

GEORGE KANJIRAKKATT



EMMANUEL NIDIRY

THE PROMOTER OF AUTONOMY AND UNITY OF
THE CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS

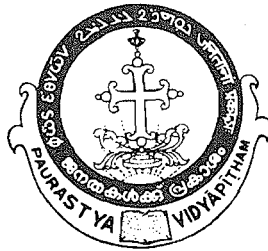
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19 March 2011

George Kanjirakkatt

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
ACO	<i>Archivum Congregationis pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, Roma</i>
AG OCD	<i>Archivum Generale Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum, Roma</i>
APF	<i>Archivum Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, Roma</i>
ARSI	<i>Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Roma</i>
CO	Christian Orient
JTS	Journal of St Thomas Christians
ETJ	Ephrem's Theological Journal
ICHR	Indian Church History Review
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Senza Numero</i> (without number)
<i>Sd</i>	<i>Senza Data</i> (without date)
<i>Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae</i> = <i>Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae atque Oceaniae</i> , 5 tomi, Olisipone 1868-1873.	
<i>Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide</i> = <i>Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide</i> , 7 vols. Edited by Raphaelis de Martinis, Romae 1888-1897.	

Fonti, II-VIII = S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale (Prot. N. 410/37), Fonti, Serie II, Fascicolo VIII, *De Fontibus Juris Ecclesiastici Syro-Malankarensium*, edited by P. J. Podipara, Vatican 1937.

Fonti, II-VIII = S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale (Prot. N. 494/37), Fonti, Serie II, Fascicolo IX, *Fontes Juribus Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, edited by P. J. Podipara, Vatican 1939.

Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar Rubr. 109 = *Delegazione Indiana Soriani del Malabar Rubrica 109*.

Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi = *Scritture Riferite nelle Congregazioni Malabaresi*.

Scri. Rife. Cong. Generale = *Scritture Riferite nelle Congregazioni Generale*.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

History is the record of past events and it is great individuals or optimistic incidents that give colourfulness or brightness to history. Though the concept of “Hero in History” is not fully acceptable, there is a great amount of truth in the dictum that history is nothing but the record of the deeds of great men. The history of Syrian Church of Malabar would not have been what it is now, had not a star like Emmanuel Nidiry risen in the cloudy horizon of nineteenth century Malabar. The history of the Malabar church during this period is replete with the marvellous deeds of Nidiry who was an enigmatic person to the European missionaries and misunderstood by most of them. Here is a documented study of this hero against the backdrop of the milieu.

The Suriani¹ Church of Malabar at the end of the nineteenth century was struggling to free itself from the yoke of Latin domination. Father Emmanuel Nidiry shines ever in the history of the Suriani Christians as a great promoter of Syrian autonomy and Malabar Christian unity.

In the ecclesiastical documents “Malabar” stands for the south western costal region of India, consisting of the present Kerala state in modern India. The Church of Malabar was founded by St Thomas, the apostle. The Christians of Malabar therefore are called Thomas Christians or St Thomas Christians. Their ecclesial identity was expressed as “*Thomayude Margam*” (the way of Thomas) which was maintained by keeping up a closer hierarchical relation with the Churches associated with the Apostle.

Until the end of sixteenth century Thomas Christians had kept hierarchical relations with the Chaldean Church and were enjoying an autonomous status with their Indo-oriental individuality distinct from that

¹ The word used for Syrians by all the ancient documents. For details see Chapter I, footnote 1.

of all other particular Churches. Their bishop was called the metropolitan and door of all India. But the effective administration was in the hands of archdeacon who was always a native priest and whose title was "the Archdeacon of all India." The St Thomas Christians were using East-Syrian liturgy with modifications in accordance with the culture and customs of the country. Their socio-political status was equal to that of high caste non-Christians.

Portuguese missionaries arrived in India in the sixteenth century. The Thomas Christians welcomed them as brethren in faith. Because of their ecclesiastical dependence on the Chaldean Church, they were accused of Nestorianism by the Portuguese missionaries. The Portuguese utilized their political and ecclesiastical powers to bring these Christians under the Latin rule.

Through the Synod of Diamper held in 1599 the Portuguese missionaries succeeded in separating the St Thomas Christians from the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch and to bring them under the Latin jurisdiction. On 20 December 1599 Angamali, their metropolitan See, was reduced to a simple suffragan diocese of Goa and on 4 August 1600 it was put under the royal patronage of Portugal (*Padroado*). Later in 1608 its archiepiscopal dignity was restored but the archdiocese of Angamali was practically considered a suffragan of Goa by the Portuguese authorities.

The Latinizing policy of the *Padroado* bishops met with great opposition from the St Thomas Christians. It culminated in 1653 when the majority of the Thomas Christians swore that they would never obey the Jesuits; *Padroado* bishops were Jesuits. This revolt is known to history as *Coonan Cross Oath*. After this unfortunate event, the Thomas Christians who constituted until then a united Church were divided into two: *Pazhayakuttukar*, the old party, who maintained the Catholic faith and the *Puthenkuttukar*, the new party, who accepted Jacobitism and subsequently the West Syrian liturgy. Later, they were again divided into different groups.

The *Coonan Cross Oath* caused a great confusion in the Malabar Church. Rome intervened and by the efforts of the Carmelite missionaries sent from Rome and native priests, many of the faithful who left the mother Church, returned to the legitimate authority. But they were reluctant to obey the

Padroado bishops. Rome, therefore established *Propaganda Fide* jurisdiction in Malabar without suppressing the *Padroado*. Thus the Catholic Thomas Christians were divided into two groups under two jurisdictions, namely *Padroado* and *Propaganda*.

The efforts of the St Thomas Christians for the unification of the divided community proved futile due to the indifference of the missionaries and ecclesiastical authorities. Their struggle for independence from Latin ecclesiastical authorities and their efforts to regain the lost unity reached the climax by the second half of the nineteenth century. The undisputable leader who coordinated the efforts for unification of the Suriani Church of Malabar was the well known hero, Emmanuel Nidiry. He dreamt that such a unification of Suriani Christians was possible only under indigenous bishops. That is why he fought for the autonomy of the Suriani Church.

Undoubtedly Emmanuel Nidiry was an undisputed leader of the divided Suriani Christians. He fought against Mellus schism and founded Syrian National Union Association of Malabar with the intention of converting the Jacobite brethren. Moreover, he succeeded in convincing the apostolic visitors and apostolic delegates of the real causes and solutions of the problems of Malabar Church and he was appreciated by them for his great zeal for the unification of the Suriani Christians.

The Suriani Christians wanted to have him as the bishop of their Church. For a while Rome too considered him a candidate for the higher ecclesiastical post. But it was very difficult for the then ecclesiastical authorities to accept the greatness of Emmanuel Nidiry. They painted him in black colours as an evil genius and a schismatic priest with a view to avoiding him.

In 2004 the Malabar Church, in full reverence and gratitude celebrated the death centenary of Emmanuel Nidiry, "the greatest Thomas Christian of all times". He had been listed as one of the fifteen greatest Malayalees (persons of Kerala) by *Bhasha Poshini*, a leading literary journal of Kerala in 1920. His contribution to the Church and society can be appreciated only with feelings of wonder and admiration.

Scope of the Work

The present work is an attempt to study scientifically the great personality of Father Emmanuel Nidiry, and evaluate his great contributions to

the Suriani Church of India. Therefore, this study concentrates on his ecclesial vision in the field of unification of the separated brethren which was later stressed by Second Vatican Council in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and his great efforts for autonomy of the Church, namely to free St Thomas Christians from Latin ecclesiastical domination. Therefore, this work analyses the difficulties and struggles which he endured for the realisation of the dream of the Suriani Christians to have bishops of their own nation and rite.

Sources

The main sources of this work are original manuscripts, namely the correspondence of Emmanuel Nidiry and the missionaries of the said period to Rome or elsewhere. We also analyse the reports of the authorities, like apostolic visitors to Malabar and apostolic delegates of East Indies. Besides, this work studies the statements and the correspondences of the vicars apostolic of that period and the decisions and judgements of the ecclesiastical authorities of Rome. Manuscript sources are chiefly from different Roman archives. We also make use of important books and other local materials, pertaining to the theme of this study.

Methodology and Limitations

In general the method of our study is analytico-synthetic that is to analyze all the available documents of that period and synthesise them chronologically so as to arrive at conclusions. Some of the documents and correspondence are illegible or already lost which partially affects our work. Since Emmanuel Nidiry did not write theological or historical treatises, we are forced to depend on other sources.

Major Divisions

After the general introduction the work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is a brief presentation of the history of Suriani Christians with great emphasis on the milieu of Emmanuel Nidiry. The second part of the same chapter deals with the early career of Emmanuel Nidiry as a deacon and a student at Verapoly seminary and ends with his appointment as the vicar of Kuravilangad parish to counter Mellus schism.

In the second chapter an attempt is made to explain the historical background of the arrival of the Chaldean bishop Mellus, the appointment

of Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor to Malabar by Rome and the joint efforts of Meurin-Nidiry team to prevent the spread of Mellus schism in Malabar. The negative response and the reaction of missionaries to the work of Meurin-Nidiry team have resulted in the appointment of Ignatius Persico as the second visitor to Malabar by Rome without calling back Meurin.

We deal with the appointment of the first apostolic delegate to India in the next chapter and analyse the role of Emmanuel Nidiry to convince the apostolic delegate and the *Propaganda* of the need of appointing autonomous bishops for the Suriani Church of Malabar. We discuss also the final steps taken by Rome for establishing two separate vicariates for the Suriani Catholics.

The fourth chapter unveils the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for the unification of the separated brethren and the foundation of the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar or *Nazrani Jāthyaikya Samgham* by Emmanuel Nidiry and the Orthodox bishop Mar Dionysius V with the aim of greater union of all Suriani Christians. He dreamt of unity and catholicity which recognize the equality of the various apostolic Churches.

On 20 May 1887 through the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* Pope Leo XIII erected two separate vicariates apostolic for the Suriani Christians, with two Latin bishops as vicars apostolic. Though they took possession of their vicariates, they deliberately delayed the appointment of the native vicars general, which was ordered in the directives of the Brief *Quod iampridem*. Finally Rome had to intervene for the appointment of the vicars general. Therefore, in the fifth chapter we study the reasons for the delay of the appointment of the vicars general by the apostolic vicars. In this chapter we also examine the conflicts between Emmanuel Nidiry and Bishop Charles Lavigne which led to the dramatic nomination of a separate vicar general for the Southist community degrading the position of Emmanuel Nidiry.

The last chapter evaluates the final attempt of Emmanuel Nidiry for the autonomy and discusses how he acted as a peace maker when the people reacted negatively and severely to the appointment of Mathew Makil as the successor of Lavigne. We also study the reaction of the new native apostolic vicars to the agitation movements. Lastly, it highlights the sincere effort of Emmanuel Nidiry in protecting and proclaiming the orthodoxy of Suriani

Church against the wrong report which was spread by some of the foreign bishops that the Church of Malabar up to the sixteenth century was under the Jacobite and Nestorian Patriarchs. Emmanuel Nidiry succeeded in proving to the world by convincing arguments that the Church in Malabar was Catholic from the time of the apostle St Thomas down to the Portuguese period.

The study ends with a general conclusion and a bibliography of cited sources and other works. We provide also an appendix, consisting of several important documents.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE EARLY ACTIVITIES OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY

The Church of St Thomas Christians or Suriani¹ Church of India remained united and retained their spiritual inheritance in a significant manner among the multi religious context² of India until the arrival of Portuguese missionaries who sowed among them the seeds of division in the beginning of the sixteenth century.³ The leadership of the missionaries created division and dissatisfaction among them. The frustrated Suriani Christians struggled almost three centuries to get rid of the Latin rule and thereby foreign domination.

At the end of the nineteenth century Emmanuel Nidiry, the undisputed leader of the Suriani Church, became the inspiring force in the struggle for liberation and unification of the divided Church. His vision, love for the Church and above all his genuine efforts for the unity and autonomy of the Suriani Church have secured him the title the *Mahātma* or Father of the Suriani Church. This chapter is a brief unfolding of *the Suriani Church of India* during the epoch of Emmanuel Nidiry, which is divided into three sections: the Eastern period, the Western period and the Suriani Church of the nineteenth century. Lastly we will study the early activities of Emmanuel Nidiry.

¹ Before deriving the present name Syro-Malabar Church the Christians of India were known as Suriani Christians. It is related to their liturgical language Syriac which was used from the beginning. It is important to note that this Christian Community is known by different names such as St Thomas Christians of Malabar, Mar Thoma Christians, Syrians, Syrians of Malabar, Suriani, Malabar Suriani, Malabar Chaldeans, Chaldeans of Malabar, Syro-Chaldeans, Nazaranis and Syro-Malabarians. Cf. F. THONIPPARA, *St Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, Bangalore 1999, 4; C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India: Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops (1877-1896)*, Kottayam 1995, 1; L. K. ANANTHAKRISHNA AYYAR, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam 1926, 1. On 1993 this Church became Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, headed by Major Archbishop. Cf. AAS, 85 (1993), 398-399.

² APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 386, f. 294^B, letter of Archdeacon Geevarghese to the Pope on 1 December 1624.

³ L. K. ANANTHAKRISHNA AYYAR, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, 243.

1. The Eastern Period

1.1. The Origin and the Geographical Setting of the Suriani Church

The Christians of Malabar firmly believe that their Church was founded by the apostle Thomas.⁴ He is believed to have landed at Maliankara near Muziris in 52 A. D.⁵ The particular conference of the *Propaganda Fide* on 5 December 1689 admitted that the Church of Malabar is as old as Christianity and the Christians were practising the sacrament of baptism for the last seventeen centuries.⁶ There are some who disbelieve or deny the St Thomas tradition; unfortunately we do not have any ancient written document other than the archaeological evidences and still living traditions which have been uninterruptedly transmitted from generation to generation⁷ and the existing community to substantiate it.⁸

According to Giacinto de Magistris, a Jesuit priest, "It is really marvellous and above all human imagination that these Christians, like roses amidst the thorns, among much idolatry, always preserved and maintained the adoration of the holy cross which was mocked and derided by the gentiles."⁹

In the Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* published on 6 November 1999 the Pope John Paul II affirmed that:

⁴ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 233, f. 56^r, "the Christians of Malabar (Serra) strongly believe that they were converted by the Apostle Thomas and though they live even among the non Christians and under the non Christian kings, they strictly followed the same faith, traditions and liturgies of their ancestors." Report of the apostolic commissary Hyacinth of Vincent OCD in 1658. Original in Portuguese.

⁵ M. MUNDADAN, *Traditions of the St Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 1970, 5.

⁶ APF, *Congregationi Particulari*, vol. 30, f. 481, report of particular conference of *Propaganda Fide* held on 5 December 1689.

⁷ M. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I, 22-30; P. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay 1970, 20-21; L. W. BROWN, *The Indian Christians of Thomas*, 49-51.

⁸ It is not our concern to prove the Apostolicity of the St Thomas Christians of Kerala. For this the following books are suggested. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, Rome 2003, 3-8; M. MUNDADAN, *The Sixteenth Century Traditions of St Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 1989, 38-67; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal* (Malayalam), 2nd edition, Kottayam 1992; E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Calcutta 1957; X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, Kottayam 1998, 33-37; L. W. BROWN, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, Cambridge 1982, 59-63; S. NEIL, *A Christianity of India, The Beginnings to AD 1707*, Cambridge 1984, 30-32; B. VDAKKEKKARA, *Origin of Christianity in India: A Historiographical Critique*, Delhi 2007; A. E. MEDLYCOTT, *India and the Apostle Thomas, An Inquiry with a Critical Analysis of the Acta Thomae*, London 1905; G. NEDUNGATT, *Quest for Historical Thomas Apostle of India: A Re-reading the Evidences*, Bangalore 2008.

⁹ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 233, f. 334^v, "È veramente par cosa meravigliosa, e fuori d'ogni credere humano prodigiosa, che fra tante idolatrie questi cristiani quasi rose fra spine siansi sempre preservati e mantenuti nell'adorazione della Santa Croce da gentili tanto schernita delusa e derisa, ma sono opere della mano di Dio." Report of Giacinto de Magistris in 1660.

From Jerusalem, the Church spread to Antioch, to Rome and beyond. It reached Ethiopia in the South, Scythia in the North and India in the East, where tradition has it that St Thomas the Apostle went in the year 52 A.D. and founded Churches in south India.¹⁰

At one time *the Suriani church of India* extended from the river Indus to the Cape of Comorin with authority even outside India.¹¹ Malabar,¹² the south-west-coastal region of India, has been from the very ancient times the home and territory of the Suriani Christians. When the western missionaries and travellers coined the word 'Malabar' or 'Malabar Church,' to refer to the Suriani Church in the sixteenth century, it included some areas of present states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in addition to Kerala.¹³

The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in A. D. 1498,¹⁴ led to renewed contacts between Malabar Coast and Europe. Making use of the political situation of Malabar, various European colonial powers established their sway over Malabar. Although Portugal, England, Holland and France established their control over some ports with the intention of commerce, it was the British East India Company that extended their influence over a greater part of India which later formed the British India. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the kingdom of Kozhikod in the northern Malabar Coast was brought under the Madras Presidency of British India, called Malabar district. The other two kingdoms of Malabar, Travancore and Kochi remained tributary kingdoms of British India.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 9, AAS, 92 (2000) 460.

¹¹ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1979, 5.

¹² The word 'Malabar' is a combination of 'Mala' and 'Bar'. 'Mala' means mountain or hill and 'Bar' may be derived from the Arabic word 'bar' meaning land or from the Syriac word 'bar' meaning country. Therefore 'Malabar' literally means country of hills or country of mountains. The Portuguese called it Serra, meaning hill or mountain. Many of the ancient documents contain expressions like Church of serra (s), Christians of serra (s) etc. referring to the Church of Suriani Christians or St Thomas Christians. Cf. F. THONIPPARRA, *St Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 5; P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, Rome 2003, 159. The other expressions for Malabar are Malankara, Malanadu, and Malayalam etc. Malayalm is the regional language. Geographically Malabar is the union of Thiruvithamcor, Kochi, and Kozhikod kingdoms of southwest coast of the Indian subcontinent. After the independence of India these Malayalam speaking regions were united into a single state in the Indian Union named Kerala.

¹³ In modern times Malabar is referred to a small region in the Northern part of Kerala. This region is now divided into four dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, namely Tellicherry, Mananthavady, Thamarassery and some areas of Palaghat. But in the Ecclesiastical documents the term Malabar refers to the whole Malabar coast as known in ancient times.

¹⁴ A. SREEDHARA MENON, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, New Delhi 1970, 53.

¹⁵ C. VARICKATT, *The Suriani Church of India*, 2.

1.2. Co-existence of Religions

India is known for its religious co-existence and religious tolerance along with its caste system.¹⁶ The Suriani Christians were considered to be a superior caste¹⁷ and they were called *Mappillas*.¹⁸ They lived in harmony with all other people of different creeds faith and traditionally enjoyed a high social status and were respected by all the people including Hindus.¹⁹ One of the factors which contributed to the progress of Christianity was the tolerant policy followed by the native Hindu rulers; special privileges and concessions were granted to the Christians²⁰ and their socio-political status was equal to that of high caste non Christians.²¹ In short, the axiom “Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in Worship” can be attributed to the St Thomas Christians.²²

1.3. Malabar Church and the Chaldean Church

From the very early times there existed some kind of relation between the Malabar Church and the Chaldean Church.²³ But due to the scarcity of

¹⁶ For the details of the caste system Cf. A. MATTAM, *Inculturation of the Liturgy in the Indian Context*, Kottayam 1991, 20-21; M. DHAVAMONY, “Christianity and Societies Based on a System of Caste” (eg. India), in *Concilium*, 130 (1979) 87.

¹⁷ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 176, “Syri cum Latinis numquam matrimonia ineunt. Syri Castae supremae Brahmanicae, Latini vero infimae.” Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876; *Ibid.*, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* -1862-1877, F. 556^v, “we Suriani Christians are originally Brahmins, for centuries we were leaders of the community and respected by the Hindus.” Letter of Meurin on 18 September 1876.

¹⁸ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali e China*, vol. 40, f. 269^v-270^r, “Nel Vicariato Apostolico sono tre sorti, o caste di Cristiani, La prima, o sia Casta de *Mapuli* sono i principali, più numerosi, e più nobili per esser questi al dir loro, oriundi da quei cristiani che furono convertiti alla Santa Fede dal glorioso Apostolo San Tommaso, e per tal motivo chiamansi *Mapuli*, o Signori deducendo la nobiltà dalla maggiore, o minore antichità della Religione, di modo che se un Re, principe, o *Namburi* che sono i Sacerdoti e i più nobili tra Gentili convertiti alla S. Fede Cristiana, volessero ammogliarsi con la figlia di un *Mapula*, o Cristiano vecchio, nessuna ne troverebbe per povera e miserabile che sia per essere in tal caso la figlia più nobile del pretendente.” Report of Fr Carlo of St Conrado in 1764.

¹⁹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 729-730, “Castae Indorum sunt institutio socialis maximis momenti. Omnes Malabarenses ritus Syriaci constituunt Castam superiorem, ideoque ab omnibus, etiam paganis, honore habentur.” Letter of the apostolic visitor Msgr. Meurin to *Propaganda Fide*, on 18 May 1876.

²⁰ A. SREEDHARA MENON, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 182.

²¹ G. M. MORAES, *A History of Christianity in India, From Early Times to St Francis Xavier: A.D. 52-1542*, Bombay 1964, 175.

²² P. J. PODIPARA, “Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship”, *Ostkirchliche Studien* 8 (1959) 82-104.

²³ The Babylonian Church, the Assyrian Church, the Church of Seleucia Ctesiphon, the Nestorian Church and the East Syrian Church are the several names, due to political, geographical and ecclesiastical reasons, by which the Chaldean Church is known in history. From the time of the Catholic Patriarch John Sulaqua (1551-1555), the term Chaldean Church refers to the Catholic section, while the Assyrian Church of the East points to its counterpart not in full communion with Rome. Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 159-161.

documental evidence it is difficult to explain the exact nature of this relation. There existed a strong commercial relationship between South India and Persia from the early centuries. The commercial language was Aramaic or Syriac. Besides, the Church of Persia holds on to the tradition that their Church was founded by the apostle Thomas on his way to India. The Church of Edessa also claims the same apostolic tradition through Mar Addai, a disciple of St Thomas, and the origin of the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon is attributed to Mar Mari, a disciple of Mar Addai.²⁴ Thus there existed a special spiritual harmony between the Persian Church and the Malabar Church.

1.4. Hierarchical Relations with the Chaldean Church

In the early Church, important administrative centres within the Roman Empire emerged as great metropolitan sees. Within the Roman Empire Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople became first metropolitan sees and then patriarchates. Similarly Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian Empire, also gradually became the Metropolitan See of the Churches in the East which were outside the Roman Empire.

In the Synod of Seleucia in 410 the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was acknowledged as the head of all the Churches of the Persian Empire.²⁵ Within this setup the Church in India developed its autonomous administrative system by accepting the primacy of the "Great Metropolitan" or "Catholicos" of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The Indian Church, in its early stage had neither a metropolitan nor a provincial synod which was necessary for the election and consecration of bishops as determined by the different councils²⁶ and hence it had to depend on other sister Churches for the consecration of bishops. In a letter to *Propaganda* dated on 25 November 1796, John Ormus, the administrator of the Chaldean Patriarchate at Mosul, wrote "the Christians of Malabar for the last seven centuries were depending on my ancestors."²⁷

²⁴ X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 49.

²⁵ The Synod of Mar Isaac (410 AD), c. 12, J. B: Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*, Paris 1902, 266. Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 10.

²⁶ According to early councils no Episcopal consecration was possible without the presence of the metropolitan and two other bishops or at least three bishops with the written consent of the metropolitan. See for details P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 10.

²⁷ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 907, f. 366^v, "Si alla fine perché da sette secoli in qua, come tengo io la memoria dipendevano da miei antenati, ed antecessori come pure essi stessi cio confessano nelle loro lettere." Letter of John Ormus to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 25 November 1796.

According to Ignatius Desto, bishop of Mardin, from the early century onwards the Christians of Malabar were depending on the Chaldean Patriarch for canon law, rituals and liturgical celebrations.²⁸ From fourth century onwards, in India there was the presence of the bishops of the Church of the East.²⁹ The channel of Persian ecclesiastical authority in India was through the bishopric of Rewardashir. Between 410-420 this bishopric was elevated to the status of a metropolitan Church and was given jurisdiction over the Indian Church. Patriarch Isoyahb III (649-660) terminated the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Rewardashir over the Indian Church and constituted it an autonomous metropolitan Church, directly under the Patriarch. From that time on the hierarchy of the Indian Church was headed by a metropolitan of all India, who had jurisdiction over the whole of India.³⁰ Later Patriarch Timothy I (780-823) confirmed the provision of Isoyahb III and reserved the right to ordain the metropolitan of all India to himself.³¹ At the time of the arrival of the missionaries in the sixteenth century the residence of the Metropolitan was in Kodungallur.

Normally the metropolitan was selected by a delegation of St Thomas Christians from among the Chaldean monks. The role of Patriarch was limited to the appointment and consecration of the Indian metropolitan. The following statement of J. Kollaparambil gives us a clear picture of freedom which the St Thomas Christians enjoyed in the selection of their metropolitan:

As in secular life, so too in the ecclesiastical, the Christians of St Thomas had a sort of individuality and autonomy. True, the Church of India had been counted as one of the provinces of Chaldean Church. Yet, as far as the Indian Church was concerned, the Chaldean Patriarch was only a figurehead, functioning as a convenient intermediary in her communion with the other apostolic Churches. From time to time, when Episcopal succession happened to be broken in their Church, the Malabarians used to send delegations to the Chaldean Patriarch with request for bishops. When the Patriarch was

²⁸ APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Mesop. Persia*, vol. 21, f. 98^r, letter of Bishop Ignatius Desto to the Prefect for the Faith and Doctrines on 18 October 1856.

²⁹ J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, "Sources on the Hierarchical Structure of the St Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period", B. PUTHUR (ed.), *The Life and Nature of the St Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period*, Cochin 2000, 168.

³⁰ P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 10-11.

³¹ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Alleppey 1976, 31.

disposed to grant the request, he usually allowed the delegates themselves to select the candidates from among the Chaldean clergy.³²

The metropolitan was only a spiritual head of the St Thomas Christians, and the administration proper was in the hands of the local priest called "archdeacon of all India."³³ He was always a celibate priest from among the St Thomas Christians and it is he who governed the Church during the prolonged vacancies in the metropolitan see. He was entitled to give dispensations, to appoint the clerics and present the candidates for Holy Orders. He was also considered as the secular superior of Christians.³⁴ J. Kollaparambil writes about the status of archdeacon:

Under the foreign metropolitan, the archdeacon of All-India, as the only infra-Episcopal dignitary and the royally privileged national head of the St Thomas Christians, was practically governing the Church of India both in ecclesiastical and civil spheres. True, the metropolitan was the spiritual head of the Church. The archdeacon was only participating in the jurisdiction of the metropolitan, but to such a degree that practically nothing except the power of Order remained for the metropolitan. The whole power of jurisdiction was exercised by the archdeacon.³⁵

In short, we can say that the archdeacon enjoyed all the powers except the powers attached to the Episcopal Order.³⁶ A. M. Mundadan also gives a clear picture of the position of the archdeacon:

As regards the archdeacon of all India, he was vested with even greater authority than the East-Syrian archdeacon, owing to the special organizational structure of the Church of India, namely the East-Syrian metropolitans at the head of the hierarchy were foreigners in a new land quite different from theirs in language, customs, religious beliefs, socio-political set-up and so on. For governing the Church, he had to depend almost fully on his assistant, the indigenous archdeacon. This circumstance gave the archdeacon a free hand in the government of this Church and enabled him to exercise the whole jurisdiction. Thus the archdeacons enjoyed very great authority among the Christians of St Thomas in India.³⁷

³² J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam 1981, 5.

³³ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, Alleppey 1974, 10.

³⁴ E. R. HAMBYE, "Medieval Christianity in India", in *Christianity in India. A History in Ecumenical Perspective*, PERUMALIL & HAMBEY (ed.), Alleppey 1972, 33.

³⁵ J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *The Archdeacon of all India: A Historico-Juridical Study*, Rome 1972, 253-254.

³⁶ J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *The Archdeacon of all India: A Historico-Juridical Study*, 187-205, 207-235.

³⁷ A. M. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, 181.

Briefly, until sixteenth century, before the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries, the Church of St Thomas Christians was under the metropolitan of all India, appointed by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch and the Church was governed by the archdeacon of all India, who was elected from the indigenous clergy.

1.5. The Communion with Rome

The ancient Christian community of India existed in the remote region of Asia, outside the Graeco-Roman world. St Thomas Christians were neither involved nor interested at all in the discordant doctrinal controversies which took place within the Roman Empire. But they always maintained ecclesial communion with the other Churches and believed in the primacy of Roman See.³⁸

Pope Pius XII in his official message in 1952 on the occasion of the 19th Centenary celebration of the arrival of St Thomas in India praised the Christians of St Thomas for their perseverance in keeping up the faith preached by the Apostle. He underlined the fact that despite trying vicissitudes they kept the faith in fact:

During centuries that India was cut off from the West and despite many trying vicissitudes, the Christian community formed by the Apostle (St Thomas) conserved intact the legacy he left them, and as soon as the sea passage - at the close of the 15th century - offered a link with their fellow Christians of the West their union with them was spontaneous. This Apostolic lineage, beloved sons and daughters, is the proud privileges of many among you who glory in the name of Thomas Christians, and we are happy on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it.³⁹

It is important to note here that St Thomas Christians, who were never excommunicated nor reunited, always remained in full communion with Roman Pontiff, although this communion could not be always expressed because of political and ecclesiastical reasons. They were often accused of Nestorian heresy and even some of the Roman documents wrongly state it.⁴⁰ The apostolic visitor Leo Meurin also held that before the Synod of

³⁸ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India, A History of the Syro-Malabar Church from the Earliest Time to the Present Day*, Bombay 1957, 17-18.

³⁹ AAS, 45 (1953), 96-97.

⁴⁰ ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi -1862-1877*, f. 462^v, "... Etenim postquam, urgente in primis Clemente VII rec.me. praedecessore Nostro, ac strenue adlaborante Alexio de Menezes Archiepiscopo dum viveret Goano, a Nestoriana haeresi ad Catholicae fidei veritatem revocati fuissent, primum Angamalensem Sedem idem Clemens Pontifex apud illos erexit, quae deinde Archiepiscopali titulo ad Cranganornsem

Diamper Malabar Christians were under the Nestorian Heresy.⁴¹ Actually it was due to the wrong idea perpetuated by the Western missionaries through their writings.⁴²

Recent studies on this subject show that St Thomas Christians always professed the Catholic faith and maintained communion with the Roman Pontiff even before the Synod of Diamper in 1599.⁴³ During the Synod of Diamper, Archbishop Menezes ordered the priests and the faithful to profess their faith in Roman Pontiff and Roman Church, but they responded with a question: "why should we believers make such a confession of faith, we are already in communion with the Roman Church."⁴⁴ "We always remained faithful to Rome when the other communities founded by the apostle Thomas left the Catholic communion."⁴⁵ "We were baptized by the apostle Thomas and up to now we retained the same faith, rituals and liturgy."⁴⁶ "The Christians of the Serra (Malabar) was never under the heresy."⁴⁷

2. The Western Period

2.1. The Portuguese Missionaries in India

The Portuguese missionaries arrived in India in the sixteenth century. They baptized several thousands of non-Christians in the Latin rite.⁴⁸ The

civitatem translata est: eosque postea, ita rerum exigentibus adiunetis, Romani Pontifices per Vicarios Apostolicos gubernarunt et gubernant." The appointment order of Meurin as the apostolic visitor of India by Pope Pius IX on 24th March 1876.

⁴¹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 744, "Ceterum notatu dignum est, schismaticos Malabarnenses, qui 1663 a Patriarcha Jacobitarum a Nestorianis Jacobitae facti sunt, nunc ritum Maronitarum sequi." Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 22 May 1876. Even some of the Suriani priests also had the same concept: "Postquam haeresim Nestorianam abjuraveramus, quare Jacobitae separaverunt se ab Ecclesia Catolica? Nonne quia non habebant Episcopum Syriacum ut desiderabant." Cf. ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* -1862-1877, F. 584^v, letter of Louis Pazheparambil to Meurin on 7 November 1876.

⁴² Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 27-33.

⁴³ For details cf. X. KODAPUZHA, *The Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1982, 61- 112; P. PALLATH, "Were the St Thomas Christians in India Nestorians at the Time of the Synod of the Diamper in 1599?" *ETJ*, 5 (March 2001) 34-70; P. J. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, London-Bombay 1970, 101-115.

⁴⁴ A. DE GOUVEA., *Jordana do Arcebishop de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Oriental, Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho*, Coimbra 1606, f. 65^r.

⁴⁵ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 386, f. 294^r, letter of the Archdeacon to Pope on 1 December 1624.

⁴⁶ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 233, f. 56^r, report of Hyacinth of Vincent OCD, the apostolic commissary in 1658. Original in Portuguese.

⁴⁷ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 233, f. 468^v, "pubblico nell'istesso tempo che la crstianita della Serra non era mai stata heretica e che l'intrusione dell' Arcideacono era stata fatta per l'ignoranza." Report of Sebastiani the Apostolic commissari to Rome in 1659.

⁴⁸ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 23.

Thomas Christians welcomed them as brethren in faith.⁴⁹ At the beginning there was good relationship between Chaldean bishops and Portuguese missionaries.⁵⁰ Cochin in Malabar and Goa on the Konkani coast were their politico-ecclesiastical centres. Goa became a bishopric in 1533, and a Metropolitan See in 1558 with Cochin as its suffragan see erected in the same year.⁵¹ Thus Latin Hierarchy was established in India under the *Padroado*⁵² of the Portuguese crown.

2.2. The Policy of Latinisation and Conflict

The good relationship which existed between the St Thomas Christians and Portuguese missionaries did not last long due to the latinising policy of the missionaries:

The Portuguese followed a policy of religious intolerance and persecution in their relations with the natives including the Syrian Christians while in politics their policy was one of sordid intrigues and crimes. Their policy of 'Latinisation' of the Kerala Church brought them into conflict with the native Christians who were deeply attached to the local traditions and way of life.⁵³

Commending on G. T. Mackenzie's statement concerning the latinisation in his book "History of Christianity in Travancore," V. Nagam Aiya states that "Mackenzie believes that when Vasco da Gama and his priests arrived in 1498 A. D., they found the Malabar Christians all Roman Catholics, only they were Roman Catholics not of the Latin Rite but of the Syrian Rite. And all the trouble was to make them Roman Catholics of the Latin Rite."⁵⁴ For the missionaries, the ideal of a true Catholic was to be of the Latin rite. Therefore they tried every means to latinise the Thomas Christians

⁴⁹ M. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1, 30.

⁵⁰ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 28.

⁵¹ P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 40-42.

⁵² *Padroado* is a system which means the protection of the Kings of Portugal over the churches in the territories occupied by the Portuguese. It had its origin with the Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455), on 18 June, by the Papal bulls 'Dum Diversas' and 'Divino Amore' he granted to the Kings of the Portugal the power to conquer the kingdoms of Mohammedans and pagans and to possess temporal goods and entitled them to spread the Kingdom of God among them. Cf. Nicholas V, the bull *Dum Diversas*, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae Atque oceaniae*, edited by Levy maria Jordão, tom. 1 (1171-1600) Olisipone 1868, 22-23; T. PALLIPURATHUKUNNEL, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church (1663-1716)*, Alwaye 1982, 3-5.

⁵³ A. SREEDHARA MENON, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, 54.

⁵⁴ V. NAGAM AIYA, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. II, New Delhi 1989, 124.

and to bring them under the jurisdiction of *Padroado*. They could not tolerate the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Patriarch in India, and strove earnestly to rupture this relationship by troubling the Eastern Prelates.⁵⁵ However, St Thomas Christians were neither ready to give up the Chaldean liturgy and the Christianised Indo-Malabar customs, nor traditions based on the *Thoma Margam* or Law of Thomas,⁵⁶ nor the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Patriarch and the Chaldean Prelates.⁵⁷

The missionaries opened seminaries at Kodungallur for the formation of seminarians of the St Thomas Christians. The training was purely in Latin pattern. The ordained priests were not acceptable to the Thomas Christians.⁵⁸ In 1555 the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Abdiso sent two bishops to India, Mar Joseph and Mar Elias. Mar Joseph was expected to take possession of the Indian Church. But they had to face bitter experiences from the missionaries in Goa, where they were detained in a Franciscan Monastery for one year and a half. When they reached in Malabar in 1557, Mar Joseph was accused of heresy. He was sent to Goa for the inquisition trails, then to Lisbon and later to Rome where he died in 1569.⁵⁹

Meanwhile another Chaldean bishop Mar Abraham⁶⁰ managed to reach Malabar and was welcomed by the St Thomas Christians. He was asked to participate in the Goan Council held in 1585. On the basis of the Papal assurance he participated in the council.⁶¹ It passed many decrees which accelerated the attempt of the missionaries to bring the St Thomas Christians to the Latin practices.⁶²

2.3. The Synod of Diamper

The death of Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean Metropolitan, in January 1597 facilitated Dom Alexis de Menezes, the archbishop of Goa

⁵⁵ J. PERUMTHOTTAM, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians (1712-1752)*, Kottayam 1994, 8.

⁵⁶ Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 63.

⁵⁷ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 23.

⁵⁸ X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 87.

⁵⁹ M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, Bangalore 1984, 37.

⁶⁰ P. PALLATH, "The Orthodoxy of Mar Abraham, the Last Chaldean Metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians of India", *CO 6* (2002) 4-25.

⁶¹ X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 89.

⁶² E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 45; P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 67.

(1595-1610) to separate St Thomas Christians from the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Patriarch and to bring the archdiocese of Angamaly under the ecclesiastical province of Goa as its suffragan.

