-giving of the couple, and being required by the good of the children, the indissolubility of marriage finds its ultimate truth in the plan that God has manifested

⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13 (AAS 74: 93–96); Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 1843.

⁹⁹ Eph 5:31–32— “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and become one flesh. This is a great mystery.” Here the Greek word *mysterion* is translated as *sacramentum* in the Latin version of the New Testament; and the conjugal relationship refers to the relationship between Christ and the Church. This refers to the theological implication of the ethical reality of indissolubility. See Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love*, 119; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 196.

¹⁰⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, 141.

¹⁰¹ Dominian, “Christian Marriage in a Changing World,” 357.

¹⁰² CCC, 1640; *CIC*, 1141, (AAS 75: 199).

¹⁰³ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, 86.

in His revelation: He wills and He communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign, and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, Christian spouses who have received “the gift of the sacrament” are called by the grace of God to bear witness to the holy will of the Lord: “Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mt 19:6). That is the inestimable value of the indissolubility of marriage.¹⁰⁵ Pope Francis says that ‘it should not be viewed as a ‘yoke’ imposed on humanity, but as a ‘gift’ granted to those who are joined in marriage...God’s indulgent love always accompanies our human journey; through grace, it heals and transforms hardened hearts, leading them back to the beginning through the way of the cross.’¹⁰⁶ Thus, we would see the integral relationship between the unity and indissolubility of marriage.

Chavara’s efforts to the renewal of the families through the re-establishment of genuine love and unity between the spouses are easily tangible through this precept where he exhorts the families about the indissoluble intimacy that must exist between the couples in accordance with the teachings of the Church and Scripture.

As a whole, marriage is no longer a mere human or secular relationship. It is part of the dynamic life of being a Christian and is a sanctified state of life. It grooms the wife and husband to be holy through all those acts that constitute the marriage and its dynamism begins with the exchange of marriage vows and through the consummation of the marriage.¹⁰⁷ Hence, love and interpersonal relationship, sexual life of the couple, procreation, sexual pleasure, unity, and indissolubility can be understood as the basic aspects of marriage.

3.1.2.2 Family and the Church

Chavara’s efforts on the formation of a disciplined and devout Christian family read between the lines of his prescriptions about the daily timetable, participation in the liturgy, and other spiritual activities can be inferred in the terms of his quest to form a strong foundation of the Church at large of

¹⁰⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 20 (AAS 74: 102–104).

¹⁰⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 20 (AAS 74: 102–104).

¹⁰⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 62 (AAS 108: 336).

¹⁰⁷ Moolakkatt, “Marriage and Family Today—Inaugural Address,” 2.

which the family becomes a fundamental unit.¹⁰⁸ The married along with their family are empowered to celebrate effectively with faith in God's Word the mystery of Christ by their witness of right living in the eyes of all. In this sense, we can see that the *Chavarul* gives us profound elaborations on right living of their faith and life as a whole that helps to unfold the mystery of Christ and Church. According to Bernard Häring, the family is not merely the "irreplaceable germinal cell of the body of the people;"¹⁰⁹ it is also the primordial cell of the people of God, the Church. In order to form families as a sacramental sign in the world, healthy marriages and good and stable family life must be the concern of Christian community. Hence there must be a covenantal Christ-Church relationship in marriage and the family must act like a domestic church.

3.1.2.2.1 Covenantal Christ-Church Relationship in Marriage

Chavara states that the essential purpose of family is realized when the members live in union with each other by the bond of blood and affection.¹¹⁰ When Chavara gives mandate for the families with regard to the spousal relationships between the couples, he insists that they must abide in deep harmony and communion in the covenant of love as that of covenantal relationship between Christ and Church. In this covenant forgiveness, generosity, and bearing the shortcomings of others become the cognate values that are inseparable from love.

A marriage is a covenantal partnership between two people who give themselves to one another in committed love. In this covenant, the consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself (Mk 10:9). The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with humanity: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love."¹¹¹ Receiving the sacrament of matrimony, the couple is blessed, strengthened, and confirmed in living the life-giving mutual love and self-gift of Christ and his Bride, the Church. A newly married couple is prompted to live a fruitful mystical union in their family life, within and after the manner of the union between Christ and His Bride, the Church.¹¹² The core of the marital relationship is the Christ-Church relationship.

¹⁰⁸ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185; I:19, 192–193; I:24, 195–96.

¹⁰⁹ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, 85.

¹¹⁰ *Chavarul*, "Introduction," 184.

¹¹¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1067–69); CCC, 1639.

¹¹² Cleemis, "Marriage and Family: A Covenant with God in His Church," 14–15.

Relationship is the foundation on which each marriage is built and nurtured. It is in the relationship of the couple that their inter-personal sexual union of life-giving love is nurtured. This interpersonal relationship is something good in itself, for it unfolds the positive attitude towards marriage and sexuality.¹¹³ Pope John Paul II states that couples “belonging to each other is the real representation...of the sacramental sign of the very relationship of Christ with the Church.”¹¹⁴ Further, he points out that Christ’s relationship with the Church is founded on His gift of self to the Church that is total, radical, and irrevocable which the married couples are invited to imitate.¹¹⁵

However, one needs to remember that marriage is contracted between two limited human beings. Though the divine purpose of marriage is that it be life-long, symbolizing the relationship of Christ with the Church, the impacts of sin can destroy the relationships between the spouses in such a manner that the covenant loses its rich meaning for one of them or for both. Thus, the Christ-Church covenant may end up in marital breakdown.¹¹⁶ Mutual self-giving in the sacrament of matrimony is grounded in the grace of baptism that establishes the foundational covenant of every person with Christ in the Church. Mutual acceptance demands from the couple a total self-giving, faithfulness, and openness to new life which comes only through Christ’s grace which pervades over the sacrament. Thus, Christ Himself encounters the Christian spouses and strengthens them to take up their daily crosses and follow Him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens. Pope Francis says, “Christian marriage is a sign of how much Christ loved his Church in the covenant sealed on the cross, yet it also makes that love present in the communion of the spouses. By becoming one flesh, they embody the espousal of our human nature by the Son of God.”¹¹⁷ That is why, “in the joys of their love and family life, he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb.”¹¹⁸ “Even though the analogy between the human couple of husband and wife, and that of Christ and his Church, is

¹¹³ Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage: Facing the Challenges*, 10.

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13 (AAS 74: 93–96).

¹¹⁵ John Paul II. *Theology of the Body: Human Love in Divine Plan*, 330–31.

¹¹⁶ Deasley, *Marriage and Divorce in the Bible and the Church*, 178.

¹¹⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 73 (AAS 108: 340).

¹¹⁸ CCC, 1642.

“imperfect,” it inspires us to beg the Lord to bestow on every married couple an outpouring of his divine love.”¹¹⁹

Since the covenantal Christ-Church relationship is presented as the goal that married couples should reach, they are welcomed and urged to nurture their human love for one another with the goal to be more like Christ’s love for the Church.¹²⁰ The covenantal Christ-Church relationship in marriage becomes relevant to the extent that the couples are able to keep up their covenant in spite of their frailties and fragilities. Thus, Chavara exhorts the families that when the families, particularly, the married couples live together in true communion effected from the bond of blood and affection, they would be able to portray the covenantal Christ-Church relationship through their family life of genuine love and harmony.

3.1.2.2.2 The Family as the Domestic Church

The Christian family is described by Vatican II as the domestic church, whereas Chavara compares it to the image of heaven, the Kingdom of God. Chavara looked upon the family as the most powerful system to shape individuals and keep them united. He was well aware of the fact that any damage to this system will not only destroy its members but also undermine the foundation of the Church and of society. Chavara did undergo the birth pang like St Paul in Gal 4:19—“My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!”—until Christ is formed in every member of a family. According to him, in a good family, husband and wife live and love each other in a similar intimacy, as Christ loves the Church. Their mutual love becomes fruitful when they have children, the embodiment of their love, and bring them up in love. When parents and children open themselves to others—treasure their parents and grandparents, reach out to relatives, their friends and neighbours—they form a wider community by radiating goodness all around. This is almost heaven on earth and it becomes a domestic church.

But this glowing picture does not often correspond to the real families. Well aware of this limitation, the *Chavarul* offers practical directions to the family, the domestic church. Therefore, Chavara visualized that just as the Church lives the sacrament of communion in the world, so too, families should live this sacrament of communion in their life. For this reason, the

¹¹⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 73 (AAS 108: 340).

¹²⁰ Philip, “Marital Indissolubility, Divorce, and Remarriage,” 95–96.

family ethics unveiled in the *Chavarul* shows love as its mandate and is centred on God, as the fear of God is the basis of the Christian family, love of God is the wealth, and devotion to God is the strength of the family. Therefore, in the *Chavarul*, we find Chavara instructing the parents to set a good example for others by loving each other,¹²¹ adhering to the observances of family prayers, keeping the Sabbath along with charitable works, giving freedom to children to choose their state of life, etc.¹²²

The Christian family constitutes “a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church.”¹²³ Through the sacrament of baptism, which grafts us onto Christ, the family is immersed in Trinitarian communion. Like the Church, the Christian family is a new creation sent to communicate the life of God to the world. We can, in a way, view the domestic church of the Christian family as an icon of the Trinity. As is evident from the New Testament (Eph 5:21–6:4; Col 3:18–21; 1 Pet 3:1–7), family is a community of faith, hope, and charity, and thus it assumes importance in the Church (Eph 5:21–6:4; Col 3:18–21; 1 Pet 3:1–7).¹²⁴ In his letters sent to various Christian communities, Paul employs the notion of the “Church” in relation to the familial environment. In his letter to the Romans, where he sends greetings to Pris’ca and A’qui’la, he adds the following words: “Greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:5). According to the ecclesiological terminology of that time, the word “Church,” stood for the community of the baptised who gathered for liturgical meetings. These Eucharistic gatherings took place at private homesteads as the ecclesial community met at the house of one of its members (Col 4:15). Paul’s greetings inform us that Pris’ca and A’qui’la had a house where the Roman community got together for prayers.¹²⁵

St. Paul’s vision of family virtues highlighted in 1 Cor 7; Col 3:18–4:1–6; and Eph 5:21–6:1–9 serves as a magna carta for a domestic church. These texts emphasise the virtues that can be exhibited in a family among couples, towards children, and between siblings and their parents (Col 3:18–4:1). In Ephesians 5:21–33, we find the ultimate model for what the domestic

¹²¹ *Chavarul*, I:1, 184.

¹²² *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

¹²³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 21 (AAS 74: 104–106).

¹²⁴ CCC, 2204.

¹²⁵ Widok, “Christian Family as Domestic Church in the Writings of St. John Chrysostom,” 167.

church should be. When we consider the concept of the domestic church according to the Church fathers, we realize that the family as the “domestic church” is an ancient patristic concept of the baptised family. The phrase “the domestic church” goes back to John Chrysostom of the 4th (349–407) century and Augustine of Hippo of the 5th (354–430) century. Other patristic writers also refer to religious devotion in the home.¹²⁶ In the light of Eph 5:21–33, the Church Fathers explain some profound bonds between ecclesial and conjugal communities, and they even use the phrase “domestic church.”¹²⁷ John Chrysostom exhorted his faithful in one of his sermons: “Make your home a church.”¹²⁸ According to Augustine, parents employ a role of *mūnus episcopale* (episcopal responsibility) within the family. In his homily he says,

To every man, if he is the head of his own house, ought the office of the Episcopate to belong, to take care how his household believes, that none of them fall into heresy...because he has been bought at so great a price. Do not neglect them the least of those belonging to you, look after the salvation of all your household with all vigilance. This if you do, you put out to use; you will not be slothful servants, you will not have to fear so horrible a condemnation.¹²⁹

Here one finds a more in-depth understanding of the unique episcopal-like role of the father as head of the family, who is responsible for its religious education and is called to become a Christlike servant to his family, thus serving Christ.¹³⁰ Alphonsus Liguori specified the ways and means to attain salvation through family life.¹³¹

With the promulgation of *LG*, the concept of the domestic church was reinserted into modern theological parlance. In a similar vein to that of the Church fathers, the magisterial teachings explain how the life of the family can be made a holy activity in union with the life and mission of Christ. For instance, *LG* explains that all moments in a couple’s life, such as daily

¹²⁶ Cahill, *Sex, Gender & Christian Ethics*, 207.

¹²⁷ Cahill, *Sex, Gender & Christian Ethics*, 207.

¹²⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 148.

¹²⁹ Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels*, 406.

¹³⁰ Atkinson, “Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory, Legitimacy, and Problems of Appropriation,” 597.

¹³¹ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori. The Ascetical Works*, Vol. 3: *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection*, 355–56.

occupations, physical and mental relaxation, apostolic endeavours and bearing patiently the hardships, are to be lived in accordance with the guidance of the Spirit. This would convert everything into holy activity that they consecrate the world itself to God and in this process a family is “regarded as the domestic church,” and it would function as a domestic church.¹³² This idea is restated in the decree on the apostolate of laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, that a family receives a mission from God, and it is called to fulfil this mission by the mutual loyalty of its members and in shared prayers offered to God.¹³³

The CCC explains that it is in the family that the father, mother, children, and all members of the family “share in Christ’s priesthood: ever more united with Him, they exhibit the grace of baptism and confirmation in all dimensions of their personal, family, social, and ecclesial lives, and so fulfil the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized.”¹³⁴ By virtue of their prophetic mission, lay people “are called...to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind.”¹³⁵ By virtue of their kingly mission, lay people have the power to uproot the rule of sin within themselves and in the world, through their self-denial and holiness of life.¹³⁶ Thus, the home is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment. Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous forgiveness, and, above all, divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life. When we consider the theological foundation of domestic church, the Church is called to build up the kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of Christ from its grass-root level, namely the family. A Christian family’s true vocation is the transformation of the earth and the renewal of the world, of creation, and of all humanity¹³⁷ through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and a Christian way of life. Therefore, the Christian family is a fundamental expression of the mystery of the Church, the most incarnate form of her charity; hence it is rightly called the “Church in miniature.”¹³⁸

¹³² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 34 (AAS 57: 40–41).

¹³³ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

¹³⁴ CCC, 941.

¹³⁵ CCC, 942; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 43 (AAS 58: 1063).

¹³⁶ CCC, 943; Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 36 (AAS 57: 41–42).

¹³⁷ Cahill, *Sex, Gender & Christian Ethics*, 209.

¹³⁸ Neuner and Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, 523.

As Pope Paul VI states, “evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.”¹³⁹ This is true of the domestic church, which must be ready through witness and explicit proclamation to alert the world to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul I briefly mentioned the term domestic church, it was only with Pope John Paul II that a systematic analysis of the theology of the domestic church was attempted. *FC* clearly enumerates the role of the family in making the Church the Mystical Body of Christ.¹⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II says, “the little domestic church, like the greater Church, needs to be constantly and intensely evangelized: hence its duty regarding permanent education in the faith.”¹⁴¹ The purpose of this domestic church is not to enclose its members or Christian values for safety in a hostile world. Instead, the family should serve, in the words of *GS*,¹⁴² as “a school of deeper humanity.”¹⁴³ “This happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys, and of sorrows.”¹⁴⁴

In the same vein, Chavara insists on having an integral observance of Sunday by attending the Holy Mass, spending the day listening to sermons, reading good books, visiting the poor, serving the sick and exercising charity.¹⁴⁵ The family that listens to the Word of God together, receives Holy Communion, and prays together is an expression of a united family, united in the presence of the Lord, seduced and graced by the Lord. The Christian family is thus grafted into the mystery of the Church to such a degree as to become a sharer, in its own way, in the saving mission proper to the Church.

3.2 The Family as a Means of Sanctification

In the definition of family proposed in the *Chavarul*, Chavara mentions that the family fulfils its purpose through members living together in profound

¹³⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14 (AAS 68: 13).

¹⁴⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to the Families*, 19; David M. Thomas, “Home Fires: Theological Reflections on the Christian Family,” 17.

¹⁴¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 50 (AAS 74: 141–42).

¹⁴² Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, 208.

¹⁴³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52 (AAS 58: 1073–74).

¹⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 21 (AAS 74: 105–106).

¹⁴⁵ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

love, children respecting and obeying their parents, walking peacefully before God and each other, and seeking eternal salvation according to one's proper state of life.¹⁴⁶ In such a way, the family becomes the means of sanctification. When we speak of family as a means of sanctification, we have to remember that family originates in marriage, which is not a mere external union of two persons, not a union merely for the continuation of the human race or the family, rather, it is first of all the union of a man and a woman in their totality, a total and mutual sharing in every dimension of their life. Through mutual love and sharing of life, they become channels of sanctification for each other.¹⁴⁷

According to Pope John Paul II, self-giving love is the point of human existence and the heart of marriage. He believes that in drawing closer to one another and giving more of themselves wife and husband become better human beings and better Christians.¹⁴⁸ They can see that, in the course of time, they get better at sacrificing their own needs for those who are close to them. Their marriages are sacramentals, not just because they are faithful, fruitful, and lifelong, but because of their loving relationships through which God can be deeply known.¹⁴⁹ When the family focuses on Jesus as their guiding compass, He will unite and illuminate their entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord's cross, and his closeness will make it possible to surmount them. In the darkest hours of a family's life, union with Jesus in his abandonment can help avoid a breakup. Gradually, "with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the spouses grow in holiness through married life, also by sharing in the mystery of Christ's cross, which transforms difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love."¹⁵⁰ Hence, the sacramental life in the family is inevitable.

¹⁴⁶ *Chavarul*, "Introduction," 184.

¹⁴⁷ Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 104–105.

¹⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 56 (AAS 74: 148–49).

¹⁴⁹ Rubio, *Family Ethics: Practices for Christians*, 75.

¹⁵⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 316 (AAS 108: 441). The spouses and families should work daily to "come together before the living God, to tell Him our worries, to ask for the needs of our family, to pray for someone experiencing difficulty, to ask for help in showing love, to give thanks for life and for its blessings, and to ask Our Lady to protect us beneath her maternal mantle. With a few simple words, this moment of prayer can do immense good for our families." See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 317 (AAS 108: 442).

3.2.1 Family: The Foundation of Faith

Chavara instructs that fear of and devotion to the Lord is the most precious possession of a family. A family that is deeply rooted in the fear of the Lord will enjoy the fruit of divine blessings in this world as well as in eternity.¹⁵¹ The family is the place where parents become their children's first teachers in faith. For parents are the first and best teachers and models of God's faithful love to his people. *LG* says, "parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children."¹⁵² Parents have an irreplaceable role in raising children. The love of parents at the service of their children has to draw forth the best that is in them, which finds its fullest expression precisely in the task of educating.¹⁵³ It is in the family that the local church begins its ministry to be fruitful. "The family is uniquely important to the Church and in these times, when all believers are invited to think of others rather than themselves, the family needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent in the work of evangelization."¹⁵⁴ The Psalmist, exhorts parents, "things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us, we will not hide them from their children; we will tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done" (Ps 78:3–6).

The *Chavarul* upholds that, parents should train their children to be good Christians at a tender age, offer them to the Lord repetitively, submit them to the intercession of the Holy Family, and pray for them often.¹⁵⁵ The foundation for all future religious practises is laid at home. Christian spirituality must find its expression in the practise of daily family prayers, the participation in the Sunday Eucharist and other religious celebrations, the blessing of the home and similar rites, and the conversation about questions of faith and spiritual life. If the prayers, liturgies, and narratives of Scripture are practised and learned early in childhood, they become deeply engraved in the consciousness of children and remain with them for life as the foundation of their faith.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

¹⁵² Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 57:15–16).

¹⁵³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 61 (AAS 58: 1081–82).

¹⁵⁴ *Lineamenta*, 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

¹⁵⁶ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, Vol. 2, 593–94.

3.2.2 Family: The Sanctuary of Life

According to Chavara, children are a gift from God and precious possession that He has handed over to the parents.¹⁵⁷ The Scripture regards the propagation of humankind as an essential purpose of marriage. The blessing of God on the first human couple, “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28), granted fertility to marriage for all the ages. This matrimonial blessing of God is an expression of Israel’s belief that children are the gift of God and that in God’s plan marriage serves the purpose of transmission of life and propagation of the humankind.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the institution of marriage and family creates the conducive ambiance for the transmission of life by preparing the necessary scope for conjugal love and its fruit, the child.¹⁵⁹

Pope Francis too emphasises the importance of the family as a “sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for.”¹⁶⁰ Bernard Häring underscores that through Jesus, the family was consecrated as a sanctuary, a shrine in the sanctuary of God, which is the Church. The elevation of matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament not only binds man and woman together in Christ, but also consecrates the entire sphere of their life together with the children and the family.¹⁶¹ Within that life-giving setting, we should reject every attempt to prevent the birth of new life, to terminate the life already conceived, or to take away human life as a punishment.¹⁶² GS exhorts, “God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner which is worthy of human beings. Therefore, from the moment of its conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes.”¹⁶³ In a similar vein, the *Chavarul* also speaks of promoting and protecting life when it emphasises considering children as a valuable gift of God.

3.2.3 Family: The Sacramental Sign to the World

Chavara had the great vision that a society will remain healthy, stable, and energetic to the extent that it is imbued with moral values of peaceful family life. A nation can remain strong even in the midst of crushing

¹⁵⁷ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

¹⁵⁸ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, Vol. 2, 500.

¹⁵⁹ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, Vol. 2, 501.

¹⁶⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 83 (AAS 108: 344).

¹⁶¹ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, 84–85.

¹⁶² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 82–83 (AAS 108: 343–44).

¹⁶³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 51 (AAS 58: 1072–73).

economic and political burdens, provided that its families are strong. Accordingly, Chavara's concern was to prepare members of society for healthy marriages and good and stable family life. With this viewpoint, he coined the rule of conduct for families to assist family members in avoiding sin and preventing the destruction caused by disorderliness; instead, he preached love, order, and peace as complements to the vices of destruction in the family.¹⁶⁴ The *Chavarul*, therefore, instructs families to practise forgiving love and to stay out of arguments, battles,¹⁶⁵ and legal disputes.¹⁶⁶ He also urges the family members to treat everyone with dignity¹⁶⁷ and to be on good terms with them.¹⁶⁸

People with different temperaments and characters come together to form a family that lasts a lifetime. A family that stays together and adjusts to each other can be presented as a model for achieving unity in diversity in a society that is fragmented on different fronts. A united family that lives a joyful life and prays together can be a sign or sacrament in the world.¹⁶⁹ A believing and evangelizing family that is in constant dialogue with the Lord will take on an active and responsible role in the service of the Church and the world. Faith works through love (Gal 5:6) and in love it finds its fullness of life.¹⁷⁰ The daily work that each one carries out in the family and in society is the way they contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God. They must be open to the poor and marginalized. They “manifest Christ to others through their mutual love, their generous fruitfulness, solidarity, faithfulness, and the way they work together.”¹⁷¹

Every family is called to conduct itself with integrity, charity, compassion, and humility and to overcome all arrogance, vanity, and criticism (Gal 5:22). It is commanded to do what is right, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly before God (Mic 6:8).¹⁷² In this way, the lingering thoughts of Chavara about the ideal Christian family can be captured as the ways and means to uphold it as the sacramental sign to the world through which

¹⁶⁴ *Chavarul*, I:7–8, 188.

¹⁶⁵ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

¹⁶⁶ *Chavarul*, I:2, 186.

¹⁶⁷ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

¹⁶⁸ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

¹⁶⁹ Fernando, “Family as the Domestic Church,” 157–58.

¹⁷⁰ Fernando, “Family as the Domestic Church,” 156.

¹⁷¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1067–69).

¹⁷² Fernando, “Family as the Domestic Church,” 156.

God's invisible graces can be made tangible to the world through the very presence of these Christian families imbued with the ideals of the *Chavarul*.

3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect

The *Chavarul* affirms that the father should teach the children by his own example to love and respect the mother, just as the mother should set an example to the children in respecting and honouring the father.¹⁷³ With this guideline, Chavara affirms the importance of a respectful relationship between the spouses and their children and other family members.

The family is the first school of faith formation and the nursery of virtues. It is the duty of parents to inculcate in their children, values like mutual love and respect through their own life witness. Thus, the parents become the first teachers and role models that the children in the family would like to idolize. The Vatican II teaches that marriage is not merely a human institution but the intimate partnership of life and love, which has been established and endowed with its own proper laws by the Creator, who is the author of marriage.¹⁷⁴ From John Paul II's teaching about mutual respect, we understand that, firstly, in marriage there is mutual "subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ and not just that of the wife to the husband," and which must gradually establish itself in hearts, consciences, behaviour, and customs. He continues that this is a call which from that time onwards does not cease to challenge succeeding generations; it is a call which people have to accept ever anew."¹⁷⁵ Secondly, John Paul II remarks, "in this love there is a fundamental affirmation of the woman as a person. This affirmation makes it possible for the female personality to develop fully and be enriched."¹⁷⁶ "All the reasons in favour of the subjection of a woman to a man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a mutual subjection of both out of reverence for Christ."¹⁷⁷

In marital love, the spouses need to see God's intention in creating them as male and female: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18, 23). As John Paul II rightly states, "the logic of the sincere gift of self"¹⁷⁸ is a source of deep joy, mutual

¹⁷³ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

¹⁷⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1068–69).

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 24 (AAS 80: 1710–12).

¹⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 24 (AAS 80: 1710–12).

¹⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 24 (AAS 80: 1710–12).

¹⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74: 91–93).

understanding, and acceptance. Marital love is the most meaningful expression of human relations and self-giving. Pope Francis says,

The love they [spouses] pledge is greater than any emotion, feeling or state of mind, although it may include all of these. It is a deeper love, a lifelong decision of the heart. Even amid unresolved conflicts and confused emotional situations, they daily reaffirm their decision to love, to belong to one another, to share their lives and to continue loving and forgiving. Each progresses along the path of personal growth and development. On this journey, love rejoices at every step and in every new stage.¹⁷⁹

Authentic conjugal love pre-supposes and requires that a man has a profound respect for the equal dignity of his wife. The tenderness and affection of this conjugal love is a manifestation of caring for the other person, of assuming responsibility for another and of wanting to foster and promote another's life as far as it is within one's power to do so. In other words, love is the active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person.¹⁸⁰ This mutual spousal relationship should flow from their common relationship with Christ.¹⁸¹ Love inspires a sincere esteem for every being and the recognition of the other person's right to happiness.¹⁸²

Through the flowering of genuine love, a family becomes a school of mutual respect. The maxim from the *Chavarul* regarding mutual love and respect in the family gives us a sound guideline about inculcating and nurturing the good habits of showing affection and acknowledging the dignity of each member of the family, thereby making it a school of mutual love and respect.

¹⁷⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 163 (AAS 108: 375).

¹⁸⁰ Coleman, *Human Sexuality*, 8; Kochuthara, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 395.

¹⁸¹ For, spousal relationships confirm and deepen one's union with God and with one another. The profound and the ordinary moments of daily life—mealtimes, workdays, vacations, expressions of love and intimacy, household chores, caring for a sick child or elderly parent, and even conflicts over things like how to discipline children, or spend money...all these are the threads from which a couple can weave a pattern of holiness in daily and ordinary life. Margaret, "Women's Space in Family Dynamics," 222.

¹⁸² Punnoose, "*Amoris Laetitia* as Beacon of Hope," 11.

3.2.5 The Eucharist Nurtures the Family

From his childhood itself, Chavara, the apostle of the Holy Eucharist,¹⁸³ showed great admiration for this precious devotion to the Holy Eucharist. This indicates that Chavara received the heritage of this piety from his family. The Holy Eucharist, which is the sacrament of sacraments, is the centre of family. It is the power house that strengthens us with the ‘bread of life.’ Realizing the inter-related and complementary bond between the Holy Eucharist and the family, Chavara admonishes that, as far as possible, all the members of the family must participate daily in the Holy Eucharist.¹⁸⁴

As we further analyse the theological perspective of the bond between the Eucharist and Christian life, we find its description in the document of Vatican II, which announces the Eucharist as “the source and summit of Christian life.”¹⁸⁵ John Paul II also declared that the Eucharist is the prime source of life, for, “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist;”¹⁸⁶ and the family is the life-giver.¹⁸⁷ John Paul II’s profound visions of family as a communion capture sacramental presence. He presents a similarity between the sharing of the Eucharistic meal and the intermingling of lives that occurs in a family. He implicitly affirms the family values of acceptance, encounter, dialogue, availability, and sacrifice. As the dignity of each person is recognised profoundly in the family, Pope John Paul II asserts the family as “the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society” and “making possible a life that is human.”¹⁸⁸ The various aspects, such as communion, sacrifice, and reconciliation, are common to both the Eucharist and the family. Eucharistic spirituality is absolutely essential for the family to grow in communion with Jesus, who is the source of life.

¹⁸³ Jossy and Kochumuttom, “Holy Eucharist: Mystery of the Lord’s Universal Availability,” 26.

¹⁸⁴ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

¹⁸⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 57:15–16).

¹⁸⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 1 (AAS 95:433–34). Pope John Paul II declared 2004 October to 2005 October as the Year of the Eucharist mainly to make us delve deep into the depth of this precious gift and to enrich and strengthen our lives, so that we can get better at the mystery of the Eucharist and sanctify ourselves. Therefore, he proposed ‘the Eucharist is the life and light’ as the theme for that year. See John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Alencherry, “The Eucharist and the Family: Life and Light of the World,” 5.

¹⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 43 (AAS 74: 134–35).

Eucharistic communion is a guarantee for the family to build up communion among its members and also in society.¹⁸⁹

In the Eucharist, the earth meets heaven, and the earthlings meet the Divinity and are raised to the divine milieu. The communion is the participation in the very life of God, and the wounded and frail nature of the human being are healed and strengthened by this ‘medicine of life.’ One’s sinful nature is sanctified in the fire of divinity.¹⁹⁰ In this manner, the Eucharist builds the family and, in turn, builds the Church and society. Both the Eucharist and the family have similarities in their nature and functions that they provide the provisions for the individual’s journey towards eternal home. When the Eucharist is not well received in the family, it ceases to be what it is supposed to be. When the family does not bring its members to the Eucharistic experience, the Eucharist ceases to be the life-support for the family members.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, when people seek for their marital and familial relationships to grow as a communion of God’s love, their family becomes more fully a “domestic church, a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table.”¹⁹² Through these instructions, Chavara exhorts that it is the Eucharist that sustains and strengthens the family bond, the bond between spouses, parents and children, relatives, friends and foes, people of different faiths, and the Church and society.

3.2.6 Family: The Arena of Reconciliation

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara urges people to “love one another” (Jn 13:34). He admonishes them to forgive the mistakes and shortcomings of one another to experience peace on earth and eternal reward in heaven. He expresses regret upon homes where there is discord and hostility between brothers and sisters. He asserts that a family experiencing strife and disputes among its members will eventually perish.¹⁹³ With this precept, Chavara invites the family members to lead a peaceful heavenly life by loving everyone and

¹⁸⁹ Alencherry, “The Eucharist and the Family: Life and Light of the World,” 27.

¹⁹⁰ Pallikunnel, *Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, 256–57. St. John Paul II rightly puts it, “The gift of Christ and His Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfils the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart.” John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 24 (AAS 95: 449).

¹⁹¹ Alencherry, “The Eucharist and the Family: Life and Light of the World,” 27.

¹⁹² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 15 (AAS 108: 317).

¹⁹³ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

reconciling with God, others, and oneself. All of us are called to holiness. Hence, the Church, which constitutes the people of God, is holy. As we all fall short of this holiness due to our sinful nature, the Church also becomes sinful. But at the same time, the Church herself provides the means of sanctification through the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. “Reconciliation is a personal act, and no one can impose it upon an entire society.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, Chavara presents reconciliation and Christian forgiveness as the means of sanctification for families.

3.2.6.1 Sin-Confession-Reconciliation

Chavara’s counsel regarding confession, reception of the Holy Communion, and mutual forgiveness in the family draws our attention towards his keen interest in the spiritual growth and welfare of families. These instructions of Chavara also allude to the eschatological aspect of our faith.¹⁹⁵ Chavara’s teachings on the sacrament of reconciliation assist us in comprehending the healing brought into our broken relationships, which leads to peaceful reconciliation.

First and foremost, sin is a choice. In terms of morality, we make ourselves into the sort of people we are by our choices.¹⁹⁶ In a way, it can be said that the root of most of the miseries in the world is the abuse of freedom. This misery is termed a moral evil or sin. This is one of the central themes of Pope John Paul II’s post-synodal document on penance and reconciliation, where he treats social sin by stressing personal sin.¹⁹⁷ As the Pope says, the mystery of sin is composed of twofold wounds which the sinner opens in oneself and in one’s relationship with the neighbour. Therefore, on the one hand, every sin can be viewed as personal, while on the other hand, it is social, as it has social repercussions.¹⁹⁸ In the Bible, the fall narrative quite clearly shows the nature and character of sin (Gen 3:1–24). The Old Testament shows that the life and history of the chosen people are continually accompanied by the motif of the frightful reality of sin. The very centre of the history of the chosen people is God’s covenant with them on Mount Sinai (Ex 20–24 chapters) and the narration of his gracious

¹⁹⁴ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 246.

¹⁹⁵ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93; I:1, 185–86.

¹⁹⁶ John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Penitentia*, 16 (AAS 77: 213–14); Shaw, *Why We Need Confession*, 28–29.

¹⁹⁷ Shaw, *Why We Need Confession*, 23.

¹⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Penitentia*, 15 (AAS 77: 212–13).

dealings with them, to which they failed to respond. The first sin was already a violation of the covenant, a spoiling of the original relationship with God, an act of proud self-assertion and rebellion against God. The history of sin continues, but the penitential Psalms show the realization that the confession of sins before Yahweh will restore the right relationship with him by virtue of His forgiveness.

In Augustine's famous definition, sin is described as "anything said, done, or desired contrary to the eternal law."¹⁹⁹ Another definition states that sin is "a turning away from God and a turning toward the creature."²⁰⁰ These two definitions of sin have revealed something of sin's significance as a contemptuous rebellion against God. The core of the sinful act is the free, self-determining choice whereby the sinner gives to himself or herself the moral identity of a sinner.²⁰¹ As our Lord makes clear, sin flows from the heart, that is, from the inner core of a person as a free and responsible being: "For, from the heart comes evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a man unclean" (Mt 15:18–19). Sin is an evil human act and, precisely as such, requires the exercise of both intellect and will. When this is lacking, a human's actions are amoral and cannot be described as human, or virtuous. Sin is basically a deliberate and voluntary act. Even in the so-called sin of omission, the omission to be sinful must be traceable to a positive act of will, the object of which is either not-to-act or to do something incompatible with the omitted obligation.²⁰²

In Paul, we find a cosmic aspect of sin similar to the personified notion of sin. Sin as a personified force is obviously the primary factor in the death of Jesus. In fact, the death of Jesus in one aspect seems to be the hour of his triumph over the power of darkness, and the resurrection marks the transforming victory of Jesus over sin and death.²⁰³ The CCC teaches, "sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity."²⁰⁴ Thus, "the sinner wounds God's honour and love, his own human dignity as

¹⁹⁹ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 22.27.

²⁰⁰ Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, 2.53.

²⁰¹ May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 147–48.

²⁰² Guinness, "Theology of Sin," 241.

²⁰³ Curran, "Christian Conversion in the Writings of Bernard Lonergan," 52.

²⁰⁴ CCC, 1849.

a man called to be a son of God, and the spiritual well-being of the Church, of which each Christian ought to be a living stone.”²⁰⁵ It is in the experience of love and forgiveness of God that the enormity of sin is really recognized. That is why Chavara, a holy soul, when he experienced the passionate love of God, asked, “dear Father, what made you love me so greatly when I was so unworthy of your love? You sought me, the prodigal son, footing it through day and night, along paths untoward and untrodden.”²⁰⁶

The *Chavarul* stresses the importance of educating the children about the consequences of sin and the need for reconciliation. Parents are instructed to facilitate their children about confession when they reach the age of seven years.²⁰⁷ The *Chavarul* cautions the parents that no child should be lost in hell due to the fault of their parents who remain indifferent to their children’s misconduct. Otherwise, the parents will be held responsible and condemned to hell on judgment day for their evil acts. It is the responsibility of the parents to correct their children when they go wrong.²⁰⁸ “To return to communion with God after having lost it through sin is a process born of the grace of God who is rich in mercy and solicitous for the salvation of men.”²⁰⁹ “Penance requires...the sinner to endure all things willingly, to be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practise complete humility and fruitful satisfaction.”²¹⁰ Contrition, according to the Council of Trent, “consists in the sorrow of the soul and detestation of the sin committed, together with the resolve not to sin anymore.”²¹¹ Contrition is always necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It is interiorly connected with trust in the mercy of God. We firmly believe that we can mend our ways, improve relationships, and rebuild our lives all over again in spite of all our past failures. According to CCC,

After having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year. Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep

²⁰⁵ CCC, 1487.

²⁰⁶ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 11.

²⁰⁷ *Chavarul*, II:8, 198.

²⁰⁸ *Chavarul*, II:19, 196.

²⁰⁹ CCC, 1489.

²¹⁰ *Council of Trent*, DS 1673; CCC, 1450.

²¹¹ Neuner and Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, 1622. CCC, 1451; Sheerin, *The Sacrament of Freedom*, 71; Jone, *Moral Theology*, 395.

contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving communion and there is no possibility of going to confession.²¹²

The goal of satisfaction is to remove the temporal punishments for sin. According to scholastic theology, satisfaction can also be atoned for the guilt of venial sins.²¹³

A person, through the confession of one's sins to the confessor, is enabled through the confessor to receive grace to know and recognize guilt, realize the basic attitude from which this sin springs up, and have a real knowledge of oneself, of one's thinking, and conduct.²¹⁴ The Council of Trent teaches that the resolve to amend one's life is necessary in order to validly receive the sacrament of penance. This resolution to amend means not merely a determination to avoid this or that mortal sin but a resolve to avoid all sins in the future. That is, when one returns to grace, he or she does not want to hold anything back.²¹⁵ However, we should acknowledge that a few hurried moments of a routine confession hardly fulfil its true purpose.

According to CCC, "the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation ought to be prepared for by an examination of conscience made in the light of the Word of God. The passages best suited to this can be found in the Ten Commandments, the moral catechesis of the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic teachings" (Mt 5–7; Rom 12–15; 1 Cor 12–13; Gal 5; Eph 4–6; etc.).²¹⁶ Chavara's instructions to the religious sisters give us an explanation of the appropriate preparation for confession and its importance. He says that the sacrament of confession is the fruit of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, confession must not be done as a routine act, but we should prepare thoroughly for it. In his steps for confession, he says that first we must meditate upon the passion of Christ, fixing our eyes on His sacred wounds, and pray for the cleansing of our souls with His precious blood. After the proper examination of conscience, we must make a resolution, say the act of contrition with devotion, and then confess our sins to the priest without

²¹² CCC, 1457; *Chavarul*, I:19, 198.

²¹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I–II, q. 88, art. 1; III, q. 87, art. 2.

²¹⁴ Sheerin, *The Sacrament of Freedom*, 63, 67.

²¹⁵ Sheerin, *The Sacrament of Freedom*, 89–90.

²¹⁶ CCC, 1454.

any hesitation.²¹⁷ Quoting Alphonsus Liguori, Chavara states that every slightest sin offense our Lord.²¹⁸ Therefore, confessing even venial sin is a necessary demand in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the fruit of confession. When we seek reconciliation, or when we reach out in love to someone, God, through us, sanctifies all the members of the Body.²¹⁹ The broken multiple relationships of the individual with God, neighbour, self, and the world as the after effect of sin can be healed with the spiritual effects of the sacrament of penance. That is, reconciliation with God, through which the penitent recovers grace; reconciliation with the Church, through which he or she can relate to his or her neighbour; remission of eternal punishment incurred by mortal sin; peace and serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation, through which he or she can relate to himself or herself; and an increase in spiritual strength for Christian battle.

3.2.6.2 Christian Forgiveness

The *Chavarul* instructs the members of the family to forgive the mistakes and wrongdoings of one another.²²⁰ Through this instruction, the *Chavarul* emphasises the need for forgiveness among the family members. The New Testament gives us the understanding that “forgiveness is the greatest and incomprehensible miracle of God’s love.”²²¹ This is presented most graphically in the parable of the ‘merciful father’ and the ‘prodigal son’ (Lk 15:11–32). Jesus disagreed radically with the Jewish leaders on the question of forgiveness. They were strong on sin, but weak on forgiveness. While Jesus recognized the presence of sin in people’s lives, His approach to it was one of healing rather than condemnation. Consequently, the principal focus of God’s forgiveness is directed not towards specific human actions, rather towards the person who is the source of these inhuman actions. The parable of the last judgement broadens this vision clearly stating that life is not just a matter of individual health and prosperity, it is also about loving relationships. Our neighbours in need are an essential dimension of our own

²¹⁷ *CKC*, 27.

²¹⁸ *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 30.

²¹⁹ Rosage, *Reconciliation: The Sacramental Path to Peace*, 82.

²²⁰ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

²²¹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 421.

personal identity as human beings. The Catholic Church has always approached sin from the angle of forgiveness.²²²

Jesus sees forgiveness as something indispensable in the personal life and family life. That is why He teaches his disciples to pray, “our Father in heaven...forgive us our sins as we forgive” (Mt 6:9–13). Adding further, he says, “if you forgive others, the wrongs they have done, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, then the wrongs you have done will not be forgiven by your Father” (Mt 6:14–15). The same point is dramatically emphasised with an impressive parable of the ‘unmerciful servant’ (Mt 18:21–35). Thus, the mind of Jesus regarding forgiveness can be understood as the grace readily received by those who have prepared themselves to forgive.²²³ The power of forgiveness curbs the recurrence of our animosity or ill-will towards the wrong-doer any more.

The above discussion substantiates the *Chavarul*, which states that the honour and blessing of a family lie in co-existing without any quarrels and being on good terms with everyone. The ability to overlook the faults of others and to forgive them is possible only for those who are really strong, prudent, and honourable.²²⁴ Retaliation is a sign of our weakness. Only strong people can forgive. The *Chavarul* explains it further with an exemplar of Emperor Constantine who was being slapped by a man from the street. Showing his magnanimity, the king refused to retaliate and thus became a model of strength and forgiveness.²²⁵ With this lesson of forgiveness, the *Chavarul* highlights the significance of forgiveness for a peaceful family life.

3.3 Family: The Cradle of Love and Life

Chavara, in his definition of family, states that a family bound by the ties of blood and affection becomes the image of heaven.²²⁶ As a domestic church, the Christian family is meant to be the light of the nations, a *lumen gentium*.²²⁷ A Christian family, as a domestic church, bears witness to the Gospel truth in society. In family life, the love between husband and wife, parents and children show a dynamic power of reciprocal giving. This

²²² Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology. The Challenges of Being Human*, 118.

²²³ Sequeira, *Theology of Sin & Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 174.

²²⁴ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

²²⁵ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

²²⁶ CSK, Vol. 4: *Kathukal*, 9/6, 133; *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

²²⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 11 (AAS 57:15–16).

reciprocal love helps the family to grow into the image and likeness of God. Thus, the total self-giving in love and absolute mutual fidelity of the spouses in the family becomes an integral part of God's eternal plan of salvation.²²⁸ According to Vatican II, family has been established in God's plan as an "intimate community of life and love."²²⁹

In order to create a family as the cradle of love and life, parents should enrich the family with the values of patience, humility, self-sacrifice, etc. which are the most precious fruits of love. The celebration of love in the family is treated lavishly and extensively in the fourth chapter of *AL*. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:4–7) serves as the springboard for the Pope's theological meditations, spiritual discourses, and frank exposition of the theme of love in families. So, we discuss on the unique features of Christian love, fundamental to marital and familial relationships.

3.3.1 Unique Features of Christian Love

To love is to give; in a Catholic marriage, each gives himself or herself to the other in a shared life together to the exclusion of all others. The basis of this view lies in Scripture. Christ spoke of two great commandments, the first to love God and the second to love our neighbour; no one has greater right to be called our neighbour than the husband or wife. Therefore, here we briefly examine the various aspects of authentic Christian love.

3.3.1.1 Love is Patient

Chavara admonishes the families to grow in the virtue of patience by entrusting themselves to Divine Providence in the midst of trials and tribulations, diseases and difficulties. He said that a person who is patient only when he or she is delighted is not a strong person.²³⁰

The Latin term *patientia* is derived from *patiendo* which signifies suffering.²³¹ Human patience is bestowed by God as a charism, and functions as a virtue which enables us to endure evils with equanimity.²³² Thomas Aquinas opines that patience is the root and safeguard of all the virtues, because it removes their obstacles. He explains that having patience means working with perfect poise in the midst of hardships. Sorrow is

²²⁸ Chundelikkat, "Sacrament of Marriage and Family as Domestic Church," 54–55.

²²⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1068–19).

²³⁰ *Chavarul*, I:20, 192–93.

²³¹ Torchia, "De Patientia," 620.

²³² Torchia, "De Patientia," 620.

moderated by patience, anger by meekness; hatred is removed by charity, and unjust injury is forbidden by justice. What is evident here is that patience, as a virtue, is brought about by charity.²³³ According to Paul, “love is patient” (1 Cor 13:4). Aquinas underlines that “patience is chiefly about sorrow, for a man is said to be patient, not because he does not fly, but because he behaves in a praiseworthy manner by suffering (*patiendo*) things that hurt him here and now, in such a way as not to be inordinately saddened by them.”²³⁴

As Alphonsus Liguori says, “patience is a perfect sacrifice that we offer to God; because in suffering tribulations and contradictions we do nothing but accept from his hands the cross that he sends us.”²³⁵ This conveys the meaning that one who suffers with patience is better than a valiant soldier. Liguori continues, “this earth is a place of merits, and therefore it is not a place of repose, but of toils and pains; for merits are acquired not by rest, but by suffering.”²³⁶ Quoting Augustine, he says that when the Lord sends suffering to people, he acts as a physician; and the tribulation that he sends is not the punishment of their condemnation, but a remedy for their salvation.²³⁷ Knowing this reality Chavara gives the exemplar of Ambrose who visited a family who had never experienced any illness, agony, or sorrow and hurriedly left the house, observing that the Divine wrath might fall on that house. And they witnessed the collapse of the house, killing everyone inside.²³⁸ It may seem to be an exaggeration, but the message is that we should have patience in times of trials and tribulations, accepting it as God’s plan and believing that these are the means to save our souls. In the context of family, when couples are patient with each other, when they embrace suffering out of selfless love for each other, a greater good will come to fruition out of their generous spirit. As they suffer, God opens their

²³³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 136, a. 2.

²³⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q.136, a.4.

²³⁵ *Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 10: *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 379.

²³⁶ *Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 10: *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 379.

²³⁷ *Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 10: *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 381.

²³⁸ *Chavarul*, I:20, 193–94.

hearts, just like a doctor opens a surgical wound, so that their hearts may expand and receive further grace.²³⁹

3.3.1.2 Love is Humble

Chavara was a man of profound humility, assuming a low profile, self-effacing, and not boastful. As a religious priest, he had, as other members of the congregation, professed humility as the fourth vow, together with the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, not to seek any position or dignity in the Church or in the congregation. Chavara strictly adhered to this promise all his life. Although he was appointed vicar general of the Catholic Syrian Church in Kerala in 1861, he never mentioned it in any of his writings.²⁴⁰ Well trained in the school of humility, he did not make much of himself but attributed any achievement to others, particularly, to his collaborators. Chavara, who lived a life of profound humility, cautions families to do the same. He advises them not to flaunt their financial status.²⁴¹ He explains it further with an episode from the life of King David, who, out of his pride of might and superiority, once ordered to take a census of his people, and soon an epidemic spread throughout his kingdom and a major portion of the population was being wiped out (II Sam 24).²⁴² For it is written, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6).

Thomas Aquinas preaches humility as the foundation of the spiritual edifice because humility expels pride and makes us submissive and ever open to receiving the influx of divine grace.²⁴³ Alphonsus Liguori says, “the proud are objects of hatred and abomination before God...For the proud man is a robber, and is blind; he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He is a robber, because he appropriates to himself what belongs to God.”²⁴⁴ He says that God regards the humble with an affectionate eye, but the proud he beholds only from a distance. In the same way that we cannot recognize a person

²³⁹ Gresko, “Spirituality of Marriage and Family in the Present World,” 13.

²⁴⁰ *Positio*, 259–260; Mundadan, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 424.

²⁴¹ *Chavarul*, I:5, 187.

²⁴² *Chavarul*, I:5, 187.

²⁴³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 161, a.6.

²⁴⁴ *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 10: *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 302.

whom we see from afar, the Lord appears to tell the proud, in the words of the Psalmist, that he knows them not.²⁴⁵

When we look into the life of Jesus, He was *Kurios* or Lord, who became a servant, exhibiting His true humility: “He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7).²⁴⁶ Augustine emphasizes that Christians grow in humility by following in the footsteps of Christ, the *Magister humilitatis*.²⁴⁷ To be loving in the manner in which we ought to love requires great humility, for “if we are to understand, forgive and serve others from the heart, our pride has to be healed.”²⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas puts forward two ways of attaining humility: by a gift of grace and by human effort.²⁴⁹ Humility is of vital importance in the spirituality of marriage and family. It helps one to consider the other as greater than oneself (Phil 2:3), to denounce one’s own plans and suggestions, whims and fancies and to be open to others’ views and opinions which would in turn lead to a successful family life. To a certain extent, achieving harmony in family life depends on humility. Only in humility can a person accept the other with warmth. Considering the presence of the other in the family not as a threat or with fear, but with love and respect, is feasible only when the members of the family are humble. Imitating Christ’s humility is a great source of strength to combat this problem in the family.

Here, Chavara’s prohibition on indulging into vain exhibition of wealth, luxuries, and extravagance is to be understood as the negation of vain glory that comes from insolent thoughts; instead, we are to practise meekness and humility, which exalts us in the eyes of God.

3.3.1.3 Love is Forgiving

By instructing the people to “love one another” (Jn 13:34) and “forgive the mistakes and shortcomings of each other”²⁵⁰ Chavara exhorts that love is forgiving. Love is the core of family life and “in every family God is revealed uniquely and personally, for God is love and those who live in

²⁴⁵ *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 10: *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 303.

²⁴⁶ Reid, *Jesus: God’s Emptiness, God’s Fullness. The Christology of St. Paul*, 67.

²⁴⁷ Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels*, Sermon 25, 337–38.

²⁴⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 98 (AAS 108: 350).

²⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 161, a. 6.

²⁵⁰ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

love, live in God and God dwells in them (1 Jn 4:16).”²⁵¹ The strength of the family “lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love.”²⁵² The joy of the family is found in sharing, bearing, and forgiving. Pope Francis invites Christian families, first of all, to value the gifts of marriage and the family, and then to persevere in love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity, and patience. Secondly, he encourages everyone to be a sign of mercy and forgiveness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy.²⁵³

Another word for forgiveness is pardon, which is derived from the Latin *perdonum*, or ‘through gift,’ which means the perfection or completion of gift.²⁵⁴ When we pardon another person, we make a complete or perfect gift of ourselves to the other. Such a pardon has as its goal the restoration of human dignity and justice in the guilty person prior to committing an offense.²⁵⁵ Forgiveness is about goodness and extending mercy to those who have harmed us. It can heal us and allow us to move on in life with meaning and purpose. Working on forgiveness can help us increase our self-esteem and give us a sense of inner strength and safety.

3.3.1.4 Love is Sincere and Transparent

In the definition of the family, the *Chavarul* states that the family members need to walk before God and each one. It can be implied that one who walks before God is in the presence of omnipotent God from whom nothing can be hidden. In other words, in His presence everything is crystal clear. It can be interpreted in such a way that, in a family, if partners are sincere and transparent in their relationship, they express openness to each other, which is an essential condition that two people can be close to each other; it makes spouses share their joys and sorrows with the other. This in turn presupposes time for each other, for conversation, a quiet being together, an exchange of sentiments and thoughts.²⁵⁶ Once couples begin to believe in each other, they manifest sincerity and transparency in their interpersonal communion. Pope Francis underscores how “those who know that they are trusted and appreciated can be open and hide nothing...a family marked by

²⁵¹ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Follow the Way of Love,” 435.

²⁵² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 53 (AAS 108: 332–33).

²⁵³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 5 (AAS 108: 312–13).

²⁵⁴ Gresko, “Spirituality of Marriage and Family in the Present World,” 14.

²⁵⁵ Laffitte, “Love and Forgiveness,” 171.

²⁵⁶ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 584–85.

loving trust, come what may, helps its members to be themselves and spontaneously to reject deceit, falsehood, and lies.”²⁵⁷ Hence, they respect each other as God’s gift and share their hearts, their dreams, failures, struggles, etc. and grow to a mature and intimate love relationship which is sincere and transparent.

3.3.1.5 Love is Listening

The *Chavarul*’s mandate on mutual respect in the family²⁵⁸ unveils the facet of love which implies listening to the other. Dialogue, which often involves deep humility to remain open to the other in a loving exchange, requires an interior silence that seeks always to “listen to the other person without mental or emotional distractions.”²⁵⁹ Pope Francis advises couples and families, “do not be rushed, put aside all of your own needs and worries, and make space. Often the other spouse does not need a solution to his or her problems, but simply to be heard, to feel that someone has acknowledged their pain, their disappointment, their fear, their anger, their hopes and their dreams.”²⁶⁰ This listening creates within each one of us a most valuable habit of giving real importance to the other person, helping us to appreciate others and recognizing their right to exist, to think as they do and to be happy. Pope Francis exhorts couples and families in listening to each other: “Never downplay what they say or think, even if you need to express your own point of view. Everyone has something to contribute, because they have their life experiences, they look at things from a different standpoint and they have their own concerns, abilities, and insights.”²⁶¹

3.3.1.6 Love is Suffering

The *Chavarul* advises parents to entrust themselves to the divine providence when they face trials and tribulations, diseases and difficulties. As already pointed out, the *Chavarul* adds that he or she is not a strong person who is patient only when he or she is delighted.²⁶² This precept indicates that there will be joys and sorrows, happiness and trials in family life. Hence, if the couple wishes to live a peaceful family life, they should

²⁵⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 115 (AAS 108: 356).

²⁵⁸ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

²⁵⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 137 (AAS 108: 365).

²⁶⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 137 (AAS 108: 365).

²⁶¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 138 (AAS 108: 365).

²⁶² *Chavarul*, I:20, 193–94.

be strong enough to accept both favourable and unfavourable situations from the hands of God.

Taking into consideration the problems and challenges faced by the families, the Church is encouraged to accompany married couples and families through both their joys and sorrows, of which marriage is an inevitable mixture including also “tensions and repose, pain and relief, satisfactions and longings, annoyances and pleasures, but always on the path of friendship, which inspires married couples to care for one another, a road along which couples and families are called to help and serve each other.”²⁶³ Indeed, authentic love gazes at the other in contemplative spirit, regardless of that person’s broken condition. Other persons are “ends in themselves, even if they are infirm, elderly or physically unattractive... Much hurt and many problems result when we stop looking at one another... Love opens our eyes and enables us to see, beyond all else, the great worth of a human being”²⁶⁴ with a spirit of respect for God through loving and holy regard toward the other. Such an approach to other persons, particularly within the dynamic of marital and familial love, denies the unclean spirit of self-centredness. Instead, bearing witness as lovers who delight in the good of those whom they love, who give freely to them, bear good fruit. Pope Francis notes that after “suffering and struggling together, spouses are able to experience that it was worth it, because they achieved some good, learned something as a couple, or came to appreciate what they have.”²⁶⁵ In the married life both joy and suffering are intertwined, but by caring, bearing, and loving the parents and children, family comes out like a butterfly from the caterpillar.

3.3.1.7 Love is Doing the Will of God

Chavara instructs people to entrust themselves to the divine providence in all their life situations, whether they are favourable or not. He illustrates the importance of faith in the divine providence with the example of a devotee

²⁶³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1068–69).

²⁶⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 128 (AAS 108: 361). Pope Francis highlights how “many married couples remain faithful when one of them has become physically unattractive or fails to satisfy the other’s needs, despite the voices in our society that might encourage them to be unfaithful or to leave the other. A wife can care for her sick husband and thus, in drawing near to the Cross, renew her commitment to love unto death.” See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 162 (AAS 108: 174).

²⁶⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 130 (AAS 108: 362).

who was always united with God's will and, therefore, could state with assurance that everything in this world happens as he wishes since he only wishes what God wills.²⁶⁶ Seeking God's will in everything help us to rejoice over all the happenings of life. Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me" (Jn 4:34). In this mortal life, food is that which preserves our life; and, therefore, Jesus said that doing the will of God was His food. Doing God's will must be the food for our souls too, without which our life cannot be sustained. St. John says, "whoever says, "I abide in Him," ought to walk just as he walked" (1 Jn 2:6). The family members, who love God should unite their will to His will, and should be satisfied with everything that God provides for him or her—in all their circumstances; and in every adversity that afflicts them, whether sickness, dishonour, weariness, loss of property or of kindred, they ever have on their lips and in their hearts these words, "Thy will be done."²⁶⁷ This is exactly the path that Jesus treads all throughout his life on earth. Alphonsus Liguori teaches that "the divine will draws out all the thorns and bitterness of the tribulations that come upon us in this world."²⁶⁸

3.3.2 Love as the Key to Marital and Familial Relationships

Chavara urges parents to be role models of mutual love and respect for their children in the family. Seeing the example of the parents, children would also learn to love and respect each other.²⁶⁹ Pope Benedict XVI says that 'love' is one of the most commonly used and misused word with the attachment of quite different meanings to it on a daily basis. Referring to the ancient Greek understanding, he explains the three types of love relative to the human experience: *eros*, that love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposed upon human beings; *philia*, the love of friendship; and *agape*, the New Testament vision, the Christian understanding of love.²⁷⁰ But in the modern times, the Christian

²⁶⁶ *Chavarul*, I:20, 193–94.

²⁶⁷ *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 2: *The Way of Salvation and of Perfection*, 232.

²⁶⁸ *The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 2: *The Way of Salvation and of Perfection*, 233.

²⁶⁹ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

²⁷⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 3. According to the ancient Greek understanding, there are four terms which refer to love – *storgē* (familial love, which refers to natural or instinctual affection, such as the love of the parent towards offspring and vice versa); *philia* (love between good friends); *eros* (love between man and woman/ sexual love or

understanding of love has come under severe attack. There is a desire to have the love known as *eros* without the profound spiritual love known as *agape*. The central point is that the love which the Greeks called *eros* has a possessive nature that requires the possession of the beloved by the lover. This erotic love, if not purified, can seek to dominate the other and ends up reducing the other to a mere object of desire.²⁷¹ The task is not to eliminate *eros*, which is good in itself, but to complement and complete it with another type of love, *agape*.

Origen is known as the first author in Christian tradition who linked *eros* with *agape*. In his prologue to the commentary on the Song of Songs he says that *eros* can be substituted for *agape* as stated by St. John: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8).²⁷² *Agape* is self-sacrificing love, in which the lover offers him or herself for the good of the beloved.²⁷³ The deepest revelation of God’s love is precisely this *agape*, in which Jesus on the cross lays down his life for those whom He loves. This is the nature of God’s love.²⁷⁴ He wishes to possess us (*eros*), but at the same time is willing to sacrifice all for us (*agape*).²⁷⁵ Human love, whether between friends, neighbours, or in the marriage, is called to be this kind of self-giving, sacrificial love.²⁷⁶ In the following we briefly discuss the different facets of marital love and children as the fruit of the couples’ love.

3.3.2.1 Different Facets of Marital Love

The main purpose of family given in the *Chavarul* is that it is the place where the members live together with the bond of love and affection.²⁷⁷ The

desire/ possessive love); *agape* (self-sacrificing love, in which the lover offers him/herself for the good of the beloved.

²⁷¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 4 (AAS 98: 220).

²⁷² Origen, *The Song of Songs. Commentary and Homilies*, 32–38; Illathuparampil, “In Defence of *Eros*,” 584. Since human being is open to Being as absolute, he/she can serve such Being anywhere. He/she is not limited to promoting being in him/herself only, but can do so in others. When, therefore, he/she focuses on him/herself and seeks his/her own full expansion in being, his/her love is called *eros*. When, however, it looks to others and devotes itself to their fulfilment, it is called *agape*. Neither *eros* nor *agape* taken separately would seem to be equal to love’s total drive, for the distinction between self and other is a distinction within being. Johann, “Love,” 1039.

²⁷³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 10 (AAS 98: 226).

²⁷⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 12 (AAS 98: 227–28).

²⁷⁵ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7, 14 (AAS 98: 228–29).

²⁷⁶ Mundaplackal, “*Deus Caritas Est*: An Overview,” 536–37.

²⁷⁷ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

marital love between husband and wife points out the erotic union of man and woman in one flesh as the prophetic announcement of a greater mystery: the union of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21–32).

Freud, in his early writings, identified *eros* with lust or *libido*. But in his later works, Freud “makes a great distinction between the passion of *libido* and the passion of *eros*. Lust or *libido* is the biological drive toward coitus, a mere physical act. *Eros*, however, is the passion for relationship; it is the desire for goodness as much as for union and communion.”²⁷⁸ The difference between *libido* and *eros* is that “*libido* seeks release from physiological tension; its end point is the gratification of orgasm and its post-climatic relaxation. However, *Eros* cherishes tension and seeks to sustain a homeostatic balance between relating opposites.”²⁷⁹ The former is “the manifestation of sex out of control, deviating, straying from rightful bonds...an *eros* devoid of the nobility of responsibility and true love” whereas the latter is the “expression of *eros* matured in and through responsible love.”²⁸⁰

In a family, the spousal imagery shows how there can be a genuine unity while the two partners keep their integrity intact. *Deus Caritas Est* teaches that the experience of falling in love is the most important natural means with which God has endowed us to learn the way of love. Such an erotic movement in a person allows one to the irresistible promise of happiness disclosed by the other. It leads one to love the other for the sake of the other.²⁸¹ Pope Benedict XVI finds that God’s love is *eros*.²⁸² At Sinai God declares his possessive love: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Ex 20:5). This yearning of God is erotic. It is consummated in Incarnation when the Son assumes flesh and transfigures it as a spiritual yearning without ceasing to be erotic.

Eros is the love by which God loves human beings. It is the desire that yearns for union with the other. It is God’s *philanthropia*.²⁸³ Gregory of

²⁷⁸ Gustafson, “Celibate Passion,” 277–78.

²⁷⁹ Gustafson, “Celibate Passion,” 278.

²⁸⁰ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, Vol. 3, 275.

²⁸¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 8 (AAS 98: 224).

²⁸² Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 9 (AAS 98: 225). He says, “God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*.”

²⁸³ Illathuparampil, “In Defence of *Eros*,” 588. The Greek word *Philanthropy* means voluntary promotion of human welfare.

Nyssa has said, “*agape* which is aroused is called *eros*.”²⁸⁴ Pope Benedict XVI argues that *eros* and *agape* are two expressions of the same love.²⁸⁵ Love is to be a balanced blending of *eros* and *agape*. Human love cannot be purely ‘spiritual’: “Yet it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves; it is human being, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves. Only when both dimensions are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love—*eros*—able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.”²⁸⁶ Pope Benedict XVI writes, “yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized.”²⁸⁷

Pope Benedict XVI explains that if the element of *agape* does not enter into *eros*, *eros* will be impoverished. Similarly, human beings cannot live by descending, *agapeic* love alone. “He cannot always give; he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift.”²⁸⁸ In the sexual union between husband and wife, if the partner is seen only as a means of sexual satisfaction, it is still to be purified.²⁸⁹ The Church teaches very clearly that *agape* which images the divine grace, should direct and permeate all other forms of love and relationships with others. Christianity never rejects *eros*, the love that searches.²⁹⁰ Therefore, Pope Benedict XVI mentions clearly that the *eros* has to be healed and purified through the guidance of the love of God.²⁹¹ Moreover, as the love

²⁸⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily 13, PG 44: 1048c.

²⁸⁵ According to the traditional description of love, *agape* and *eros* stand at opposite poles. *Agape* was generally understood as self-sacrificing love, and the latter was explained primarily as self-fulfilling love. See Illathuparampil, “In Defence of *Eros*,” 585. This distinction was further confirmed and explained by Anders Nygren in his famous work, *Agape and Eros* published originally during 1930–1936. He reasoned that *agape* is God’s freely given love. It is sacrificial giving. *Eros* is the possessive and calculative love. He counted *philia* a subset of *eros*. See Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 210. Pope Benedict XVI, in *Deus Caritas Est* strike a differing note. See Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 10 (AAS 98: 226).

²⁸⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5 (AAS 98: 220–21).

²⁸⁷ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7 (AAS 98: 223).

²⁸⁸ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7 (AAS 98: 223).

²⁸⁹ Edayodil, *Sexual Ethics for Today’s Youth*, 60–61.

²⁹⁰ Edayodil, *Sexual Ethics for Today’s Youth*, 60.

²⁹¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 3 (AAS 98: 219). The Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all. Of the three Greek words for love: *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship), and *agape*, New Testament

between the friends “can be deeply generous without being completely disinterested in all moments,”²⁹² its erotic roots of need and desire cannot and should not be severed from it but rather have to be nurtured and shaped. Thus, the marital love between the couples must be an amalgamation of *eros* and *agape*.

3.3.2.2 Children: Love of the Couple and Love Between the Couple

The *Chavarul* underscores that children are sacred treasures entrusted to the parents by God. The couples who are joined by God with the command “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) bear children as the fruit of their self-giving love, *agape*—the supreme form of love illustrated by God Himself in giving His life for us. Thus, the children are the love of the couple and the love between the couple.

The magisterium of the Church echoes a similar tone regarding children and the love between their parents. *Humanae Vitae* affirms that a child is and must be the fruit of the specific act of conjugal love of the parents.²⁹³ *GS* states that the identity and dignity of every child comes “from the very heart of that mutual giving [of husband and wife] as its fruit and fulfilment.”²⁹⁴ John Paul II describes children as a gift from God and claims that a couple’s relationship with their children deepens the one-flesh union between a husband and wife.²⁹⁵ The Pope explains conjugal love as a composition of a totality that involves all the aspects of the person, namely, the call of the body and instinct, the force of emotion and affectivity, and the aspiration of the spirit and the will. It aims at a profoundly personal unity that goes beyond the union of one flesh and leads the spouses to unite in one heart and soul. This union demands indissolubility and fidelity in the definitive reciprocal gift and opens it into the fruitfulness of bearing

writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term *philia*, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in St. John’s Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and His disciples. The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love. See Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 3 (AAS 98: 219).

²⁹² Pope, “Our Brother’s Keeper”: Thomistic Friendship and Roger Burggraeve’s Ethics of Responsibility,” 350.

²⁹³ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 9 (AAS 60: 486).

²⁹⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1068–69).

²⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 14 (AAS 74: 96–97).

children.²⁹⁶ It is similar to God's self-gift. Total self-gift, as in the case of God as well as in conjugal love, is always marked by a kenotic offering.²⁹⁷ In this light, we could deduce that children are precious gifts from God and God gives this gift as the fruit of the love of the couple and love between the couple to enhance and strengthen their relationship with each other.

3.4 Family: The Abode of Virtues

Chavara visualizes every family as an abode of virtues.²⁹⁸ It is evident in the *Chavarul* where we find Chavara putting forward quite a number of virtues like fear of God, love, hope, prudence, justice, courage, and self-control as inevitable to a good Christian family. Chavara has been nurtured to be a virtuous person by his parents, and 'being good' has become intrinsic to him. Hence, he urges parents to create a conducive atmosphere for children to practise virtues in their lives from their young age onwards, which will become a habit in them to form character and thus to become virtuous persons. One of the characteristics of the *Chavarul* is that it uses many stories, dictums, anecdotes, and similes to explain most of the virtues. The *Chavarul* is mostly marked by specificity, for instance, when speaking of the family prayers and the daily time table, Chavara gives us the concrete guidelines for the formation of the ideal family. In this section let us see how theological and moral virtues are incorporated into the *Chavarul* as the foundation for an ideal Christian family. Under the following titles, we discuss the significance of theological and moral virtues in families against the background of the maxims in the *Chavarul*.

3.4.1 Theological Virtues

The theological or supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity are important virtues which families today must put into practise in their daily lives. When placed within an evangelical perspective, all of the virtues find their roots in the mystery of Christ, in His self-giving and reconciling love manifested on the cross. These theological virtues are accounted in Paul's letter, "faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). The Christian tradition has designated these three as

²⁹⁶ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13 (AAS 74: 93–96), Referring to Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 9 (AAS 60: 486).

²⁹⁷ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology IV: Spirit and Institution*, 218.

²⁹⁸ The word virtue comes from the Latin word *Vir* which means man and *Virtus* means manliness. Kasper, "Virtue of Prudence," 17.

the supernatural, infused theological virtues²⁹⁹ which are totally free gifts of God's generous love,³⁰⁰ God's freely bestowed grace. Paul, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and others unanimously point to the progression of these virtues as faith turning to hope and hope to charity. Because we know God, we hope in God's promises and live in God's love.³⁰¹ Therefore, it is important that families today must prepare their hearts ready and open to receive these virtues as gratuitous gifts from God.³⁰² Let us discuss in detail the three theological virtues against the background of the writings and teachings of Chavara.

3.4.1.1 Faith

The virtue of faith enables the person to call the heavenly Father as one's own father. Throughout his writings, Chavara called God as the Father and Jesus as *Ente nalla Appa*—'my good father.' The depth of his God experience resulted in a constant awareness of his filial relationship with God. With his growth in this virtue of faith, Chavara entered into deep and constant colloquies with God.³⁰³ The father-son relationship with God instilled in him a close-knit union with God, which enabled him to embrace all the children of God as his brothers and sisters. In referring to children as the sacred treasures of God entrusted to parents,³⁰⁴ Chavara reminds them of their primary responsibility of introducing the children to a personal relationship with God through prayer and spiritual nourishment. In other words, holding the hands of their children, parents should help them tread the path leading towards the heavenly Father.³⁰⁵

The CCC teaches that "faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself."³⁰⁶ By faith, "man freely commits his entire self to God."³⁰⁷ Faith is not just a matter of freedom but an absolute requirement. "Indeed, it is faith that allows

²⁹⁹ CCC, 1812–1813.

³⁰⁰ Bohr, *Catholic Moral Tradition*, 206.

³⁰¹ Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 162.

³⁰² Augustine, "Jesus Christ: A Sure Model to Cope with Crisis in Family Life," 137.

³⁰³ CWC, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 3, 5, 9, 14, 40.

³⁰⁴ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

³⁰⁵ *Chavarul*, II:2, 197.

³⁰⁶ CCC, 1814.

³⁰⁷ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 5 (AAS 58: 819).

individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom.”³⁰⁸ “Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of providence.”³⁰⁹ Here the words of the Book of Proverbs are pertinent: “The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps” (Prov 16:9). “This is to say that with the light of reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it within the horizon of faith.”³¹⁰ The famous biblical definition of faith is as follows: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).³¹¹ In the Old Testament, the idea of Yahweh was that of a hidden God who could be experienced only by faith.³¹² In all of His miracles, Jesus transcended His faith in God the Father, the only prerequisite of faith from the beneficiaries (Mk 5:34; Mt 9:18–26; Lk 8:48, 50).

According to Thomas Aquinas, faith is not a series of statements but a virtue, a key internal disposition that develops significantly the way we live: “Faith is a habit of the mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent.”³¹³ In his second article, focusing on our intellectual capacity, he states that faith informs and perfects but does not contradict our rationality.³¹⁴ The third article answers the goal of faith as charity, which he defines as union with God. Actually, it is only by faith that we can hope for charity. For, without the grace to believe, we would not know or long for the experience of charity. On the other hand, when we have charity, our faith is deepened, enlivened, and nurtured. While we need faith to receive charity, charity in turn sustains and

³⁰⁸ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 13 (AAS 91: 15–16).

³⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 16 (AAS 91: 18–20).

³¹⁰ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 16 (AAS 91: 18–20).

³¹¹ Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 277.

³¹² Foley, *Believing in Jesus: A Popular Overview of the Catholic Faith*, 5.

³¹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 4, art. 1. Stephen Brown, in his essay on faith argues that according to Thomas it is by faith and our assent that God moves us inwardly. But it is not an assent to what is known. “Revealed truth is not a self-evident message that forces assent. Faith is an assent to what is not self-evident. It is an assent to what is beyond human invention and grasp.” See Brown, “The Theological Virtue of Faith: An Invitation to an Ecclesial Life of Truth,” 224.

³¹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 4, art. 2.

animates faith.³¹⁵ The fourth one says that faith without charity is a lifeless faith. In other words, charity makes the faith real.³¹⁶

According to the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, faith enriches the family, which is the basis of humanity, and it has been founded on the steady union between man and woman in the context of marriage. This expression of love enables them to also participate in God's love.³¹⁷ The faith matures in the context of family where the children learn from their parents the various aspects of faith. The vocation to love helps parents and children to understand God's faithfulness, which surpasses every trial that comes their way.³¹⁸ Faith is the sanctuary in which we can meet God as He is and can express our deep longing for intimacy with God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.³¹⁹ Hence, Chavara's instruction in the *Chavarul* to parents with regard to teaching them the prayers and prayer habits³²⁰ was intended to help them grow in an unwavering faith to enable them to stand firm and remain unshaken when the stormy wind of adversities beats against their boat of family life.

3.4.1.2 Hope

Chavara was a man of hope. As already mentioned, Chavara had taken the Word of God, "Lord is my portion and cup" (Ps 16:5) as his motto from the very beginning of his seminary life. In his most desperate moments, when he lost his parents and only brother, he kept his lamp of hope ablaze and took recourse to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of hope.³²¹ His hope never disappointed him. In spite of the painful failures of his attempts to start the convent for women religious at Alangad and Puthenpally, Chavara remained determined, hoping in the divine providence and thus could realize the foundation of a women religious congregation at Koonammavu with a meagre sum of just eighteen rupees.³²² His love and concern for the

³¹⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 4, art. 3.

³¹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 4, art. 1. See also Harrington and Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, 86–87.

³¹⁷ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, 52 (AAS 105: 190).

³¹⁸ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, 52–53 (AAS 105: 190–91). See also Rausch, *Faith, Hope, and Charity: Benedict XVI on the Theological Virtues*; Augustine, "Jesus Christ: A Sure Model to Cope with Crisis in Family Life," 138.

³¹⁹ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, 41.

³²⁰ *Chavarul*, II:2, 197.

³²¹ Kochumuttom, *Spirituality of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 273.

³²² CWC, Vol. 1: *The Chronicles*, 105.

poor and suffering are very impressive in his words and actions, which became the source of hope for those who live in a hopeless situation. The establishment of schools for all, irrespective of caste and creed, economic status, and the arrangements made under his leadership for the mid-day meal for the poor students and providing them with clothes and books by collecting *pidiyari*, and ‘confraternity for Happy Death’ which are referred to in the first chapter, are some of the examples of his staunch hope and trust in the Lord.

The theological understanding of hope is intimately united to faith.³²³ This hope leads to a great confidence in the supernatural forces that we will surely attain the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explains this idea saying that Christians will be saved by hope. And this hope cannot be seen (Rom 8:24). He further explains that if we see the things before hoping for them then that would not be a true hope. He writes that hope helps us precisely when we are weak and that our weakness may be so great that we may not even know how we ought to pray. But he says, it is at that moment when we hope to be able to pray, that the Spirit speaks to the Father through our groans. Then, in our inability to pray, the Spirit prays for us, but through us (Rom 8:26–28). For Christian families, hope is very important as it provides the necessary energy to wait for the final reward with courage. God will fill us with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13). In our groans, we hope and we hope when we can do nothing more than express the wish to believe. This wish to believe is found in the hearts of many mourners.³²⁴

According to Thomas Aquinas, hope is the theological virtue that resolutely pursues the end, which is God.³²⁵ Hope is particularly applicable to the ambiguous time in which Christians live that “already but not yet”: The time of our redemption by Christ is already here, but the time of our fulfilment in the kingdom of God is not yet. Paul ties them together into an original triad in the earliest scriptural texts of the New Testament (1 Thess 1:3, 5:8; 1 Cor 13:13). Just as Christians were known for their faith and

³²³ Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 364.

³²⁴ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, 45.

³²⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 17, art. 1. Heribert Jone defines hope as a supernatural, infused virtue by which, with reliance on God’s omnipotence, goodness, and fidelity, we look forward to eternal salvation and the necessary means to obtain it. Jone, *Moral Theology*, 74.

love, they were also known for their hope for the coming of the kingdom.³²⁶ In a nutshell, we can say that hope turns our eyes to the absolute and abiding future in God and makes us clear-sighted about the necessary steps to take in times of trials and tribulations; it makes us eager for growth and ongoing conversion. Thus, hope as a theological virtue plays a great role in family life, making it an abode of virtues where the members of the family bear and share the joys and sorrows of their daily life with the unfailing faith of hope still burning and illuminating their lives.

3.4.1.3 Charity

Chavara warns families that their days would not be recorded in the book of life if they have not done any good deeds for others.³²⁷ Through this exhortation in the *Chavarul* Chavara teaches the families the value of charity in their day-to-day lives. The word “charity” which originated from the Latin word *caritas*, refers to the highest manifestation of Christian love. It is a God-infused virtue that helps us to perform acts of affection and kindness towards others out of *agape*.

The Bible persistently shares the message that God has loved us first, and the proper response to God’s love for us is to love God and love our neighbour. Therefore, theologically, love is described not as one virtue among many others, but as “the bond of perfection” as in Colossians 3:14—“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Love embraces and holds together all the other virtues. So, Paul, in his fabulous description of love in 1 Cor 13, gives love the primary place among the charisms and ranks it as superior even to faith and hope: “And the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). And in his ethical advice to the Romans, Paul declares that “the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:8), and gives as his reason that “love does no wrong to a neighbour therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10).

The theme of the primacy of charity has been developed by Christian theology since the age of the Fathers. Augustine redefined the classical four cardinal virtues as forms of charity: “If virtue leads us to the happy life, I dare say virtue is nothing other than supreme love. For, in describing virtue as fourfold, as I see it, we are talking about different movements of the one

³²⁶ Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 161.

³²⁷ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

love.”³²⁸ For Augustine, the greater the love the greater the adherence to commandments, for they are the expressions of God’s love. Without the rectitude ensured by the commandments, love will not be true, will not survive.³²⁹ Also there is no true love without the willingness to sacrifice, for human love is built on sacrifice. Thomas Aquinas notes that charity increases in us not by one act of charity after another, but by our striving in charity. Since charity is about union with God our participation in charity can increase indefinitely. In that sense, charity is to love God with our whole heart always and truly. Charity proceeds from a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith. It is referred to the act of charity.³³⁰ The virtue of charity is what motivates us to “love God, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.”³³¹ In other words, we can say that it is the virtue of charity that should animate all our moral actions.

Chavara exhorts Christian families, “Let no beggar leave your home empty handed; likewise, do not hesitate, as much as you can, to give alms.”³³² “Christians know that charity is the heartbeat of life.”³³³ The good Samaritan, who transcended the narrow classifications of caste, creed, race, and religion, was able to interrupt his journey, change his plans, and unexpectedly comes to the aid of an injured person who needed his help. Thus, he sets a good example for us to acknowledge the neighbours we meet on the way of our life and stretch out our helping hands to them.³³⁴ In brief, charity should be the soul of our actions and spirit of our thoughts.

When we analyse in connection with family life, Chavara’s precepts and life example on charity communicate that, there is no guarantee that people will feel the same way all through family life but they can be charitable at any cost. For example, if a couple can devise a shared and long-lasting life project, they can love one another and live as one until death, enjoying an enriching intimacy. The love they pledge is greater than any emotion, feeling or state of mind, although it may include all of these. It is a deeper love, a lifelong decision of the heart. Even amid unresolved conflicts and

³²⁸ Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, 15.25. “*Ex ipsius amoris vario quodam affect.*” Quoted in Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 27.

³²⁹ Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, 24. 44.

³³⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 24, art. 2.

³³¹ CCC, 1822.

³³² *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

³³³ Foley, *Believing in Jesus: A Popular Overview of the Catholic Faith*, 194.

³³⁴ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 101.

confusing emotional situations, they daily reaffirm their decision to love, to belong to one another, to share their lives and to continue loving and forgiving. On this journey, love rejoices at every step and at every new stage.³³⁵ Couples who love in this manner affirm and deepen in their living out the unity and indissolubility of their marital bond by the grace of the Holy Spirit, His supernatural strength and spiritual fire, and confirm, direct, and transform their love in every new situation.

From the reflections on theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity we can deduce that every family is to be anchored their life on these virtues. It is important for married couples and family members to love each other genuinely, recognizing that their constancy in Christian faith, hope, and charity toward one another is of vital service in bringing the Gospel of the family to a world so greatly in need of this hopeful message. It is in this context of the family relationship that Chavara advises them to have patient endurance to practise the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

3.4.2 Moral Virtues

The supernatural virtues are directed by faith, whereas, the moral virtues are directed by reason's response to natural law. It is the right and duty of everyone to lead a virtuous life. James Keenan gives a specific definition of being virtuous. "Being virtuous is more than having a particular habit of acting...it means having a fundamental set of related virtues that enable a person to live and act morally well."³³⁶ Traditionally, four virtues have been seen as most essential for moral life: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are called cardinal virtues because every other virtue can be seen as part or component of one of these four virtues. These virtues can be summarised briefly as the ability to make thoughtful and wise decisions (prudence); the art of living with others (justice); the skill to confront and overcome fears (courage or fortitude); and the balance and integration of various desires, appetites, and attractions of life (temperance).³³⁷

3.4.2.1 Prudence

Musings on various precepts of the *Chavarul* draw our attention to Chavara's exhortation to be prudent while taking decisions for the family welfare. He says that the important duties of the parents, like the selection

³³⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 163 (AAS 108: 375).

³³⁶ Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," 711.

³³⁷ Lamoureux and Wadell, *The Christian Moral Life*, 124.

of the friends and servants, the chastisement of the children, their conscience formation, etc., are to be done with the utmost prudence.³³⁸

The virtue of prudence encourages us to discern not what seems to be good but rather what, in truth, is really good. Good intentions are not enough because we can always plan to do good. However, without prudence, without distinguishing the genuine good from the apparent good, our actions will harm the persons.³³⁹ The CCC defines that: “Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.”³⁴⁰ In other words, prudence is a virtue that allows one to judge rightly what, when, and how to act. When the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, they wanted to test Jesus whether He was following the Mosaic law of stoning a woman caught in adultery. But the prudent way of responding to their questions made them speechless (Jn 8:1–11). In another place, Jesus was questioned by Pharisees about the paying of tax (Mt 22:17–21). Here again, Jesus gave a prudent reply to them in the following words: “Then render to Caesar what is of Caesar and to God what is of God” (Mt 22:21). Thus, prudence is right reason applied to practice.³⁴¹

With Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas upheld the absolute priority of prudence among the cardinal virtues. Prudence is not a small virtue that warns us against taking bold steps. On the contrary, prudence is the virtue that looks forward to the overall end of life—the human good—and sets all subsequent agendas for attaining that end and all intermediate ends. As charity unites the infused virtues, prudence unites and connects the moral virtues. In short, the whole matter of moral virtues falls under the rule of prudence.³⁴² Therefore, prudence is the most important cardinal virtue that parents should have in order to mould their children in truth and justice. Chavara urges parents to be very careful in taking measures to discipline children for their character formation, as both extreme punishments and too much leniency are not good, but to have the prudence to choose the middle path.

³³⁸ *Chavarul*, II:10, 195; I:24, 195–196; II:9, 198.

³³⁹ Josephraj, “Virtues in General,” 14.

³⁴⁰ CCC, 1806.

³⁴¹ Kasper, “Virtue of Prudence,” 19–20.

³⁴² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol. II, II^a–II^{ae}, q. 47, art. 6.

3.4.2.2 Justice

Chavara, the man of justice, practised and preached what he lived. The various precepts regarding justice in family life in the *Chavarul* are the articulation of his life principles. He prohibited every act against this virtue of justice and invited people to be more compassionate and generous. He advises against depriving or delaying just salary for workers, because doing so is a serious offence that appeals to God's throne. Do not humiliate the poor or cause them any trouble, for God will seek revenge from them because of their tears.³⁴³ The *Chavarul* emphasises, thus the importance of practising the virtue of justice by giving due respect to others and respecting the dignity of everyone as God's children. The right and pure conscience of Chavara prompted him to instruct people concerning sins against justice. He cautions them to not even temporarily store stolen things in their homes.³⁴⁴ He confirmed the evil consequences of such an act with an example of the disheartening end of a man who had become rich by stealing and indulging in other dishonest means.³⁴⁵ By this precept, Chavara teaches families that it is an injustice to possess others' property, and the one who obtains riches by unjust means is sure to perish. For it is one's responsibility to protect the possessions of others instead of possessing them unjustly.

It also gives a lesson to families to be satisfied with whatever means one has, rather than possessing wealth unjustly and losing their soul to hell. In another precept regarding the settlement of the property among the children, Chavara advises parents to make preparations to settle their children into their own houses before their death. They are asked to divide the properties among the children when the parents are in their good senses, because if there would be any dispute among the children as result of property partition, the parents would be held accountable for their misdeeds.³⁴⁶ In all these precepts regarding justice, Chavara instructs parents to teach children to respect the dignity of others as children of God, to protect their right to life, their freedom, their possessions, and to live with everyone peacefully.

³⁴³ *Chavarul*, I:18, 192.

³⁴⁴ *Chavarul*, I:7, 188. This quotation is already mentioned in 2.2.1.2.3 under the title "Do not Steal or Keep Stolen Things," which explains the application of the seventh Commandment. Whereas, here this quote demonstrates that it is injustice to possess others' property.

³⁴⁵ *Chavarul*, I:17, 191–92.

³⁴⁶ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200.

The Greek term for the virtue of justice is *hē dikaiosunē* which means a state of character or a virtue that leads someone to aim at a just state of affairs from a just intention.³⁴⁷ Thus, justice is not simply concerned with external activity rather, it is about ordering all our interior dispositions so that the claim of equality originates from within.³⁴⁸ “Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour. Justice towards God is called the ‘virtue of religion.’ Justice toward others disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good.”³⁴⁹ Charity is the cradle of justice, as it is of all the other virtues. To pretend to love one’s neighbour and then to refuse him or her justice is a mockery, for, the two cannot be separated.³⁵⁰

Philosophy has long held that the formal principle of justice is, “give to each what is due.” The due can be understood as need, effort, merit, contribution, equality, market demands, and so on.³⁵¹ The perspective on justice requires an option for the poor and oppressed. The perpetrator of injustice must make reparations by attempting to correct the injustice and set things right again.³⁵² Aristotle explicates that justice is a character trait that makes someone the sort of person who performs just actions, responds justly, and desires to see justice done.³⁵³ Thomas Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian notion of justice and stated that justice was about relationships between people and was determined according to the rule of equality. Therefore, the law would be its objective measures.³⁵⁴ In his treatment of justice Aquinas defines it as “a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by constant and perpetual will.”³⁵⁵ It is a virtue that is done voluntarily and knowingly, and it is a habit that is determined to produce just acts.

³⁴⁷ Young, “Aristotle’s Justice,” 180; Pakaluk, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 182.

³⁴⁸ Williams, “Justice as a Virtue,” 192.

³⁴⁹ CCC, 1807.

³⁵⁰ Welty, *A Handbook of Christian Social Ethics*, 324.

³⁵¹ Lebacqz, “Implications for a Theory of Justice,” 254.

³⁵² Lebacqz, “Implications for a Theory of Justice,” 255.

³⁵³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V.II, 1129a, 5–10.

³⁵⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 58, art. 2. St. Thomas had no wish to reject the Augustinian and Pauline teaching on justice. But he gave theological thought an important orientation. From his time onward, justice was to designate the virtue that regulates relationships between persons within society.

³⁵⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q. 58, art. 1; Charles and Maclaren, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II*, 89.

Irrespective of our familiarity with a person and regardless of our degree of attraction or repulsion to another, we believe that in justice, each person is given the same basic fair treatment without any partiality.³⁵⁶

During his time, Chavara observed the injustice that was prevalent in the society due to the caste system. Most of them were deprived of their dignity as human persons, and were denied even of their basic needs, the right to education, etc. For him, justice is to protect the dignity of the other by accepting others as God's beloved children respecting them as they are created in the image and likeness of God. It is important to protect, uphold, and promote the dignity of the human person as the virtue of justice also involves being in relationship with our fellow beings within the community. In short, justice is to safeguard the rights of others; their right to life, freedom, honour, sanctity of home, and external possessions.³⁵⁷

3.4.2.3 Fortitude

The *Chavarul* explains fortitude with an illustration of the three sons who were ready to look after their mother in her old age. Even at the cost of their lives, one of them pretended to be a thief and was sentenced to death, while the other two got the money for seizing the thief and handing him over to the police.³⁵⁸ By this exemplar, Chavara instructs children to be courageous or to practise the virtue of fortitude to fulfil the fourth commandment of God, that is, to respect their parents and to ensure that their minds are not burdened or aggrieved.³⁵⁹

Etymologically, the Latin word for heart is *Cor*.³⁶⁰ The word courage means to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart. Courage is deepened when our humanity is more profoundly rooted in justice, fidelity, and self-esteem. It is actualized whenever we stand firm and step forward to indulge in social action.

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life...Fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and

³⁵⁶ Keenan, *Moral Wisdom*, 150.

³⁵⁷ Laravoire, *Our Catholic Faith*, 459.

³⁵⁸ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200–201.

³⁵⁹ *Chavarul*, II:16, 201.

³⁶⁰ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, 88.

to face trials and persecution. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defence of a just cause.³⁶¹

Inevitably, this demands courage. Fortitude is the cool, steady behaviour of a person in the presence of danger, the tenacious preservation of that which is dearer to him or her than his or her life. But its range is widened by the inclusion of dangers to the soul as well as the body; it is the bravery of one who dwells in a spiritual world.³⁶² Fortitude is the spirit that not only resists and endures, but even triumphs over the trials and temptations of life.³⁶³ “Fortitude is a disposition whereby the soul is strengthened for that which is in accord with reason, against any assaults of the passions, or the toil involved by any operations...fortitude keeps the mind unbent by the enticements of pleasures.”³⁶⁴

The bravery of Christ is seen when, in spite of being aware of his passion and the violent death on the cross, he courageously communicates that “I have a baptism to be baptized with” (Lk 12:50). Courage can be seen when one person reaches out to another in need in the face of danger.³⁶⁵ It does not look for trouble but helps defend, protect, and rescue when life is endangered, the marginalized are oppressed, and the voiceless are threatened. Therefore, the *Chavarul* asks families to stand firm in times of trials and tribulations, at the face of threat and fear, in fulfilling the responsibilities towards parents and children by spending one’s own time, energy, wealth, even at the cost of one’s own life itself.

3.4.2.4 Temperance

In the *Chavarul* there are many precepts which shed light on the areas where we need to practise the virtue of temperance or self-control. It requires a great deal of investment of this virtue to overlook others’ faults and forgive them.³⁶⁶ While disciplining the children we must make them understand why and for what they are being punished rather than inflicting corporal punishments along with the pouring out of abuses.³⁶⁷ He also advises the parents that the fights between children of neighbouring

³⁶¹ CCC, 1808.

³⁶² Kirk, “The Cardinal Virtues,” 240.

³⁶³ Kirk, “The Cardinal Virtues,” 240.

³⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I–II, q.61, a.4, 5.

³⁶⁵ Savio, “Virtue of Fortitude,” 46.

³⁶⁶ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

³⁶⁷ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

families should not lead to quarrels among the elders.³⁶⁸ Children must be taught to have control of their senses.³⁶⁹ He disapproves the habit of collecting news from every house; instead he asks to discharge each one's duties diligently.³⁷⁰ All these precepts, in one way or the other, point out the deliberate need of having self-control or temperance in family life.

Temperance is the fourth cardinal virtue. As a special virtue, temperance guards the will against choosing the desires of the senses and pleasures contrary to good reason.³⁷¹ This virtue channels our actions to be well-ordered affections, giving the proper expression of feelings to our actions. Temperance liberates human powers for the service of the good.³⁷² Thomas Aquinas gives the meaning of temperance as 'serenity of the spirit.'³⁷³ The purpose and goal of *temperantia* is the person's inner order, from which alone this 'serenity of spirit' can flow forth.³⁷⁴ The potential of temperance involves continence, humility, meekness, mercy, good order, proper attire, self-sufficiency, and moderation.³⁷⁵

Temperance "is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honourable."³⁷⁶ The moderate use of these pleasures must respect human dignity.³⁷⁷ Thus, the virtue of temperance, in the strict sense, is a virtue which regulates the desire and use of food and drink and venereal pleasures according to right reason.³⁷⁸ The *Chavarul* instructs families to practise the virtue of temperance in order to have a well-balanced life. In other words, it urges people to live a life of constant exercise that keeps all their sensibilities, feelings, inclinations, hungers, and urges well-toned and turned. Thus, the *Chavarul* insists that families become cradles of virtues,

³⁶⁸ *Chavarul*, II:13, 199.

³⁶⁹ *Chavarul*, II:12, 199.

³⁷⁰ *Chavarul*, I:7, 188.

³⁷¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 141, a. 2; Cunningham, *Christian Ethics: The End of the Law*, 159.

³⁷² Wadell, *The Primacy of Love*, 133.

³⁷³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 141, a. 2.

³⁷⁴ Pieper, *Fortitude and Temperance*, 54.

³⁷⁵ Aquinas, *The Cardinal Virtues*, xix.

³⁷⁶ CCC, 1809.

³⁷⁷ Davis, *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol.1, 267.

³⁷⁸ Pazhayampallil, *Pastoral Guide*, 368.

where children learn what virtue is and how to be virtuous by looking at their parents and elders.

3.5 Family: The School of Integral Formation of Children

The *Chavarul* reminds parents that children are valuable gifts from God and they are the souls that Jesus Christ has entrusted in their hands to sanctify them with His most precious blood, to make them His servants, and thus to offer them back to Him on the Day of Judgment.³⁷⁹ Hence, they must be brought up, trained, and disciplined as mature citizens both of this world and of the world to come. Family is the primary school of initial and integral formation of children. Parents in the family have a great role in the spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and moral formation and transformation of their children. Though Chavara lived at a time when psychology had not been developed as a separate branch of science concerning this theme he speaks with the insight of a Christian philosopher, psychologist, or moral theologian.³⁸⁰ From this discussion, one could deduce that Chavara was a keen observer of society, particularly the family, and evaluated it in the light of Christian teachings. His special mention of the integral formation of children in their own family sheds more light on it.

3.5.1 Integral Formation of Children

The concept of integration implies harmony, wholeness, and unity. Integral formation is an “incorporating and unifying process tending to produce wholeness.”³⁸¹ Human personality has three intertwined components, namely body, mind, and soul.³⁸² In order that parenting to be integrative or holistic, parents should pay attention to the growth and development of all three aspects of the personality of their children, namely, physical, psychological, and spiritual.³⁸³ The aim of all formations is to facilitate the integration process through various means by making use of all available resources.³⁸⁴ In the context of family, the blessing of offspring is not completed by the mere begetting of children, but it is to be done by giving proper education to them. The education of children flows from the fecundity of marital love and the vocation of the couple to collaborate with

³⁷⁹ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

³⁸⁰ Mampra, “*Chavarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 12.

³⁸¹ Nuesse, “Integration,” 553.

³⁸² Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 78.

³⁸³ Elamkulam, “Parenting and its Psychological Nature,” 42–43.

³⁸⁴ Maniampra, “Formation as Psycho-Spiritual Integration,” 12.

the Creator's work of creation which is the "transmission of life and rearing of children."³⁸⁵ The expression 'rearing children' refers to providing all that is necessary for a child to grow and develop all its potentialities, including proper education from the family.³⁸⁶ In this light, we discuss further on the integral formation of children, paying attention to four major areas, namely, psychological, intellectual, spiritual, and moral formation.

3.5.1.1 Faith Formation

Chavara advises parents to make sure that the children are at home when the Angelus bells ring. After family prayers, they should be trained to greet and kiss their elders' and parents' hands.³⁸⁷ This instruction of Chavara rightly shows us his keen interest in developing the spiritual ambiance in the family that promotes religiosity. From early childhood, children should be taught step by step their daily prayers and be made to join their parents for the family prayers in the evening. The evening family prayer, where all the family members come together to pray, creates in the child a sense of belonging and inculcates the habit of praying at an early stage in human development.³⁸⁸ Various precepts given in the *Chavarul* redefine the spirituality to be followed in families. Chavara gives a basic framework of the daily time table which rotates around the axis of prayer timings in the prime hours of the day. He strictly orders them not to interrupt the routine of family prayer at any cost.³⁸⁹ The *Chavarul* emphasises the importance of the spiritual tradition which must be nurtured in families to inculcate the values of love, care, discipline, and order among the members and thus transform the family into the abode of heaven.

Every individual Christian, not only children but all, needs catechesis to grow in faith. Bernard Häring notes that "the mental and spiritual training should begin in the very early years, for it has a decisive formative influence in this susceptible period of the child's life."³⁹⁰ Pope Francis, while presenting the family as a domestic church, reiterates its crucial role in the faith formation of children. He writes, "the family is thus the place

³⁸⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 80–85 (AAS 108: 343–46).

³⁸⁶ Fernando, "Family and Education of Children: Insights from *Amoris Laetitia*," 241.

³⁸⁷ *Chavarul*, II:11, 198–99.

³⁸⁸ Kakkanattu, "Faith Formation in the Family," 72–73.

³⁸⁹ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195.

³⁹⁰ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, Vol. 3, 98.

where parents become their children's first teachers in the faith."³⁹¹ Parents have a great role in imparting the essentials of Christian faith through their living model. As some scholars propose, the family becomes a place of informal religious education, where learning happens by walking in the shadow of parents who live out their teachings because "much of Christian education is learned through the everyday opportunities of experiencing life together as a family."³⁹² A. P. J. Abdul Kalam reminds the parents of the importance of being spiritual leaders to their children in order to empower them at various phases of their growth and transform them into responsible citizens.³⁹³ The custom of greeting and kissing the hands of the elders and parents after the family prayer is aimed at educating the children to respect all those in authority in faith and thereby inducing them into the role of leadership in the society.³⁹⁴

Pope John Paul II defines the role of parents in faith formation by focusing on the threefold functions of the baptised by presenting Christian families as a believing and evangelizing community (Prophetic); a community in dialogue with God (Priestly), and a community at the service of human beings (Kingly).³⁹⁵ Faith is a free gift from God, who has called us into communion with Him. It is "our personal response to God who freely revealed himself to us and his saving will in different ways, but definitively and fully in Jesus Christ."³⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II emphatically states that parents are the primary educators of their children. This obligation arises from the fact that the parents who have given life to their children are called to lead them to the fullness of self-actualization as human beings. It is the

³⁹¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 16 (AAS 108: 317).

³⁹² Blanchette Jr., "Spiritual Markers in the Life of a Child," 122; Kakkanattu, "Faith Formation in the Family," 74–75.

³⁹³ Kalam, "Collaboration for Nation Building," 26.

³⁹⁴ Regarding one's obligation to respect those in authority see Heb 13:17; I Pet 2:13–17; Rom 13:1–7.

³⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 50 (AAS 74: 141–42). Chapter IV of *Lumen Gentium* specifies how the laity become sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ. "The faithful who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the people of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of Christ, and to the best of their ability, carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world." Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 31 (AAS 57:137–38).

³⁹⁶ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 2 (AAS 58: 818).

prophetic duty of parents to make sure that their children grow up animated by the love of God and charity to others.³⁹⁷

As we consider the priestly function of parents, the Christian family is the first school of prayer, the ‘domestic church.’ Parents are the prime witnesses of a living relationship with God for their children. They must transform their home into a praying community in an effort to instil in their children the importance of the basic prayers treasured in Catholic homes.³⁹⁸ Pope Francis goes further to affirm, “it is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important. Hence, moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.”³⁹⁹ The sacraments are the means of sanctification, and parents must see to it that their family is never deprived of their richness, particularly the Holy Eucharist.⁴⁰⁰ The kingly function of parents is given in a nutshell as

By word and example, in the daily round of relations and choices, and through concrete actions and signs, parents lead their children to authentic freedom, actualized in the sincere gift of self, and they cultivate in them respect for others, a sense of justice, cordial openness, dialogue, generous service, solidarity, and all the other values which help people to live life as a gift.⁴⁰¹

According to Bernard Häring, “if the seeds of the Gospel truth are not sown in the fallow soil of children before the weeds of worldly interests spring up and overrun it, the seeds of religious truth never find more fertile soil and bear more abundant fruit than when they are sown in the tender hearts of children by the loving instruction of parents in the dawn of their lives. But the good word must always be enriched by a good example.”⁴⁰² Parents who appreciate and affirm each other will be more successful in imparting values to their children.⁴⁰³ A family that respects others (1 Cor 16:18), bears their burdens (Gal 6:2), and indulges itself in selfless service (1 Cor 10:33), by following the Pauline directives of clothing oneself with compassion,

³⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 36 (AAS 74: 126–27).