As soon as archbishop Menezes reached in Malabar in February 1599, he visited the local kings and got their support because they were eager to receive the favour of the Portuguese against their local rivals. Despite the protest from the part of Archdeacon, Menezes began to visit officially the parishes and administer the sacrament of confirmation. Within a short period, he ordained more than one hundred young men to priesthood.⁶³ Many books of the Suriani Catholics were burned on the pretext that they contained heresy.⁶⁴ The archdeacon was forced to subscribe to a list of ten points prepared by archbishop Menezes.⁶⁵

Against the norms and regulations of the Church, Archbishop Menezes convoked a Synod from 20 to 26 of June in 1599, which is known as the Synod of Diamper.⁶⁶ About 153 priests and 600 delegates from different parishes participated in the Synod. It was a turning point in the history of St Thomas Christians, which led to the suppression of the Eastern rite and the termination of the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Patriarch in India.

After the Synod of Diamper in 1599, a Latin bishop was appointed for the St Thomas Christians; their Metropolitan see Angamaly was reduced to a bishopric under Goa and was put under Portuguese *Padroado* on 4 August 1600.⁶⁷ Later in 1608 due to the protest of the Thomas Christians its Metropolitan status was restored, but the all India jurisdiction was suppressed⁶⁸ and the See was shifted from Angamaly to Kodungallur.⁶⁹

⁶³ J. THALIATH, *The Synod of Diamper*, OCA, 152, Rome 1958, 23-25.

⁶⁴ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 62-63.

⁶⁵ For the list of ten points see: P. J. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, 137-138; P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 68-69.

⁶⁶ For the details of the Synod of Diamper Cf. J. THALIATH, *The Synod of Diamper*; P. PALLATH, "The Synod of Diamper Valid or Invalid?" in G. NEDUNGATT, ed., *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 199-226; A. DE GOUVEA, *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e bispado de Angamale dos antigos christaos de Sam Thome das Serras do Malavar das partes da India Oriental*, Combra 1606, 3-62; J. D. MANSI, *Diamperitana Synodus in Malabar, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissime Collectio*, vol. 35, Paris 1902, 1161-1368; J. HOUGH, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, Vol. 2, London 1839, 511-683.

⁶⁷ ACO, Ponenze 1885, 3.

⁶⁸ Cf. X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 94-96; P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 80-83; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 43-47.

⁶⁹ S. NEIL, *A History of Christianity in India, The Beginning to AD 1707*, Cambridge 1984, 311.

2.4. Coonan Cross Oath: Reaction to Latinisation

Archdeacon wrote many letters to the Oriental patriarchs describing the miserable situation in Malabar and asking them to send prelates for the Thomas Christians who knew their liturgical language.⁷⁰ The latinising policy of the *Padroado* bishops met with great opposition from the part of the archdeacon and the Thomas Christians.⁷¹ “Instead of teaching, the main concern of the Jesuits was to govern us.”⁷² Francis Donati gives a clear picture of the suffering of Suriani Christians under the Jesuits, “Now they (Jesuits) are severely torturing the archdeacon and the priests and the Christians of the *Serra* (Malabar). These Christians of Malabar were very primitive in their origin ... the Jesuits don’t allow them to contact with other religious congregations and even to write to the Holy Father and to the *Propaganda Fide*.”⁷³ The archdeacon wrote a long letter to the Pope explaining the miserable situation of Suriani Christians under the rule of Jesuits⁷⁴ and he concluded the letter requesting the Pope: “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I beg you to show mercy on the suffering faithful and to solve all their problems.”⁷⁵

The Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria sent Cyril Mar Atallah Ibn Issa to help the Christians of Malabar on the request of archdeacon of India. He reached Mylapore on 25 August 1652, he was arrested by the Portuguese Inquisition and detained at the Jesuit College. He sent a letter to the archdeacon through the St Thomas Christian pilgrims who met him at Mylapore, in which he declared himself to be “Ignatius, Patriarch of the whole of all India and China,” who had all powers from the Pope.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ S. MANIAKKUNNEL, *A Historical Outlook into the Life and Activities of Fr Leopold Beccaro of St Joseph in Malabar (1860-1877)*, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome 2003 (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis) 35; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 48.

⁷¹ Cf. J. THEKKEDATH, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S. J. Archbishop of Kodungallur (1641-59)*, Roma 1972, 21-40.

⁷² APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 98, f. 160^R, “Le perchè li Padri della Compaginà a trattano più di dominarci, che d’insegnarci.” Letter of Archdeacon Geevarghese to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 28 December 1628.

⁷³ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 138, ff. 237^V-238^R, letter of Francis Donati to Pope on 22 February 1634. See also the letter to the superior general of Dominican congregation on 10 January 1629, cf. APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 98, f. 185^R, 191^R.

⁷⁴ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 138, ff. 244^R-245^V, letter of archdeacon Geevarghese to Pope, on 5 January 1634. The original letter was written in Latin and signed as archdeacon of India in Syriac.

⁷⁵ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 138, f. 245^V.

⁷⁶ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 234, f. 355.

St Thomas Christians believed that Mar Atallah was indeed sent by the Pope. However, the Portuguese authorities decided to deport him to Goa via Cochin and then to Portugal. When the ship arrived at Cochin the Jesuits denied permission to the archdeacon and Christians to meet the prelate Atallah and a false rumour was spread that the Portuguese (Jesuits) had drowned him off the coast of Cochin.⁷⁷ Finally, the disappointed Christians, under the leadership of the archdeacon and priests gathered on Friday, 3 January 1653 in the church of Our Lady of Life at Mattancherry and resolved with a solemn oath not to obey Archbishop Garcia or any other prelates from the Society of Jesus and not to admit any Jesuits to their Churches. This revolt is known to history as *Coonan Cross Oath*.⁷⁸ Later, on 22 May 1653 in the church of Alangad, during the feast of Ascension twelve priests imposed their hands on the archdeacon and conferred on him "Episcopal consecration"⁷⁹ relying on a false letter said to have been written by Atallah.⁸⁰ Thereafter the archdeacon began to be called archbishop Mar Thoma I.

The *Coonan Cross Oath* was not against the Pope nor the Church of Rome, but against the archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits who disobeyed the orders of Pope by taking away the prelate whom the Pope had sent to them.⁸¹ The letter of archdeacon to the Goan inquisition on 30 June 1656 is a clear proof for the same:

Like all other Churches recognise the holy Roman church as mother and head, we as her children, do the same and will always obey all the successors

⁷⁷ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, 25.

⁷⁸ Cf. J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, 140; J. PERUMTHOTTAM, "Synod of Diamper and the Subsequent Events which Led to the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653", Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, *Papers and Joint Statements 1899-2000*, Kottayam 2001, 519; J. THEKKEDATH, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S. J. Archbishop of Kodungallur (1641-59)*, 60; Fonti, II-VIII, 53; P. PALLATH, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, 15-29.

⁷⁹ For details see, P. PALLATH, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, 21-22.

⁸⁰ In reality Atallah was not sent by the Pope, it was clear from the Brief *Gratum Nobis*, dated 22 January 1660 addressed to the St Thomas Christians, where the Pope Alexander VII officially informed them that Atallah was not sent "neither by Innocent X of happy memory nor by any other Roman Pontiff, Our predecessor, but under the pretext of a false apostolic mission he tried to deceive your simplicity...." Cf. *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tom. 2, 98; G. T. MACKENZIE, "History of Christianity in Travancore" in V. M. NAGAM AIYA (ed.) *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, New Delhi- Madras 1989, 184. Fonti, II-VIII, 53.

⁸¹ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 233, f. 114^r, report of Marcellus on 1 June 1659; Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 85-86.

who sit and preside on the chair of St Peter. We know that baptized have to obey the Roman Church and her Pontiffs. Having been said that the Patriarch was sent by His Holiness Innocent, we have obeyed him in conformity with his letter. And for this reason we have done it and not for distancing from Roman Church. We affirm it by oath.⁸²

Archdeacon also wrote that “if we are mistaken, it is out of our ignorance and not out of malice.”⁸³

2.5. *Padroado* and *Propaganda* Jurisdictions

The *Coonan* Cross Oath caused great confusion in Malabar. St Thomas Christians did not accept the Jesuits and Archbishop Gracia. Gradually the St Thomas Christians were divided into two: *Pazhayakuttukar*, the old group, who maintained the Catholic faith and the old practices and the *Puthenkuttukar*, the new group, who in the course of time accepted Jacobitism and the Antiochene liturgy and canonical traditions.⁸⁴ Many petitions were sent to Rome⁸⁵ and finally Rome intervened through the *Propaganda Fide*.⁸⁶ Pope Alexander VII sent two groups of Carmelite priests headed respectively by Sebastani Joseph of Holy Mary and Hycinth of St Vincent to Malabar with the special mission of the unification of the

⁸² APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 233. f. 286v, “E così come tutte le altre chiese riconoscono la Santa chiesa di Roma per capo e madre, e noi come figlioli di quella facciamo l'istesso e sempre ubbidiamo a tutti li successori, che sederono e presiederono nella Cathedra di S. Pietro, essendo che tutti li battezzati devono ubbidire alla chiesa Romana, alla sua sommi Pontifici e così essendo ci detto che il Patriarca era mandato da Sua Santità Innocenza quale abbiamo ubbidito tutti conforme la sua lettera e per questa ragione e non per allontanarci dalla chiesa Romana abbiamo operato e fatto quanto si è detto; e così affermiamo col giuramento.” Letter of archdeacon on 30 June 1656, originally it was written in Malayalam later translated to Portuguese and then to Italian. Cf. APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 232. f. 13-15.

⁸³ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 232. f. 14^r, “Se abbiamo errate, non è stato per malizia, ma per ignoranza.” Cf. also APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 233, f. 287^r.

⁸⁴ J. KALLARANGATT, “Nidhirickal Manikathanar (1842-1904) The Mahatma of the Syrian Christian Community of India: A Death Centenary tribute”, in *CO* 25 (2004) 5; J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam 1981, 142-148.

⁸⁵ P. J. PODIOARA, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay 1970, 154.

⁸⁶ A department of Roman curia, erected by Pope Gregory XV on 6 January 1622, as the central and supreme body, responsible for the spread of faith and for the co-ordination of the missionary activities of the Church, especially in America, Africa and Asia. The Pope took this initiative because the missionary patronage of Portugal was useful at the start but it became a hindrance later due to close relation of the apostolate and colonisation. Missionary activities were hindered by various reasons and so there was a need to liberate the missionary apostolate of the Church from the civil authority and put it directly under the Holy See. In the apostolic constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* of Pope Paul VI on 15 August 1967, named this department as *Sacra Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione seu de Propaganda Fide*. Later in the apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus* of Pope John Paul II, on 28 June 1988, this department is named *Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione* (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples).

St Thomas Christians.⁸⁷ By the efforts of those Carmelites and native priests most of the frustrated and dissatisfied Thomas Christians came back to the legitimate authority.

In 1658, Sebastiani returned to Rome and submitted the report about Malabar to the *Propaganda Fide*.⁸⁸ On 20 December 1659 Sebastiani was appointed as the apostolic commissary and administrator of Kodungallur.⁸⁹ Later, in 1660 Rome erected the apostolic vicariate of Malabar without suppressing the *Padroado* and thus the Thomas Christians were divided into two jurisdictions, namely *Padroado* (Archdiocese of Kodungallur) and *Propaganda* (Vicar Apostolic of Malabar). A small group remained under the pseudo archbishop Mar Thoma I.

During the apostolate of Sebastani, many of the Christian faithful, who in good faith followed the pseudo bishop, returned to the legitimate Catholic faith. About eighty four Churches returned to Catholic communion and thirty two remained under Mar Thoma I.⁹⁰ The efforts of the Apostolic Commissaries did not succeed to bring back the Mar Thoma I and his flock to the Catholic communion. Mar Thoma I demanded that he be consecrated a bishop. Since such a demand was not acceptable, as a last resort on 1 February 1663 Sebastani excommunicated Mar Thoma I (Archdeacon) from the Catholic communion.⁹¹ Thus the drama of the *Coonan* Cross Oath ended with a tragic event in the history of the St Thomas Christians by dividing them into Catholic and non Catholic groups. The attempt under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry to bring back the separated brethren to the Catholic communion will be discussed later.

3. Suriani Church in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century, for the Suriani Christians, was a story of continuous struggle for independence from the Latin ecclesiastical authorities and of great efforts to regain the unity which they had lost at

⁸⁷ *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tom. 2, 78-85; P. PALLATH, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, 29-274.

⁸⁸ For the reports and the mission of Sebastiani, see P. PALLATH, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, Changanassery 2006.

⁸⁹ *Juris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 1, 314-317.

⁹⁰ M. D'SA, *History of Catholic Church in India*, vol. 1, Bombay 1910, 13.

⁹¹ P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 136. Here it is important to note that Rome excommunicated only the archdeacon, not the community. But in reality it was interpreted in the other way.

the time of *Coonan* Cross Oath. They were divided under different jurisdictions of the Latin Rite: one under the *Propaganda Fide* and the other under the *Padroado*. In 1833, there were 41 parish churches, 106 priests, 25 deacons 30,607 faithful and 11 filial churches under Verapoly (Vicar Apostolic of Malabar) of *Propaganda Fide* jurisdiction⁹² and a greater number under Portuguese *Padroado* jurisdiction.⁹³

3.1. Efforts for Unity and the Reaction of Missionaries

The Suriani Christians were not satisfied with the missionaries.⁹⁴ Under the leadership of the clergy, they wrote many letters to the Pope to have their own bishops. They even wrote that “asking for their own bishops is not out of detestation towards Latin bishops but the appointment of an indigenous bishop will create peace among the Christians of Malabar and open a new path for the reconciliation and thereby unification of the separated brethren.”⁹⁵

On the other hand there was a strong opposition from the part of missionaries against the appointment of indigenous bishops.⁹⁶ According to them if the Indian Church came under the authority of the Indian people it would be an irremediable disaster to the Catholic religion.⁹⁷ According to Marcellino there were many priests in Malabar but nobody had the

⁹² BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 712.

⁹³ See footnote 112.

⁹⁴ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 232, f. 375^B, report of Marcellus on 1 June 1659, it states that the unification efforts of the archdeacon were always impeded by Garcia the metropolitan of Kodungallur.

⁹⁵ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Cina*, vol. 39, ff. 3^{R-V}, “Hoc igitur beatissime Pater, a Sanctitate vestra postulamus beneficium non quid abhorremus (in the original it is given as aburimus) vel contemnamus Episcopos Latinos ex Ritus abominatione aut detestatione, aut voluntatem non habemus parendi quibuscumque Episcopis a Sanctitate Vestra super nos constitutis vel constituendis, sed quia constituto praelata ejusdem Ritus, quo utitur ipse clerus nostrae Ecclesiae, pax et concordia harmoniaque decens et debita, inter clerum, eundemque Praelatum conservetur omninò et fratres nostri schismatici, qui specialiter propter differentiam ritus nostrorum praelatorum renuentes cotes, constituto sibi capite, separati sunt, ad fidem convertantur Catholicam communionemque universalis Ecclesiae, quorum conversio perfacilis sperari possit, si constituatur Episcopus ex ritu Syro-Chaldeico” Letter signed by eighty two priests to the Pope on 1794, written in Syriac and Latin in two columns.

⁹⁶ APF, *Scri. Cong. India Cina*, vol. 39, f. 924^R, letter of Aloysius Mary the apostolic vicar of Verapoly on 23 April 1793 to the prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*. According to him there is no good candidate among the Suriani Christians to the post of bishop.

⁹⁷ APF, *Scri. Cong. India Cina*, vol. 38, f. 208^B, “... perché posta la cristianità nelle sole mani degli indiani, come succede ora Soriani al avviso di S. Francesco Saverio temo una irreparabile rovina della Cattolica Religione.” Letter of Aloysius Mary the apostolic vicar of Varapuzha on 15 November 1787 to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*. Here he is quoting the opinion of St Francis Xavier.

sufficient knowledge, prudence and fortitude to be consecrated as bishop.⁹⁸ For a long time, Rome did not respond to the petitions of the Suriani Catholics.⁹⁹

3.2. The Response from Rome

Due to the continuous petitions from the Malabar Christians against the activities of the missionaries, the *Propaganda Fide* asked the vicar apostolic of Verapoly to submit a report on the missionaries. From the instructions given to the vicar apostolic it was clear that the *Propaganda Fide* was convinced of the problems in Malabar.¹⁰⁰

The subsequent instruction of the same letter of the *Propaganda* shows that they were almost ready to grant them indigenous bishops. "Without any personal interest and having only God before your eyes and with all sincerity inform me, whether it would be expedient to grant a bishop of their own rite, in order to soothe the people; meanwhile the Sacred Congregation will take the matter into consideration."¹⁰¹ The letter continues "If everything goes like this it is better that Your Lordship re-establish their ancient discipline and the celebration of the Chaldean rites which are approved by the Church."¹⁰² However, in reality the cold indifference of Rome continued.

⁹⁸ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1873, 670 - 671, "... molti sacerdoti buoni per la bontà dei costume, ma dove è la prudenza? dove è la fortezza? dove è la scienza e tutte altre doti ad un Vescovo necessarie?" Letter to Bernardino, the vicar apostolic of Verapoly on 13 September 1865.

⁹⁹ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale.*, vol. 907, ff. 358^v-357^v, letter of 75 Suriani priests in Syriac to the Pope on 17 January 1800. They complained to the Pope that they wrote many letters and petitions for the last ten years but up to now Rome had given no reply.

¹⁰⁰ APF, *Lettere*, vol. 294, ff. 328^v - 329^r, "Furono i molti e gravi reclami giunti alla S. Congregazione per parte dei Siro-Caldei contro i Padri Carmelitani, i quali volevano dominare dispoticamente su la nazione ed esercitare su'la medesima i più duri trattamenti. Dicevano, che i detti Padri missionari menavano una vita non solo poco esemplare, ma scandalosa, che avevano procurata la morte de vari Vescovi nazionali, strapazzato e sospeso il nuovo Vescovo Paolo Abram Pandari ordinato, è mandato loro da Mar Giovanni Ormez Archivescovo di Mosul, e Amministratore del Patriarcato Babilonese, e che impedivano perfino il loro ricorso alla S. Sede. Quindi è che i medesimi domandavano alla S. Congregazione un Vescovo del Proprio rito, non volendo piu dipendere dai Padri Missionari" Letter of the *Propaganda Fide* to the vicar apostolic, Raymond on 1 October 1808.

¹⁰¹ APF, *Lettere*, vol. 294, f. 329^v, "che se per quietare la nazione fosse spediante di darle un Vescovo del proprio rito. Ella senza badare al proprio interesse e avendo sol Dio innanzi agli occhi, mene faccia con tutta ingenuità consapevole mentre la S. Congregazione potrà prendere in considerazione l'affare." Letter to the vicar apostolic Raymond

¹⁰² APF, *Ibid.*, f. 331, "Perseverando le cose in questo stato, sarà bene, che Vostra Signoria e vi ristabilisca l'antica disciplina e l'osservanza dei riti Caldaici approvati dalla chiesa."

3.3. Suppression of *Padroado* Jurisdiction

On 24 April 1838, with the apostolic letter *Multa praeclare*,¹⁰³ Pope Gregory XVI suppressed Portuguese *Padroado* jurisdiction in India. As a result, Suriani Christians who belonged to the archdiocese of Kodungallur came under the jurisdiction of the vicar apostolic of Verapoly.¹⁰⁴ Making use of this occasion, the vicar apostolic of Verapoly requested the *Propaganda Fide* for the title of archbishop: "from the ancient times the Syro Chaldeans had a head with an archbishopric title...they are of the opinion that if the apostolic vicar had the title of archbishop that would not only please and confirm the Syro Chaldeans...but also facilitate the conversion of the schismatics, at least of many."¹⁰⁵

But Suriani Christians were not satisfied with these ecclesiastical titles. They wrote to Baghdad requesting to send a bishop to celebrate their rites in their traditional language.¹⁰⁶ When Ludwig Martin of St Theresa (1844-1853) became the successor of Francis Saviour, he also requested for the archbishopric title by explaining that "it is necessary to gain the Syro-Chaldeans and moreover this external honour will keep them in unity and obedience."¹⁰⁷ Ludwig was genuinely interested in the progress and development of Suriani Christians and clergy.¹⁰⁸ He had a good opinion of the Suriani clergy.¹⁰⁹ But he had to face many objections from his own community¹¹⁰ and he was called back to Rome on 1852 and later he resigned

¹⁰³ *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 5, 195-198.

¹⁰⁴ P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 96.

¹⁰⁵ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 7, f. 345^r, "I Siro-Caldei che fin dai secoli più rimoti hanno sempre avuto per capo un prelato col titolo di Arcivescovo fin dacche si sottomesero alle Bolla *Multa praeclare*, hanno mostrato desiderio che il loro nuovo superiore continuasse ad avere almeno ad honorem lo stesso titolo. Questi miei compagni (per cui consiglio scrivo questo paragrafo) sono di parere che se il Vicario Apostolico avesse il titolo di un qualche Archivescovato in partibus infidelium, cio servirebbe non solo per contentare e conformare i Siro-Caldei; ma attesa la vanità commune negli Orientali, potrebbe agevolare la conversione dei scismatici almeno di molti." Letter of Francis Saviour to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 12 January 1840. The underline is seen in original also.

¹⁰⁶ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 7, f. 108^r, letter to Peter bishop of Baghdad on 25 March 1838.

¹⁰⁷ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 10, f. 416^v, "per tenere cattivati i syro-caldei ... l'esteriorità però e l'onore e li ritiene ubbidienti e nella necessaria unità." Letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 4 July 1845.

¹⁰⁸ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 10, f. 530^v, letter to *Propaganda Fide* on 17 November 1845.

¹⁰⁹ APF, *ACTA*, vol. 214, f. 667^r, "Questi sembrano anche di presente assai più disposti per lo stato Religioso; comeche un buon numero di ecclesiastici vivono in comunità quasi come Religiosi, ed il sottoscritto può per la esperienza affermare essere essi i migliori e più proficui ecclesiastici Indigeni del Vicariato." Letter to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 6 July 1852.

¹¹⁰ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 13, ff. 516^r-518^r, letter to *Propaganda Fide* on 30 June 1851.

his post as vicar apostolic of Verapoly.¹¹¹ On 21 February 1857, the representatives of the Holy See and the Portuguese government signed a Concordat, which was ratified on 6 February 1860 and published on 30 May 1860. This concordat re-established all the *Padroado* dioceses suppressed on 24 April 1838.¹¹²

3.4. The Maltreatment of Missionaries and Contacting the Chaldean Patriarch

In 1855 Bernardino of St Teresa became the vicar apostolic of Verapoly. He was not at all interested in the mission in Malabar¹¹³ and in the growth of the Suriani Christians of India; he wrote: “in brief, we have to work, in an immoral and perverse nation, not for the salvation of the people but of mares.”¹¹⁴ As a protest, many wrote to Rome about the unpleasant conduct of Bernardino.¹¹⁵ Even the annual report of the apostolic vicar of Mysore dated 24 September 1861, criticised the activities of Bernardino in Malabar.¹¹⁶ Those who wrote against Bernardino to Rome were ill-treated by him: “you wish to see Rome, you are a great sinner, you are proud and have dared to write to His Holiness. Do you think that you are someone before the Pontiff?”¹¹⁷

Life became more and more miserable under the Verapoly jurisdiction due to the indifferent activities and the cruel punishments.¹¹⁸ Even the missionaries wrote about the cruel punishments of the vicar apostolic of Verapoly:

¹¹¹ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 15, f. 763^R, letter to *Propaganda Fide* on 5 November 1855.

¹¹² Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 98. After the re-establishment of *Padroado* jurisdiction, 37 parishes joined the archdiocese of Kodungallur of *Padroado* Jurisdiction and 104 parishes remained under *Propaganda* vicariate of Verapoly and 16 parishes remained under both jurisdictions. For details, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 728-731.

¹¹³ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 14, f. 1311^V, letter of Leyander to *Propaganda Fide* on 16 September 1854.

¹¹⁴ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 18, f. 325^V, “Si può dire in somma che siamo in medio Nationis pravae et pervase-in gente non gente-a travagliar per la salvazione non di uomini, ma di giumenti.” Letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 5 October 1862.

¹¹⁵ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 16, ff. 452^R-457^R, letter to Pope Pius IX on 27 November 1857.

¹¹⁶ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 995, ff. 1211^R-1231^R, report of the Mysore apostolic vicar Charbonnaux on 24 September 1861.

¹¹⁷ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 16, f. 1118^V, “Oh, tu cupis videre Romam: tu es maximus peccator, tu superbus es ausus scribere ad Summum Pontificem: quid cogitas, nam tu es aliquid coram Summo Pontifice.” Letter to Pope on 25 November 1858.

¹¹⁸ Cf. APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Oriente*, vol. 17, f. 1420^V, letter of Bernardino to the provincials of the OCD on June 29, 1860. This letter gives a clear picture of the different models of punishments of that time.

It is not to deny, however, according to our conscience we could frankly say that, the reason for this rebellion against us is due to the rigorous policy adapted by the Monsignor. It is too much of rigor and cruel and full of threats and punishments.¹¹⁹

Moreover, they did not know their liturgy, Syriac and the language of the place.¹²⁰ They also neglected the field of education.¹²¹ Therefore, the frustrated Suriani Christians as a last resort turned to the Chaldean Patriarch¹²² looking for help in their attempt to get an indigenous bishop:

In these days out of the love for the Saviour the Malabarians annoyed us through their supplications and bundles of letters provoking that we would be responsible before God for the loss of their souls if we refused to consecrate bishops for them. They have written many letters indicating that they cannot anymore be under the direction of missionaries and no way can accommodate them. These justifications are sufficient to adhere to their petitions.¹²³

Thus the negative attitude of missionaries towards the Suriani Christians paved the way for the coming of Bishop Rocos to Malabar and the spread of Rocos schism among the Suriani Christians.

3.5. The Arrival of Rocos in Malabar and the Rocos Schism

Though *Propaganda Fide* asked Patriarch Joseph VI Audo (1848-1879) not to interfere in the affairs of Malabar,¹²⁴ he continued his work to achieve

¹¹⁹ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 1859-1861, vol.17, 2. f. 1880^R, "Non è a negarsi però e noi astretti da dovere di cosceinza candidamente il diciamo, che motivo non lieve di questa ribellione contro di noi sia appunto il sistema di governo adottato e rigorosamente osservato da questo nostro Monsignore, che sa troppo di rigore e severita, e tutto pieno di minacce e castighi." Letter signed by four missionaries namely Philip, Leonard, Leopold, Kerubin to the general of OCD, on 16 August 1861.

¹²⁰ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 995, f. 1213^R, the report of the apostolic vicar Charbonnaux on 24 September 1861; ACO, *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Malabaresi*, I (1862-1877), f. 184-185.

¹²¹ ACO, *Scri. Orig. Caldei* (1872-1873), fasc. 4. ff. 31^R-32^R.

¹²² ACO, Ponenze 1865, 3-6; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 72.

¹²³ ACO, Ponenze, 1848-1869, 386, "In questo frattempo ci hanno annoiato i detti Malabarici colle loro suppliche, e con mandarci plichi scongiuranti noi per le viscere del Salvatore, e provocanti al giudizio d'Iddio a dover essere noi responsabili delle anime loro pericolanti se rifiutassimo più a lungo a consacrare loro Vescovi; accusando eglino che non potevano più oltre vivere sotto la direzione dei missionarii e Vicarii del loro paese, e che in nessuna maniera potevano accomodare con essi adducendo molte e molte cause che sarebbero più che sufficiente per dover aderire allà loro petizione." Letter of Patriarch Audo to Pope on 16 October 1860.

¹²⁴ ACO, Ponenze, 1864-1865, 311-319; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 73.

his determined goal, which led to further schisms in Malabar. In spite of the opposition from the Holy See, the Suriani Christians were constantly in contact with the Chaldean Patriarch. A meeting at Kuravilangad took the resolution to collect money and to send a delegation to the Patriarch at Mosul with the petition of the Malabarians and they elected *Malpan* Antony Kudakkachira¹²⁵ as the leader of the delegation. Later a group under his leadership collected the signatures of the priests and the people¹²⁶ and went to Baghdad accompanied by two clerics and fifteen seminarians.¹²⁷ On the way *Malpan* Antony Kudakkachira died¹²⁸ and the mission was taken up by Fr Antony Thondanatt. They approached the patriarch and submitted the petition requesting a bishop for Malabar.¹²⁹

In the meeting of the bishops, priests and some important lay people under the Patriarch Audo on 12 September 1860,¹³⁰ they selected Thomas Rocos¹³¹ and on 30 September the Patriarch consecrated him as the metropolitan of Bassora or Pherat Meisan,¹³² who was to sent as a Patriarchal visitor to Malabar in order to study the situation in Malabar.¹³³ Mar Thomas Rocos together with Fr Antony Thondanatt and his team reached Kochi on 9 May 1861.¹³⁴ Thomas Rocos had been accorded a warm welcome in Malabar.¹³⁵

¹²⁵ Antony Kudakkachira was born on 1819 at Palai, Kerala. He was proficient in Syriac, Latin, Italian and Portuguese languages. He had already written to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* with the signature of 30 priests on 1 June 1853 about the miserable situation of the priests and people in Malabar due to the lack of (a) they have no bishops of their own Rite; (b) they have no schools for Syriac, either private or public; (c) they have no qualified priests to teach them; (d) they don't have theological and liturgical books. Hence they asked for a bishop and some priests who knew Chaldean language to instruct them. Cf. ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1862-1877, f. 509.

¹²⁶ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 720; G. T. MACKENZIE, *Christianity in Travancore*, Trivandrum 1901, 87.

¹²⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1862-1877, ff. 567^{R-V}, letter of apostolic visitor Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 2 November 1876. Pareparambil gives the names of priests and the students cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History of the Catholic Syrian Christians of Malabar*, Puthenpally 1920, 8-9. "Aloysius Pareparambil" is written also "Louis Pazheparambil."

¹²⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 9.

¹²⁹ ACO, *Srit. Orig. Caldei*, 1865-1866, fasc. 7, f. 534; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 721.

¹³⁰ ACO, *Ponenze* 1864-1885, 340.

¹³¹ Cf. ACO, *Scri. Orig. Caldei*, 1865-1866, fasc. 7, f. 537. Thomas Rocos was born on 1808 at the village of Mangesh in Iraq. He entered the monastery of Rabban Hormiz in 1823. He was ordained priest and later consecrated by Mar Audo on 30 September, 1860.

¹³² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 342.

¹³³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 655; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 721.

¹³⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 350-351; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 721.

¹³⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1885, *Caldei*, *Sommario*, 196; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 721; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 73.

He wrote a letter to Resident (Government-Representative of the English Crown in Malabar) on 31 December 1861, in which he addressed himself as the “Mar Thomas Metropolitan and Commissioner of the Roman Catholic Chaldean Syrians in Malabar.”¹³⁶ He also falsely declared that he was consecrated by the Pope; therefore the priests and the people welcomed him believing that he was sent by the Pope.¹³⁷ By accepting the authority of Rocos, about 86 parishes fully and 30 parishes partially fell into the schism.¹³⁸ Rocos administered ordinations to eight clerics to priesthood and minor orders to more than 100 candidates, of whom many were unworthy.¹³⁹

3.5.1. Elias Chavara Kuriakose as Vicar General

In order to prevent Rocos schism, the apostolic vicar Bernardino appointed Fr Elias Chavara Kuriakose as vicar general of the Syrians on 8 June 1861.¹⁴⁰ At the same time Bernardino had not given any power to him.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the missionaries asked Msgr. Bernardino to give the vicar general adequate power which would create unity among all the parishes against the schism.¹⁴² It is interesting to note here the mentality of the missionaries concerning the appointment of Fr Elia Chavara Kuriakose, when the *Propaganda Fide* wanted to appoint a suriani priest as a permanent

¹³⁶ V. NAGAM AIYA, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. II, New Delhi - Madras 1989, 198.

¹³⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 353.

¹³⁸ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 726-728. Pareparambil gives the list of 85 churches fully and 32 churches partially fell into schism, cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 18-19.

¹³⁹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 362; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 16; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 722. Though many of the candidates were unworthy or who had no reputation at all, there were also candidates from good families like Nidiry and they took pride to be ordained by a Chaldean bishop.

¹⁴⁰ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 687-690; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 722-723. Bernardino was even ready to appoint Elia Chavara Kuriakose as the auxiliary bishop of suriani Christians. Cf. APF, SC Indie Oriente, vol. 17, F. 1871^B, letter of Bernardino on 12 August 1861. But later the *Propaganda Fide* asked the opinion about appointing a suriani priest as vicar general with the title of bishop on 14 April 1865, Bernardino changed his old view and he wrote that it is better to have no change in the present condition. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1873, 668-669, letter to the *Propaganda Fide* on September 24, 1865.

¹⁴¹ APF, *Scrit. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 1859-1861, vol. 17, 2. f. 1880^v, “Or fa appena tre mesi e mezzo, creò nella persona di un vecchio ed ottimo sacerdote soriano, priore del convento di Mananatto, un Vicario Generale pei Soriani, soggetto veramente degno di tal ufficio e lo fece pubblicare nelle chiese lo lasciò affatto privo di ogni benché minima autorità, quel vano timore che ne vada a mano l'autorità Vescovile, sicché quest'ottimo sacerdote si lamenta fortemente che vedendo correre tante chiese alla perdizione ed allo scisma si trova impotente ad usare qualche riparo a tanta ruina.” Letter was signed by Philip, Leonard, Leopold, Kerubin to the Definitor General of OCD, on 16 August 1861.

¹⁴² APF, *Scrit. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 1859-1861, vol. 17, 2. f. 1880^v.

vicar general with the title of bishop.¹⁴³ Fr Leopold who complained against Msgr. Bernardino commented that Fr Elias Chavara Kuriakose had not sufficient knowledge and administrative competence to be appointed as vicar general.¹⁴⁴ Fr Marcellino also wrote negatively against the appointment of vicar general with the title of bishop.¹⁴⁵ The letter of Leonard, written after he became the vicar apostolic of Verapoly, reveals that he has forgotten about his former views on the appointment of vicar general for Suriani Church.¹⁴⁶

3.5.2. The Action from Rome

Pope Pius IX sent a brief *Perlibenter* to the Syrians of Malabar on 5 September 1861,¹⁴⁷ in which he declared that “Bishop Rocos has come to Malabar without our permission and in spite of our prohibition, and nobody should join him.”¹⁴⁸ Through another letter *Hisce litteris*, dated 21 September 1861 Pope gave permission to the apostolic vicar to excommunicate Rocos from the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁹

In the meantime Patriarch Audo was summoned to Rome by *Propaganda Fide* to discuss the problems of Malabar. During his audience

¹⁴³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1873, 668-669, letter to the *Propaganda Fide* on 24 September 1865.

¹⁴⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1873, 673-677, letter to Bernardino on 18 September 1865.

¹⁴⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1873, 670-671, “Così confesso che l’eccellenza Vostra specialmente nei Conventi ha molti sacerdoti buoni per la bontà dei costumi. Ma dove è la prudenza? dove è la forza? dove è la scienza e tutte le altre doti ad un Vescovo necessarie?” Letter to Bernardino on 13 September 1865. Here he contradicts himself to his former opinion of the Malabar priests that they know Suriani better than the professors of the Rome and they comment the Bible perfectly and even some of them by hearted the whole Bible. Cf. APF, *Scrit. Cong. Indie. Orientali*, 1853-1854, vol.17, f. 1301^R, letter of Bernardino to the *Propaganda Fide* on 4 September 1854.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1862-1877, vol. 1, “Il Cattenare Elia Ciriaco Vic. Generale di cui fa menzione V.E. son già, quattro anni che passo’agli eterni riposi. Era stato fatto vicario generale dei Soriani dal mio Predecessore ad istanza di alcuni Missionari, ed io fui allora uno di questi, sperando con ciò, di fare cosa grata al clero e popolo Soriano, ma per essere anch’egli indigeno nessuno voleva aver ricorso a lui ed anche quelli che furono in quel tempo i più ingrati e male affezionati al Vicario Apostolico, preferivano di portarsi in persona dal Vicario Apostolico per chiedere perdono delle loro colpe e ricevere la penitenza, piuttosto che presentarsi al suddetto Vicario Generale Cattenare Elia.” Letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 12 September 1874.

¹⁴⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 693; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 21; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 724-725. This letter was a replay to the letter of Fr Elias Chavara Kuriakose on 19 June 1861, asking to the Holy See concerning the appointment of Rocos, because he claimed that he was sent by Holy See. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 690-691; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 723.

¹⁴⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 20.

¹⁴⁹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 692; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 725.

with the Pope on 14 September 1861, the Patriarch asked pardon for his action and kissed the feet of the Pope, who gave him his benediction.¹⁵⁰ On 7 September 1861 the Patriarch wrote a letter to Rocos from Rome ordering him that he should immediately return to Baghdad.¹⁵¹ But he was not ready to return and therefore, Msgr. Bernardino solemnly excommunicated Rocos on 30 November 1861.¹⁵² Finally Rocos returned to Baghdad on March 1862.¹⁵³

Rocos schism was really an eye opener to the *Propaganda Fide*. Without wasting time they made a study of the Malabar problems based on the reports of the apostolic delegates and the missionaries. Whether Malabar should be annexed to the patriarchate of Babylon or not? Whether a bishop of their own rite should be appointed? But due to the differences of opinion, *Propaganda* could not arrive at a proper decision.¹⁵⁴ As we have seen, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Malabar Church was struggling under the Latin domination. With hope, the Suriani priests and the people continued to write to the Pope. They also wrote to the Chaldean Patriarch and requested his assistance.¹⁵⁵

4. Emmanuel Nidiry: the Man and His Early Activities

In this section we are trying to explain the early career of Emmanuel Nidiry and how he served his community to achieve their goal, by being a loyal secretary to the *Padroado* administrator and a student obedient to the *Propaganda* authorities at Mannanam Seminary. Here we also study the background of the arrival of bishop Mellus and the early stage of the spread of Mellus schism. Finally we conclude with events leading to the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry by the archbishop of Verapoly as the parish priest of Kuravilangad to fight against Mellus schism.

4.1. The Historical Setting of the Family and the Birth

Normally the birth of great persons gives colour and charm to the places. In the case of Emmanuel, it is vice versa because his family hailed from

¹⁵⁰ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 353-355.

¹⁵¹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 694-695; ACO, *Scri. Orig. Caldei*, 1865-1866, fasc. 7, f. 606.

¹⁵² A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 74.

¹⁵³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 362.

¹⁵⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 392-395.

¹⁵⁵ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 740.