³⁹⁸ Moolayil, “Family, the Primary School of Faith Formation,” 123.

³⁹⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 227 (AAS 108: 402–403); 288 (AAS 108: 427).

⁴⁰⁰ Moolayil, “Family, the Primary School of Faith Formation,” 123.

⁴⁰¹ John Paul II, *Evanglium Vitae*, 92 (AAS 87: 505–506).

⁴⁰² Häring, *The Law of Christ*, Vol. 3, 99.

⁴⁰³ Varickasseril, “Fundamental Requirements for a Good Christian Family,” 20.

kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness in imitation of the forgiving Lord (Col 3:12–13) will certainly make a difference in society. Thus, Chavara’s instruction on faith formation does not connote mere learning by heart of some prayers, but rather intends to form a proper attitude towards life based on the right value system.

3.5.1.2 Psychological Formation

Scientific studies initiated by human cognitivists and developmental psychologists confirm that the individual self of a person emerges only gradually through stages. Slowly, human persons become aware of who they really are and, therefore, how they ought to live. The variance in intellectual capacities and in psycho-social environment causes humans to be different. It is partly the rationale why every human person comes to possess a unique personality.⁴⁰⁴ This is the reason that explains why even if the children are of the same parents, living in the same environment with the same instructions and discipline, their mentality, behaviour patterns, outlook, spiritual, intellectual, and psychological development vary from person to person.

Social and emotional learning of children, which is the part of psychological formation, is a process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks through social and emotional learning. It is their ability to recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet personal and social means and make responsible and ethical decisions.⁴⁰⁵ When we come to the psychological formation of children highlighted in the *Chavarul*, Chavara instructs parents that both excessive strictness and extreme leniency are evil. While excessive affection will make them proud, undue anger and punishment will cause them to lose trust, become shameless, and become intellectually incompetent.⁴⁰⁶ This teaching of Chavara is in line with Paul’s exhortation, “and you fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but rear them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Bernard Häring explains that though advice and commands should be given firmly, they should not be given in

⁴⁰⁴ Sequeira, *Conscience and Christian Moral Life: Living Christian Life*, Vol. 2, 178.

⁴⁰⁵ Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg, *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning*, 41.

⁴⁰⁶ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

wrath nor must be instigated by anger.⁴⁰⁷ Parents are thus advised to refrain from over strictness as well as over indulgence as both are detrimental to the growth of children. Harsh treatment makes them fearful, indifferent, shameful, dull, or aggressive. Disciplining must be done with care and compassion, giving proper awareness to children.⁴⁰⁸ Though punishment is part of upbringing, it is really not the sole or first corrective educational measure. It is better not to administer any corporeal punishment out of anger and there must be no unjust punishment.⁴⁰⁹

Pope Francis urges the fathers who are too controlling, to allow their children to develop. Some fathers feel that they are useless or unnecessary, but the fact is that “children need to find a father waiting for them when they return home with their problems. They may try hard not to admit it, not to show it, but they need it.”⁴¹⁰ Only if parents devote time to their children, speak of important things with simplicity and concern, and find healthy ways to be with them, they will be able to shield their children from harm. Vigilance is always necessary, and neglect is never beneficial. What is important is the ability to help them grow lovingly in freedom, maturity, overall discipline, and real autonomy. Only in this way will children come to possess the resources needed to find themselves and to act intelligently and prudently whenever they meet with difficulties.

In another precept, Chavara explicates the importance of the parental role in the psychological formation of their children. He says that just as the mother should teach the children by her example to love and respect the father, the father should set an example for the children in loving and honouring the mother.⁴¹¹ Parents act as role models for their children through the examples they set with their attitude and behaviour in the family and outside. They are the first teachers of their children. And usually, children are more affected by what their parents do than what they say. Nurturing relationships in a family is critical for the healthy development of the children. If a child feels safe, secure, and loved in their family, it helps with the formation of their self-esteem and well-being. It helps the child develop more social competence and better communication

⁴⁰⁷ Häring, *The Law Christ*, Vol. 3, 97.

⁴⁰⁸ Elizabeth, “Chavara: Visionary and Karmayōgi of Families,” 130.

⁴⁰⁹ Häring, *The Law Christ*, Vol. 3, 97.

⁴¹⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 177 (AAS 108: 382).

⁴¹¹ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

skills than the one who does not experience these family connections.⁴¹² Thus, owing to the need of a parental role model in the lives of children, Chavara instructs them to set forth the example of the virtues and attitudes they desire in their children's life by their own lived examples. These examples set forth by the parents would help in the right psychological formation of their children.

3.5.1.3 Intellectual Formation

A good psychological formation given to the children in the family would assist their intellectual formation which is mainly actualized through school education. Chavara, the champion of education, strongly believed that education is the source of power and means for empowering a person. He affirms the importance of monitoring children's education by highlighting that, children should be sent to school as soon as they reach school age. Parents should periodically ask their children about their progress in studies as well as the kind of friendships they are developing. Parents are required to review their studies every Sunday.⁴¹³ As it is mentioned in the first chapter, Kerala, during Chavara's time was a land of family schools. Though there were many positive movements in the early part of the 19th century in the educational realm in Kerala, it was beyond the reach of the Syrian Catholics. Hence, Chavara, who had not seen the corridors of systematic schooling, was determined that the formal education that was denied to him and his ancestors had to be made available to contemporary and future generations.⁴¹⁴

Chavara started the endeavour of education from the family which is the *locus classicus* (the ideal place) where the children are nurtured and given an education that prepares them for life. Children are trained in families to be attentive not only to their personal needs but to the society as well.⁴¹⁵ Vatican II exhorts that all human beings have an inalienable right to education, in keeping with their ultimate goal, abilities, sex, the culture and tradition of their country, and harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth as the privilege of enjoying human dignity. A true education, on the other hand,

⁴¹² LaFortune, "What is the Family Impact on Early Childhood Development." [Online]

⁴¹³ *Chavarul*, II:14, 199.

⁴¹⁴ Chathamparampil and Kureethara, "Unique Contributions of Blessed Chavara in Educating the Kerala Society," 121.

⁴¹⁵ Varickasseril, "Fundamental Requirements for a Good Christian Family," 17.

aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his or her ultimate end and of the good of the societies.⁴¹⁶ In this regard, Pope Francis emphasises that the overall education of children is a “most serious duty and at the same time a primary right of parents.”⁴¹⁷ He adds that “greater emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that children are a wonderful gift from God and a joy for parents and the Church. Through them, the Lord renews the world.”⁴¹⁸ Vatican II teaches,

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators...Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence, the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs...Children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbour.⁴¹⁹

Education should enable us to live our day-to-day lives in accordance with personal and social morality. This would inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life based on justice, love, and simplicity. Likewise, it would also awaken a critical sense, which would lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and its values.⁴²⁰ Such an education should insist on the unity of the entire human family and the social teaching of the Church.⁴²¹ When Chavara advises parents to take keen interest in educating their children he wants to eliminate the darkness of illiteracy which he compares with spiritual blindness.⁴²² And encourages them to use their freedom responsibly to face the challenges and issues of life with good sense and intelligence.

⁴¹⁶ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1 (AAS 58: 5).

⁴¹⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 84 (AAS 108: 345).

⁴¹⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 222 (AAS 108: 400–401).

⁴¹⁹ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3 (AAS 58: 6–7).

⁴²⁰ Declaration of the Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 51.

⁴²¹ Declaration of the Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 58.

⁴²² CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 9/2, 95.

3.5.1.4 Moral Formation

The Christian vision of the family anchors itself on a set of moral principles and values that safeguard and ensure a holistic human development.⁴²³ The *Chavarul* highlights the moral formation of children through its advices to parents considering children as the sacred gift from God;⁴²⁴ respecting each other and setting examples to the children to honour everyone;⁴²⁵ esteeming the dignity and freedom of the grown up children in choosing one's state of life;⁴²⁶ forming a right conscience which is free from deceit and trickery; gently rectifying their mistakes; and teaching them to hold truth and justice in high esteem.⁴²⁷ According to Catholic Social Teaching, the moral formation of children is the right of parents.⁴²⁸ Book of Proverbs instructs the parents, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). This points out that what children learn at home at an early stage will provide them with a strong basis for leading a quality life.⁴²⁹ Paulachan Kochappilly specifically elucidates, "the child learns the basics of ethics along with the mother's milk. It is the rapport with the members of the family, starting with the parents, which shapes and reshapes the imagination and motivation of the moral agent, and it is the same experience that inspires people to act in a given situation."⁴³⁰ Pope Francis reminds parents that they may rely on experts in schools for basic instruction, "but can never completely delegate the moral formation of their children to others."⁴³¹ For, moral formation is not a question of knowing certain ethical codes and norms of behaviour in private or public sphere it is rather an experience that begins with a trustful relationship with the parents.⁴³² This brief discussion indicates how theologians affirm that fundamentally parents are the formators and children grow by imitating their parents, that is, by learning from their words and actions, value systems, attitudes, behaviour, priorities, lifestyle, etc. In the following, we

⁴²³ Kakkanattu, "Faith Formation in the Family," 78.

⁴²⁴ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

⁴²⁵ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

⁴²⁶ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

⁴²⁷ *Chavarul*, II:10, 198.

⁴²⁸ Fernando, "Family and Education of Children: Insights from *Amoris Laetitia*," 244.

⁴²⁹ Pamplany, "'This is a Great Mystery...': The Concept of Family in the Bible," 327.

⁴³⁰ Kochappilly, "Family as the Foundation of Formation," 343.

⁴³¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 263 (AAS 108: 417).

⁴³² Fernando, "Family and Education of Children: Insights from *Amoris Laetitia*," 244.

examine major components of the moral formation of children against the background of the precepts of the *Chavarul*.

3.5.1.4.1 Inculcation of Values

Chavara, discerning the importance of inculcating values in the children, teaches the parents to have respect towards one another,⁴³³ to perform charitable acts such as visiting and caring for the sick, particularly those who are very poor,⁴³⁴ to give arms to beggars,⁴³⁵ and not to humiliate or trouble the poor.⁴³⁶ By these advices Chavara desires that family being the primary setting for socialization, the children would learn to relate, listen, share, care, respect, be patient, and help one another; and to live as the children of one family.

“Values are judgements based on a notion of what is good and what is bad; they refer to concepts of a ‘just life.’ Values are not personal preferences based on taste; they are judgements based on more or less explicit and systematic ideas about how a person relates to his or her environment.”⁴³⁷

Human beings are born into a family which plays an indispensable role in preparing children to become members of a bigger family, namely, society.⁴³⁸ Pope John Paul II says that the family is “the first and fundamental school of social living.”⁴³⁹ Chavara’s instructions concerning empathy towards the poor and needy, and marginalized members of the society give us his convictions about the great social values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and solidarity to be practised in the families to help children grow with the essentials of living in the society. Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others.⁴⁴⁰ Fraternity enhances freedom and equality. Fraternity is born not only of a climate of respect for individual liberty, or even of a certain administratively guaranteed equality, but it necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality.⁴⁴¹

⁴³³ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

⁴³⁴ *Chavarul*, I:22, 194–95.

⁴³⁵ *Chavarul*, I:14, 191.

⁴³⁶ *Chavarul*, I:18, 192.

⁴³⁷ Veugelers and Vedder, “Values in Teaching,” 379.

⁴³⁸ Fernando, “Family and Education of Children,” 256.

⁴³⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 37 (AAS 74: 127–29).

⁴⁴⁰ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 115.

⁴⁴¹ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 103.

Only those who are free and open in spirit will be able to undergo the process of building up fraternity.⁴⁴²

Pope Francis affirms, “the strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love.”⁴⁴³ Once a trustful relationship is established well, the parents can gradually inculcate various values and worldviews that make up the moral formation. Instead of burdening the young mind with do’s and don’ts, it is necessary to make them appreciate what is desirable and worthwhile. Contrary to the predominant ‘here and now’ and ‘use and throw’ mentality, parents can inspire them to see greater values in forgoing an immediate pleasure for the sake of a better and more orderly life. Obviously, this should be done through active methods and dialogue. The language used must be simple and comprehensible to their age. Instead of presenting the moral principles, values, and norms as absolute and unquestionable truths, children must be given opportunities to learn them by doing. All this calls for shaping their will and nurturing the inclination towards what is good.⁴⁴⁴ “A good ethical education includes showing a person that it is in his own interest to do what is right.”⁴⁴⁵

However, it is not sufficient to have a mere desire for or attraction to a value, but an interior disposition towards good needs to be gradually translated into good habits. Jesus points out that morality is essentially an interior disposition, a matter of attitude. Chavara, a man of values and principles jotted down some of the precepts in his *Chavarul* embedded with various values like humility, patience, good relationship, submission to God’s will, etc. to facilitate the parents to inculcate them in their children by their own examples and become channels of God’s grace.

3.5.1.4.2 Fostering Respect for Others

Chavara advises parents concerning the mutual respect in their families.⁴⁴⁶ Parents are the ones who shape the child’s personality, offer the child role models and benchmarks. The way parents communicate with each other, the same way will the child communicate with the parents. And the way the parents deal with the child, the same way the child will also deal with the

⁴⁴² Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 50.

⁴⁴³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 53 (AAS 108: 332–33).

⁴⁴⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 264 (AAS 108: 417–18); Fernando, “Family and Education of Children: Insights from *Amoris Laetitia*,” 245.

⁴⁴⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 265 (AAS 108: 418).

⁴⁴⁶ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

parents, so as to say that the child is like a mirror of the parents. The child will imitate the qualities, virtues, and behaviour patterns of their parents.⁴⁴⁷ Hence, to foster the virtue of respect in children, it is very crucial that the parents themselves respect each other and set an example to children. The biblical text, “Be subject to one another” (Eph 5:21), is actually concerned with respecting others. In marriage, this reciprocal “submission” takes on a special meaning, and is seen as a freely chosen mutual belonging marked by fidelity, respect, and care.⁴⁴⁸

According to John Dewey, there is a need for an openness that respects others and an originality that requires self-respect.⁴⁴⁹ How well parents teach their children to respect their authority lays the foundation for future moral growth. Pope Francis expresses a pedagogical intuition in his words: “The strengthening of the will and the repetition of specific actions are the building blocks of moral conduct; without the conscious, free, and valued repetition of certain patterns of good behaviours, moral education does not take place.”⁴⁵⁰ As an example of cultivating the good habit of respecting each other, the three famous words spoken by Pope Francis are “Please,” “Thank you,” and “Sorry,” the key expressions which are not merely “well-mannered” words but simple expressions,⁴⁵¹ which contain much power to keep family life intact amidst numerous problems and open the way to living a peaceful life in the family. In short, respecting each other can be fostered in children through our simple gestures and actions in day-to-day living.

3.5.1.4.3 Culture

Chavara’s desire for cultivating freedom in the members of the family, especially in children, can be seen in his advice to parents with regard to the upbringing of children. According to him, children should be allowed

⁴⁴⁷ Marilena, “The Role of Parents in Integrating their Own Children in Society,” 1.

⁴⁴⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 156 (AAS 108: 371–72).

⁴⁴⁹ Dewey, “Ethical Principles Underlying Education,” 10; Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882–1898*, 54.

⁴⁵⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 266 (AAS 108: 418).

⁴⁵¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 266 (AAS 108: 418). Pope Francis has cited these “essential words” already in the context of fostering friendship in the family. See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 133 (AAS 108: 363). Earlier he has pointed out the impact of these words in daily life in the “Address to the Pilgrimage of Families during the Year of Faith” (26 October 2013). Again, during the General Audience of 13 May 2015, he has explained in detail the profound meaning and impact of these words for family life. [Online]

complete freedom to choose their way of life when they reach adulthood.⁴⁵² According to him, it is God who resolves their state of life, and therefore, parents should give freedom to children to carry out their responsibility to make the right choice in their life. Though Chavara's advice is particularly regarding the freedom to choose one's status of life, this is his conviction of the importance of freedom that children should have.

Freedom forms the centre of moral life without which we cannot become moral persons. Thus, promoting freedom is promoting the possibility for a moral life.⁴⁵³ The *CCC* teaches that "freedom is the power rooted in the will to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility."⁴⁵⁴ The freedom to decide about oneself is categorized under the core freedom. This basic freedom is directed toward a loving relationship with God, the ultimate end of our lives.⁴⁵⁵ God gave the free will as a gift to the human person to make possible the free choice to love God, but a person has freedom only to the extent one makes correct moral choices. Also, God respects human freedom so much so that He will not force a person to do something contrary to one's will. This implies that we have to use our free will for the good.⁴⁵⁶ The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just.⁴⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Pope Benedict XVI teaches about education and freedom: "A true education must awaken the courage to make definitive decisions, which today are considered a mortifying bind to our freedom."⁴⁵⁸

In this context, children have got the freedom to choose their proper state of life. In the pursuit of choosing their vocation, parents are to be the advisers of their children regarding their choice, although they may not interfere with children's right to a free decision. Since the family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom, the family should offer the necessary conditions and opportunities for the initial exercise of one's freedom. Thus, the *Chavarul* stands as an ideal guide to facilitate

⁴⁵² *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

⁴⁵³ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 75.

⁴⁵⁴ *CCC*, 1731.

⁴⁵⁵ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 77.

⁴⁵⁶ Socias, *Our Moral Life in Christ*, 15

⁴⁵⁷ *CCC*, 1733.

⁴⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, "Address to the Participants in the Occasion of the Fourth National Ecclesial Convention." [Online]

parents in imparting and nurturing the right sense of freedom in their children.

3.5.1.4.4 Formation of Conscience

Chavara cautions parents on indulging their children in lying, cheating, and other deceitful tricks as a norm of cunningness for survival in the world. On the contrary, he instructs them to reprimand and correct the children on encountering their mistakes. They are to be taught to hold truth and justice in high esteem.⁴⁵⁹ Here, this precept highlights the importance of forming a right and good conscience in children from their early stages itself. The ethical conduct is to be made a priority in the upbringing of the children. They should be taught to be honest and sincere at all costs. In other words, it can be said that education must be oriented toward the formation of conscience, toward the approval of the good flowing from the interior freedom of spirit.

At the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount Jesus points out, “blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8). In the formation of conscience, purity of heart is inevitable. The heart that sees, knows, and perceives has to be purified so that the vision of God is made accessible at every moment of life.⁴⁶⁰ Hence, the formation of conscience is a lifelong task that becomes increasingly challenging as the world grows increasingly more complex each day.⁴⁶¹ Richard M. Gula says that the formation of conscience involves more than simply answering the practical moral question, “what ought I to do?” It must also address the prior moral question, “what sort of person ought I to become?” This means that the aim of the formation of conscience must include a person’s moral character. Since morality is interested in *who we are*, as well as in *what* and *how* we choose, the consideration of character in the formation of conscience will not be eliminated.⁴⁶²

As the child advances in age, it must receive progressively increasing freedom for personal creative initiative in accordance with its maturity of mind and character. Otherwise, the day of sudden emancipation from

⁴⁵⁹ *Chavarul*, II:10, 198.

⁴⁶⁰ Kochappilly, “Formation of Conscience as Celebration of the Spirit of Christ in the Context of Everyday Life,” 50.

⁴⁶¹ Gómez, “Formation of a Moral Conscience,” 193.

⁴⁶² Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 137.

parental authority will be the occasion of a moral trauma.⁴⁶³ In order to avoid this tragedy, children must be taught to frequently answer the practical moral question, “what ought I to do?” in order to make a particular moral choice. When the right choice becomes of primary interest, the formation of conscience becomes a matter of acquiring the necessary skills for making the right judgments.⁴⁶⁴ The fully and ideally grown conscience is what we call the “right conscience.” Therefore, the aim of education and formation is nothing but the achievement of a right conscience that can easily function and live, in terms of rationality, autonomy, altruism, intensity, integrity, responsibility, and universality.⁴⁶⁵ It is necessary, therefore, to have certain skills to assess morally relevant factors, such as the action itself, intention, circumstances, consequences, values, and norms; the ability to consider all sides of an issue; the ability to provide sound reasons for a moral judgment; and the ability to have a decisive will to execute a judgment. This is the process of deliberation proper to conscience.

Conscience is properly formed in dialogue with several sources of moral wisdom. As humans, we need to consult our own experience as well as the experience of family, friends, colleagues, and experts in the field which pertains to the area of judgement at hand. We analyse and examine the stories, images, languages, rituals, and actions by which the various communities live their moral lives. As Christians, we turn to the testimony of Scripture, the religious convictions of our creeds, the lives of moral virtues, and the informed judgement of theologians, past and present, who help interpret the traditions of Christian life. As Catholics, we pay attention to our rich heritage of tradition as well as to the official teachings of the magisterium which are pertinent to our areas of concern.⁴⁶⁶ Magisterium as the teaching authority of the Church is to be understood as a service of guidance. By practising virtues namely, justice, temperance, fortitude, and self-care through the prudence of conscience, we learn more and more about how we are to respond to God, neighbour, and ourselves in love.

⁴⁶³ Häring, *The Law Christ*, Vol. 3, 97.

⁴⁶⁴ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 136.

⁴⁶⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16 (AAS 58: 1037).

⁴⁶⁶ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 137.

Therefore, virtuous practices become the exercises for the formation of conscience.⁴⁶⁷

In order to form the conscience, self-examination is inevitable which must focus on our right relationship with God, fellow-humans, and the cosmos.⁴⁶⁸ Jesus Christ is the measure for our review of personal relationships with God and other fellow human beings.⁴⁶⁹ In this line, Chavara's precepts about the formation of conscience and discernment of actions given in the *Chavarul* fits rightly in our need to educate the parents in this particular realm of the upbringing of children.

3.5.1.4.5 Sex Education

Chavara was very particular in instructing the parents to take special care to preserve the innocence and purity of their children. In the *Chavarul*, Chavara makes a special mention of sex education to children. In his instructions he admonish that children must not be allowed to move around naked even inside the house,⁴⁷⁰ and that the boys and girls, as they grow up, must not be allowed to sleep together.⁴⁷¹ These instructions are relevant to the families because from their young age itself it is necessary to make children understand the dignity of their body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). In another precept to the parents concerning children Chavara reprimanded them regarding immodest clothing that paves the way to hell.⁴⁷² Chavara gives these clear guidelines about clothing the children and practising modesty to set upon them the physical boundaries to facilitate the development of healthy perspective of their own bodies and physical relationships. He also insists the parents not to utter vulgar words or unbecoming conversations in the presence of their children⁴⁷³ because they spoil the purity of their heart.

Chavara says, “when the children are too young, do not permit them go out of elders’ sight to play with their friends. Do not trust servants who are careless with the children; very often these careless servants spoil them. Do

⁴⁶⁷ Harrington and Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, 70–71.

⁴⁶⁸ Sequeira, *Theology of Sin & Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 285.

⁴⁶⁹ Kochappilly, “Formation of Conscience as Celebration of the Spirit of Christ in the Context of Everyday Life,” 53.

⁴⁷⁰ *Chavarul*, II:3, 197.

⁴⁷¹ *Chavarul*, II:4, 197.

⁴⁷² *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

⁴⁷³ *Chavarul*, II:3, 197.

not permit children to stay in the houses of relatives; for, although they leave as angels, many a time, they return as devils.”⁴⁷⁴ Child protection was a concern for Chavara even in his times. Therefore, he asks the parents to keep an eye on little children always and not to let them remain with servants and their companions. Given the fact that much of the child abuse is taking place within the confines of the family, Chavara warns the parents not to encourage their children to stay at their relative’s houses.⁴⁷⁵ In a way, Chavara instructs today’s parents to consider what they want their children to be exposed to. This necessarily means being concerned about who is providing them entertainments, who is entering their rooms through television and electronic devices, and with whom they are spending their free time.

Chavara asks the parents to take extreme caution in the development of children when they are in their younger age instead of sending them to various celebrations such as anniversaries, feasts, marriages, etc. He wants them to train the children at home in some occupation proper to their age. He also speaks about the danger in clothing girls for festival celebrations or as bridesmaids for weddings in such way as to exhibit them as objects.⁴⁷⁶ Book of Sirach says, “a person is known by his appearance... A person’s attire and hearty laughter, and the way he walks, show what he is” (Sir 19:29–30). Quoting this, Thomas Aquinas says, “moderation of outward movements is directed somewhat to other persons.”⁴⁷⁷ He cites Augustine’s sayings in his Rule: “In all your movements, let nothing be done to offend the eye of another, but only that which is becoming to the holiness of your state.”⁴⁷⁸ In a similar way, Bernard Häring advises that parents must supervise the activities of their children outside the family and as far as possible protect them from the occasions of sin. In the education of purity, reverential instruction on the mystery of sex is of great importance. This instruction should proceed in cautious stages corresponding to the awakening curiosity of the inquiring child and its need to be informed. It should not be an artificially pre-arranged instruction but an entirely natural and obvious explanation of the mysteries of life.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴ *Chavarul*, II:5, 197; II:7, 198.

⁴⁷⁵ Kuzhivelil, “Chavara: Child Educationist and Parent-Guide,” 145.

⁴⁷⁶ *Chavarul*, II:11, 198–99.

⁴⁷⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q.168, a.1.

⁴⁷⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa–IIae, q.168, a.1.

⁴⁷⁹ Häring, *The Law of Christ*, 97–98.

Sex education does not mean imparting a complete knowledge of anatomy and physiology of the human body only. Rather, true sex education consists in letting the children grasp, in the concrete experience of everyday life, the role and meaning of sexuality and love in the life of a couple and the society in which they live.⁴⁸⁰ This deeper understanding of sexuality indicates that sexuality embraces the whole person. The CCC emphasises sexuality as an all-embracing reality. It “affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.”⁴⁸¹ Pope John Paul II exhorts that sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person, body, emotions, and soul, and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love. Sex education is the basic right and duty of parents, and it must always be carried out under their attentive guidance.⁴⁸²

Sex education is also a process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships, and intimacy.⁴⁸³ Vatican II spoke of the need for “a positive and prudent sex education” to be imparted to children and adolescents “as they grow older.”⁴⁸⁴ It must be done within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving. *AL* affirms that, “the sexual urge can be directed through a process of growth in self-knowledge and self-control capable of nurturing valuable capacities for joy and for loving encounter.”⁴⁸⁵ It also underlines that an authentic sexual union is a sign of an all-inclusive commitment, which requires integral and generous self-gift.⁴⁸⁶ The goal of sex education is therefore to acquire adequate knowledge of human sexuality so as to prepare people to enter into mutually enriching relationship.⁴⁸⁷ Often, young people mistakenly identify sexual union with love. Hence, they may desire to give everything all at once, without any regard for a sense of graduality. Sex education consists precisely in helping them overcome these confused and immature

⁴⁸⁰ Grugni, *Sex Education*, 14.

⁴⁸¹ CCC, 2332.

⁴⁸² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 37 (AAS 74: 91–93).

⁴⁸³ Chitra, “Merits of Sex Education in Schools,” 34.

⁴⁸⁴ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1 (AAS 58: 5).

⁴⁸⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 280 (AAS 108: 423).

⁴⁸⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 283 (AAS 108: 424).

⁴⁸⁷ Fernando, “Family and Education of Children: Insights from *Amoris Laetitia*,” 251.

perceptions of sexuality.⁴⁸⁸ Right education can make the young aware of the necessity of taking measured steps in the knowledge and practice of sexuality.

In this sense, Chavara's advice to be exceedingly careful, to be chaste and modest in all of one's postures, whether sitting or walking, lying or playing, is laudable. Immodesty is wrong in the eyes of both God and the world.⁴⁸⁹ He further asks parents to see to it that boys and girls must not roam around immodestly dressed up and that they must refrain from unchaste body contacts.⁴⁹⁰ Chavara pays special attention to formation of girls in the virtues of modesty and chastity. For, Chavara was convinced that if a girl would acquire virtues and become well disciplined, when she would become a mother, she would be able to make the whole family virtuous, and thereby the society and nation would be virtuous. He, therefore, had special care for the upbringing of the girl child in the family. In a nutshell, Chavara underlines the importance of a virtue that the Church's moral vision considers as an edifying element of sexuality, namely, modesty. "Modesty is a natural means whereby we defend our personal privacy and prevent ourselves from being turned into objects to be used."⁴⁹¹ The *Chavarul* emphasises sex education of children as one of the most important responsibilities of parents which would protect children from many dangers and keep them pure and chaste, and this message continues to be relevant even in the changing contexts of today.

3.5.1.4.6 Media Education in the Family

Knowing the impact of the media in the life of children, Chavara gives certain guidelines to the parents about the upbringing of children. Through his precepts he alerts the parents of the dangers hidden in disguise in the media. He reminds that collection of pagan books or those containing lewd songs are potential dangers which must be discarded.⁴⁹² Hence, Chavara exhorts the parents to avail the children a collection of good books packed with wisdom and knowledge that enhance piety.⁴⁹³ Through this advice, Chavara prompts the parents to cultivate in children the habit of reading

⁴⁸⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 284 (AAS 108: 424–25).

⁴⁸⁹ *Chavarul*, I:19, 193.

⁴⁹⁰ *Chavarul*, I:19, 193.

⁴⁹¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 282 (AAS 108: 424).

⁴⁹² *Chavarul*, I:21, 194.

⁴⁹³ *Chavarul*, I:21, 194.

good books. Those days, the only medium of communication and mass media was in the written format of letters, newspaper, and books. Therefore, Chavara cautioned the parents about the proper use of these available media which would hamper the sound formation of children. When these instructions of the *Chavarul* are translated into today's context, they can be seen as an instruction to parents to teach children about the right use of the media.

The *Communio et Progressio* underlines that the Church sees media as 'gifts of God' which unite human beings and help them to cooperate with God's plan for their salvation in accordance with His divine providence.⁴⁹⁴ Since the release of the decree *Inter Mirifica*, the Church has done a lot to empower and facilitate the utilization of emerging means of social communications, progressing in its educational aspect of technological advancements in the digital media.⁴⁹⁵ In a statement, Pope Benedict XVI noted that "technological advances in the media have, in certain respects, conquered time and space, making communication between people, even when separated by vast distances, both instantaneous and direct."⁴⁹⁶ Thereby, the Church has put forth attempts to utilize the new social media as well as teach the faithful about the cultural and moral implications that these technologies offer.

Media literacy is the ability to interpret and create personal meaning from the hundreds even thousands of verbal and visual symbols we take in every day through television, radio, computers, newspapers, and magazines, and of course, advertising. It is the ability to choose and select, the ability to challenge and question, the ability to be conscious about what is going on around us and not be passive and therefore, vulnerable. "We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words, and sounds."⁴⁹⁷ Pope John Paul II remarks that the media serves people in both positive and negative ways.⁴⁹⁸ On the one hand, the use of the media has turned out to be a blessing in bringing drastic development in the fields of education and entertainment, while on the other hand, due to the impact of

⁴⁹⁴ Pastoral Instruction on Means of Communication, *Communio et Progressio*, 5.

⁴⁹⁵ Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 16.

⁴⁹⁶ Benedict XVI, *The Media: A Network for Communication, Communion, and Cooperation*. 40th World Communication Day, 2006, 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Elizabeth, *Taking Part in Politics: Participation through Communication*, 228.

⁴⁹⁸ John Paul II, "Television has Immense Power to Strengthen or Weaken Family Life. Message for 28th World Communication Day," 3.

the media, moral challenges within the family are on the rise. The media are increasingly playing the role once played by family, community, religion, and formal education; not only broadcasting information and knowledge, but also shaping values and norms, moulding attitudes and behaviour, and influencing the very process of living. In other words, the media constitutes a huge, vibrant, and influential force in society.

Hence, in this fast-track world of mass media and communications, it is our prime duty to educate children on the prudent use of social media for their development. At the same time parents must foster the good habit of reading books that widen the cognitive skills of imagination and comprehension. This brings relevance to Chavara's teaching on collection and reading of good books and restraining the evil from the corrupt media.

3.6 The Role of the Woman in the Family

Women empowerment, feminine genius, etc. are some of the most used expressions in today's world. But the nineteenth century scenario was not the same. Those days, people in Kerala hardly heard the word "women's rights" or "women empowerment" mentioned in public. It was the time when patriarchal system was prevalent. The women were largely deprived of even the basic rights of education, property inheritance, and proper clothing. They were not allowed to come out of the four walls of the kitchen. They did not appear before strangers and were not allowed to dine with their husbands;⁴⁹⁹ they had no particular role in society or in the Church except child-bearing, child-rearing, and working for the comfort of everyone at home. Their potentials to serve humanity in varied ways laid hidden in themselves as circumstances did not bring them out.⁵⁰⁰ Women, particularly, the Syrian Catholic women, were greatly underprivileged on the religious, social, economic, and educational fronts of the society. It is into this society that Chavara was born and in time, he became a revolutionary leader who brought about remarkable changes in the culture of Kerala in the nineteenth century, particularly in the life of women.⁵⁰¹ He highly esteemed the value of the woman as wife and mother in the family.

⁴⁹⁹ Joseph, *Marriage among Indian Christians*, 68.

⁵⁰⁰ Cleopatra, "Blessed Chavara's Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century," 42.

⁵⁰¹ Karthikeyan, "Nanmayude Thelineerozhukunna Puzha (Mal.)" (*River Flowing with the Water of Goodness*), 16. A detailed explanation of patriarchal system is given in the first chapter.

Seeing the plight of the suffering woman of his century, Chavara was greatly grieved at heart and decided to bring new tides of hope in the lives of women with his empowerment initiatives like founding the Congregation for women for their uplift, teaching them various skills and handicrafts on the way of self-sufficiency, starting the boarding school for the girls, etc. Let us throw some more light upon the precepts on women empowerment given in the *Chavarul* describing the dignity of woman and her role as a mother in the family.

3.6.1 Dignity of Woman

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara instructs that in the same way that the father should be model for the children how to love and respect their mother, so too should the mother provide an example for the children in this regard.⁵⁰² Chavara had a particular intention in advising the father to love and respect the mother. He intended to break the iceberg of the rigid mentality of the patriarchal dominion of the time. He wanted to uplift the status of women in the family as equal to that of the men. Getting through the male dominant set up of the society, we can understand that by speaking in favour of women in the *Chavarul*, Chavara takes a daring step to bring a paradigm shift in the patriarchal mindset which prevailed in the culture.

Chavara's literary works highlight his feminism through his sayings on the role of feminine figures in his own life and society. In the *Compunction of the Soul* he writes extensively on his own mother and Blessed Virgin Mary;⁵⁰³ his book, *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, tells us about his close affinity with female saints like Teresa of Avila,⁵⁰⁴ Mary Magdalene, and Mary Cortona;⁵⁰⁵ in the poem *Martyrdom of Anastasia* he describes the bravery and faithfulness of the saintly nun which demonstrates his lofty ideals about consecrated life.⁵⁰⁶ In his letters to the nuns we find him highly praising the women religious as queens: "O! queens and spouses of our Lord and King Jesus Christ, the state of life you have embraced is indeed

⁵⁰² *Chavarul*, II:9, 198; *CWC*, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 2/9, 114.

⁵⁰³ *CWC*, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, Canto I:48–70; Canto II:1–28, 201–280; Canto III:8–50.

⁵⁰⁴ *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 2, 5.

⁵⁰⁵ *CWC*, Vol. 3: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 3, 8.

⁵⁰⁶ *CWC*, Vol. 2: *Martyrdom of Anastasia*.

great and praiseworthy. The terrestrial empresses will feel jealous of you.”⁵⁰⁷

Let us go through one of his prominent literary works in the context of women empowerment—the *Martyrdom of Anastasia* in detail. This poem should be studied against the backdrop of the social conditions that existed then in Kerala. The suffering of women due to the rigid, inhumane practises of the caste system and patriarchy during this period has already been explained in the first chapter of this book. The *Martyrdom of Anastasia* depicts women as being so strong and convinced of their faith and discernment. The mother superior of the convent is portrayed as a woman who upheld extraordinary emotional maturity and reasoning ability. Though she knew that her favourite disciple *Anastasia* would be tortured and killed, she sent her to the Emperor’s palace with a serene heart. Her faith in God is unwavering. She says,

Daughter dear
Your blessed groom
Calls you with a longing love
Go, be quick...
She kissed her with love
And filled her with valour.⁵⁰⁸

The nineteenth century poems of Malayalam literature usually presented women as feeble, victims of male desire, and their emotions were romanticised. Seldom had literature of that age sketched women as being worthy, knowledgeable, and independent individuals. It was in such a period when the life of a woman was largely confined to the role of a daughter, wife, or mother, that Chavara wrote this poem. Women could not think of opting out of the institution of the family to lead a religious life. Also, the Church in Kerala did little to encourage monastic life for women.⁵⁰⁹ In such a situation, Chavara, along with Fr. Leopold took the initiative to set up a congregation for women for the uplift of the family and society. Chavara believed that the dissemination of knowledge, both religious and secular, was essential for the reform of the family, Church, and society, which would be accomplished only if women would be

⁵⁰⁷ CWC, Vol. 4: *The Letters*, 7/2, 77.

⁵⁰⁸ CWC, Vol. 2: *Spiritual Poem, Anastasiayayude Rakthasaskyam* (Mal.), 45–50, 176. See also Raveendran, “Martyrdom of *Anastasia*: Celebrating a Brave Woman,” 245–46.

⁵⁰⁹ Raveendran, “Martyrdom of *Anastasia*: Celebrating a Brave Woman,” 245–46.

empowered. In this poem, acknowledging his mother's role in his integral formation, Chavara intended to depict women as brave and courageous. This stimulation to the role and dignity of women would help to channelize the power of mothers in the spiritual, psychological, and moral formation of children as well as for peaceful living in the family.

Keeping in mind the nineteenth-century gender structure, let us proceed to the Church's understanding of the creation and dignity of women in this world. Pope John Paul II says, "the Creator entrusts dominion over the earth to the human race, to all persons, to all men and women, who derive their dignity and vocation from the common "beginning."⁵¹⁰ Pope further adds, "in God's eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root... [for] "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).⁵¹¹ God honours the dignity of women by assuming human flesh from the Virgin Mary, whom the Church honours as the mother of God, presenting her as the model of every woman.⁵¹² "In the eyes of his contemporaries, Christ became a promoter of women's true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity."⁵¹³ Jesus' relationship with women is not just non-condemnatory, it is also empowering, for He makes women the messengers of the Good News. For example: the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7–27) and Mary Magdalene (Jn 8:3–11).⁵¹⁴ We see that Jesus was the true champion of a gender just society. The apostle Paul says: "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith...there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28–29). *GS* states that since humans, both men and women were created by God, both have the same inherent reasoning capacity, share in the divine mission, and therefore are equal. It goes so far as to state that "any kind of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design."⁵¹⁵ *Pacem in Terris* attempts to employ the personal dignity of women in the society as it says, "women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural

⁵¹⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6 (AAS 80: 1662–64).

⁵¹¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 29 (AAS 80: 1721–24).

⁵¹² Margaret, "Women's Space in Family Dynamics," 217.

⁵¹³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 12 (AAS 80: 1681–82).

⁵¹⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 12 (AAS 80: 1681–82).

⁵¹⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 29 (AAS 58: 1048–49).

dignity...they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.”⁵¹⁶

In a nutshell, as human persons, men and women enjoy equality and equal dignity. There is no room for discrimination between them. The apparent differences between them are not discriminative but mutually complementary and enriching which in turn enhances the humanity as a whole. Chavara used this complementary relation between men and women to re-establish the wholeness and integrity of the family which was once lost due to the indifference shown towards its complementary partner. Thus, Chavara highlights the fact that woman who was created as the crown of creation must not be trampled down under the feet of the dominant patriarchy and be listed among the downtrodden. On the contrary, he yearned to elevate them to that lofty status which the Creator had envisioned for them from the beginning of creation itself. Thus, Chavara’s role in restoring the dignity of women as portrayed in all his literary works and various endeavours remains inevitable.

3.6.2 Woman as Mother

There are several roles that women assume in the family: wife, mother, leader, guide, administrator, economist, disciplinarian, teacher, etc. Women as mothers are the chief executives of family enterprises. Pope John Paul II exhorts, “thank you, women who are mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God’s own smile upon the new-born child, the one who guides your child’s first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.”⁵¹⁷ Chavara visualized a mother as the formator of her child. She is the one who, according to Chavara, creates a domestic church at home and the child is attuned to the stem.⁵¹⁸ He recollects:

Huddled close to her feet, I learnt aright
Gently, of matters sublime, of my faith
As at midnight she rose and knelt at prayer
Warding off sleep and petty dullness to the air

⁵¹⁶ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 41 (AAS 55: 268).

⁵¹⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 2 (AAS 87: 804).

⁵¹⁸ Cleopatra, “Blessed Chavara’s Vision and Action for the Enlightenment of Women in the 19th Century,” 44.

Long hours, on her knees, in prayer she stayed
Leaning on her then I would seat myself
While devoutly [pray] a string of pious words
To mother of God and the Christ, King of Kings.⁵¹⁹

It is mothers who teach to pray, assign duties, and distribute the responsibilities among the family members according to their interests and abilities and provide resources in terms of equipment and materials to accomplish the various enterprises of the family.⁵²⁰ Children turn to them for love, sympathy, and empathy, understanding and recognition. Mother is concerned about the physical well-being of every member of the family—the helpless infant, the sickly child, the adolescent youth, the senescent parent, the needy neighbour, etc. Obviously, a society devoid of mothers would be dehumanized, for mothers are always, even in the worst of times, witnesses to tenderness, dedication, and moral strength.⁵²¹ Pope John Paul II believes that mothers are simply better at sacrifice than fathers because they learn to sacrifice naturally through the experience of pregnancy.⁵²²

The mother connects the new generation with the old values and norms and thereby provides stability and continuity to the social structure. Pope Francis states, “mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism...It is they who testify to the beauty of life and love.”⁵²³ It is the mother who willingly watches over her child with great tenderness, love, and compassion, who helps it to nurture in confidence and to experience that the world is a good place to live in. She helps the child to grow in self-esteem and to develop a capacity for intimacy and empathy.⁵²⁴ A mother’s love is found in the Triune God, a perfect model in loving and self-giving (1 Jn 4:7–21). Mary is an exemplar both of a virgin and a mother.⁵²⁵ From Mary women can learn the true meaning of motherhood.

⁵¹⁹ CWC, Vol. 2: *Compunction of the Soul*, I:II, 53–60.

⁵²⁰ Margaret, “Women’s Space in Family Dynamics,” 206.

⁵²¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 174 (AAS 108: 280–81).

⁵²² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 18–19 (AAS 80: 1693–700), where the Pope links childbirth to the self-emptying sacrifice of the cross.

⁵²³ Francis, “Catechesis,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 7–8 January 2015, 8.

⁵²⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 175 (AAS 108: 281); Margaret, “Women’s Space in Family Dynamics,” 218–19.

⁵²⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 (AAS 57: 24–25).

In sum, a woman's role as a mother is very significant in the emotional and psychological development of children. As the first teacher of the child, she transmits the social, moral, and spiritual codes and ideals and shapes its personality. Chavara recollects his mother as the basic instrument of his vocation. By her love, prayer, and example, the seed of vocation was sown in him. Chavara understood that the Church and society needed holy mothers to bring the divine into children, in order that they might become holy men and women.

3.7 Business Ethics in the Family

Chavara alerts the families that the business is risky both for the soul and the wealth unless it is done with due care, honesty, and justice.⁵²⁶ This admonition is followed by the truth that no unjust trader has been found to make steady and continuous progress in life, and that the riches amassed by fraud and deceit will melt away like snow.⁵²⁷ By giving this precept Chavara shows the Christian approach to economics and economic affairs. He urges that due attention must be paid to the Gospel warnings about the dangers of wealth and riches. It is obvious for the Christians that those who create, own, and control wealth have particular cause to fear for their eternal salvation.⁵²⁸

According to Blackwell Wiley, ethics means the study of what is right and wrong, and business ethics is the application of ethics in business.⁵²⁹ In Christian business ethics, a person should run the business on biblical principles of honesty, integrity, love, truth, etc. Human beings, having been created "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27), have an unlimited potential. We need others and society too, in order to grow and reach our full potential as human beings. The family is the first and most basic link between one person and the rest of the human race. As Pope John Paul II says, "it is in interrelationships on many levels that a person lives, and that society becomes more "personalized"."⁵³⁰ Pope John XXIII exhorts those who are immersed in the business of this world not to allow their consciences to sleep and not to lose sight of the true hierarchy of values. He says that

⁵²⁶ *Chavarul*, I:13, 190.

⁵²⁷ *Chavarul*, I:13, 190.

⁵²⁸ Charles and Maclaren, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II: Its Origin and Development*, 261.

⁵²⁹ Wiley, *This is Business Ethics: An Introduction*. [Online]

⁵³⁰ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 49 (AAS 83: 854–55).

scientific and technical progress and the resultant material well-being are good things and mark an important phase in human civilization. But goods of this kind must be valued according to their true nature: as instruments used by human beings for the better attainment of their end.⁵³¹

Another precept from the *Chavarul*⁵³² explains the danger of extravagance and miserliness with the help of an exemplar of a man who spent generously on his household needs and gave alms according to his state and means. As he prospered well, he began to neglect charity and focused more on amassing wealth for himself. In the course of time, he developed an infectious wound on his leg; he consulted many physicians and spent a lot of money on various treatment procedures. Then, an angel appeared and told him: “Know that those who amass wealth by refusing to do charity will face inordinate instances of spending money.”⁵³³

Jesus also used the parables to teach us the lessons of true charity and the vanity of riches, which are acquired at the cost of the bread of the poor and needy. He warns against the dangers of riches (Mt 16:26). He emphasises the truth that the soul of a person is more important than the riches of the world and losing the soul in the quest of amassing the wealth would profit nothing (Lk 12:20).⁵³⁴ It is against this background of the scriptural warnings on the need to have the right attitude to wealth that the general norms governing economic life are given by Vatican II. Economics has to serve the needs of the whole person—material, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. The extremes of individualism and central control are to be avoided, and resources are to be used for the good of all; this means that none should be underused as a result of the selfishness of the few.⁵³⁵ Chavara’s business ethics calls the individual and the family as a whole to follow the ethics of love, justice, and truth in their affairs to enable the smooth functioning of the family.

3.8 Work Ethics in the Family

Chavara instructs the family members to labour in accordance with their status of life. Refusing to work is not the sign of a respectable person but

⁵³¹ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 245–46.

⁵³² This precept is referred in the section 2.2.1.3.6.1 Extravagance and Miserliness, footnote 255.

⁵³³ *Chavarul*, I:15, 191.

⁵³⁴ Charles and Maclaren, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II*, 262.

⁵³⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 64 (AAS 58: 1086).

only of the indecent, who do not have a family and offspring. Laziness is the mother of all vices which leads to the development of undesirable behaviours like drinking. Alcoholism is a deplorable social evil and is the worst act in God's eyes.⁵³⁶ Here, Chavara speaks of the importance of work and the dignity of labour. Just as the old saying goes, "idle hands are the devil's workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece," so does Chavara say that laziness is the source of all evils and therefore, he exhorts the families to refrain from this vice and keep away all other negative traits to which it gives birth.

Work ethics refers to a set of values that are defined and characterized by diligence and hard work.⁵³⁷ Work ethics can be viewed as a moral or psychological attitude that it is "good" for a person to work.⁵³⁸ Work ethics exhibit a particular set of values and behaviours such as reliability, dedication, discipline, productivity, co-operation, integrity, respect, responsibility, etc. These values of ethics mould a person into a more responsible and determined individual. It impacts all the activities of their day-to-day life.⁵³⁹

Pope John Paul II writes that "work is a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth."⁵⁴⁰ He defines work as any activity performed by a human being, whether manual or intellectual in whatever nature or circumstances.⁵⁴¹ The subject of work is the human person. The work a person does must "serve to realize his humanity, to fulfil his calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity."⁵⁴² Work is a person's vocation and a way one realizes oneself as a person. Work comprises both of an obligation and a right of all persons.⁵⁴³ Through their work, the human beings share in the work of the Creator.⁵⁴⁴ It is the human work that makes it possible for a person to lay the foundation of a family and maintain it.

⁵³⁶ *Chavarul*, I:12, 189.

⁵³⁷ "Work Ethics for Development Professionals," 1. [Online]

⁵³⁸ Mulligan, *Work Ethics and Family Background*, 12.

⁵³⁹ "Ten Ways to Develop Strong Work Ethics among Employees." [Online]

⁵⁴⁰ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 4 (AAS 73: 584–85).

⁵⁴¹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, *Blessing* (AAS 73: 577–78).

⁵⁴² John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 6 (AAS 73: 589–90).

⁵⁴³ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 16 (AAS 73: 610).

⁵⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 25 (AAS 73: 618–19).

Work influences the whole process of education in the family as it fashions a person as a human being.⁵⁴⁵

Vatican II states that work is a right, not simply because all persons have a right to the basic necessities of life, though it is a part of it, but because all persons have something important to do in this world by which they will realize their very selves.⁵⁴⁶ The remuneration for work should guarantee a dignified livelihood for the person and one's family on the material, social, cultural, and spiritual levels to correspond to the role and the productivity of each, the relevant economic factors in his employment, and the common good.⁵⁴⁷ Pope John Paul II emphasises that all persons have the equal right to participate in their society. He claims that women's work in the family is work and has social importance because the love and nurture of children is crucial to society⁵⁴⁸ and rightly acknowledges that the work of parenting contributes to the good of society and is in that sense public work.

The precept in the *Chavarul* can be interpreted as the instruction to the parents to set a good example for their children by working hard for their livelihood. It unfolds another facet of laziness which gives rise to the social evils like alcoholism. Alcoholism not only harms the persons who consumes it but also brings disgrace to the entire family and gives a bad example to the children. The parents must rather be busy in loving and serving everyone, showing hospitality, and setting the model of prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled life. As the children grow up, they must follow the good example of parents and they must be accustomed to work, even if the parents are well-to-do. For only then will they be able to make a decent living and become helpful members of the community, and not a burden to it. The children's education must finally be completed by enabling them to learn a useful profession, by which they can sustain themselves and have a secure family life in future.

3.9 Ecological Ethics in the Family

The instructions in the *Chavarul* like, being frugal in spending and avoiding squander beyond one's means in the celebrations and festivals⁵⁴⁹ and

⁵⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 10 (AAS 73: 600–601).

⁵⁴⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 43 (AAS 58: 1061–64).

⁵⁴⁷ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 21; Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 58 (AAS 23: 198); Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, 49 (AAS 29: 378).

⁵⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 19 (AAS 80: 1697–98).

⁵⁴⁹ *Chavarul*, I:6, 188.

avoiding materialistic behaviour and amassing of novel items highlight Chavara's sense of eco-friendliness. He says that instead of greed in exploiting the resources, one must rejuvenate the nature and the environment of the residence with the positive energy of peace, love, compassion, and harmony.⁵⁵⁰ These precepts of Chavara help us to value the nature and its good.

The precepts of the *Chavarul* on the integral formation of families also make special mention of our duty to defend and take care of our “common Home,” the Mother Earth.⁵⁵¹ In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis has pointed out that everything is related and hence the environmental crisis should be seen in its close relation to socio-economic, cultural, political, and religious realities. Within this “integral ecology,” the family too plays an important role. By integral ecology, it is understood that environmental problems cannot be separated; it is closely related to other human and social problems. Just as the different aspects of the planet—physical, chemical, and biological—are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which cannot be fully explored and understood. Human life and its problems, particularly the social problems are part and parcel of ecological problems. Hence, “strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”⁵⁵² On the role of the family in inculcating an adequate ecological education, Pope Francis says:

In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. In the family we learn to ask without demanding, to say “thank you” as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have been given, to control our aggressivity and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm. These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ *Chavarul*, I:11, 189.

⁵⁵¹ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1 (AAS 107: 847).

⁵⁵² Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 139 (AAS 107: 903).

⁵⁵³ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 213 (AAS 107: 931).

It is in the family that we learn to regulate the habit of consumption and take part in caring for the environment as our common home. Consumption is not a good thing when it distances people from their obligations regarding the use of earthly good: when it makes them unaware of the social purposes of property, and of their duty to cultivate solidarity with others in its use. An inequitable distribution of wealth, the ‘throw-away’ culture, pollution of the environment, etc. are not good things in themselves.⁵⁵⁴ So, what we need today is a profound interior conversion, a new spirituality, ‘an ecological conversion,’ that would replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed, and compulsion.”⁵⁵⁵ In other words, ecological conversion calls for a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness and gratitude to God for the loving gift of our common home and our interconnectedness with the rest of the creatures.

The *Chavarul* advises the parents to respect the sacredness of the home by giving stern warning against impolite speech, non-Christian dialogue, complaining, and unkind criticism of neighbours or anyone else.⁵⁵⁶ Chavara has a point in saying this about keeping up the holiness of the ecological ambiance. The negative energy radiated from the above said traits would hinder the flow of grace to our families as well as pollute its graceful environment. Reading between the lines of the precepts of this *Chavarul*, we can intercept its underline instructions regarding maintaining the sacredness of the auspices we live in.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have been discussing the theological vision of family in the *Chavarul*. According to Chavara, “family is the image of heaven.” Chavara took care of the integral formation of the family in the resemblance of this imagery with his various advices for their mutual bond in the family, spiritual life, means of sanctity through the sacraments, virtues to be practised, social values, integral formation of children, respect towards

⁵⁵⁴ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 28 (AAS 80: 548–550); John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, 36 (AAS 83: 838–39).

⁵⁵⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 9 (AAS 107: 851).

⁵⁵⁶ *Chavarul*, I:10, 188.

women, and various principles to be practised in the business, work, and the environment.

The theological reflections on the maxims of the *Chavarul* help us to understand the moral criteria for families to grow as loving communities. The *Chavarul* explains the families as being initiated in the sacrament of matrimony with the basic aspects of love and interpersonal relationship, sexual life, procreation, sexual pleasure, unity and indissolubility. The family which is founded on love has fidelity as its first task to be fulfilled. Marital sexuality leads to the union of the spouses and with God. Chavara exhorts parents to see children as the sacred treasures entrusted to them by God. Marriage bond is established by God Himself and can never be dissolved and hence demands for the exclusive love between the couples. Family depicts the covenant relationship of the Church with Christ and thus it is viewed as the domestic church. It is through the Christian family the Church lives and fulfils the mission given to her by Christ. The family is the fundamental agent of the Church's evangelization and catechesis and at the same time, it is also an irreplaceable entity which cannot be substituted by anything else.

One of the adjectives used in the *Chavarul* for the definition of family is "seeking eternal salvation." Family forms the true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth to facilitate deeper union with God. This is actualized through its foundation of faith and sacraments. The first step for all the future religious practises begins from home. The family is the sanctuary where life is conceived and cared for. Therefore, the *Chavarul* includes the precepts which speak of promoting and protecting life. Through the family, family members are called to become the sacramental sign in the world. Practising the virtues and living a life based on the Gospel values would make them a sign board in this world to lead the people around on right path. The family is also a school of mutual love and respect where children learn the lessons of life by practising these essential virtues of life.

The Eucharist, the sacrament of sacraments, forms the centre of the family. Various aspects, such as sacrifice and reconciliation, common to both the Eucharist and the family help us to grow in communion with Jesus who is the source of life. Chavara received this great inheritance of the Eucharistic devotion from his childhood itself and imparted it to the families through his precepts on the holy Eucharist based on his own lived experiences.

Reconciliation with God, others, and oneself in the family is one of the surest means of growing in holiness. Therefore, Chavara included the precepts on sacrament of reconciliation and mutual forgiveness to ensure peace and harmony in the families. Christian families must be open and be part of an ongoing mission for the other families, which is essential for the emergence of a civilization of love and the humanization of society. Their witness is primarily the witness of life like yeast in the world, for a good and happy family can be a sacrament of Christ's salvation to the people around them. They, thereby, serve as a means of sanctification for family members as well as for the Church and society.

Family is the cradle of love and life. We have discussed here the unique features of Christian love as the key to marital and familial relationships. Christian love is the sum total of its various facets such as patience, humility, forgiveness, sincerity, readiness to listen, suffer, and fulfil the will of God. All these qualities of love mentioned in the different guidelines of the *Chavarul* make the family a real hub of love and life. The supreme rule of Christian life is mutual love. When love forms the basis of family life, then all faults fade away and a new energy surges in to accept everyone as they are in spite of their defects, failures, and shortcomings. The total self-giving in love and absolute mutual fidelity of the spouses in the family becomes an integral part of God's eternal plan of salvation.

Chavara envisions families as the abode of virtues. His precepts for families incorporate many guidelines to grow in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The faith matures in the context of family where the children learn from their parents the various aspects of faith. Therefore, Chavara instructs the parents to teach their children various aspects of faith and prayers by their examples in daily life. Hope cannot be captured through our senses but can be discovered in our life through our unfailing trust in God who can turn our sorrow to joy. Charity is the motivating force that leads us to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. Chavara exhorted the parents to practise this virtue in their family life. The love and affection shared among the family members, particularly the parents, would help the children acquire this virtue of charity which begins at home. The moral virtues are fundamental set of related virtues that enable a person to live and act morally well. The relevance of these moral virtues in our lives can be summed up as prudence to the right reason in action; justice to the fellow human beings; fortitude for relinquishment and self-forgetfulness of one's

own possessions and life; and temperance for attaining the will's mastery over one's instincts and desires.

The theological vision of the *Chavarul* is further elaborated in the view of parents' role in the integral formation of children. Since, parents dedicate more care and effort to the upbringing of their children than anybody else, it is also their right and privilege to educate them according to their own principles, convictions, and virtue perspectives. This integral formation of the children includes faith, psychological, intellectual, and moral formation. It is the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-beings which will promote the integrated, personal, and social education of their children. The quality of trust promoted by parents, the experience of communion in day-to-day life, and an open and respectful vision of the society instilled in the younger generation are indeed facilitating factors of education. The *Chavarul* advised the families to have an integral observance of Sunday, which includes, apart from attending the Holy Mass, doing some charitable works such as visiting the poor, serving the sick, and in exercising charity. He stressed the importance of family prayer as the means of inculcating piety and the basic aspects of faith in the children. The psychological formation of children in the *Chavarul* can be derived from his precepts on moderation required by parents in correcting their children. Owing to the need of the parental role model in the lives of children, parents are advised to set forth the example of the virtues and attitudes they desire in their children's lives by their own lived examples. These examples laid down by the parents would help in the right psychological formation of their children. Moral formation of the children can be done by inculcating values, fostering respect towards others, cultivating freedom, formation of conscience, and giving sex and media education to them.

The role of women in the family is studied under the sub-headings of "dignity of women" and "women as mothers." Through his versatile writings, Chavara highlights the role of women in the family and in a person's individual life. He exalted their dignity as equal human beings created by God, and therefore, he appealed the other members of the family to acknowledge the dignity of women and render them the respect and honour they deserve as equal human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

Chavara's business ethics depicted in his advice to the family is a call to follow the ethics of love, justice, and truth in business matters. Chavara's exhortation on work does not preach workaholism, but rather emphasizes the true industriousness one should practise to prosper in life. Here he particularly stresses the social vice of alcoholism, which targets the peace and harmony of families. Chavara's instruction on keeping up the sacredness of family and the environment includes refraining from gossip, criticism, uncharitable talks, etc., and frugal and responsible use of the natural resources and things of daily use. Chavara's keen interest in looking after these minute details speaks volumes about his deeper understanding of eco-spirituality.

As a whole, Chavara's attention to the theological vision of the family is noteworthy. The *Chavarul*, being an important contribution in the moral teachings of the nineteenth-century has opened the insights in moral theology, sociology, and psychology, to reflect on the chief values that build up the family like unity in family, need for charity, good conduct in relationships, hard work, fear of God, forgiving love, humility, industriousness, sense of justice, role of conscience, habit of reading good books, responsible upbringing of children, etc. Sacraments, devotions, especially those to Eucharist and Mother Mary, family prayer, etc. have been put up as the precious assets of a good Christian family.

The authenticity and relevance of the *Chavarul* is in the fact that this work is the result of Chavara's life experiences learned from his family, theological tradition, personal intuitions, and intense prayer life. Every precept in this set of family codes gives us a full length of theological background pertaining to it. These theologically rich maxims of the *Chavarul* can be used as a family handbook to curtail many of the family problems of our contemporary time. Therefore, in the next chapter, we study the family ethics in the *Chavarul* as a response to the challenges of family life today.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAMILY ETHICS IN THE *CHAVARUL* AND THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY LIFE TODAY

In the strictest sense, family is ordained both for intimate community of life and love.¹ In this sense, the family is the primordial institution, the cradle of humanity, and the way of the Church.² As a basic unit of society, it enables us to realize the potential of the present generation, to nurture the new generation, and to give care and love to the older generation.³ Hence, the pivotal role of families in ensuring social stability is an undisputable fact. This is precisely the reason nations as well as religions accord a great role to the healthy existence of families in society. The well-being and welfare of the family is a prime concern for the Church too. In families, the Church encounters the reality of life. Therefore, the welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and of the Church.

Families in India are indeed at a crossroad today. Many Indian families have found a way to stay cohesive and resilient during these times of turmoil and rapid change. In reality, family has always been at the foundation of this diverse and expanding society, and in general, Indians today continue to place marriage and family life among their highest values and priorities. Children and adolescents are given a special place in the family and community. Interdependence, support, and nurturing across the generations are uniquely valued in the Indian family system. Parents and extended family members remain the primary socializing agents for children, a practice no longer evident in many regions of the world. Parents and adult children tend to maintain close ties even when great geographical distances separate them.

¹ Synod of Bishops, *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, 4.

² Pope John Paul II modified the words of his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), “Man is the way of the Church” (“*Homo est via Ecclesiae*” *Redemptor Hominis*, 14 (AAS 71:285) and said, “The family is the way of the Church” (“*Familia via est Ecclesiae*” *Gratissimam Sane*, 14 (AAS 86:896). Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, 2.

³ Sahayaraj, *Marriage and Family in the Plan of God: Reflection of Saint John Paul II*, 178.

Though the positive traits of families light up our minds, they are also encountering complex and disturbing problems. In the postmodern world, families face cultural, ideological, social, and spiritual crises and growing tendencies of materialism, individualism, secularism, atheism, and selfish liberalism of morals. Consequently, family life is jeopardised. The philosophy of relativism seeks to redefine marriage as a free union between two people who are attracted to each other, whether they are of the opposite sex or not. This situation has the potential to obscure the true meaning of marriage. It is not a new phenomenon, but its acceptance is growing. Cohabitation for long periods of time without any concrete plans to regularize marriage is on the increase. Again, there is an increasing trend of married people getting separated for infidelity and sometimes for petty reasons. When it comes to domestic violence, both married men and women are victims of abuse by their spouses. Couples undergo fear, oppression, alcoholism, pseudo relationships, injuries, and even death as a result of this.

Though technology has provided unprecedented affluence in many countries, it can also be a weakening force that threatens family structures. Technocracy has brought with it rapidly evolving cultural norms and new modes of social communication, all fuelled by the aggressive use of the internet and smartphones, resulting in unprecedented changes in today's family life. Due to a context obsessed with free time and tempted by throwaway culture, it has become fashionable to reject the sacrifice required to care for and support one another.⁴ The institution of marriage, which requires commitment to one another as well as sacrifice, is eroding. Because of the mistaken notion of relationships and sexuality, violence has grown widespread. Family relationships have been significantly impacted by mass migration in quest of jobs and subsistence, lack of care and attention for the elderly and ideological denial of gender differences. All of these issues highlight a desperate need for renewal, which must come from the cradle of humanity and each individual human being.

These are major problems we find in the contemporary families. The *Chavarul* of Chavara contains solutions to some of these issues, though not in the literal sense of the terms but rather in some of their indications. Because, the miniature forms of these problems can be identified in the nineteenth century socio-cultural context of Indian society and Chavara responded to those problems through the *Chavarul*. Therefore, we can find

⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 39 (AAS 108: 325).

guidance and solutions for certain problems in the *Chavarul*, which contains precepts for family life, as a means to foster harmony in the family. The *Chavarul* is an invitation to Christian families to treasure the gifts of marriage and family, and to persevere in a love that is generous, committed, faithful, and patient. An overview of the challenges and problems that threaten the fabric of families in today's social, cultural, theological, and pastoral situations will be looked at in this chapter. Later, a depiction of how the *Chavarul's* vision of family ethics is an important aid for families to fulfil their vocation and mission in the Church and the contemporary world, will be undertaken.

The above-mentioned themes are mainly discussed in three parts in this chapter. The first part highlights the positive side of modern families. The second part describes the problems faced by in their husband-wife relationships, issues due to mixed marriages and disparity of cult, dowry, patriarchy and gender inequality, economic factors, influence of globalization, and the problems parents face in raising up their children. Finally, in the third part, the *Chavarul* elaborates on how a family can become a theocentric family and how parents and children can create their families as the image of heaven by implementing a love-centred ethics in the family life despite its various problems.

4.1 Families Today: A Few Positive Aspects

There are many strong and happy families all over the world. Many of them are adorned with many positive traits that often remain side-lined by the exaggerated talk about the problems of modern families. In fact, much less attention has been paid to strong, healthy families, and the characteristics that make them successful. Researchers, policymakers, and the media have all paid close attention to the problems of families and how some families are failing to meet the needs of their members.⁵ Most professional authorities focus their attention on families that are fractured by internal struggles. Subsequently, modern families are targeted for their changing structure and roles in society. At the same time, modern society emerges as distinct by breaking down the rigidity of traditional aristocratic orthodoxy, which dictated the monopoly of certain members. Some of the important bright sides of modern families are: more equality in gender-based roles,

⁵ Singh, "Family in India: Problems and Policies," 289-304; Adams and Trost, eds., *Handbook of World Families*, 129-66.

economic independence of married women, openness to different cultures, increase in intimacy between parents and children, equal participation in shouldering responsibilities, and successful management of stress and crisis.

4.1.1 Equality in Gender-Based Roles

According to the sociologist Harriet Bradley, “Gender refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organization of reproduction, the sexual divisions of labour, and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.”⁶ Shaji Kochuthara opines that the biological difference between man and woman is used to justify forcing them into various social roles that shape and limit their attitudes and behaviours. Their disparities in appearance are related to a variety of psychological qualities and characteristics. As a result, a man is expected to be masculine, not only male; and a woman is expected to be feminine, not only a female. In other words, being a man or woman entails acting in a specific manner that is shaped and determined by culture, though the expectations of these behavioural patterns may differ from culture to culture. According to modern studies on sexuality and gender, sex is a biologically given factor, whereas gender is a socially and culturally constructed reality.⁷

Equality in gender-based roles does not mean that men and women are equal in all aspects or that they are equally capable of fulfilling any or every task. But they are equal as human beings, equal in personal dignity and worth, and equally entitled to all human rights and freedoms.⁸ In order to have equality in gender-based roles, it is important to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women and men. Pope John Paul II underlines, “both man and woman are human beings, to an equal degree. Both are created in God’s image.”⁹ This equality is achieved in a unique way through the reciprocal self-giving by parents to their children, which is characteristic of marriage and family life.¹⁰

⁶ Bradley, *Fractured Identities*, 205.

⁷ Kochuthara, “Sexuality, Gender and Sexual Violence: Can Christian Sexual Ethics Prevent the Culture of Sexual Violence in India?” 457.

⁸ Srampickal, “Gender Justice, Integral to Christian Commitment to Justice,” 38.

⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6 (AAS 80: 1662–63).

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Familiairs Consortio*, 22 (AAS 74: 106–107).

Generally, the roles of father and mother in a family are defined in such a way that the father plays the role as the head of the family, providing for the material needs and spiritual leadership in the family, while mothers play the role as the heart of the family in nurturing, training, and loving children. The father takes an active part in establishing family rules and discipline and makes it a haven of peace and joy. With the advent of modernization, these restrictions based on gender are slowly being effaced. As the new generation has been described as “post-feminist” and many women believe that gender discrimination is a thing of the past, there has been a convergence of genders among younger people, particularly where increased access to education and the labour market for young women has reduced gender disparities in qualifications and work. Women have attained prestigious posts in the judiciary, education, politics, information technology, medicine, and other myriad fields.¹¹

As traditions take the back seat, women have found many avenues to channelize their creativity, passions, and career goals.¹² They think that equality has been attained. This empowers young women to stand up for their rights.¹³ These changes have implications for women’s positions in the family too. There has been a remarkable closing of the gap in gender-based roles in the current families of young men and women.¹⁴ Both husband and wife share their roles with each other in terms of their involvement in family life, the tasks they perform, and the responsibilities they take up. Often, there is a balancing of everything and more emotional intimacy that is built by sharing, sensing, and trusting. There is equal independence, mutual dependence, and reciprocal obligation. It is not that the partners think alike, but that they think together. At times, they quarrel which may help them know each other better. This transition in the outlook of the present generation shows a positive shift in gender role perspectives, which in turn becomes a blessing to families.

4.1.2 Economic Independence of Married Women

Women in modern families have attained an increasing degree of economic independence that sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty

¹¹ Gangoli, *Indian Feminisms: Law, Patriarchies, and Violence in India*, 2.

¹² “How to Choose the Best Jobs for Girls.” [Online]

¹³ Bradley, *Gender*, 184.

¹⁴ Walby, *Gender Transformations*, 2.

eradication, and inclusive economic growth.¹⁵ With increasing education opportunities for women, a large number of women are entering the organized workforce at a fast pace, allowing them to become economically self-sufficient and independent. At a basic level, economic independence makes women feel more secure and respected, and it has a cascading impact that affects not only women, but also their families, society, and the country at large. As Calvin Coolidge says, there is no dignity quite so impressive and no independence quite so important, as living with one's own means.¹⁶ It implies that living with one's own earnings gives one the most independence and a sense of dignity. Hence, the financial independence is so vital for everyone, when it comes to women, it is of paramount importance.

Today, women have come a long way just fighting for equal rights and opportunities.¹⁷ They are no longer subordinate to their male counterparts but excel everywhere. Currently, the percentage of women employed outside of their homes is continually on the increase. In the upper class, women are property owners, whereas in the lower economic classes, they are wage earners or professional workers. This economic independence has largely affected the attitudes of modern women. Formerly, women had no choice but to find a male partner who could marry her, support her financially, and assure her of a stable future. And now they no longer feel helpless before men, but settle matters with them on their own. Even when married women are hit with the tragedies of life like the chronic illnesses of their husbands or their sudden demise, divorce, etc., their economic stability helps them cope with these hard realities of life and move ahead to take care of their own future and that of their children without being devastated. Thus, women of modern families have grown up to be self-sufficient and capable of running their own lives without being dependent on their fathers, husbands, or sons. As a result, married women's economic independence is seen as a positive trait in modern families.

¹⁵ "Economic Empowerment." [Online]

¹⁶ Calvin Coolidge, "There is no Dignity Quite so Impressive and no Independence Quite so Important as Living within Your Means." [Online]

¹⁷ Aggarwal, "Financial Independence is Important for Women Not to Prove a Point, But to Break Stereotypes." [Online]

4.1.3 Openness to Different Cultures

One of the most important environmental elements that determine one's personality is the culture in which one lives. Families, in all their remarkable diversity, are the basic foundation of human cultures.¹⁸ The concept of culture engages a number of deep and complex realities. From the modern anthropological view, culture is a way of life, a way of being that is peculiar to a people, as expressed in their beliefs, values, attitudes, and worldviews. It refers to the way people construct the character of their lives as groups and societies in particular circumstances and contexts.¹⁹ Culture, however, is not linear and unchanging. It is a dynamic creation of dialogue, conflict, and negotiation within multileveled social processes, and interactions. Constituted by beliefs, values, customs, stories, and traditions that form a particular way of being human, culture emerges from historical processes and continues to evolve as its participants make sense of their experiences in changing times and circumstances.²⁰

The concept indicates continuity in time and comprehensiveness in scope, and every society goes to great lengths to transmit its culture to succeeding generations through proper rituals and socialization. One of the most remarkable achievements of any culture is its ability to induce individuals to internalize its version of socially constructed reality.²¹ Today's world, however, is diverse and global. Technology has made cross-cultural encounters a relatively common occurrence around the world. People are regularly interacting beyond national borders through social networking sites, blogs, and chat rooms. Children and youth today enter a workforce and an adult society that crosses borders and interacts with people from diverse backgrounds in a variety of contexts. Through social media and other means, they are exposed to a variety of cultures. As a result, there is a shift in lifestyle as well as marital and family interactions.

The new generation cultivates an open-minded approach towards the culture, customs, rites, and rituals of those around them. They gain cultural competency so that they can effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful relationships with people from various cultural backgrounds.

¹⁸ Defrain and Asay, "Strong Families Around the World," 5.

¹⁹ Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, 33.

²⁰ Marcus and Fisher, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, 98.

²¹ Clark, "Culture," 140–41.

This exposure to diverse cultures increases their self-awareness, develops their social skills, and changes their behaviours. It goes beyond tolerance, which implies a willingness to put differences aside. It includes recognizing and respecting diversity in various contexts through words and actions.²² Children are better equipped to interact, communicate, and form relationships with people from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as deal with life's challenges. Therefore, being open to different cultures has become a blessing for modern families.

4.1.4 Increase in Intimacy between Parents and Children

The paradigm shift in the cultural milieu has a great impact on family life, particularly in the parent-child relationship. Traditional parents are portrayed as controlling, overbearing, and as those who set high standards for their children. The interactions between these parents and children used to be intense, judgemental, and punitive. Parents used to spend a great amount of their time communicating and enforcing family values and beliefs.²³ The contemporary family attempts to conquer some of the negative shades of traditional family life by letting the children and parents experience more liberty in their relationships. Today, the parent-child relationship has become more friendly. The traditional authoritarian and domineering relationships between parents and children are being replaced with warm and democratic parenting that enhances children's self-esteem and confidence. Positive communication, identifying problems and discussing how to solve them together, promote children's social and problem-solving skills. Autonomy-promoting parents encourage their children's creativity, empowerment, and self-determination. Parents' support and their positive attitude towards their children instil confidence in them for their future.²⁴ Along with this liberation, parents try to instil in their children the virtues of accountability and responsibility by setting boundaries and pointing out possible consequences. In today's certain families we find that all of these factors contribute to the intimacy of the parent-child bond.

²² Guzman, et. al., "Cultural Competence: An Important Skill Set for the Twenty First Century," 1. [Online]

²³ "What Every Modern Parent Needs to Know about Creating a Positive Parent-Child Relationship." [Online]

²⁴ Lonczak, "What is Positive Parenting." [Online]

4.1.5 Equal Participation in Shouldering Responsibilities

When spouses become parents, they are given a new responsibility by God. Their parental love is to become a tangible manifestation of God's love for the children, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:15).²⁵ According to the CCC, parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. By acknowledging their role in children's formation, most of the parents try to bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home that values tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and selfless service. Because, the home is well suited for education in virtues, parents have an important obligation to provide good examples for their children.²⁶

In traditional families, the roles and responsibilities of family members, particularly of the father and mother, were predestined. The woman's sole duty was to bear and rear the children. And the man shouldered the entire burden of earning bread for the family and was the least involved in childcare. This was mainly because of the agrarian nature of society that was prevalent. Society was not as developed as it is now. Today, in some of the families, parents work as a unified team. Roles and responsibilities are equally shared between the father and mother. They are completely supportive of one another in their shared endeavour of raising children well.²⁷ Despite their differences in views and opinions on many issues, those parents are usually able to come to an agreement, notably when it comes to their children's discipline. They realize that when teaching their children to discern right and wrong, they must present a united face to them as parents.

Parents who take effort to live an exemplary life, often demonstrates to the children his or her respect for the other spouse, resulting in each of them exercising the same authority in the eyes of the children, each in a different but complementary way. This bond between parents, as well as their living examples of respect, generosity, and self-sacrifice, will have far more significance than lectures, reprimands, and other verbal instructions. In terms of religious formation, those parents personally educate and supervise their children's religious formation. Prayer before meals, proper attire for church, providing God-centred ethical explanations, celebrating Sunday and

²⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 14 (AAS 74: 96–97).

²⁶ CCC, 2223; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52 (AAS 58: 1073).

²⁷ Stenson, *Upbringing: A Discussion Handbook for Parents of Young Children*, 46.

other religious feasts, cordial regard for the clergy and religious, generosity towards church charities, all demonstrate to the children that their parents see their family as dependent on God and as grateful for his blessings.²⁸ Such parents balance firmness with compassion, treating their children as God does. They lay down the law, but in a loving and forgiving manner. They show their children that they love them enough to correct their mistakes, and thereby build strength. As a result, they try to be neither harsh nor gentle, neither authoritarian nor lenient.

4.2 Challenges and Problems Faced by Contemporary Families

Families all over the world are facing unprecedented and unimaginable situations, which nobody can ignore. The pressure and tension they suffer are unavoidable because they come from the shifts occurring in various existential and essential realms of families—those related to the shape, structure, formation, and internal dynamics that are at work in the family.²⁹ The values and perspectives of the current era have crept into families, shaping the family structure and organization. It plays a major role in determining the interconnectedness, the nature, and the extent of interpersonal relationships inside and outside families. Despite the fact that a respectful, cooperative, and trusting relationship between spouses has been a marital ideal in most cultures since antiquity, the quality of the spousal relationship has only recently come to be considered as the criterion of the existence of a marriage.³⁰ Today, “the couple’s relationship is seen to be important in its own right and not just for the sake of the children. Couples marry because they love each other and not just because they want children.”³¹ In other words, Lisa Cahill opines that,

Today, especially but not exclusively in Northern Atlantic (“Western”) societies, love is considered the basic of marriage, and essential factor in the continuation of a marriage. Placing love at the centre of marriage has led to very profound questions about the meaning and purpose of marriage, leading in turn to widespread cohabitation without marriage to test love, higher divorce rates

²⁸ Stenson, *Upbringing: A Discussion Handbook for Parents of Young Children*, 48–49.

²⁹ Eattanial, “Families of the Postmodern Society: Relevance of Chavara’s Vision on Family,” 184.

³⁰ Cahill, “Christian Vision of the Family: Rethinking the Family as Domestic Church,” 23.

³¹ Kelly, *New Directions in Sexual Ethics*, 109.

when love has cooled, and the marriage of same-sex couples, whole love and dedication can be compared to that of heterosexuals.³²

These realities show that there is a paradigm shift in the family cultures of the present time, shift from joint family to nuclear family; in the family lifestyle due to working parents and their difficulty in balancing responsibilities both at home and at work; in the mutual sharing of responsibility in families; in areas related to family bonding, thereby increasing divorce rates; in the sweeping alterations in the way of seeing, assessing, and evaluating values and the differing significance of intimacy, kinship, allegiance, and attachments in the family circles of relationships; in the dimensions of faith and values; in economic life, causing migration, poverty, and struggle for sustenance; in the environmental set up due to globalization; all of these have unprecedented significance today. Hence, in this section, we try to concisely explore these crucial factors that have had a great impact on families today and how the *Chavarul* responds to these issues.

4.2.1 Problems in Spousal Relationships

The Catholic Church underlines that in the sacrament of marriage “a man and a woman by irrevocable personal consent establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life.”³³ A great emphasis is put on the partnership or couple’s relationship which “forms the heart of their marriage.”³⁴ Likewise, “in contemporary culture, the fundamental ethical value in married life is the interpersonal marital relationship.”³⁵ With regard to the importance of intimate relationship in marriage, Kelly asserts that “the matter of the sacrament of marriage is the human relationship of the couple themselves” and “the heart of marriage lies in its being an interpersonal sexual relationship of life-giving love, and one which is therefore permanent and exclusive.”³⁶ Therefore, “unless the personal relationship is

³² Cahill, “Christian Vision of the Family: Rethinking the Family as Domestic Church,” 23; Clague, “Pastors and People: The Synod of the Family and the Non-reception of Church Teaching,” 209-210.

³³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58:106); Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11 (AAS 58:847).

³⁴ Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage*, 12.

³⁵ Schillebeeckx, “Christian Marriage and the Reality of Complete Marital Breakdown,” 91.

³⁶ Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage*, 12.

firmly based, there is little hope that the marriage will survive, at least in a form that would be regarded as desirable.”³⁷

Since the couple’s intimate personal relationship is the core of marriage, a crisis in a couple’s relationship destabilizes the family and may lead, through separation and divorce, to serious consequences for adults, children, and society as a whole, weakening its individual and social bonds. If marital problems are confronted in haste and without patience, with poor reflection and unwillingness to make sacrifices and forgive one another, failures in this regard may give rise to new relationships, and new marriages, creating family situations that are complex and problematic for Christian life.³⁸ Kelly states that, “break-up of marriage is one of the most profound crises in marriage and family because it is not just a matter of the institution or of the violation of rules and laws, but of the spouses’ denial of each other and of who they themselves are.”³⁹ Marital breakdown is, in any sense, a human tragedy, which causes suffering and despair to the spouses, to their dear and near ones, and to the society and the Church.⁴⁰

The data provided by various reports indicate that family breakdown has become a serious issue in India too.⁴¹ Family court officials from different states affirm that there is a steady increase in the divorce rate in the country.⁴² Reports show that the number of divorce applications has doubled and even tripled in cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Lucknow over the past five years.⁴³ Remarriage is also taking place in many instances.⁴⁴ Some of the leading reasons for divorce in India are lack

³⁷ Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage*, 11.

³⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 41 (AAS 108: 326).

³⁹ Duke, “Reflections on the Family,” 43.

⁴⁰ Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage*, 25.

⁴¹ Kochuthara, “Sexual and Family Ethics. Future Prospects,” 188–89.

⁴² As per the 2014 statistics, in Mumbai family court, 11,667 cases of divorce were filed till November 30, up from 5,245 cases in 2010. In Kolkata in 2014, 8347 divorce cases filed in 2003. About 2000 divorce cases were filed in the Lucknow family court in 2014. Of these, about 900 were filed by young couples married less than a year. Bengaluru has even earned the reputation of the divorce capital of India with its divorce petitions registering an increase of about 20% in the last years. There are at least 25 divorce cases filed every day. In Kerala which is the state with most number of Christians, the state family court received 44, 236 divorce cases between January 2011 and January 2012. Tharayil, “Family Problems and Family Breakdowns,” 64–65.

⁴³ Tharayil, “Family Problems and Family Breakdowns,” 64.

⁴⁴ Atkinson, “Remarriage,” 729.

of commitment, infidelity or extra marital affairs, conflicts, arguments between couples, marriage at a very young age, financial problems, substance abuse, domestic violence, health problems, lack of support from family members, etc.⁴⁵ The development and maintenance of sexual relations with other people outside of a sacramentally constituted marriage continues to pose a threat to many marriages and families. Infidelity from the part of men is regarded as a serious reason for divorce in countries where women have a high level of economic independence.⁴⁶ The individualization and industrialization of society, along with women's participation in education and public life, are among the factors that escalate divorce rates. "Armed with a measure of economic power, many women have less incentive to stay in marriage and work out their differences with their husbands. The higher the wife's income and the closer it is to her husband's, the rate of divorce also rises."⁴⁷ The divorce rate is also affected by age, religious faith, and family background.⁴⁸

The spouses, the families, and society as a whole suffer due to divorce. When a person fears losing someone who is important to him or her, he or she first feels anxiety about the potential loss, then angry, and finally depression after the loss. As the couple becomes estranged from one another this series of events manifests as physical and psychological symptoms. Hence, divorced individuals have minor psychiatric symptoms of poor sleep, irritability, tension, anger, anxiety, as well as lower levels of overall health.⁴⁹ A greater number of divorced men and women are admitted for psychiatric care than married or single people, and their treatments are less successful.⁵⁰ Both divorced and remarried parents leave an indelible mark on children, and it is such a mark that strikes those who experience it on an ontological level, at the level of their being.⁵¹ First of all, children feel embarrassed. They are most hurt by divorce when their

⁴⁵ Hawkins, et al., "Reasons for Divorce and Openness to Marital Reconciliation," 456.

⁴⁶ Illathuparampil, "The Gospel of Joyful Families: Vision and Vocation of Family in *Amoris Laetitia*," 209.

⁴⁷ Popenoe, *Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies*, 223.

⁴⁸ Glenn and Michael, "The Social and Demographic Correlates of Divorce and Separation in the United States," 566.

⁴⁹ Dominian, "The Consequences of Marital Breakdown," 128–29, Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," 1274

⁵⁰ Coombs, "Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review," 99.

⁵¹ Root, *The Children of Divorce. The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being*, ix.

love is divided and when they suffer from anxiety about the uncertainties of custody. They are ordered to live with both alternately.

Children belonging to divorced parents' families often face a lot of psychological issues. There may be overt signs of depression such as withdrawal, sadness, and multiple psychosomatic complaints (headache, tiredness, etc.). A child may compensate for his or her depression with behaviours like becoming the class clown, getting into trouble, forming sexual alliances, and so on. Children of divorced single parents usually live in a household in which anger and resentment persist for several years. Low self-esteem, insecurity, depression, and anger all have a bad effect on a child's self-esteem. A child with poor self-esteem is less able to bounce back from the effects of a lost parent. All of these have a harmful effect on the child who has no support resources to handle it. Along with this, we can see that there are negative child outcomes, including lower academic success, greater behavioural problems at home and in school, poorer psychological well-being, increased depression and anxiety, and obsessive sexual activity and criminal behaviour due to divorce and remarriage and the mental conflicts associated with it.⁵²

Another problem with separation is that a legal separation is a legal agreement between a couple to live apart, share their assets, and provide for their children. It causes mental agony to undergo all these legal procedures. The majority of divorces and separations occur within the first ten years of marriage, and many involve small children. Incorporating the personalities of two different individuals into the parenting process has a beneficial effect on children.⁵³ Children who are raised by a single parent, on the other hand, do not receive adequate character development. In many situations, partners are often affected by the stress and bitterness of separation, and they are unable to plan their lives according to their children's demands, particularly when these needs conflict with their own.⁵⁴

There are many other problems that divorced parents and children face in their lives. A majority of single parents experience financial difficulties in

⁵² Strohschein, "Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories," 1289; Amato and Keith, "Parental Divorce and Well-Being: A Literature Review," 46.

⁵³ Laveena, Govindaraju & Monteiro, "A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent," 54.

⁵⁴ Laveena, Govindaraju and Monteiro, "A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent," 57.

meeting the basic needs of their children, such as providing good food, clothing, and school fees. Nobody is satisfied with the plight of single parenthood. In many of them, the feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, anger, sadness, depression, and anxiety about the future are so dominant that they bring about personality changes. Most single parents find it difficult to entertain visitors of the opposite sex in their house and feel the lack of male or female company at social functions. Their social lives are limited mainly to relatives and friends of the same sex. They may also face social disgrace and a lack of companionship. Having been accustomed since childhood to the constant companionship of family members and then of a lovely spouse, single parents are lonely when they find themselves deprived of the constant companionship of a person of similar interests and values. When the custody of children is divided between divorced and separated parents, each experiences adjustment problems. For example, after being with one parent, the other parent often encounters rebellion on the part of children against home rule and responsibilities.

After divorce or separation from a partner, both men and women are deprived of regular sexual outlets unless they remarry shortly after divorce or separation from their partner. Regardless of which spouse was responsible for the problems that led to divorce or separation, both spouses tend to experience feelings of failure. Their status will change from married to separated, divorced, or remarried.⁵⁵ Childcare is not only providing physical care and comfort but also love, attention, discipline, and opportunities for socializing children. Life-long bitterness has been engendered in those in whom only love and reverence should dwell. Divorced people ordinarily enter into another marriage, which usually becomes detrimental to the children, which is certainly a sad feature of a broken home caused by divorce.⁵⁶

The Catholic Church considers divorce based on its inspired teaching on spousal relationship. The Vatican II explains holiness of marriage and family as follows: “The matrimonial covenant established by the Creator and ordered by His laws by which a man and a woman by an irrevocable personal consent establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, is by its natural character ordered towards the good of the spouses and

⁵⁵ Laveena, Govindaraju and Monteiro, “A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent,” 57.

⁵⁶ Scott, “Divorce is a Disease which Destroys Marriage,” 15–16.

the generation and education of the offspring.”⁵⁷ It emphasizes both the Church’s understanding of marriage as well as its position on divorce. The Church has always maintained the position that unless an annulment has been obtained, the (first) marriage remains valid; any subsequent marriage without obtaining annulment is against unity and indissolubility of the marriage. As a result, the second marriage or relationship is equal to an adulterous relationship, which prevents the partners from receiving the Eucharistic Communion.⁵⁸ John Paul II taught that communion can be granted to the divorced and remarried only if they live in complete continence.⁵⁹ The CCC repeats this norm:

If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God’s law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists...Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ and who are committed to living in complete continence.⁶⁰

Although *AL* did not attempted to provide a definitive teaching on this issue, on various occasions, Pope Francis himself has repeatedly stated that under the guidelines given in *AL*, communion can be offered to the divorced and remarried people, at least in certain cases (without insisting on the condition of abstinence).⁶¹ “What is possible is simply a renewed encouragement to undertake a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases.”⁶² As mentioned above, this discernment must be made in the conversation with the priest, in the internal forum.⁶³

It indicates the significance of the spousal relationship in their married life and if once this bond is broken the spouses must go through a protracted period of pain and frustration. Children become silent victims of this tragedy. We cannot ignore the fact that family problems and family breakdowns are real problems in India. In this regard, we may trace some of

⁵⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58:1067-69).

⁵⁸ Kochuthara, “Pastoral Care in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia*,” 75.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84 (AAS 74: 186)

⁶⁰ CCC, 1650.

⁶¹ Kochuthara, “Sexual and Family Ethics,” 189.

⁶² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 300 (AAS 108:433).

⁶³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 300 (AAS 108:433).

the precepts in the *Chavarul* that promote a strong bond between spouses and maintain the stability and security of their covenantal relationship.⁶⁴ At the same time, we cannot claim that Chavara could have envisaged all the problems that would have happened after one century and half. Instead, what is important is to understand the importance he gave to spousal relationship and the need of pastoral care of the family.

4.2.2 Deterioration of Faith and Moral Values in Families

Today, families are going through the most challenging and transitory phase. Although we see signs of great religious revival in India, individuals and families seem to be more frustrated, tensed, and depressed. They seem to lack the inner strength that is founded on deep-rooted faith and trust in the all-providing and loving God. On the one hand, we see ritualism on the increase, and on the other, we witness the decline of spirituality. This decline in genuine spirituality leads to the deterioration of family life, which has resulted in more divorces.⁶⁵ The main factors contributing to this gloom are lack of faith in God and the degeneration of human values like love, unity, forgiveness, kindness, justice, mercy, and goodness. Values help human beings to generate an ethos in order to guide their lives.⁶⁶ Moral values are often used as yardsticks to measure one's moral behaviour in society.⁶⁷ Closely-knit family ties, filial piety, and care and respect for the

⁶⁴ The problems confronted in spousal relationships are described in detail in section 4.2.1 Problems in Spousal Relationship. The perceptive of the *Chavarul* on the importance of spousal relationship is discussed in the following point: 4.3.2. Love-Centred Ethics in the *Chavarul*. Its biblical and theological perspectives are discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.1.2.2 Unity of Mind and Heart; 2.1.2.3 Bond of Blood and Affection; 2.2.1.3.1 Love One Another; 2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity; 2.2.2.3.2 Setting a Good Example in Front of Children; 3.1.2.1.1. Love and Inter-personal Relationship; 3.1.2.1.5 Unity and Indissolubility; 3.1.2.2.1 Covenantal Christ-Church Relationship; 3.2.4 Family: School of Mutual Love and Respect; 3.3.1 Unique Features of Christian Love; and 3.3.2 Love as the Key to Marital and Familial Relationship.

⁶⁵ Kandankary, "Suicide in Kerala: A Psychological Analysis," 60.

⁶⁶ Taneri, Gao, and Johnson, "Reasons for the Deterioration of Moral Values: Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis," 242. Values represent what is important to individuals. Researchers classified values as cultural values (freedom, creativity, love, communication, activity), moral values (purpose of life, happiness, good, duty, responsibility, conscience, honour, dignity), aesthetic values (beauty), religious values (faith), scientific values (verity/factualness), political values (peace, justice, democracy), and legal values (law and order).

⁶⁷ Taneri, Gao, and Johnson, "Reasons for the Deterioration of Moral Values: Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis," 243.

aged are among the deeply-rooted cultural values in India. Such cultural values and traditions are sources of strength for families in deepening their call and providing the most favourable atmosphere for a life of love and communion.⁶⁸ One of the reasons for the deterioration of faith is the issues related to mixed marriages or marriages with disparity of cult which have become an ordinary reality in the present cultural fabric of any society. It is not a sudden or innovative befall to a community today, but this has been a reality all through the ages. Therefore, it must be adequately addressed. The looming challenge of such marriages is that the couples often face a conflict of faith elements in the family situation, which may jeopardize their faith life and cause disharmony in the family and upbringing of children.

4.2.2.1 Issues with Mixed Marriages

According to Thomas Doyle, the term “mixed marriage” refers, in the broad sense, to marriage between Catholics and non-baptized persons and those between Catholics and baptized non-Catholics.⁶⁹ Canonically speaking “mixed marriage” is the technical term canon law used for a marriage between two baptized persons, one of whom is Catholic and the other is non-Catholic.⁷⁰ They share the same baptism but they do not profess the same beliefs. They are united and divided at the same time.⁷¹ In such marriages, couples might find difficulty adjusting to each other much more than if they were of the same faith.⁷²

Marriage is a unique human relationship encircling the totality of life of the spouses and their family in such a way that religion cannot be kept aside from it. If religion is not practiced in the family, either a negative or anti-religious attitude or some unstructured indifference toward the ultimate realities of human existence will at least outwardly take its place.⁷³ Pope Paul VI opines that in the past, Catholics were separated from members of other Christian confessions and from non-Christians by their social standing in the community or even by geographical boundaries. However, in more recent times, communication between men and women of different regions

⁶⁸ Rosales, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 2, 321.

⁶⁹ Doyle, “Mixed Marriages,” 800.

⁷⁰ *CCEO*, c. 813; *CIC*, c. 1124.

⁷¹ Orsy, *Marriage in Canon Law Texts and Comments, Reflections and Questions*, 180.

⁷² Daejeon, “The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life,” 4–5.

⁷³ Pospishil, *Eastern Catholic Marriage Law According to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 314.

and religions has substantially improved, which has led to not only a reduction in this separation but also a significant rise in the number of mixed marriages and marriages of disparity of cult. It has been greatly influenced by the development and spread of civilization and industry, urbanization and the resulting depopulation of rural areas, mass migrations, and the increase in numbers of exiles of every kind.⁷⁴ In countries like India, where Catholicism is a minority of 1.6%,⁷⁵ many mixed marriages take place with their inherent difficulties in terms of the legal system, baptism, upbringing of children, and mutual respect with regard to differences in faith. If spouses do not agree on their faith and religious convictions, their longing for unity will remain unfulfilled and tensions will prevail.

In the Motu Proprio *Matrimonia Mixta*, Pope Paul VI expressed the anxieties of the Church regarding mixed marriages, saying that mixed marriages do not advance the restoration of unity among Christians, except in some cases. They follow upon differences in religion and divisions among Christians, and because of the inherent difficulties, they introduce a kind of division into a living cell of the Church, the Christian family. For these reasons, the Church discourages the contracting of mixed marriages. According to Pope Paul VI, the inherent difficulties in such a union are the differences in views on the sacramental nature of matrimony and the interpretations of moral principles with regard to marriage and family.⁷⁶

Before the Vatican II, the problem of mixed marriage was considered a big pastoral problem. Many bishops, in their pastoral letters warned the faithful of the dangers of mixed marriage and in particular of the dangers for the faith of the Catholic party and for the Catholic upbringing of children.⁷⁷ Vatican II heralded a new and broad attitude towards mixed marriages.⁷⁸ There occurred great changes in the attitude of the Church towards non-Catholic Christians and other religions. It brought out the acceptance of the ecumenical movement as well as advances in the Church's teaching on religious freedom. The Church recognises the ecclesial reality of the other Christian Churches and their role in the divine plan of salvation. Church

⁷⁴ Paul VI, *Matrimonia Mixta*, 1 (AAS 62: 257–58).

⁷⁵ Park, "Asian and Asian American Catholicism." [Online]

⁷⁶ Paul VI, *Matrimonia Mixta*, 1 (AAS 62:259–60).

⁷⁷ Anandarayar, *The Religious Education of Children Born from Mixed Marriages*, 59.

⁷⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Matrimonii Sacramentum*; Paul VI, *Matrimonia Mixta*.

knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honoured by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter.⁷⁹ The legislation for mixed marriages is found in the *CIC*, 1983 and *CCEO*, 1990, which were promulgated by Pope John Paul II. According to these codes, prior permission is necessary for licitly celebrating mixed marriages and the local Ordinary or Hierarchy will grant the permission only if the prescribed conditions are fulfilled.⁸⁰ There are both prohibitive and favouring attitudes or at least tolerating attitude to mixed marriages.⁸¹ Pope Francis thinks that issues involving mixed marriages require particular attention. Although the nature of marriages between Catholics and other baptized persons is unique, there are many aspects of these unions that could be utilized and developed, both for their sake and for the benefit of the ecumenical movement.⁸² They can link up the principles of two Christian customs and are capable of integrating both of them. Thus, they embrace the vocation to bring the Christian communities closer to unity. They provide a dynamic force of ecumenism.

Nevertheless, one of the negative consequences of mixed marriage is that the family often chooses to practice no religion at all or religious apathy. In some families, there is a possibility that the Catholic party will decline away from Catholic faith. It is undoubtedly a serious risk; thus, Catholic party must exercise extreme caution if they want to maintain their faith. Moreover, the Catholic parent is bound to uphold the teaching of his or her religion and impart it to children. The non-Catholic parent also has a fundamental right to educate his or her children. Therefore, there can be a problem if both partners are meticulous about bringing up their kids in their own faiths and this may result in annoyance. This could direct to the conflict over their family's cohesiveness.

4.2.2.2 Issues with Marriages of Disparity of Cult

Canonically, “marriage of disparity of cult” means a marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person. For a Catholic, marriage with a disparity of cult is considered an impediment to a valid marriage. So,

⁷⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 15 (AAS 57:19).

⁸⁰ *CCEO*, cc. 803, 813, 814; *CIC*, cc. 1086, 1124, 1125.

⁸¹ Valliyamthadam, *Mixed Marriage Laws and Pastoral care in Canon Law and Indian Civil Law*, 34.

⁸² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 247 (AAS 108:411–12).

“marriage with a non-baptized person cannot validly be celebrated.”⁸³ According to *CIC* and *CCEO* dispensation is necessary for validly celebrating marriages of disparity of cult and the local Ordinary or Hierarchy will grant the dispensation only if the prescribed conditions are fulfilled.⁸⁴

If such a marriage is contracted fulfilling the norms required for validity, the marriage will be regarded as valid but it will not constitute a sacrament until the other spouse receives a valid baptism.⁸⁵ The reasons for this impediment are that the marriage will not be a sacrament with one spouse non-baptized; that the non-baptized person’s view on marriage may not be compatible with the Catholic’s view; the essential properties of unity and indissolubility of marriage and that such marriages may hinder the practice of religion on the part of the Catholic spouse. The *CCEO* teaches that in the marriage of baptized persons these essential properties “acquire a special firmness by reason of the sacrament.”⁸⁶ The sacramentality of marriage makes its essential properties, unity and indissolubility, absolute once that marriage is consummated. Since in non-sacramental marriage there is no “special firmness,” it can be dissolved for a just reason.⁸⁷

The marriages of disparity of cult can create many problems. It leads to a proximate danger to the faith of the Catholic spouse. Even if a couple wishes to be together in their experience of the great values of life, regardless of whether they can accept each other’s convictions with reverence, love, and tolerance, the question of religious education and the baptism of children will not be solved. The problems are not only due to differences in faith and in the very notion of marriage, but also due to different religious mentalities that can cause conflict in marriage and it may also affect the faith formation of children, gradually leading them to religious indifference.⁸⁸ Such children may grow up in a confused situation that leads them to a dilemma in choosing their faith. In another case, some non-baptized partners agree to the terms of the Catholic partner initially to please him or her or under pressure, but later reject them. If the Catholic partner is a woman, the chances of bringing up the children in her faith are

⁸³ *CCEO*, c. 803; *CIC*, c. 1086.