Niranam,¹⁵⁶ a place of great importance and antiquity.¹⁵⁷ Later this ancient family migrated to Kuravilangad,¹⁵⁸ an ancient Thomas Christian centre in central Kerala. The first founder of the family was Abraham (Itty). The young Itty, on the invitation of a noble Namboory, who was the head of the Kanjirakkatt family of Kuravilangad, came to Kuravilangad with his widowed mother, in search of fertile land and better job. The Namboory gave him a plot of land called Nidhirickal¹⁵⁹ and the latter settled down there with his mother. Thus the family got the house name 'Nidhirickal' and the surname 'Nidiry'.¹⁶⁰

Gradually Nidhirickal family became one of the prominent families of Kuravilangad, both in wealth and reputation. The successors of Itty kept up the reputation of the founder. Itty Iype, the great-grand son of Itty, married the niece of Parambil Chandi.¹⁶¹ Itty Iype's son, Ulahannan (John), shifted the *tharavad* to a more attractive site in the northern part of Kuravilangad. Ulahannan had two daughters and three sons. The late bishop James Kalassery¹⁶² was the great grand son of the younger daughter of Ulahannan. The second son, Varkey, became a priest and was the vicar of the Kuravilangad parish for several years.

The family reached its glory at the time of Ittiyavira (Abraham), the youngest son of Ulahannan. He was a well-recognised Christian leader and

¹⁵⁶ Niranam is a place in the vicinity of the present Thiruvalla town and it is believed from the early centuries that the apostle Thomas had founded a Christian community there. There were four aristocratic Christian families such as Pattamukkil, Thayil, Manki, Madathilen, which *claimed* that they have received faith directly from the Apostle Thomas. The Nidhirickal family relates its origin to Mattackal succession, a branch of Madathilen tradition. Cf. T. MOOLAYIL, (ed.) *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam* (Malayalam), Kuravilangad 2004, 7. Tradition attributes that St Thomas has founded seven Christian communities in different places of Malabar. The places are Quilon, Niranam, Nilackal, Kokamangalm, Kottakkavu, Cranganur and Palayur. Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 56-62; X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 32-33.

¹⁵⁷ There is a local tradition that in Niranam the families were originally Namboory Brahmins and most of them having become Christians, the rest left the place. Cf. G. M. MORAES, *A History of Christianity in India*, Bombay 1964, 40.

¹⁵⁸ Kuravilangad was the prestigious headquarters of Archbishop Parambil Chandi (1663-1687) the first native bishop of the Suriani Catholics. For many years, Kuravilangad was the residing place of the Archdeacons. Cf. J. KALLARANGATT, "Nidhirickal Manikathanar (1842-1904) The Mahatma of the Syrian Christian Community of India: A Death Centenary Tribute", *CO* 25 (2004) 6.

¹⁵⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar* (Malayalam), Ernakulam 1950, 2nd edition by J. PELLISSERY, Kottayam 1994, 54.

¹⁶⁰ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 2nd edition, Kottayam 2003, 35.

¹⁶¹ Alexander Campo or Parambil Chandi (1663-1687), the first native bishop of Suriani Catholics.

¹⁶² James Kalassery (1927-1949), the fourth bishop of Changanassery diocese.

a strong supporter of the *Padroado* group and involved himself in the ecclesiastical disputes of the day. He was a pioneer in the spread of English education. Emmanuel was born on 27 May 1842¹⁶³ as the second son of Ittiyavira and Rosa. His official name was Emmanuel A. Nidiry or E. A. Nidiry.¹⁶⁴ Due to the sudden death of his mother in 1851, he was brought up under the guidance and care of his stepmother.

4.2. An Inborn Prodigy and Versatile Polyglot

Ittiyavira, father of Emmanuel was a well educated and recognized lawyer of that time. He saw the extraordinary intelligence and talents of Emmanuel and was much interested in his education. He appointed an extraordinary tutor at home to give special coaching in English. Emmanuel learnt Syriac under the guidance of his uncle, Fr Varkey Nidiry who was a parish priest at Kuravilangad who gave special orientation to Emmanuel towards priesthood. He had his advanced lessons of Syriac under Mar Athanasius, professor at old seminary Kottayam. There he practised his English lessons too.

Emmanuel got an opportunity to improve his Syriac with Denha Bar-Yona from Babylon who was staying at Kuravilangad and thus Emmanuel mastered spoken Syriac.¹⁶⁵ Portuguese was the official language of *Padroado* and his family was in that group.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, Emmanuel started to learn Portuguese under a *malpan*¹⁶⁷ and later he mastered it under Benjamin, a

¹⁶³ The year '1842' was most significant in the history of Suriani Church; primarily it was the death centenary year of Mar Joseph Cariattil who was the leader of the liberation struggle of the Suriani Church in the eighteenth century. Secondly, it was the third centenary year of the coming of Francis Xavier to India. It seems that the history gave birth to another great Thomas Christian to lead the Suriani Church to autonomy and unity in the nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁴ The name Emmanuel A. Nidiry appears as E. A. Nidiry or Mani Nidiry in Roman documents and manuscripts. In the manuscripts he himself wrote as E. A. Nidiry. His family name is cited variously in the documents as Nidiry, Nidhiry, Nidiri, Nidhiri, Nidhiyiri, Nidhirickal, Nidhiyirickal etc. Mani Nidiry or 'Manikathanar', his popular Malayalam name is a combination of two words namely Mani and *Kathanar*. The name Mani is equivalent to Emmanuel in English. The word *Kathanar* refers to a Suriani priest, therefore literally Manikathanar means Father Emmanuel or Don Manuele in Italian. In this work we are using the official name Emmanuel Nidiry. Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", OCP 70 (2004) 314.

¹⁶⁵ T. MOOLAYIL, (ed.) *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam*, 10.

¹⁶⁶ Although, Pope Gregory XVI suppressed *Padroado* in 1838, later in 1857, Pope Pius IX revived it and the Surianis were divided under the *Padroado* and *Propaganda* jurisdiction. Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 728-731.

¹⁶⁷ The word *malpan* means master or a learned man, normally an eminent priest who gives formation to the candidates of the priesthood. Under this system, the candidates are supposed to reside with the *malpans* and this way of priestly formation is called *malpanate* system.

Portuguese missionary priest which helped him in his early career. His exceptional intelligence and sharp memory helped him to learn Sanskrit and Tamil. Later his knowledge in Sanskrit and the proficiency in Tamil were very much appreciated by the scholars of the day. Side by side with the study of other languages, he advanced in the study of the Malayalam, the mother tongue. He read the masterpieces of the ancient authors and memorised long passages of poetry. His deep knowledge in Malayalam literature helped him make excellent orations in the future.

The young Emmanuel, to satisfy his curiosity turned to science. He deepened his knowledge in Hindu *Sastras*¹⁶⁸ and astrology. Emmanuel learned *Ayurveda*,¹⁶⁹ a part of traditional system of education and became a physician before he entered in the priesthood. He also found time for learning *Kalarippayatt*, a traditional physical education based on gymnastics and the use of weapons, under the guidance of Kuruppanparambil Thomman.¹⁷⁰ Although he developed all the inborn talents, and rose to the heights of a theologian and statesman with proficiency in 12 languages, including foreign tongues, such as Greek, Latin, Portuguese and Italian,¹⁷¹ his mind was oriented to the service of God and the people and never forgot to develop his spiritual attitudes too.

4.3. The Reception of the Minor Order

After the basic formation to the clerical life under a *malpan*¹⁷² the time had come for Emmanuel to receive minor order.¹⁷³ Under the *Padroado* regime, Suriani Christians were directly under the archbishop of Goa. Consequently, for the reception of clerical orders the candidates had to depend on either the archbishop of Goa or the *Propaganda* bishops, the

¹⁶⁸ A traditional Hindu concept of different branches of science.

¹⁶⁹ A traditional Hindu system of medicine (incorporated in Atharva Veda, the last of the four Vedas) which is based on the idea of balance in bodily systems and uses diet, herbal treatment and yogic breathing. Cf. Oxford Dictionary of English, 2nd edition, Oxford, 2005, 12.

¹⁷⁰ T. MOOLAYIL, (ed.) *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anyatha Deepam*, 11.

¹⁷¹ J. MARANGATT, "Manikathanar Uncrowned King of Malabar Church", *JTC* 15 (2004) 1.

¹⁷² The young Emmanuel completed his clerical studies under Karakkunnath *Malpan*. Cf. T. MOOLAYIL, (ed.) *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anyatha Deepam*, 10 - 11.

¹⁷³ However Stephen Britto, the *Padroado* archbishop of Angamali (1624-1641), suppressed the traditional system of priestly formation, and only 17 *malpanates* survived. For details, see R. THATTIL, *Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malabar Church, a Historico-Juridico Study*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome 1988.

rival group. Both were difficult choices.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, when the Chaldean bishop Mar Rocos came to Malabar in 1861 all the clerical candidates rushed to him to get ordained by him.¹⁷⁵

Emmanuel Nidiry was tonsured by Mar Rocos at Thaikattussery in July 1861.¹⁷⁶ Fortunately it was two months before the excommunication of Mar Rocos from the Church.¹⁷⁷ Since Mar Rocos was a forbidden intruder, after his excommunication doubts were raised about the Pontifical he used and about the validity of the orders he conferred. The problem was referred to Rome.¹⁷⁸ Moreover there was an order of archbishop Salvator Saba,¹⁷⁹ the apostolic commissary, that "... all those who were ordained by Mar Rocos should remain in those minor orders until the reception of an order from the Vatican ..."¹⁸⁰ Since there was no response from Holy See, on 15 July 1869 many parish priests and clergy from Malabar wrote to *Propaganda Fide* to rectify the ordinations given by Mar Rocos.¹⁸¹ Later Leonard Mellano, the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly while he was in Rome for the Vatican Council I (1869-1870) submitted the list of candidates ordained by Mar Rocos to the secretary of *Propaganda Fide*: priests 18, deacons 9, sub deacons 24, minor orders 54, tonsurati 23 (total 128).¹⁸²

Though *Propaganda Fide* later approved the validity of the ordinations¹⁸³ conferred by Rocos, Emmanuel Nidiry had to pay much under the slow

¹⁷⁴ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhry Manikathanar*, 185.

¹⁷⁵ It is reported that Mar Rocos ordained 18 priests, 9 deacons, 24 subdeacons and conferred the minor orders on 54 candidates and the tonsure on 23. Cf. A. URUMPACKAL, *The Mellus Schism*, doctoral dissertation, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome 1980, 98.

¹⁷⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhry Manikathanar*, 177.

¹⁷⁷ Pope Pius IX, through an apostolic letter *Hisce litteris*, on 5 September 1861 gave permission to the apostolic vicar of Verapoly to excommunicate Mar Rocos in case he refused to withdraw. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 692; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 725. Later on the basis of the letter of Pope Pius IX, Msgr. Bernardino on 30 November 1861 excommunicated Rocos. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1864-1865, 362; A. M. MUNDADAN, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, 74.

¹⁷⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f.181, the petition of the priests, deacons and other clerics who received orders from Rocos to Cardinal Barnabò on 12 September 1867.

¹⁷⁹ Salvator Saba was sent to India by *Propaganda Fide* for the execution of the concordat between Holy See and the Portuguese king.

¹⁸⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f.181, the petition of the priests, deacons and other clerics who received orders from Rocos to Cardinal Barnabò on 12 September 1867.

¹⁸¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f.199, the petition of the parish priests and clergy from Malabar 15 July 1869.

¹⁸² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f. 208.

¹⁸³ The Vicar General of Goa published a Circular in the *Padroado* parishes that the 'Congregation of the Ecclesiastical defence', after having studied the deplorable state of the priests ordained by Metropolitan

going policy of Rome. He had to endure a period of fourteen years of purification for the priestly ordination due to his association with Mar Rocos. However, for the same ecclesiastical authorities it was not a problem to depend on a Chaldean bishop for the episcopal ordination of Angelus Francis on 22 May 1701.¹⁸⁴

4.4. Secretary to the *Governador* (Administrator)

The Portuguese missionaries were impressed by the young Emmanuel who had just completed 19 years in 1861. Considering his ability and skilfulness in foreign languages he was appointed as secretary to Antonio Santimano, the administrator of the see of Kodungallur.¹⁸⁵ The appointment of teenager Emmanuel to this key post was an approval of his exceptional ability and leadership.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, his uncle Fr Varkey Nidiry and his father were strong supporters of *Padroado* group. Emmanuel served continuously until 1873 under seven different administrators.¹⁸⁷ As secretary to the administrator, he helped very much the clergy and his fellow Surianis and tried his best to settle the disputes in the parishes.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, the

Thomas Rocos, and had been suffering for many years, has given the faculty to rehabilitate them and therefore the Circular communicated that whoever was under any irregularity, with the publication this circular was absolved from any such irregularities and suspension. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f.226^B.

¹⁸⁴ Angelus Francis was a Carmelite priest appointed by *Propaganda Fide* on 1700 as the vicar apostolic of Verapoly. This appointment was not acceptable to the Portuguese missionaries in Malabar because according to their claim only they had the power to govern the Suriani Church of Malabar. At that time, there were two Portuguese bishops in India, archbishop of Goa and the bishop of Cochin. Since they refused to confer episcopal ordination to Angelus Francis, the Carmelite missionaries sought the help of the Chaldean bishop, Mar Simon, who had just reached at Sooret near Bombay. On 22 May 1702, the Chaldean bishop, Mar Simon conferred episcopal ordination on Angelus Francis at Alangatt. Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 579.

¹⁸⁵ Originally, it was the archbishopric of the Suriani Church but was reduced to a suffragan see of Goa. Later restored by the *Padroado* but left without bishop and governed by the archbishop of Goa through an administrator. Cf. P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 74-80.

¹⁸⁶ V. C. George gives the duties of the young Emmanuel as a secretary to the administrator: "to arrange the transfers and the appointments of the vicars, to examine the Accounts of the parishes, to sanction the dates for the parish feast, to receive new candidates to the seminary formation and to see the all round development of the diocese...." Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 184.

¹⁸⁷ The administrators of that period were Antony Santimano (1857-1864), Antony Paul Pinto (1864-1866), Joseph Ayres Silveira Mascarenhas (1866), Francesco Rodrigues Torres (1867), Antonio Correia dos Reis Coelho (1867-1869), Francesco de Jesus dos Santos Antony Vincent Lisboa (1870), Benedict do Rosario Gomes (1870-1875). Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 1098; C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 547.

¹⁸⁸ G. J. NIDHIRY, (ed.) *Nidiryckal Manaikathanar Kalathinte Saradhi* (Malayalam), Kuravilangad 2003, 50-51.

cooperation he received from the part of the clergy and people was really a sign of recognition of his ability and trustfulness.

4.5. The Birth of Mangalapuzha Seminary

The foundation of the present famous Pontifical Seminary at Mangalapuzha¹⁸⁹ in Alwaye is a clear proof for the farsightedness and extraordinary vision of Emmanuel Nidiry. It was under the leadership of Emmanuel that a new plot, Mount Formosa, a beautiful site on the bank of the river Periyar, was bought for the seminary and for the residence of the administrator. For this, they collected money from the parishes under the *Padroado* jurisdiction.¹⁹⁰ In 1867, the administrator Antonio Coelho shifted his residence to the new house at Mangalapuzha together with his secretary. Emmanuel Nidiry was appointed teacher of English and Malayalam, and he taught from 1867 till 1873 at the seminary.¹⁹¹

4.6. The Future Orator and the Self-made Lawyer

The administrator Antonio Coelho was a great retreat preacher and the secretary, Emmanuel Nidiry was the translator of the Portuguese orations in to Malayalam which helped Emmanuel to become an excellent orator in the future. When there was quarrel between the *Padroado* and *Propaganda* groups for the possession of Suriani Churches, Emmanuel was appointed attorney for the settlement of the disputes.¹⁹² His ability and influence helped him to settle disputes and quarrels. He performed the job as a compromiser and peacemaker splendidly, gaining an outstanding popularity as a self-made lawyer.¹⁹³ In 1873 he won a court case against a notorious

¹⁸⁹ The Mangalapuzha seminary originally belonged to the St Thomas Christians of the *Padroado* group. Later due to the suppression of the *Padroado* in 1866, the seminary was brought under the Spanish Carmelites of the *Propaganda* jurisdiction who had their seminary at Puthenpally. This seminary was shifted to Mangalapuzha in 1932. Until the establishment of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary at Kottayam in 1962, Mangalapuzha seminary was the only major seminary for the formation of the Suriani clergy in Malabar. The request of the Kerala Catholic Bishop Conference to reorganize the seminary on the basis of the Rites was approved by the Holy See in 1996. Now the seminary is subject to the Holy See under the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and its direction and administration are entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Synod.

¹⁹⁰ G. J. NIDIRY, (ed.) *Nidiryckal Manakathanar Kalathinte Saradhi*, 50; see also *Nazrani Deepika*, 24/03/1940. Since the amount collected was insufficient, Parayil Tharakan, a friend of Emmanuel, met part of the expenses. The plot was at first bought in Tharakan's name, later his amount was paid off and the property was transferred to the *governador*, the administrator.

¹⁹¹ A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 77.

¹⁹² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 202.

¹⁹³ T. MOOLAYIL, (ed.) *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam*, 72-74.

police officer, Manisanku by name, who had perpetrated brutality in mafia style on the village people of Kalathur.¹⁹⁴ By this victory, the priest-lawyer's fame spread all over Malabar. Later in 1879, there was another famous court victory in an appeal in Chittattoor case.¹⁹⁵

4.7. The Launching of New Efforts

Rocos schism created much confusion and uncertainty in the Suriani Church. Those who followed the schism later merged into three groups: *Padroado*, *Propaganda* and Rocos. There were conflicts among the groups and many left *Padroado* and joined *Propaganda* and vice versa.¹⁹⁶ By the work of the *Propaganda* vicar apostolic of Verapoly, Leonardo Mellano, many parishes of *Padroado* came to accept Verapoly jurisdiction.¹⁹⁷ Understanding the difficult situation, in 1868 Emmanuel planned to make a trip to Rome and Portugal and necessary arrangements were made for collecting money from the people to meet the expenses.¹⁹⁸ This scheme, unfortunately, did not materialise.¹⁹⁹

4.7.1. Deacons' Petition

Emmanuel remained faithful to *Padroado* expecting a new bishop for reviving their ancient See of Kodungallur. For the realisation of this project and for convincing the *Padroado* authorities of the same, Emmanuel made a trip to Goa in 1872.²⁰⁰ In the same year a petition of the students from the Mangalapuzha seminary with the official recommendation of the administrator, Benedict Rosario Gomes (1870-1875) was sent to the archbishop of Goa and to the king of Portugal requesting a bishop for Kodungallor.²⁰¹ This petition is known as deacons' petition and it was the beginning of a long agitation which later ended with autonomy and freedom

¹⁹⁴ For the details, see A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 86-96; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 232-245.

¹⁹⁵ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 314-328.

¹⁹⁶ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 728-731.

¹⁹⁷ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 737-740.

¹⁹⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 185.

¹⁹⁹ If it was realized there would have been another phase of history for the Suriani Church of Malabar and a completion of the efforts of Mar Cariyattil began in eighteenth century. For details, see T. PAREMAKKAL, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, translated into English with an introduction and notes by P. J. PODIPARA, Rome 1971.

²⁰⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 200.

²⁰¹ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 741; A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 80.

to the Suriani Church. When this petition was sent Emmanuel was a professor at Mangalapuzha seminary, and it was the brain of Emmanuel that was behind the petition of the students.

4.7.2. A Shift from *Padroado* to *Propaganda*

The rivalry between *Padroado* and *Propaganda* group increased day by day. There was no response from *Padroado* authority to the petitions of the people²⁰² which irritated them and led to an unhappy incident in Kanjoor church.²⁰³ As a result of this miserable incident there was a flow of faithful and priests from *Padroado* to *Propaganda*. The Mangalapuzha seminary was almost empty. The administrator himself moved to Cochin. All these incidents taught Emmanuel Nidiry that by remaining in *Padroado* alliance he could not reach his goal. Therefore, the noble and the loyal secretary of *Padroado* authorities finally decided to join the *Propaganda* camp.

4.7.3. A Student at Verapoly Seminary

Though Emmanuel Nidiry was coming from a hostile camp he could easily establish a cordial relation with his new superiors. At present, the top priority of Emmanuel Nidiry was to finish his priestly studies since the *malpanate* formation that he received was not recognized as 'canonical.' By this time, Bernardine Bacinelli (1853-1868) the apostolic vicar of Verapoly closed the *malpanate* system and established four regional seminaries, Verapoly for the Latins and Mannanam, Elthuruth and Vazhakulam for the Surianis.²⁰⁴ In 1874, Emmanuel Nidiry became a student at Mannanam seminary. It was not a humiliation for the former professor at Mangalapuzha seminary to be reduced to the status of a senior student at Mannanam seminary. There he made use of his time to widen his knowledge and to satisfy his intellectual curiosity.²⁰⁵ He became a friend of books and as a

²⁰² The representatives of 31 parishes have decided to remain under *Padroado* till 1873 and if they were not given the promised archbishop, they would join Verapoly. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1862-1877, f. 581, petition of *Padroado* group to the vicar general of Kodungallur on 5 July 1872, enclosure A of Leo Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 9 November 1876.

²⁰³ A fanatic follower of *Padroado* group stabbed the pro-*Propaganda* vicar of Kanjoor parish, while distributing Holy Communion. For details, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, in 1872 208.

²⁰⁴ G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", *JTS* 15 (2004) 10; ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1164.

²⁰⁵ V. C. George reports that when Emmanuel Nidiry was a student at Mannanam seminary he wrote a letter to the vicar apostolic of Verapoly asking his permission to read the books published by Protestants. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 251.

polyglot, he could read books in different languages and many branches of theology.²⁰⁶ His stay at Mannanam helped him expand his relations with missionaries like Fr Ambrose OCD and Fr Elias OCD.

4.7.4. Anonymous Letter to the Pope

Though Emmanuel Nidiry was in a new camp, his mind was filled with national spirit and love for the Suriani Church. His vast reading of Church history, both general and in particular of the Suriani Church, aroused in himself the need for unity of the Suriani Christians and the 'self rule' for the protection of ones own rites. By this time Emmanuel Nidiry gained the support of the eminent priests like Fr Kuriakose Porookara and Fr Alexander Kattakayam. He launched out his new *modus operandi* from the Mannanam seminary with the help Fr Louis Pazheparambil²⁰⁷ and Fr Joseph Peedykel. After long days of discussion, they decided to send a petition to the Supreme Pontiff informing that the spread of schism in Malabar was due to the absence of a separate bishop for the Surianis and requesting the Pope to send a bishop to India to study the problems in Malabar.²⁰⁸ The petition was despatched on 28 July 1875. They sent the petition without any signature and thus the petition became an anonymous letter.²⁰⁹

4.7.5. Recognition from Verapoly Authorities

Understanding the greatness of Emmanuel, the authorities of Verapoly heavily relied on him. To solve the court cases, the archbishop Leonard Mellano found that Emmanuel was the best person to be consulted and the latter was entrusted to conduct the litigations of the vicariate.²¹⁰ The friendship of Emmanuel with the high officers of the state, the British

²⁰⁶ Emmanuel Nidiry had a collection of more than 3000 books in his personal library. It contains books from all branches of science and different languages. Father Ambrose, OCD before returning to Italy gave a collection of 300 books as gift to Emmanuel. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 249-250.

²⁰⁷ When Ernakulam vicariate was established in 1896, Louis Pazheparambil (1896-1919) became the first apostolic vicar of Ernakulam. Cf. C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 482-484.

²⁰⁸ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum* (Malayalam), Trivandrum 1937, 135.

²⁰⁹ It is reported that they sent the letter without signing because they were afraid of authorities. Emmanuel Nidiry was almost at the final stage of the preparation for the priestly ordination and he had already the previous terrible experience. Fr Louis was a monk of the Carmelite order and could not do anything against his authorities. It is said that before sending the petition they have placed it on the altar for the blessing of God and prayed for the realisation of petition. Cf. A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 102-103; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 258-259; I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 135-140.

²¹⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 272.

Resident, the Dewans and the Maharajas of Cochin and Travancore would have helped him win their support for the Church. The success of the famous Arthunkal church case²¹¹ helped consolidate the relationship between Emmanuel and the archbishop which continued even after the ordination of Emmanuel.²¹²

4.7.6. The Ordination and the First Mass

Emmanuel Nidiry received the sub diaconate on 6 May 1875 and the diaconate on the following 24 November.²¹³ Thus, the long-awaited time arrived and the lengthy period of (14years) preparation was over and finally Emmanuel Nidiry was ordained a priest on 12 December 1875 by the vicar apostolic of Verapoly at Mannanam, where he celebrated the first Mass on 3 January 1876 in the presence of a large crowd.²¹⁴ Three months after the ordination in March 1876, the young priest was appointed as the vicar of Kuravilangad by the vicar apostolic Leonardo Mellano to fight against Mellus schism.²¹⁵

We have been trying to narrate *the Suriani Church of India* during the epoch of Emmanuel Nidiry and his early activities. It is clear that up to the sixteenth century there was only one Church in India namely the Suriani Church or the Church of St Thomas Christians and these Christians enjoyed high position and privileges among the other religions of India. This apostolic Church was in constant communion with the Roman Pontiff. The Indian Church was governed by the archdeacon of India under the spiritual leadership of the Chaldean bishops who were appointed on the

²¹¹ Some of the anti parishioners of the Arthumkal had encroached on the church properties. Vicar and the trustees filed a suit against them, which was dismissed by the Alleppey Sub-Court. At this critical situation archbishop entrusted the case to Emmanuel Nidiry for further procedures. Finally through the efficient efforts of Emmanuel the case was ended in favour of the vicar. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 274-275.

²¹² In the personal diary of Nidiry we read that for the first three days after the ordination, he received stipends from the vicar apostolic. See *Ibid*, 278.

²¹³ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 105.

²¹⁴ The first Mass of Emmanuel Nidiry was an occasion for great joy and blessing for the parishioners of Kuravilangad and for the whole Suriani Church. The presence of government officials, protestant and Jacobite missionaries and the people of different sects and castes depicts his wonderful personality and his great influence among the people of different levels. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 277-278; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 752; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 100.

²¹⁵ Leonardo Mellano, vicar apostolic was full confident in Fr Emmanuel Nidiry and for him Fr Nidiry is the best person to eradicate Mar Mellus form Kuravilangad. Cf. A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 281.

request of this community. By the Synod of Diamper in 1599 the Suriani Church came under the Latin rule. The opposition to latinisation resulted in a division of the Suriani Church into two factions after the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653. Under the Latin rule about two centuries the Suriani Church suffered much and lost its long cherished traditions and customs. In the second half of the nineteenth century we see a lasting struggle for the indigenous bishops and for the unity of the Suriani Christians which was lost at the time of the *Coonan* Cross Oath. Emmanuel Nidiry gave his leadership for this liberation and unification movement. He was really an inborn prodigy and he mastered and developed all his God given talents to the maximum perfection. The appointment of young Nidiry to the post of the secretary to the administrator was really an approval of his competence. The more he studied the history of the Suriani Church the more he committed himself to its emancipation. He formed himself to be always loyal to the Suriani Church and its unity.

MELLUS SCHISM AND MEURIN-NIDIRY TEAM

The conflict between *Propaganda* and *Padroado* led to the arrival of Mellus and the spread of another schism in Malabar. Because of continued petitions from Malabar, Rome intervened at last by sending an apostolic visitor to the Suriani Church. In this chapter we analyse the background of the arrival of Mellus and the spread of Mellus schism. We shall also explain the intervention of the apostolic visitor, Msgr. Leo Meurin, and the reaction of the missionaries to the appointment of the apostolic visitor. Here we are also unveiling the efforts of Nidiry-Meurin team to prevent the spread of schism in Malabar and the negative response of Rome to the report of Meurin. We also study the circumstances that led to the coming of a second visitor to Malabar, and the appointment of a coadjutor for the pastoral care of Suriani Catholics.

1. The Background of the Arrival of Mellus

Even though Rocos schism had failed in Malabar, the rivalry between *Propaganda* and *Padroado* led to a greater schism in the Suriani Church. Conflict between the two warring groups became more apparent when Leonardo Mellano, the archbishop of Verapoly, forbade his faithful from attending the mass said by those priests and from receiving them in their churches, who were ordained by Rocos, even after the validity of their ordination was confirmed by the *Propaganda Fide*.¹ A. Pazheparambil reports

¹ A. P. URUMPACKAL, *The Mellus Schism*, 104. It is important to note here that in 1870 Leonard Mellano had obtained permission to receive the clerics who were ordained by bishop Thomas Rocos while he was in Rome. It was clear from his letter to *Propaganda Fide* on 12 January 1871, he wrote: the extraordinary faculty which the Holy Father has given me for ten years allows me to dispense 'a quibuscumque irregularitatibus' and therefore I do not need any permission to absolve (those clerics). Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 226. Here two questions remain unanswered: 1. why did the Apostolic Vicar keep quiet about the permission? 2. why did Rome not inform the petitioners that the requested permission to re-enter the Catholic community was given to Vicar Apostolic?

that the Archbishop's ignorance of the Syro-chaldean liturgy caused many difficulties in Malabar:

The governing bishops were of Latin rite, whilst the governed priests were of the Syrian rite...when the superiors performed any of the liturgical functions the governed Syrian priests were strangers to the ceremony, when the superiors held ordinations, the 'Ordinandi' being strangers to the prayers and the exhortations which superiors recited ...²

Moreover, Mellano absolved ecclesiastical censures of only those whom he liked or those who were against *Padroado*.³

1.1. The Unchristian Behaviour of Missionaries

The approach of Leonardo Mellano and the missionaries towards the Surianis was provocative and offensive.⁴ The Surianis were often ill treated and insulted by them.⁵ Even Ignatius Persico, the second apostolic visitor criticised the secretary of the archbishop and wrote that his imprudent actions are the cause of the problems.⁶ For Mellano, "to write to Rome or to subscribe to petitions directed to Rome is a reserved sin"⁷ and under the same reason he dismissed seven religious priests from their native religious congregation.⁸ Later Mellano justified his action by contending that to save the congregation it was necessary to expel seven or eight from the congregation.⁹ Meanwhile about the expulsion of the seven priests, Persico,

² A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 74-75.

³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 571^a.

⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 176ff, letter of Leopold Beccaro to the prefect of *Propaganda Fide* in 1875. In the letter, he wrote about the bad behaviour of Fr Candidus and Fr Marcilino towards the Suriani Christians. He also complained that most of the money, which was collected from the Suriani faithful and from foreign countries, were used for the Latin Christians. In the report of Persico, he also criticized the charter of Candidus that "...di carattere violento ed anche turbulento; eminentemente partigiano ed anche intrigante." Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 618.

⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1862-1877, f. 528^a, letter of Meurin on 4 May 1876. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 75-76.

⁶ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 601. In his report, while speaking about Fr Candidus, he wrote that "uno dei più giovani, il quale poco prudente, partigiano ed irruente è la causa più frequente dei molti dissidi, malintesi ed anche litigi che si hanno a deplorare."

⁷ Cf. ACO, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1876, s. n., letter of Msgr. Meurin on 15 August 1876; G. NEDUNGATT, *Manikathanr in Centenary Retrospect*, OCP 70 (2004) 322.

⁸ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 177; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 765-766; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 90-103; ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 252^v. Sankoorikal Paulose, Mathekkal Mathai, Meenattoor Emmauel, Keeri (Irimpen) Varghese, Tharavattathil Hilarion, Chavara Joseph, Luis Pazheparambil were the excommunicated priests.

⁹ APF, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Orientale*, vol. 26, 1885-1886, f. 258^a. "Sarebbe di prima necessità espellerne sette od otto dalla congregazione per salvare il corpo." Mellano to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* on 14 November 1885.

the second apostolic visitor commented that these priests did not deserve such a great punishment. Criticizing the action of Mellano, he wrote, "Mellano lacked prudence and acts with overwhelming haste...therefore the personality contradicts his nature. I must confess that even if the apostolic vicar is removed, their desire for an indigenous bishop will ever remain."¹⁰ Msgr. Andrea Aiuti, the delegate apostolic of India while reporting the cruel actions of vicar apostolic stated that these priests were the best among them.¹¹ From the letter of the Carmelite missionary Leopold Beccaro¹² we get a clear picture of the attitude of missionaries. He writes:

I heard that the missionary apostolic Fr Candido was speaking to the people of one of the main parishes of south namely Pulingunnu that he believed, he had come to India to fight against paganism but now it seems that he is to fight against the Suriani tendencies.¹³

The Carmelite missionary Gerard Beccaro, brother of Leopold Beccaro had also complained about the ill treatment of the missionaries in Malabar.¹⁴ Since writing to Rome for getting a bishop of their own rite was considered as a great sin and offence, the priests as well as the faithful were afraid of doing it. Fr Leopold Beccaro stated that for the same reason the prior, Fr Elias Chavara Kuriakose had attempted secretly to write to the sacred congregation but due to the fear of displeasing the vicar apostolic and illness he could not do it.¹⁵ Concurrently, we have a letter requesting for a separate bishop for the Suriani Church:

¹⁰ ACO, *Ponente*, 1877, 613. "Mellano mancato di prudenza e agito con soverchia precipitazione...la personalità contro il Vicario Apostolico esiste a dunque, ma in coscienza debbo confessare che anche rimosso il Vicario Apostolico, l'aspirazione di avere un Vescovo indigena resterà sempre."

¹¹ "i migliori che v'erano", ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi -1878-1889*, f. 1430^{h-v}, letter of Aiuti to the *Propaganda Fide* on 14 April 1889.

¹² Leopold Beccaro and his brother Gerard Beccaro worked in India and were later called back to Rome, thanks to the intrigues of Mellano, by the reason that they were supporters of Surianis for separate vicariates and indigenous bishops. After their return to Rome, Mellano wrote to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* to do anything necessary that they should not make any correspondence with their friends in Malabar. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f. 436^v, letter on 1 March 1876.

¹³ ACO, *Ponente*, 1876, 179, "Mi venne riferito, che, il P. Candido, Miss. Ap. in una delle principali Chiese del sud, di nome Pulingouna, in presenza dei principali di quella Chiesa, disse aver creduto finora d'essere venuto all'Indie per combattere contro il paganesimo, ma che ora vedeva dover combattere contro il Sorianismo."

¹⁴ ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale* 1876, vol. 7, s. n., letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 8 December 1875.

¹⁵ ACO, *Ponente*, 1876, 176, "L'idea ed il desiderio di avere un Vicario Apostolico esclusivamente per loro non è nuova fra i Soriani, poiché fu già trattata segretamente dal defunto Priore di tutti i Conventi P. Ciriaco di S. Elia; il quale voleva porgerne supplica alla sagra Congregazione, ma per il timore di troppo disgustare il defunto Vicario apostolico e la grave malattia da cui non diede corso a quest'idea già vagheggiata da molti."

We are St Thomas Christians and for the last many years, we do not have our own governor. All others who have recently been made Christians have their own governors. We the Christians from the antiquity do not have the above-mentioned governor; therefore we are looking to Babylon to have a bishop of our own rite. Therefore we inform Your Eminence that it would be better to have two bishops, one for the Latin Church and the other for the Suriani Church. So that the desire to have proper bishop will be satisfied and the communion with the Babylon will be entirely avoided.¹⁶

1.2. Disregard of the Service of the Suriani Priests

The superior mentality of the missionaries always created problems. They lacked politeness in their dealings towards the Suriani priests.¹⁷ They treated the Suriani priests like servants and not like priests. Moreover, for the services in the Latin churches, the Suriani priests were appointed in the second place under the Latin priests.¹⁸ Surianis complained to Meurin that the Latin priests did not like the services of the Suriani priests. The Suriani priests did not want to be appointed as assistants to the Latin vicars. Many times both groups requested the vicar apostolic not to repeat this situation, yet he sent them to the Latin churches as assistants which they had to obey. They were not given mass stipend. The Surianis never had marriage relations with the Latins. Surianis were reportedly high caste Brahmins and the Latins were of the lower caste.¹⁹

¹⁶ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, vol. 1, f. 384^{R-V}, "Nos sumus christiani S. Thomae, nos a multis annis rectorem privatum non habemus; alii omnes qui a paucis annis Christiani facti sunt habent rectorem privatum, nos vero ab antiquitate christiani, non habemus supradictum rectorem, ergo curramus in Babiloniam ut habemus Episcopum proprii ritus... Propterea notum facio Eminentiae vestrae quod bonum erit ut hic duo Episcopi praesint, unus Ecclesiae Latinae, et alter Ecclesiae Syriacae, ita, ut abscindatur desiderium proprium Episcopum habendi et sic communio cum Babilonis omnino interdicatur." The author of this letter is unknown because only one page is available in the archive and the rest of the letter might have been lost and it is attached to the letter of Mellano on 27 December 1875.

¹⁷ "Les Reverends peres monstrent un grand manque de tact." Cf. ACO, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale* 1877, s. n., letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 4 September 1876.

¹⁸ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 613, "E poi perchè tanto lui, quanto gli stessi Carmelitani trattano gli ecclesiastici soriani come se fossero servi e non Preti; mentre anche al bisogno di avvalersene per le Chiese latine i Soriani son sempre messi in secondo luogo e tenuti subordinati a Preti latini." Report of the Persico.

¹⁹ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 777, "Latini nolunt a presbyteris syris serviri, neque Cattanaarii Assistentes nominari parochorum latinorum. Utraque pars a Vicario apostolico pluries petit, ne ita fieret, ille autem nihilominus nos in ecclesias latinas mittit, ut Assistentium partes agamus, nos autem illi obedimus. Pro Missis catandis ibidem stipendia accipere non possumus. Syri cum Latinis numquam matrimonia ineunt. Syri sunt Caste supremae brahmanicae, Latini vero infimae." Letter of Meurin on 10 June 1876.

1.3. Negligence in the Field of Education

Even though the missionaries governed the Suriani Church more than three hundred years they really discarded the field of education.²⁰ "The missionaries do not like to give us more education, because they are afraid that we will turn against them. They are regretting on some of the members of the tertiary, whom they taught Latin, because they wrote for us to Rome."²¹ Moreover, the missionaries were not interested in studying the language of the place.²² The Surianis even complained to Meurin, the apostolic visitor, that the missionaries were not interested to give them knowledge. It is due to the lack of ignorance that many turned to Mellus.²³ Andrea Aiuti, the apostolic delegate, reported the negative mentality of the Carmelites, in the education of the Suriani priests:

...for the priests of Malabar it is enough to know how to say the prayer, to read the Mass and to give the absolution in confession. The knowledge is not bread for them because if we taught them anything after having learned it, would exaggerate them, they would become proud and they would cease to respect us anymore.²⁴

The only study prescribed for the sacred ordination was that of a little Latin and Syriac and something of morals.²⁵ Bernardine Baccinelli suppressed *Malpanate*, traditional system of the seminary formation and he ordered that the students for the priesthood should obtain their training in the seminary. Later Leonard Mellano also followed the same principle. Thus owing to the opposition of apostolic vicars by the beginning of 1868 the *Malpanate* system disappeared from Malabar.

²⁰ "Scientiam Malabarensibus esse periculosam", was the opinion of the missionaries. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1877, s. n., letter of Meurin on 4 September 1876.

²¹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 754, "Nolunt Missionarii nos plura docere, ne contra eos insurgamus. Dolent se tertiarios aliquos linguam latinam docuisse; sunt illi qui pro nobis Romam scripserunt." Meurin quotes here the words of the Surianis, letter to the *Propaganda Fide* on 1 June 1876.

²² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 617, the report of Persico.

²³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 775, "Atque missionaries postulamus qui nos doceant, nam qui nunc nos regunt, nolunt nos instrui. Multi ex mera ignoratia ad Episcopum Mellus diflexerunt." Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876.

²⁴ ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1428^R, "... per Malabaresi basta saper dire l'orazione legger la Messa e dare l'assoluzione in confessione; la scienza non è pane per loro anche perchè se insegnassimo loro qualche cosa essi dopo averla imparata si gonfierebbero, diverrebbero superbi e non ci rispetterebbero più. Bella ragione davvero." Report of Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 13 April 1889. The underline is seen in original.

²⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1428^R.

1.4. The Cruel Punishments

The punishments given by the missionaries to the faithful especially in Verapoly vicariate were unjust and cruel: like denial of the usual burial on the basis that the dead did not confess on last Easter or previous year even if he made the confession at the moment of death... If somebody died without preparing the will paper, he was denied a decent burial and the mass on the 3rd, 7th and 30th day... When the relatives didn't make arrangements for the celebration of the mass on the day of demise, the priests were not allowed to participate in the death anniversary celebrations... If the newly weds reached late in the church once the mass was begun, they would be denied the blessing and for that they had to come another day to the church.²⁶

Msgr. Meurin also gives the report of the punishments of the vicar apostolic of Verapoly.²⁷ Fr Hilarion who was dismissed by Mellano for having written to Rome for a separate bishop, later wrote to Leopold and Gerard expressing his internal grief and asking to send a visitor to study the situation in Malabar because the people were already tired of Carmelite missionaries and the cruel punishments of Mellano.²⁸ Fr Joseph Chavara, another dismissed priest by Mellano, for the same reason, sent a similar but a long letter to Rome.²⁹ In such a situation, it is of no wonder that the priests and

²⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 252^v-253^r, "Chi, essendosi pur confessato in punto di morte, non si era confessato nella pasqua dell'anno ultimo o degli anni anteriori. Alla pagina 62 si minaccia di proibire i suffragi del 3^o, 7^o e 30^o a chi colpevolmente sia morto intestato e alla pagina 124 lo si priva d'ogni solennità di funerale. Alla pagina 76 si chiede ai sacerdoti di andare all'anniversario d'un defunto, al quale in die habitus, i parenti non fecero celebrare al meno una messa. Nelle accennate disposizioni o si spinga la punizione oltre il sepolcro contro chi morti riconciliato colla chiesa, ovvero d'una colpa dei superstiti i infligge ai defunti (privati di suffragi) la pena!.

Così per soverchio rigore rinnovare ad altro giorno la benedizione del matrimonio sol perchè gli sposi arrivarono in chiesa a messa incominciata, e non si ha altra messa in quel giorno. Non ho potuto aver certezza, avendone pure interrogato più d'uno di parroci romani, della disposizione del regnante sommo pontefice chi porta in proposito. Ma non si tiene qui che non si possa assolutamente benedire il matrimonio extra missam...." Report of Fr Anacleto on 22 July 1874 to the secretary of the *Propaganda Fide*.

²⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 750, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 22 May 1876.

²⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 444^{r-v}. This letter is originally in Malayalam but Gerard wrote an Italian summary on the left side of the margin of the letter on 24 March 1876: "Il contenuto di questa lettera è la notizia che si parla pubblicamente nella Missione di Verapoly di non voler più i Carmelitani. Tanto sono rigorose le misure sempre crescenti che prende Monsignore contro i Soriani."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 476^r-477^v, letter to the Pope on 29 June 1879, letter is written in Malayalam.

the faithful of the Suriani Church turned to the Chaldean Patriarch for assistance.³⁰ Moreover, the presence of the Chaldean monks in Malabar helped them contact the Chaldean Patriarch.³¹

2. Bishop Mellus in Malabar

In spite of the clear order of Pope Pius IX given to the Chaldean Patriarch Joseph Audo not to interfere in the affairs of the Malabar Church,³² the latter persisted to interfere.³³ Rome once again prohibited him from meddling in Malabar.³⁴ Even in the First Vatican Council the Chaldean bishops together with the Patriarch raised the problem of jurisdiction over the Malabar Church. But before arriving at a decision due to the Franco-German war the council was dissolved.³⁵ Finally patriarch Audo decided to send bishop Mellus³⁶ to Malabar.³⁷ Mar Mellus on the way to Malabar reached Bombay on 21 October 1874. Cardinal Franchi, the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* telegraphed to Meurin on 14 July 1874: “communicate the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly: bishops and Chaldean monks are coming to Malabar against the will of the Pontiff, they are already suspended, give warning to the faithful. You have the faculty for further censures.”³⁸ But the attempt of Msgr. Meurin, the vicar apostolic of Bombay failed to prevent them from proceeding to Malabar.³⁹

³⁰ The historian Bernard Thoma reports that the Suriani Christians continued their request to Chaldean Patriarch for sending a bishop for them. Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 740-741.

³¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1275; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 28-31; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 741-742.

³² De MARTINIS, R., *Juris Pontifici de Propaganda Fide*, vol. VI, 383-384. The brief *Nuper nobis redditae*, on 26 September 1862.

³³ ACO, *Ponenze* 1873, 5-6, letter on 12 May 1864 to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*.

³⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1867, vol. 4, f. 134, letter of *Propaganda Fide* on 14 March 1867.

³⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 30.

³⁶ Yohannan Mellus was born of catholic parents in 1831 at Mardin (Turkey). At the age of 16 he joined the monastery of Rabban Hormiz. He was ordained priest on 21 September 1856 by Mar Audo. Later on 5 July 1864 he was consecrated bishop of Akra by Mar Audo. For details, see A. P. URUMPACKAL, *The Mellus Schism*, 141-146.

³⁷ ACO, *Ponenze* 1874, 2-11.

³⁸ ACO, *Ponenze* 1874, 15.

³⁹ “Bishop Meurin, the then vicar apostolic of Bombay, both by letters and by words tried to dissuade him from proceeding to Malabar, to Accomplish his schismatical projects there and even offered him the money for his return to Chaldea.” ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 453- 454. Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 30-31.

to Kuravilangad. The bishop settled himself in the parochial house.⁵⁸ It was really a shock for the faithful to see that an excommunicated bishop had taken possession of their church.

As a result of the presence of Bishop Mellus at Kuravilangad, the parishioners were divided into two rival groups with two vicars and two teams of trustees.⁵⁹ Quarrels among these groups became order of the day at Kuravilangad. Mellus tried his best to contact the neighbouring priests and parishioners and to canvas them to his side.⁶⁰

2.4. A Special Offer to Fr Emmanuel Nidiry

Even though bishop Mellus tried his best to spread the schism, he could not gain much support from the south. Moreover, the appointment of Fr Emmanuel Nidiry as the vicar of Kuravilangad in March 1876 by the vicar apostolic of Verapoly, was detrimental to his plans. Therefore, his next effort was to persuade Fr Emmanuel Nidiry and thereby to gain his support. He already knew that Fr Emmanuel was the champion of Syrian emancipation and was the most influential man at Kuravilangad. Therefore, to win over Emmanuel was the best means for the realization of his dreams.

Bishop Mellus had sent a special messenger to Fr Emmanuel Nidiry with a letter containing an astounding and attractive offer to the young priest.⁶¹ The poor Chaldean bishop had wrongly judged the Malabar priest who was always faithful to the Catholic Church and proud of his own rite. By accepting the proposal of Bishop Mellus Fr Emmanuel could have easily become the bishop of Suriani community. For Fr Emmanuel the loyalty to the Catholic Church and its heritage were higher than the personal glory. It is said that Fr Emmanuel tore the letter in to pieces in the very presence of the messenger.⁶²

However, bishop Mellus invited Fr Emmanuel Nidiry for a dialogue which took place at Kuravilangad.⁶³ Mellus again tempted Fr Nidiry with

⁵⁸ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 116.

⁵⁹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 116-117.

⁶⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 280.

⁶¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 281.

⁶² A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 118.

⁶³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 282.

high offers but Fr Nidiry remained faithful to his strong convictions. Finally, understanding the insecurity of staying at Kuravilangad Mellus decided to go back to Trichur leaving Mar Jacob⁶⁴ at Kuravilangad as his coadjutor with the charge of southern region.⁶⁵

2.5. Fr Emmanuel Nidiry, Vicar of Kuravilangad

The presence of Bishop Jacob at Kuravilangad could not do anything for the spread of the schism. Nidiry had strong influence at Kuravilangad, which he utilised entirely for eradicating the schism from the parish.⁶⁶ Most of the schismatics returned to the Catholic flock but a few remained in schism for fear of punishment if they returned.⁶⁷ However, those who returned were not ready to go again to the jurisdiction of Varapoly, because most of the people who had fallen in schism were anti Carmelites. After a long consultation with the vicar apostolic of Varapoly, Emmanuel Nidiry succeeded to appoint a *Padroado* vicar at Kuravilangad to satisfy the returned flock.⁶⁸ Although Mellus schism partially disappeared from Kuravilangad by the effort of Nidiry, it left behind a strong impact on the Suriani Church.

3. Petition Movements from Clergy and People

The main cause of the spread of schism in Malabar was the absence of bishops who knew the rite and liturgical language of the Suriani Christians. Therefore, they began to write to Rome under the leadership of Syrian Carmelites.⁶⁹ Aloysius Pareparambil gives three causes for the spread of schism:

First is the problem of 'rite' the governing bishops were Latin and the governed priests were Syrian rite and the superiors did not know Syriac, liturgy, breviary and other prayers. The Second cause was the bad behaviour

⁶⁴ Mar Philip Jacob Uraba was another Chaldean bishop reached Malabar at the request of Mar Mellus, Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 386, letter of Leo Meurin to Franchi on 20 December 1875; Cf. A. P. URUMPACKAL, *The Mellus Schism*, 146.

⁶⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 49-50.

⁶⁶ For the fight against the schism, Fr Emmanuel Nidiry got the support and help of Fr Mattathil Jacob, Fr Valladiyil Jacob and Fr Mecherikkunel Manuel. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 282.

⁶⁷ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 119.

⁶⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 283.

⁶⁹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 76-78.

and ill treatment of the missionaries towards the priests and faithful. Thirdly, the suppressive mentality of the superiors to the legitimate claims of the Surianis namely to have bishops of their own nation.⁷⁰

We have already seen the deacons' petition and the anonymous petition, under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry, which paved the way for a strong movement. From 1875 onwards, there was a series of petitions to Rome from Malabar. The main content of all the letters was the request for the indigenous bishops and the division of the Verapoly vicariate.⁷¹ They also requested the *Propaganda Fide* to send a vicar apostolic either from Madras or from Bombay to study the matters of Malabar.⁷²

The petitioners also wrote to the different apostolic vicars of various places explaining their problems in Malabar and they got reply from the apostolic vicars of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Jaffna.⁷³ Msgr. Leo Meurin, the vicar apostolic of Bombay, was personally interested in the affairs of Malabar, and had informed the congregation about their demands.⁷⁴

4. The Apostolic Visitor

In view of series of long petitions and understanding the worse situation of Malabar created by the Mellus schism, the *Propaganda Fide*, in spite of the objection of Mellano,⁷⁵ decided on 24 March 1876, to send Msgr. Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor⁷⁶ to study the problems and to assess the

⁷⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 74-76.

⁷¹ Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 365^R-366^V, 400^R; 401-406; 409-412; 418-421; 423-424; 425-426; 427-428; 429-430; 431-432; 433-434; 438-439; 440-443. These letters were representing parish priests, religious priests and laymen. They were written in Latin, Syriac, Malayalam and English.

⁷² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 226, letter on 26 October 1875 to *Propaganda Fide* signed by more than seventy priests.

⁷³ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 143.

⁷⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 372-373, letter of Meurin to Franchi on 1 November 1875.

⁷⁵ Mellano was already asked by the *Propaganda*, whether it would be of help if the Congregation sent a visitor to Malabar. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1875-1876, ff. 383^V-385^R, letter of Franchi to Mellano on 24 September 1875. He already replied to the question of the Congregation on 24 September 1875 that a visitor sent from Rome would be of help neither for the Catholics nor for the schismatics. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 379^V, letter of Mellano to Franchi on 10 November 1875.

⁷⁶ Pope Pius IX appointed Meurin by the Papal decree *Opportet Romanum Pontificem*. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 465^{R-V}, for the Malayalm translation, see *Ibid.*, f. 464^{R-V}.

real situation in Malabar.⁷⁷ Msgr. Leo Meurin⁷⁸ reached Cochin on 5 May 1876.⁷⁹ It was an unceremonious arrival.⁸⁰ His secretary Fr Clarke accompanied him and they stayed in a church near by Fort Cochin.⁸¹ On 8 May 1876, the apostolic visitor issued a pastoral letter asking the clergy and laity to answer properly to his enquiries.⁸² He sent the letter together with the copy of the decree of his appointment to all the parishes which was read in all the churches.⁸³

Meurin issued another pastoral letter on 9 May 1876, explaining the Mellus schism and the miserable conditions of the priests and the faithful who followed the schism.⁸⁴ A text from the liturgical book was cited in the pastoral letter⁸⁵ to show that the apostolic visitor would accept the faithful unconditionally, if they returned from the schism.

4.1. Emmanuel Nidiry as the Interpreter

The apostolic visitor Meurin on his way to Malabar visited Goa and discussed the problems of Malabar with the archbishop and the former

⁷⁷ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 715, "Visitatio haec Apostolica ordinatur ad cognoscendum verum statum rerum, neque ullo pacto minuit dignitatem nec suspendit Ordinariorum iurisdictionem, quae integra manet in suos respective subditos." For the 12 regulations of *Propaganda Fide* to the apostolic visitor see ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 715-718.

⁷⁸ Msgr. Leo Meurin was born in Berlin on 23 June 1825. After his priestly studies, he was ordained as a priest on 3 September 1848, for the diocese of Cologne. Later in 1853, he entered the Society of Jesus. After five years, he was sent to Indian mission and worked as a military chaplain, parish priest, rector of the seminary and headmaster of the school at Bombay. On 27 March 1867, he was appointed as the vicar apostolic of Bombay and was consecrated on 2 February 1868. As an apostolic visitor to Malabar, he studied the problems of the Suriani Church and gave the reports with his own personal suggestions. Those reports are in the form of more than fifty letters that he wrote to the *Propaganda Fide*. Later he was transferred to Mauritius island and died on 1 June 1895. Cf. A. VÄTH, *Die Deutsche Jesuiten in Indien*, Regensburg 1920, 99-134. For the Malayalam translation of the letters, see C. PAYNGOT, *Kerala Sabha Pathonbatham Noottandil Meurinte Kathukal* (Malayalam), Kottayam 1996.

⁷⁹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 725, letter of Meurin on 18 May 1876 to the *Propaganda Fide*.

⁸⁰ I. C. Chacko reports that no one was sent to the port by the vicar apostolic of Verapoly to receive the apostolic visitor because the appointment of the apostolic visitor was against the will of Mellano. Cf. I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazhparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 208. V.C. George states that the vicar apostolic of Verapoly had sent an old priest to Cochin to receive Meurin. See V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 285.

⁸¹ On the same day by evening they visited Archbishop Mellano at Manjummel and discussed various matters and the next day they returned to Cochin. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 725, letter of Meurin, to the *Propaganda Fide* on 18 May 1876.

⁸² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 463^v. It is attached to the letter of Meurin on 18 May 1876.

⁸³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 286.

⁸⁴ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 287.

⁸⁵ V. C. George says that the text from liturgical book was included by the inspiration of Emmanuel Nidiry. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 287.

administrators.⁸⁶ They recommended strongly Emmanuel Nidiry to the post of Malayalam interpreter for the apostolic visitor, because they were convinced of his efficiency and his command of language.⁸⁷

On the first meeting with Mellano, Meurin succeeded to get Emmanuel Nidiry appointed as his interpreter by the archbishop.⁸⁸ On 23 May 1876, Emmanuel Nidiry started his job translating the English speech of Meurin in to Malayalam.⁸⁹ Since he had to play a decisive role as an interpreter, he was asked to take an oath before the apostolic visitor,⁹⁰ to which he remained always faithful. Nidiry found himself in a delicate situation. He had to play a neutral role between the two rival groups headed by *Padroado* and *Propaganda*. At the same time he had to safeguard the desires and hopes of the Surianis for which he had been fighting all through his life.

4.2. The Reception and the Conference at Mannanam

To acquaint himself with problems better, Meurin decided to convene a conference. On 10 May 1876, Meurin issued an invitation notice to the vicars and the representatives of the Suriani churches to attend the conference at Mannanam.⁹¹ Emmanuel Nidiry requested the prior general to make all the necessary arrangements for a warm reception to the apostolic visitor at Mannanam in contrast to the cold reception that he received at Cochin.⁹²

Emmanuel Nidiry arranged a magnificent reception to the apostolic visitor and the Suriani Christians viewed him as a liberator. Meurin sailed to the monastery of Mannanam in a decorated boat, accompanied by 300 diverse rowing boats filled with 5000 people. On landing at Mannanam, he was received by the prior general in the presence of a large crowd including

⁸⁶ ACO, *Scritture Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 524^{R-V} + 527^{R-V}, letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 27 April 1876.

⁸⁷ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 106.

⁸⁸ It is reported that the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry as the interpreter was against the will of Carmelite missionaries because they had another candidate Fr Philip to the post of interpreter. Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 107-108.

⁸⁹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 771, letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876.

⁹⁰ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 771, "Quo facto Interpretorum me genuflexus, et toto populo stante, iureiurando solemniter se fideliter ex una lingua in alteram versurum, et strictissimo silentio servaturum esse quicumque ei tamquam Interpreti meo proponerentur." Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876.

⁹¹ ACO, *Scritture Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 467^R. Though the Missionaries suggested various places, for convening the conference under the influence of Emmanuel Nidiry the apostolic visitor preferred Mannanam, the centre of Suriani Catholics. See V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 288.

⁹² A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 108-109.

priests and the clerics.⁹³ Meurin understood that the warm reception given to him was an outward expression of their devotion to the Holy See and was a symbol of their future expectations.⁹⁴

Meurin reached Mannanam on 20 May 1876 and from 23 onwards he began to meet the faithful.⁹⁵ Mannanam conference was a great occasion for the Suriani Christians to share their problems and to express their demands. It was perhaps the most important conference in the history of the Malabar Suriani Christians after the synod of Diamper. Almost 3000 representatives of different parishes participated in the conference, which lasted for three days.⁹⁶

After the long discussion at the end of the conference, a unanimously approved petition was submitted to the apostolic visitor with the suggestion that the whole Suriani Catholic community in Malabar should be placed under a European bishop, assisted by a native Syrian bishop:

We desire to have a European so that he may supervise the bishop from our own nation, and that his missionaries may teach our young men; and we will have one from our own people to perform all our ceremonies in our Syriac language, and protect the people from schism, dissension and division, and to prevent the coming of the Babylonians to our land.⁹⁷

Actually, this decision was against the plan of Emmanuel Nidiry. Bringing again the Suriani community under the foreign domination was intolerable for him. Since all of his friends had signed the petition, he was compelled to agree to the new proposal.⁹⁸ Immediately after the conference Meurin

⁹³ For the details of the reception, see ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 752, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 1 June 1876; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 291-292; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 848-850.

⁹⁴ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 752, "Incredibili entusiasmo exceptus. Clarissima signa reverentiae et obedientiae erga Sanctam Sedem." Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 22 May 1876.

⁹⁵ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 692.

⁹⁶ For the details of the conference, see ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 748-749; *Ibid.*, 770-782, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876. See also A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 111-117; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 295-300.

⁹⁷ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 780, "Desideramus habere unum ex Europeis, ut ipse super inspiciat episcopum nationis nostrae et ejus Missionarii doceant Juvenes nostros; et desideramus habere unum ex natione nostra ut ipse perficiat omnes ceremonias nostras in nostra lingua syriaca et protegat populum a schismate, dissentione et divisione, et ut impediatur adventui Babiloniensium in regionem nostram rogamus Amp." Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876. In this letter, Meurin gives the signature of 123 priests. Bernard Thoma, the famous historian of the Suriani Church, presents the petition with the signature of 136 priests. See BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 770-773. For the English translation of the petition, see A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 393-394.

⁹⁸ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 129.

went to Cochin, accompanied by Emmanuel Nidiry, and sent the petitions to Rome together with a detailed report of the conference and his recommendations.⁹⁹ The amount paid for the telegram was rupees 500 and it shows how lengthy the report was.¹⁰⁰

4.3. The Report of Monsignor Pagani

Following the report of Meurin, Pagani¹⁰¹ sent another report to Rome regarding the Mannanam conference with significant suggestions:

Cardinal Franchi, *Propaganda Fide*, Rome. The apostolic visitor of Malabar writes. With great enthusiasm, he was received, the clearest sign of the reverence to the Holy See. We had a general conference of the clergy and the laity. Except a few, all demand the erection of a diocese, a governing European bishop from the missionaries to be sent and an auxiliary bishop in pontificals (with pontifical privileges) from the Malabarians. Such a concession is not at all dangerous, but is much beneficial, and even necessary to bring back all the Mellusians and the Jacobites and to keep the Babilonians away. Denial of this is very dangerous.¹⁰²

The suggestion of Meurin to appoint a Jesuit bishop for governing and a bishop from Chaldean rite to protect the rite and conferring ordination¹⁰³ was against the policy of the *Propaganda Fide*. Reacting negatively¹⁰⁴ the *Propaganda Fide* asked the apostolic visitor to observe the regulations,¹⁰⁵ which were given to him.

⁹⁹ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 850.

¹⁰⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 116.

¹⁰¹ Msgr. Pagani was the Pro Apostolic Vicar of Bombay and he was in charge of the diocese in the absence of Msgr. Meurin.

¹⁰² ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 692, "Cardinal Franchi, *Propaganda Roma*. Scribit visitator Malabar 'Maxime entusiasmo exceptus, clarissima signa reverentiae erga Sanctam Sedem. Generalem Conventum Cleri populi que habuimus. Paucissimis exceptis petunt erectionem dioceseos, Episcopum Europeum gubernantem ex Missionariis mittendis assumendum, cum Episcopo assistente in Pontificalibus ex Malabarensibus assumendo. Concessio nullatenus periculosa, valde proficua, immo necessaria ad reducendum Mellusianos et Jacobitas, et ad arcendum Babylonenses. Denegatio, periculosissima. Pagani Pro- Vicarius Apostolicus." Letter of Pagani to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* on 5 June 1876.

¹⁰³ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 789, "Consulto ut in Malabar Constituat Episcopus e Societate Jesu gubernans, et Episcopus Syriacus ritus Chaldaici pro Ordinibus tantum et pro ritu Servendo." Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 17 June 1876. Here he quotes the proposal of Mar Mellus.

¹⁰⁴ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 695, "La Propaganda scrisse il 22 Giugno a.c. su questo proposito a Mons. Meurin Gravissimum prorsus est, et inexpectatum tuum telegrama." Letter of *Propaganda Fide* to Meurin on 22 June 1876.

¹⁰⁵ For the regulations given to the apostolic visitor, see ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 715-718. Among the regulations, the fifth rule was an application of the Lateran council decision namely how one bishop can serve the faithful of different rites.

4.4. The Harsh Experience of Emmanuel Nidiry

As the interpreter to the apostolic visitor, Emmanuel Nidiry had to undergo many difficult ordeals. The very appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry as the interpreter was against the will of missionaries.¹⁰⁶ When the apostolic visitor was staying with Fr Cherubin and Fr Philipus in Cochin some of the Carmelites of the third order (Tertiaries) came to visit him. Emmanuel Nidiry was the interpreter. In order to overhear their conversation the Missionaries sent the sacristan who knew English and Malayalm. While he was secretly listening to the conversation, the secretary of the apostolic visitor caught him. On questioning, he told that Fr Cherubin and Fr Philipus had sent him. In the following day, the missionaries justified their action explaining that they sent the sacristan to see the fidelity of the interpreter.¹⁰⁷

4.5. The Maltreatment from the Part of Missionaries

The superiority complex of the Carmelite missionaries created a kind of detestation towards the native Christians. The Malabar priests, even if advanced in age, were permitted neither to sit nor to eat with the missionaries.¹⁰⁸ It happened even to Emmanuel Nidiry, the interpreter of the apostolic visitor in 1876. He was made to sit and eat alone apart from the group during the dinner with the Carmelites in the monastery of Koonammav. By the intervention of Meurin, he was given a seat with the group.¹⁰⁹ However, the action of Meurin was disliked by the missionaries. Emmanuel Nidiry quipped with good grace: that he being a descent of

¹⁰⁶ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 108.

¹⁰⁷ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 748, "Dum aliqui tertarii me visitabant, et P. Emmanuel interpretem agebat, Rev. PP. Cherubin et Philippus, quibuscum, Cochini habitabam, Sacristanum Anglicam et Malayalim linguam callentem, ad auscultandum iuxta portam miserunt. Quem quum Secretarius meus observaret, exiens e cubiculo rogavit eum, ad quid conversationem Visitatoris cum Tertiariis audire studeat. Tunc confessus est simplex homo, se a Missionariis ad hoc esse missum; et abire coactus est. Proxima die Missionarii sponte se excusaverunt dicentes, se discere voluisse, an P. Emmanuel fidelis sit interpres." Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 1 June 1876.

¹⁰⁸ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 748, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 1 June 1876. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 393-394.

¹⁰⁹ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 748, "Aversio populi fere universalis a Missionariis non solum ab imperioso modo agendi iuvenum, sed etiam a regulis quibusdam repetenda est, quibus Missionarii auctoritatem suam tueri conatur. Presbyteris indigenis, etiam senioribus, non licet sedere coram Missionariis, etiam iuvenibus, nec comedere cum Superioribus. Quando Cattanarii ipsum Rev. P. Priorem omnium Conventuum dignissimum inter presbyteros Syriacos, coram iuvene quodam Missionario sedente stantem videbant, magna indignatione impleti sunt. Cattanarius *Emmanuel Nidiry*, quem Rmus Praesul mihi comitem et interpretem destinavit, Cochini non fuit admissus ad mensam nostram, non quidem propter meam dignitatem, sed propter P. Philippum Superiorem Conventus Cunnemao. Humiliatio ista non minus me

Brahmin converts and the missionaries of Verapoly, owing to their own sense of inferiority, did not regard themselves worthy to eat with him.

Emmanuel Nidiry also complained to Rome about the ill-treatment of the Carmelite missionaries and the bishops of Verapoly towards the faithful and the priests of India. They did not have the civilization and etiquette to receive the Indian faithful and the priests properly.¹¹⁰ Later, Meurin reported that even though the prohibition of the Malabar priests to sit with the missionaries and to dine with the bishops was revoked, unfortunately the old custom was reintroduced, when Marcellino OCD became the coadjutor of Verapoly.¹¹¹

5. Meurin-Nidiry Team

After the Mannanam conference, thanks to the efforts of his interpreter Emmanuel Nidiry, Meurin was fully convinced of the problems of the Suriani Church. The secretary of the apostolic visitor published a report on Mannanam conference in the Catholic Examiner of Bombay, in which he approved the competence of Emmanuel Nidiry.¹¹² This report, certainly, was an appreciation of the ability and fidelity of Nidiry by the apostolic visitor Meurin. Nidiry accompanied Meurin throughout his Journey in Malabar.¹¹³ They became good friends and had admiration and affection for each other. Nidiry enjoyed all sorts of freedom with Meurin. Once Meurin jokingly remarked that Kerala was a land of schismatics and wondered how one could be made a bishop. Nidiry retorted at once: "Then how could Germany, which gave birth to Martin Luther, produce a bishop like Your Lordship?"¹¹⁴

quam illum pupugit. Quum Cattanaariis me invisentibus sedem offerrem, Missionarii me et illos torvis oculis aspiciabant. Missionarii aegre ferunt, si Cattanaarii eorum Scapulare non osculantur dam presbyteri latini illud impune omittunt, quo Syri eo magis offenduntur, quod ipsi nobilem Castam constituent, dum Latini in dignitate sociali illis inferiores sint." Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 1 June 1876.

¹¹⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 471^R, "quod missionarii Verapolitani Carmelite et episcopi non habant necessariam urbanitatem et civilitatem in recipiendis Indianis tam fidelibus quam sacerdotibus." Letter of Nidiry to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* on 5 June 1876.

¹¹¹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 867^R, letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 23 December 1878.

¹¹² "Fr Nidiry, a highly intelligent and Zealous young Cathanan well-conversant with the Syriac, Malayalam, English and Portuguese languages." A report on the Mannanam Conference in Catholic Examiner of Bombay on 14 October 1876. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 298.

¹¹³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Generale* 1877, Luglio, s. n., letter of Meurin on 12 October 1876.

¹¹⁴ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 130.

5.1. The Ollur Conference

The schism affected badly the northern part of Malabar. Therefore, after visiting Pallikunnu, Changanacherry etc., Meurin proceeded to the north. He reached Elthuruth on 17 August 1876¹¹⁵ and stayed at Elthuruth Monastery almost sixteen months near the enemy camp. At Elthuruth, with the help of Nidiry and Fr Alexander Kattakkayam, the then prior of the Monastery, Meurin converted many schismatics.¹¹⁶ There he resolved to conduct a public conference like that of Mannanam at Ollur.

Immediately Meurin published an invitation letter for the Ollur conference¹¹⁷ and sent an open letter to Bishop Mellus¹¹⁸ inviting him to the conference or for a personal interview. Bishop Mellus was not ready to attend the conference. However, he sent a letter to be read in the conference.¹¹⁹ The conference took place on 19 and 20 September 1876. The limited number of the participants in the Ollur conference was a clear proof of the strength of the schism in the North.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the conference helped to a large extent prevents the spread of schism by convincing the faithful that Bishop Mellus was not sent by the Pope.¹²¹

5.2. The Conversion of Bishop Jacob

By the effective teamwork of Meurin and Nidiry, the schism had lost its support in South. Therefore Mar Jacob who was residing at Kuravilangad, returned to Trichur and stayed with Mar Mellus. Now Nidiry turned his efforts to bring Mar Jacob back to the Catholic side.¹²² In order to talk with Mar Jacob, Nidiry was sent to him by the apostolic visitor Meurin.¹²³ Many

¹¹⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 550^R, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 11 September 1876.

¹¹⁶ A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 137.

¹¹⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 554^{R-V}, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 11 September 1876. For the Malayalam translation, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 303-304.

¹¹⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 307-309.

¹¹⁹ For the letter of Mellus, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 309-310.

¹²⁰ Meurin gives a detailed report of the Ollur conference. See ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 557^R-559^V, letter of Meurin on 25 September 1876.

¹²¹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 121.

¹²² Already two attempts were made under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry for the conversion of Mar Jacob while he was staying at Kuravilangad. Cf. A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 134.

¹²³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 563^R, letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 5 October 1876.

nights conferences were held at Trichur, between Nidiry and Mar Jacob. Mar Jacob was a virtual prisoner in the hands of his people. Therefore, his secretary represented him in the further conferences with Nidiry and his team.¹²⁴ Mar Jacob was assured of protection and all possible help after his return. Now, the safe exodus of Mar Jacob and his secretary from the schismatic camp was the great problem.

On 2 August 1877, with the help of Fr Alexander Kattakkayam, Nidiry stealthily entered the schismatic churchyard. The bishop was ready and he followed them to outside, got into the cart and drove off towards Elthuruth.¹²⁵ Meurin received him to the Catholic flock with outstretched hands.¹²⁶ The anger of the schismatics now turned to Emmanuel Nidiry, who was known to be the leader of all these incidents. Meurin reports that Bishop Mellus had instigated the schismatics of Trichur to ridicule his interpreter publicly and to attack him.¹²⁷ When Nidiry entered the second time in the schismatic camp to take the belongings of Mar Jacob, he was attacked by a group of people, thank God he saved himself.¹²⁸ After the return of Mar Jacob, the schismatics tried their best to bring him back to their camp. Fr Palakkunnel, the vicar general of Mar Mellus describes his attempt to persuade him to the schism:

Mar Elias Mellus sent me to Ollur because the insult and disgrace had become unbearable... The wicked bishop only laughed all that way and did not come back. The reason was that some high hopes had been given to him through letters by the bishop of Bombay and through the sweet words by Emmanuel Nidiry that he could be made a catholic bishop by Rome to rule over the Malabar Syrians under Verapoly. Therefore he contemptuously turned down our words.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidiry A History of His Times*, 152-153.

¹²⁵ "Fr Nidiry says that the blessings of Dr. Meurin enabled him to take him (Mar Jacob) away at midnight from the schismatical residence of Bishop Mellus and to escape from the fury of the schismatic mob who pursued them with deadly weapons to kill both of them on the way." Quoted from the personal diary of Emmanuel Nidiry. Cf. A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidiry A History of His Times*, 154.

¹²⁶ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 62-63.

¹²⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 709^r, "Triciurenses schismatici ab Episcopo Mellus ad rabiem usque excitati sunt, adeo ut nuper Interpretem meum publice insultare et Capidibus aggredi non dubitaverint." Letter of Meurin on 27 August 1877.

¹²⁸ Fr Palakkunnel writes about these incidents: "Fr Nidiry sustained many insults. But for the ban of Mar Elias Mellus, who was moved by affection, he (Fr Nidiry) would have died that day." Cf. P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakkunnel Valliachante Nalagamam* (Malayalam), Changanacherry 1972, 206.

¹²⁹ P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakkunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 206.

Against the expectation of all, Mar Jacob accompanied Meurin to Bombay and returned to Babylon.¹³⁰

5.3. Contact with Fr Palakunnel Mathai Mariam

Emmanuel Nidiry took efforts to bring back Fr Palakunnel Mathai Mariam,¹³¹ a strong supporter and vicar general of bishop Mellus,¹³² to the Catholic Communion. Nidiry wrote a letter to Palakunnel assuring him of a fair treatment in case he returned.¹³³ Later in 1880 he went back and reunited with the Catholic Church.¹³⁴ Palakunnel wrote to Rome from the Kavalam church on 25 July 1880:

I joined bishop Mellus without the least intention to oppose the most Holy Father, but because I could not bear to see the Verapolitans trample my men under their feet and oppressing them under slavery, and also because I was depressed. I was considering a solution, when bishop Mellus came. Thinking that there may be a way out from the slavery and that I may get consolation from my suffering and, as there was no means to inform the Holy See, I joined bishop Mellus.¹³⁵

5.4. The Famous Chittattoor Church Case

The Catholics and the schismatics jointly owned the St Sebastian's Church at Chittattoor.¹³⁶ In order to re-establish the sole authority of the church and the church properties, in 1875 the vicar apostolic of Verapoly filed a case in the Calicut South Malabar Subordinate Court. Understanding the seriousness of the case the archbishop entrusted Emmanuel Nidiry to conduct all the matters under the guidance of the apostolic visitor Meurin.

¹³⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 734^v, letter of Meurin on 8 October 1877; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 758.

¹³¹ Fr Palakunnel (1831-1900) was a contemporary of Emmanuel Nidiry, a strong opponent of European domination and later he joined the schism in opposition to Verapoly. It was Palakunnel who preached the sermon at the first mass of Nidiry Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 278.

¹³² P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 222-223.

¹³³ P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 97-198.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 229-234; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 761.

¹³⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1016-1017. The original letter is in Malayalam and it is kept with a Latin translation. English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India* ..., 56.

¹³⁶ In 1861 the then Catholic vicar of the church joined the Rocos schism. After the departure of Mar Rocos he joined to the *Padroado* group and was appointed as the vicar by the Governodor. Later this group joined to the Verapoly side. However, the Rocosian group was strong in the parish and when bishop Mellus reached Malabar, they approached Mellus and a new priest was made the vicar of the same parish by Mar Mellus. For details, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 314-328.

For Nidiry, it was really a challenge. He worked hard for the liberation of the church¹³⁷ as well as to gain the support of the anti-Verapoly group. His skill and efficiency, above all the advice of the apostolic visitor helped him go ahead. At the same time, he suffered a lot;¹³⁸ underwent many difficult situations, even threat to his life and gained more enemies.¹³⁹

The judgement of Calicut court was in favour of the schismatic groups, since there already existed some records of the police case between *Padroado* and Verapoly groups, regarding the ownership of the church. Therefore, the judge ordered a fresh suit to be filed jointly by the Verapoly and the *Padroado* authorities. knowing the importance of the case and its after-effect on the future of the Catholic Church of India (in legal affairs), an appeal was filed in the High Court of Madras against the decision.¹⁴⁰ As we see later, in 1877 Meurin, the apostolic visitor was called back from Malabar. Therefore, he entrusted all further conduct of the case to Emmanuel Nidiry:

With the permission of Rev Vicar Apostolic I entrusted, all further conduct of case of Chittattoor and other cases together with the responsibility of all things to be done, to my interpreter and extraordinarily efficient Cattanar, Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁴¹

Though Meurin left Malabar, he was interested in the procedures of the Chittattoor case. He sent Rupees 500 to meet the expenses of the case.¹⁴² Unfortunately, the High Court decision was unfavourable to the Catholic side. It was a new challenge for Nidiry and he wrote to the *Propaganda* with a new proposal:

Your Eminence could notice well how he (Mellus) has acquired the courage to raise his head. The decision of the Holy See understood differently, the return of Msgr. Visitor and the decision of the High Court of Madras were circumstances very favourable to Mellus to deceive and to excite the poor

¹³⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Generale* 1877, s. n. "Interpres meus, Emmanuel Nidiri Cattanarius cum adiutorio apparitoris et militum ecclesiam Cittatucarensem jam occuparit." Letter of Meurin on 30 March 1877.