⁸⁴ *CCEO*, c. 861; *CIC*, c. 1150.

⁸⁵ Pinheiro, *Marriage Law in the Latin Code and in the Eastern Code*, 165.

⁸⁶ *CCEO*, c. 776§3.

⁸⁷ Thengumpally, “Marriage of Unbaptized Persons,” 67.

⁸⁸ *CCC*, 1634.

minimal, particularly in patriarchal societies like India. Sometimes, children who are not baptized choose to follow the religion of their non-baptized parent, which can be difficult for the Church and Catholic partners to deal with. Another issue is the burial of the non-Catholic partner. Non-baptized partners will not be buried in Christian cemeteries.⁸⁹

The interreligious families who are subjected to oppressive social norms are being abandoned by the communities that may have served as their support systems. Many widows who lost their family members in religious or social conflict face life with incredible fortitude and must constantly compromise cultural values in order to support their families and strive for justice.⁹⁰ In short, the increasing number of mixed marriages and marriages with a disparity of cult must be addressed as a serious problem that threatens the spiritual life and religious affinity of the present generation. In the *Chavarul*, though there is no direct indication of mixed marriage and marriage of disparity of cult, Chavara sternly speaks of the need of contracting marriage with families that keep order and fear of God.⁹¹ He also instructs the parents how to instil faith in their children, how to initiate a sacramental life and assist them to choose their state of life.⁹²

4.2.2.3 Suicide in the Face of Crises

Suicide is a tragic and untimely choice of death. Each suicide is a personal tragedy that immaturely takes the lives of an individual and has a continuing ripple effect. Catholic theology has always regarded the act of suicide as a violation of the divine precept “You shall not kill” (Ex 20:13). This precept, though contained in the revealed law of God, has been

⁸⁹ Vazhappilly and Maroky, “Awareness and Attitude of the Catholic Youth Towards the Marriage with Disparity of Cult: Analysis of Pastoral Survey,” 99–101.

⁹⁰ Prasad, “Crisis in Values of Family and Marriage in India,” 360.

⁹¹ Chavara, *Chavarul* I:8, 188.

⁹² Chavara, *Chavarul* I:4, 199. The solution for these issues is mentioned in detail in the section 4.3.1.1 Fear of God as the Basis of the Christian Family; 4.3.1.2 Love of God as the Wealth of the Family; 4.3.1.3 Devotion to God as the Strength of the Family. Its biblical and theological views are discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.1.2.5 Harmony with God and People; 2.1.2.6 Seeking Eternal Salvation; 2.2.1.1.1 Fear of God: The Most Valuable Possession; 2.2.1.1.3 Sacraments and Devotional Practices; 2.2.1.1.4 Observe the Days of Obligation; 2.2.2.1 Faith Formation; 2.2.2.4 Freedom to Choose the State of Life; 3.1.2.2 The Family as the Domestic Church; 3.2 The Family as a Means of Sanctification; 3.4 Family: The Abode of Virtues; and 3.5.1.1 Faith Formation.

considered basically a provision of natural law. Thomas Aquinas demonstrates this by presenting a three-fold argument on the moral malice of suicide, which has served as the foundation for the later theological discussion on this subject. To begin with, suicide is morally wrong because it is a breach of charity; it goes against a human being's inherent desire to love him or herself and preserve his or her life. Suicide is an act of self-destruction, and as such, it is unkind to oneself.

The second moral objection to suicide is that it is an act of injustice toward the community. Since everyone is a member of the community, he or she harms the community while destroying his or her life. Thirdly, suicide is a denial of God's sovereignty and, as a result, a failure of our responsibility to the Creator. According to Thomas Aquinas, a person belongs to God because he created him. Life is God's gift to human beings. Therefore, killing oneself or discarding one's life as worthless is an affront to God's authority. The moral malice in suicide is presented by Thomas Aquinas as follows: the guilty individual sins against charity in relation to themselves; he or she sins against justice in relation to God and the community. As a result, suicide is morally unacceptable.⁹³

According to the World Health Organization's report, Preventing Suicide is a Global Imperative. A person dies by suicide every 40 seconds, somewhere in the world. It is estimated that over 800,000 people die by suicide every year.⁹⁴ "India saw 450 suicides per day in 2021, mostly labourers, housewives, and self-employed."⁹⁵ Pope John Paul II points out that certain psychological, cultural, and social conditions may lead a person to choose suicide, which is in stark contrast to their intrinsic desire to live. These elements will reduce or even eliminate subjective responsibility.⁹⁶ Group suicide or family suicide has become a unique feature of India, and it is on the rise. In such circumstances, parents often commit suicide after killing their little children, believing that they will be spared the consequences of their parents' deaths. As a social being, the very existence of the human person is dependent on a social relationship to a considerable extent. Isolation from society and financial crises can be another leading reason for

⁹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, 64.5.

⁹⁴ "Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative," 2014. [Online]

⁹⁵ "India Saw 450 Suicides Per Day in 2021." [Online]

⁹⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 66 (AAS 68: 56).

family suicide.⁹⁷ Suicide is the result of a complex interaction of biological, psychological, social, cultural, and environmental elements. Family issues, economic crisis, unemployment, incurable and prolonged illness, failed love affairs, poverty, property disputes, failure in exams, and psychological disorders are some of the major apparent causes of suicide.⁹⁸

As far as the morality of suicide is concerned, it is a denial of the obligation to self-preservation. Obviously, the vast majority of people who commit suicide do so because they are suffering from severe emotional distress. They act irrationally or with a limited range of options. In particular, Vatican II specifically reaffirmed the elevated dignity of the human person and, in a special way, his or her right to life. As a result, the Council calls indignities or dishonour, “any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or suicide,”⁹⁹ as they are crimes against life. Pope Francis exhorts that “euthanasia and assisted suicide are serious threats to families worldwide.”¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith adds that at times there are psychological factors present that can diminish or even completely erase guilt in the instance of suicide.¹⁰¹ Because many suicides are the result of stress, moral categories such as right or wrong may not be appropriate. A calmly and reflectively chosen deliberate act of suicide cannot be considered morally acceptable.¹⁰²

Unfortunately, during a crisis, particularly in the beginning, there are more questions than answers. It may not be evident at that point how serious the crisis is, what caused the disaster, and what steps individuals can take to safeguard themselves. If they cannot find trust and hope in God, this uncertainty will force the people to decide whether to take their lives in order to escape from it. Only a family that reveres and fears God will be

⁹⁷ Julian and Mynatty, *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae*, 319–20.

⁹⁸ Julian and Mynatty, *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae*, 318.

⁹⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 27 (AAS 58: 1047).

¹⁰⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 48 (AAS 108: 330).

¹⁰¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Declaratio de Euthanasia*, 3 (AAS 72: 554).

¹⁰² Julian and Mynatty, *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae*, 319–24.

able to endure hardships in life. Chavara proposes a few guidelines that enable families to persevere in the face of trials and tribulations.¹⁰³

4.2.3 Dowry

The Dowry Prohibition Act of Indian Civil Law defines dowry as a gift demanded or given as a precondition for a marriage.¹⁰⁴ The modern definition of dowry in India is as follows: “Dowry is a payment of cash or valuable gifts from the bride’s family to the bridegroom upon marriage.”¹⁰⁵ Dowry is punishable by law, but it is widely practiced and no religion, caste, region, or socio-economic group is free from it.¹⁰⁶ Traditionally, the social custom of dowry was practiced only among upper-caste Hindu families. Dowry has, over the years, been adopted by other castes and religious communities. Moreover, from being understood as a *streedhan* or woman’s property given to her at the time of her marriage, the very nature of dowry has undergone a dramatic change. Most arranged marriages have become business transactions involving crude negotiations on the exchange of items such as furniture, clothes, and kitchen utensils considered necessary to start a new home as well as on extravagant wedding feasts, entertainment of guests, consumer goods, gold, and cash that the bride’s family, depending on the groom’s profession and family status, feels obliged to give to his family. The eradication of dowry from Indian society has always been a losing battle for social reformers.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Chavara’s precepts regarding trust in God and endure hardships in life are discussed in the sections 4.3.1 Theo-Centric Family; 4.3.2.2 Strengthening of Family Relationships; 4.3.2.4 Forgiveness for Fostering Communion; 4.3.2.6.2.1 Correction and Discipline. It also explains the biblical and theological viewpoint of it in the second and third chapters: 2.1.2.1 A Good Christian Family is the Image of Heaven; 2.1.2.5 Harmony with God and the People; 2.2.1.1.1.1 Relationship with God-fearing People; 2.2.1.1.1.2 Choose God-fearing People as Friends; 2.2.1.1.2 Submission to the Will of God; 2.2.2.3.1 Prudent Child Discipline; 3.1.1 Family as the Image of Heaven; 3.2.1 Family: The Foundation of Faith; 3.2.2 Family: The Sanctuary of Life; 3.3.1.1 Love is Patient; 3.3.1.6 Love is Suffering; 3.5.1.4.1 Inculcation of Values; 3.5.1.4.6 Media Education in the Family.

¹⁰⁴ “Know Your Law. “Law Relating to Dowry Offences” (The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961),” 29.

¹⁰⁵ Gurudev, “The Origin of Dowry System in India.” [Online]

¹⁰⁶ George, *India Untouched. The Forgotten Face of Rural Poverty*, 207.

¹⁰⁷ Kurian, “Feminism and the Developing World,” 59–60.

The Dowry Act of 1961 made dowry illegal and a criminal offence.¹⁰⁸ Yet, it hardly had any impact on the institution of dowry, and giving and taking dowry has continued to be widely practiced in Indian society as an accepted social custom¹⁰⁹ which has spread through the entire cross-section of society.¹¹⁰ This custom has suddenly acquired harmful overtones in recent years and is perceived as pernicious to the welfare of society in general and women in particular.¹¹¹ “Dowry has become a social menace in modern India, leading to the oppression of women, physical violence on the bride, causing financial and emotional stress on the parents of the bride, marital conflict, and so on.”¹¹² It has been the leading cause of the continuing degradation of women, and cases of dowry-deaths are largely hidden behind the closed doors of the home.

Dowry can take place different forms. Usually, it consists of an amount of money, jewellery, or property offered to the bridegroom or his family by the bride’s family when the marriage is fixed. But, in most cases, it is a demand from the bridegroom’s family. Even a middle-class family may demand lakhs of rupees from the bride’s family. The demands may differ depending on socio-economic status.¹¹³ In practice, dowry is not a one-time payment at the time of marriage. Often, the demands for money, property, and gifts continue even years after marriage.¹¹⁴ There are many dreadful and shocking incidents of dowry almost every day in the newspapers. The reported dowry death cases in India amounted to nearly seven thousand in the year 2020.¹¹⁵ The lives of millions of women are made unbearable due to dowry. The dowry-murder is but one example that can be used to increase international awareness of the severe effects of violence against women. A dowry-murder is the killing of a woman, ostensibly for not bringing a sufficient dowry to the marriage. It is the culmination of a series

¹⁰⁸ According to the dowry Prohibition Act, which was originally passed in 1961 and amended three times in the 1980’s of the Indian Civil Law, dowry is punishable by law. See “Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.” [Online]

¹⁰⁹ Srinivas, *Some Reflections on Dowry*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Kurian, “Feminism and the Developing World,” 60.

¹¹¹ Ahuja, *Violence against Women*, 122.

¹¹² Gurudev, “The Origin of Dowry System in India.” [Online]

¹¹³ Kochuthara, “Dowry as a Social-Structural Sin,” 342–43.

¹¹⁴ Kochuthara, “Dowry as a Social-Structural Sin,” 109–111.

¹¹⁵ “The Total Number of Reported Dowry Death Cases in India from 2005-2020.” [Online]

of prior domestic abuse incidents by the husband's family.¹¹⁶ Many other social evils have their roots in the dowry system. The spread of sex selection practice and the decline in sex ratio is another effect of dowry demands.¹¹⁷ Currently, the record shows that there are only 948 females for every 1000 males in India.¹¹⁸ Dowry leads to evils like female infanticide, malnutrition of the girl child, prostitution, sex trafficking, divorce, and constant tensions and conflicts in family life. It is noteworthy that in India, dowry is the strongest agent that propagates patriarchy and thus causes related problems in families.¹¹⁹

The Church in India has done very little to eradicate the evil of dowry. Though the CBCI Gender Policy of 2010 rejects dowry explicitly,¹²⁰ dowry-related violence is common in Christian families. The Church authorities take no practical or committed action to resist this practice. The catechetical programme of the Church does not include, in general, any teaching against dowry. This subject is rarely taken up seriously in marriage preparation courses or in youth groups. On the contrary, dowry is accepted in practice.¹²¹

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara ask the families to get into contracts with families who have order and fear of God rather than looking for wealthy families. He continued by saying that it is not the rich who bring goodness and delight into the family, but the orderly and God-fearing relatives. He gave the example of a French man who desired to marry his son off to the daughter of an aristocratic family, nevertheless, when the woman entered into his home, he was progressively out due to his inferior social standing.¹²² Chavara did not specifically address the issue of dowry in this precept, because, dowry payment from the family of the bride to that of the groom were rarely encountered in Kerala during the nineteenth century.¹²³ At the same time, there is an indication that for a God-fearing individual

¹¹⁶ Narayan, "Cross-cultural Connections, Border-crossing, and "Death by Culture,"" 85.

¹¹⁷ John, "Child Sex Ratio and Gender Discrimination," 60.

¹¹⁸ Population of India, "Sex Ratio in India 2021." [Online]

¹¹⁹ Kochuthara, "Dowry as a Social-Structural Sin," 109–10, 113.

¹²⁰ Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, *Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India*, 14.

¹²¹ Kochuthara, "Dowry as Socio-Structural Sin," 117.

¹²² *Chavarul*, I:8, 188.

¹²³ Lindberg, "The Historical Roots of Dowries in Contemporary Kerala," 32.

what makes the family happy and prosperous is not the wealth brought by the bride's family.¹²⁴

4.2.4 Issues with Patriarchy and Gender Inequality

Today, we hear slogans and mandates calling for the entire globe to be considered one, to remove all barriers of caste, class, and religion, and to build a prosperous, peaceful, and harmonious community, free from violence, disease, poverty, and injustice. However, we see indifference, discrimination, inequality, and bias in our own families on a daily basis. Gender is one of the most powerful variables that influences growth from the moment of conception to death.¹²⁵ The suppression of women is profoundly rooted in Indian society's social structure, traditions, religious doctrines and practices, educational and judicial systems, and families. Even in the twenty-first century, patriarchy appears to reign in the hearts of many people across the globe. Patriarchy is the basis of gender discrimination, despite the fact that there are many connected causes namely, caste, religion, economic status, media, and state policies.¹²⁶

Gender inequality is justified, perpetuated, and sustained by patriarchal or male-headed institutions, male pro-culture, and gender identities. All of the concepts, norms, traditions, beliefs, conventions, and values that reinforce men's supremacy and devalue women are referred to as forming a patriarchal culture. This male-dominated ideology and its values have been gradually interiorized and internalized by both women and men over the years. This patriarchal baggage is carried by many men and women in their families today. Women's subordination appears to be quite natural, normal, and accepted as part of the socialization process.¹²⁷ Many seem unconcerned about various types of atrocities and violence,¹²⁸ including domestic violence, dowry-deaths, rape, including marital rape, trafficking of women and girls for sex and slavery, girl-babies killed before and after

¹²⁴ Answer to this problem can be found in 4.3.1.1 Fear of God as the Basis of the Christian Family; 4.3.1.2 Love of God as the Wealth of the Family; 4.3.1.3 Devotion to God as the Strength of the Family. It is also discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.2.1.1.1.1 Relationship with God-fearing People and 3.6.1 Dignity of Woman.

¹²⁵ Choudhury, "Gender Issues in Family Life," 18.

¹²⁶ Patel, "Growing Violence Against Women," 43.

¹²⁷ Selvaraj, "Gender Justice in the Church and Society: Biblical Perspectives," 62.

¹²⁸ Brownridge, *Violence against Women. Vulnerable Populations*, 5.

birth,¹²⁹ women driven to suicide by new demands related to marriage, increasing incidences of mental depression due to overt and hidden abuses, and so on. All because patriarchy makes people blind and dumb.

In India, women constitute half of the country's population. Inequality based on gender still persists despite constitutional guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for both men and women.¹³⁰ The *Indian Penal Code (IPC, 1860)* has identified rape, kidnapping and abduction for different purposes, homicide for dowry, mental and physical torture, sexual harassment, and importation of girls, as crimes against women.¹³¹ This is how the survival, development, and responsibilities of women have been monitored in Indian families.

In the media, women are frequently exploited rather than exalted. They are often treated as objects rather than as humans with inviolable dignity, in order to satisfy others' desires for pleasure or power.¹³² For example, when a 19-year-old girl was gang-raped and murdered in Hathras district in the north-Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on September 14, 2020, the political leaders interfered and distorted the laws and forced the cops not to do their jobs.¹³³ Even in the most infamous case of Nirbhaya's death following a brutal gang rape in December 2012, no attitudinal change has happened in society except for a legislative update.

Another form of discrimination against women is found in the ecclesiastical circle, which has no exception in India. The concern for it is found in the question posed by the International Union of Superiors General to Pope Francis: "How is it possible that we are frequently neglected and not included as participants...? Can the Church afford to continue speaking about us instead of speaking with us?"¹³⁴ Borrowing the words of Cardinal Leo Suenens, they reiterate, "Why are we even discussing the reality of the Church when half of the Church is not even represented here?" When the

¹²⁹ Before birth girl-foetus is killed in the womb of the mother. At the global level Amartya Sen reports of more than one hundred million "missing women" most of whom are from Asia. Sen, "More than 100 Million Women are Missing," 61.

¹³⁰ Choudhury, "Gender Issues in Family Life," 19.

¹³¹ Reddi and Reddy, *Indian Penal Code*, art. 362–76, 152–61; Singh, *Crime Against Women*, 67.

¹³² Mukadam and Patwardhan, "Sexual Harassment at Workplace," 67.

¹³³ Hial, "Stand Up, Stand Out and Make a Difference...!," 481.

¹³⁴ "Pope Francis' Meeting with the International Union of Superiors General May 12, 2016." [Online]

subject is family, sexuality, and reproduction, the absence of women's voices and women's votes is particularly tragic."¹³⁵

Pope Francis adopts a different voice in response to these concerns. He addresses a sensitive issue in the Catholic Church: the exploitation of nuns and religious sisters as cheap sources of labour, a classic example of the Church's inhumanization of women. In fact, he is aware of the untold number of nuns and consecrated women who serve as domestic help to seminarians, priests, and bishops.¹³⁶ The Pope lauded consecrated women who serve as catechists, theologians, and spiritual guides, demonstrating the beauty of God's love and mercy. Pope Francis, who walks the talk, declared that under a new constitution for the Holy See's central administration, any baptized lay Catholic, including women, will be able to lead Vatican departments. He has already named a number of lay people, including women and religious sisters, in various administrative departments.¹³⁷ He is convinced that it is good to open new spaces and responsibilities to women, both in the Church environment as well as in the public and professional spheres.¹³⁸ This is just the beginning from a higher level, we still have a long way to go to get to the grass-root level.

A shift in mindset is inevitable to accept the unique feminine sensitivity and aptitude for others, which creates a critical and exciting mission for women today.¹³⁹ They just open their arms to anyone in need and provide a safe haven for others to belong. Spiritual motherhood is the hallmark of femininity. They have the potential to act as the conscience of the Church and the soul of the State. They possess a unique blend of mystical union with God, compassionate care for the suffering, and prophetic courage in

¹³⁵ Francis, "Address to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)." [Online]

¹³⁶ Francis, "Behind the Pope's "Fighting" Words to Women Religious," February 2, 2022. [Online]

¹³⁷ "Pope Rules any Baptized Lay Catholics, Including Women, can Lead Vatican Departments," March 20, 2022. [Online] Sr. Nathalie Becquart, xmcj, Consultor to the General Secretariate of the Synod of Bishops, Sr. Raffaella Petrini, the highest-ranking woman in the Vatican City State and the deputy governor of the area, Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, the French former superior general of an Italian religious order, the Daughters of Mary the Helper, and a laywoman, Maria Lia Zervino, Sr. Alensandra Smerilli, who was named to a deputy position in the Vatican's development office, which deals with justice and peace issues. "Pope Names First Women to Office that Helps Select Bishops," 13 July 2022. [Online].

¹³⁸ Francis, "Feminine Genius is Needed in the Church." [Online]

¹³⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 30 (AAS 80: 1724).

confronting the powerful. In India, the Church must recognize women's strengths and engage in a process of self-critique and cultural and structural critique to uncover gender and other biases that exist both within and outside the Church. Fighting gender stereotypes deeply engraved on the minds of people is indeed the core of changing one's mindset.

Women all over the world are beginning to express their outrage and condemn atrocities and violence against them. They are also promoting women's awareness of gender equality¹⁴⁰ and justice. Building a more gender-just society is one of the most challenging issues for Indian society in the third millennium. Despite the Indian constitutional guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for men and women based on social, economic, and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship, equality of status and opportunity, the dignity of the individual, and the unity and integrity of the nation,¹⁴¹ gender inequality persists, causing horrendous violence against women in families and societies.

In short, women will be deprived of their power as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters unless and until both men and women begin to respect the roles each one plays and accept their contributions. The solution is that the issues of women should not be limited to loud protests, agitations, and talks alone, but rather begin with respecting them concretely and everywhere. India had a great legacy of treating women with respect. During ancient India, the early Vedic period (1500–1000 BCE), women were considered with respect and dignity. The women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standard. There were many women rishis, and they were held in high esteem. In royal households, women were given respect and they even rendered a significant contribution in the decision making and administrative functions. They played an important part in politics as well. But in the later Vedic period (100–600 BCE) women were being discriminated. The discrimination was observed primarily in terms of education and other rights and facilities. The position of women further experienced a decline with the prevalence of child marriage, widow burning

¹⁴⁰ By gender equality, we mean equality between women and men and between girls and boys in all aspects of life, including education, health, nutrition, access to economic assets and resources, political opportunity, and freedom from coercion and violence. Kumar, "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment," 2.

¹⁴¹ Jhabvala, *The Constitution of India*, Articles 14–35, 23–80.

(*sati*), polygamy, and the purdah system¹⁴² under the pressure of caste and patriarchal systems.

Women have the power to become extraordinary in the ordinariness of their lives.¹⁴³ By describing the female personality as being particularly receptive and sensitive to others, Pope John Paul II explains that God entrusts the human being to women in a unique and beautiful way.¹⁴⁴ There are many mothers, whose stories are unknown but who work silently behind the curtains as agents of change in their family and society. It is our responsibility to bring to limelight their unseen labours, toils, and sacrifices so that they can be recognized and appreciated. Women's education in India can play a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but also improves the quality of life at home and in society. Hence, special measures need to be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, and create a gender-sensitive education system that would avoid many of the family problems and enable the family members to lead a happy and peaceful family life.¹⁴⁵

4.2.5 Issues Confronted by Elderly Parents

Traditional Indian joint family system has played an important role in ensuring the social and economic stability of the elderly. Old age and wisdom are considered being synonymous and respect and support for the elderly have been deeply ingrained in Indian culture for centuries. However, families in India today are significantly less likely to provide care for their elderly members due to rapid development, globalization, industrialization as well as the emerging prevalence of nuclear family set-ups. As a result, the elderly people have a higher chance of experiencing

¹⁴² Rout, "Role of Women in Ancient India," 42.

¹⁴³ Manohar, *Women's Issues and Reflections*, 189.

¹⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 30 (AAS 80: 1724–25).

¹⁴⁵ The precept in the *Chavarul* gives solution to this problem of patriarchy and gender inequality in the second and third chapters: 2.1.2.2 Unity of Mind and Heart; 2.2.2.3.2 Setting a Good Example in Front of Children; 3.1.2.1.1 Love and Interpersonal Relationships; 3.1.2.2.1 Covenantal Christ-Church Relationships; 3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect; 3.6.1 Dignity of Woman; and 3.6.2 Woman as Mother.

mental, physical, and financial insecurity in the years to come, which will reduce their quality of life.¹⁴⁶

Old age is an inevitable phase of life, with declining capacities and changing physical and psychological needs. The presence and involvement of the elderly in the family keeps bonds intact and connects generations. Values, traditions, culture, and wisdom are imparted to the younger generation, and checks and balances maintain the structure of the family. The elderly also helps provide a congenial environment for children's sound upbringing. Parents, grandchildren, and other young family members must therefore be sensitive to the changing needs of aging family members. Allowing the elderly to remain productive family members would enable them to better cope with the challenges of aging.¹⁴⁷

One of the major social issues in Indian families is the mistreatment and abuse of the elderly. As is to be expected, the biology of aging causes the elderly to become physically feeble. Deterioration in the functioning of the various bodily systems occurs during old age resulting in general health problems. Multiple health issues may arise in old age. Some of the somatic diseases affecting elderly people in India include high blood pressure, heart diseases, stress, cancer, diabetes, and diseases of the joints and bones. These health issues need attention and care, particularly from family members. Timely monitoring of appropriate diet, exercise, health check-ups, use of medicine, rest, and personal assistance are a priority.¹⁴⁸ Elderly abuse, bereavement, social isolation, and physical infirmity are all regarded as contributing directly or indirectly to depression in older people due to their financial, social, economic, and health vulnerabilities.¹⁴⁹ The likelihood of changing marital status, from married to widowed, is also relatively significant as people get older.¹⁵⁰ With the various types of aging scenarios, there is pressure on all aspects of care for the elderly, whether it is physical, financial, social, or psychological. The needs and problems of the elderly vary significantly according to their age, socio-economic status, gender, and other background characteristics. Besides physical and social

¹⁴⁶ Kumar, Sathyanaryana, Omer, *Living Arrangements of Elderly in India: International Conference on Challenges of Population Aging in Asia*, 34; Jamuna, "Ageing in India: Some Key Issues," 16.

¹⁴⁷ Patnam and Khan, "Creating a Safe Haven for the Elderly in Indian Families," 269.

¹⁴⁸ Patnam and Khan, "Creating a Safe Haven for the Elderly in Indian Families," 271.

¹⁴⁹ Bakshi and Pathak, "Aging and the Socioeconomic Life of Older Adults in India," 2.

¹⁵⁰ Bakshi and Pathak, "Aging and the Socioeconomic Life of Older Adults in India," 2.

aging processes, psychological aging processes include changes in personality, mental functioning, and sense of self during adulthood.¹⁵¹

Changes in family structure, which is another factor, often compel the elderly to live alone or to shift from their own homes to some institutions or old-age homes.¹⁵² Because moving to a home for the aged is considered a stigma, many older people would rather suffer than go to an aged home. In his encyclical, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the elderly in the family. He says, “older people find themselves cruelly abandoned. We fail to realize that, by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others without the closeness and concern of family members, we disfigure and impoverish the family itself. We also end up depriving young people of a necessary connection to their roots and a wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own.”¹⁵³

Deprivation is another common form of abuse in which the needs of the elderly are ignored or minimised.¹⁵⁴ Many elderly people are subjected to neglect, ill-treatment, and deprivation at the hands of their family members. In a study on elder abuse conducted in Delhi, it was discovered that the elderly is subjected to abuse in one form or another by their own offspring.¹⁵⁵ Pope Francis says, “the elderly, who are vulnerable and dependent, are at times exploited simply for economic advantage.”¹⁵⁶ The majority of them are left shocked to face reality after being treated as a burden by their children and in-laws.¹⁵⁷ Their caregivers are sometimes unconcerned with their emotional, physical, and other requirements.

Older parents are expected to adapt to the younger generation’s lifestyle and are often side-lined from important family decisions and, in some cases, even from decisions regarding themselves. In older people, this leads to extreme mental depression and loneliness. This form of neglect affects

¹⁵¹ Kunkel and Morgan, *Aging, Society, and the Life Course*, 89.

¹⁵² Singh and Afroz, “Psycho-Social Challenges of Elderly,” 174.

¹⁵³ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 19.

¹⁵⁴ Bakshi and Pathak, “Aging and the Socioeconomic Life of Older Adults in India,” 15.

¹⁵⁵ Datta, “Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons,” 156.

¹⁵⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 48 (AAS 108: 330).

¹⁵⁷ Datta, “Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons,” 157.

people from all walks of life.¹⁵⁸ They suffer greatly as a result of this, and many families have become spiritually poor.¹⁵⁹ Due to immigration, the elderly face “empty nest” syndrome without having emotional support from caregivers in the context of their failing health. When people live alone, they need to confront the task of coping with day-to-day activities as well as catastrophes such as acute health problems.¹⁶⁰ In short, old age is a delicate period during which older people require care and comfort in order to live a healthy life free of anxieties and worries. Because of a lack of awareness about the changing behavioural patterns of elderly people at home, they are more prone to ill-treatment. In this context, Chavara’s precept to respect parents and “ensure that their minds are not burdened or aggrieved,”¹⁶¹ is relevant.

4.2.6 Economic Factors Affecting Families

Economic inequality, which indicates the inequality of wealth and income, is a serious problem within and between countries around the globe. The NGO Oxfam International reported that 573 people became new billionaires during the pandemic 2019–2022, at a rate of one every 30 hours. At the same time in the year, 2022, 263 million more people crashed into extreme poverty, at a rate of a million people every 33 hours.¹⁶² Economic inequality is a perverse problem that touches on many areas of life in society, affecting families’ income and wealth. It also suppresses political voice, affects health outcomes and lifespan, increases wealth segregation within society, and much more.

Economic factors have an important impact on the concept and existence of the family. Families of very low economic status are vulnerable to life’s unpredictable occurrences, such as loss of work, injury, legal issues, illness,

¹⁵⁸ Datta, “Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons,” 156.

¹⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 27 (AAS 74: 113).

¹⁶⁰ Datta, “Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons,” 159.

¹⁶¹ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200. The solution for this problem is discussed in 4.3.3.5 Respect and Care for Parents. As well as in the second and third chapters: 2.2.2.4.3 Obtain God’s Blessings by Respecting Parents and 3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect.

¹⁶² Oxfam International Report, “Pandemic Creates New Billionaire Every 30 Hours—Now a Million People could Fall into Extreme Poverty at Same Rate in 2022,” May 23, 2022. [Online]

and educational challenges due to their lack of education and income. They may find themselves in these situations as a result of circumstances over which they have no control. For instance, economic issues, the changing nature of jobs, political trends, government policies, and commercial practices in our society all play a role.¹⁶³ Because their lives are never certain, family members strive for security. Coping is particularly challenging for single mothers who are responsible for both themselves and their children and have a limited income. Many people never manage to get out of their situation.

Nowadays, it is a growing trend among youngsters to select their life partners by looking at their economic status. They try to find their family's stability through the economic stability of their partner and end up tied up with the person belonging to a higher economic status. But this attitude towards marriage, which focuses on economic factors rather than love and affection, is most likely to encounter failure in married life. Since their focus has been on the net worth of their partners or their families, a little blow to their financial status creates a lot of tension and dispute in the family.¹⁶⁴ Economic hardships are one of the most common reasons for family conflicts that gradually lead to separation. Even if it is so, what matters most is the attitude towards this economic factor. If an individual has the proper attitude and motivation towards the family and its filial relationship, financial or economic crises would hardly be able to shake the strong family bonds knit together with chords of love and fidelity.

According to studies, economic hardships, such as low income, high debts relative to assets, and negative financial events such as increasing economic demands, recent income loss, and work instability, are also tangible events in an individual's life that can have a significant impact on family functioning. All of these factors contribute to economic pressures like unmet material needs like adequate food and clothing, inability to pay bills or make both ends meet, and utter poverty, which force people to cut back on even necessary expenses like medical treatment.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, financial difficulties can strain relationships, marriages, and even our

¹⁶³ Chilman, "Working Poor Families: Trends, Causes, Effects, and Suggested Policies," 192.

¹⁶⁴ Synod of Bishops, *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Conger, et.al., "Economic Pressure in African American Families: A Replication and Extension of the Family Stress Model," 183.

relationship with God.¹⁶⁶ The difficulty of raising children, hesitancy to welcome new life, a tendency to see older people as a burden, and an increase in emotional problems and outbreaks of violence are some of the negative impacts of poverty on the social order. At times, families suffer terribly when, faced with the illness of a loved one, they lack access to adequate health care or struggle to find dignified employment.¹⁶⁷

Economic hardship primarily influences the development of children, and it prohibits a family's access to education, cultural activities, and involvement in the life of society. Economic constraints also control the behavioural and emotional functioning of parents. Because when economic pressure is high, there is an increased risk of emotional or behavioural problems in parenting, such as harsh, uninvolved, and inconsistent childrearing practices.¹⁶⁸ Families with greater financial resources are able to make significant investments in the development of their children, such as parent-directed learning as well as support for advanced or specialized tutoring or training, adequate food, housing, clothing, medical care, and living in a more economically affluent neighbourhood that fosters a child's competent development.¹⁶⁹ Families also suffer from problems related to work, with young people having limited options and employment offers being highly selective and insecure. Workdays are long and oftentimes made more burdensome by extended periods away from home. This condition makes it difficult for family members to spend quality time with their children on a daily basis.¹⁷⁰

According to Pope John Paul II, lifestyle and expenditure are vitally important. He appeals to everyone with simplicity and humility to be convinced of the gravity of the present situation and of each individual's personal responsibility to use their resources appropriately.¹⁷¹ The Pope highlights the perilous impact of consumerism on families, because consumerism encourages people to feel unhappy with what they have and urges them to seek fulfilment in consumption. Consumerism discourages

¹⁶⁶ Conger, Conger, and Martin, "Socioeconomic Status, Family Processes, and Individual Development," 690.

¹⁶⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 44 (AAS 108: 328).

¹⁶⁸ Conger and Conger, "Resilience in Midwestern Families: Selected Findings from the First Decade of a Prospective. Longitudinal Study," 367.

¹⁶⁹ Bradley and Corwyn, "Socioeconomic Status and Child Development," 389.

¹⁷⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 44 (AAS 108: 327–28).

¹⁷¹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 47 (AAS 80: 579–82).

intimacy, relationships, and respect for people as they are.¹⁷² Middle-class families are dissatisfied because they believe they do not have the luxury. Most families' lives are significantly more empty as a result of consumerism than they might otherwise be. This limits their choices, consumes up their time, deprives them of happiness, and constricts their ability to act on commitments to the common good.

According to Pope John Paul II, many people around the world are unable to claim membership in what might be regarded as a family in the proper sense. Large sections of humanity live in conditions of extreme poverty, where a lack of shelter, food, education, unstable relationships, and so on make it impossible to speak of a true family in practice.¹⁷³ Obviously, poverty and hunger are realities in many countries, particularly in India, where a lack of employment opportunities has harmed family life and forced many people to migrate to other parts of the world.¹⁷⁴

Due to the economic situations of families, thousands of people leave their families behind to look for jobs that are often not proportionate to their knowledge and skills. Tragically, migrant workers often labour in circumstances of grave discrimination and exploitation. India is the great exporter of cheap labourers. It is true that salaries they earn abroad are significantly much more than they can earn in their own country, but it is often at the price of the stability of their families, the proper education and maturation of their children, who are deprived of the presence, the guidance, and love of both the parents at their most formative and impressionable age.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, people who migrate for work, face greater cultural dislocation. They lose many of the positive values cherished by their own communities, and they experience great difficulties upon re-entering as well.¹⁷⁶

People, communities, and nation-states have been transformed because individuals or groups of people have moved by land, sea, or air. Families have been part of these movements of people for centuries and generations. While families are split by migration, they are, at the same time, in flux as they take on new faces and engage in new strategies of belonging,

¹⁷² Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*, 197.

¹⁷³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 85, (AAS 74: 187).

¹⁷⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 25 (AAS 108: 320).

¹⁷⁵ Daejeon, "The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life," 6

¹⁷⁶ Eilers, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 2, 114.

becoming, and being a family in the twenty-first century.¹⁷⁷ The impact of migration on the family is tremendous. The migration of male heads of households has been found to lead to reconfigurations of productive labour within families as women and children perform tasks traditionally performed by men. Male migration may also result in difficulties on the part of the non-migrant mother disciplining the children, as well as experiences of increased loneliness and isolation. At the same time, the left-behind wife or mother experiences greater autonomy and self-confidence as well as improved social status as she literally single-handedly takes on the reins of raising the family.¹⁷⁸ Until recently, it was considered that migrant workers were mostly men, and the majority of women migrated to re-unify families. Traditional barriers and patterns have been shattered as a result of women's participation in international migration.¹⁷⁹

When it comes to female migration, the issue is a little more complicated, particularly when the person migrating is a wife and mother. On the one hand, there is evidence that migration contributes to the positive reconstitution of gender relations by forcing a reorganization of home labour in families by distributing a portion of women's household chores, such as childcare, to men. In fact, taking on caregiving responsibilities allows some left-behind men to reclaim and redefine their masculinities.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, migrant wives and mothers are frequently blamed by their families and communities in their home country for spousal abandonment, divorce, male alcoholism, teenage pregnancies, children's low academic performance, criminal behaviour, and even child abuse.¹⁸¹

In conclusion, families encounter a variety of difficulties as a result of economic reasons. Children, youth, and families are being severely impacted by the worsening economic crisis. Within the nuclear family, stressors like job loss, home foreclosure or loss of family savings place strain on parent-child relationships and on the family as a whole. It also forces people to migrate in pursuit of work, which has a significant negative impact on spousal relationships, children's formation, and other aspects of life. In other words, the entire development of family system is impacted by

¹⁷⁷ Cruz, "Families and Migration," 63.

¹⁷⁸ Cruz, "Families and Migration," 64.

¹⁷⁹ Cruz, "Families and Migration," 64.

¹⁸⁰ Pingol, *Remaking Masculinities: Power and Gender Dynamics in Families with Migrant Wives and Househusbands*, 35.

¹⁸¹ Cruz, "Families and Migration," 66.

economic concerns. In this situation, the *Chavarul* proposes a few precepts regarding work ethics and social justice to the poor which would help to some extent to reduce these problems.¹⁸²

4.2.7 Influence of Globalization on Families

According to Joseph Stiglitzas, globalization is the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies.¹⁸³ Globalization can also be defined as the pervasive decline in barriers to the global flow of information, ideas, and factors—capital and labour, technology, and goods.¹⁸⁴ The process of globalization has made several positive contributions. The world has become a “global village”¹⁸⁵ or as the communication world puts it, the world wide web—“www,” a web connecting the whole world. It indicates that the world today is more interconnected than ever before.¹⁸⁶ Pope Benedict XVI recognizes globalization as a process in which “humanity itself is becoming increasingly interconnected; it is made up of individuals and peoples to whom this process (globalization) should offer benefits and development. The breaking-down of barriers is not simply a material fact: it is also a cultural event, both in its causes and effects.”¹⁸⁷ Because of the novel means of information and correspondence provided by the internet and similar services, not only goods but also services and knowledge can flow much more easily. This accelerates, thickens, deepens, and lowers the cost of globalization in the twenty-first century, bringing benefits and costs.¹⁸⁸ Globalization influences and transforms all facets of human life, as well as nations around the world.¹⁸⁹ Many of those employed in agriculture, the

¹⁸² The biblical and theological understanding of work ethics and social Justice in connection with the *Chavarul* is discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.2.1.2.5 Work with Dignity; 2.2.1.3.3 Establish Justice to the Poor; 2.2.1.3.6 Ethical Finance Code for Families; 3.7 Business Ethics in the Family; and 3.8 Work Ethics in the Family.

¹⁸³ Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, ix. Also see Kochuthara, “Economic Inequality: An Ethical Response,” 2.

¹⁸⁴ Kaplinsky, “Globalization and Economic Insecurity,” 14.

¹⁸⁵ The term global village has been coined and made popular by Canadian media theorist, Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 93.

¹⁸⁶ Pais, “Globalization and its Impact on Families,” 1; Kaplinsky, “Globalization and Economic Insecurity,” 14.

¹⁸⁷ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 42 (AAS 101: 677–78).

¹⁸⁸ Love, “Putting People before Profits: Globalization and Poverty,” 18.

¹⁸⁹ Rahman and Zhang, “Globalization and Family Values: Eroding Trends,” 63–64.

poor, and those working in social welfare are strong opponents of globalization, whereas many employed in IT, management, and allied sectors are strong proponents.¹⁹⁰

The fact that globalization has a strong impact on people's mental and spiritual lives creates a significant tension. Human lives have become an unavoidable component of a commercial process that risks promoting individualism over society; greed in place of sharing; and materialism over meaningful relationships. The conjugal lives of couples are therefore in pitiable condition.¹⁹¹ Consequently, moral and behavioural development do not provide the appropriate pathway to effective social connections. Money has become divinized due to globalization, and the divine has become monetized. The gospel values of love, compassion, justice, and social commitment are not saleable commodities. This is one of the fundamental ethical crises of globalization.¹⁹² Therefore, the *Chavarul* offers guidelines to avoid individualism, greed, consumerism, and fosters selfless love, sharing, and meaningful relationships.¹⁹³

4.2.8 Problems Parents Face in Raising up Children

In the past forty or more years, due to a different cultural and social scenario, good parents were those who instilled manners, respectful for others, and responsibility in their children. They were more focused on the fundamentals. We must understand the difficulties and challenges that parents face today, the increased complexity and altered dynamics that are involved in it. Parents today often feel torn between professional and parenting responsibilities. When they focus on one, they feel like they are neglecting the other. This is a common dilemma for today's parents, who often have hectic schedules. They find it difficult to carve out and deliver the gift of time on a regular basis. The economic situation has created a lot of pressure on parents to earn enough money to meet the rising costs of education. Additionally, parents are under pressure to ensure that their

¹⁹⁰ Kochuthara, "Globalization in Solidarity: Reflections on Globalization from India," 55.

¹⁹¹ Rahman and Zhang, "Globalization and Family Values: Eroding Trends," 68.

¹⁹² Chetti and Joseph, eds., *Ethical Issues in the Struggle for Justice*, x.

¹⁹³ The biblical and theological perspectives of these guidelines are explained in the second and third chapters: 2.2.1.3.1 Love One Another; 2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity; 2.2.1.3.6.4 Content with One's Possession; 3.1.2.1.1 Love and Interpersonal Relationships; 3.3 Family: The Cradle of Love and Life; 3.4 Family: The Abode of Virtues; 3.5.1.4.1 Inculcation of Values; 3.5.1.4.2 Fostering Respect for Others; and 3.9 Ecological Ethics in the Family.

children succeed academically so that they may compete favourably once they graduate and move into the job market. Compared to the so called “nuclear family,” single parent families are now even more common. Both the adult and the children may find life in a single parent household to be quite stressful. The detrimental impacts of media consumption on children and youth are another issue since it exposes them to violence and aggressive behaviour, sexual content, poor body image and low self-esteem, and poor physical and academic performance. Moreover, the effects of continuing conflict between the parents, less opportunity for parents and children to spend time together, effects of the breakup on children’s school performance and peer relations, disruptions of extended family relationships, and issues caused by parents’ entering new relationships, etc., are other significant issues parents face today when raising children.

4.2.8.1 Problems Caused by Nuclear and Working Parents’ Families

Families, the basic units of society, have undergone significant changes in recent years. In the aftermath of twentieth century globalization and the socio-cultural context that resulted from it, the society that was characterized by the dominance of joint and extended families has witnessed a steady decline, giving rise to a variety of nuclear families, like those of single parents, parents with civil unions without the blessing of marriage at a church, those with heterogeneous or homogeneous parents, and families in which both parents work.¹⁹⁴ According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term “nuclear family” was first coined in 1947. However, the concept of a family that consists of a father, mother, and children is much older.¹⁹⁵ Due to industrial and technological advances, a great percentage of nuclear families are city-based families.¹⁹⁶ With the disintegration of the joint family system, the majority of urban dwellers, and even many rural citizens, prefer to live in small nuclear family units. At the same time, they wish to maintain close relations with their extended family and have them available during times of crisis. Moreover, unlike the traditional joint family system, today’s elderly members not only have fewer roles to play in child socialization but are also less likely to live with their adult children and grandchildren due to increased mobility in educated

¹⁹⁴ Osondu, “The Role of the Family in the Formation of a Committed Christian in the Society,” 82.

¹⁹⁵ Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, “Nuclear Family,” 1547.

¹⁹⁶ Das, “Employed Women and Problems of Child,” 139.

families. As a result, many families lack clear and consistent role models for their children outside of their own parents.¹⁹⁷

The nuclear family system has created role strain, ambiguity, and conflict between family members, as well as confusing expectations for children. Partly for safety reasons, parents are increasingly limiting their children's free time to socialize with peers both at school and in the neighbourhood. This reduces the social network of youngsters while also creating feelings of fear and distrust.¹⁹⁸ The media, particularly the electronic media, aggravates the problem by destroying the interpersonal bond between parents and children and instilling unrealistic aspirations in them, such as the desire to have everything available and to enjoy life.

As joint families are being replaced by nuclear families, so too are one-job families giving way to two-job families. Consequently, financially self-sufficient and career-oriented men and women who make their own decisions and strive for personal achievement have evolved.¹⁹⁹ As a result, women's roles and status have shifted, necessitating a reinterpretation. More and more women are coming out of the closed confines of their homes to assume roles different from the traditional roles of wife, mother, and other related responsibilities of home-making. In addition to her multiple roles as wife and mother, she also has the additional role of an employed woman. In other words, if she is a working woman, she often has to labour from dawn to midnight, oscillating between jobs at home and at her workplace.²⁰⁰ Socio-economic and demographic issues, which include poverty, poor health, low levels of education, gender inequality, declining family support for the elderly, and unfavourable geographic location, have forced women into the labour force in India.²⁰¹ Indian women are born workers. They work throughout all stages of life. The proportion of women with family obligations who simultaneously work at a paid job has increased significantly in the last two decades and is expected to keep

¹⁹⁷ Carson and Chawodhury, eds., *Indian Families at the Crossroads*, 11; Singh, "Problems of India's Changing Family and State Intervention," 3.

¹⁹⁸ Carson and Chawodhury, eds., *Indian Families at the Crossroads*, 11; Singh, "Problems of India's Changing Family and State Intervention," 3.

¹⁹⁹ Singh, "Problems of India's Changing Family and State Intervention," 3.

²⁰⁰ Choudhury, "Gender Issues in Family Life," 19; Kandankary, "Nature of Family in India," 83–84.

²⁰¹ Das, "Employed Women and Problems of Child," 139–40.

growing. Yet, overwork is one of the most common problems faced by working women in India.²⁰²

The economic participation of women outside the home has influenced the roles and relationships between men and women and gender-based social attitudes and behaviours in general. Employment will bring economic security, but it may also create problems in the family.²⁰³ Many employed women feel that they cannot give adequate time to child-rearing and, lately, feel guilty about neglecting their duties as mothers. The children of an employed mother will often miss her at home, she will have less time to entertain relatives and guests, and the pressure of her office work and problems may be reflected in her dealings with the family members, disturbing family peace and happiness.²⁰⁴ Her relentless trials to bridge the gulf inevitably fail, leading to a situation of anxiety, confusion, and dilemma ending in role-conflict.²⁰⁵ There is a common belief that employment of a mother impairs the normal development of a child. Sometimes, when the child-related demands at home compel her to give more attention and time, she neglects her job. A warm and intimate, constant and continuous relationship between the mother and the child is essential for the sound mental, physical, and psychological development of the child. Caring for children is the essence of motherhood.²⁰⁶ In the absence of parental supervision, children, as they grow up, instead of heeding interactive input from adults around them, get obsessed with watching videos and playing virtual games, thus missing the normal developmental milestones.²⁰⁷ Thus, balancing work and life is one of the biggest issues faced by couples in nuclear families, who aim for growth in their personal and professional spheres unreasonably. The required change—redefinition of roles, reallocation of responsibilities, and familial and societal support for the resolution of conflict—does not seem to occur.²⁰⁸

²⁰² Das, “Employed Women and Problems of Child,” 139–40.

²⁰³ Mohanty, “Dual-Earner Family: A Journey to Freedom and Equality,” 120.

²⁰⁴ Mohanty, “Dual-Earner Family: A Journey to Freedom and Equality,” 120.

²⁰⁵ Das, “Employed Women and Problems of Child,” 139–40.

²⁰⁶ Das, “Employed Women and Problems of Child,” 139–40.

²⁰⁷ Nalgirkar, “Problems Faced by Working Parents about their Children in Nuclear Family.” [Online]

²⁰⁸ *Chavarul* gives guidelines to raise children by giving them training to have a disciplined life, which will be helpful for nuclear and working parents’ families. 4.3.2.6.1

4.2.8.2 Problems Faced by Single Parent Families

Every child's family is his or her foundation. Children are supposed to grow up in a family where both the mother and father play their respective roles in providing them with a sense of security and stability. A single parent is a parent who is not living with a spouse or partner, who has the responsibility of raising a child or children.²⁰⁹ In recent years, the number of families with single or separated parents and those with remarriages of one or both partners has been on the rise due to multiple factors such as industrial development, urban migration, rising divorce rates, and so on.²¹⁰ Single-parent families often result from the "unwillingness of biological mothers or fathers to be part of a family; situations of violence, where one parent is forced to flee with the children; the death of one of the parents; the abandonment of the family by one parent, and other situations."²¹¹ In some cases, a single parent need not be the natural mother or father of the child, as some individuals choose to adopt a child. Sometimes the biological parents become unable to take proper care of the child due to sickness, extra-marital affairs, etc.²¹² In the case of divorce or separation, generally, the mother is given custody of the children. Divorce is the most stressful experience for couples in adulthood and is equally disheartening for their children. A breakdown in the family structure converges all responsibilities of the family and the upbringing of children on a single person, which may have a tremendous impact on children and their ability to function normally.²¹³

Parenting done by both parents is challenging enough even under the best of conditions, whereas single parents bear multifaceted challenges due to the overburden of responsibilities.²¹⁴ Stress is a normal reaction that everybody experiences and channels in different ways, but a disruption of

Correction and Discipline; and 4.3.2.6.2 Formation of Conscience. Its biblical and theological implications are discussed in the second chapter: 2.2.2.1 Formation in Prayer Life; 2.2.2.3.1 Prudent Child Discipline; and 2.2.2.4.2 Formation of a Right Conscience.

²⁰⁹ Majithuibou, *Single Parenting Issues Faced by Widows. A Qualitative Study on Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 10–11.

²¹⁰ Gupta and Kashyap, "Growing up in a Single Parent Family," 139.

²¹¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 252 (AAS 108: 400–401).

²¹² Laveena, Govindaraju & Monteiro, "A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent on Teenager Care," 54.

²¹³ Gupta and Kashyap, "Growing up in a Single Parent Family," 139.

²¹⁴ Nieuwenhuis and Laurie, "The Triple Bind of Single-Parent Families," 1.

family life can be more stressful than any other. Single parents, particularly the female heads of households, are forced to face various difficulties like socio-economic problems, family problems like caring for and nurturing children alone, stress due to overwork, and personal and social problems like feelings of insecurity.²¹⁵ So, single parents feel lonely, helpless, hopeless, sleepless, frustrated, distressed, and they undergo an identity crisis and experience a lack of confidence.²¹⁶ Single-parent families often face a lot of financial, physical, spiritual, educational, sociological, and patriarchal issues of personality and character.²¹⁷ They find it difficult to make both ends meet since the single parent has to pay for all the expenses of running the house and raising the child.²¹⁸ Economic hardship is also found to cause emotional distress in parents, which can in turn hamper a parent's ability to be supportive, sensitive, and consistent in his or her attention to children.²¹⁹

In the case of a single-parent family, children miss one of their parents, and as a result, they form their personalities based on the available model in one of their parents. It is to be noted that the main cost of single-parent families is that the children are victimized. They are deprived of the psychological, emotional, and spiritual development that is to be acquired from both the parents, from their mutual love, sharing, and respect, and all the more from their life examples. If single-parenthood occurs because of the death of the husband, it brings lots of problems for the widow. All of a sudden, she is exposed to facing the pain of bereavement as well as realigning herself to a new life.²²⁰ Single parents hesitate to make new friends and hence experience a lack of companionship. They experience a considerable change in their social relationship.²²¹ As a result, a sense of social isolation is felt among them. All these factors make a single parent face problem, which in turn affect parenting.

²¹⁵ Chanda & Pujar, "Stress and Psychological Well-being among Single Parents," 227.

²¹⁶ Jackson, Preston & Franke, "Single Parenting and Child Behaviour Problems in Kindergarten," 52.

²¹⁷ Majithuibou, *Single Parenting Issues Faced by Widows*, 23; Daryanai, et.al., "Single Mother Parenting and Adolescent Psychopathology," 1414.

²¹⁸ Laveena, Govindaraju & Monteiro, "A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent," 54.

²¹⁹ Majithuibou, *Single Parenting Issues Faced by Widows*, 23.

²²⁰ Laveena, Govindaraju and Monteiro, "A Study on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent," 56.

²²¹ Kitchlu, *Widows in India*, 168.

In short, the family is the backbone of a child's life. We believe that parents armed with knowledge will make the right decision on behalf of their loved ones, for that is the essence of parenting. Being a parent is tough work. However, being a single parent is perhaps even tougher. Whatever the reason, single parents face challenges that require a lot of courage, determination, and emotional strength to overcome.

4.2.8.3 The Preciousness of Children

Pope Francis places the value of children within a horizon that goes beyond the family ties. By recalling the example and teachings of Jesus on the Kingdom of God (Lk 2:41–52; Mt 10:34–37; Lk 9:59–62), he reminds that “children are not the property of a family, but have their own lives to lead.”²²² Children are unique individuals with their own identity, value, and purpose of life. It is the responsibility of the parents to uphold and promote the uniqueness of each child. This vision of children implicitly refutes the idea that the child in the womb is the property of parents, and hence, they have the power to determine its future. Instead, each one possesses an autonomous life from the moment of conception. The role of parents is to sustain and safeguard the newly conceived life. They have no right to dispose of it as they wish, even for the presumed good of the child's future. But today, millions of abortions take place across the globe each year. Children are denied the freedom to be born. Even after birth, children are not safe in their homes or society. They are often being abused sexually, mentally, psychologically, and spiritually.

4.2.8.3.1 Abortion

In general, the meaning of the term “abortion” refers to the termination of an activity or a process before it reaches its completion or conclusion. When applied to the process of human procreation, it refers to the expulsion or removal of a fertilized egg, or an embryo, or a fetus, from a woman's womb before this new developing life entity is capable of sustaining life outside it.²²³ Abortion occurs in substantial numbers among married and unmarried women with and without children, and at virtually all socioeconomic levels.²²⁴ Abortion can be both direct and indirect. Direct or induced abortion is an abortion that is brought about artificially and

²²² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 18 (AAS 108: 318).

²²³ Hanigan, “Abortion,” 3.

²²⁴ Burch, “Abortion,” 28.

purposely and is sometimes called “therapeutic” if it is done in the interest of maternal health. Indirect or spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) is the one occurring naturally and not for a set purpose. Some forms of induced abortion are now legal in most countries in the world.²²⁵ Abortion has been legal in India since 1971 under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, which is liberal in its provisions.²²⁶ The new MTP (Amendment) Act, which came into force from 25 March 2021 expands the access to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian, and social grounds to ensure universal access to comprehensive care.²²⁷

Abortion is evil because a zygote, the single cell formed by the union of a sperm and an ovum, is a human being, and killing a human being is evil.²²⁸ Abortion is also a violation of the dignity of the human person. The Roman Catholic Church has been the most consistent and most articulate critic of abortion and condemns it as a crime against life and a clear violation of the commandment “thou shall not kill” (Ex 20:13). Pope Pius XII repeatedly condemned the “deliberate and direct disposing of an innocent human life” and argued that “neither the life of the mother nor that of the child can be subjected to an act of direct suppression.”²²⁹ Pope Francis asks, “how can an action that ends an innocent and defenceless life in its blossoming stage be therapeutic, civilized or simply human?... It is not right to do away with a human life in order to solve a problem.”²³⁰ The first reason for the Church’s opposition to unrestricted abortion is that it sees God as the primary author of life, and so it regards the conception of a new life as a gift from God to be welcomed, respected, and cared for by the entire human community. Secondly, the Church teaches that a new human life is present from the moment of conception, so that this new human life possesses the same dignity and right to life as any other human person. Thus, the Church concludes that induced abortion is a violation of the most basic of human rights, namely, the right to life. Taking this life directly and on purpose is

²²⁵ Hanigan, “Abortion,” 3.

²²⁶ Sheriar, “Abortion has been Legal in India Since 1971 but it is still not a Woman’s Right.” [Online]

²²⁷ “India’s Amended Law makes Abortion Safer and more Accessible.” [Online]

²²⁸ Tomy, “Abortion: A Violation of the Dignity of Being Human,” 12.

²²⁹ Pius XII, *Address to Midwives*, 1 (AAS 43: 842); Pius XII, *Address to Family Campaign and Other Family Associations*, 3 (AAS 43: 858).

²³⁰ Francis, “Respect Life.” [Online]

simply not a right anyone possesses. Hence, there can be no legitimate claim to a woman's right to choose to abort a pregnancy.²³¹

The problem of induced abortion is still a current issue. According to statistics, 55.9 million induced abortions took place in the whole world every year between 2010 and 2014.²³² The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that out of the estimated 5.3 million induced abortions in India in 1989, 4.7 million were unsafe, leading to the needless injury and death of many women.²³³ The various reasons for abortions are: financial inability to afford a child; unwillingness to raise a child due to the imagined difficulty that having a child would dramatically change one's life; possible problems affecting the health of the fetus; being a victim of rape; being in abusive relationships with the partner; hesitation to bring a child into an unfavourable atmosphere; becoming pregnant as a result of incest; or any serious health complications associated with having a child.²³⁴

Defending human life is a basic human right to provide everyone with the dignity of life, irrespective of colour, creed, language, and gender. Snatching life in any form—born or unborn—is a deeply intrinsic, disordered belief. It is the murder of the soul, person, individual, and human being. Abortion is murder of the worst kind. It kills a generation of people; it steals their rights; and worse, it erodes a culture that is marked by love and respect and begs for the dignity of every human being. So, abortion is an inhuman activity, it is a crime against children, a crucial issue unborn children face in the womb of their mother. In this context, Chavara's precept which instructs parents to consider children as precious gifts from God is remarkable.²³⁵

4.2.8.3.2 Child Abuse

Child abuse is yet another problem that children today must deal with. Child abuse is a state of physical, psychological, emotional, economic, or sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen. It is a violation of the basic human rights of a child.²³⁶ Physical abuse is any kind

²³¹ Hanigan, "Abortion," 4.

²³² Singh et al., *Abortion Worldwide 2017. Uneven Progress and Unequal Access*, 8–9.

²³³ Irudayadason, "Unmasking the False Dichotomy in the Abortion Debate in Defence of the Empowerment of Women and the Entitlement of the Preborn," 60.

²³⁴ McCarthy, "Abortion as Disguised Tyranny," 173.

²³⁵ It is discussed in detail in the section 4.3.2.6.1 Children: The Precious Gift of God.

²³⁶ Pande, *Sexual Abuse of Girl Children. Some Hidden Facts*, 10–11.

of physical injury inflicted on a child by any means other than accidental. It includes child neglect caused by an intentional or unintentional failure to provide a child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision leading to the impaired health and development of a child.²³⁷

Psychological abuse is an assault on a child that adversely affects his or her emotional and social development, whereas psychological neglect is any kind of behaviour that deprives a child of what he or she needs for intellectual, emotional, and social development. In practice, psychological or emotional abuse seems to be ignored, and only physical abuse is considered an issue worth noting.²³⁸ But children suffer emotional abuse in various forms, which include the emotional abuse caused by indifferent and neglectful acts of parents; their nagging and abusive attitude; harsh punishments that result in inner-wounds, and so many other forms of chastisement. Still another form of psychological abuse is perpetrated by overly demanding parents who want a child to achieve at a level far beyond his or her capacity.²³⁹ Any use of corporal punishment as a way to discipline their children may leave emotional scars.

Child sexual abuse is another form of abuse. It is defined as the “involvement of dependent children and adolescents in sexual activities with an adult or any person older or bigger, where there is a difference in age, size, or power, in which the child is used as a sexual object for the gratification of the older person’s needs or desires to which the child is unable to give informed consent due to the imbalance of power or any mental or physical disability.”²⁴⁰ Molestation, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, abduction, pornography, prostitution, and sexual exploitation are ways in which children are being abused.²⁴¹ Children all over the world are subjected to horrific forms of sexual victimization at the hands of adults who are supposed to protect them.²⁴² In 90% of child abuse cases, the abuser is someone the child knows and trusts: a neighbour, close relative, family friend, sibling, or even the child’s father or mother. Feelings of shame, guilt, or even confusion prevent young children from informing their parents about the event, many times due to the threat from the

²³⁷ Vaughan, “Child Abuse and Its Consequences,” 12–13.

²³⁸ Somen, “Child Abuse in India,” 21–23.

²³⁹ Vaughan, “Child Abuse and Its Consequences,” 14–15.

²⁴⁰ Draucker and Martsof, *Counselling Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*, 25.

²⁴¹ Pande, *Sexual Abuse of Girl Children. Some Hidden Facts*, 14, 35.

²⁴² Parrot and Cummings, *Sexual Enslavement of Girls and Women Worldwide*, 9.

abuser.²⁴³ It is therefore critical to look for red flags in children, such as withdrawal from friends or usual activities; changes in behaviour such as aggression, anger, hostility, or hyperactivity; changes in school performance; depression, anxiety, unusual fears, a sudden loss of self-confidence, frequent absences from school, reluctance to leave school activities as if he or she does not want to go home; attempts at running away; rebellious or defiant behaviour; self-harm or attempts at suicide, etc. Specific signs and symptoms depend on the type of abuse and can vary. But these are only warning signs, and they do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused.²⁴⁴ It can make a huge difference to a child's life if she or he knows that the parents understand her or his feelings.

A victim of child sexual abuse suffers a variety of devastating short-term or long-term consequences. An abused child has unexplained physical and mental injuries that affect the victims throughout their lives, even leading to subsequent mental illness, nervous breakdown, anger, hostility, low self-esteem, conduct disorders, delinquency, inappropriate sexual behaviour, teen pregnancy, truancy, poor performance in school, substance abuse, etc.²⁴⁵ Sexually abused children also have a high risk of becoming dysfunctional parents, causing family problems and the abuse of their own children.

In short, child abuse and neglect include a variety of behaviours that has a profound, long-lasting emotional impact on children, such as, ignoring a child's needs, leaving them alone in dangerous situations, exposing them to sexual situations, or making them feel unimportant or foolish. Thus, child abuse or neglect can have an impact on all domains of development—physical, psychological, emotional, behavioural, and social—all of which are interrelated. Therefore, treating children unfairly and undervaluing their lives is another way to violate their dignity.²⁴⁶

4.2.8.4 Impact of Media and Information Technology on Family Life

Today, various forms of media, such as radio, television, satellites, computers, the internet, smart phones, etc., are ubiquitous. The explosion of

²⁴³ Pande, *Sexual Abuse of Girl Children: Some Hidden Facts*, 12.

²⁴⁴ Chitnis, "Child Abuse—A Guide to Parents & Caregivers." [Online]

²⁴⁵ Rai, *Problem of Child Abuse in India*, 4.

²⁴⁶ Refer 4.3.2.6.1 Children: The Precious Gift of God; 3.1.2.1.3 Procreation; 3.3.2.2 Children: Love of the Couple and Love between the Couple; and 3.2.2 Family: The Sanctuary of Life.

computers and information technologies has been rapid as well as remarkable, which has created a new virtual world that exists on the net and looks obviously very realistic.²⁴⁷ The social networking platforms, which are utilized by both individuals and corporate units to partake in virtual communities in cyberspace, offer simpler and more accessible means for communication, collaboration, community building, mutual support, publicity, academic research, and wealth amassment.²⁴⁸ The media broadens viewers' horizons and brings them into contact with a wide array of events and cultures. It caused the emergence of a "global village" in which the whole of humankind would be brought together through electronic circuits.²⁴⁹

The media also has negative effects that can influence our thinking and distort our worldview. The home, school, and church, which were the portals of exchange of cultural values from one generation to the next, are slowly being replaced by the media. Values are no longer learned while sitting at the feet of grandparents; they are learned in front of a television, computer, or smartphone screen. The media frequently present an unreal view of the world and an oversimplified view of life, which often desensitises their viewers.²⁵⁰

Pope Francis calls on us to pay particular attention to the risks to which children and adolescents are exposed due to frequent and easy access to social media. Modern technology is a curse because it constantly disconnects people from the real world. The excessive hanging around in cyberspace creates a way to easily manipulate the private spaces of individuals by people with selfish interests.²⁵¹ Another drawback is that family life is often inadequately portrayed in the media. The uncensored telecast of entertainment channels distorts the consciences of young and old alike with infidelity, sexual activity outside marriage, the absence of a moral and spiritual vision of the marriage covenant, etc. while positive support is at times given to divorce, contraception, abortion, and

²⁴⁷ Tharayil, "Impact of Internet and Social Networking Sites on Formation," 303.

²⁴⁸ Aljentera, *The Parish Guide to Social Media: How Social Networking can Recharge Your Ministry*, 42–43.

²⁴⁹ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 4.

²⁵⁰ Anderson, *Moral Dilemmas*, 200–203.

²⁵¹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 278 (AAS 108: 422).

homosexuality. Promoting such portrayals causes hostility to marriage and the family, which is detrimental to the common good of society.²⁵²

Pornography is another negative side effect of mass media that is tearing apart the very fabric of modern society. It is defined as material that “is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.”²⁵³ There are many psychological and social effects of pornography. A brief exposure to violent forms of pornography can lead to anti-social attitudes and behaviours. Those who view pornography tend to be more aggressive towards other sex, less responsive to the pain and suffering of others, and more willing to accept various myths about rape.²⁵⁴ Researchers have found that pornography can diminish a person’s sexual happiness and satisfaction with their sexual partner’s physical appearance, affection, and sexual performance.²⁵⁵ Children who are addicted to watching pornographic materials stealthily tend to move around in fear and guilt, lose concentration in studies, show behavioural disorders and are often disrespectful towards the opposite sex. In a nutshell, pornography attacks the dignity of men and women who are created in the image of God.

Computer technology is adding another dimension to the lives of individuals. The ever-increasing abundance of information actually threatens individual privacy. Within the family, this output of technology impacts negatively on domestic relations between the family members. The Internet and e-mail, as personal extensions of the individual, are highly demanding and time-consuming. They serve as a factor that can mitigate family cohesion. This fact attests to the wide range of specific interest members of the family can develop with many other individuals outside of the family environment who exist only on the screen but are nevertheless influential. Concomitantly, individual rhythms and perceptions of time pervade family life since each member is influenced by a differential acceleration of time, leading to a de-synchronization of the family.²⁵⁶ As individuals gain divergent views and interests due to their own distinct

²⁵² John Paul II, “Message on the World Communication Day on 24 January 2004.” See also Sahayaraj, *Marriage and Family in the Plan of God. Reflections of St. John Paul II*, 182.

²⁵³ McManus, *Final Report of the Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography*, 8.

²⁵⁴ Donnerstein, “Pornography and Violence against Women,” 281.

²⁵⁵ Zillman and Bryant, “Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape,” 15.

²⁵⁶ Das, “Impact of Technology on Family Life,” 87–88.

channels of information and communication, these views and interests tend to prevail over intra-family values. As a result, each member is inclined to have his or her own agenda and becomes detached from the family.

Technology, which allows the accumulation of knowledge, appears to be in competition with formal education. The lack of systematization in the transmission of knowledge exposes the younger generations to the risk of falling behind in their education. Formal teaching is competing with easily accessible information. Electronic technology tends to eliminate the necessity for books and a lasting systemic view of a subject, given the younger generation's quest for instant answers. The advantages of self-teaching using media courses are numerous.²⁵⁷ However, the drawback is that, because the student is alone, he or she must remain motivated at all times owing to a lack of guidance and authority from a teacher. Passivity and inconsistency might be hindrances to a positive outcome. Gradually, the youngster may grow addicted to electronic devices and lose interest in in-depth study of their subjects, negatively impacting the child's future life.

Another challenge is the significant role played by smartphones and social media in family disintegration, particularly among young couples in India. For example, at least 3,000 of the more than 5,000 divorce cases filed in Bangalore in 2018 were related to misuse of technology. Illicit messages or calls or chats or Facebook posts on smartphones that are traced by one or both spouses could be the grounds of divorce. In extreme cases, some people use GPS to track down a partner with a lover. Some people even utilise apps to retrieve deleted messages or photographs in order to prove that their partners are cheating on them. Cyber addiction is also on the rise among youngsters.²⁵⁸ The number of "cyber widows"²⁵⁹ and disorders like cyber gambling is increasing. As a result of such deviant behaviours, the family atmosphere becomes dry, and family life turns out to be a living hell for the spouses.

Due to the new trends in family culture and the influx of modern communication media, the space for devotional practices is diminishing day

²⁵⁷ Das, "Impact of Technology on Family Life," 88–89.

²⁵⁸ Yamini, ed., "Smartphones, Facebook, WhatsApp Break Down Marriages in Bangalore." [Online]

²⁵⁹ "Cyber widow" is a term used to describe the wife of a man who spends more time with his computer or gadget than with her. This leads to greater loneliness and severe marital issues. Tharayil, "Family Problems and Family Breakdowns," 67.

by day. The traditional scene of family prayer in the evening and the chanting of prayers and hymns have been replaced by prime-time shows in entertainment channels and smart phones. Parents hardly have any time to listen to the stories of their children, and both the elderly and youngsters are found busy ‘fondling the rectangular piece’ in their hand. In the quest for these virtual conversations with people far and near, they often fail to have genuine conversations with their own family members and become victims of communication gaps, and eventually the family bonds get weakened.²⁶⁰

4.3 The *Chavarul* and the Present Challenges of Families

We have discussed the different facets of contemporary families with their new trends that have positive effects as well as the major challenges and problems they encounter. When we analyse the *Chavarul* in the present context, the various precepts in the *Chavarul* give the impression that the families in the nineteenth century also encountered such challenges, albeit in a minimal form. Through the *Chavarul*, Chavara attempted to address these issues and found a solution which is still applicable and relevant today.

In the very introductory part of this family code, the *Chavarul*, Chavara gives a sound definition of an ideal Christian family. It includes the spiritual, interpersonal, and social dimensions of the family. Chavara envisioned Christian families as the replica of heaven, where the members are intimately related to each other. Each one is ready to behave according to one’s status in the family by respecting, loving, and readily serving each other with love. The divine dimension of the family is manifested in the affective and reverent attitude towards the parents, mutual love and respect among siblings, and decent and respectful dealings with others. The beautiful definition and description conclude with a clear perspective on the purpose of life, which is to receive eternal bliss in heaven. Thus, when people start forgetting this divine dimension, their lives will soon fall into the way of misery.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ *Chavarul* offers guidelines to cultivate reading habit in children and train them to use media responsibly. See 4.3.2.6.2.1 Correction and Discipline; 2.2.1.2.4 Enhance Healthy Reading Habit; 2.2.2.3.1 Prudent Child Discipline; 2.2.2.4.5 Upbringing Children to Maturity in Sexual Matters; 3.5.1.4.5 Sex Education; and 3.5.1.4.6 Media Education in the Family.

²⁶¹ Mampra, “*Chavarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 10.

In the *Chavarul*, the various instructions given by Chavara on family life and the upbringing of children certainly give a solid foundation for a true family where the virtues of love, peace, sacrifice, prayer, and mutual understanding thrive. He wrote this testament in order to safeguard the families from the possible disaster caused by lack of order, fear of God, peace, and charity among the members of the family. In the testament, he envisages a reform of the family in its spiritual, moral, social, and financial dimensions. The forty directives that the testament contains deal with the virtues that must prevail in a Christian family, like charity, piety, readiness to forgive each other, forbearance, tolerance, respectfulness, meekness, simplicity, and good relationships. It has instructions on right conversations, love for work, righteousness, honesty, hospitality, the right mode of conduct towards domestic workers and justice to labourers.

The social concern of Chavara is reflected in his demands for concern for the poor and needy, the habit of giving, modesty, endurance in struggles and difficulties, and the avoidance of luxury and prodigality. Mention is also made regarding personal virtues like the necessity of reading good books, prayer, and the reception of sacraments, faithful observance of Sundays and other days of obligation and punctuality. The directives come to a conclusion with advice to keep away from calumnies and to cultivate Christian, moral, and human values and a warning about the impairment that may occur in the absence of these virtues. The relevance of the *Chavarul* is in the fact that it warns families about the hidden dangers arising from various post-modern approaches. Therefore, the *Chavarul* can be visualized as a code of conduct for families. In the following points, a detailed discussion is made on how to transform our families into theo-centric families, how to implement a love-centred ethics in the family, and how to provide an integral formation to children in the family.

4.3.1 Theo-Centric Family

God created families, so they would not be destroyed by human problems and challenges. As Christians, we face the question of how best to help and strengthen the family in accordance with Scripture.²⁶² Chavara pictured families as images of heaven; they are heavenly paradises on earth where the members of the family practice and cherish mutual love in interpersonal relationships. From the Most Blessed Trinity, Christian families receive

²⁶² *Chavarul*, I:1, 185; Titus, "Families in God's Plan: Biblical Perspectives," 355.

their call and the grace they need to live an exemplary family life.²⁶³ Chavara realized that it is difficult for human beings to imitate the Holy Trinity, but the imitation of the Holy Family that resembles the sublime love and communion of the Holy Trinity aids us to have access to the hidden mysteries of the Trinity.²⁶⁴ In a Theo-centric family, fear of God must be the foundation, love of God must be their greatest asset, and devotion to God must provide the faith to live a peaceful family life. And these families, in turn, will create a civilization of love and life.

4.3.1.1 Fear of God as the Basis of the Christian Family

The *Chavarul* says that the most valuable possession of a family consists in its fear of God and piety. A God-fearing family will enjoy the fruit of divine blessings in this world as well as in eternity.²⁶⁵ Chavara instructs families not to enter relationships with those that lack order and fear of God.²⁶⁶ He further says that all sorts of people must not be entertained in the house, but only those who are well-mannered and God-fearing.²⁶⁷

There is a two-fold aspect of fear. The first kind is accompanied with reverence. This is the kind of fear that citizens have towards good rulers, and that we have towards God. Right-minded children display this fear toward their parents. The other kind of fear is accompanied by hatred. This is the type of fear that slaves feel towards harsh masters. When we talk of having a fear of God, we mean reverential fear. Seriousness and an honourable yet thoughtful diligence, are present where there is a fear of God.²⁶⁸ This fear of the Lord is a gift of the Holy Spirit. A soul moved by this gift is overwhelmed by the greatness of God and adheres ever more firmly to the divine goodness. A reverence follows that moves the person to fear anything that threatens their union with God the Father. This fear is filial; it causes the soul to turn away not only from sin but also from every tendency to refuse God anything.²⁶⁹

²⁶³ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184; Eattanial, “Families of the Postmodern Society: Relevance of Chavara’s Vision on Family,” 184.

²⁶⁴ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

²⁶⁵ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

²⁶⁶ *Chavarul*, I:7, 188.

²⁶⁷ *Chavarul*, I:9, 188.

²⁶⁸ Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 279.

²⁶⁹ Mulhern, “As a Gift of the Holy Spirit,” 864–65.

When Chavara advises to have fear of God, to associate only with those who fear God, and to keep the company of God-fearing people, he intends that these people will respect their own lives and the lives of others, and will be cautious not to offend either God or others. When fear of God diminishes, consequently, faith and moral values will deteriorate.²⁷⁰ The faith teaches us that every human life, beginning at conception, is a gift from God and has unlimited value in his eyes.²⁷¹ When people lose their faith vision or fear of God, they are more prone to doing anything they want. When people and families become engrossed in the myriad stresses of daily life, the *Chavarul* invites them to take a step back, put their lives into spiritual perspective, and rediscover the truth of their own vocation as a gift²⁷² and safeguard every life at any cost. It is difficult to have a faith vision without a spirit of prayer and meditation. A total surrender to him in love and obedience is required to experience the happiness and peace for which he created us. Therefore, Chavara advises parents to gather their entire family to pray the family prayer and to do so, on a regular basis.²⁷³

According to Pope Francis, an orderly process of handing on the faith depends on parents' relationship with God: how they genuinely trust in God, seek him and feel the need for him. They must realize that faith is a gift of God, but entrusted to their care. Through their creative commitment, they collaborate with God's plan. In other words, parents are the active agents of catechesis and evangelization of their own family.²⁷⁴ Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that education in Christian faith is essentially a matter of entering into a living relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father, through prayer and personal relationship. Only those who know and love Jesus can introduce others into such a living relationship.²⁷⁵ It is from the parents that the child receives the first and profound experience of human and divine love.

Pope Francis adds that to be effective in faith education, the parents must adopt a method suitable to each age. For children, they may make use of symbols, actions, and stories. For the adolescents instead they may have to personalize it by encouraging their own experience of faith suited to their

²⁷⁰ David, *Sacredness of Human Life*, 33.

²⁷¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 101: 677–78).

²⁷² *Chavarul*, I:1, 184.

²⁷³ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

²⁷⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 287 (AAS 108: 426).

²⁷⁵ Benedict XVI, “Address to the Participants in the Convention of the Diocese of Rome.”

age. In both cases, the attractive testimonies of the parents play a vital role. They teach more convincingly by their life and witness than by the theoretical lessons on faith. Hence, organizing properly the moments of family prayer is important in the handing on the faith.²⁷⁶ When faith is lived and handed on properly, its fruitfulness will go beyond family confines. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside of the family circle. Thus, the family that is evangelized becomes an evangelizer.

Accordingly, as detailed in the second chapter,²⁷⁷ the *Chavarul* stresses the significance of having trans-personal relationships in families and encourages people to consider “fear of God” as the most valuable possession. The *Chavarul* instructs the families to have relationship only with God-fearing people, choose God-fearing persons as friends, and prefer hiring God-fearing people as servants. This similar perspective is also highlighted in the third chapter.²⁷⁸ It is therefore highly appropriate to use its maxim as a guide to reshape and remould contemporary families into the ideal of heaven on earth.

4.3.1.2 Love of God as the Wealth of the Family

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara urges families to love one another and forgive the mistakes and shortcomings of others.²⁷⁹ The Christian family is the first school in which a Christian is taught to love God and others. Chavara used the parable of the miser to illustrate how charitable acts carried out for the love of God are the genuine source of the family’s wealth and how those who choose not to do so will pay the price.²⁸⁰

Love is the fulfilment and the end of the law and of all the divine scriptures.²⁸¹ Love of God and love of neighbour are closely interwoven. Since God first loved us (1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere “command;” it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws

²⁷⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 288 (AAS 108: 427).

²⁷⁷ Detailed description is given in the second chapter, “The Biblical Background of *Chavarul*”: 2.2.1.1 Trans-Personal Relationship in Family Life

²⁷⁸ Relationship with God-fearing people is highlighted in the third chapter, “The Theological Vision of Family in *Chavarul*”: 3.1.2.2.2 The Family as the Domestic Church.

²⁷⁹ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185.

²⁸⁰ *Chavarul*, I:15, 191.

²⁸¹ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, I/II, 123.

near to us.²⁸² To love God more than we love others is the most loving thing we can do for them, because God's love is the genuine treasure of the family, which motivates them to do good to others. This conviction of the true wealth of love compels them to help others.

All facets of love are included in Chavara's precepts on love. He urges parents to love one another despite the harm done to them. To some extent, this entails loving their enemies, which is distinct from loving wickedness, ungodliness, or cunning. Rather, it means loving the ungodly and the wicked. When one loves God with all their might and power, they enter into God, and God introduces love.²⁸³ As a result, parents who love God are enabled to love others and perform charitable acts in the name of this love. When parents try to maintain harmony, righteousness, truth, and patience in their own life, the children too will be inspired to live accordingly. Similarly, children learn to be charitable, preserving the bond of fellowship, enduring insults, being patient, bearing no grudge, encouraging those who are sick, respecting the elderly, admonishing sinners, not oppressing debtors and those in need, and so on.²⁸⁴ Thus, they will find true wealth in God by loving and serving God and others.

Once the families regard God's love as their ultimate wealth, the couples can find a solution to the problems that they confront in their relationships, as well as the concerns with elderly parents.²⁸⁵ More details concerning love as the wealth of the family, can be found in chapter three of this book, which describes family as the school of mutual love and respect, family as the cradle of love and life, and love as key to marital and familial relationships.²⁸⁶

4.3.1.3 Devotion to God as the Strength of the Family

Chavara considered devotion to God as the strength of the family. He exhorted that at least one member of the family should go to Holy Mass

²⁸² Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1 (AAS 98: 217–18).

²⁸³ Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian beliefs*, 409.

²⁸⁴ Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 531.

²⁸⁵ Which are discussed in section 4.2.1 Problems in Spousal Relationship and 4.2.5 Issues Confronted by Elderly Parents.

²⁸⁶ The third chapter gives more details regarding love as the wealth of the family: 3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love Respect; 3.3 Family the Cradle of Love and Life; and 3.3.2 3.3.2 Love as Key to Marital and Familial Relationships.

daily to receive blessings from God for the whole family.²⁸⁷ He knew that it involved sacrifice, but he also wanted to convince family members that one had to make sacrifices and continue to maintain a close relationship with God to receive his abundant blessings.²⁸⁸

The *Chavarul* urges people to have genuine devotion to God which will strengthen them when they face difficulties and trials in life.²⁸⁹ Chavara also insists that, along with participation in liturgy and sacraments, the reading of the Holy Scripture and meditation on it become an essential part of the true Christian life.²⁹⁰ Families are stronger when members are hitched together as one, owing to their shared affiliation with God. A shared commitment to God's Word can provide families with a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which can propel them to stay together and achieve the right perspective on life's struggles and challenges.²⁹¹ It can give them guidelines for living, which can contribute to the fashioning of a positive household.

In his apostolic exhortation, Pope John Paul II interrogates parents about the upbringing of their children regarding the faith and sacraments. He says that parents teach their children lessons for life as an act of worship of singular value by their example of honesty in thought and action, along with some common prayers. In this way, they bring peace in their home and thus build up the Church.²⁹² These same thoughts about training children in faith and devotion can be traced back to the *Chavarul*, where Chavara admonished families to keep a certain timetable for their daily life, giving due importance to family prayer, work, and spiritual reading, which would help them to keep up the relationship with God and others fresh and pure.²⁹³ Pope Francis also emphasizes that family prayer has more power to help people grow in faith than the hundreds of sermons and all the catechesis they receive throughout their life,²⁹⁴ because prayer becomes a beautiful moment in which the family meets a fascinating person in Jesus. It becomes

²⁸⁷ *Chavarul*, I:19, 192–93.

²⁸⁸ Mampra, “*Chavarul* of Chavara: A Precious Gift to Families,” 11.

²⁸⁹ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

²⁹⁰ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195; I:3, 187.

²⁹¹ Raina, “Family Relationship—Importance and How to Build Healthy Relationship.” [Online]

²⁹² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 60 (AAS 74: 152–53).

²⁹³ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

²⁹⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 288 (AAS 108: 427).

a true moment of life and faith, integrated into the daily routine of family life. As a result, these lively prayer moments open the domestic church to the universal Church, transforming it into a missionary force.²⁹⁵ Chavara also reminds parents that when children are of age they must be prepared for sacraments and instructed, particularly, about the devotion to Mother Mary.

In the process of handing on the devotion to God, the family truly becomes an agent of pastoral activity. It proclaims explicitly the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness: solidarity with the poor, moral and material assistance to the needy families, protection of creation, promotion of the common good, transformation of unjust social structures, and practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.²⁹⁶ These are not merely gestures of human compassion but an “expression of profound Christian belief in the love of the Father who guides and sustains us.”²⁹⁷ Through these acts, the families proclaim that the love of the Father revealed in the total self-gift of Jesus Christ continues to be with them even today and enables them to face courageously the storms of life. This is the Good News which must be heard and lived in each family, at every moment, as a source of life that illumines the path. It is this experience that makes the family a domestic church and a leaven of evangelization in society.²⁹⁸

Chavara’s maxims and emphasis on the necessity of genuine daily devotion to God along with other spiritual practices he recommended are relevant for contemporary families to overcome issues brought on by the decline in faith and moral values in family.

4.3.2 Love-Centred Ethics in the *Chavarul*

A family is a community of persons whose proper way of existing and living together is communion: *communio personarum*.²⁹⁹ The home is the cradle of love and it is the domestic church which creates the conditions for reaching the full potential of love in its members, a love which reflects and participates in the love of the Trinity, the sharing of which is their ultimate

²⁹⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 289–290 (AAS 108: 427–28).

²⁹⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 290 (AAS 108: 428).

²⁹⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 290 (AAS 108: 428).

²⁹⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 290 (AAS 108: 428).

²⁹⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 7 (AAS 74: 88).

destination.³⁰⁰ Here, we discuss how families can be a communion of love by expounding love as a mandate for family ethics, strengthening family relationships, respecting the dignity of women, implementing a love-based justice, fostering communion by forgiving love, and by presenting charity as the channel of love.

4.3.2.1 Love as the Core of Family Ethics

According to Chavara, the supreme rule of the Christian family is mutual love and the consequent unity of mind and heart. This family *koinonia* is mentioned in the introduction to the *Chavarul*, wherein we find Chavara stating that the main purpose of the family is to live together by the bond of blood and affection.³⁰¹ Here, Chavara refers to the commandment of the Lord: “That you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Mutual love brings peace on earth and eternal blessings in the world to come.³⁰² In the introduction to the *Chavarul*, Chavara says that the only consolation for a person who experiences trials and tribulations in this world is to belong to and live in a family where love, order, and peace reign.³⁰³ In another precept, Chavara advises that both father and mother should set an example to the children in respecting and loving each other. Thus, children may learn from parents to love and respect everyone.³⁰⁴

The bond of family is characterized by love. The civilization of love starts in the family.³⁰⁵ A man and a woman get married and start a family together through love. Marital love is the most meaningful expression of human relations and self-giving.³⁰⁶ It is a fundamental human yearning for reciprocal affirmative acceptance and growth. In this reciprocal love relationship, both man and woman are to be recognized and valued for what they are to one another and are invited to give visible expression to conjugal partnership and parenthood. Pope John Paul II rightly states, “the logic of the sincere gift of self”³⁰⁷ is a source of deep joy, mutual understanding, and acceptance. In marital love, authentic conjugal love presupposes and

³⁰⁰ Dominican, *Marriage, Faith and Love*, 276.

³⁰¹ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

³⁰² *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

³⁰³ *Chavarul*, “Introduction,” 184.

³⁰⁴ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³⁰⁵ Rosales, *For All the People of God*, Vol. 2, 322.

³⁰⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 163-164 (AAS 108: 375–76).

³⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11 (AAS 74:91–92).

requires that man has a profound respect for the equal dignity of his wife. This mutual and unconditional love between husband and wife makes a home.³⁰⁸ The couple, as part of the family, are invited to form a community of people. It takes a constant effort to develop an authentic community of people. Without love, the family cannot grow and develop into a genuine community of people.³⁰⁹

This love needs to be cultivated, because it is not something that is already achieved, but a project that needs to be patiently constructed by both spouses. According to Pope John Paul II, a married couple is obliged to be faithful to one another every day in order to advance their partnership.³¹⁰ Because marriage is essentially a vocation to love, without respect for the other partner and the willingness to be with and for the other, which is the core of love, no marriage can be successful. The couple's love is expressed through their children. Children are emphasised as one of the goals of marriage in the Second Vatican Council's declaration, which highlights that this goal comprises both having children and raising them in a humane and Christian manner.³¹¹ It depends on raising children in a way that helps them learn how to love, and this can only happen if their parents are making an effort to practise love in their homes and society.³¹² During family communion, which makes God's love known and evident, the family members learn to sincerely love one another and to serve the Church and the larger community.

The gift of life is handed down from parents to children and contributes to society through the mysterious force of love. The child acquires an understanding of being human, respect for people, service to others, and a sense of spiritual relationship that unites human beings only through the family. When the sense of love is lost in the family, the sense of the greatness of human beings and God also gets blurred.³¹³ The couples end up in the blindness that overlooks this love relationship and slowly get estranged from each other, letting the entire family fall into the gloom of fragmentation. Divorce, generally, is the end product of a process of

³⁰⁸ Kochappilly, "Family as the Foundation of Formation," 345.

³⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 18 (AAS 74: 100–101).

³¹⁰ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 19 (AAS 74: 101–102).

³¹¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1067–1068).

³¹² Ryan & Julian, *Love and Sexuality: A Christian Approach*, 148–49.

³¹³ Geissler, *Family Man*, 120.

estrangement.³¹⁴ It is often preceded by numerous little acts that cool down the relationship. Thus, we can see that the beautiful compilation of the family ethics in the *Chavarul*, which exhorts the Christian family to have mutual love between the couple as well as among children and to be united in heart and mind,³¹⁵ is still relevant today and conveys the profound message that love is the foundation of family ethics.

4.3.2.2 Strengthening of Family Relationships

Chavara emphasizes in the *Chavarul* the need to keep up good relationships with the members of one's own family and others. He instructs families to have God-fearing people as their friends, and not to go from door to door seeking news about others.³¹⁶ By putting forward this, Chavara intends that the strength of the family depends on the unity and love of the parents and children, as well as their faith life. A crisis in a couple's relationship destabilizes the family and may lead through separation and divorce to serious consequences for adults, children, and society as a whole, which weaken their individual and social bonds.³¹⁷ For this reason, Chavara advises families to maintain good relationships with their own family members and others in order for everyone to experience the strong bond between them and to discover their purpose in life.

Healthy family relationships can foster a feeling of love and security in all family members. It can be one of the greatest blessings parents can give to their children and other family members—a nurturing and caring environment that helps them grow into well-balanced and happy adults. As life turns full circle, kids often have the chance to repay the gift by taking care of their aging parents. Communication, quality time, appreciation, treating one another with respect, and teamwork are some of the essentials in building a strong and supportive family.³¹⁸ Family relationships can have the tendency to give birth to a violent personality due to lack of

³¹⁴ Goode, *After Divorce*, 56; McCall and Simmons, *Identities and Interactions*, 34.

³¹⁵ See references in the second and third chapters: 2.1.2.2 Unity of Mind and Heart, 2.1.2.3 Bond of Blood and Affection, and 2.2.1.3.1 Love One Another; Chapter 3: 3.1.2.1.1 Love and Interpersonal Relationship, 3.1.2.2.1 Covenantal Christ-Church Relationship in Marriage, 3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect, 3.3 Family: The Cradle of Love and Life.

³¹⁶ *Chavarul*, I:8, 188.

³¹⁷ *Relatio Synodi*, 2014, 10; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 41 (AAS 108: 326).

³¹⁸ Raina, "Family Relationship—Importance and How to Build Healthy Relationship." [Online]

communication, defensive predominating attitudes, lack of mutual support, absence of family activities that encourage participation, frequently conflicted and violent parental relationships, and hostile relationships between parents and children in the family.³¹⁹ This violence within the family becomes a breeding ground of resentment and hatred in the most basic human relationships.

Chavara cautions parents against the extremes in their parenting, claiming that both excessive strictness and tolerance are bad for children. He admonishes that parents should set an example to children by their mutual respect, which emerges from their mutual love.³²⁰ For the love between husband and wife is a manifestation of God's love and faithfulness, which were given to humankind once and for all in the person of Jesus Christ, and are made visible in the Church.³²¹ Therefore, loving each other in the most complete and profound way is the vocation and fundamental option of couples.³²² This conjugal love between partners, which is a reflection of God's love, is the essence of marriage. The self-giving demanded by this conjugal love encompasses the entire individual, including the affections and emotions, mind and will, and personal freedom.³²³

When Chavara instructs father to respect mother and mother to respect father,³²⁴ there is an indication to give equal respect to one another, particularly women. Chavara recognizes the hardships and exploitation faced by women in the family, in particular the years-long abuse, harassment, and humiliation that violate their dignity, and cautions the husbands to respect their wives and, vis-à-vis, and set an example for the children. Through this precept, Chavara proposes a solution for the issues confronted by women in the family and society due to patriarchy, gender inequality, and dowry system. Its theological implications are given in detail in the third Chapter of this book.³²⁵

³¹⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 51 (AAS 108: 331–32).

³²⁰ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³²¹ Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, 30.

³²² Attard, "Can Marriage Make You a Saint?," 211.

³²³ Attard, "Can Marriage Make You a Saint?," 217.

³²⁴ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³²⁵ Theological implications of Issues with patriarchy, gender inequality, and dowry are given in detail in the third chapter: 3.1.1 Family as the Image of Heaven, and 3.2.4 Family: The School of Mutual Love and Respect.

Chavara says that fighting between children should not lead to quarrels among the elderly. Those elderly people, who cannot accept their children being slighted or hurt by someone else, are also childish in their reaction.³²⁶ By giving them this guidance, Chavara warns the parents not to be childish by seeking vengeance for their kids' little grievances against their classmates, neighbours, or the discipline they receive from the teacher. When older people enter the situation, a fight that started out for the benefit of the kids will turn into a fight between the kid's parents and breed bitterness. Instead, he teaches them to correct their children when they go wrong, to respect the dignity of everyone, to forgive the faults of others, and to deal with them gently. This precept can assist the single parent families and nuclear and working Parents' families, to face their challenges by fostering their close relationships.³²⁷

In this way, when we analyse the prevailing problems in family relationships in our times, in the light of the *Chavarul*, we find that the maxims given by Chavara as a family code are of great help in strengthening the severed relationships in family.

4.3.2.3 Love-Based Justice

In the *Chavarul*, Chavara exhorts the families to be generous in their almsgiving without letting down even a single person who approaches them for help. Chavara's sense of social justice, enveloped with true charity towards the poor and needy, is explicit in his exhortation about the payment of just wages to labourers in due time. He also instructed them that the postponement of payments was to be condemned as a sin. He cautions families against the insolent attitude of belittling or troubling the poor, for, God accounts for their tears.³²⁸ He claims that doing business jeopardises both one's soul and one's wealth. However, he does not forbid business in itself, but the treachery that sometimes accompanies this kind of profession. But, if business is the only means of their livelihood, he asks them to pursue it with due care, honesty, and justice.³²⁹ He also reminds them that they should take care of the conduct and spiritual welfare of the servants

³²⁶ *Chavarul*, II:13, 199.

³²⁷ The theological implications of single parent families and nuclear and working parents' families are discussed in the third chapter: 3.2.6.2 Christian Forgiveness and 3.3.2.3 Love is Forgiving.

³²⁸ *Chavarul*, I:18, 192.

³²⁹ *Chavarul*, I:13, 190.

employed in the family.³³⁰ Through his various precepts in the *Chavarul*, Chavara's concern for the human dignity of those on the peripheries is made explicit. The excerpts from the *Chavarul* with regard to this topic are paraphrased for our study. Chavara exhorts fathers to teach children by their example to love and respect their mothers, who are often considered subordinate in the family.³³¹ In another instance, we find him highlighting the preciousness of children as valuable gifts from God.³³² He further admonishes that we must never humiliate or trouble the poor for fear of God, who would seek retribution on account of their tears.³³³

God, the supreme Creator, has created everything on this earth. He created human beings in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:27). Thus, in spite of being the mere work of the hands of the great Designer, our human dignity is all the more raised to the greater status of divine dignity as being created in God's image and likeness, which should not be lessened or belittled by the trivial differences based on the person's gender, occupation, economic or social status. Thus, the excerpts from the *Chavarul* with regard to social justice serve as a manual for acknowledging the human dignity of all and for leading a happy life in harmony with all our fellow beings.

In the above-mentioned precepts of the *Chavarul*, we see Chavara as a prophet of justice due to his just dealings with others, particularly the poor. He insisted that justice was to be followed strictly in a Christian family. His precepts on justice point out the fact that the world indeed stands in need of liberation from the enslavement of social injustices resulting from massive poverty and other social problems. The negative consequences of it have influenced our minds, resulting in life principles that are variants of the Gospel values and are extremely destructive to human civilization. It has an impact on the human person as an individual and as a society, not only in business but in all aspects of life.³³⁴

Thomas Aquinas affirms that one will act justly only when one fulfils the duty towards others justly. He says, "indebtedness is most clearly present in matters of justice, since justice has reference to another person... In matters involving other people, it is evident that he is under obligation to render to

³³⁰ *Chavarul*, I:23, 195.

³³¹ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³³² *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

³³³ *Chavarul*, I:18, 192.

³³⁴ Kumar, "The Formation of Conscience in the Context of Globalization," 771-72.

them whatever he owes them.”³³⁵ As Pope John XXIII asserts, people have rights as individuals and as a group. “Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and finally the necessary social services.”³³⁶ One needs to respect and give these rights to one’s neighbour. That is the duty of the individual person and society—to give to each other what is their due. But “to claim one’s rights and ignore one’s duties, or only half fulfil them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other.”³³⁷ For example, rights are essentially coupled with duties. This sense of justice is what is meant by Chavara when he speaks of the kind of justice shown to all. These evils of injustice can be rectified only with the balance of true love and justice. When we consider all our fellow human beings as our own brothers and sisters born of the same Creator, our fraternal love and true charity would avoid every trace of injustice and oppression towards them. Thereby, we can resolve the various problems faced by contemporary families, like dowry, gender inequality, issues faced by elderly, etc. as discussed above.³³⁸

Chavara was well aware of his rights and duties towards this universal family, which included God as his Father, all human beings as his brothers and sisters, the Church as his mother, and the entire world as his own family.³³⁹ So, he made sure that none of the family members were victims of social injustice. Hence, the social justice teachings of Chavara—to be kind and generous in providing for everyone’s needs; to pay a just wage to the labourers and be careful not to delay; to maintain honesty and justice in conducting business, to be charitable toward the poor and needy; to care for the conduct and spiritual welfare of the servants, to treat women with

³³⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Virtues of Justice in the Human Community*, 11–11, 101–122: q. 122.2.

³³⁶ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 (AAS 55: 259–60).

³³⁷ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 30 (AAS 55: 264).

³³⁸ 4.2.3 Dowry; 4.2.4 Issues with Patriarchy and Gender Inequality; 4.2.5 Issues Confronted by Elderly Parents; 4.2.6 Economic Factors Affecting Families; and 4.2.7 Influence of Globalization on Families.

³³⁹ *The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel*, 48.

respect; and not to humiliate the poor and help us materialize the vision of a utopian society from its distorted fate.³⁴⁰

4.3.2.4 Forgiveness for Fostering Communion

Chavara stresses the importance of forgiveness in the family and rebukes those who become the cause of quarrels.³⁴¹ He asserts that the honour and blessing of a family lie in coexisting without any quarrels and being on good terms with everyone. The ability to overlook the faults of others and to forgive them is possible only for those who are really strong, prudent, and honourable.³⁴² Both of these counsels highlight Chavara's intention to bring a civilization of love in families. Regarding forgiving love, Pope Francis opines that a great spirit of sacrifice is essential to maintain and develop the communion in a family through forgiveness. Each person must be willing and open to understanding, tolerating, forgiving, and reconciling. He continues, "there is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension, and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wounds its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life."³⁴³ Once they accept God's unconditional love and recognize it as a gift of divine grace in the face of such circumstances, couples and families will be able to show boundless love and forgive others even when they have wronged them. Otherwise, the family will become a source of perpetual conflict and criticism rather than a place of understanding, support, and encouragement.³⁴⁴

Forgiveness is the key to happiness in a family because it keeps the members close together and protects them from bitterness. No relationship is as intense and close as marriage, and the family formed after marriage cannot survive without forgiving "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21–22) in their day-to-day life. Lack of forgiveness in a family can lead to

³⁴⁰ The biblical and theological explanation of these precepts are given in detail in second and third chapters: 2.2.1.3.4 Establish Justice to the Poor; 2.2.1.3.6.1 Teachings on Extravagance and Miserliness; 2.2.1.3.6.3 Business Ethics; 3.4.2.2 Justice; 3.6.1 Dignity of Women; 3.7 Business Ethics; 3.8 Work Ethics; and 3.9 Ecological Ethics in the Family.

³⁴¹ *Chavarul*, I:1, 185–86.

³⁴² *Chavarul*, I:1, 186.

³⁴³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 106 (AAS 108: 353).