¹³⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 652^v, letter of Meurin on 10 May 1876.

¹³⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 623^v, letter of Meurin on 22 February 1877.

¹⁴⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Generale* 1877, s. n., letter of Meurin on 30 March 1877.

¹⁴¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 724^v, "Cum licentia Rmi Vicarii Apostolici Interpreti meo, Cattanario Emmanuelli Nidiry, viro habilissimo, curam tradidi omnium quae adhuc in Chittatucarensi aliisque causis agenda supersunt." Letter of Meurin on 27 September 1877; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 758; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 130.

¹⁴² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 320, letter of Meurin to Nidiry on 28 October 1877.

people. Though the above mentioned decision of the madras Court is in favour of the schismatics, it seems to me that we would be able to gain the other cases if the two prelates of Goa and Varapuzha together would again go to the court.¹⁴³

A new petition was planned, for which Nidiry collected the signature of the *Padroado* Governor. Together with the signature of archbishop of Verapoly, the petition was submitted to the court in 1877. The procedural error was rectified and both groups were represented. Nidiry gained the cooperation of the *Padroado* group for raising funds.¹⁴⁴ This time, the outcome of the case was a victory for the Catholic section. According to the court verdict the St Sebastian's church together with the properties was to be handed over to the Catholics. In connection with the case, Nidiry had to travel many times to Calicut and once during his way to Calicut he saved himself through his mental power from the attack of the robbers.¹⁴⁵

The schismatics still with hope appealed to the High court of Madras. Nidiry had to stay several days in Madras in connection with the court dealings. During his stay, he made friends with many important persons and got opportunity to visit Maharaja Manniyasree, the Governor of Madras. During his several trips to Madras Nidiry visited Fr Mullur at Mangalore and he learned the preliminary lessons of Homeopathy. Fr Mullur offered some important books on Homeopathy to Nidiry, and they continued their friendship for a long time. Later the knowledge of Nidiry in Homeopathy helped him give consolation to thousands of people and he cured many.¹⁴⁶

Finally, the decision of the court was announced on 24 January 1879, and it was a total victory for the Catholic Church and it legally affirmed

¹⁴³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 738, "Prendo libertà di spedirle una fedele versione del pastorale dello scismatico vescovo Mellus che ci pubblicò appena che ci arrivò la decisione della S. Sede a riguardo della richiesta della chiesa Syro-Chaldaica di Malabar. Vostra Em. potrà ben accorgere come egli abbia ardito ad alzar la testa. La decisione della S. Sede diversamente intesa, gita di Msgr. Visitatore e la decisione della suprema corte di Madras, furono circostanze assai favorevoli a Mellus per ingannare ed eccitar la povera gente. Ancorché la suddetta decisione in Madras sia in favor dei schismatici mi pare che potremo guadagnare noi altri se i due prelati di Goa e Verapoli fossero di nuovo fatto ricorso insieme alla corte." Letter of Nidiry to Franchi on 31 October 1877. Cf. also V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 321, letter of the vicar apostolic to Nidiry on 26 December 1877.

¹⁴⁴ ACO, *Srit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 901ff; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 146.

¹⁴⁵ For the details, see A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 149.

¹⁴⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 320.

the supremacy of the Pope over the church in Malabar.¹⁴⁷ Nidiry received the expenses of the appeal from the schismatics and drove them out of the church.¹⁴⁸ Veliyanadu, Pazhayoor, Aranattukara, Mattudhesam, Chevvur and Arthatt church cases followed the Chittattoor case.

The success of the case was in a way the success of Nidiry. Even Msgr. Ignazio Persico,¹⁴⁹ in his letter recognized the great ability of Nidiry.

If the Chittattoor case is won against Mellus, it is because Msgr. Meurin initiated the process and had prepared everything, and above all because Mani Nidiry, the Suriani priest was the procurator of the process.¹⁵⁰

I. C. Chacko writes, Nidiry was already famous and he became more famous through his management of the Chittattoor case.¹⁵¹ After the great triumph, Nidiry made visit to Meurin in Bombay and spent a few days there. Later Meurin wrote to Louis Pazheparambil: "Nidiry stayed a short time with me-to my greatest delight."¹⁵²

5.5. Recapture of Ambakkatt and Mapranam Parishes

Nidiry had an important role in regaining the parish of Ambakkatt for which, he visited the parish many times.¹⁵³ When the schism became influential in the parish, Meurin sent Nidiry to the parish of Ambakkatt to control the dangerous situation.¹⁵⁴ Once the parishioners prevented the parish priest from celebrating the Holy Mass for two days and planned to receive a priest sent by Mar Mellus. However, by his intelligent approach Nidiry succeeded in bringing back many faithful from the schism.¹⁵⁵

Meurin gives a clear picture of the role played by his interpreter in the conversion of the parishioners of the Mapranam church:

¹⁴⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 232ff. A copy of the high court judgement published in Bombay Examiner daily.

¹⁴⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 130.

¹⁴⁹ See, footnote 190.

¹⁵⁰ APF, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, vol. 1017, f. 369^R, "Se vincerò contro Mellus il processo per la chiesa di Chittatur si fu perchè Msgr. Meurin aveva cominciato quel processo e preparato ogni cosa e di più perchè posero procuratore di quel processo il Sacerdote Nidiry Siriano" s. d.

¹⁵¹ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 326.

¹⁵² A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 150.

¹⁵³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 591^V, letter of Meurin on 23 November 1876.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 577^R, letter of Meurin on 9 November 1876.

¹⁵⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 593^R, "Quam interpres meus ad eos perrenerit, cum dexteritate animos plurimorum sibi devinsit." Letter of Meurin on 30 November 1876.

At the same hour when my interpreter returned from Ambakkatt, immediately he had to go to the church of Mapranatt [Mapranam], located in one day's distance of journey from here, because it was informed that the same church also would join the intruder Mellus. The cause of the insurrection of this parish is the edict of the Vicar Apostolic in 1871, introducing new and increased stipends for the priests, against which all the churches sharply protested... My interpreter found that all the parishioners, except the one who informed us of the crisis, were hostile to him and infected with the spirit of schism. Therefore, having held a discourse after the Mass (the first one after ten years in this church!) he immediately convened all the parishioners to a meeting. He advised them until late in the night without any food and with great dexterity induced them to elect – in the place of the administrator, who held the keys of the treasury of the church alone in his hands and who conspired with another priest of the same church and with the prominent ones of Trichur to hand over the church to Bishop Mellus – four other more faithful administrators and to promise again their obedience to the legitimate Prelate.¹⁵⁶

The Meurin-Nidiry team had become a great force in preventing the schism in Malabar.¹⁵⁷ Meurin appreciated very much the extraordinary ability of Nidiry, his interpreter, and enjoyed his assistance during his visit in Malabar. Acknowledging the greatness of the service of his interpreter in eradicating the schism, he wrote, "The schism is controlled by the immediate and timely intervention and the hopeful proclamation of my extraordinary interpreter."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 577^v, "Eadem hora qua interpres meus ex Ambacat redux erat, ei citissima ad ecclesiam Mapranatt, iter unius diei hinc distantem, proficiscendum fuit; nam ista quoque ecclesia ad Episcopum intrusum transire velle nuntiabatur. Causa insurrectionis istius parochiae est edictum Vicari Apostolici anni 1871, quo nova et aucta jura stolae introducta fuerunt, contra quae omnes ecclesiae acriter reclamaverunt... Interpres meus omnes parochianos, uno excepto, qui nobis rem nuntiaverat, sibi hostiles, et, si non consentiat, et schismatico spiritu infectos invenit. Concione igitur post Missam habita, (quae in illa ecclesia post fere decem annos prima fuit !) statim parochianos ad comune consilium capiundum convocavit, et, usque ad noctem impransus illis suadens, magna dexteritate eos adduxit, ut loco odierni administratoris, qui claves thesauri ecclesiae callide in suas solas manus obtinuerat, et cum Cattinario quodam hibinlo ejusdem ecclesiae et cum primoribus triciurensibus ad ecclesiam Episcopo Nullas tradendam conspiraverat, alios quatuor administratores fideiiores eligerent, et obedientiam suam erga legitimum suum Praelatum de novo promitterent." Letter of the Meurin on 9 November 1876.

¹⁵⁷ Emmanuel Nidiry conducted civil suits and regained the churches of Lalam Puthenpally, Chennakary and Elangi from the hands of the schismatics. Cfr ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1007 (1887-1899) fasc. VI.

¹⁵⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 592^r, "Schisma per celerem intervencionem interpretis mei, viri praeclari ingenii, ejusque declarationem, spem nondum evanuisse, inhibitum fuit." Letter of Meurin on 23 November 1876.

5.6. An Accusation against Nidiry

The schismatic bishop, Mar Jacob after his conversion, was staying with Meurin, Nidiry and Clarke, the secretary of the apostolic visitor at Elathuruthu. Meanwhile he obtained the letter of re-admission from the Pope.¹⁵⁹ During his stay at Elthuruthu, the news spread that Mar Jacob was appointed as a Syriac professor to teach the seminarians by the initiative of Nidiry. The disappointed Malabarians complained to Meurin about the same. As a clarification to their doubts, he wrote:

The complaint that you wrote against Mani Nidiry is groundless. He is convinced that the Chaldean prelates are incompetent to give education and development to the people of Malabar. In fact, the opinion of Mani Nidiry is same as yours.¹⁶⁰

It was really an attack from the opposition group to create confusion among the strong supporters of Nidiry and to scatter them. Realizing the seriousness of the problem, Meurin again wrote another letter with more clarifications: "I never requested the Holy See to appoint Mar Jacob as your bishop. I do not think that it would be of any use. He has not studied theology properly. He lacks the ability to start educational institutions of lower and higher levels for you."¹⁶¹ Even Mellus also tried his best to break the relationship between Meurin and Nidiry. Mellus asked bishop Jacob to file a false case, during his stay at Kuravilangad, against Nidiry.¹⁶²

6. The Starting of Conflicts

Meurin started his mission in Malabar in good faith. At the same time, he was fully convinced of his limitation as an apostolic visitor and he openly informed *Propaganda* of the same.¹⁶³ At the beginning, the *Propaganda* was not prejudiced of the mission of Meurin because even before the appointment as apostolic visitor he was asked by the *Propaganda* to give a secret report on the conduct of the missionaries and the vicar apostolic of

¹⁵⁹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 156.

¹⁶⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 352, letter of Meurin on 7 September 1877.

¹⁶¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 352-353, letter on 9 January 1879 to Aloysius Pareparambil.

¹⁶² ACO, *Scrl. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 716^R, letter of Meurin on 10 September 1877.

¹⁶³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 718, the first letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 21 April 1876. Meurin presented two main problems to the *Propaganda*: the problem of language and the problem of clash with vicar apostolic of Verapoly because they belonged to two different religious Orders.

Verapoly.¹⁶⁴ Later, the *Propaganda* lost confidence in Meurin, relying on the fake complaints of the missionaries. The *Propaganda* disregarded all his letters and ignored his proposals for solving the problems of the Suriani Church of Malabar, and decided to send a second visitor.

6.1. The Resistance of the Missionaries

The appointment of Meurin as the apostolic visitor of the Suriani Church of Malabar was strongly opposed by the missionaries of Verapoly.¹⁶⁵ Leonard Mellano, the vicar apostolic of Verapoly too responded negatively to the appointment of the visitor¹⁶⁶ and complained that the mission of Meurin was to appoint two indigenous bishops and an archbishop of Jesuit order.¹⁶⁷ In a contemptuous manner, Mellano presented the appointment of Meurin as equal to the appointment of a Chaldean of Baghdad or Garibaldi of Rome.¹⁶⁸ The missionaries even tried to prevent the faithful from visiting the apostolic visitor and forcefully collected signatures in support of the vicar apostolic.¹⁶⁹ They also wrote many letters to Rome with reports against Meurin.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1873-1874, f. 251^R, "Mentre per il S. Padre per tal modo l'interessata ambizione di Caldei vuole anche interessarsi della condizione in cui versano i Soriani del Malabar. Quindi a V.S. che per la vicinanza può averne notizia è affidato con tutta riservatezza l'incarico di riferire sulla condotta dei Missionari di Verapoli e dello stesso Vicario Apostolico." Letter of the *Propaganda Fide* on 10 August 1874.

¹⁶⁵ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 21, f. 995^R, the letter of the vicar apostolic of Verapoly and seven missionaries on 30 October 1877; ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 749, the letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 22 May 1876.

¹⁶⁶ "....a visitor sent from Rome would be of help neither for the Catholics nor for the schismatics." Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 379^V, letter of Mellano to Franchi on 10 November 1875.

¹⁶⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 765, "Fra i progetti emessi nella conferenza, ve ne fu uno di chiedere due Vescovi nativi del Malabar, con un terzo Gesuita, col titolo di Metropolitano." Letter to *Propaganda Fide* on 4 June 1876.

¹⁶⁸ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 797, "Prescindendo dalla persona sacra, che il Visitatore Apostolico rappresenta, dico con tutta franchezza, come la sento davanti a Dio, che se la S.C. avesse mandato qua qualche Caldeo di Bagdad, o Garibaldino di Roma per fare questa visita...." Letter to the *Propaganda Fide* on 18 March 1876.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 787, letter of Meurin to the *Propaganda Fide* on 17 June 1876.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1876, s. n., letter of the prior of the Mannanam Convent on 16 December 1875; *Ponenze*, 1876, 131, letter of the apostolic vicar on 27 December 1875; ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff.532^R-533^V, letter of Fr Marcolinos on 5 June 1876; *Ibid.*, ff.491^R-492, letter of the rector and staff of Arunattukara seminary on 26 July 1876; *Ibid.*, f. 473^{R-V}, letter of Fr Marcolinos to the Carmelite General on 2 June 1876; *Ibid.*, ff.516-517, Varghese Valiaveetil to Cardinal Franchi on 7 december 1876; *Ibid.*, ff. 494-497, letter of Candid, OCD, on 6 August 1876; BERNARD THOMA., *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 777.

6.2. Dissatisfaction and Misinterpretation of Rome

Meurin was really a man of conviction and courage.¹⁷¹ Having studied the real problems of the Suriani Church of Malabar, he informed the *Propaganda Fide* of the problems with his own personal suggestions:

If it is permitted to submit my opinion for the knowledge of the Holy See, a diocese should be immediately erected for the Malabarians of the Syriac rite and when the Jacobites are reunited, the diocese should be divided into two.¹⁷² I cannot remain silent in my true conscience. Otherwise, after the wrong happening my conscience will be compelled to accuse me on my silence. If such a long time is needed for the erection of a new diocese or a separate vicariate, it would be better to immediately appoint a temporary administrator with ample faculties to save the people from the mouth of the fox.¹⁷³ The Holy See must understand without uncertainty that there will be no peace for the Surianis until they have their own bishop for the celebration of their rite. Even if it is presumed, that it is possible to suppress the present agitations, and could eradicate the schism so that free the vicariate as in the present condition. However, there will be no peace. The extinguished fire will soon burst instantly in to flames.¹⁷⁴ Expecting the letter of the Patriarch, time for hearing the appeal and the instructions of you [Holy See], I am staying here as a prisoner on basis of the new experience that without granting an indigenous bishop to this people it is impossible to win over the schism or to prevent the Babylonians.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ ACO, *Scritta Riforma Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 378, "Si presbyteris Joanis creditoris, (nam et eorum sententiam cognoscere juvat,) primaria causa totius schismatis mallusiani in imprudenti oppressione et illegitima aggressione Vicari Aplici Verapolitani reponenda est. Non ego, sed quot quot ex Joanis Mellus supreme tedio adscribunt, quo Malabareses, populus ceteroquis mitis et longanimis, jam longo ex tempore erga Episcopum suum imple sunt." Letter of Meurin on 4 May 1876.

¹⁷² ACO, *Ponente*, 1876, 752, "Si sapientiae S. Sedis cogitatum meum submittere liceat, statim erigenda est dioecesis pro Malabaresibus ritus Syriaci; et si quando Jacobitae convertantur, illa dioecesis in duas dividenda erit." Letter of Meurin on 1 June 1876.

¹⁷³ ACO, *Scritta Riforma Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 579^v, "Non possum tuta consensu tacere, ne forte, postquam calamitatem superavenerit, meipsum de silentio servato accusare cogar. Si praeliminaria erigendae novae dioecesis, aut separati Vicariatus Apostolici, tantum tempus postulent, constituatur interim, et statim Administrator cum amplissimis facultatibus, qui gentem hanc a faucibus vulpis eripiat." Letter of Meurin on 9 November 1876.

¹⁷⁴ ACO, *Scritta Riforma Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 595^v, "Habeat S. Sedes pro certo. Sorianos nostros numquam pace fructuros esse, nisi illis Episcopus in eorum ritu celebras constituatur. Dato etiam, et non concesso, quod praesens motus reprimi, et, schismate superato, Vicariatus hic Apostolicus in statu quo delinqui possit, tamen pax solida non erit, sed flamma extincta mox et brevi post eo violentior iter exardescet." Letter of Meurin on 30 November 1876.

¹⁷⁵ ACO, *Scritta Riforma Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 648^v-649^r, "Sedeo hic quasi captivus expectans Epistolam Patriarchae, tempus appellationis dijudicandae, et Eminentiae Tuae ulterius mandata, novissima experientia confirmatus in dubio, an schisma hoc vinci et Babylonienis arceri possit, quin genti huic Malabaricae proprius et sui ritus constitutivus Episcopus." Letter of Meurin on 26 April 1877.

In order to suppress the schism more quickly, Meurin proposed that a better course would be for the Holy See to appoint him administrator of the diocese, and consecrate a bishop from Malabar clergy for the episcopal duties. At least for this time, all the clergy might elect the assistant bishop for episcopal duties after referring the result to the Holy See, he be consecrated by Meurin.¹⁷⁶

He wrote frankly several times to Rome about the importance of granting an indigenous bishop to solve the problems in Malabar.¹⁷⁷ Even after returning to Bombay, he wrote to Rome for the Suriani Church with the same proposals.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, he wrote about the indolence,¹⁷⁹ intolerance, punishments, discrimination and maltreatment of missionaries.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Rome was not satisfied with his suggestions and asked him to observe the regulations given before his appointment.¹⁸¹ In the conference of the Cardinals on 28 August 1876, they criticised the mission of Meurin and rejected the demand of Meurin to divide the diocese of Verapoly and to grant an indigenous bishop to Malabar¹⁸² and they decided to write a letter to him.¹⁸³

On 27 November 1876, the general assembly of *Propaganda* discussed once again the problems in Malabar. The main theme of their discussion was the message of the telegram received by the prefect of the congregation on 24 November: "The visitor informs. The predictions come true as

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 753, "Adhuc melius fore censo, ut S. Sedes me Administratorem erigendae dioecesis nomet, et Episcopum Assistentem in Pontificalibus ex clero Malabarensi..." Letter of Meurin on 1 June 1876.

¹⁷⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 752, letter on 1 June 1876; *Ibid.*, 794-795, letter on 17 June 1876; ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f.531^{Rv}, letter on June 23 1876; *Ibid.*, f. 562-563, letter on 5 October 1876; *Ibid.*, f. 579^v, letter on 9 November 1876; *Ibid.*, f. 595^v-596^R, letter on 30 November 1876; *Ibid.*, f. 609^{Rv}, letter on 25 January 1876; *Ibid.*, Fol. 622^v, letter on 15 February 1877; *Ibid.*, Fol. 624^R, letter on 22 February 1877; *Ibid.*, Fol. 649^R, letter on 26 April 1877.

¹⁷⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 811^R-814^v, letter on June 28 1878.

¹⁷⁹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f.611^R, "Reverendi Patres Carmelitani progressi Protestementismi oculos claudunt, et novi solum bonum semen in agro sibi commisso seminare omittunt, sede t inimicum jiania sua seminare tranquille sinunt. Ignorantia cleri et populi cattolici in hae parte septentrionali est vere incredibili, et certe una ex causis praecipuis schismatis." Letter of Meurin on 25 January 1877.

¹⁸⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f.528^R, letter on 4 May 1876; ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 754, letter on 1 June 1876; *Ibid.*, 775, letter on 10 June 1876; *Ibid.*, 777; ACO, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1877, s. n. letter on 4 September 1876.

¹⁸¹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 695, letter of *Propaganda Fide* on 22 June 1876.

¹⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*, 683ff.

¹⁸³ The *Propaganda Fide* had sent two letters to Meurin on 5 September 1876. For the letters see ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1875-76, vol. 9, ff. 386^R-389^v. The first letter is very secret and confidential in which they strongly criticised the proposal of Meurin and the second is normal in tone.

informed earlier. The Church is shaking; the schism will win, if the petition is not immediately granted.”¹⁸⁴ Finding it difficult to take a proper decision due to the diverse reports¹⁸⁵ of the vicar apostolic of Verapoly and Meurin, the cardinals decided to send a second visitor to Malabar.¹⁸⁶ On 19 December 1876, the Holy Father appointed Msgr. Ignatius Persico as the second visitor¹⁸⁷ and on 9 January 1877 the *Propaganda* gave him twelve regulations.¹⁸⁸

It seems that for the *Propaganda* the cause of all the problems in Malabar was the recommendation of Meurin for the division of the vicariate of Verapoly and for granting an indigenous bishop. However, *Propaganda* agreed to the proposal of Meurin, “it is evident and beyond doubts that the demand for an indigenous bishop is natural and antique.”¹⁸⁹ If it is so clear, why the *Propaganda* preferred to send a second visitor to Malabar rather than solving the problem?

7. Ignatius Persico as the Secret Visitor

Ignatius Persico¹⁹⁰ reached Malabar via Bombay on 23 February 1876¹⁹¹ and stayed with Mellano about a week in Manjummel.¹⁹² During their

¹⁸⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 811, “Visitato nuntiat: praedicta eveniunt. Ecclessiae vacillant, Schisma vincent nisi petium statim concedatur.” Msgr. Pagani, the pro vicar apostolic of Bombay, sent this message to Rome.

¹⁸⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 590.

¹⁸⁶ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 814.

¹⁸⁷ ACO, *Ibid.*, 814.

¹⁸⁸ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 590-594. In the instruction it was clearly stated the main duties of the new apostolic visitor, “2. Scopo della medesima, è 1° conoscere positivamente il vero stato delle cose; 2° avisare ai mezzi più conducenti alla repressione dello scisma Caldeo; 3° ristabilire possibilmente la calma fra i cattolici.” ACO, *Ibid.*, 591.

¹⁸⁹ “Si conosce essere antico (altronde ben naturale) il desiderio di avere un Prelato indigeno; ma non può dubitarsi.” Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 592. Quoted from the regulations given to Persico by the *Propaganda Fide* on 9 January 1877.

¹⁹⁰ Ignatius Persico was born on 30 January 1823 at Naples. After his ordination as Franciscan in 1846, he was sent as a missionary in the apostolic vicariate of Patna in India. In 1849, he became the vicar apostolic of Patna and served as the secretary of Bombay administrator and editor of Catholic Examiner of Bombay. He played a major role in the settlement of Goan schism. He was consecrated as the coadjutor to the vicar apostolic of Bombay in 1854. In 1856, he was appointed as the vicar apostolic of Agra. He became the bishop of Chalston (North America) in 1867. In 1874, he was appointed as a visitor to Canada and in 1877 he was appointed as a secret visitor to Malabar. Later he became vicar of St Peters Basilica and secretary to the *Propaganda Fide*. In 1893, he was named a Cardinal and he died in 1895. Cf. C. PAYNGOT, *Kerala Sabha Pathaonpatham Noottandil Ignatius Persicoyude Report* (Malayalm), Kottayam 1997, 16-17.

¹⁹¹ APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indi. Orientali*, vol. 21, f. 770^b, letter of Mellano to *Propaganda Fide* on 5 March 1877; ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 651, the copy of the same letter. In this letter, he writes that he had informed everything which Msgr. Persico wanted to know about the Malabar.

¹⁹² A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 126.

discussions of the problems in Malabar, the archbishop asked to grant a coadjutor bishop from the Carmelites for the Surianis and he proposed Fr Marcellino, the rector of the Puthenpally seminary as the best person for the post.¹⁹³ Bernard Thoma, the historian of the Suriani Church, reports that a petition was submitted to Persico with the suggestion of appointing Fr Marcellino to the post of bishop as the best solution to solve the problems of Malabar. Bernard comments that this petition was prepared secretly at Puthenpally seminary and the signatures in the petition seem to be of one and the same person.¹⁹⁴

After the visit to vicar apostolic of Verapoly, Persico visited Meurin at Elthuruth.¹⁹⁵ On the meeting of Persico and Meurin, Aloysius Pareparambil comments:

After the visit of Bishop Persico, he was little down-coast. Before the coming of bishop Persico, bishop Meurin was hopeful of a favourable settlement of the petition of the meeting at Mannanam for getting a separate bishop for the Syrians.¹⁹⁶

They travelled together to Trichinopoly to meet the archbishop of Goa and to have a talk with him about the *Padroado* affairs.¹⁹⁷

7.1. The Report of Ignatius Persico

The visit of Persico was in a way partial and incomplete. It seems that he wanted only to please Rome by rejecting the proposals of Meurin and it is very clear from his letter to Msgr. Aloisi Masella, the secretary of the *Propaganda Fide*, dated 21 March 1877. He wrote if his mission would have the effect to control the ardour of Msgr. Meurin and to reach a conclusion on double jurisdiction and to give a bishop to Surianis of their on rite, it would be a subject of satisfaction to the Holy Father and His

¹⁹³ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 126.

¹⁹⁴ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 778.

¹⁹⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 628^r, letter of Meurin on 6 March 1876; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 127; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 853.

¹⁹⁶ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 128.

¹⁹⁷ ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1877, s. n. Letter of Meurin on 30 March 1877; ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 628^r, letter of Meurin on 6 March 1876; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 128.

Eminence the Cardinal Prefect.¹⁹⁸ His very short stay in Malabar was not sufficient to study or to evaluate the problems of the Suriani Church of Malabar. He visited only the vicar apostolic of Verapoly and the archbishop of Goa and some bishops,¹⁹⁹ concluded shortly his mission and returned on 26 March²⁰⁰ without hearing the obedient and distress faithful of the Suriani Church. After returning to Rome, he submitted a report to the *Propaganda Fide* on 29 April.²⁰¹

7.2. Ignatius Persico Contradicts Leo Meurin

Persico had a very negative opinion of Meurin. Even on the way to Malabar, he wrote to Rome that it was very unfortunate to appoint Meurin as apostolic visitor. In the same letter, he remarked that Meurin lacked prudence.²⁰² Criticising the Mission of Meurin in Malabar he reported that even before the appointment as apostolic visitor, Meurin had contact with missionaries like Leopold and Gerard who were discontented with the activities of the vicar apostolic and other fellow missionaries.²⁰³

Persico continues, while the vicar apostolic of Madras instructed the Suriani people properly,²⁰⁴ Meurin showed always sympathy to the

¹⁹⁸ APF, *Scri. Cong. Indie Orientali*, vol. 21, f. 756^v "Se la mia missione non avrà altro effetto che quello di contenere l'ardore di Msgr. Meurin e qualche altro onde venire testo ad una conclusione sulla duplice giurisdizione come pure di dare un vescovo del rito a Soriani questo solo sarà soggetto di compiacimento al S. Padre ed a Sua Eminenza il Cardinal Prefetto." Letter of Persico to the Secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* on 21 March 1877. The letter of Persico to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 21 December 1876, affirms the above statement. He wrote that he has already discussed and received the matter for studies from Msgr. Aloisi Masella before he leaves to India. Cf. APF, *Ibid.*, fol. 594.

¹⁹⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 345.

²⁰⁰ ACO, *Scri. Orig. Cong. Generale*, 1877, s. n., letter of Meurin on 30 March 1877. He left the Malabar before receiving the telegram of *Propaganda* requesting him not to return. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1877, f. 200^v.

²⁰¹ For the report, see ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 595-637, original in Italian. For the Malayalam translation of the reports, see C. PAYNGOT, *Kerala Sabha Pathaonpatham Noottandil Ignatius Persicoyude Report*, Kottayam 1997.

²⁰² APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indi. Orientali*, vol. 21, f. 851^r, letter of Persico to the *Propaganda Fide* on 15 February 1877.

²⁰³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 597, the report of Persico to the *Propaganda*.

²⁰⁴ The Suriani people had written many times to the vicar apostolic of Madras and Pondicherry for their help. However, they insisted them to obey the vicar apostolic of Verapoly. Therefore, Persico is comparing Meurin with other apostolic vicars. In reality they were not interested in Malabar Church and even wrote to Rome that granting indigenous bishops to Malabar as great danger. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 884^r, letter of the vicar apostolic of Madras to the *Propaganda Fide* on 20 February 1879. The vicar apostolic of Pondicherry was afraid that if the indigenous bishops are granted and allowed to celebrate the sacraments in the future they will propose many other demands. Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 887^{r-v}, letter of the vicar apostolic of Pondicherry to the *Propaganda Fide* on 12 February 1879.

dissatisfied and encouraged the demands of the Suriani people.²⁰⁵ Criticising the appointment of the secretary to Meurin,²⁰⁶ Persico complained that the secretary and Meurin were not acquainted with the language and customs of the country and therefore they could not consult the root causes of the problem with independent persons.²⁰⁷ Hence, they were forced to depend on discontented and problematic groups.²⁰⁸ Here it seems that the accuser was an expert in the language of Malabar. Condemning the very personality of Meurin, Persico wrote:

Msgr. Meurin is not very prudent; he speaks a lot and writes much. He is of ardent and enthusiastic nature. He always wants to do something new and extraordinary, since he rejoices always in formulating new proposals, he has become a man of utopian ideas, less practical and less suitable for the office, that he should exercise.²⁰⁹

7.3. The Account of Ignatius Persico on Leonard Mellano

In the report given to Rome, Persico had severely criticised the activities of Mellano.²¹⁰ "... I do not think, he is up to the level of his position ... he is so rigid, inflexible and very rigorous to those who seemed to be against the Carmelites ... He has been very rigorous to inflict censures and impose taxes ..."²¹¹ Complaining about the secretary of Mellano, he wrote; "one

²⁰⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 597, "Che poi Monsig. Meurin abbia invece sempre mostrato simpatia co'disaffetti, ed incoraggiato le pretese dei Soriani in generale è conosciuta." Report of Persico to the *Propaganda*. We can see a similar letter of Msgr. Mellano with the same accusation on Meurin. Cf. APF, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Indi. Orientali*, vol. 21, f. 1112^r, the letter of Mellano to the *Propaganda Fide* on 28 January 1878.

²⁰⁶ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 597, the report of Persico to the *Propaganda Fide*.

²⁰⁷ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 718, "... che non conoscendo nè lui nè lo stesso Monsig. Meurin la lingua e i costumi del paese dove si sono recati, non han potuto mai discendere in fondo alle questioni consultando all'uopo persone indipendenti." Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 598. About all these difficulties Meurin already wrote to the *Propaganda* even before reaching Malabar. See the letter of Meurin on 21 April 1876. It is interesting to note here that the criticising person also did the same; in the case of Meurin, he had at least a good interpreter.

²⁰⁸ Here, Persico is pointing the relationship of Meurin to the seven priests who are excommunicated by Mellano because wrote to Rome for the indigenous bishop. Meurin had already written to *Propaganda* about the genuineness of relationship with those priests. Cf. ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 534^r-536^r, letter of Meurin on 6 July 1876.

²⁰⁹ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 599, "Monsig. Meurin non è molto prudente, che parla troppo e scrive assai più, che di natura ardente ed entusiasta ha bisogno sempre d'intraprendere qualche cosa di nuovo o di straordinario, e che compiacendosi nella formazione di sempre nuovi propositi, non finisce così che diventare un utopista e un uomo poco pratico e poco adatto all'ufficio che deve disimpegnare." Report of Persico to *Propaganda Fide*.

²¹⁰ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 601-602.

²¹¹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 618, "... pure non mi pare affatto all'altezza della sua posizione...si mostra poi duro, inflessibile, ed anche rigoroso verso tutti quelli che gli si fanno credere contrari ai Carmelitani...egli

of the youngest, not sufficiently prudent, partisan and violent is the frequent cause of misunderstandings and quarrels.”²¹² He continues to write, “Mellano and the other Carmelite priests treat the Suriani priests like servants and not as priests, besides for the service in the Latin churches the Suriani priests are always appointed in the second place under Latin priests.”²¹³ After writing all these, he concluded that there was neither reason for holding fear of Mellano, nor could anything be expected from him.²¹⁴

7.4. Persico Proposes Marcellino as the Bishop Candidate

Persico concluded his report with the suggestion of the return of Meurin from Malabar²¹⁵ and recommended to grant a Latin bishop with the title of archbishop by establishing a new vicariate for the Suriani Church²¹⁶ to keep up the traditions and privileges of their old Kodungallur diocese.²¹⁷ Appreciating the service of the Carmelites, which they had rendered for the last two centuries, he suggested that they might be allowed to continue the mission in Malabar²¹⁸ and proposed Marcellino²¹⁹ as the bishop for the Suriani Catholics:

... for the formation of two new Vicariates and to effect and facilitate the adoption of the measures and other provisions indicated by me, I would propose Fr Marcellino of St Teresa to the post of vicar apostolic. He would be the best and most suitable person for this office, because he is the only person who knows the languages of the country very well, in which he has also written and published various useful and instructive works, and above all, he is well appreciated by all. Moreover, the same has been designated

sia stato troppo rigoroso nello infliggere censure, e che lo sia stato poi anche di più nella decretazione della tasse.” Later he added something also about the secretary “di carattere violento ed anche turbolento; eminentemente partigiano ed anche intrigante.”

²¹² *Ibid*, 601, “... uno dei più giovani, il quale poco prudente, partigiano ed irruente è la causa più frequente dei molti dissidi, malintesi ed anche litigi che si hanno a deplorare.”

²¹³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 613, “E poi perchè tanto lui, quanto gli stessi Carmelitani trattando gli ecclesiastici soriani come se fossero servi e non Preti, mentre anche al bisogno di avvalersene per le chiese latine i Soriani son sempre messi in secondo luogo e tenuti subordinati ai Preti latini.”

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 602, “Da tutto quel che si è detto sopra di lui, se ne può pure inferire, che se non c’è cosa da temere da Mons. Mellano, non c’è neanche la minima cosa da sperare.”

²¹⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 635.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 629.

²¹⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 634-635.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 632.

²¹⁹ *Ponenze*, 618, “È il migliore di tutti i Missionari su tutti i rapporti; conosce molto bene il Malayalm nella cui lingua ha composto e pubblicato varie opere; Di buone forme e generalmente amato sia dai Latini che dai Soriani.”

and recommended as the best candidate for the bishopric by Msgr. Mellano, in case he were to be given a successor or coadjutor and all Carmelites would accept his nomination with great pleasure and satisfaction.²²⁰

7.5. The Appointment of Marcellino as Coadjutor

The general assembly of *Propaganda Fide* on 9 July 1877, under the leadership of Cardinal Franchi, the prefect of the congregation discussed the problems of the Suriani Catholics of Malabar based on the report of Persico who was sent by the *Propaganda* as a super visitor to Malabar.²²¹

Considering the suggestions given by Persico the general assembly of the *Propaganda* decided to appoint Marcellino as coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly with the exclusive charge of the Suriani Catholics, without dividing the vicariate of Verapoly.²²² In addition, the same assembly of cardinals determined to retrieve the mission of Meurin in Malabar. Later through the Apostolic Letter *Romani Pontificies*, the decision of the assembly was promulgated on 17 August 1877.²²³

8. The Desire of Emmanuel Nidiry to Join the Society of Jesus

At the end of the visit, after entrusting the affairs of the Chittattoor litigation to Nidiry, Meurin made an eight-day retreat together with Clarke, his secretary and Emmanuel Nidiry at the monastery of Elthuruth. On the fifth day, after having made a good confession Nidiry decided to join the Society of Jesus. The courageous Nidiry wrote a letter and presented it before Meurin for his suggestions:

My Lord, since I read Alfonso Rodriguez, I have had, now and then a desire to enter the Society of Jesus. That thought and desire occupied my mind during the retreat, especially today. I therefore request your Lordship to be pleased to consider this before God and let me know: 1. Whether this

²²⁰ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 634, "... per attuare e facilitare la formazione de' due nuovi Vicariati non che l'adozione delle altre misure e provvedimenti da me indicati e raccomandati, io proporrei a vicario Apostolico pe'Soriani il Padre Marcellino di S. Teresa, il quale sotto tutti rapporti sarebbe il migliore e il più atto a quell'uffizio, imperciocché è il solo che conosce benissimo le lingue del paese nelle quali ha scritto pure e pubblicato varie opere molto utili ed istruttive, e perchè infine è anche ben veduto da tutti. Al che si aggiunga, che egli mi è stato designato e raccomandato dallo stesso Mons. Mellano come il miglior candidato all'Episcopato, nel caso di doverglisi dare, sia un successore, sia un coadiutore, e che anche tutti i Carmelitani vedrebbero la sua nomina con grande compiacimento e soddisfazione."

²²¹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 814.

²²² ACO, *Brevi e Bolle e Lettere Apostolicæ* (1869-1877) 178.

²²³ Cf. *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, VI, P. II, 370-371.

thought is a call of God or a fancy of mine proceeding from my want of consistency to remain in the state of the already chosen. 2. Whether as the Society does not admit men of different Rites, there will be any objection to receive me, if I resolve to enter it.²²⁴

Meurin advised him to be grateful for the good thought and try to attain more perfection until the call of God and be thankful to our Lady.²²⁵ There is no exaggeration to believe that his close relationship with Meurin might have stimulated a desire to join the Society of Jesus.²²⁶

9. The Departure of Meurin

As soon as Leo Meurin received the letter of Franchi dated 21 August 1877,²²⁷ asking him to return to Bombay and about the appointment of Marcellino as the coadjutor bishop, he wrote a letter to the Suriani Catholics informing them of the new arrangement of Rome and he thanked them for their love, concern and cooperation.²²⁸ He entrusted Emmanuel Nidiry to continue with the Chittattoor litigation.²²⁹ On 28 September 1877, rejecting the request of Mellano to assist at the consecration of Marcellino,²³⁰ Meurin left Malabar accompanied by his secretary and the reunited Chaldean bishop Mar Jacob.²³¹ It was really a painful moment for Nidiry and all the Suriani Catholics.²³² Nidiry accompanied them up to Coimbatore.²³³

²²⁴ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 349. Here the author mistakes the Jesuit writer Alonso Rodríguez (1538-1618) for the Redemptorist saint Alphonsus Liguori. His spiritual classical work *Practice of perfection and Christian Virtues*, 3 vols. Seville, 1609, was used as a spiritual reading book in all formation houses and religious houses. Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", in *OCF* 70 (2004) 324.