³⁴⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 108 (AAS 108: 354).

estrangement and divorce.³⁴⁵ A marriage that is in crisis, close to ruin, and a marriage weighed down by mutual estrangement can be saved only by the spouses, provided that they are able to forgive each other and march with perseverance toward reconciliation. In a family, conflict between young and old, father and mother, or son and daughter, must be resolved with mutual understanding and forgiveness, by keeping away any pride and stubbornness.³⁴⁶

In another precept of the *Chavarul*, Chavara exhorts families to keep away from the destructive civil litigation that ruins them.³⁴⁷ Today, civil litigation has become a fashion for many families. Many people follow this vain trend, queuing before juridical offices only to add to the pile of pending cases that drain them of their money and patience. People often undergo a lot of mental struggles and face setbacks in their health in the quest to fight their cases. Even after getting the case closed in their favour, people do not experience complete peace of mind and are often haunted by their guilt feelings, as well as fear, and depression. Hence, Chavara warns families that, instead of going for civil litigation, choosing the path of peaceful dialogue and forgiveness would be a wise option which would spare the families from the above-mentioned loss.

Forgiveness is an essential part of a strong and healthy relationship that can be maintained by discussing problems or situations where forgiveness may be given. In particular, Chavara's precepts on forgiveness, which are rooted in the Word of God and which have theological depth,³⁴⁸ are indeed helpful in attaining the goal of fostering communion in our families and the society at large.

³⁴⁵ John Paul II, "Homily of Pope John Paul II at New Orleans on 12 September 1987." [Online]

³⁴⁶ John Paul II, "Homily at Liechtenstein, Switzerland on 8 September 1985." [Online]

³⁴⁷ *Chavarul*, I:2, 186.

³⁴⁸ A detailed biblical and theological explanations of these precepts can be found in second and third chapters of this book. 2.2.1.1.2 Submission to the Will of God; 2.2.1.3.1 Love One Another; 2.2.1.3.5 Avoid Meddling in Other's Affairs; 3.2.3 Family: The Sacramental Sign to the World; 3.2.6 Family: The Arena of Reconciliation; 3.2.6.2 Christian Forgiveness; 3.3.1.3 Love is Forgiving; 3.3.1.5 Love is Listening; and 3.3.1.6 Love is Suffering.

4.3.2.5 Charity as the Channel of Love

The *Chavarul* gives many guidelines that emphasise the virtue of charity. According to Chavara, the days that a person has not done any good to others will not be recorded in the book of life.³⁴⁹ He highlights the danger of accumulating wealth by forgoing charitable giving, because those who do so will have to spend money excessively for other purposes.³⁵⁰ Additionally, he counsels families not to lend money to others except out of charity.³⁵¹ He advises families to respect the dignity of everyone, even beggars, and not to let them leave one's home without receiving something,³⁵² as well as not to hesitate to give alms as much as one can.³⁵³ He went on to say that one should not be satisfied with attending Holy Mass on days of obligation; rather, one should spend the rest of the day engaging in virtuous acts such as listening to sermons, reading inspiring books, and visiting and caring for the sick, particularly those who are very poor and underprivileged.³⁵⁴

In his *Chavarul*, Chavara penned down the above-mentioned precepts with the intention of instilling the true spirit of charity in families. Charity is the highest form of love. Charity, “poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5), is the first and most necessary gift by which we love God and neighbour.³⁵⁵ It is charity, “the bond of perfection and the fulfilment of the law” that “rules over all the means of attaining holiness, gives life to them, and makes them work.”³⁵⁶ The infinite fullness of God is reflected in creation in its myriad expressions, and creation itself is *imago Dei*, a participant in divine love.³⁵⁷ For this reason, Chavara emphasizes the value of treating everyone with respect and love, being charitable in all aspects, regardless of richness or poverty, caste or creed. Chavara further instructs the families to share their wealth with the poor, which is a sublime form of charity which can solve many problems families face today due to poverty, consumerism, etc.

³⁴⁹ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

³⁵⁰ *Chavarul*, I:15, 191.

³⁵¹ *Chavarul*, I:4, 187.

³⁵² *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

³⁵³ *Chavarul*, I:14, 190.

³⁵⁴ *Chavarul*, I:22, 194–95.

³⁵⁵ Dreyer, “Love,” 616.

³⁵⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 42 (AAS 57: 47–48).

³⁵⁷ Dreyer, “Love,” 620.

Another precept on charity invites families to celebrate Sunday not only God-oriented but also human-oriented. Chavara urges families to observe Sunday integrally by doing charitable acts, such as visiting the sick and needy, serving the poor and destitute, and spending more time with God in prayer and spiritual reading. It shows the altruistic vision of Chavara and the horizontal dimension of the Lord's Day.³⁵⁸ This precept of the *Chavarul* emphasises that families are to be an evangelizing agent. Life in the family should "become an itinerary of faith and in some way a Christian initiation and a school of following Christ. Within such a family all the members evangelize and are evangelized."³⁵⁹ Believing and evangelizing, and in constant dialogue with the Lord, a family will take on an active and responsible role for service in the Church and in the wider community. In love, faith finds its fullest expression (Gal 5:6) and means of operation. The family must lovingly and actively engage in the life of the local church, particularly through the various pastoral initiatives that are undertaken. The daily work that each one carries out in the family and in the society is the way they contribute to building up of the Kingdom of God.³⁶⁰ They must be open to the needy of every sort. They "manifest Christ to others through their mutual love, their generous fruitfulness, solidarity, faithfulness, and the way they work together."³⁶¹ In the midst of life and the milieu of modern living, families should live their missionary and prophetic mission with courage and determination. Walking in this way, families can become a powerful witness and can assist other families which are going through difficult times as discussed above.

Every member of humanity is a member of the same family, where God the Creator serves as the father and all people are siblings who have a common ancestor. In this family, no one should lack access to basic essentials. Inspired by this ideal of universal family, Chavara urged people to practise genuine charity in their family and society so that all may share in the joy of plenitude and prosperity and there may be no one suffering for want of basic necessities. In everyday life, Christian charity is seen and experienced

³⁵⁸ Rose, "Family Prayer and Lord's Day in the Making of the Domestic Church," 131.

³⁵⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntianti*, 71 (AAS 68: 60-61).

³⁶⁰ Fernando, "Family as the Domestic Church," 156.

³⁶¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 (AAS 58: 1068-69).

in the care and concern for each member of the family, manifested in words and deeds toward other members.³⁶²

4.3.3 Parents' Role in the Integral Formation of Children

Since the early doctrinal formulation of marriage, the Church has envisioned a unique role for parents in the upbringing of the children. It has maintained the inalienable right of the parents to educate their children according to their religious and moral beliefs. In the words of Pope John Paul II, the fruitfulness of conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children but “is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual, and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world.”³⁶³ According to William May, the “good of children” refers to being “lovingly received, nurtured humanely, and educated in the love and service of God.”³⁶⁴ Therefore, it is the duty of the parents to foster the right family atmosphere that supports an integrated, personal, and social education of their children.³⁶⁵ More specifically, in a Christian family, which is founded on the sacrament of matrimony, children learn to know and worship God as well as to love their neighbour. In this sense, the family provides the primary experience of the society and the Church, introducing the children to both the community of citizens and to the people of God.³⁶⁶

4.3.3.1 Children: The Precious Gift of God

Chavara enlightens parents on the preciousness of children. He states that children are the sacred treasures entrusted to them by God Almighty.³⁶⁷ This precept from the *Chavarul* edifies us towards the truth that being created in the image and likeness of God, human life is sacred and inviolable in every state and in every situation. Life is a divine gift of which we are stewards, not owners. God alone has sovereign dominion over human life, and he protects it.³⁶⁸ No one can, under any circumstances,

³⁶² Regarding Charity towards others is discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity; 2.2.1.3.4 Refrain from Unchristian Conversation and Gossip; 2.2.1.3.5 Avoid Meddling in Others' Affairs; and 3.4.1.3 Charity.

³⁶³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 28 (AAS 74: 114).

³⁶⁴ May, “Marriage,” 666.

³⁶⁵ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3 (AAS 58: 731-32).

³⁶⁶ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3 (AAS 58: 731-32).

³⁶⁷ *Chavarul*, II:1, 196.

³⁶⁸ CCC, 2288–89; Häring, *Medical Ethics*, 69.

claim for him or herself the right to destroy an innocent human being. In other words, we must show care for every life.³⁶⁹ Pope Pius XII asserted, “every human being, even a child in the mother’s womb, has a right to life directly from God and not from the parents or from any human activity. Hence, there is no human authority, no science, no medical, eugenic, social, economic, or moral ‘indication’ that can offer or produce a valid juridical title to a direct deliberate disposal of an innocent human life.”³⁷⁰

As the sanctity of life is anchored in the fundamental belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, there is no such thing as a valueless life, whether at the beginning or at the end of human existence. Vatican II stated that all offences against life itself, such as murder,³⁷¹ purchasing the organs of the poor for resale or use in experimentation,³⁷² abortion, euthanasia, and suicide; all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures; all these are against the fundamental dignity and respect due to the human person.³⁷³

Chavara says that one who tries to end one’s life in times of despair and distress is not a strong person, because he or she tries to escape from life situations. Bernard Häring exhorts that human beings are not the sovereign of their own lives but only faithful stewards who have to protect and promote the fullness of their lives while serving others and promoting the fullness of their lives. According to him, the most shocking infidelity to the stewardship of life is to throw it away as worthless.³⁷⁴ The real strength of a person is seen in his or her weakest moments of life. It is the virtue of fortitude and deep faith in divine providence that equip a person to battle the storms of life and demonstrate inner strength. Therefore, the precept of the *Chavarul* which acknowledges the value of the children is an answer to the contemporary problems of abortion and child abuse.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 87 (AAS 87: 499–500).

³⁷⁰ Pius XII, “Allocution to Midwives.”

³⁷¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 27 (AAS 58: 1047).

³⁷² Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 123 (AAS 107: 896).

³⁷³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 27 (AAS 58: 1047).

³⁷⁴ Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol. 3, 35–36.

³⁷⁵ The biblical and theological perspectives of preciousness of life, virtue of fortitude, deep faith in divine providence, etc. are analyzed in the second and third chapters: 2.2.1.1.2 Submission to the Will of God; 3.2.2 Family: The Sanctuary of Life; 3.4.1.1 Faith; 3.4.1.2 Hope; and 3.4.2.3 Fortitude.

4.3.3.2 Character Formation of Children

According to a proverb, “when wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost.”³⁷⁶ Moral formation is the central theme of the *Chavarul*. According to Chavara, moral formation of children is the primary role of parents. It is the parents who instil virtues in their children and provide them a loving home.

4.3.3.2.1 Correction and Discipline

Chavara outlines certain precepts about the moral formation of children. He admonishes parents to discipline children in an appropriate way by avoiding both undue sternness and excessive tolerance towards children. He continued by saying that showing children too much affection would make them feel proud, and that using excessive anger and punishment would lead to lack of trust, be ashamed of themselves, and be intellectually incompetent. He also advises to give them corporal punishment, if necessary, only after making them understand the seriousness of their fault. He goes on to warn that using harsh language when scolding children would not only have no positive impact on them, but will also cause them to use the same language when they have children of their own.³⁷⁷

One of the most challenging tasks within the process of moral formation is correction. It is a skill to correct an erring person effectively and at the right time. The act of correction reveals who the educator is, more than the limitations of the one who is being corrected. Experience has taught us that not all educators are skilled in this area. Until obtaining a mastery in this, an educator is still in the process of learning to be an educator.

AL dedicated three paragraphs to correction, with the subtitle “The Value of Correction as an Incentive.”³⁷⁸ It displays the notion that correction is an essential part of moral formation. Children learn the distinction between right and wrong behaviour when they receive a suitable punishment for misbehaving. It teaches that bad behaviour hurts other people and that in order to make amends and undo the damage, one must repent, seek for forgiveness, and reconcile with them.³⁷⁹ However, the correction should be made in a way that children can perceive it as a sign of parents’ recognition

³⁷⁶ Graham, “Billy Graham Quotes.” [Online]

³⁷⁷ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198.

³⁷⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 268–70 (AAS 108: 419).

³⁷⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 268 (AAS 108: 419).

of children's potentialities and confidence in them. Parents who correct their children must also know the difference between a serious misbehaviour and the limitations and weakness that come with age. Not every act of wrongdoing requires the same type of punishment. Such a punitive mindset is not only harmful to the growth of children but also obscures the severity of misbehaviour. Finally, correcting someone should not turn into a mechanism to vent one's own frustration and anger. Parents must humbly acknowledge their own limitations and make efforts to overcome them while disciplining their children.³⁸⁰ In Chapters 2 and 3 of this book, the biblical and theological visions of moral formation of children are discussed in detail.³⁸¹

Another challenging task in moral formation is discipline. Nobody like being disciplined, particularly children and adolescents who do not understand, acknowledge, or appreciate the motivation behind it. They typically reject it because it stands in the way of their immediate happiness. Therefore, if moral formation to be effective, parents must teach their children to interiorise the discipline. Instead of portraying it as a restriction or an obstacle to growth, they must present it as a stimulus. They must strike the right balance between two extremes, caving into children's every wish and depriving them of all rights, dignity, and identity. Both strategies are detrimental and unhealthy for moral growth. When children are allowed to do what they desire they will grow up affirming only their rights, but without any sense of responsibility. In the latter case, children would be consumed by a sense of obligation and conformity, but they would not appreciate their own dignity and worth.³⁸² Even as adults, they will not enjoy the real freedom of choice. In this context, Chavara's maxims on a

³⁸⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 269 (AAS 108: 419).

³⁸¹ See in the second chapter: 2.2.2.1.1 Formation in Prayer Life; 2.2.1.2.2 Self-Discipline and Time Management; 2.2.2.3.1 Prudent Child Discipline; 2.2.2.3.2 Setting a Good Example in Front of Children; and in the third chapter: 3.5.1.1 Faith Formation; 3.5.1.2 Psychological Formation; 3.5.1.3 Intellectual Formation; 3.5.1.4.1 Inculcation of Values; 3.5.1.4.2 Fostering Respect for Others; 3.5.1.4.3 Cultivation of Freedom; 3.5.1.4.6 Media Education in the Family; 3.8 Work Ethics in the Family; and 3.9 Ecological Ethics in the Family.

³⁸² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 270 (AAS 108: 419).

balanced discipline, is relevant. It can be solution for the issues faced by parents in disciplining children.³⁸³

He further admonishes the elders to set good example to children by practising mutual respect and humility in the family and avoid the exhibition of their own status and wealth,³⁸⁴ and to be judicious in spending money for celebrations.³⁸⁵ Chavara gives these precepts to parents who wish to exhibit and keep up their status and wealth, giving less importance to unity, love, and charitable acts. In another precept, Chavara forbids parents from wasting time by collecting the news of the neighbours and advises them to use time prudently in discharging their own duties faithfully.³⁸⁶ Exhorting them on the sacredness of the home, he cautions them to refrain from inappropriate speech, unchristian talks, complaining, and uncharitable criticism of neighbours or anyone else on its premises.³⁸⁷ It is implied that parents must include the larger family into their love relationship. They must understand their language and refrain from criticism must care for them, and show hospitality towards them while maintaining the legitimate privacy of the home.³⁸⁸ It is the duty of the parents to dispose their children gradually to recognizing God's love for all people and to teach them to be concerned with the material and spiritual needs of the neighbours. They must bring up the children in such a way that they might grow beyond the safe boundaries of the family and be open to other communities of the Church and of the society. As a result, children will learn that their parents love God, each other, and them.

Children, who grow up in a family setting where they are loved, cared, accepted, and respected by parents, remarkably experience a strong sense of safety. In that case, if they are in agony in their lives and need to flee for help, they usually go home instead of trying to resort to drugs and alcohol.³⁸⁹ Such children will display positive values, such as honesty, self-confidence, and loyalty. Therefore, parents must place the greatest

³⁸³ 4.2.8.1 Problems Caused by Nuclear and Working Parents' Families; 4.2.8.2 Problems Faced by Singly Parent Families; and 4.2.8.4 Impact of Media and Information Technology on Family Life.

³⁸⁴ *Chavarul*, II:9, 198; I:5, 187.

³⁸⁵ *Chavarul*, I:6, 187.

³⁸⁶ *Chavarul*, I:7, 188.

³⁸⁷ *Chavarul*, I:10, 188–89.

³⁸⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 198 (AAS 108: 390).

³⁸⁹ Rienow, *Visionary Parenting*, 4–5.

significance on helping children find a balance between a strong sense of self and a healthy respect for others, to love themselves and to practice self-control.³⁹⁰ Parents, following the commandment of Jesus: “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mk 12:31), strive to help their children develop a positive sense of self, which will enable them to enjoy healthy relationships with others. Hence, Chavara’s instruction on the role of family members in children’s moral formation is incredible.³⁹¹

Regarding the moral formation of children, the *Chavarul* proposes a set of precepts that include certain instructions to parents about their children’s prayer life, vocation, morality, friendship, and social communication. He proposes an ideal time table for the daily routine that prioritizes strict observances of daily prayer along with regular study, meal, and sleeping timings.³⁹² Parents must encourage and give freedom to children to choose the right vocation in life instead of imposing their own choices upon them.³⁹³ It indicates that the primary goal of parents should be to instil in their children love of God that is holistic. Through their parents’ constant efforts, life witness, and instruction, children can be initiated into a spiritual life.³⁹⁴ This foundation of faith will enable them to understand their worth as unique creations of a loving Father, giving them the freedom to love genuinely and accept others.³⁹⁵ During adolescence, concerns about beliefs, meaning, purpose, identity, and relationships are crucial. The spiritual dimension has the power to integrate all facets of a person’s life and development.³⁹⁶ Spending time with children, living out their faith through their words and deeds, reading scripture, engaging in prayer and devotional practices, and performing acts of service and compassion are some of the most effective ways parents can foster the development of their children’s faith.³⁹⁷

Chavara advises parents to keep an eye on their children’s choices of friendship³⁹⁸ and their means of leisure and entertainment lest they may be

³⁹⁰ Grant, *Growing Parents Growing Children*, 56.

³⁹¹ *Chavarul*, I:8, 188; I:9, 188; I:10, 188-89.

³⁹² *Chavarul*, I:24, 195-96.

³⁹³ *Chavarul*, II:14, 199.

³⁹⁴ Wigger, “The Joy of Practice in Families,” 20.

³⁹⁵ Jones, “The Family in Formational Years,” 23.

³⁹⁶ Jones, “The Family in Formational Years,” 22.

³⁹⁷ Jones, “The Family in Formational Years,” 38.

³⁹⁸ *Chavarul*, II:6, 197.

led astray by the malice of this world which waits to prowl on them.³⁹⁹ Today, youth and children are greatly affected by the influence of social media. It is obvious that the total deprivation of the media is neither possible nor a healthy option. However, parents are obliged to guide and watch over their children's use of it.⁴⁰⁰

The diminishing of faith and moral values in the younger generation is an alarming concern regarding moral formation. This signals to the present generation to retreat to their origins, age-old traditions and culture, where families were considered the first schools of moral formation and basic education in life. In this context, the relevance of Chavara's precepts becomes more profound to illumine the families' need to mould the character of the young and the old alike.⁴⁰¹

4.3.3.2.2 Formation of Conscience

Conscience is the "voice of God," a voice echoes in the human hearts, as Vatican II calls it.⁴⁰² As the voice of God, it demands obedience. It inspires us with the ways of the Lord, revealing the "Will of God" in the present moment. While it is the voice of God, it also acknowledges that it is human and can make mistakes. *GS* states, "conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity."⁴⁰³ However, the same cannot be true for a person who cares little for truth and goodness or for a conscience that gradually becomes nearly blind as a result of habitual sin.⁴⁰⁴ Conscience, as the voice of God, has immediate access to universal moral principles. However, when interpreting those principles while making moral decisions in the present situation, a person can make a mis-judgement

³⁹⁹ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

⁴⁰⁰ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 76 (AAS 74: 173–74); Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, 25.

⁴⁰¹ In the second and third chapter of this these outlines the biblical and theological perspective regarding the moral formation of children. 2.2.1.2.2 Self Discipline and Time Management; 2.2.1.2.4 Enhance Healthy Reading Habit; 2.2.1.2.5 Work with Dignity; 2.2.1.3.1 Love One Another; 2.2.1.3.2 Acts of Charity; 2.2.1.3.3 Establish Justice to the Poor; 2.2.1.3.4 Refrain from Unchristian Conversations; 2.2.1.3.5 Avoid Meddling in Other's Affairs; 2.2.1.3.6.1 Teaching on Extravagance; 2.2.1.3.6.4 Content with One's Possession; 2.2.2.3.1 Prudent Child Discipline; 3.4.1 Theological Virtues; and 3.4.2 Moral Virtues.

⁴⁰² Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16 (AAS 58: 1037).

⁴⁰³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16 (AAS 58: 1037).

⁴⁰⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16 (AAS 58: 1037).

influenced by various factors such as family, culture, one's philosophy of life, religion, emotions, environment, and so on. "Human moral action is conditioned by the social, familial, and personal experiences that mould and give structure to the values a person accepts as his or her own."⁴⁰⁵ Every individual must therefore make diligent efforts to ensure that one's own conscience is properly formed while making judgements and decisions based on one's practical reasoning. The formation of conscience can have two parts, initial formation, which begins in childhood, and corrective formation, which occurs when a person realizes that his or her conscience has been influenced by various factors over the years, particularly those that are negative and destructive, whether vincibly or invincibly.⁴⁰⁶ Because of this, the conscience sometimes makes incorrect judgments or choices, which need to be changed to the right ones.

The formation of conscience in children takes place through the influences that surround them; and their notions of good and evil result from the moral atmosphere they breathe. To this extent, let us discuss some of the precepts from the *Chavarul* which throw light on the formation of conscience in children. As parents play a major role in the conscience formation of children, Chavara admonishes them to train children to speak the truth and avoid craftiness in their dealings by their own example of virtuous life.⁴⁰⁷ Chavara cautioned parents against exhibitionism, which is sure to be doomed.⁴⁰⁸ Today, the values of truth and righteousness are on the decline and have become synonyms for timidity and foolishness. One of the reasons behind the deterioration of values in children and young people is the lack of role models. Often, these children are brought up in families where parents encourage their children to learn craftiness as a means of surviving in the world. Pomp and show are some of the features of modern society. People in so-called elite societies spend a lot of money, even beyond their financial capacity, to keep up their name and status in society. Self-indulgent parties, extravagant marriages, luxurious living, etc. are some of the examples of this reckless squandering of contemporary society.

⁴⁰⁵ Wuerl, "The Bishop, Conscience and Moral Teaching," 129.

⁴⁰⁶ Kumar, "The Formation of Conscience in the Context of Globalization," 768–69.

⁴⁰⁷ *Chavarul*, II:10, 198.

⁴⁰⁸ *Chavarul*, I:5, 187; I:12, 189–90.

Chavara's precept for the ideal daily routine includes a daily examination of conscience.⁴⁰⁹ As a part of preparing them to receive the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, he also educates them on the importance of the sacrament of confession.⁴¹⁰ We must acknowledge that the sense of sin has significantly decreased when we consider the state of the world today. Lack of awareness of sin is one of the main obstacles in the formation of conscience. As Pope John Paul II says, "the current tragic situation, which seems to have forsaken certain fundamental moral values, is largely due to the loss of the sense of sin."⁴¹¹ Making moral judgements in light of their rejection of traditional and authoritarian morality is the main challenge these young people face.⁴¹² In Chapters 2 and 3 of this book, the formation of a right conscience based on biblical and theological understanding is discussed in detail.⁴¹³

The teachings of Vatican II encourage us to solve immediate challenges and assess moral questions in the context of the gospel and human experiences.⁴¹⁴ The experience of the entire Church as articulated in its magisterium and in the lives and experiences of the saints who are a part of the living tradition of the Church can be compared with one's conscience in order to confirm, purify, and perfect it. This task must be carried out in prayer with the help of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹⁵ In this regard, we can use Chavara's aforementioned teachings as a manual for developing a good conscience, which inspires us to lofty ideals of living such as truthfulness, authenticity, humility, purity of heart, hard work, and virtuous behaviour.

4.3.3.2.3 Sex Education

The *Chavarul* was written at a time when social and cultural renaissance had just begun in Kerala. Chavara's works portray a glimpse of the renaissance. It included very sensitive topics of human integrity, like sex education, that were hardly spoken of in public, during his time. Chavara

⁴⁰⁹ *Chavarul*, I:24, 195–96.

⁴¹⁰ *Chavarul*, I:19, 193.

⁴¹¹ John Paul II, "Address to the General Audience, Wednesday 25, August 1999," 2.

⁴¹² Leon, "Formation of Conscience: As an Integral Part of Religious and Moral Education," 8–9.

⁴¹³ In the second chapter: 2.2.1.2.3 Do not Steal or Keep Stolen Things; 2.2.2.4.2 Formation of a Right Conscience and in the third chapter: 3.5.1.4.4 Formation of Conscience.

⁴¹⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 46 (AAS 58: 1065).

⁴¹⁵ McTavish, *Choose Life!*, 14.

draws the attention of parents to the need to teach their children about sexuality as well as other necessary inputs of life in order to provide them holistic formation. His teachings pertaining to sex education can be quoted from the *Chavarul* where he says that children must be trained to be modest in their conduct and dress⁴¹⁶ right from childhood. He cautions parents not to take the ignorance of children for granted, to speak anything unbecoming in their presence.⁴¹⁷ Chavara also warns parents against letting children sleep in their rooms, asks them to avoid allowing boys and girls to share a room for sleeping.⁴¹⁸ He added that do not let youngsters stay at the homes of relatives, often they leave as angels, but return as devils.⁴¹⁹ He also counsels parents to always keep their young children in the vicinity of adults when playing with their friends. Besides, he says: “do not trust servants who are careless with the children; frequently these servants spoil them.”⁴²⁰ Chavara cautions parents against letting children move around naked even inside the house⁴²¹ as well as against dressing up girls in expensive costumes and ornaments to exhibit them.⁴²² These precepts indicate that parents have a responsibility to educate their children about sex in a suitable manner and at the appropriate time.

The topic of sex education is hotly disputed in today’s world. Educationists differ on *when, what, how, and where* of sex education. There is no consensus among the parents. In a multi-cultural and multi-religious context, pendulum of sex education fluctuates between distasteful taboo and liberal indulgence. One’s religious upbringing also has an impact on how they view sex, either positively or negatively.⁴²³ Governments and policy makers are thus unable to propose a curriculum of sex education agreeable

⁴¹⁶ *Chavarul*, I:19, 193.

⁴¹⁷ *Chavarul*, II:3, 197.

⁴¹⁸ *Chavarul*, II:4, 197.

⁴¹⁹ *Chavarul*, II:7, 198.

⁴²⁰ *Chavarul*, II:5, 197.

⁴²¹ *Chavarul*, II:3, 197.

⁴²² *Chavarul*, II:5, 197.

⁴²³ Dag Øisten Endsjø argues that the major religions of the world differ on the way sexuality has to be concretely lived. Cultural diversity and denominational differences within each religion play an important role in the diverse perception of what constitutes “sex”. Moreover, there are notable differences between the official teachings of religious authorities and the judgment and practice of the believers. Endsjø, *Sex and Religion: Teachings and Taboos in the History of World Faiths*, 23.

to all.⁴²⁴ In this context, *AL* advocates for imparting sex education to the younger generation and offers a wide range of pastoral guidelines. It acknowledges the difficulty of addressing this issue “in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished.”⁴²⁵ Sex education, often, is discussed in terms of ‘protection’ and ‘safe sex.’ Adolescents in fact lack the maturity, values, mutual commitment, and goals necessary for a successful marriage. Consequently, letting children use their bodies according to their desires would only encourage them to use other people to meet their needs and get over their restrictions.⁴²⁶

According to *Gravissimum Educationis*, children and adolescents need to have “a positive and prudent sex education.”⁴²⁷ However, in order to avoid impoverishing the language of sexuality, such an education must be viewed “within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving.”⁴²⁸ *AL* affirms: “the sexual urge can be directed through a process of growth in self-knowledge and self-control capable of nurturing valuable capacities for joy and for loving encounter.”⁴²⁹ The exhortation underlines the need to frame sexuality in terms of mutual self-giving and commitment. The young must be made aware of the important role that love, mutual concern and care, loving respect, and deeply meaningful communication play in sexuality. An all-encompassing commitment is shown by an authentic sexual union, which necessitates integral and generous self-gift.⁴³⁰ Sex education aims to provide people with adequate knowledge of human sexuality that can prepare people of complementary sex to enter into mutually enriching relationship.⁴³¹

Young people should be made aware of the fact that their body has its own language, which “calls for a patient apprenticeship in learning to interpret and channel desires in view of authentic self-giving.”⁴³² Often young people mistakenly identify sexual union with love. As a result, they are willing to

⁴²⁴ Nynäs and Yip, eds., *Religion, Gender and Sexuality in Everyday Life*, 50.

⁴²⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 280.

⁴²⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 283.

⁴²⁷ Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1 (AAS 58: 729–30); Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 280 (AAS 108: 423).

⁴²⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 280 (AAS 108: 423).

⁴²⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 280 (AAS 108: 423).

⁴³⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 283 (AAS 108: 424).

⁴³¹ Nicolosi and Linda, *A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*, 23.

⁴³² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 284 (AAS 108: 424).

offer everything at once, instead of having a sense of graduality. What sex education aims to address precisely is to help them overcome these confused and immature perceptions of sexuality.⁴³³ Such an education makes the young aware of the necessity of taking measures when learning about and engaging in sexual activity.

AL asserts that the subject matter of sex education needs to be suited to the age and maturity of children.⁴³⁴ Though it is somewhat general, it is a valid recommendation for families who deal with the digital world. The information we acquire through media is abundant and accessible to everyone. Distinguishing the good from bad is totally left to the freedom of users. Therefore, *AL* calls on parents to assist the young generation in cultivating a critical sense to deal with the onslaught of ideas, suggestions, images, and stimuli that come from mass media. They must be able to differentiate between messages that advance their growth toward maturity and those that limit their capacity for love. To do this, parents must use newer and more suitable terminology when introducing the subject of sexuality to children and teenagers.⁴³⁵

AL emphasises the significance of the virtue of modesty in this context, which the Church's moral vision views as a pedagogical element of sexuality. Although many consider it a "relic of a bygone era," Pope Francis affirms:

Modesty is a natural means whereby we defend our personal privacy and prevent ourselves from being turned into objects to be used. Without a sense of modesty, affection and sexuality can be reduced to an obsession with genitality and unhealthy behaviours that distort our capacity for love, and with forms of sexual violence that lead to inhuman treatment or cause hurt to others.⁴³⁶

Sex education calls for preparing the young to respect and appreciate sexual difference. In this sense, the first lesson of sex education is to help the young to accept their own bodies as male or female, despite all the understandable difficulties one might face in the early phases of sexual differentiation. When one perceives the human body as a gift of creation to

⁴³³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 284 (AAS 108: 424–25).

⁴³⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 281 (AAS 108: 423).

⁴³⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 281 (AAS 108: 423–24).

⁴³⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 282 (AAS 108: 424).

be treasured, there will not be any assertion of absolute power over one's body. Children need to be taught to appreciate sexual difference in other's body as a mutually enriching reality. Lack of acceptance of one's own body and the fear of sexual difference, instead, will lead to self-centredness and self-absorption.⁴³⁷

It is true that being biologically male or female is the fruit of God's creation. However, masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories. Sexual difference does not imply that each sex has specific personal or social functions pre-determined by nature. In reality, a number of socio-cultural, relational, and educational factors influence how one exercises one's sexuality. Therefore, the goal of sex education is to help young people avoid associating gender roles with sexual differences. A rigid approach to sexual differences would not help young people to appreciate the genuine reciprocity incarnate in human bodies. It will also prevent persons from fully developing their identity, freedom, abilities, and interests.⁴³⁸ In short, sex education should be 'relationship education' focusing on how to achieve long-term commitment.

The experiences of the contemporary world and the information shared by counselling centres help us to realize that Chavara was not a conservative person in sketching the boundary line for the youth and family through his dos and don'ts in the precepts regarding sex education. In fact, these precepts outline his farsightedness and practical wisdom to avert the misfortunes in the lives of children due to a lack of sex education.⁴³⁹

4.3.3.2.4 Respect and Care for Parents

Parents are visible God and God is the invisible parent. Emphasising the importance and the high status held by parents, Chavara advises children to respect their parents and take care not to make them sad or burdened on any account.⁴⁴⁰ To parents, he warns that they must not be indecisive or show undue regard for their children, even when they are grown up and have become erudite and competent. He counsels them not to entrust the

⁴³⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 285 (AAS 108: 425).

⁴³⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 286 (AAS 108: 425–26).

⁴³⁹ The issues related to the impact of media and information technology on family life is discussed here. Its biblical and theological perspectives are discussed in the second and third chapters: 2.2.2.4.1 Dressing Modestly; and 3.5.1.4.5 Sex Education.

⁴⁴⁰ *Chavarul*, II:16, 200.

management of the household affairs completely to them as it would often end in disappointment.⁴⁴¹

When it comes to the elderly, there are some cultures that show a special reverence and deep love for them. Rather than being outcast from the family or simply tolerated as a burden, they stay in the family and continue to play an active and responsible role, while still having to respect the autonomy of the new family. The elderly provides the vital function of being a witness of the past and a source of wisdom for the young and the future.⁴⁴² In many families, children are taught the rudiments of the faith by their grandparents. Many people find understanding and comfort from elderly people who may be lonely or ill but are able to instil courage through their loving advice, silent prayers, or the witness of suffering borne with patient acceptance. At the time when their physical energies and level of activity are decreasing, our brothers and sisters become even more precious in the mysterious plan of providence.⁴⁴³

However, some societies have historically treated the elderly in undesirable ways and continue to do so now as a result of the disordered industrial and urban development.⁴⁴⁴ The elderly assist us to appreciate “the continuity of the generation,” by their “charism of bridging the gap.”⁴⁴⁵ Very often, the most important values are passed down to their grandchildren by their grandparents, and “many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian faith to their grandparents.”⁴⁴⁶ There are a lot of resources that belong to the elderly. Through prayer and advice, elderly can enrich the world. Their resources enrich the home; its immense capacity for evangelization by word and example, and by activities eminently adapted to the talents of the elderly is a force for the Church of God yet to be thoroughly understood or adequately utilized.⁴⁴⁷

Pope Francis opines that, on the one hand, most families have a high regard for the elderly, surrounding them with affection and considering them as a

⁴⁴¹ *Chavarul*, II:15, 200.

⁴⁴² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 27 (AAS 74: 113).

⁴⁴³ John Paul II, *Letter to the Elderly*, 13.

⁴⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 27 (AAS 74: 113).

⁴⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Address to Participants in the International Forum on Active Aging*, 5 (AAS 72: 1035).

⁴⁴⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 192 (AAS 108: 388).

⁴⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Address to Participants in the International Forum on Active Aging*, 5 (AAS 72: 1036).

blessing. On the other hand, their loved ones frequently feel the pressure of providing the care that they require. He goes on to add that since contemporary society tries to eradicate all signs of death and dying, care and concern for people in their later phases of life are more important today. The elderly who are vulnerable and dependent are at times unfairly exploited simply for economic advantage. Many families demonstrate to us how it is possible to approach one's final stages of life by highlighting the value of one's sense of fulfilment and participation in the Lord's paschal mystery.⁴⁴⁸

As the Psalmist prays, "do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent" (Ps 71:9). Just as God asks us to be his means of hearing the cry of the poor, so too he wants us to hear the cry of the elderly. This poses a problem for families and communities because

The Church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less of indifference and contempt, towards old age. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elderly feel like a living part of the community. Our elderly are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life.⁴⁴⁹

In order to treat the elderly with respect, today we need a Church that opposes the throw-away culture by the overflowing delight of a new embrace between young and old.⁴⁵⁰

Care is one of the basic needs of human beings. There is an innate longing in every person to care and to be cared for. Care broadly encompasses concern, support, and the art of nurturing.⁴⁵¹ Understanding the insecurities and helplessness of aged parents, children must help them to conquer their emotional needs and to feel like a significant part of the family. The primary responsibility of a family towards its elderly members is to provide economic and emotional support as well as physical care.⁴⁵² With this point

⁴⁴⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 48 (AAS 108: 330).

⁴⁴⁹ Catechesis, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8

⁴⁵⁰ Catechesis, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8.

⁴⁵¹ Datta, "Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons," 149.

⁴⁵² Datta, "Socio-Ethical Issues in the Existing Paradigm of Care for the Older Persons," 153.

of view, the precepts from the *Chavarul* regarding the obligation to respect and care for parents serves as reminders of our responsibility to return their love and care for us.⁴⁵³

4.4 Conclusion

Modernization has brought about many changes in various avenues of life. These changes have also triggered a drastic shift in the modern family structure and its ethics. In this chapter, we have made an attempt to study the challenges faced by families in the contemporary milieu and the family ethics in the *Chavarul*. This study was carried on in three sections. With a brief introduction, we started by highlighting the positive qualities of modern families and then went on to probe the challenges and problems faced by them. Lastly, the third section dealt with the *Chavarul* and the present challenges of families.

The study on the challenges of family life today and the family ethics in the *Chavarul* highlights the relevance of the *Chavarul* in the settings of family life at our present time. The social renaissance and the advancement of science and technology have brought many changes in family life and its morals. The bright side of this transition is that it has brought equality in gender-based roles in modern families. Breaking the age-old stereotypes and cultural biases about the gender-based roles, the modern generation of men and women have stepped into different arenas of work and career that were previously reserved for a specific gender group. The economic independence of married women has paved the way to self-sufficiency. Women in today's generation have become more independent, capable of managing both indoor and outdoor chores on their own, as they have chosen to work rather than stay at home.

Even though the modernization of families has added many positive features to the family today, it is inevitable to overlook the many challenges and problems under which contemporary families struggle. Urbanization has brought a paradigm shift from the joint family to the nuclear family system that has led to the loss of cordial relationships and larger family

⁴⁵³ This precept in the *Chavarul* can assist the elderly who confront with many issues as they age, which are discussed in detail in section 4.2.5 Issues Confronted by Elderly Parents. The biblical viewpoint on this principle is provided in the second chapter: 2.1.2.4 Respect and Obedience to Parents and 2.2.2.4.3 Obtain God's Blessings by Respecting Parents.

support, socio-economic stress in handling the burden of the family, and ignorance towards the discipline of children with both parents busy earning their daily livelihood. Families with single parents and divorced or remarried people are the new versions of families in modern society, which pose the threat of deprivation of children of the psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development that is to be catered to by both parents.

The faith and moral values are declining in modern families as a result of mixed marriages and marriages of disparity of cult, the dowry system, suicide, neglect of the elderly, the impact of the media and information technology. Though the participation of women in business, infrastructure, various professions, and management has increased, patriarchy, gender inequality, and domestic violence still remain as unsolved questions to be tackled by women on their way to success and empowerment. Economic hardships are seen as one of the most common reasons for family conflict and disputes that disturb the smooth functioning of the family. Massive poverty and migration have given rise to growing violence, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, etc.

The *Chavarul*, the code of conduct for families, is of great use in chalking out solutions for various problems and challenges faced by contemporary families. These precepts present to us the model of the Theo-centric family. As the fear of God is diminishing and faith and moral values are getting distorted in the members of families today, many social evils like abortion, suicide, etc. have started to creep in. These evils can be conquered by having fear of God as the foundation of the Christian family, love of God as the true wealth, and devotion to God as the strength of the family. The love of God impels us to love our neighbours. With the technological explosion and modernization, the devotion to God is decreasing, and families have become more complex. Daily prayers, sacraments, and devotional practices will strengthen the families to foster true devotion in these circumstances.

Furthermore, the *Chavarul* emphasises a love-centred ethics for families. The love-centred ethics helps us to explore the family ethics that teaches us about love as a mandate for family ethics, strengthening the relationship, love-based justice, forgiving love, respect for human dignity, and charity as the channel of love. Lack of love in the family leads to division and disunity. As a result, Chavara emphasises love as a mandate to be followed in order to experience real *koinonia* by living together by the bond of blood

and affection in his family ethics. Indecent talk, unchristian conversation, grumbling, and uncharitable criticism, weaken the family bonds. Therefore, Chavara reprimanded the families against these negative tendencies and urged them to strengthen the family relationships and ties with their neighbours by dealing with everyone with true love. He exhorted the families to seek love-based justice in their daily transactions by forbidding any kind of treachery or scheming against the poor and needy.

Chavara's precepts teach us that forgiveness is essential to create a strong and healthy relationship that takes away our grudge towards the offenders and helps us free ourselves from guilt feelings, fear, and depression. The *Chavarul* teaches us to channelize our love through charitable acts towards the poor and needy. When we understand the true meaning of these precepts that highlight the works of mercy and charity, we will be able to negotiate the doom of massive poverty and suffering that is caused by the saturation of wealth in the hands of a few people and their deaf ear to the cries of the needy.

Chavara's precepts also highlight the parents' role in the integral formation of their children by respecting them as precious gift from God, through their teachings on moral formation, formation of conscience, sex education, and respect and care for the parents. The study of Chavara's admonitions on respect for life and its praxis helps us to change the fate of families and society today. All the precepts of the *Chavarul* converge towards moral formation that leads to the formation of a right conscience. Erroneous conscience is one of the major problems of today's youth and children, which is formed by the false teachings that surge in unchecked through various sources like internet, social media, bad friends, insincere relationships, and unfaithful servants. It is a parent's duty to keep a watchful surveillance over the sources that manipulate their children and counsel them on the right path. They must impart sex education to their children at the right age to mould them into more mature and responsible persons in society and protect them from becoming prey to sex abuse.

The different precepts of the *Chavarul* addressed to parents to lead a peaceful family life, the upbringing of their children, and to children with regard to respecting and caring for their parents, throw light on many dark shades of the contemporary families. Therefore, the family ethics explained in the *Chavarul* with their practical implications are of great help in dealing with the various problems and challenges of our present-day families. In

this way, the family ethics of the *Chavarul* become a mandate for the renewal and sustenance of families.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Family is the bedrock of every society. Every human civilization shows respect for the institution of marriage and family. Families are viewed as a life-long partnership of man and woman together with their children. At the same time, families are facing serious crises today. Though family problems were there in the past too, the depth and breadth of family problems have increased considerably. Families that break apart, suffer social and cultural decline in society. Moreover, many of the social problems today stem from family problems.

In this work, we have attempted to study the family ethics in the *Chavarul* which envisages Chavara's vision of building up a virtuous family and of imparting an integral formation of children. This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter has described the socio-cultural context of nineteenth century wherein the author, Chavara was born. This historical account serves to illustrate the idea of the socio-cultural factors that influenced the ideals of the author that led its renewal. This chapter also contains a brief biography of Chavara, which provides insights into his upbringing and family background. Through the ages, the traditional society of Kerala underwent continuous transformations that led to fundamental reforms in the socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres in the state. The efforts of Chavara were focused on reviving the family and restoring its distorted image. He established organizations that guaranteed equality for all people in all spheres of life and empowerment of the oppressed. For this purpose, he initiated educational institutions, print media, founding of the religious congregations, and charity homes. Thus, Chavara had the potential to significantly change the basic nature of the traditional society to a great extent. The biographical sketch of Chavara shows that various factors including his early childhood and upbringing, his seminary probationary period, his passion for God and people, all played a part in moulding him into an excellent pastor, a shepherd after the heart of God with the smell of the sheep.

Chavara's integral outlook towards society prompted him to evoke in people the awareness to become conscious of their obligation to care for others, to value all people equally, perceive the importance of learning, to practise justice, and to recognize the status of women in society. He also proved, through all his deeds as a sage, that spirituality encompasses

humanism and humanitarian service. His radical initiatives in the fields of education, literature, and charity helped to advance society, particularly among Syrian Catholics. He was a renowned social reformer who made significant contributions to awaken Kerala's social consciousness.

Following a thorough study of the historical setting, in the second chapter we have examined the family ethics in the *Chavarul* in the light of the biblical vision of family. The idea of the ideal family as the image of heaven is elucidated in the first part of this section where the *locus familia* is discussed as the most natural environment for a child's formation and its overall growth. The families are expected to serve as a refuge for the qualities, attitudes, and virtues that transform them into the imagery of heaven. The second part of this section converges from the general overview of the *Chavarul* to its biblical vision. In the first section of the *Chavarul*, the trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal relationships in the family are studied from a biblical viewpoint, which advises on family ethics in general.

The biblical passages that highlight our relationship with God are used to outline the trans-personal relationship. The *Chavarul* demonstrates that the family, as an image of heaven, is the basic factor of the Church and society. It exhorts the family members to have fear of God and to associate only with God fearing people to improve their relationship with God and carry out God's plan in their life. Despite all the trials and tribulations of life, those who submit their will to God's will, will find peace and solace in Him. The *Chavarul* also exhorts families to lead a life focused on the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist, reconciliation, and other devotional practices. The exhortations about self-discipline and day-to-day family life are part of intra-personal relationship in family life. We have seen here how the *Chavarul* illuminates the interior sphere of our personalities in accordance with biblical standards, which portray humans as God's image and dwelling place.

Chavara gave practical tips on how to live lives that serve as living examples of numerous virtues and values, emphasising the significance of being watchful with one's own eyes, thoughts, words, and deeds. Every family is given a daily schedule by the *Chavarul* in order to enhance their members' physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being as well as to cultivate a life of discipline modelled after the ideal family customs and standards outlined in the Bible. The subsequent section of the inter-personal

relationship describes the code of conduct we ought to uphold when interacting with others. The first precept in the *Chavarul*, love one another, invites us to love both our friends and foes alike expecting nothing in return.

The second part of the *Chavarul*, which explains how parents should raise their children, is divided into various facets of formation including faith, intellectual, psychological, and moral formation. Here, in his directives to the parents for the upbringing of their children, Chavara's far-sighted vision and fatherly concern for children are envisioned. The children, according to Chavara, are the sacred treasures that God has entrusted to the parents. In accordance with the biblical vision of upbringing, he provided them various instructions for the integral formation of their children. We can conclude that *Chavarul's* biblical perspective of family ethics is based on the Bible or, more specifically, that they emerged from Chavara's profound reflections on the Word of God. It is found that all these thought-provoking directives of the *Chavarul* compiled by him are still relevant in the present time.

The third chapter focuses on the deeper understanding of the *Chavarul* through the theological perspective in reference to the Church's teachings on family ethics and the theology of the family. All the precepts and their practical implications point to the single goal of re-modelling the family into the image of heaven for which it is predestined in God's saving plan. These theological reflections on the *Chavarul* show us the way of perfection to go to heaven in and through our families. The study of the theological vision of family in the *Chavarul* is carried out in nine different parts. The *Chavarul* elaborates on the concept of family by providing evidence that depicts family as the image of heaven. Various aspects of marriage are explained to describe the love and interpersonal relationship in the family, sexual life, procreation, unity, indissolubility, and the social life of the couples.

Having understood the theological interpretation of the concept of the family, the covenantal Christ-Church relationship in marriage and the notion of family as the domestic church are explained. Family can be sanctified through the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation. *Chavarul* stresses that reconciliation with God, others, and oneself in the family is one of the surest means of growing in holiness. Practising the virtues and living a life of Gospel values would make them a sign board in the world to

lead the people around on the right path. Mutual love is the supreme rule of Christian life. The total self-giving in love and absolute mutual fidelity of the spouses in the family becomes an integral part of God's eternal plan of salvation. Children are the result of the couple's love for one another and the upbringing of children is their right and privilege. *Chavarul* highlights the dignity of women and their significance as mothers in the family. We have also discussed the *Chavarul's* vision of business ethics, work ethics, and ecological ethics to be observed in the family. These theologically rich maxims of the *Chavarul* can be used as a guide for families to prevent many of the issues that are plaguing families today. In short, Chavara's advice to families resonates with the heartbeat of the Church's teachings.

Contemporary families have undergone several changes as a result of globalization, rapid change in technology, social structure, and cultural values. With this in mind, the fourth chapter highlights the "Relevance of the Family Ethics in the *Chavarul* in the Light of the Challenges and Problems Faced by Families Today." It also presents the love-centred ethics in theo-centric families. This chapter begins with presenting the positive aspects of contemporary families, including gender equality, economic independence of married women, openness to different cultures, increased intimacy between parents in shouldering the family responsibilities, and equal parental and child participation. The challenges and problems faced by the contemporary families are then brought into focus, which include issues with spousal relationships, deterioration of faith and moral values in families, dowry system, patriarchy and gender inequality, issues confronted by elderly parents, economic factors affecting families, influence of globalization, and problems parents face in raising up children.

After carefully examining various challenges and problems facing families today, the following section describes how to encounter these issues in the light of the *Chavarul*. When such problems surfaced in the nineteenth century, Chavara responded to them through the *Chavarul* in a unique way to maintain the stability and resiliency of families. This analysis includes the description of theo-centric families where fear of God is the foundation, love of God is the wealth, and devotion to God is the strength of the family. This section further unfolds the love-centred ethics in the *Chavarul*. It defines love as the mandate for family ethics. Finally, this section gives a detailed explanation of parents' role in the integral formation of children. It takes into account the moral development of children, who are priceless gifts from God. The parent's role to reprimand and discipline their children,

to instil moral values, to form a right conscience, to give sex education, and to have respect and care for their parents are further explained. The practice of the precepts in the *Chavarul* will help contemporary families to function effectively.

Major Findings of the Study

On the basis of this study, some major findings are drawn forth in order to highlight the relevance of *Chavarul* in today's family situation.

1. The major contribution of the *Chavarul* is its theological vision of the family: ““A good Christian family is the image of heaven.” This theological vision is rooted in the Holy Scripture. Though a definition and conception of family based on love was not so current at that time, the *Chavarul* in a revolutionary manner conceives of family as a reality founded on love.
2. The *Chavarul* proposes a love-centred family ethics. This was rather unique considering the historical context. Often, the procreative and legal aspects of marriage were given importance in philosophical, theological, and sociological discussions at that time. This love-centred ethics of the family helps the *Chavarul* surpasses its time.
3. Based on the theological concept of the family, a family ethics and a code of conduct for families is proposed by Chavara. It is applicable not only for Christian families but also for all the families regardless of faith or culture. This work is one and a half century old and is the first among such works in history.
4. The *Chavarul* provides even the minutest details necessary for the renewal and well-being of the family in its spiritual, moral, psychological, social, and financial dimensions, and for the integral formation of children.
5. The *Chavarul* presents that family spirituality is based on relationship with God, oneself, and others—trans-personal, intra-personal, and inter-personal relationships.
6. As already pointed out, the relevance of the *Chavarul* goes beyond its historical time and place, with its theological vision and ethical response to the contemporary problems. That is why even in the study of recent documents like *GS* and *AL* the *Chavarul* can be made use as a connecting link and cultural resource. Besides, today many of the families are fragmented due to various problems and challenges. The *Chavarul* can be

considered as the Christian manual which serves as a remedy to all these problems.

7. The *Chavarul* gives a comprehensive approach to the life of the family. The precepts given in the *Chavarul* are to safeguard the families from the possible disaster caused by lack of order, fear of God, peace, and charity among the members of the family. It also instructs the families to practice virtues such as love, patience, humility, relationships, industriousness, hard work, justice, obligation to observe the Lord's Day, etc. It is given as a testament and is made up of suggestions, recommendations, rules, and regulations that are helpful in building a good and strong Christian family.

8. The *Chavarul* challenges today's lifestyle and culture that have created in people the mindset that they can easily compromise their family values. Many people today value economic self-sufficiency and career more than their family.

9. The *Chavarul* sheds light on the value of hard-work and perseverance in life. It also forbids acquiring wealth through dishonest means and deception. It emphasises the daily practise of charity by carrying out at least one good deed each day and making it worthwhile to be recorded in the book of life.

10. Though written in the 19th century even before *Rerum Novarum*, the *Chavarul* shows a clearly developed sense of social justice. Even in the context of a hierarchical society of that time, it takes a strong stance against withholding or delaying the wages for the labourers and treating them unjustly.

11. Chavara's concept of formation of children goes beyond 'do's and don'ts'. He advises parents to encourage their children to read good books and monitor their choices of leisure activities. In order that the children may be protected from any harmful influences that can result from these unrestrained media sources.

12. The *Chavarul's* approach to sex education is far-sighted. Chavara reminds parents of their obligation to give proper sex education and moral formation to their children and safeguard them from any kind of disaster in this regard.

13. The *Chavarul* is the result of Chavara's learning from his environment, Word of God, theological studies, personal intuitions, and intense prayer life. Thus, it is a model for theologising in the context.

In the light of this study on *Chavarul*, I would like to propose a few suggestions for the pastoral care of families:

1. A formation in view of the natures of the sacrament of covenantal love-relationship is to be given not only to those who prepare for marriage but also from early years of catechism studies. This can help prevent threats to the exclusivity and indissolubility of marriage, and openness to life.
2. Marriage preparation programme should include the importance of living a God-centred life, the impact of daily family prayer on children, the responsibilities of parents in the spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and moral formation of children, the instilling of Christian values in them, enabling the creation of peaceful and harmonious families.
3. The lay faithful is to be given proper guidance and instructions on the Church teachings regarding various issues in family life, and actions against the commandments of God, etc., in order that they may develop good conscience. Such an attempt will empower and inspire people to live up to high principles of conduct such as truthfulness, authenticity, humility, purity of heart, hard work, and virtuous behaviour.
4. Parents should be given appropriate reminder and guidance on the sex education, especially in the current social context, so that children may be protected from potentially harmful situations.
5. Parents and children should be taught how to use electronic devices wisely and properly, since there are a lot of issues associated with the excessive use of them.
6. Classes on the social teachings of the Church may be arranged for adults and youngsters so that they might develop a special affection for the poor and the marginalized, and are discouraged from degrading or troubling them.

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APPENDIX

CHAVARUL OF SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

9.10. The First Letter Addressed to the Parishioners of Kainakary (*Chavarul*)¹

Almost three years before his death, Fr. Chavara, in February 1868, wrote this letter as a ‘Will and Testament’ to his parishioners. At that time, Kainakary was not an independent parish, but a unit under the Chennankary parish. There was a chapel built at Kainakary, where the faithful of that area had services, at times. Fr. Chavara writes this letter for the parishioners of this area. The letter reveals his intimate love for the people of his own place. It offers precious directives and guidelines for an authentic Christian family life and worthy Christian manner of rearing up children. It was first published in 1910 under the title, ‘Testament of a Good Father.’ Since then, this booklet had more than 30 editions, thousands of copies distributed and translated into more than fifteen languages.

INTRODUCTION

A good Christian family is the image of heaven. The *raison d’être* of family is that the members live together by the bond of blood and affection, with children duly obeying their parents, and respecting them and one another, walking peacefully before God and each one, seeking eternal salvation according to his or her proper state of life. The only sweet consolation for a person experiencing trials and tribulations in the sorrowful valley of this world is to belong to and live in a family where love, order, and peace reign. Likewise, it is most distressing for members to live in a family where order and peace do not prevail and where no one is concerned about the service of God and their own eternal salvation. How sad and unfortunate are the families that have no concern about orderliness in their homes? How many of such rich, famous, and respected families have been ruined? How often have the behaviour and attitude of these families led to quarrels, commission of sins, destruction, and death? Praying for divinely inspired clarity and peace of mind, I have framed these rules of conduct for families with the intention of their avoiding sin and destruction resulting from

¹ *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Vol. 4: *Letters*, Translated by Augustine Keemattam, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 2020, 184–202.

disorderliness. May I appeal to everyone to wholeheartedly follow and carefully enforce these precepts as a counsel coming from your revered ancestors!

PART I

PRECEPTS FOR FAMILIES

Love

1. “Love one another” (Jn 13:34). Forgive the mistakes and shortcomings of each other. If you do so, you will experience peace on earth and eternal reward in heaven. How lamentable it is to find a home where there is discord and acrimony between brothers and sisters. Our Lord himself has stated that every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined (Mt 12:25). A family that experiences discord and fight among its members will soon perish. If you are not ready to forgive the mistakes and wrongdoings of your family members, how will they forgive you? If they should forgive you for mistakes you may make in future, shouldn’t you forgive them today for theirs? If you love only those who have not harmed you, then you are doing what people of other faiths and total strangers who do not know each other, do. Should you voluntarily create more woes and difficulties than what our great father Adam has bequeathed already? Woe unto those who cause quarrels in families!

There is an instance of an old woman who incited several quarrels in her home. The devil appeared before her and offered her a bag full of gold and took her to the hell as his counsel, saying that she had successfully accomplished in three days what he had been unable to achieve in three years!

The honour and blessing of a family lies in coexisting without any quarrels and to be on good terms with everyone. Even animals retaliate against those who resent them. The ability to overlook faults in others and to forgive them is possible only for those who are really strong, prudent, and honourable. Once, while Emperor Constantine was walking along the road escorted by his royal troop, a man from the street came up and slapped him. immediately, his people sought permission to retaliate and kill the offender. The Emperor, however, replied: “If I do what even my lowest officer can

do, what merit is there in it? I, however, forgive him and that is the mark of the great might I have as an Emperor.”

2. Civil litigations ruin families. Even in the most just case, many a litigant has come to rue the fact that it would have been better not to have gone to court. No one has been happy or better off by having gone in for civil litigation.

3. Celebrating family festivals and other commemorations on Sundays and days of obligation is an evil practice that, finally leads the soul to ruin. Sunday is the Lords’ Day. Such devious habits and practices are the inventions that turn the Lord’s Day into devil’s day. Moreover, it is a deplorable custom, forbidden by God and the Church, for the bereaved family members not to attend the Church and to participate in other spiritual services on Sundays and days of obligation.

4. Do not make it a habit to borrow money, except for any urgent necessities; try to repay your debt as quickly as possible. Do not lend money to anyone except on the ground of charity. The wealthiest family is the one which is not in debt. If there are outstanding Mass obligations or any other debt left by parents or forefathers, hasten to fulfil them with zeal, as it is most perilous to ignore them. For, Divine wrath befalls on families burdened with such unfulfilled obligations.

Humility

5. Do not show off the status of your wealth. He who displays all his wealth is considered to be of lower status. Very often, the one who styles himself as rich will soon go begging. King David, being proud of his might and superiority, once ordered a census of his people; soon Divine wrath befell his people in the form of an epidemic throughout his kingdom wiping out a major portion of the population (2 Sam 24).

6. Be frugal in spending, and do not spend beyond your means in celebrating anniversaries and festivals. For, no one knows how long one can keep up such a style. The light of a mini lamp that burns longer is preferable to a torched haystack that blazes for a while and gets extinguished instantaneously. When Democritus, a renowned philosopher, was once asked as to who is the best among human beings, he answered: “The one who least exhibits oneself is the greatest.” A scholar once counselled a distressed man who had spent all his wealth on extravagant

feasts and marriages and had become a pauper: “Brother, if you had not burnt away your lamp during the day, you could have lighted it at night.

Relatives and Friends

7. Do not go from door to door seeking news about others. For, if you were to discharge your own duties well, you would not have time to peep unnecessarily into the affairs of others.

8. Do not contract relationship with families that lack order and fear of God. For, it is not the rich who bring goodness and delight into your family, but the orderly and God-fearing relatives. How many families have been distressed and ruined due to their regrettable association with rich relatives.

In France, a certain man had an only son. He made strenuous efforts to marry his son off to the daughter of an aristocratic woman. The marriage was, finally, solemnized on condition that all his ancestral wealth would be bequeathed to his son. After a while, his own son along with the bride’s family began to resent his lower status and, hence, he was dismissed from the household. He went begging and was forced to feed himself on the remains of the food thrown out of his son’s house during feasts and commemorations.

9. Do not entertain all sorts of people in your house, but receive only those who are well-mannered and God-fearing. As the old saying goes, “show me your friends and I will tell you who you are.”

10. Let everyone know that your house is not a place for indecent talk, unchristian conversations, grumbling and uncharitable criticism of neighbours or anyone else. You must know that punishment will befall upon you for entertaining discussion on the shortcomings and evil deeds of others in your home. There was a man who habitually went around speaking ill of others. He ended up mad and began to bite his own tongue which was infested with worms and boils; he eventually died an unfortunate death due to the resulting infections.

Industriousness

11. Do not become too materialistic and keep acquiring novel items; instead, try hard to improve the holdings you already possess. The wealth of a family does not lie in amassing innumerable possessions, but in their quality. An industrious man lived happily with a limited number of assets. Some envious people accused him of hiding some priceless treasures, and

took him to court. The king immediately ordered his assets to be catalogued and assessed. He was, however, acquitted honourably when he informed the court that his treasure was a small plot of land, which was transformed into gold as he had worked hard on it and shed his sweat on its soil.

12. Labour according to your status in life. Refusing to work is not the style of a respectable person, but would fit only the indecent, who do not have a family and progeny. Laziness is the mother of all vices; it ends up in inculcating bad habits such as drinking. Alcoholism is a reprehensible evil in the society and the worst act before God. Kathon, a Roman chieftain, not only ordered that everyone desirous of living in Rome should show his or her toughened hands resulting from hard work to merit the disposition but also decreed that the Nobles and the Lords carry on their person the tools of their respective trade when they are out on the streets.

13. Business is not only risky for your soul but also for your wealth. If there is no other option to make a living, you are not forbidden from pursuing business. It should, however, be carried out with due care, honesty, and justice. No unjust trader has been found to make steady and continuous progress in life. Riches amassed by fraud and deceit will melt away like snow.

There were two tradesmen who never prospered in their business despite adopting many tricks and frauds. One day they approached the confessional and confessed their tricks and frauds. The confessor advised them to desist from fraudulent and dishonest practices. When they acted accordingly, with God's abundant blessings, they prospered within one year.

Act of Charity

14. Days on which you have not rendered any good to others will not be reckoned in the book of life. Be desirous of others' love and respect than they becoming fearful of you. Let no beggar leave your home empty handed; likewise, do not hesitate, as much as you can, to give alms.

A man performed at least one charitable act on a daily basis as he was convinced that God the Creator has decreed it obligatory to render others some good every day. One day, while at supper, recalling that he had not rendered any good to anyone else on that day, he first attended to the matter at hand before having his supper.

15. Extravagance and miserliness are both sinful. Worms will devour the wealth of a miser. The luxuries of an extravagant will vanish like smoke. There was a man who spent generously on his household needs and gave alms according to his state and means. As he prospered well, he began to neglect charity and focused more on amassing wealth for himself. In course of time, he developed an infectious wound on his leg; he consulted many physicians and spent a lot of money on various treatment procedures. Then, an angel appeared and told him: “know that those who amass wealth by refusing to do charity will face inordinate instances of spending money.”

16. You do not require many friends; but choose one carefully from among a thousand. Those who do not love God will not truly love you either. David and Jonathan loved each other; united in one mind, they loved and helped each other genuinely till the very end of their lives. Their love did not diminish due to any trivial circumstances; instead, their close friendship grew stronger in times of danger and hardship.

Desire for Justice

17. Do not allow to keep stolen goods even for a short while in your house. The Holy Spirit has warned that a house harbouring stolen goods will go up in flames. Do not mingle with those who steal; for, certainly, they will not hesitate to steal your possessions. Moreover, you will have a share in their sin as well.

There was a man who became rich by stealing and indulging in other dishonest means. While on death-bed, he invited the will-writers on the pretext of partitioning his assets, and dictated to them the following: “I leave my soul to the devil.” His children were shocked by this, and they enquired of him whether he was in his senses or affected by delirium. The sick man, however, replied: “No my dear children; I am in my senses. Let them write what I dictate: ‘I leave my soul as well as that of my wife, who encouraged me to embezzle the properties of others, to the devil. I surrender your souls too to the devil; for, it was for you that I misappropriated these goods that belonged to others’.” Saying this, he unfortunately breathed his last.

18. Do not deny or delay just wages to labourers; for, it is a grave sin crying out before the throne of God. Do not humiliate or trouble the poor; for, God will seek retribution from you on account of their tears.

It is reported from the city of Leuven that there was a householder who was very rich. A poor widow and her four children were tenants on his estate. As he oftentimes harassed and saddened them, one day, having reached the end of her tether, the mother prayed on her knees: "Oh Lord, deliver us from this unfair and sad state." Instantaneously, the rich landlord dropped dead.

Fear of God

19. The most valuable possession of a family consists in fear of and devotion to the Lord. A family in which the fear of the Lord pervades will enjoy the fruit of divine blessings in this world as well as in eternity. Blasphemous language and vulgar conversations will fade away the brightness of a good family like dark clouds. As much as possible, participate daily in the Holy Mass. If it is difficult, take part in the Masses on Mondays for the souls in purgatory, on Fridays in commemoration of the passion and death of the Lord, and on Saturdays in devotion to our Lady of Sorrows. If all members from a family cannot attend daily Mass together, let them take turns, ensuring that one or two attend Mass every day. Confess your sins and receive Holy Communion at least once a month. If you cannot participate in the Novena prayers associated with major feasts and the feasts of our Lady, and the monthly devotions in honour of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph in the Church, you must recite them at home.

Be exceedingly careful to be chaste and modest in all your postures, whether sitting or walking, lying or playing. Immodesty is reprehensible both before God and the world. We would learn only on the day of judgment about how many souls have been lost in hell due to boys and girls roaming around immodestly dressed and their unchaste body contacts, which their parents do not forbid.

There was an extraordinarily modest boy in France, who, even when he was alone, kept his whole body, including his arms, wrapped under the dress. When he was told that, were he to be punished to the hell, he would be naked there. On learning this, he was awfully horrified and cried. Through the example of this boy, we understand how much he treasured modesty in his life.

Patience

20. Entrust yourself to the Divine Providence when you are faced with trials and tribulations, diseases, difficulties. He is not a strong person who is patient only when he is delighted. A devotee used to say: “In this world, everything happens according to my wish; for, I wish only that which is willed by God.”

During a house visit, when Saint Ambrose was told that the family had never experienced any illness or agony or sorrow, he hastened to leave the house observing: “Let us leave this house; for, Divine wrath will soon befall on this house.” Immediately, the house collapsed killing everyone inside. For, punishment is a sign of God’s love for us and it helps us to seek God during trying times.

Good Books

21. Scientific books of the nonbelievers spread ignorance and erroneous knowledge. Collecting pagan or heretical books or those containing lewd songs in the house is identical to hiding fire in haystacks. Parents shall procure for their children the treasure of books packed with wisdom and philosophical knowledge that enhance piety. As much as possible, you shall buy and build up a collection of such books in your household.

There was a beggar who was illiterate. Yet, he bought books out of the alms he received; he managed to get them read out to him by those who could read and conformed his life to the noble way of life enshrined in them. Thus, he gave an edifying example to many.

Days of Obligation

22. One should not be complacent with only participation in the Holy Mass on days of obligation; instead, most of the day shall be spent in virtuous acts such as listening to sermons, reading good books, and in performing charitable acts such as visiting and caring for the sick, especially those who are very poor.

23. Appoint only those who fear the Lord for any service at home. Ensure that their numbers are restricted to the minimum. Many are the homes in which the sway of the devil is established through the appointed caretakers. Masters should know that they are responsible for keeping track of their servants’ conduct and in assisting them in their spiritual welfare.

Daily Routine

24. Ensure that you go to bed and get up in the morning punctually. Everyone shall abide by the following timetable strictly: At least by six o'clock in the morning, ensure that every member is up and recites the morning prayers. Then, all those who are able should attend the Holy Mass. Have breakfast at eight o'clock in the morning and lunch at twelve noon. In the evening, after praying the Angelus, all shall commonly recite the family prayers, which shall be followed by half an hour of meditation upon a theme based on what is read from good books.

Do not interrupt the routine of family prayer even if some important guests or visitors turn up at your house at that time. For, while, on the one hand, you feel attending to the people visiting your home, you also feel the call of God, on the other; in fact, God is closely watching your choice. Hence, you should not fail in observing the virtuous act of family prayer; by strictly adhering to it, you set a good example for others. If they ridicule you, consider it to be a blessing. After supper at eight o'clock, you shall make an examination of your conscience and say the night prayers, following which you shall go to bed.

The head of the house shall ensure that these precepts are followed strictly. Read out these precepts before the members of the household on every Sunday and on the first day of every month.

PART 2

UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

1. Parents, you ought to know that bringing up your children is the most important thing and your primary duty in life. Children are sacred treasures entrusted to you by God Almighty. You should also remember that these are the souls that Jesus Christ has entrusted in your hands to sanctify them with His most precious blood and to make them His servants and, thus, to offer them back to Him on the Day of Judgment. If any of the children were to be lost in hell due to the fault of their parents, what a serious hindrance will it be for their salvation! Origen, a great theologian, has stated that, if the parents have been condemned to hell on the judgment day, due to the evil acts of their children, it is because God holds them responsible for the acts of their children. If you desire your children to be with you and be

helpful to you in your old age, ensure that they are trained to be good Christians in their tender age. If they do not fear and love the Lord when they are young, they will neither love nor respect their parents. Parents should offer their children to the Lord repetitively and submit them to the intercession of the Holy Family and pray for them often. God will receive a mother's petition as that of her baby.

2. As the children grow up, teach them to devotedly call on the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Let the children familiarize and kiss the image of the Holy Family and teach them to honour and venerate them. As they begin to speak, teach them to recite short prayers such as Our Father, Hail Mary, the Angelus, etc. How commendable it is to nourish their souls by these means along with the nutritious food that you provide for their body.

3. Do not let your children move around naked even inside the house. Do not engage in unbecoming conversations and gossiping in the presence of children. Do not even wrongly assume that they do not follow what you say. Children in Christian countries are not even told that they are born of their mothers; instead, in their tender age, they are told that the baby was sent from the heavens during a rain or that the baby was found in a well.

4. Out of respect for the elders, do not let children sleep in their parents' bedroom. Moreover, do not let boys and girls sleep in the same room; for, the devil will teach them what they do not know by nature.

5. When the children are too young, do not permit them go out of elders' sight to play with their friends. Do not trust servants who are careless with the children; very often these careless servants spoil them.

6. As soon as the children come of age, they should be sent to school. From time to time, parents should enquire about their progress in studies and also about the type of friendships they cultivate. Every Sunday, parents must review what they have studied.

7. Do not permit children to stay in the houses of relatives; for, although they leave as angels, many a time, they return as devils.

8. When children are seven years old, facilitate their confession after instructing them what they should know about it. Instruct them especially to be devoted to the Blessed Mother.

9. Both extreme strictness and too much leniency towards children are evil. While too much affection will make them proud, excessive anger and

punishment will lead to lack of trust, shamelessness, and intellectual incompetence in them. Before inflicting corporal punishment, prudently make the children understand why they are being punished, and honourably advise them along with rationing their food and, occasionally, making them kneel down. Pouring out abuses in the process of correcting the children will not only have any positive effect on them, but will only make them repeat the same to their children when they grow up. The mother should set an example to the children in respecting and honouring the father; so shall the father teach the children by his example to love and respect the mother. If the parents do not love and respect each other, their children also will not respect them.

10. Do not train children in lying or cheating, or other shadowy tricks, saying that it is normal and that they need to be cunning to survive in the world. When you come across their mistakes, rebuke and correct them. Teach them to hold truth and justice in high esteem.

11. Ensure that all children are at home by the time the Angelus bells ring. Train them to greet and kiss the hands of the elders and parents as soon as the family prayers are over.

As the children reach twelve years of age, a period of extreme caution in their development, instead of sending them to various celebrations such as anniversaries, feasts, marriages, etc., care should be taken to ensure that they are trained at home in some occupation proper to their age. Dressing up girls for festival celebrations or as bridesmaids for weddings is an insidious custom that originated in hell.

12. Proudly showing off the daughters by dressing them up in expensive costumes and ornaments beyond their status and means, as it is apparently the way of the rich and aristocratic families, ignites hellfire for many a soul. The most desirable adornment for a girl lies in her modesty, piety, silence, and control of eyes.

13. Fight between children should not lead to quarrel among elders. Those elders, who cannot accept their children being slighted or hurt by someone else, are also childish in their reaction.

14. When they come of age, children should be given full freedom to choose their state of life. For, it is God who resolves on their state of life and it is the responsibility of the children to make the right choice; it is not the prerogative of the parents. Many are the parents and children who wail

in hell owing to their mistakes in this regard. Hence, decision about the state of life should not be delayed for boys beyond sixteen and eighteen and for girls beyond fourteen and sixteen years of age. Their consent must be specially ascertained before marriages are arranged. Seek in every alliance courteousness and noble qualities of conduct than wealth and social status. Otherwise, instead of joy and happiness, it may result in incessant grief for children as well as parents.

15. Parents shall not be indecisive or show undue regard for their children even when they are grown up and have become erudite and competent. As far as possible, do not entrust them the management of the household affairs. For, many a parent has ended up in disappointment after having transferred the authority of the household.

16. Parents, ahead of their own demise, should take steps to settle their children in their own homes. Apportion the properties among the children when parents are in their good senses. For, discord may arise among the children on account of property division and the parents will be held responsible for the sins from such dissensions and conflicts among them.

Finally, dear children, you are bound by the commandment of God to respect your parents and to ensure that their minds are not burdened or aggrieved. For, you shall remember that violating the fourth commandment of God would bring down God's curse not only in afterlife but also in the present.

In Japan, a heathen kingdom, there lived a mother with three children. They could not take care of their mother the way she deserved, as they were extremely poor. In this kingdom, there was a rule that thieves should be invariably hanged and that those who capture and hand over thieves to the state shall be suitably rewarded. Being motivated by this rule and with the hope of providing better facilities for their mother, one of the children pretended to be a thief and the other two handed him over to the authorities for which they, in turn, collected their reward. When one of the wardens in the jail saw the two brothers compassionately bidding farewell to the thief and encouraging him to be brave in facing death for the sake of their mother, he enquired of him the reason for such kind of behaviour. The warden came to know that the person facing the gallows is the brother of the other two, who decided on his own to die for the sake of their mother's welfare. When the king was informed about this fact, he not only set the

brother free, but also decreed to offer maintenance to the mother till her death. My dear children, remember this incident always!

13 February 1868

Father Kuriakose Elias of the Holy Family, Prior of Mannanam and other Monasteries of the TOCD

EPILOGUE

My beloved children,

In flesh and blood, I am the son of Kuriakose Chavara of the parish of Chennankary. The omnipotent God most kindly brought me into this world. As I have been born in this family and from these parents, it is but natural that, in the order of charity and justice, I am bound to be grateful and to serve you. However, other than the few good deeds that have been done in general, there is nothing noteworthy enough that I have done for you. Hence, I bequeath to you this document in my own handwriting. This script will not perish even when I am dead and gone. So, I entrust this cherished treasure to you, my children of the Kainakari Church.

This is my last testament (will) given to you, my siblings and family members, and children both in the order of spirit and flesh. Let this be a mark of the fact that you are my successors. The countless favours God has bestowed upon you are not entirely due to your meritorious lives, but earned also by the true love and trust of your forefathers. Hence, you must ensure that you do not lose it! Do remember that I came into this world and that I left it by copying this testament by as many as possible to preserve and perpetuate it in your homes. Keep the original locked in a box in the chapel. On the first Saturday of every month, all of you shall come together and read it; this shall be a commemoration of my death anniversary; there is nothing else you need to do to remember me.

Lastly, every month, after you have read this testament, you may whisper a short prayer on my behalf: "O! Lord, keep the soul of thy servant also in the abode of the just.

INDEX

- Abode of virtues 217, 267, 272, 314
- Abortion 363, 364, 365, 448, 453, 461, 463, 471, 482, 487
- Abuse 48, 365, 366, 367, 433, 444, 445, 468, 480, 483, 486
- Acts of charity 143, 162, 163
- Adolescents 199, 298, 317, 366, 368, 374, 393, 400
- Adult children 317, 358
- Adults 55, 80, 115, 328, 360, 366, 381, 393, 399, 415
- Alcoholism 154, 157, 309, 310, 495
- Alphonsus Liguori 22, 109, 215, 217, 238, 253, 256, 257, 262, 483
- Amoris Laetitia* 27, 30, 31, 106, 133, 215, 218, 219, 220, 223, 224, 226, 229, 231, 233, 235, 236, 241, 243, 246, 248, 258, 259, 260, 261, 274, 282, 283, 284, 286, 288, 289, 291, 292, 298, 299, 306, 318, 328, 329, 332, 336, 340, 350, 353, 354, 361, 363, 368, 374, 375, 377, 378, 379, 381, 382, 386, 392, 393, 394, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 419, 438, 453, 459, 460, 463, 465, 466, 468, 475, 476, 482
- Appa* 15
- Asceticism 72, 74, 312
- Aspects of marriage 113, 217, 224, 233, 411, 413
- Atheism 318
- Augustine 25, 108, 109, 122, 222, 223, 229, 230, 232, 238, 250, 256, 258, 268, 270, 272, 273, 297, 375, 418, 422, 459, 477, 482, 491
- Biblical understanding of family 108, 122
- Bond of blood and affection 109, 112, 219, 234, 236, 379, 407, 491
- Borrowing money 176, 178, 212
- Business ethics 307, 308, 316, 412
- Care 54, 65, 67, 70, 73, 80, 82, 102, 115, 116, 121, 130, 164, 169, 174, 187, 190, 191, 192, 193, 204, 206, 209, 213, 215, 216, 218, 229, 238, 240, 243, 261, 282, 286, 290, 292, 295, 296, 299, 307, 311, 312, 315, 317, 318, 322, 329, 331, 333, 336, 346, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 361, 364, 366, 374, 381, 383, 385, 390, 391, 394, 400, 402, 404, 407, 409, 413, 415, 495, 501, 502
- Carmelite 15
- Caste system 38, 41, 42, 46, 50, 51, 52, 87, 174, 278, 303
- Character Formation 392
- Charitable works 237, 315

- Charity 63, 83, 89, 90, 101, 113, 119, 143, 158, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 176, 178, 211, 212, 216, 237, 239, 240, 244, 256, 267, 269, 272, 273, 274, 275, 284, 308, 314, 315, 316, 339, 372, 379, 383, 385, 388, 389, 406, 407, 409, 410, 414, 493, 496, 503
- Charity Home 89
- Child abuse 209, 297, 355, 366, 367, 391
- Child sexual abuse 366
- Childcare 331
- Christian family 18, 29, 32, 60, 63, 92, 105, 107, 109, 110, 111, 114, 147, 161, 187, 210, 212, 218, 220, 221, 233, 236, 237, 239, 240, 244, 254, 267, 284, 313, 316, 335, 371, 372, 375, 379, 381, 384, 390, 406, 413, 414, 491
- Christian forgiveness 249
- Christian life 80, 82, 210, 211, 222, 239, 247, 295, 314, 328, 377, 412
- Christian love 211, 217, 255, 272, 314
- Civilization of love 314, 373, 379, 386
- Code of conduct 103, 149, 215, 372, 406, 411, 413
- Cohabitation 31, 326
- Common Home 311
- Communion 18, 23, 77, 85, 92, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 139, 185, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 223, 224, 229, 232, 234, 235, 236, 237, 247, 248, 251, 252, 259, 264, 283, 298, 313, 315, 332, 334, 336, 373, 378, 380, 386, 387
- Compunction of the Soul* 27, 61, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 91, 105, 110, 136, 137, 152, 188, 194, 302, 306, 417
- Confession 76, 118, 119, 135, 186, 187, 189, 190, 215, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 398, 500
- Conscience 117, 147, 177, 191, 198, 201, 202, 203, 204, 212, 213, 215, 250, 252, 253, 273, 275, 276, 289, 294, 295, 296, 315, 316, 333, 346, 396, 397, 398, 407, 413, 415, 499
- Contemporary families 18, 30, 32, 33, 35, 95, 318, 371, 375, 378, 385, 405, 406, 407, 412, 413
- Correction 341, 361, 371, 392
- Covenant relationship 195, 313
- Covenantal Christ-Church relationship. 221, 234, 236, 411
- Cradle of love 217, 255, 314, 376, 378
- Cultivation of Freedom 292, 393
- Culture 40, 57, 86, 100, 155, 175, 183, 185, 199, 203, 287, 301, 302, 311, 312, 318, 320, 323, 327, 344, 348, 349, 365, 370, 396, 397, 404, 413, 414
- Cyber widows 370
- Dalit 78
- Days of obligation 32, 140, 141, 143, 211, 372, 388, 493, 498
- Devotion to God 152, 237, 315, 373, 376, 377, 378, 406, 412

- Devotional practices 63, 79, 82, 136, 183, 211, 370, 395, 406, 410
- Dignity 29, 30, 31, 38, 46, 84, 95, 97, 130, 145, 146, 148, 150, 151, 154, 155, 158, 197, 199, 200, 211, 221, 222, 231, 243, 244, 246, 247, 250, 257, 259, 266, 276, 278, 280, 287, 289, 296, 302, 304, 305, 309, 311, 315, 320, 322, 333, 340, 345, 347, 364, 365, 367, 369, 379, 380, 382, 383, 384, 388, 391, 393, 396, 406, 412
- Dignity of women 304, 305, 315
- Discipline 31, 33, 37, 61, 67, 108, 143, 144, 146, 147, 148, 185, 194, 195, 196, 200, 211, 213, 218, 246, 275, 282, 285, 286, 309, 321, 325, 331, 366, 383, 392, 393, 406, 410, 412
- Disparity of cult 319, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 406
- Divine Office 81
- Divorce 55, 121, 322, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 343, 355, 361, 368, 370, 381, 387
- Do not Steal 149, 276, 398
- Domestic church . 17, 29, 67, 215, 217, 218, 221, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 248, 254, 282, 284, 305, 313, 378, 411
- Domestic violence 318, 329, 344, 406
- Dowry 49, 56, 57, 60, 319, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 382, 385, 406, 412, 486, 487, 490
- Eco-friendly 191
- Ecological Ethics 310, 357, 386, 393
- Economic factors 310, 319, 352, 412
- Economic hardships 352, 406
- Economic independence . 97, 320, 321, 322, 329, 405, 412
- Economic inequality 351
- Economic issues 352
- Eco-spirituality 316
- Education 32, 40, 41, 46, 48, 52, 53, 54, 56, 60, 63, 66, 68, 69, 77, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 121, 191, 192, 193, 197, 198, 208, 209, 213, 228, 229, 238, 240, 278, 281, 283, 287, 288, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 310, 311, 315, 321, 322, 325, 329, 332, 337, 347, 348, 352, 353, 354, 357, 359, 370, 374, 390, 396, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 407, 410, 413, 414, 415
- Elderly parents 61, 121, 376, 412
- Encounter 15
- Equal participation 320
- Equality 320, 347, 360, 434, 457, 468, 469, 471, 485
- Essence of marriage 109, 225, 226, 227, 382
- Eternal salvation 110, 117, 210, 241, 271, 307, 313, 491
- Ethical Finance Code 172, 356
- Eucharist 80, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 147, 185, 211, 217, 242, 247, 248, 284, 313, 316, 398, 410, 411, 451, 464

- Euthanasia 340, 391
- Evangelization 17, 242, 284, 313, 374, 378, 403
- Examination 31, 147, 215, 252, 296, 398, 499
- Exhibition 258, 394
- Extended family 30, 317, 358
- Extravagance. 172, 308, 386, 396, 496
- Facets of Marital Love 263
- Faith 17, 31, 57, 61, 64, 67, 68, 78, 89, 92, 93, 96, 119, 126, 132, 139, 152, 157, 174, 178, 183, 184, 185, 186, 198, 203, 212, 213, 217, 218, 220, 234, 237, 240, 242, 245, 249, 261, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 282, 283, 285, 288, 303, 304, 305, 313, 314, 315, 327, 329, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 347, 373, 374, 377, 378, 381, 389, 391, 395, 396, 403, 406, 411, 412, 413, 487
- Faith and Moral Values 333
- Faith Formation 183, 184, 282, 283, 284, 289, 338, 393, 464, 472, 474, 487
- Familiaris Consortio* 17, 29, 215, 218, 224, 230, 232, 233, 235, 237, 240, 241, 245, 247, 266, 267, 283, 284, 290, 298, 325, 332, 351, 354, 377, 378, 379, 380, 390, 396, 403, 419, 451, 481
- Families today 21, 22, 33, 267, 327, 344, 406, 412
- Family 1, 3, IV, 19, 20, 21, 25, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 41, 42, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 70, 74, 90, 91, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111, 112, 120, 121, 122, 123, 129, 143, 144, 156, 158, 180, 183, 184, 185, 189, 199, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 229, 233, 234, 236, 237, 238, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 254, 255, 257, 259, 267, 268, 270, 281, 282, 283, 284, 287, 289, 290, 291, 298, 299, 300, 301, 304, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 313, 314, 317, 318, 319, 326, 327, 328, 329, 332, 333, 334, 338, 340, 341, 344, 345, 348, 351, 352, 353, 354, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 364, 367, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 375, 376, 377, 379, 380, 381, 382, 386, 387, 389, 391, 393, 394, 395, 409, 411, 412, 421, 423, 424, 426, 427, 431, 434, 437, 438, 439, 441, 442, 444, 445, 446, 447, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 488, 489, 500, 503
- Family breakdown 328
- Family code 107, 212, 371, 383
- Family ethics 18, 22, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 95, 103, 106, 120, 122, 161, 205, 210, 213, 216, 237, 316, 319, 379, 381,

Index

- 405, 406, 407, 409, 410, 411,
412, 413
- Family prayer 146, 147, 218, 282,
283, 284, 315, 316, 371, 374,
375, 377, 415, 499
- Family relationship 274
- Family system 55, 59, 60, 61, 129,
317, 348, 355, 358, 359, 405
- Fear of God 18, 121, 123, 124,
125, 127, 128, 130, 168, 210,
215, 237, 267, 316, 338, 343,
372, 373, 374, 375, 384, 406,
410, 412, 414, 494
- Fidelity 29, 59, 61, 93, 108, 130,
220, 223, 225, 226, 227, 228,
255, 259, 266, 271, 278, 292,
313, 314, 325, 332, 352, 412
- Financial 77, 158, 172, 176, 188,
212, 257, 322, 329, 330, 339,
342, 349, 352, 353, 362, 365,
372, 397, 413, 485
- Forgiveness 159, 253, 259, 341,
383, 386, 387, 469
- Forgiving love 159, 161, 211, 244,
316, 379, 386, 406
- Formation in Prayer Life 184, 361,
393
- Formation of children 18, 21, 61,
99, 193, 194, 198, 209, 213,
217, 281, 282, 285, 289, 300,
304, 312, 315, 337, 392, 393,
395, 396, 397, 409, 412, 413,
414, 415
- Formation of conscience 294, 296,
397, 398
- Fortitude 274, 278, 279, 295, 314,
338, 391
- Foundation 18, 32, 55, 63, 66, 73,
75, 82, 95, 96, 108, 121, 122,
143, 165, 183, 184, 185, 196,
200, 210, 217, 233, 235, 236,
239, 242, 257, 267, 270, 292,
309, 313, 317, 323, 339, 361,
372, 373, 381, 395, 406, 412
- Freedom to choose the state of
life 198, 207
- Gender 102, 112, 198, 304, 318,
319, 320, 321, 344, 345, 347,
348, 349, 355, 359, 360, 365,
382, 384, 385, 402, 405, 406,
412
- Gender Equality 468
- Gender inequality 344
- Gender-just society 347
- Generosity 51, 159, 163, 165, 178,
234, 259, 312, 325
- Globalization. 356, 357, 384, 385,
397, 447, 449, 465, 467, 469,
474, 476
- God-Fearing People 125
- God-Fearing Persons 127
- God-fearing servants 130
- Good conduct 198, 316
- Gospel values 313, 384, 411
- Gossiping 168, 212, 500
- Hard work 19, 21, 91, 143, 154,
155, 156, 157, 179, 211, 309,
316, 398, 414, 415, 495
- Harmony 31, 43, 61, 106, 111,
116, 117, 131, 143, 147, 158,
161, 187, 206, 224, 234, 236,
258, 272, 277, 281, 287, 311,
314, 316, 319, 376, 384
- Healthy Reading Habit 151, 371,
396

- High caste 45
Holiness 69, 97, 121, 125, 209,
239, 241, 246, 249, 297, 312,
314, 331, 388, 411
Holy Mass 68, 71, 135, 140, 146,
240, 315, 376, 388, 497, 498,
499
Homilies 63, 76, 77, 79, 101
Hope 19, 29, 57, 134, 178, 237,
267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 274,
302, 314, 328, 340, 502
Hospitality 142, 310, 372, 394,
404
Humanization 83, 314
Humility 61, 90, 100, 132, 138,
189, 209, 244, 251, 255, 257,
258, 260, 280, 285, 291, 314,
316, 353, 394, 398, 414, 415
Idleness 157, 211, 215
Image of heaven 21, 23, 30, 35,
82, 106, 109, 110, 125, 158,
198, 208, 209, 210, 216, 219,
221, 236, 254, 312, 319, 410,
411, 413, 491
Indian families 22, 317, 345, 349
Indigenous 15
Indissolubility 58, 59, 108, 217,
223, 224, 231, 232, 233, 266,
274, 313, 332, 337, 411, 415
Individualism 17, 31, 306, 308,
318, 357
Industriousness 316, 414
Information technology 321, 402,
406
Integral ecology 311
Intellectual Formation 68, 191,
287, 393
Interior 141, 171, 179, 201, 202,
211, 218, 224, 260, 277, 291,
294, 312, 410
Interpersonal relationship 224,
233, 235, 313, 411
Interreligious families 338
Intimacy between parents and
children 320
Intimate relationship 108, 109,
111, 112, 327
Invincible ignorance 396
Joint family 59, 60, 61, 129, 327,
348, 358, 405
Joy 395, 427, 438, 445, 453, 456,
464, 468, 481, 482, 484
Justice 158, 165, 166, 167, 174,
276, 277, 288, 320, 344, 356,
357, 383, 385, 386, 396, 430,
431, 432, 438, 456, 461, 465,
468, 469, 472, 479, 480, 482,
483, 484, 485, 496
Justice to the poor 32, 356
Kainakary 17, 29, 41, 63, 65, 89,
95, 105, 107, 491
Kalari 48, 52, 65, 68, 83, 152
Kerala 3, IV, 15, 19, 22, 23, 29,
33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,
43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50,
51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58,
59, 60, 62, 63, 72, 74, 75, 77,
78, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89,
90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99,
101, 102, 174, 175, 257, 287,
301, 303, 328, 333, 343, 398,
409, 410, 423, 425, 426, 428,
429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 436,
437, 438, 439, 441, 442, 443,
444, 445, 446, 448, 451, 452,

- 462, 465, 469, 470, 471, 475,
477, 481, 482, 486, 487, 489
- Kettuthengu* 78
- Koinonia* 112, 379, 406
- Leadership 15, 16
- Leopold 15
- Literary works 37, 88, 90, 91, 302,
303, 305
- Liturgical Renewal 80
- Lived experiences 132, 313
- Love 18, 21, 25, 29, 31, 58, 61,
67, 78, 82, 89, 91, 107, 108,
109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115,
116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 123,
125, 127, 129, 136, 139, 144,
148, 153, 155, 158, 159, 160,
161, 163, 164, 165, 166, 170,
174, 178, 180, 185, 188, 191,
195, 197, 198, 201, 203, 204,
205, 206, 215, 217, 218, 219,
220, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226,
227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232,
233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239,
240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245,
246, 248, 250, 253, 254, 255,
256, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263,
264, 265, 266, 267, 270, 272,
273, 274, 277, 281, 282, 284,
286, 288, 291, 293, 295, 298,
302, 303, 304, 306, 307, 308,
310, 311, 313, 314, 315, 316,
317, 319, 325, 326, 327, 330,
331, 333, 337, 339, 340, 346,
352, 354, 357, 362, 365, 371,
372, 374, 375, 376, 378, 379,
380, 381, 382, 384, 385, 386,
388, 389, 390, 394, 395, 400,
401, 403, 405, 406, 407, 411,
412, 413, 414, 415, 491, 492,
495, 496, 498, 500, 501, 503
- Love and Life 58, 254, 357, 376,
381, 466
- Love is forgiving 258
- Love is Humble 257
- Love is Patient 255, 341
- Love of God 338, 344, 375
- Love one another 160, 376, 379,
380
- Love-based justice 379, 406
- Love-centred ethics 319, 372, 406,
412, 413
- Makkathayam* 60, 61
- Malabar 15, 16
- Marital love 113, 246, 379
- Marriage 19, 29, 31, 32, 33, 42,
43, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61,
84, 107, 108, 109, 111, 113,
114, 120, 121, 125, 126, 207,
221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226,
227, 228, 229, 231, 232, 233,
234, 235, 236, 241, 243, 245,
255, 258, 259, 261, 263, 270,
292, 317, 318, 319, 320, 326,
327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 334,
335, 336, 337, 338, 341, 342,
343, 345, 347, 352, 358, 368,
380, 386, 390, 400, 409, 411,
415, 494
- Materialism 318, 357
- Meddling 158, 170, 171
- Media 19, 29, 31, 63, 79, 88, 101,
102, 152, 299, 300, 301, 315,
319, 323, 344, 345, 356, 358,
359, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371,
396, 401, 402, 406, 407, 409,
414

- Media Education 299, 341, 371, 393
- Migration 30, 31, 318, 327, 354, 355, 361, 406
- Miserliness 172, 174, 308, 496
- Mixed marriages 319, 334, 335, 338, 406
- Modest Dressing 199
- Moral decisions 396
- Moral formation 34, 183, 198, 210, 212, 213, 217, 281, 282, 289, 291, 304, 315, 392, 393, 395, 396, 407, 411, 414, 415
- Moral theology.. 22, 34, 216, 217, 316
- Moral Theology 17, 23, 113, 114, 250, 251, 254, 271, 433, 435, 436, 437, 438, 440, 441, 442, 444, 454, 456, 459, 462, 463, 465, 467, 468, 471, 476, 479, 480, 483, 485
- Moral virtues 217, 267, 274, 275, 295, 314
- Mystical growth 313
- Natural resources 51, 316
- Nature 23, 33, 40, 57, 101, 105, 109, 116, 123, 125, 142, 143, 147, 148, 170, 191, 223, 228, 229, 231, 235, 248, 249, 250, 263, 265, 308, 309, 311, 325, 326, 335, 336, 341, 352, 402, 409, 500
- Non-Christian dialogue 312
- Nuclear family 30, 31, 60, 327, 348, 355, 358, 359, 405
- Obedience 114, 405
- Observance of Sunday 240, 315
- Old age 181, 204, 205, 213, 278, 349, 351, 404, 499
- Openness to Different Cultures 323
- Palackal 15
- Parenting 32, 194, 197, 281, 310, 324, 330, 353, 357, 362, 363, 382, 486, 488
- Partition 59, 180
- Pastoral life 71
- Patience 132, 161, 170, 204, 255, 256, 259, 285, 291, 314, 328, 376, 387, 414
- Patriarchal system 47, 50, 60, 61, 101, 301
- Patriarchy 47, 303, 305, 319, 343, 344, 345, 348, 382, 406, 412
- Peace 43, 80, 114, 115, 116, 117, 127, 149, 156, 158, 159, 161, 169, 187, 201, 202, 203, 210, 218, 219, 244, 248, 253, 259, 287, 311, 314, 316, 321, 333, 346, 360, 372, 374, 377, 379, 387, 410, 414, 491, 492
- Pidiyari* 77
- Piety 65, 73, 80, 100, 126, 141, 143, 151, 154, 199, 200, 201, 204, 247, 299, 315, 333, 372, 373, 498, 501
- Poor 38, 42, 51, 56, 78, 83, 85, 88, 89, 94, 102, 126, 136, 140, 149, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 173, 175, 177, 179, 180, 240, 244, 271, 276, 277, 290, 308, 315, 328, 329, 330, 351, 357, 358, 359, 367, 372, 378, 383, 384, 385, 388, 389, 391, 404, 407, 415, 496, 497, 498, 502

- Porukara 15
 Poverty 321
 Prayer 184, 186, 187, 325, 361,
 389, 393, 473, 477, 480
 Preciousness of Children 363
 Printing press 47, 82, 85, 86, 88,
 89, 102
 Problems 19, 21, 23, 33, 35, 61,
 75, 105, 171, 176, 209, 212,
 260, 261, 286, 292, 311, 316,
 318, 319, 324, 328, 329, 330,
 331, 332, 333, 337, 343, 348,
 349, 351, 353, 356, 360, 362,
 365, 367, 371, 372, 376, 383,
 384, 385, 387, 388, 391, 405,
 406, 407, 409, 412, 413
 Procreation 108, 111, 113, 217,
 219, 223, 228, 229, 233, 313,
 363, 390, 411
 Providence 131, 255, 498
 Prudence 129, 267, 274, 275, 295,
 314
 Psychological abuse 366
 Psychological formation 23, 30,
 194, 213, 285, 286, 287, 315
 Public Education 83
 Raising up Children 357
 Readiness to listen 314
 Reading good books 140, 151,
 152, 154, 211, 240, 300, 316,
 372, 498
 Reconciliation 76, 101, 140, 188,
 189, 190, 211, 217, 218, 247,
 249, 251, 252, 253, 313, 387,
 410, 411
 Relativism 318
 Respect and Care for Parents 351,
 402
 Respect and obedience 114
 Respect for others 91, 284, 395
 Retreats 75, 76, 77, 79, 101
 Roccas Schism 77, 80
Role of Women 56, 84, 348, 444,
 478, 489
 Sacrament of confession 252
 Sacramental sign 217
 Sacraments 32, 69, 76, 82, 87,
 101, 119, 135, 139, 184, 190,
 210, 213, 222, 231, 247, 284,
 312, 313, 372, 377, 406, 410,
 411
 Sacredness of family 316
 Sacrifice 80, 81, 93, 118, 119,
 124, 137, 138, 139, 145, 148,
 205, 247, 255, 256, 263, 273,
 279, 306, 312, 313, 318, 325,
 372, 377, 386
 Salvation 69, 70, 73, 79, 80, 87,
 91, 96, 118, 119, 210, 219, 231,
 238, 251, 255, 256, 300, 314,
 335, 412, 491, 499
 Sanctification 61, 73, 134, 145,
 217, 241, 249, 284, 313, 314
 Sanctity 15, 38, 49, 65, 78, 101,
 187, 216, 231, 232, 278, 312,
 391
 Sanctuary of life 217, 243
 Sanskrit school 47, 63, 82, 83, 84,
 86, 102, 152
 School of mutual love 246, 376
 Secularism 17, 42, 318
 Self-Discipline 146, 393
 Self-giving love 114
 Selfless service 284, 325
 Sense of justice 107, 168, 174,
 176, 284, 316, 385

- Separation 43, 55, 58, 328, 330, 331, 335, 352, 361, 381
- Setting good example 213
- Sex 47, 198, 208, 209, 213, 223, 230, 264, 287, 296, 297, 298, 299, 304, 315, 318, 320, 327, 331, 343, 344, 369, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 407, 413, 414, 415, 489
- Sex education 298, 400
- Sexual abuse 31, 367
- Sexual life 217, 224, 231, 233, 313, 411
- Sexual pleasure 217, 224, 227, 229, 230, 233, 313
- Sexuality 113, 144, 209, 222, 223, 226, 227, 229, 230, 235, 298, 299, 313, 318, 320, 346, 399, 400, 401, 402, 488
- Sin 68, 110, 115, 118, 123, 149, 151, 157, 159, 164, 165, 166, 188, 189, 190, 200, 202, 205, 215, 230, 235, 239, 244, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 297, 373, 383, 396, 398, 491, 496
- Single parent 330, 358, 361, 362, 363, 383
- Single-parent family 31, 362
- Social communication 318, 395
- Social Scenario 41
- Social values 217, 290, 312
- Socio-cultural context 21, 22, 33, 34, 37, 318, 358, 409
- Sociology* 43, 441, 446, 470
- Solidarity 40, 49, 145, 244, 250, 284, 290, 312, 378, 389
- Spiritual formation 191
- Spiritual motherhood 346
- Spousal relationship 246, 326, 331, 332, 333
- St Thomas Christians 15
- St. Thomas Christians* 37, 42, 49, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 76, 77, 96, 101, 108, 426, 427, 428, 429, 431, 464, 465, 470, 482
- Submission to the Will of God 131, 341, 387, 391
- Suffering 92, 133, 137, 142, 143, 186, 255, 256, 261, 271, 302, 303, 328, 340, 346, 369, 389, 403, 407
- Suicide 333, 338, 339, 465, 489
- Synod 16
- Theological virtues 162, 267, 274, 314
- Thomas Aquinas 109, 223, 226, 230, 255, 257, 258, 268, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 280, 297, 339, 384, 430, 450
- Unchristian Conversation 168, 390
- Untouchability 38, 44, 86
- Wisdom 15
- Witness 15
- Youth 20, 32, 48, 100, 184, 212, 306, 323, 343, 355, 358, 396, 402, 407