²²⁵ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 350.

²²⁶ The genuine desire of Nidiry to join the Society of Jesus was later misinterpreted by Charles Lavigne, S. J. the first apostolic vicar of Kottayam and about this we will see later.

²²⁷ For the letter of Franchi, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 758-759; A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 63-65.

²²⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 724^R, letter of Meurin to Franchi on 27 September 1877. For the copy of the pastoral letter of Meurin on 21 September 1877, see *Ibid.*, 725-728. For the Malayalam translation, see C. PAYNGOT, *Kerala Sabha Pathonpatham Noottandil Meurinte Kathukal*, 367-371.

²²⁹ See the footnote 74.

²³⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 730^R, Mellano to Franchi on 2 October 1877.

²³¹ *Ibidi.*, 724^V, letter of Meurin to Franchi on 27 September 1877; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 758.

²³² Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 734^R-735^V, letter of Meurin on 8 October 1877.

²³³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 353.

Leo Meurin was a man who had seen the heart of the Suriani Church. He worked hard for the unity and integrity of the Church, and foresaw the possible unity of the Suriani Christians only under an indigenous bishop. The main accusation against Meurin was that he supported the Surianis to have their own bishop.²³⁴ Even after his return from Malabar he continued to write to the *Propaganda* for the Malabar Church,²³⁵ because he was really an optimist and courageous. With hope, he wrote to the General of the Jesuit Order about the negative attitude of the Holy See towards his suggestions.²³⁶ Fr Torquato Armellini, the secretary of the General sent a copy of the same letter to the prefect of the *Propaganda* on 8 July 1878. The *Propaganda* replied to the secretary and asked him to inform Meurin that the congregation would not change its decision, which it has taken last year.²³⁷ Besides, the congregation advised Meurin not to encourage the rebellious and unquiet people of Malabar and their desire for indigenous bishop.²³⁸ Receiving the copy of the letter of the *Propaganda* from the General, Meurin again replied explaining the worse situation of Malabar and once again with great confidence strongly affirmed his previous suggestions.²³⁹ It is of no doubt that the departure of Leo Meurin was a heavy loss for the Suriani Church. If his suggestions were accepted, it would have been another phase of history for the Suriani Church. However, his name will be remembered with gratitude, as long as the Syro Malabar Church exists.

10. The Various Reactions to the Appointment of Coadjutor

The consecration of Marcellino as coadjutor and titular bishop of Páros took place on 21 October 1877.²⁴⁰ Emmanuel Nidiry also participated

²³⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 600, "E ritornando di nuovo alla sua permanenza nel Malabar, Mons. Meurin vi si è reso pericoloso nel senso che avendo egli apertamente incoraggiato i Soriani nelle loro aspirazioni, questi gli sono ora attaccatissimi, sperando per mezzo suo di ottenere il loro intento." Report of Persico to *Propaganda*.

²³⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, ff. 734^R-735^V, letter on 8 October 1877; *Ibid.*, ff. 736^R-737^R, letter on 15 October 1877; *Ibid.*, 1878-1889, ff. 811^R-814^V, letter on 28 June 1878.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 815^{R-V}, letter on 14 June 1878.

²³⁷ Listening only to the partial report of the second visitor Persico *Propaganda* took a new decision for the Suriani Catholics but the later incidents in Malabar proved that the decisions were not correct. This failure of decision was publicly admitted in the conference of Cardinals on 16 December 1886. Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1886, 1077.

²³⁸ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1878, f. 355^{R-V}, letter of the secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* to the secretary of the Jesuit General on 19 August 1878.

²³⁹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 866^R-867^V, letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 23 December 1878.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1862-1877, f. 754, s. n., letter of Marcellino to Pope Leo XIII.

in the celebration.²⁴¹ After a few days, Nidiry arranged a grant reception for the new bishop at the parish of Kuravilnagad, where he was the parish priest.²⁴² The appointment of the new bishop did not satisfy the Surianis²⁴³ who always demanded a separation from Verapoly and the appointment of an indigenous bishop.²⁴⁴ Even the appointment of Marcellino as the coadjutor was not a matter of joy for the Carmelites too:

... the nomination of R. P. Marcellino of St Teresa as bishop of Páros and as coadjutor of our present apostolic vicar with analogous instructions, which are truly hard and difficult, but in general we are content because we feared still worse ...²⁴⁵

Archbishop Mellano was not in good terms with Marcellino in the division of their jurisdiction. He did not want to reveal the instruction of the *Propaganda* to the Surianis that Marcellino should act for the Suriani Catholics independently of the apostolic vicar. Mellano even complained to *Propaganda* about Meurin's letter explaining that the coadjutor was exclusively for the Suriani Catholics.²⁴⁶

11. Mellus Leaves Malabar

By the devoted work of the Meurin-Nidiry team out of 34 schismatic churches, 22 churches and many of the schismatics returned to the Catholic communion. Moreover, the success of Meurin-Nidiry team in the famous Chittattoor church case was a stroke to Mellus and his followers. Finally realizing that he lost the support, Mellus decided to leave Malabar.

On 5 March 1882, Mellus left Malabar entrusting²⁴⁷ all the schismatic churches to Mar Abdiso Thondanat²⁴⁸ and the Chaldean monk Augustine,

²⁴¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 353. V. C. George reports that it was on the retreat preaching of the Marcellino at Kuravilangad that the young Emmanuel received the first communion. Cf. *Ibid.*, 355.

²⁴² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 355.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 359, letter of Nidiry to Franchi on 27 November 1877.

²⁴⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 734^R, letter of Meurin on 8 October 1877.

²⁴⁵ AGOCD, *Candidus a S. Corde Marie, ocd*, 1876-1894, letter to his superiors on 2 October 1877.

²⁴⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 730^R, letter of Mellano to Franchi on 2 October 1877.

²⁴⁷ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 761.

²⁴⁸ Antony Thondanat, was born circa 1827 in Anakallingal near Bharananganam, ordained a priest under Verapoly c. 1850. He accompanied Kudakkachira Antony to Babel in 1857 and returned to Malabar with Rocos in 1861. When the excommunicated Rocos returned to Babel in 1862, Thondanat followed him. There he was consecrated bishop by the Nestorian Patriarch in 1862 and took the name Mar Abdiso. Mar Abdiso returned to Malabar in 1863, but the people did not accept him and later he submitted to Verapoly in 1865. He was serving as a parish priest when bishop Mellus came to Malabar. Accepting the invitation

giving them the faculty of blessing oil, for administering confirmation and ordinations up to acolyte.²⁴⁹ Though Mellus himself left the Mellusian schism, the followers finally formed a community known as the Assyrian Church of the East.²⁵⁰

12. Marcellino's Attempt for the Resignation

The dissatisfied Surianis, continued writing to Rome concerning the appointment of the coadjutor.²⁵¹ They sent letters to the neighbouring apostolic vicars explaining the situation in Malabar. Emmanuel Nidiry and Luis Pazheparambil prepared them.²⁵² Despite the petitions, the petitioners received no reply from Rome. Meanwhile the tension between Mellano and Marcellino increased and Marcellino felt abandoned by Mellano and other missionaries.²⁵³ Therefore, he repeatedly wrote to his superiors for assistance.²⁵⁴ Moreover, on the one hand, there was the objection from the part of the Suriani community and on the other hand, the spread of schism. In this irresistible situation, Marcellino wrote to his superiors²⁵⁵ and to the Holy Father, pointing out his physical, intellectual and psychological inability to hold the office and requesting them to relieve him from his duties.²⁵⁶ Marcellino was not satisfied with Suriani Catholics. In his report to Rome written in January 1883, he wrote:

... I do not desire anything other than that moment, when I will be free from the terrible and for me unbearable burden of governing this people. I am not born to govern, but to be governed. I believe permanently that I

of Mellus, he joined the schism in 1874 but after four years of association with Mellus, in 1878 reunited with the Catholic Church for the second time and was a parish priest at Anakallumkal until 1882. Again, he joined the schism and while he was serving the community at Elamthottam parish, Mellus invited him to take the charge of the whole community.

²⁴⁹ Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1118; P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 236; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 761.

²⁵⁰ X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 129.

²⁵¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 765-766, petition from Ollur on 15 February 1878; *Ibid.*, fol. 802-805, petition from Kudamaloor on 6 May 1878; *Ibid.*, ff. 864-865, on 30 November 1878; *Ibid.*, ff. 964-966, on 8 November 1878; *Ibid.*, f. 985-986, petition Fr Nidiry on 14 April 1880; *Ibid.*, f. 988ff., petition of Pazheparambil and others on 17 April 1880; *Ibid.*, ff. 1042-1045, from Pulinkunnu on 5 December 1880; *Ibid.*, ff. 1074-1076, on 25 March 1881; *Ibid.*, ff. 1155-1157, from Alappuzha on 1 October 1882; *Ibid.*, ff. 1215-1216, from Kaianakary on 15 November 1883.

²⁵² C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 57.

²⁵³ AGOCD, *Marcellinus a S. Teresia-Berardi, ocd*, letters dated 22 July 1878 and 15 March 1884.

²⁵⁴ AGOCD, *Marcellinus a S. Teresia-Berardi, ocd*, letters dated 5 October 1884, 27 March 1886.

²⁵⁵ AGOCD, *Marcellinus a S. Teresia-Berardi, ocd*, letter dated 22 July 1878.

²⁵⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 927^R-928^R, Marcellino to Leo XII, s.d.

came to the missions by divine vocation. Therefore, I am ready for the state of simple missionaries, but not as a bishop, to do whatever will be commanded by the superiors. I see that my damnation is almost certain, therefore again, I beg to his eminence and through him to the Supreme Pontiff to free my poor soul from this life imprisonment.²⁵⁷

The disappointed Marcellino, for a second time attempted to resign on 16 December 1883. He wrote:

My poor soul feels always more troubled and impelled to desperation. On the other hand, considering that a person in this state would do good, and on the other hand, with myself in this office grow the troubles, sins increase and souls are lost...Most Holy Father, to throw one in the deep ocean without any means of salvation, and then to tell him that he has the responsibility of his life, seems to me too much, and such an obligation not true...²⁵⁸

The situation in Malabar became more and more confused. The Suriani Catholics were separated into different factions. The appointment of Marcellino as coadjutor did not satisfy them. He had interest neither in the progress of the Suriani community nor in the field of education.²⁵⁹

Recognizing the seriousness of the problems in the Suriani Church of Malabar, Rome appointed Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor to Malabar to study the real situation. Although there was great objection from the part of the missionaries to the appointment of the apostolic visitor, by continuous effort, Meurin-Nidiry team could pacify the people and prevent the further spread of schism in Malabar. There is no exaggeration when Bernard, the historian of the Suriani Church comments, "the most respected Fr Nidiry was specially chosen by God to break the backbone of and destroy

²⁵⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1176⁸, "...non desidero che quel momento in cui mi vedrò libero dal terribile peso, e per me insopportabile, di governar questa gente. Non sono nato a governare, ma ad essere governato, e siccome venni alle missioni (come credo permanente) per divina vocazione, così sono pronto allo stato di missionarii semplici, per fare quello che mi verrà comandato dai superiori, ma come Vescovo no, vedo la mia dannazione quasi certa, quindi di nuovo prego sua eminenza e per Suo mezzo il Sommo Pontefice, a liberare la mia povera anima da questo ergastolo."

²⁵⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1217, "La povera mia anima si sente sempre più turbata, e spinta alla disperazione, d'altronde considerando che una persona nata a questo farebbe del bene, e che invece stando io in questo ufficio crescono i mali, moltiplicarsi i peccati, e le anime si perdono. ... Beatissimo Padre, gettare uno in alto mare senza aver un mezzo di salvezza, e poi dirgli che ha la responsabilità della sua vita, pare troppo, e non vera tale obbligazione..." English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...* 68.

²⁵⁹ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 617, report of Persico.

the Mellusian schism and to convert Mar Jacob.”²⁶⁰ The strong convictions and principles helped Nidiry to stand straight even before the great offer of bishop Mellus, to consecrate him the bishop of the Suriani Church. Unfortunately, relying on the complaints of the missionaries, Rome sent a second visitor to Malabar without calling back the first. Finally, neglecting the trustworthy report of Meurin, Rome appointed a coadjutor for Suriani Catholics basing on the prejudiced report of Ignatius Persico, the second visitor. However, this appointment did not satisfy the Surianis but worsened the whole situation.

²⁶⁰ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 752.

THE PROMOTER OF AUTONOMY

Though *Propaganda* appointed a coadjutor solely for the pastoral care of the Suriani Christians, they were not satisfied with the new arrangement of Rome. Naturally the situation in Malabar became worse and more confused. Moreover the diverse reports from Malabar created confusion in Rome. Informed of the dangerous situation in Malabar, Rome decided to appoint an apostolic delegate to India with a view to collecting accurate information about the events in Malabar. In this chapter we consider the circumstances which led to the appointment of the apostolic delegate and analyse the role of Emmanuel Nidiry to convince the apostolic delegate and the *Propaganda Fide* the need of appointing autochthonous bishops for the Suriani Church of Malabar. We also study the final steps of Rome for establishing two separate vicariates for the Suriani Catholics.

1. Nidiry Continues His Efforts

The visit of two apostolic visitors aroused certain expectations among the Suriani Christians. At the same time the Verapoly authorities purposefully appointed Emmanuel as the vicar of three important parishes.¹ He shifted his residence to Alleppey. In spite of his heavy work as a parish priest, he continued his efforts to liberate the Suriani Church from the hands of Latin bishops. I. C. Chacko writes, "During the apostolic visitor's stay, Fr Nidiry, by the nature of his position as interpreter, was forced to neutrality. But, after the visitor's return, he was free to act according to his own opinion. He began to apply his manifold talents to the attainment of autonomy."² On the other side Marcellino, the coadjutor who was appointed

¹ The parishes are Kuravilangad, Alleppey and Muttuchira. The first two parishes were forane parishes. By offering high positions, the authorities hoped to control the agitation movement of Emmanuel Nidiry.

² I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevidhavum Kalavum*, 393.

for the special pastoral care of Surianis was losing his support and credibility, because he was not interested in the progress of the Suriani Church. Cardinal Tisserant writes:

The choice was not happy one. The new bishop-elect was intimately connected with the vicar apostolic, and since he knew that some day he would rule the Latins of the vicariate, he made little effort to win over the affection of the Syrian [Suriani] faithful who had been committed to his special care. What is more, he omitted to carry out one of the conditions laid down by the *propaganda* at the time of his appointment. He never nominated a vicar general and the four Syro-Malabar counsellors who were to assist him. Thus, the intentions of the Holy See were once more to a great extent frustrated.³

Moreover the tension between Mellano and Marcellino continued and they were not in full harmony on the division of their jurisdiction. While considering him as a general assistant Mellano claimed that he had still authority over the Surianis and in the pastoral letter he expediently concealed the order of *Propaganda Fide* that Marcellino should act for the Suriani Catholics independent of the apostolic vicar.⁴

2. The Appointment of Apostolic Delegate to India

Being aware of the critical situation in India, especially in the Suriani Church of Malabar, the Holy See decided to appoint an apostolic delegate, hoping that he would be a more reliable source of information for the Holy See. On 23 September 1884, Antony Agliardi⁵ was appointed as the first apostolic delegate of East India⁶ and thus the history of the apostolic delegation was inaugurated in India. In 1884 he landed in Bombay⁷ and set up his office there. Providentially, he came in close contact with bishop Meurin, who had better knowledge of the problems of Suriani Church. In fact, it became a favourable occasion for the Suriani Catholics to present

³ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 125.

⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 729, English copy of Mellano's pastoral letter on 30 September 1877. It was sent to the Congregation by the Suriani petitioners to prove that Mellano did not follow the instruction. Cf. also *Ibid.*, ff. 742-743, petition dated 18 November 1877.

⁵ Antony Agliardi was born on 4 September 1832 in Cologno al Serio in the diocese of Bergamo, Italy. On 23 September 1884 he was appointed apostolic delegate of East India, and later he was promoted to the dignity of the titular archbishop of Caesaria in Palestina. Cf. *Hierarchia Catholica*, vol. VIII, 166.

⁶ Cf. ASS, vol. 17, Roma 1902, 224.

⁷ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 785.

their grievances. They tried their best to contact the apostolic delegate with the help of bishop Meurin. They wrote letters to the apostolic delegate through bishop Meurin.⁸ Knowing the worse situation in Malabar, Agliardi asked bishop Meurin to write to Rome in favour of the Malabar people to give them a separate bishop other than the one from the Carmelites.⁹ On the basis of the request of Agliardi, the vicar apostolic of Bombay wrote to Rome, informing the necessity of granting the Surianis a separate bishop.

2.1. Nidiry Encounters the Apostolic Delegate in Bombay

In order to facilitate the demand for an indigenous bishop Emmanuel Nidiry made a journey to Bombay.¹⁰ In Bombay, through the influence of bishop Meurin, Emmanuel Nidiry managed to obtain permission to have an interview with Agliardi, the apostolic delegate. It was reported that Agliardi listened to the full story of the grievances of the Surianis and to their demand for indigenous bishops.¹¹ This interview was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Agliardi and Emmanuel Nidiry. Besides, the apostolic delegate received information concerning the problems of the Suriani Church through the newspapers. Realizing the gravity of the situation he decided to visit Malabar and informed the same to Rome.¹² In the meantime, the petitioners of the Malabar were informed that the apostolic delegate would visit them immediately.¹³

2.2. Agliardi's Visit in Malabar

Based on the information about the visit of apostolic delegate to Verapoly, the principal leaders of the Surianis came together at Mannanam. In the meeting they resolved to send a deputation to Verapoly. They selected Emmanuel Nidiry and Parayil Varkey Tharakan¹⁴ as the delegation.¹⁵

⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 131.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰ About the journey of Emmanuel Nidiry to Bombay, a short telegram message had been recorded in the personal diary of Nidiry: "Started from Coravalangad on the night of 21st June (Sunday). Reached Alleppey at 9 morning of Monday, 22nd. Sent the following telegram to Rev. Fr N. Clarke, Fort chapel; "Illness prevented. Today starting via Tinnelvely. Are Franjee and Ceylon's Bishop there. Reply prepaid." Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 372.

¹¹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 172.

¹² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, ff. 1231-1232.

¹³ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 132.

¹⁴ A layman who worked with Emmanuel Nidiry and others for the emancipation of the Suriani Church.

¹⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 132.

Agliardi reached Malabar in November 1885 and stayed at Verapoly. On the request of Mellano and Marcellino he visited Koonammavu, the novitiate house of the Suriani Carmelites.¹⁶ The deputation of the Suriani leaders Emmanuel Nidiry and Parayil Varkey Tharakan visited the apostolic delegate and invited him to Mannanam, the main house of the Suriani Carmelites with numerous members. They invited Marcellino too together with the apostolic delegate.

The Suriani priests and the laity under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry put their whole energy to give a grand reception to the apostolic delegate. Agliardi received a colourful and majestic welcome from the Suriani Catholics of Malabar.¹⁷ He wrote to Rome about the reception:

The welcome that the Suriani gave me was truly extraordinary, and surpassed by far that of Latins at Cochin. Some 150 decorated boats that carried about six thousand people accompanied me from Verapoly to Mannanam that is for some 50 miles of canals with confraternities, concerts, songs etc., etc., etc.¹⁸

Amazed by the royal reception and seeing the large crowd, the apostolic delegate exclaimed, "what more could you do, if the Holy Father himself comes?"¹⁹ During his stay at Mannanam he called together the members of the Suriani Carmelites and instructed them to observe the new rule given by the Holy See and asked them to wait for six years of the experimental period for any further modification of the rule. The members of the community promised obedience to the Holy See.²⁰

¹⁶ For the details of the beginning of the 'religious life' of the Suriani Catholics, see C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India* ..., 77.

¹⁷ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., II part, 134-135, "The grand procession of boats of all sizes and shapes, the long stately 'Chuntans' or snake boats decorated at the poop and prow with gold and silver ornaments, manned by sixty or more rowers and used for the regatta of His Highness the Maha Raja of Travancore, the gay 'Odies' or play-boats, beautiful cabin boats, all with oarsmen numbering from 10 to 50, and the innumerable host of smaller boats of all descriptions, all in motion with life and spirit, moving on the calm, majestic waters of the Vempanat Lake, singing songs and shouting hurrahs, was a sight which would have sent a thrill o joy to the most morose of hearts."

¹⁸ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 547, "L'accoglienza che mi fecero i soriani fu veramente straordinaria, e sorpassò di gran lunga quella dei latini di Coccino. Un 150 navi pavesate, che portavano un 6 mila persone, mi accompagnarono da Verapoly a Mannanam., cioè per un 50 miglia di canale, con confraternite, concerti, inni ecc., ecc., ecc.." Copy of Agliardi to *Propaganda*.

¹⁹ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 785.

²⁰ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 546v. The Suriani Carmelites had already complained to the apostolic delegate about the existing rules of their community and requested for modifications.

Emmanuel Nidiry and other priests approached and requested bishop Marcellino to submit a petition on behalf of the Surianis to the apostolic delegate. Unwillingly he accepted the suggestion.²¹ When Agliardi ended the discourse with the Suriani Carmelites, Marcellino entered the hall with about eighty priests and some lay leaders and requested the apostolic delegate to hear the petition of the Suriani Catholics regarding the nomination of indigenous bishops. It was really a surprise for Agliardi to see Marcellino at the head of the representation.²² Emmanuel Nidiry gave the petitions to Marcellino, who in turn submitted them to the apostolic delegate.²³ Agliardi thanked them for the grand reception which they had given to him and advised the Suriani Catholics to look forward to the decision of the Rome. He added:

The Holy See is like the divine providence which also concedes in denying - like a mother, who does not give a knife in the hands of children. If the Holy See still does not satisfy the desire of those who demand a Suriani bishop, still the consideration made by the Holy See is a sign of her benevolence toward them.²⁴

Agliardi also spoke with all the Suriani priests who came with petitions and other leaders of the parishes. The supporters of the Carmelites, who opposed the appointment of native bishops, also visited Agliardi with their counter arguments.²⁵ It seems that archbishop Mellano and the missionaries were displeased with bishop Marcellino for his action.

2.3. The Report of the Agliardi and the New Hope

The visit of Agliardi, the apostolic delegate, aroused a new hope among the Surianis. It was only because of Emmanuel Nidiry that they were able to submit the petition through the hands of bishop Marcellino. Joseph Pidiyekkal narrated beautifully the story of the dedicated efforts of

²¹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 174-175.

²² ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 546.

²³ For the copy of the petition addressed to the prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 785-786. As the leader of the Suriani priests Emmanuel Nidiry had signed the petition first, followed by 78 others. See also, A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 175-177.

²⁴ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 547, "Sapere che la S. Sede è come la divina Provvidenza, che anche nel negare concede- essere come una madre, che non dà il coltello in mano ai figli- Se dunque la S. Sede ancora non soddisfa i desideri di quelli che domandano un vescovo Soriano, anche la ponderazione usata dalla S. Sede essere un segno della Sua benevolenza per loro." Agliardi to *Propaganda*.

²⁵ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 547.

Emmanuel Nidiry in convincing the apostolic delegate of the problems of Surianis and the adversity which Nidiry had to face in submitting the petition to Agliardi.²⁶ I. C. Chacko attributes the success of the scheme “to the high intellectual ability and skill of Fr Emmanuel Nidiry.”²⁷ Bernard Thoma comments, “It was the brilliant Fr Immanuel Nidiry who made intense efforts to bring down the delegate to Mannanam.”²⁸ The Surianis with much confidence waited for the decision of the Holy See.

Agliardi submitted his report to the *Propaganda Fide* on 18 December 1885, in which he presented the actual situation of the Verapoly vicariate. He wrote:

It is certainly with regret I say that at present the vicariate of Verapoly on the part of the majority of clergy and people is in a state of feverish excitement and of disturbance. Perhaps the principal cause is the wish to have at any cost a bishop of their rite, even without jurisdiction, but for the pontifical and for the ordinations in the Suriani rite, as there in Rome for the Greeks and for the Armenians who live there.²⁹

Agliardi strongly suggested the creation of two vicariates for the Suriani Catholics and proposed Carmelites as apostolic vicars for the would-be erected apostolic vicariates.³⁰ He also pointed out the merits of the division of the Suriani Catholics into two vicariates.³¹ Moreover, the missionaries themselves were aware of the need of division of the Verapoly vicariate in order to avoid the present evil conditions. Agliardi wrote:

This idea has been approved by the two bishops; Msgr. Marcellino said to me that I was doing that as his affair; Msgr. Leonard has said to me that it is a good remedy for the present evils “a most important point and a radical reform for the good of the Christians.”³²

²⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 375. Here the author quoted the text from J. PIDYEKKAL, *An Autobiography of Mani Nidhiry*, Kuravilangad 1930.

²⁷ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 434.

²⁸ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 785.

²⁹ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 547^v. English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...* 80.

³⁰ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 552^v.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 552^v.

³² ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 552^v, “Questo pensiero è stato approvato dai due vescovi; Mons. Marcellino mi ha detto che io lo facevo come cosa sua; Mons. Leonardo mi ha detto che è un bel rimedio ai mali presenti “un punto importantissimo, e una riforma radicale” pel bene dei cristiani.”

3. An Unrealized Journey of Emmanuel Nidiry to Rome

Taking into account the need of higher studies for the Suriani clergy, and thereby entrusting to them, in future, the seminary formation in Malabar, the congregation asked Mellano to prepare seminarians to be sent to Rome.³³ On 5 July 1886, the congregation informed Mellano confirming the admission of four students.³⁴ Later Agliardi the first apostolic delegate of India sent a telegram to Mellano concerning the four seminarians with an instruction that in case an interpreter was needed, to send Emmanuel Nidiry along with them.³⁵ Mellano sensed the danger of sending Emmanuel Nidiry to Rome and therefore without giving a reply to Agliardi, on 26 December 1886 he wrote to the prefect of the congregation; in the letter Mellano pictured Emmanuel Nidiry as a public scandal:

Your Eminence told me in the telegram to send Kathanar Mani Nidiry with them in case they needed of an interpreter. I am convinced that Your Eminence would have had a great deal of good information regarding him, however he is not a person to whom the four young ones could conscientiously be entrusted; further that would be a real public scandal if so done, since this Kathanar [Emmanuel Nidiry] is quite well known for some evil.³⁶

In addition, Mellano informed the Prefect that he had given permission to the Carmelite Boniface, Rector of the Puthenpally seminary,³⁷ to go to Europe along with the students; they reached Rome on 25 January 1887.³⁸

3.1. *Propaganda* Studies More about Emmanuel Nidiry

The reply of Mellano was really a surprise to *Propaganda* because the congregation had already a letter of Agliardi on 1 May 1886 qualifying

³³ In June 1886, the congregation wrote to Mellano to prepare six seminarians to be sent to *Propaganda* College. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 19, f. 235^v.

³⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 19, f. 273^v, letter on 5 July 1886.

³⁵ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 30.

³⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 30, "Mi diceva pure V. E. nel telegramma di mandare seco loro, qualora abbisognassero di interprete, il Cattenar Nidiri Mani. Son persuaso che V. E. avrà avuto a di lui riguardo grande informazioni, non è però un soggetto a cui possano coscienziosamente confidare i detti quattro giovani, oltre che sarebbe un vero scandalo pubblico se così si eseguisse, essendo abbastanza questo Cattinar conosciuto per qualche male."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 30.

³⁸ The four students were Sebastian Pullen from Gnarakal, Alexander Cattakayam from Pala, Antony Valiaveettil from Ampazhakad, Paul Alapat from Edamthuruthy. Cf. APF, *Collegio Urbano-Alunni* 1889-1911.

Nidiry as an “excellent Suriani Catholic Priest.”³⁹ Moreover, the *Propaganda* itself had already presented Emmanuel Nidiry as a good priest in the letter dated 7 August 1886 to the superior general of Christian Brothers of Ireland while asking an instructor to be sent to Syrian National Association of Malabar.⁴⁰

Since Mellano depicted Emmanuel Nidiry as public scandal, the congregation asked Mellano for an explanation of the letter and directed Agliardi to collect precise and trustworthy information regarding Nidiry.⁴¹ In view of the request of the *Propaganda*, Agliardi asked more information from Mellano and three other missionaries: Monteiro, Marcellino and Polycarp, concerning the doctrine and morals of Emmanuel Nidiry.

3.2. The Report of Agliardi

On 27 March 1887, Agliardi wrote from Goa to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* with following explanation for his optimistic judgment on Nidiry: 1. The favourable and good report of Meurin, for whom Nidiry had acted as interpreter for more than a year, when the former was apostolic visitor in Malabar; 2. Agliardi’s personal knowledge, having received Nidiry as a guest in his house in Pune for some days, two years before; 3. The correspondence of Nidiry himself concerning the conversion of the Jacobites, some of which he had already directed to *Propaganda*; 4. The words of eulogy regarding Nidiry given by Mellano and Marcellino during Agliardi’s visit in Malabar.⁴²

In addition Agliardi commented that the expression ‘public scandal’ used by Mellano was to be taken in an improper and metaphoric sense. According

³⁹ APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 2 Sem. 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 533, “Il Rev. Nidiry, ottimo sacerdote cattolico Soriano.” Agliardi was reporting about the acquisition of a property in Kottayam for the Syrian National Union Association by Nidiry and Mar Dionysius.

⁴⁰ APF, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 382, f. 460^v, “Il Metropolitano dei giacobini insieme ad altro buon Sacerdote ha fatto acquisto di una proprietà in Kottayam per l’associazione nazionale Siro Malabarice.” Letter of *Propaganda* to the Superior General of Christian Brothers of Ireland on 7 August 1887.

⁴¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 30, letter to Agliardi on 23 January 1887. 23.

⁴² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1244^a-1244^v, “Essendo ora in grado di poter in qualche modo rispondere alla venerata lettera del 23 gennaio N. L., premetto che la buona opinione, che io mi era formata sul Sacerdote Emanuele Nidiry, si fondava: 1°. sul concetto che se ne era fatto Msgr. Meurin, che lo ebbe quale interprete nel corso di più di un anno, in cui fu Visitatore Apostolico nel Malabar; 2°. sul modo che tenne il Nidiry in mia casa, dove stette per alcuni giorni due anni fa in Poona; 3°. sulle sue lettere riguardanti la conversione dei Giacobiti, delle quali lettere alcune ho mandato alla *Propaganda*, 4°. sulle parole in suo elogio dettate da Msgr. Mellano e da Msgr. Berardi, quando io visitai il Malabar.” Letter of Agliardi to Simeoni on 27 March 1887.

to him Mellano was referring to problems and diverse opinions of different parties of his country [vicariate] concerning the trip of Emmanul Nidiry to Rome:

As I believe that the expressions public scandal etc. used by Msgr. Mellano in the letter directed to Your Eminence have to be taken in an improper and metaphoric sense [not in literal sense] and I think that in the use of such expressions the Prelate alluded to the matters of partisans, who work in his vicariate, where the journey of Nidiry to Rome would have been viewed by the partisan adversaries with sorrow and admiration.⁴³

Moreover, Agliardi sent to the Prefect of the Congregation the reports which he collected from Monteiro, secretary of the Patriarch of Goa, Mellano, Marcellino, and Polycarp along with his reply.⁴⁴

3.3. The Attitude of Monteiro concerning Nidiry

On 20 March 1887 Monteiro, the secretary of the Patriarch of Goa, wrote to Agliardi about his opinion of Nidiry:

On the request of Your Highness, being given the qualities of the Rev. Mani Nidiry, priest of the Syrian rite under the jurisdiction of Msgr. the Archbishop of Verapoly, I have the honour and the satisfaction to inform Your Excellency that I have personally known this ecclesiastic at Cochin in 1877, and having spoken to him several times, I could get a very positive idea of his intelligence and sacerdotal spirit. Besides this, I think that I should tell Your Highness that, before having made the acquaintance of Fr Nidiry, I had heard many praises of him from Fr Antonio Correia dos Reis Coelho, former Vicar General of Cranganore and Governor of the archdiocese of Goa during the absence of Msgr. Arioria Pessoa. While talking about his works at Cranganore, this good Portuguese priest told me that, as the interpreter of his sermons, he had taken Fr Nidiry (who was then minor if I am not mistaken) a very intelligent and devout young man, whom he owed a good part of the fruits of his missions and especially the conversion of a few hundred of pagans. ... To end I would add, Eminence, that the late Archbishop of Goa, Msgr. d'Ornellas, after having

⁴³ *Ibid.*, f. 1245, "Quanto a me credo che le espressioni-scandalo pubblico etc. usate da M. Mellano nella lettera diretta a Vostra Eminenza debbano prendersi in un senso improprio e metaforico, e penso che nell'usarle forse l'esimio Prelato alludesse alle questioni di partigiani che agitano il suo paese dove l'andata del Nidiry a Roma sarebbe stata dai partigiani avversari veduta con dispiacere ed ammirazione."

⁴⁴ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, 1250^{R-V}, letter of Monteiro. For the letter of Mellano, *Ibid.*, f. 1253^{R-V}; for the letter of Marcellino *Ibid.*, ff. 1251^R-1252^R; for the letter of Polycarp *Ibid.*, ff. 1246^R-1249^R.

spoken to Fr Nidiry, told to me that this ecclesiastic had pleased him well.⁴⁵

3.4. The Assessment of Mellano of Emmanuel Nidiry

To the request of Agliardi, on 16 March 1887 Mellano replied to Agliardi without giving a concrete explanation to his expression 'public scandal'. He wrote:

About the Priest Mani Nidiry, I must openly confess, that his behaviour is not quite conforming to the spirit of a Catholic Priest and it is rather known to the public; about his private life I ignore what it might be. His family is well noted on the occasion of a schism in his parish during the time of my predecessor. As a child he received education in the school of the Protestants, and in his youth he began to involve himself in the civil affairs, as schismatic he waged war against the apostolic vicar, and schismatically he was admitted in the seminary under the Goans, and when requested to accept him under my jurisdiction, I thought to welcome his supplication, and thus he was accepted and received the sacred order in time. Till now he has not shown any inclination other than for the vanity of the world, especially in the civil cases of the courts. Thus he served me in the case of the Church of Chittattocara and Msgr. Marcellino for another, not as a lawyer, only as an adviser to the lawyer. In short he is capable of doing the worldly things according to the modern spirit, and this is the reason why he is accepted by the revolutionaries with whom he associates; but for the things of God he is not adequate; and this is also the public opinion.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, 1250^{R-V}, "A la demande de Votre Grandeur, vu les qualités de Rev. Mani Nidiry, prêtre du rite syriaque de la juridiction de Msgr. l'Archevêque de Verapoly, j'ai l'honneur et la satisfaction d'informer Votre Excellence que j'ai connu personnellement cet ecclésiastique à Cochinchine en 1877 et que lui ayant parlé quelquefois, j'ai pu faire une idée très avantageuse de son intelligence et de son esprit sacerdotal. Autre cela je crois devoir dire à Votre Grandeur qu'avant d'avoir fait la connaissance du P. Nidiry, j'avais entendu bien d'éloges de lui au P. Antonio Correia dos Reis Coelho, ancien vicaire général de Cranganor et gouverneur de l'Archevêché de Goa pendant l'absence de Msgr. Arioria Pessoa. En parlant de ses travaux à Cranganor, me disait ce bon prêtre portugais, que pour interprète de ses prédications il avait pris le P. Nidiry. (qui était alors minoré, si je ne me trompe pas) jeune homme très intelligent et pieux, au concours duquel il devait une bonne partie des fruits de ses missions et surtout de la conversion de quelques centaines de païens. ... En finissant j'ajouterais, monseigneur, que le feu Archevêque de Goa Msgr d'Ornellas, après avoir parlé au P. Nidiry, m'a dit que cet ecclésiastique lui avait bien plu." Letter of Monteiro on 20 March 1877.

⁴⁶ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1253^{R-V}, "Circa il Sacerdote Nidiry Mani devo apertamente confessare, che la sua condotta non è affatto conforme allo spirito di Sacerdote Cattolico e come tale è conosciuto abbastanza dal pubblico; circa la sua vita privata poi ignoro quale sia. La sua famiglia si è resa abbastanza nota in occasione di uno scisma nella sua parrocchia sotto il mio predecessore, da piccolo lui ha ricevuto l'istruzione nella scuola dei protestanti, e ben giovane cominciò ad intramettersi nelle cause civili, da scismatico guerreggio contro il Vicario apostolico, scismaticamente fu ammesso nel

3.5. The Opinion of Marcellino on Emmanuel Nidiry

Marcellino on 27 February 1887 replied to Agliardi and submitted his views on Nidiry: "As a secular young of 15 or 16 years of age, Emmanuel Nidiry served at my Holy Mass ... After 1858, some of his predecessors (principally a priest, his uncle) who had made an unjust and illegal revolution against Msgr. Bernardino, joined with the schism, Indo-Lusitana [Goan Schism] together with a part of the parish."⁴⁷ Marcellino continues:

In this way Mani became liberated. He joined in the Jacobite-Protestant school at Kottayam, where he did his education, and then, from the Goans, he received minor orders, and served as a secretary to the Goan administrators for many years. He knows English, but does not write it very well. He knows Soriano [Syriac] sufficiently well. He speaks a little Portuguese, but I doubt whether he can write it. He knows some words of Latin, but is about zero. He has a good knowledge of the Malabar language, and other (native) languages. He studied the moral theology published in Malabar by Fr Philip, our missionary = Philosophy, dogmatic theology and the other ecclesiastical sciences he has not studied. 3. Since some years he is vicar of his church [Kuravilangad], and also of Alleppey ... 4. About the morality, two years ago a priest complained to me. But I reasonably thought to be little or no truth. ... In Malabar who speaks a foreign language, and shows friendship with various employees of the government is easily admired by the servum pecus. ... The prominent persons among the priests and the people, who think seriously give little respect for him, rather at sometimes they openly speak about him as a man not to rely on. As concerns governmental prudence, upright honesty in dealing the affairs of the

Seminario Goano, ed avendomi poi supplicato di accettarlo sotto la mia giurisdizione, ho creduto bene di accogliere la sua supplica, così fu accettato ed a suo tempo ordinato. Finora non ha dimostrato di avere altra inclinazione altro spirito fuor che alla vanità del mondo, specialmente poi di intromettersi nelle cause civili dei tribunali, per ciò che me ne sono servito nella causa della Chiesa di Chittattocare e Msgr. Marcellino per un altro, non come avvocato, solo come consigliere dell'avvocato. È capace insomma per trattare le cose di mondo secondo lo spirito moderno, e questo è il motivo perché è accarezzato dai rivoluzionari con cui fa lega, ma per le cose di Dio non è affatto adeguato, e così pure deve essere l'opinione generale." Letter of Mellano to Agliardi on 16 March 1887.

⁴⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff.1251^R-1252^R, "Il Sacerdote Mani Nidiry doveva avere i 15 o 16 anni quando come giovane secolare mi serviva la messa da dove io la missione nella sua chiesa ciò fu nel 1857, deve pertanto avere ora 45 o 46 anni di età. In quell'epoca ossia l'anno che segui 1858 i suoi maggiori si precedile (principale fu un suo zio prete) capo di una rivoluzione contro Msgr. Bernardino di f. m ingiustissima glossarono illegalmente con una parte della chiesa allo scisma Indo - lusitane." Letter of Marcellino to Agliardi on 27 February 1887.

churches - I would not give an arm of my old vicar general for the whole of Mani Nidiry.⁴⁸

3.6. The Evaluation of Polycarp

Polycarp wrote a long letter on 3 March 1887 to Agliardi regarding different points about the conduct of Nidiry:

Here is what I can say in all good conscience and “Coram Deo” about the Cattamar [Priest] Mani Nidiry and for a greater clarity, I am going to classify my information under different topics:

1. The Studies. I learned to know the Cattamar Mani Nidiry 6 or 7 years ago and I know that his parents embraced the schism of Goa following a quarrel with Msgr the Archbishop Bernardino. He brought up with the Protestants and the Jacobites at Kottayam. When Rochos arrived in Malabar he submitted himself to him and after his departure for Mossoul, Mani submitted himself to Goa and stayed some time with the Goan Governor as secretary and received the 4 minor orders. Seeing that he had not much to hope there, he was received by the present Archbishop of Verapoly, Msgr Leonard, and was ordained a priest by his Lordship only just before the arrival of Mellus.

2. His science. Being light-minded and having allowed himself to wander here and there, he could learn only the Syriac and the Moral Theology translated into Malayalam. Not having followed a regular course in one seminary he could learn neither the Dogma nor the other ecclesiastical sciences and he knows only the little he could draw from the English books.

⁴⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff.1251^r-1252^r, “In questo modo il giovane Mani libero. Se ne andò alle scuole giacobitico – protestante di Kottayam, la fece la sua educazione poi da goano fu ordinato minorista, e servì ai governatori goani come segretario per molti anni.

Conosce l'inglese non lo scrive, però molto bene conosce il siriano sufficientemente, parla un poco portoghese non so e dubito se lo scrive. Sa qualche parola latina; ma è quasi zero. Ha buona cognizione della lingua Malabar anche altre lingue. Ha studiato la teologia morale Malabar stampata dal R. P. Pilippo nostro missionario = Filosofia, Teologia, Dogmatica ed altre scienze ecclesiastiche non le ha studiate.

3. Da alcuni anni è vicario della sua chiesa, ed anche di Alleppey ...

4. Circa la moralità due anni fa, fu accusato a me da un altro sacerdote. Ma come pensavo ragionevolmente esservi poco, o nulla di vero, ... nel Malabar chi parla una lingua estera, e mostra amicizia con vari impiegati del governo viene facilmente ammirato dal servum pecus. Per questo fra i governi amanti di novità, e desiderosi di aiuto viene stimato come abile per far loro la Cabisilla Spagna. Le persone gravi del sacerdozio e del popolo, che pensa seriamente poca stima fanno di lui, anzi alle volte ne parlano apertamente come di uomo da poco confidare.

In materia di prudenza governativa, di onestà integerrima nel trattare affari di chiesa - io non darei un braccio del mio vecchio vicario generale per tutto l'intiero Mani Nidiry.” Letter of Marcellino to Agliardi on 27 February 1887.

3. Knowledge of the languages. He knows English well enough to speak it, fairly well the Syriac, a little Portuguese that he doesn't know how to write, I think and the Malayalam.

4. His orthodoxy in the faith. I never heard anything against his orthodoxy; but he must be like all his compatriots who never have the courage of their opinions and rarely dare to defend their superior in critical moment and I think that I can assure Your Excellency that if God were to give to the Malabar the opportunity to defend their faith until bloodshed, I fear that there would not be as many martyrs as in China. The Fides grace is too common here.

5. His morality. I know positively that there were deplorable things that happened here in Trichoor itself and in Aranattukara very near to here, while he stayed in these localities to follow some cases before the court of Trichoor. Unhappily, the affairs of Aranattukara became rather public.

6. His job. Msgr. the Archbishop had used him in the cases against the schismatics, not as a lawyer but as a helper to provide some materials and as someone knowing all the intrigues and the petty quarrels of the natives; in this way he knew how to use the remedies and the system of the homeopathy.

7. His compatriots' esteem. He knows how to give himself a little to boast and is appreciated by all those who oppose our dignified Bishops and who are against everything that is Latin. But the serious priests, I dare to affirm it, look at him as a fusspot and a too worldly priest. Some of the high rank Syrians and also some distinguished Latins are not favouring him and lately a gentleman told me, "Fr Many is anything but a priest."

Besides last year after the departure of Your Excellency a council was held very near here, at Olloor, to know who would be the worthiest Cattamar to become a Syrian bishop, because one had said publicly or at least pretended that Your Excellency had promised to the Syrians at Mannanam, to give them a native bishop. Thus, in this public council, Mani Nidiry was proposed as the most suited choice. But it was answered that he was made to be a lawyer rather than a Bishop.

... I never had the least trouble with him and all the times we had the opportunity to see and meet each other, our relationship was good. Therefore, Your Excellency may remain assured that everything that I have just exposed is the pure dictamen of my conscience and I still add that

unfortunately the common sense, judgment, simplicity and sincerity are rare things in Malabar.⁴⁹

3.7. A False Allegation against Emmanuel Nidiry to Put off His Trip to Rome

As soon as *Propaganda* was informed through Agliardi, the then apostolic delegate about the purchase of the property for the Syrian National Union Association under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry in collaboration with Mar Dionysius,⁵⁰ the Congregation asked Mellano through a letter dated 17 June 1886, to report about the new Association and to request Nidiry

⁴⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi 1878-1889*, ff. 1246^r- 1249^r, "Voilà donc ce que je puis dire en toute conscience et « Coram Deo » du Cattanar Many Nidiry et pour une plus grande clarté je vais classer mes renseignements sous différents chefs: 1° Les Etudes. J'ai appris à connaître le Cattanar Many Nidiry il y a 6 ou 7 ans et je sais que ses parents s'étant jetés dans le schisme de Goa par suite d'une querelle avec Msgr l'Archevêque Bernardino, il a été élevé avec les Protestants et les Jacobites à Cottayam. Quand Rochos arriva au Malabar il se soumit à lui et après son départ pour Mossoul Many se soumit à Goa et demeura quelques temps avec le Gouverneur goanais en qualité de secrétaire et reçut les 4 ordres mineurs. Voyant qu'il n'avait pas grand-chose à espérer il se fit recevoir Msgr l'Archevêque actuel de Verapoly Msgr Léonard et fut ordonné prêtre par sa Grandeur seulement quelques temps avant l'arrivée de Mellus. 2° Sa science. Etant léger de caractère et s'étant laissé trainer par ici et par là il n'a guère pu apprendre que le Syriac et la Théologie Morale traduite en Malayalam. N'ayant pas suivi de cours régulier dans un séminaire il n'a appris ni le Dogme ni les autres sciences ecclésiastiques et il ne sait que ce qu'il a pu tirer un peu des livres anglais. 3° Connaissance des langues. Il connaît assez bien l'anglais pour le parler, passablement le Syriac, un peu de Portugais qu'il ne sait pas écrire, je pense, et le Malayalam. 4° Son orthodoxie dans la foi. Je n'ai jamais rien entendu contre son orthodoxie ; mais il doit être comme tous ses compatriotes qui n'ont jamais le courage de leurs opinions et n'osent presque jamais défendre leurs supérieurs dans un moment critique et je crois pouvoir assurer V. Exc. que si le Bon Dieu donnait l'occasion aux Malabar de défendre la foi jusqu'au sang je crains bien qu'il n'y aurait pas autant de martyrs qu'en Chine. La « Fides quaca » est par trop commune ici. 5° La moralité. Je sais positivement qu'il y a eu des choses déplorables ici à Trichoor même et à Arnatoorkaray tout près d'ici, pendant qu'il demeurerait dans ces localités pour défendre des procès devant la cour à Trichoor. Les affaires d'Arnatoorkaray étaient devenues assez publiques malheureusement. 6° Son emploi. Msgr l'Archevêque s'était servi de lui non comme avocat, dans les procès contre les schismatiques mais comme aide pour fournir des matériaux et comme connaissant toutes les intrigues et les chicanes innées aux natifs; de cette façon il savait user des remèdes et du système de l'homéopathie. 7° Son estime auprès des compatriotes. Il sait se donner un extérieur un peu brillant et est bien vu de tous ceux qui font de l'opposition à nos dignes Evêques et qui sont contre tout ce qui est latin. Mais les prêtres sérieux, j'ose l'affirmer, le regardent comme un faiseur d'embarras et un prêtre trop mondain. Des Syriens de haut rang comme aussi des latins distingués ne sont pas pour lui et dernièrement un gentleman me dit « Fr Many is anything but a priest ». De plus l'année dernière après le départ de Votre Exc. on tint un conseil ici tout près, à Ollor, pour savoir qui serait le Cattanar le plus digne de devenir évêque Syrien, parce qu'on avait dit publiquement ou du moins on prétendait que V. Exc. avait promis à Manânam, aux Syriens de leur donner un évêque natif. Or donc dans ce conseil public on proposa Many Nidiry comme étant le sujet le mieux éligible mais on répondit qu'il était fait plutôt pour être avocat qu'Evêque. ... Je n'ai jamais eu le moindre désagrément avec lui et toutes les fois que nous avons eu l'occasion de nous voir et de nous rencontrer nous étions en bons rapports par conséquent, V. Exc. peut rester assuré que tout ce que je viens d'exposer est le pur dictamen de ma conscience et j'ajoute encore que malheureusement le bon sens, le jugement, la simplicité et la sincérité sont des choses bien rares au Malabar." Letter of Polycarp to Agliardi on 3 March 1887.

⁵⁰ APF, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Indie Orientali*, 2 Sem. 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 533.

to collect information to be sent to Rome.⁵¹ Mellano, who was silent to the request of Congregation, responded at once picturing Emmanuel Nidiry as a public scandal, as the same Congregation asked him to send Emmanuel Nidiry to Rome as the interpreter to seminarians.⁵²

The very fact that Emmanuel Nidiry became the unquestionable leader of the emancipation movement, and his acceptance in Malabar created a kind of fear among the missionaries. It was unthinkable for Mellano, who presented in Rome always the negative face of Malabar Catholic Christians, the trip of Emmanuel Nidiry to Rome. Mellano was afraid whether it would repeat what happened a century ago when Cariattil Joseph visited Rome.⁵³ An expression in the letter of Mellano gives a clue to this:

He is capable of treating the worldly things according to the modern spirit, and this is the reason why he is embraced by the revolutionaries with whom he joins; but in the things of God he is not quite adequate; and this is also the general opinion.⁵⁴

In fact the missionaries were afraid of losing their authority and position in Malabar. Besides, the friendship of Emmanuel Nidiry with bishop Meurin, the apostolic visitor and with Agliardi and Aiuti, the apostolic delegates, increased their enmity towards him. Therefore, to prolong the power and authority in Malabar, Mellano used the old method of attacking the reputed Suriani priests by accusing them of false notions and thus picturing them badly to the higher ecclesiastical authorities especially before the Roman curia.⁵⁵

⁵¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 19, f. 250, letter to Mellano.

⁵² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1244^v. See footnote 36.

⁵³ Mar Joseph Cariattil (1742 -1786) was the freedom fighter of the Suriani Church in eighteenth century. His mission was not realized due to his sudden death. For the details of his journey to Rome and his mission, see F. THONIPPARA, *St Thomas Christians of India ...*, 104-130. Cf. also T. PAREMMAKKAL, *The Varthamanappusthakam*, translated into English by P. J. PODIPARA, OCA 190, Rome 1971.

⁵⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1253, "È capace insomma per trattare le cose di mondo secondo lo spirito moderno, e questo è il motivo perché è accarezzato dai rivoluzionari con così fa lega, ma per le cose di Dio non è assetto adeguato, e così pure deve essere l'opinione generale."

⁵⁵ We have a clear proof for this type of attack by the missionaries in the letter of Meurin, the apostolic visitor. He reported about three methods which were used by the missionaries to keep up the power in Malabar. Among the three, the worse was to attack the reputed or accepted priests by accusing on them false concepts. "Precisa accusatione plurium cattanariourum praestantium." Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Generale* 1877, Luglio, s. n., letter of Meurin on 4 September 1876 to the *Propaganda Fide*.

The second letter⁵⁶ of Mellano confirms the above affirmation because he had nothing to produce concretely against Nidiry when the Congregation asked an explanation from Mellano himself for his expression 'public scandal'. He wrote only that "About the priest Nidiry Mani I must frankly confess that his conduct does not conform to the spirit of a Catholic priest and as such he is known by the public; about his private life, I ignore what it may be."⁵⁷

Moreover in the letter of Polycarp, he accused Nidiry of a scandalous moral life. If it was true, Mellano would not have omitted in his letter to the Congregation to justify his statement that Nidiry was a scandalous person. Though Marcellino had nothing to write positively about Emmanuel Nidiry, in his letter he denied the complaint lodged by a priest two years ago about the moral life of Nidiry. There was little or no truth in the complaint levelled by Marcellino.⁵⁸

Therefore it is possible to conclude that the false accusation was purposefully made by Mellano to block his journey to Rome. Besides missionaries wanted to reduce the number of supporters of Emmanuel Nidiry and thus thwart his great dream of unifying all the Suriani Christians of Malabar, so that they could prolong their authority in Malabar.

4. The General Meeting of *Propaganda* on 20 December 1886

Based on the report of the apostolic delegate Agliardi, sent on 20 December 1886 the general assembly of the *Propaganda* discussed the issues of Malabar.⁵⁹ Though in the general meeting, Cardinals took decision to separate the Suriani Catholics from the Latins forming for them one or two vicariates under one or two bishops of Latin rite.⁶⁰ However, the question on granting indigenous bishops to Suriani Catholics was still postponed. Regarding the question of indigenous bishop to Suriani Catholics the general assembly of Cardinals concluded the following:

⁵⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1253^{R-V}, letter of Mellano to Agliardi on 16 March 1887.

⁵⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1253^{R-V}.

⁵⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff.1251^V, "Circa la moralità due anni fa, fu accusato a me da un altro sacerdote. Ma come pensavo ragionevolmente esservi poco, o nulla di vero." Letter of Marcellino to Agliardi on 27 February 1887.

⁵⁹ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 529.

⁶⁰ ACO, *Ponenze* 1886, 1092; ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530-530^V.

Although Msgr. Agliardi asserts that he has found among the Suriani Catholics some priests in whom the best qualities and the attachment to the Holy See are assembled, still it presents a certain difficulty in that the Carmelite apostolic vicars are of the contrary opinion.⁶¹

The negative approach of *Propaganda* to the genuine demand of Surianis for having indigenous bishops was not reasonable. Cardinal Tisserant gives impressive statistics to justify Surianis' demand:

At that time, Syrians were at least 200,000 strong with 360 priests; yet they had no bishop of their own. This was an awkward, if not unjust, situation compared with that of Armenian Catholics, who were barely 80,000 in number and yet had a patriarch, eighteen resident bishops and many titular ones. The Chaldeans themselves, though less numerous, had their patriarch and 12 bishops. The establishment of the hierarchy in India where many dioceses numbered less than 10,000 people, made the situation still more humiliating.⁶²

The same general assembly of the Cardinals commented about the low intellectual and moral standards of the Surianis.⁶³ If so, who are to be blamed for the ignorance of the Suriani priests? Here it seems that Rome had forgotten the three hundred years of religious formation of the Suriani Catholics under the Latin missionaries who claimed to be the intellectual genius and the custodian of the morals. In the report of Zaleski, on Kottayam apostolic vicariate on 30 November 1892, he criticized the missionaries regarding the education of the native clergy:

Now one can say without exaggeration that, except in Mangalore and Kandy the missionaries, in the whole of India never thought of raising the native clergy to their level.⁶⁴

The Surianis many times complained that the missionaries did not like to educate them.⁶⁵ "Moreover, we ask the missionaries to instruct us; because

⁶¹ ACO, *ACTA* 1886, vol. 17, f. 526.

⁶² E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 126.

⁶³ "The moral character of the Suriani Christians was seen as unstable and unquiet." Letter of resolutions communicated by *Propaganda* to Agliardi on 23 December 1866. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 19, f. 496^v-499.

⁶⁴ ACO, *Rubrica* 109, *Dele. Indi. Sori. Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 64, "Ora si può dire senza esagerare che, a l'eccezione di Mangalore e di Kandy i missionari non hanno mai pensato in tutta l'India, di elevare il clero nativo al loro livello (in originali it is given as nivello)." Report of Zaleski on 30 November 1892.

⁶⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 754, "Nolunt Missionarii nos plura docere, ne contra eos insurgamus." Letter of Meurin on 1 June 1876. Here the Surianis are complaining against the Carmelite missionaries.

the mentality of those who presently govern is not to give education for us.”⁶⁶ In such a situation why did the *Propaganda Fide* impede the genuine attempt of Emmanuel Nidiry to start a mixed college at Kottayam by the Syrian National Association,⁶⁷ which was oriented to raise the standard and morals of the Surianis?

5. The Conference of Bangalore on 25 January 1887

As it was suggested at the time of the establishment of Latin hierarchy in India,⁶⁸ Agliardi convened the conferences of bishops in three places viz. in Colombo, Bangalore and Allahabad.⁶⁹ On 25 January 1887, all the bishops of southern India met together in Bangalore under the presidency of Agliardi. After the proclamation of the establishment of Latin hierarchy in India by the apostolic delegate, they discussed two issues⁷⁰ concerning the Suriani Catholics of India: the number of vicariates for the Suriani Catholics and the expediency of granting the Suriani vicar general the pontifical privilege and the faculty of giving confirmation. By the erection of Latin hierarchy on 1 September 1886 the Catholic St Thomas Christians became members of the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

Accepting the division on the basis of natural limit of Alwaye river which divides the region from Malayattoor to Cochin, for the north, they suggested Trichur as the residence of the bishop and for the southern vicariate, Kottayam.⁷¹ The Carmelites proposed that Marcellino and another Carmelite must be selected as vicar apostolic for the new vicariates. Regarding the expediency of giving separate bishops, they replied, “as the governing bishops of the Syrians had agreed to give separate bishops for the Syrians, they had nothing to say against their proposal. For better peace in Malabar, it was better to give separate bishops.”⁷² Though Agliardi already knew the

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 1876, 754, “Atque missionarios postulamus qui nos doceant, nam qui nunc nos regunt, nolunt nos instrui.” Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 June 1876. The Carmelites were not interested in the education of the Surianis.

⁶⁷ Cf. ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530^v; ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 19, f. 499; ACO, ACTA 1887, vol. 18, f. 261.

⁶⁸ Latin Hierarchy was established by the Papal Bull *Humanae Salutis Auctor* on 1 September 1886. Cf. ARSI, *Cottayam Franciae* 1887-1898, vol. 1, fasc. III, 19.

⁶⁹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 133.

⁷⁰ The two issues are already proposed in the general meeting of the *Propaganda* on 20 December 1886. Cf. ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530. The Latin hierarchy was erected on 1 September 1886.

⁷¹ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, ff. 263^v-264, copy of the report of the conference to *Propaganda*.

⁷² A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 134.

decision of the *Propaganda* to entrust the mission to the Jesuits,⁷³ he recommended the Carmelites namely Msgr. Marcellino and Fr Polycarp as the apostolic vicars for the Suriani Catholics.⁷⁴ Moreover, the bishops of Verapoly, Mangalore and Kollam had spoken well of Marcellino and Polycarp and Agliardi informed Rome that he agreed with their opinion.⁷⁵

6. The Interference of Emmanuel Nidiry

While in Rome a serious search for the new apostolic vicars was taking place, on 7 January 1877 Meurin informed *Propaganda* the plan of Mellus to come to Malabar in person or to send another bishop.⁷⁶ Based on the information about the possibility of another schism in Malabar, the *Propaganda* asked Agliardi through a telegram to collect accurate information and to be vigilant.⁷⁷ Agliardi replied to the telegram on 25 January along with a letter of Emmanuel Nidiry.⁷⁸ Emmanuel Nidiry wrote:

The news regarding Mellus are various and very doubtful. The Mellusians say that they have received letters from him exhorting them to remain faithful to Bishop Thondanatt and to the Cor-episcopo Augustine, and promising them to come in person or to send another one consecrated by him. I believe that he waits for a better chance, from now on, when the people were very furious and bored because of their subjugation to Verapoly under the prohibition of contracting marriage with those under the jurisdiction of Goa. He was informed of this situation by a Chaldean priest named Philip Assaius.⁷⁹

⁷³ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530-530^v.

⁷⁴ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 262^v, letter of Agliardi on 25 January 1887 to *Propaganda*.

⁷⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 514.

⁷⁶ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 253^v, "Frattanto avendo Monsig. Leone Meurin in data 7 Gennaio comunicare alla Propaganda alcune *Notae ex Malabar* in cui fra le altre cose si diceva che lo scomunicato Monsig. Mellus apprestatasi o fare ritorno al Malabar o ad inviarmi un nuovo vescovo che egli avrebbe consacrato."

⁷⁷ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 253^v, "... affinché assumere esatte informazioni e vegliasse." Telegram of the Prefect of *Propaganda* to Agliardi on 8 January 1887.

⁷⁸ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 253^v. For the Italian translation of Nidiry's letter, see *Ibid.*, 263^{r-v}, Emmanuel Nidiry to Agliardi on 12 January 1877.

⁷⁹ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 263^r, "La notizia che riguarda Mellus è varia e molto dubbiosa. I Mellusiani dicono d'aver ricevuto lettere da lui esortandoli a perseverare fedeli al Vescovo Thondinath ed al Corepiscopo Agostino, e promettendo loro di venire in persona o di mandare un altro consacrato da lui. Credo che egli attenda un'opportunità migliore, come in avanti, quando la popolazione era assai adirata ed annoiata a motivo di dover sottomettersi a Varapullay dietro la proibizione di contrarre matrimoni con quelli della giurisdizione di Goa. Questa circostanza gli fu partecipata da un Prete Caldeo chiamato Filippo Assaius." Letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Agliardi on 12 January 1877.

Later the letter of Agliardi on 14 March 1877 confirmed the news of a possible schism among the Suriani Catholics subject to Goan jurisdiction, who according to the Concordat were to be under the *Propaganda* jurisdiction.⁸⁰ This fear was again confirmed by the petition of 'Syro-Chaldean community of the archdiocese of Cranganore subject to the archbishop of Goa'.⁸¹ In the petition they used strong words:

1. That a Syro-Chaldean bishop be granted to the petitioners,
2. That, if it were not possible at present, permission should be granted to the petitioners to remain as before under the Portuguese Padroado, annexing their 28 churches to the diocese of Cochin, until they could be provided with a bishop of Syro-Chaldean rite. That on the contrary, if the petitioners were compelled to be subject to *Propaganda*, according to the resolution those churches would suffer an incalculable loss, since the majority, which were converted from the schism of Mellus, intend to return to the same and to fortify his party.⁸²

Meanwhile Agliardi was transferred from India and appointed as the pro-secretary of the Congregation for the *Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinarii*.⁸³ Andrea Aiuti was appointed as the new apostolic delegate of India on 31 March 1887.⁸⁴

7. The Erection of Two Apostolic Vicariates

Based on the resolution of the conference of bishops held on 25 January 1887 at Bangalore,⁸⁵ Pope Leo XIII, through his apostolic letter *Quod jampridem* of 20 May 1887, separated Surianis from the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly⁸⁶ and constituted two Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic, Trichur

⁸⁰ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 264.

⁸¹ Cf. ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 254, letter to the Holy Father on 5 February 1887.

⁸² ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 254, "... in questa supplica con energico linguaggio si domanda: 1. Che sia concesso ai ricorrenti un vescovo siro-caldeo. 2. Che se ciò non è possibile al presente che sia permesso ai ricorrenti di rimanere, come prima, sotto il patronato portoghese, essendo annesse le loro 28 chiese al vescovato di Cochin, finché non vi si provvederà con un vescovo siro caldeo. Se accade il contrario, si conchiude, ed i ricorrenti sono costretti a sottomettersi alla propaganda per fermo le chiese avranno a soffrire una perdita incalcolabile, essendochè la più gran parte delle medesime, convertite dallo scisma di Mellus, intende di ritornare allo stesso e fortificare il suo partito."

⁸³ *Hierarchia Cattolica*, vol. VIII, 166.

⁸⁴ *Hierarchia Cattolica*, vol. VIII, 73, ACO, *Breve e Bolle e Lettere Ap.* 1869-1917, Re. 153, ff. 272^v-73.

⁸⁵ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, ff. 263^v-264, copy of the letter of the bishops who met together in Bangalore to *Propaganda*.

⁸⁶ When the Latin hierarchy was erected on 1 September 1886 the Catholic St Thomas Christians became members of the Verapoly Archdiocese.

and Kottayam.⁸⁷ The copy of the apostolic letter was sent to Aiuti, the apostolic delegate in India.⁸⁸

Though the Holy See separated the Surianis from the Latin Archdiocese of Verapoly, their demand for indigenous bishops remained unheard. Cardinal Tisserant gives his interpretation to the question why the Holy See did not satisfy the demand of Surianis fully. He writes

... numerous European missionaries in various parts of India were afraid that if the Syrians had access to episcopate, Indians of their own missions would begin agitating to obtain bishops of their own blood ... such was the weight of prejudice that nobody dared to appoint Syro-Malabar prelates immediately.⁸⁹

However, to fulfil the desire of Surianis Holy See created a new office; according to the apostolic letter, each Latin vicar apostolic "should appoint a Syro-Malabar vicar general to whom should be given the privileges of exercising in his own rite pontifical ceremonies and of conferring the sacrament of confirmation, with chrism nevertheless consecrated by a bishop; and they shall choose four ecclesiastics of the same nation and rite and shall avail themselves of their advice in all ecclesiastical affairs."⁹⁰ It is interesting to note here that though the apostolic letter erecting two new vicariates was promulgated, the Holy See did not yet decide the candidates to be appointed to these vicariates.

7.1. Aiuti Requests the Help of Emmanuel Nidiry

Understanding the proficiency of Emmanuel Nidiry in different languages, after receiving the Papal Brief, *Quod iampridem*, Aiuti summoned him to Ootacamund to get the Papal Brief and his own pastoral letter translated into English and Malayalam.⁹¹ Emmanuel Nidiry had to stay a few days with Aiuti for the translation. During his stay, he discussed the problems of the Malabar Church with the apostolic delegate. Within in a short period Aiuti identified the greatness of the Malabar priest,

⁸⁷ Leonis XIII, *Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. VII, Romae 1888, 106-108; ASS 19 (1887) 153-154. For the English translation of the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem*, see P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 105-106. Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 789-790.

⁸⁸ Cf. ACO, *ACTA*, 1887, vol. 18, f. 254^v; ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1886, vol. 20, f. 170^v.

⁸⁹ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India ...*, 126.

⁹⁰ P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 106.

⁹¹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 136.

which the other European missionaries failed to recognize. They became close friends.

As instructed by the Holy See,⁹² the translated copies of the Papal Brief and the pastoral letter of Aiuti were sent to the superiors of Mannanam and Aranattukara convents for the distribution to the clergy and the people.⁹³ Besides, Aiuti himself sent one copy of each with his covering letter to Mellano and Marcellino.⁹⁴

Aiuti wrote in his pastoral letter that the new arrangement of the Holy See was a temporal adjustment and there was no intention of continuing the rule by a vicar apostolic for a long period:

The Holy See will later examine if you by your obedience and virtues have given such proof as to persuade the Holy See that ecclesiastical government can be entrusted to a Bishop of your own nationality and rite. If you do this, the Holy See will not hesitate finally to grant your wish. ... Meanwhile wait with confidence for further orders from the Holy See, trusting that they too will be as favourable and useful to you as those already issued.⁹⁵

It was a great shock to the missionaries especially to Mellano and Marcellino to hear that Aiuti employed the assistance of Emmanuel Nidiry, the leader of the emancipation movement for the translation of the Pontifical Brief and his own pastoral letter. Moreover, the expression, which he used in the covering letter that the "translation was done by an intelligent person,"⁹⁶ created a kind of discontent in both Mellano and Marcellino, who formerly commented that "the knowledge of Nidiry in Latin is zero and he knows some words of Latin."⁹⁷ On 18 August 1887, criticizing Aiuti, Mellano wrote to the *Propaganda*:

I also believe the necessity of informing Your Eminence of what happened these days in this mission, and it has produced a very bad impression on

⁹² Aiuti was already asked by the Holy See to console the Suriani Catholics and to exhort them to wait obediently to the disposition of the Holy See. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1887, vol. 20, f. 119^v-200. Letter to Aiuti on 4 June 1887.

⁹³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1280. For the Malayalam translation of the Pastoral letter of Aiuti, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 794-798.

⁹⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1280.

⁹⁵ A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidiry A History of His Times*, 400-401.

⁹⁶ APF, *Scritture Riforme Indie Orientali* 32 B, ff. 760^v-761^r, "... di essersi servito di persona intelligente per farne la traduzione." Letter of Mellano to *Propaganda* on 18 August 1887.

⁹⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1251, "sa qualche parola latina, ma è quasi zero." Letter of Marcellino on 27 February 1887 to Agliardi.

this Christianity not to say a public scandal. The apostolic Delegate called Cattamar [Priest] Nidiry to Ootacamund where he remained several days with him, for this I was assured, that he employed him for the translation of the decree of division of Surianis of Malabar in two apostolic Vicariates, having done the translation got it printed there. The translation is very defective; he sent me a copy of it with a covering letter and also (a copy) to Msgr. Marcellino, describing that he employed the service of an intelligent person to do the translation, and he took such measures to obviate every inconvenience etc.⁹⁸

I. C. Chacko writes that the immediate reward to Emmanuel Nidiry for doing service to the highest ecclesiastical authorities was a punishment. Emmanuel Nidiry was relieved of his position as vicar of Alleppey parish by the authorities Verapoly⁹⁹

In spite of all this Aiuti and Nidiry continued their friendship and made much correspondence concerning the affairs of Malabar. On 21 May 1887, in a confidential letter to Nidiry, Aiuti repeated what he had told him orally about his candidacy as bishop:

In reply I must tell you the same that H. E. Msgr. Agliardi told you in his letter No. 25 written at Bangalore on 23 January of the present year. I can assure you once more, that the Holy See is thinking of you. Wait for sometime longer; and in the meantime be obedient and submissive.¹⁰⁰

7.2. Rome Prefers Jesuits instead of Carmelites

According to the decisions of the conference of the Cardinals on 20 December 1886,¹⁰¹ the Prefect of the Congregation requested the general of the Society of Jesus to take care of the Suriani Catholics of India.¹⁰² In a

⁹⁸ APF, *Scritture Riforme, Indie Orientali* 32 B, ff. 760^v-761^r, "Credo pure necessario di informare V. E. di quanto avvenne in questi giorni in questa missione, e che ha prodotto in tutta questa Cristianità una pessima impressione per non dire scandalo pubblico. Il Delegato apostolico aveva chiamato a se in Ootacamund il celebre Cattamar Nidiry Mani, con cui rimase vari giorni, per quanto venni assicurato, fece fare da lui la traduzione in Malabar del decreto di divisione di questi Soriani in due Vicariati apostolici, facendola pure stampare là, la traduzione per altro è molto difettosa, me ne mandò copia in una sua lettera, come pure a Msgr. Marcellino, diceva mi pure nella Sua lettera di essersi servito di persona intelligente per farne la traduzione, e di aver preso tale misura per ovviare ad ogni inconveniente etc." Letter of Mellano to Propaganda on 18 August 1887.

⁹⁹ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 457.

¹⁰⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...* (third part), 144-145, letter of Aiuti on 21 May 1887 to Nidiry.

¹⁰¹ In the conference, the Cardinals decided to entrust the Malabar mission to the Society of Jesus. Cf. ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, 530-530^v.

¹⁰² ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1887, vol. 20, f. 110^v, letter on 6 April 1887.

letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 4 May 1887 Anderledy, the vicar general expressed his good will and at the same time the impossibility to accept the task because of lack of personnel.¹⁰³ Barbier from Madure mission replied to the general concerning the request of the *Propaganda* that there were 349 untrained priests in Malabar, having contact with the Chaldean Patriarch, and so it was impossible to govern them. Besides, once again the Jesuits would be expelled from the Malabar as it happened in the 17th century.¹⁰⁴

Later Agliardi contacted the general of the Society of Jesus and discussed the issue of starting a college in Malabar.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the congregation again asked the general to provide them with at least two Jesuit '*terne*' for the two new apostolic vicariates in Malabar.¹⁰⁶

7.3. Leo Meurin: A Proposed Candidate for the Suriani Vicariate

Finally, the general of the Society of Jesus agreed to the request of the congregation¹⁰⁷ and in a letter to the prefect of the congregation Fr Anderledy suggested Msgr. Leo Meurin, the apostolic vicar of Bombay and former apostolic visitor of Malabar, as the apostolic vicar for one of the new vicariates and requested more time for formulating the '*terne*'.¹⁰⁸

The prefect of the congregation asked more information about Meurin through Persico.¹⁰⁹ Persico, who already judged Meurin negatively,¹¹⁰ did not change his opinion and presented the unsuitability of the proposed candidate.¹¹¹ Finally, he discouraged the appointment of Meurin as the apostolic vicar of the Suriani Catholics of Malabar.¹¹² On 15 July 1887, Anderledy submitted the two *terne* and suggested another name, Fr Charles Lavigne, as preferable to the other six nominees which he proposed.¹¹³ The general also expressed the need of sending the candidate to Syria to

¹⁰³ ACO, ACTA 1887, vol. 18, f. 265.

¹⁰⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 525.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 265^v-266.

¹⁰⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1887, vol. 20, f. 152, letter on 3 May 1887.

¹⁰⁷ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 496; ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 265^v.

¹⁰⁸ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, ff. 254^v; ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 496.

¹⁰⁹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1887, vol. 20, f. 192, confidential letter to Persico on 25 May 1887.

¹¹⁰ Cf. ACO, *Ponenze*, 1877, 595-637, report of Persico submitted to Rome on 29 April 1877.

¹¹¹ Cf. ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 266.

¹¹² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 521-523.

¹¹³ ACO, ACTA, 1887, vol. 18, f. 267^v.

learn Syriac language, before the consecration.¹¹⁴ At the same time Agliardi recommended Adolph Medlycott as the candidate for the new apostolic vicar for Malabar in case the Jesuits declined to submit the requested *terne*.¹¹⁵

8. The Meeting of *Propaganda* on 25 July 1887

The general meeting of the *Propaganda* on 25 July 1887, after discussing the appointment of the apostolic vicars for the vicariates for the Suriani Catholics of Malabar, concluded the conference with following decision:

To plead the Holy Father in favour of Marcellino Berardi for the vicariate of Trichur and in favour of Polycarp, ocd, for the vicariate of Kottayam: with Episcopal character and titular church.¹¹⁶

Already the conference of the *Propaganda* held on 20 December 1886, decided to entrust the vicariate to a religious congregation other than Carmelites.¹¹⁷ But the decision of the *Propaganda* taken on 25 July 1887 shows that there was a sudden change on the part of the congregation. Why did *Propaganda* again prefer Marcellino who already wrote to Rome:

... I do not desire anything other than that moment, when I will be free from the terrible and for me unbearable burden of governing this people. I am not born to govern, but to be governed. I believe permanently that I came to the missions by divine vocation. Therefore, I am ready for the state of simple missionaries, but not as a bishop, to do whatever will be commanded by the superiors. I see that my damnation is almost certain, therefore again, I beg to his eminence and through him to the Supreme Pontiff to free my poor soul from this life imprisonment.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 497; ACO, *ACTA*, 1887, vol. 18, f. 255.

¹¹⁵ ACO, *ACTA*, 1887, vol. 18, f. 262, letter of Agliardi on 14 January 1887.

¹¹⁶ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 503; ACO, *ACTA*, 1887, vol. 18, f. 258.

¹¹⁷ Cf. ACO, *ACTA*, 1886, vol. 17, f. 530^{8-v}.

¹¹⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1176⁸, "...non desidero che quel momento in cui mi vedrò libero dal terribile peso, e per me insopportabile, di governar questa gente. Non sono nato a governare, ma ad essere governato, e siccome venni alle missioni (come credo permanente) per divina vocazione, così sono pronto allo stato di missionari semplici, per fare quello che mi verrà comandato dai superiori, ma come Vescovo no, vedo la mia dannazione quasi certa, quindi di nuovo prego sua eminenza e per Suo mezzo il Sommo Pontificio, a liberare la mia povera anima da questo ergastolo."

Later it seems that Marcellino himself had changed his view and in a letter to Agliardi he expressed his desire to get appointed as the apostolic vicar of Trichur.¹¹⁹

8.1. Polycarp

Father Polycarp, who worked in the mission of Verapoly and Baghdad was another candidate proposed by the Cardinals in the meeting held on 25 July 1887. For the general of the Carmelite Congregation, Polycarp was not the suitable person to be appointed as the bishop. On 27 July 1893, the general of Carmelites sent a letter to the secretary of Zaleski in which he wrote that Polycarp had great desire to go to India, and that before Marcellino was appointed as the coadjutor bishop, his name was also proposed. Therefore, it was the mitre of Marcellino which attracted Polycarp to go to India. But according to him he had no sound qualities to be appointed as a bishop. Then he added, "he is more ardent and a reckless person. In one word a good soldier but a malicious leader."¹²⁰

Though the above mentioned letter was written after five years of the decision of the Cardinals, a question can be asked, why the Cardinals proposed such a person to a higher ecclesiastical post. For, they could not see any worthy candidates among the natives for Episcopal ordination.¹²¹

8.2. The Interference of Leo XIII in the Appointment

Though the Cardinals suggested Marcellino and Polycarp as the new apostolic vicars of Surianis, the following telegram of Aiuti became the stimulus force for the dramatic movement in the appointment of the apostolic vicars for the new vicariate of Malabar by the Pope Leo XIII:

For charity prevent His Holiness from appointing Marcellino and Polycarp as the vicars for Surianis; otherwise schism certain.¹²²

¹¹⁹ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 514, "E spogliato degli scrupoli onde era agitato lo scorso anno, mi ha manifestato il desiderio di esser lui nominato Vicario Apostolico di Trichoor nella parte settentrionale del Malabar." Agliardi to *Propaganda* on 25 January 1887.

¹²⁰ ACO, *Rubrica* 109, *Dele. Indi. Sori. Malabar*, 1889-1900, 1bis, fasc. 14, 160-161. "Il est trop ardent, trop téméraire, et pour dire tout en un mot c'est un bon soldat, ce sera un mauvais capitaine." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 24 July 1894, here he cited the letter of the Carmelite general addressed to secretary of Zaleski on 27 July 1893.

¹²¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1430^v-1431^r.

¹²² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 506, "Per carità impedisca presso Sua Santità esecuzione nominare Vicario per Soriani Marcellino, Polcarpo, altrimenti scisma certo. Risposta." Cf. also ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 316, letter of *Propaganda* to Aiuti on 27 August 1887, here also the text of the telegram was cited. The date of the telegram was not given.

On the basis of the telegram of Aiuti to Agliardi, the Holy Father was pleased to nominate Fr Carlo Lavigne and Fr Adolf Medlycot as the new apostolic vicars of Surianis:

In the absence of the undersigned, followed by the telegram of Auiti, the apostolic delegate of East Indies, to Agliardi, pro-secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the external affairs, the Holy Father, after receiving the report of the latter, took the decision to nominate Fr Charles Lavigne S J the vicar apostolic of Kottayam and to the Trichur vicariate Fr Adolf Medlycot the alumnus, as a results from the letter of Agliardi to the Prefect on 23 August 1887.¹²³

To avoid the schism the Holy Father asked Agliardi on 27 August to reply by telegram to Aiuti:

You are authorized to declare that the Holy Father has not nominated any Carmelite as apostolic vicar for the Suriani Catholics, letter follows.¹²⁴

Agliardi was asked to inform Aiuti about the election of the new apostolic vicars¹²⁵ and the secretary of the Pontifical Briefs was asked to prepare the Briefs regarding the appointment of new apostolic vicars in Malabar.¹²⁶

8.3. Nidiry: The Person behind the Telegram?

It is not an exaggeration to say that Emmanuel Nidiry was the prominent person behind the telegram of Aiuti to the Holy Father. There are two reasons which more or less confirm the above fact. Immediately after the establishment of the two vicariates for the Surianis Fr Sebastian Vaimatom, the secretary of Marcellino sent a telegram in the name of the Suriani priests and laity to the *Propaganda* requesting to entrust the new vicariate to the Carmelites and not to appoint the Jesuits. On hearing the same the people thought that the Carmelites would be appointed to the new vicariates. Out of anxiety the principal leaders wrote to Aiuti and informed the news which

¹²³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 503, "Nell' assenza del sottoscritto, in seguito di un telegramma di Msgr. Aiuti Delegato Apostolico nelle Indie Orientali a Msgr. Agliardi pro-segretario della S.C. degli affari esteri, il S. Padre presso relazione di quest'ultimo si degna nominare a vicario ap. Di Kottayam il P. Carlo Lavigne S. J. e di Trichoor l'alunno P. Adolf Medlycot, come risulta dalla lettera di Msgr. Agliardi all'Eminentissimo prefetto del 23 Agosto 1887 (firmato) S. Cretoni Segretario." Cf. also ACO, *ACTA*, 1887, vol. 18, f. 258.

¹²⁴ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 506, "Ella è autorizzato a dichiarare che il S. Padre non ha nominato nessun Carmelitano quale Vicario Apostolic pei Soriani: Segue lettere." Cf. also ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 316, letter of *Propaganda* to Aiuti on 27 August 1887.

¹²⁵ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 320^v.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, f. 326^v.

was spread. Aiuti replied "I can tell you that your information is wrong. The two new Vicars Apostolic are not from among the Carmelites. I bless you with all my heart."¹²⁷ After narrating the author who witnessed to the events added, "There is an incident regarding the selection of the Bishops which I am not willing to relate here."¹²⁸ What was the incident? It was the interference of Emmanuel Nidiry informing Aiuti the possibility of further schism in Malabar if the Carmelites were appointed to the new vicariates.

Secondly, the letter of Aiuti to the *Propaganda* in which he reported that after the proclamation of the new vicariates the Suriani Catholics wrote letters to Aiuti expressing their joy and gratitude to the Holy Father:

We are grateful to His Holiness the gracious sovereign Pontiff for the said decision by which we hope to get free from the present Carmelite government and to get a new one which will pave the way for completing our design at least in future.¹²⁹

Aiuti also reported that there were letters of disobedience to the orders of the Holy See, if the Carmelites were reappointed as the apostolic vicars.¹³⁰ Moreover, the letter of Marcellino to *Propaganda* dated 25 December 1887, confirms the above statement. He wrote:

Your Eminence can take it for certain that the so called alarming news reached Rome against the Carmelites were pure fiction of some 3rd order, Nidiry Mani and some ex-Tertiary's [TOCD], and this they did secretly. Malabar knew nothing of it, and it remained calm.¹³¹

Therefore, the conclusion is that the proper reaction of the people under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry, prompted Aiuti to send a telegram to Holy See and that changed the whole process of the appointment of the new apostolic vicars.

¹²⁷ Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 136; Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 408-409, letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry on 20 July 1887.

¹²⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 137.

¹²⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. Indiana Soriani Malabar 1890-1926*, vol. 6 bis, prot. No. 15076, letter by the clergy of South on 31 August and of the North on 15 September 1887; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 410, letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry on 25 September 1887.

¹³⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi*, 1878-1889, f. 1281.

¹³¹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi 1878-1889*, f. 1302^R-1303^V, "Vostra Eminenza tenga per certo, che le notizie così dette allarmanti giunte a Roma contro i Carmelitani furono pura finzione di alcuni 3ⁱ, Nidiry Mani ed alcuni ex-Terziani, e ciò lo fecero in segreto che il Malabar ne seppe nulla, e stava tranquillissimo." Letter of Marcellino to *Propaganda* on 25 December 1887.

8.4. The Response of the Carmelites to the New Appointments

For the Carmelites more important was the authority over the Surianis, although they were not ready to work for the development of the Suriani Church. On 19 August 1887, Aiuti wrote to the *Propaganda* about the response of the Carmelites on the establishment of two vicariates for the Suriani Catholics of Malabar:

The Carmelites alone have expressed their discontent to the dispositions of the Holy See out of their fear that the two Vicariates would be entrusted to another Order or religious Congregation.¹³²

Marcellino, who formerly wrote to Agliardi, the then delegate apostolic of India, regarding his desire to get appointed as the vicar apostolic of Trichur,¹³³ became distressed after the appointment of new apostolic vicars for the Suriani Catholics. Criticizing the apostolic delegate Aiuti, Marcellino added: "the new apostolic delegate does not know anything about Malabar."¹³⁴ Moreover, he wrote that he had seen the tears shed from the eyes of priests from north and south and of lay persons due to the loss of the services of Carmelites.¹³⁵ He concluded his letter: "I request Your Eminence to remember us, who are reduced to nothing."¹³⁶

9. A New Hope for the Surianis

The appointment of Charles Lavigne¹³⁷ and Adolf Medlycott¹³⁸ to the new apostolic vicariates of Malabar was an occasion of great joy for the

¹³² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1282^v-1283^r, "I Carmelitani soli si sono mostrati poco soddisfatti delle disposizioni della S. Sede per timore che essi hanno che i due Vicariati possono venire affidati ad un altro ordine o Congregazione religioso." Letter of Aiuti to *Propaganda* on 19 August 1887.

¹³³ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1887, 154, letter of Agliardi to *Propaganda* on 25 January 1887.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 1302^r-1303^v. "L'agire finora del nuovo Del. Apo. è che persona non conosce nulla del Malabar."

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 1032^v.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 1302^r-1303^v. "Prego poi Vostra Eminenza a ricordarsi di noi siamo ridotti a nulla."

¹³⁷ Msgr. Charles Lavigne (1840-1913) was born in Marvéjols (Lozère), France, on 6 January 1840. He was a diocesan priest before entering the Society of Jesus. For four years before his nomination, he had been private secretary to the Very Reverend Father P. Beckx, General of the Society of Jesus, who died on 4 March 1847. The new Jesuit general Father Anton Anderledy, yielding to the insistence of the *Propaganda* to propose a Jesuit for the Malabar bishopric, named him. On 13 November 1887, he received his Episcopal consecration at Marvéjols (Lozère), as Titular bishop of Milevis and Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam. Cf. C. E. O'NEILI, J. M. DOMÂNGUEZ, (eds) *Diccionario Histórico De La Compañía De Jesús: Biográfico-Temático*, Rome 2001, 2296.

¹³⁸ Adolph Medlycott was born on 15 January in Chittagong belonging to the apostolic vicariate of East Bengal, of European parents. He made his ecclesiastical studies in Rome and was ordained priest on 17 March 1861 in Rome. At the time of his nomination to the new vicariate he was working as military chaplain in Punjab in North India. Cf. C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India*, 115-116.

Suriani Catholics, and the happy news was conveyed to Emmanuel Nidiry by Aiuti.¹³⁹ Though their laments were not fully heard, they were happy to see the exclusion of the Carmelites. In the above letter of Aiuti, Emmanuel Nidiry was further informed that Msgr. Marcellino would inform the appointment of the new apostolic vicars through a pastoral letter.

From Rome Agliardi also wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry on 2 October 1887, informing him of the interest of the Holy Father in the unity and development of Suriani Catholics by appointing the new apostolic vicars. He hoped that the new apostolic vicars would do their best for the all-round development of Surianis.¹⁴⁰ On 19 November 1887 Aiuti wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry requesting him to make necessary arrangements for the new bishops.¹⁴¹ All these letters show that Emmanuel Nidiry was already accepted as a leader of the Suriani Catholics even by the higher ecclesiastical authorities.

9.1. Warm Reception to the New Apostolic Vicars under the Leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry

As requested by the apostolic delegate, to make necessary arrangements for the reception of Msgr. Medlycott¹⁴² Emmanuel Nidiry and Fr Alexander Kattakayam reached Shornoor. On the way they found time to exhort the parishioners of Vadakkanchery to reject the Mellusian schism and receive the new apostolic vicar. On 28 December 1887, Msgr. Medlycott made his official entry in Thrissur.¹⁴³ It was a happy news for the newly appointed bishop to hear about the conversion of the whole congregation without a single exception to abjure the schism and to submit to the new apostolic vicar.¹⁴⁴ At Trichur also Emmanuel Nidiry became the centre of attraction. He was the responsible person to translate the sermons and speeches of Medlycott.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 410-411, letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry on 13 October 1887.

¹⁴⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 411-412, letter of Agliardi to Emmanuel Nidiry.

¹⁴¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 412, letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry.

¹⁴² Medlycot received the Episcopal consecration from Aiuti on 18 December 1887. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, f. 20^v.

¹⁴³ "Domenica scorsa Msgr. A. Medlycott faceva la sua entrata in Trichur che fu un vero trionfo tanto fu solenne." Cf. ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1302^v, letter of Marcellino on 25 December 1887.

¹⁴⁴ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 195-196.

¹⁴⁵ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 418.

Msgr. Charles Lavigne received his Episcopal consecration on 13 November 1887 at Marvéjols, his native parish in France.¹⁴⁶ After the consecration he spent a few days in Rome and received the faculties which he requested, to celebrate Mass and hear confession.¹⁴⁷ Lavigne had no idea about the Kottayam vicariate but he had already heard about a zealous Malabar priest. Therefore, on 1 February 1888 he wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry:

Having heard of your zeal for the welfare of the Syrian nation and knowing nobody else in Malabar, I address myself to you. ... Different motives are obliging me to pass through Trichinapoly, especially the wish to study the going of College [to learn about the functioning of Trichinapoly College]. I hope to see you there. In order to find the affairs in a good way please keep the following information about the Apostolic Vicariate of Kottayam ready for me. 1. The roll [list] of the Syrian churches 2. The state of the churches and schools for the use of both Syrians and Latins 3. The indications of the pecuniary means the vicariate is disposing. These indications are quite indispensable in order to be able to decide some hanging questions with H. E. the Apostolic Delegate in Ootacamund.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Aiuti had made several correspondences with Emmanuel Nidiry,¹⁴⁹ and instructed him to reach Ootacamund as soon as he received the telegram of Aiuti regarding the arrival of Lavigne.¹⁵⁰ Receiving the telegram¹⁵¹ informing that Lavigne would arrive on 5 April 1888 at Trichinapoly, Emmanuel Nidiry proceeded to Trichinapoly accompanied by Fr Alexander and Fr Pazheparambil. They met the bishop and accompanied him all along his way to Ootacamund.

On 27 April Lavigne left Ootacamund and reached Elthuruth on 29 of the same month, at a Suriani Carmelite monastery belonging to the vicariate of Thrissur. On 30 he visited Msgr. Medlycott. On the way to Kottayam the parishioners of Ollur gave him a warm reception. On 1 May Lavigne entered Ernakulam, the northern part of his vicariate where

¹⁴⁶ P. JABRUN, *Un Episcopat aux Indes, Vie de Msgr. Charles Lavigne*, Toulouse 1919, 67.

¹⁴⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, vol. 21, f. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Taken from the personal diary of Emmanuel Nidiry. Cf. A. M. NIDIRY, *Father Nidiry A History of His Times*, 197-198.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 410-413, 420-422.

¹⁵⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 421, Letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry on 22 March 1888.

¹⁵¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 423.

he was given a grand reception and two petitions by the Syrians and Latins.¹⁵² Then, “the bishop in full pontificals with mitre and crosier accompanied by 300 priests, 40 Carmelite Fathers of the Third Order, and one hundred seminarists and surrounded by the different confraternities carrying the solid gold-crosses and 120 silver crosses”¹⁵³ proceeded to Kottayam via Mannanam. A grandiose welcome was given to Lavigne at Mannanam under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁵⁴ About 30,000 persons gathered to receive the new bishop¹⁵⁵ and thus Mannanam witnessed to another exciting event in the history of the Suriani Church. Lavigne himself was so happy about the reception that he wrote to Simeoni, the Prefect of the Oriental Congregation about the same.¹⁵⁶ Agliardi wrote “I felt much pleased seeing the grand reception that Lavigne has had from his flock.”¹⁵⁷

A memorandum drafted by Emmanuel Nidiry was presented to Lavigne by the clergy and laity at Mannanam, which explained the decline that happened to the ancient Suriani traditions and rites due to the absence of an indigenous bishop and the memo hoped the new bishop would do everything to restore their original glory by appointing a co-adjutor bishop from among the Surianis. It also stressed the need of starting educational institutions for uplifting the standard of the people, and explained the collaboration which was made with the Jacobite brothers in connection with educational institutions.¹⁵⁸

In his reply Lavigne said, “Your ancient rite will be restored to its former splendor.” Regarding the educational institutions he only reminded the decision of Pope to start a national college for the Surianis. Nothing was said about collaboration with the Jacobites.¹⁵⁹ On 10 May 1888, the feast

¹⁵² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 425.

¹⁵³ For the report of reception given to Lavigne, see A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of Important a Very Period ...*, 180-185.

¹⁵⁴ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 425.

¹⁵⁵ P. JABRUN, *Un Episcopat aux Indes, Vie de Msgr. Charles Lavigne*, 89-95.

¹⁵⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1312, Aiuti to Simeoni on 9 May 1888; *ibid.*, f. 1313, Lavigne to Cardinal Simeoni on 4 May 1888. “Je me borne pour aujourd’hui à dire à V. E. que ma prise de possession a eu lieu au milieu de l’enthousiasme général; les détails touchants et pittoresques seront, je pense, relatés par les journaux.”

¹⁵⁷ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 192, letter of Agliardi to Louis Pazheparambil on 23 June 1888.

¹⁵⁸ For the petition given to Lavigne, Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of Important Period ...*, 186-188.

¹⁵⁹ For the reply of Lavigne, see A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 189-191.

of the Ascension, Lavigne entered Kottayam at Edakkatt parish in solemn procession and took possession of his see.¹⁶⁰

The reply of Lavigne was not satisfactory to the leaders of the emancipation movement. In the letter of Meurin on 30 September 1888, he thanked Emmanuel Nidiry for having sent him a copy of the memo given to Lavigne and he congratulated Surianis for having obtained a new bishop. He also advised Nidiry to permit the bishop 'to restrain him when carried away by the national spirit.'¹⁶¹ On 2 October 1887, in reply to Emmanuel Nidiry, Agliardi, the former apostolic delegate wrote:

I am sure that by this time all your anxieties expressed in them are over, as you must have already received the good tidings of what the Holy See has been pleased to do on behalf of St Thomas' Christians in Malabar. I consider this the dawning of a new era for the Syrian Nation of India. ... As for yourself, I have no doubt you will stand by the side of your new Pastor, ... The confidence with which the new Delegate Apostolic has honored you, manifests your worth and the influence that you are able to exercise over your people for their spiritual improvement and welfare.¹⁶²

9.2. A New Dawn in Malabar

The appointment of new apostolic vicars did not satisfy the leaders of emancipation. In spite of the initial disappointment, Emmanuel Nidiry and other Suriani leaders determined to co-operate with the new bishop. After the official enthronement ceremonies at Edakkatt parish, the new bishop returned to Mannanam and continued to stay there.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, as instructed by the Pope in his bull,¹⁶⁴ Lavigne appointed four counsellors from the Suriani priests. Among the four counsellors,¹⁶⁵ three were Northists and the other represented the Southist minority.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 427.

¹⁶¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 428. Letter of Meurin to Emmanuel Nidiry on 30 September 1888.

¹⁶² Cf. A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 396.

¹⁶³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 427.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. ASS, vol. 19, 513-514.

¹⁶⁵ The three counsellors from Northist were Emmanuel Nidiry, Louis Pazheparambil and Alexander Kattakkayam. Joseph Tharayil represented the Southist community. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 429; ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, fasc. VI. 3. Letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Lavigne on 12 June 1888.

¹⁶⁶ They are believed to be the 72 families migrated to Malabar from Seleucia Ctesiphon under the leadership of Thomas Kinay about fourth century. For more details, see J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *The Babylon Origin of the Southists among the St Thomas Christians* (OCA) 241, Rome 1992.

The bishop and his councillors soon shifted to the new house. A bungalow opposite to Woodland Estate and belonging to one Mani Thomas was hired as the bishop's house. The new vicariate had to face many problems. Yet the bishop and his able advisers undertook the task with vigour and confidence. Emmanuel Nidiry remained to be the parish priest of Kuravilangad even after his appointment as the councillor to the bishop and continued his efforts for the unification of the Jacobite brethren.¹⁶⁷

10. The Beginning of Divergences

Though Lavigne was a gifted man, his approach to the problems of Malabar alienated him from his counsellors. He was utterly lacking the spirit of understanding and compromise, essential for success in solving complex issues. He did not learn the local language Malayalam and always relied on an interpreter, which is pointed out as the first of ten obstacles to evangelization in a document entitled "*De impedimentis Propaganda Fidei in Indiis orientalibus deque mediis ea superandi.*"¹⁶⁸ He did not learn Syriac either, the liturgical language of the Surianis and thus the isolation was complete from the faithful too.

10.1. Confusion at Kottayam

Soon after the evacuation from the Woodland Estate the bishop had bought a plot near Kottayam, called Paryankunnu, to build his permanent residence. Lavigne wanted the foundation stone of the new bishop's house to be laid by the apostolic delegate. The earth levelling work had been given to a Jacobite contractor by Emmanuel Nidiry. Unfortunately there arose dispute between the bishop and the contractor regarding the payment and he threatened not to permit the bishop to enter the compound. At last Emmanuel Nidiry had to sue against the contractor to get him evicted from the property. Moreover, Emmanuel Nidiry obtained police protection during the blessing of the corner stone by the apostolic delegate. The bishop out of fear asked Louis Pazheparambil to take the stone from the compound and keep it under safe custody. This unhappy and humiliating incident

¹⁶⁷ We have many letters of Emmanuel Nidiry to bishop Lavigne informing him about the progress of the his mission among the Jacobites. Cf. ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006 (1888-1897) fasc. VI. 7-12.

¹⁶⁸ "Inadequate knowledge of the vernacular language is obviously a great disadvantage for the missionary. ... It seems advisable ... to enjoin strictly on the prelates not to give any charge to a missionary who has not passed a strict examination in the vernacular language." Cf. APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 2 Semestre 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 949. For the whole document, cf. *Ibid.*, ff. 940-952.

prompted the bishop to search another property for the residence.¹⁶⁹ Lavigne told Nidiry “What I shall I do. Let me go out of this town and get a compound elsewhere for my purpose.”¹⁷⁰

10.2. The Diocesan Synod at Changanacherry

Lavigne summoned a diocesan synod on 17-21 December 1888. On the second day of the synod the bishop, in his speech, made a fierce attack on the Syrian National Association or *Jātyaika Sangham* founded by Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁷¹ It was a heavy blow to Emmanuel Nidiry, who had made all his efforts with the permission and blessings of his then ecclesiastical superiors. On 15 July 1889 he wrote to Aiuti:

Your Excellency might remember well that fact of any having complained of the act of Msgr. Lavigne (sic) which publicly condemned and censured in the synod of Changanacherry my labour in making the Syrian association and buying property for the same. These acts having been done with the permission of the then Bishop, the only authority whom I should have consulted, they were and still are well justified before the public ... The last Friday I saw in the Mannanam convent press, not as yet printed the translation of a letter of your Excellency styling the said labour to mock the Syrian Union association as fruits of inconsistency or weakness in the faith, with a circular of Msgr. Lavigne prohibiting even some civil or social communications (just like those which are well allowed to have with Protestants) to have with Jacobites. ... Yes, my Lord, I think that this is the greatest dishonour I can expect at present ...¹⁷²

G. Nedungatt comments that by forbidding Catholics to associate with the Jacobites, like attending their schools, Lavigne preferred another alternative of attending Hindu or state schools, or no education at all.¹⁷³ An unworkable proposal, since Catholic schools were then rare and far between: there were only five secondary schools for the 110,000 strong Catholic population of the vicariate. There was no institution of higher education, like college.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of Important Period ...*, 144-146. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 452.

¹⁷⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 146.

¹⁷¹ A. THAZHATH, *The Juridical Source of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam 1987, 245-246.

¹⁷² ARSI, *Miss. Cottayam (Franciae)* 1003, (1888-1896), fasc. 3, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Aiuti on 15 July 1889.

¹⁷³ Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, “Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect”, *OCP* 70 (2004) 331.

10.3. An Unpleasant Incident at Mannanam

In decision making, Lavigne used his supreme power; no consultation was made even with his councillors and that led to another humiliating incident for him. He ordered to increase the monthly fee payable by the seminarians of Mannanam. As soon as they received the new order of bishop Lavigne, 58 seminarians rushed to Kottayam, where they asked for an audience with the bishop. He refused to receive them and entrusted two of his councillors, Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pazheparambil, to persuade them to return to the seminary and to ask pardon of the rector for their insubordination. Emmanuel Nidiry effectively led them back and they were readmitted in the seminary. Later, when Lavigne visited the seminary he made an enquiry and expelled eight principal leaders of the revolt.¹⁷⁴ It was a shocking and impetuous action and created bad impression of Lavigne among the clergy and faithful. The matter was referred to Aiuti, the apostolic delegate and he found a way to save the face of Lavigne and to have the seminarians readmitted.¹⁷⁵ Though Aiuti could save the face of Lavigne, the drama of the strong intervention of apostolic delegate in the readmission of the seminarians was known to the public and it turned out to be a matter of shame to Lavigne.¹⁷⁶

10.4. Emmanuel Nidiry Turns to the Apostolic Delegate

Emmanuel Nidiry was not happy with the various humiliating actions of Lavigne, some of which were not even conducive to the interest of the Suriani Church of Malabar. He decided to bring these matters to the attention of the apostolic delegate and on 15 July 1889 he wrote to Aiuti:

Your Exc. might remember well the fact of my having complained of the act of Msgr. Lavigne which publicly condemned and censured in the Synod of Changanacherry my labours in making the Syrian Association and buying property for the same. These acts having been done with the permission of the then bishop the only authority whom I should have consulted, they were and still are well justified before the public, ... I saw the translation of

¹⁷⁴ Among the expelled eight seminarians, Abraham Nidiry was the youngest brother of Emmanuel Nidiry. Cf. P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 293.

¹⁷⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1432-1433, a detailed report on the incident by Aiuti to Simeoni on 13 April 1889. See also, V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 456-459.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. ACO, *rubri. 109, Deleg. India, Soriani Malabar* 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 3, 8, letter of Malabar priests and lay representatives from Kottayam to Zaleski on 4 May 1892.

a letter of Your Exc. styling the said labours to make the Syrian Union Association as fruits of inconsistency or weakness in the faith, with a circular of Msgr. Lavingue prohibiting even some civil or social communications (just like those which are well allowed to have with Protestants) to have with Jacobites. When I read the translation of Your Exc.'s letter a priest remarked that "this is a repetition of the insult given to you in the Synod, with the only difference of the present being more public and proceeding from a higher dignity of the Church. ... I accept this dishonour as a great reward from Heaven, from the merciful hands of our Lord sent through the right channel of his representative in the world and I offer them to him for the expiation of my manifold sins. But my duty as a Counsellor of the Vicar Apostolic compels me to inform Your Exc. that the said publication prepared without consulting the majority of the counsellors will have a quite contrary effect. ... these are my humble opinions, which I frankly submit to the kind consideration of Your Excellency that I may not be blamed in future and to discharge a duty of my conscience."¹⁷⁷

Moreover, there was a change in the relation between Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pazheparambil, the two great leaders of emancipation. They stood together in the emancipation movement ever since the anonymous petitions of 1875 with a common goal. But now there was a difference in their outlooks. I. C. Chacko writes, "ever since the coming of bishop Lavigne, our hero is no longer an agitator. He tried to win over the goodwill of the new bishop and through his goodwill to win the rest of the demand, a native coadjutor bishop."¹⁷⁸ Soon after taking charge of his vicariate, Lavigne appointed Louis Pazheparambil as his secretary.

On the contrary, Nidiry had no change. Autonomy of the Suriani Church was the final goal for him and he was not ready to compromise with his target. Therefore, Lavigne began to view Emmanuel Nidiry with suspicion and hostility.

10.5. The Desire of Emmanuel Nidiry to Join the Jesuit Order

Soon after the arrival at Kottayam, Lavigne tried to collect information on Emmanuel Nidiry, from diverse sources. In a letter to apostolic delegate on 21 June 1889 Lavigne wrote that Emmanuel Nidiry approached him

¹⁷⁷ ACO, *Fascicolo* Prot. No. 990/31, 1-2, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Aiuti on 15 July 1889. The letter of Nidiry is given as appendix I.

¹⁷⁸ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 489.

with the desire of joining the Jesuit Order. In a ridiculing manner Lavigne added in the letter that Emmanuel Nidiry expressed his above mentioned aspiration while he was praising him with good words:

From the very first days of my administration, Fr Nidiry showered praises on me, he asked me to practise the most perfect obedience of the religious under my orders, he even asked to be admitted in our Society. When he saw that his excessive compliments did not produce any effect on my mind, he stopped completely, and now it is the opposite that is seen. He had played the same game with Msgr. Meurin to whom he asked to be admitted as a novice in our Order.¹⁷⁹

But we have a clear document on the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry to join the Jesuit Order as to escape from the jurisdiction of Carmelites. However, in order to avoid the clash between the two religious orders the general of the Jesuit Order denied admission to Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁸⁰

On 29 May 1889, Emmanuel Nidiry wrote a letter to Bartholomew, a priest of Franciscan Order asking him the conditions to start Franciscan Third Order in Malabar. He also informed that there were six priests and some lay people from the vicariate of Trichur who already agreed to cooperate with him for the initiation of Franciscan Third Order, in order to work for the conversion of Hindus and Jacobites and to serve among the Catholics.¹⁸¹ All these can be interpreted in the light of Emmanuel Nidiry's great desire to work for the conversion of the Jacobites, since he felt the difficulty of action within the present conditions of the life.¹⁸²

Though Rome had given separate apostolic vicars to Suriani Church, the emancipation leaders were dissatisfied. Without studying the tradition

¹⁷⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1484^v. "Dès les premiers jours de mon administration le P. Nidiry m'accablait d'éloges, me demandait à pratiquer sous mes ordres l'obéissance la plus parfaite du religieux, il demandait même à être admis dans notre Société. Quand il vit que ses compliments outrés ne produisaient aucun effet sur mon esprit, il cessa tout à fait, et maintenant c'est le contraire qui perce. Il avait joué le même jeu avec Msgr Meurin à qui il demanda d'être admis comme novice dans notre Compagnie." Letter of Lavigne to Aiuti on 21 June 1889.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. APF, *Scri. Orie. Cong. Generale*, vol. 1017, f. 369^R. s. d. "Questo sacerdote [Nidiry] mi assicuro che il modo con cui i Siriani specialmente i sacerdoti sono trattati da Carmelitani è intollerabile. Egli per sottrarsi alla giurisdizione carmelitana domandò di esser ricevuto nella Compagnia di Gesù, ma fu rifiutato dal P. Generale dei Gesuiti per non eccitare discordie tra i due ordini religiosi." The author of the letter is unknown. Since it is attached to the letter of Persico and from the very hand writing it seems to be the letter of Persico. The archivist added the year on the document as 1881.

¹⁸¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 459-460. Nidiry received a positive reply, see *Ibid.*, 462-463.

¹⁸² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 460-466, Nidiry to Aiuti on 2 July 1889.

and culture of the Malabar Church the foreign prelates continued to impose their Latinization policy on the faithful and the unity of the Church was least concern for them. The labours of Emmanuel Nidiry for the unification of the separated brethren were viewed suspiciously by the new prelates. Still with hope Emmanuel Nidiry continued his works for the unification of the Church. In the next chapter we shall see the great efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for the unity of the Suriani Christians of Malabar.

A GREAT PROPHET OF ECUMENISM

Though *Propaganda Fide* appointed two vicars apostolic for the Suriani Christians, they were not satisfied with the foreign prelates. At the same time Emmanuel Nidiry continued his hard work for the unity of the Suriani Christians. Gradually he became an acknowledged leader of Surianis, also of the separated brethren. His friendship with the Jacobite leaders, especially with Mar Dionysius V facilitated him to speed up the ecumenical movements. In this chapter, we are trying to unveil the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for the unification of the separated brethren and the foundation of the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar or *Nazrani Jāthyakya Samgham* by Emmanuel Nidiry and Mar Dionysius V with an aim of greater union of all Suriani Christians. He dreamed of a unity and catholicity which recognize the equality of the various Apostolic Churches.

1. The Birth of a Leader

The failure of the schism in Malabar and the departure of bishop Mellus to Babylon helped Emmanuel Nidiry to prove his ability and his commitment for the unity of all the Suriani Christians, as existed before the *Coonan* Cross Oath of 1653. Realizing the greatness of Emmanuel, the whole community of the Surianis recognized him as the leader of the emancipation movement in Malabar. He was deeply convinced of the idea of Syrian unity and autonomy for the preservation of the Apostolic and Syriac character of the Suriani Church and for the restoration of its ancient glory. Seeing that schism in Malabar was partially under control, Emmanuel Nidiry began his efforts for the unity of the Suriani Christians. He had the support of several Suriani priests and laymen. A strong supporter among the priests was Louis Pazheparambil. They both stood together in their efforts for liberation and unity of the Surianis.

2. The Ecumenical Efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry

Before the *Coonan* Cross Oath and the division of 1653, the Surianis were greatly united, with common traditions and beliefs. Though the *Puthankoottukar* (new party) separated themselves under the leadership of Mar Thomas, their religious practices and rituals were those of Suriani Catholics.¹ Instead of uniting all to one flock under one shepherd the missionaries considered them as schismatics and kept them at a distance. The Carmelite apostolic vicars of Verapoly even prohibited the Suriani Catholics from contacting the separated groups.²

Ever since the split of 1653, there was a strong desire between the two sections of Surianis to put an end to the division, for which many efforts were made. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the aspiration for union became more and more relevant due to the political, educational and social situations of the country. If united, the Suriani Christians could have played a better role in the political, educational, cultural and economic activities of the country.

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Nidiry had started to launch out his scheme to liberate the Suriani Catholics from the yoke of the Europeans, to bring back all the Suriani Christians to the bosom of the Catholic Church and to utilize their entire resources for the development of the Suriani community. His family background also helped him in this task: his step mother was a Jacobite convert. He had several influential Jacobite relatives and friends. He was friendly with the Jacobite bishop Mar Doinysius Pulikkott and the lay leader Varghese Mappila Kandathil. Moreover, his high educational qualifications and his extraordinary qualities opened diverse avenues and offered opportunities to contact the other Christians separated brethren and their leaders and vice versa.

2.1. The *Puthen*koottukar after the Grave Tragedy

Unfortunately, after the *Coonan* Cross Oath,³ the Suriani Christians of Malabar, who remained as a united community up to the fifteenth century

¹ APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali Cina* 1769-1771, vol. 32, f. 400^B, the annual report of Florence, the vicar apostolic of Verapoly on 31 December 1770.

² APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali Cina*, vol. 34, f. 76^B, the pastoral letter of Florence of Jesu, apostolic vicar of Verapoly on 4 July 1874. Original in Malayalam.

³ For the details and the after effect of *Coonan* Cross oath and the Apostolic mission of Joseph of St Mary Sebastiani, the Apostolic Commissary appointed by the Roman Pontiff, see P. PALLATH, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, Changanassery 2006.

had undergone many changes and gave birth to different religious communities.⁴ Few months after the split on Pentecost Sunday on 22 May 1653, twelve priests imposed hands on the Archdeacon calling him archbishop Mar Thomas I.⁵ Later Mar Thomas invited Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem, a Jacobite bishop who propagated Jacobitism among his followers,⁶ but he did not consecrate Mar Thomas I bishop, because his intention was to bring the separated Suriani Christians to Antiochean tradition. "From 1665 to 1751 five bishops in succession, all bearing the name Mar Thoma, and belonging to the Pakalomattam family, sat at the head of the Church."⁷ From the very early centuries, the important office of the archdeacon was exclusively reserved to the Pakalomattam family.⁸

In 1751, due to the continuous request of the Mar Thomas V, the Antiochean Patriarch sent two bishops, Mar Basilios and Mar Gregorios together with Ramban John and two other clerics to Malabar.⁹ Though with great hope Mar Thomas approached the Jacobite prelates in order to be consecrated bishop by them, they purposefully delayed the consecration. Later, in 1752 they consecrated Ramban John as bishop Ivanios. In 1772 Mar Gregorios consecrated Kattumangattu Gevarghese as Kurillos and appointed him the metropolitan of the Malankara Church.¹⁰ Due to the lack of support of the community and because of the interference of the Travancore and Cochin kingdoms Mar Kurillos was forced to go to British Malabar and at Thozhiyoor he established the 'independent Syrian Church of Malabar'.¹¹

⁴ APF, *Cong. Particolari* 1750, f. 114^B, letter of Mar Thoma to the Pope in 1748. Original in Syriac.

⁵ P. J. PODIPARA, *The Syrian Church of Malabar*, Changanacherry 1938, 46; J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, 142-148.

⁶ C. MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro Malankara Church*, Alwaye 1973, 22-24.

⁷ W. LOGAN, *Manual of the Malabar District*, vol. 1, Madras 1887, 206.

⁸ It was believed from the ancient times that the Pakalomattam family was converted by St Thomas himself and they are credited for having provided bishops till 1815. Cf. ANANTHAKRISHNA AYYAR, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, 38.

⁹ PAULINO A S. BARHTHOLOMAE, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Romae 1794, 111-112.

¹⁰ The word 'Malankara' literally means the land or country of mountains. In 1653 by the Coonan cross oath against the Padroado Jesuits, a section of the Surianis left the Catholic Church and made allegiance with the Jacobite Syrian Patriarch of the Antioch, and accepted Antiochean rite. Later in 1930, a group from that community entered in to the communion with the Catholic Church. At present in ecclesiastical sense, Syro-Malankara refers to these St Thomas Christians who came into full communion with Rome. In this work, 'Malankara' refers to the *Puthenکوottukar* or new group after the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653.

¹¹ X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 160; E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 144.

After the death of Mar Basilios in 1764, under the pressure of the King of Travancore in 1772, Jacobite bishop Mar Gregorios consecrated Mar Thomas VI at the church of Niranam and the first consecrated bishop of the Malankara Church took the name Dionysius I.¹² His attempts for reunion with the help of Mar Cariattil were not successful due to the sudden death of the latter.¹³ Later, Mar Dionysius abandoned his reunion efforts due to the uncertainty of his position in the Catholic Church and he gradually entered into relationship with Anglican missionaries.¹⁴

2.2. The Anglicanization of the Malankara Church

Since 1816, the Malankara Church was being gradually influenced by the Anglican Church thanks by the activities of the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society. Attracted by the activities of the missionaries, Mar Dionysius III (1817-1825), in a synod held at Mavelikkara in 1818 took the decision to promote relationship with the Anglican Church.¹⁵ By the continued work of the Anglican missionaries, many from Malankara became Anglicans.¹⁶ Later on, knowing the danger of losing their ecclesial heritage and patrimony, Mar Dionysius IV convened a synod at Mavelikara in 1836 to put an end to the relationship with the Anglicans and officially accepted the canonical discipline and liturgy of the Antiochian Church.¹⁷ The properties owned in common by both were divided.¹⁸

The decision of the Mavelikara synod was not acceptable for a minor group of the Malankara Christians. Under the leadership of Abraham *Malpan* Palakunnathu from Maramon, they continued the process of Anglicanization.¹⁹ Abraham *Malpan* started to correct the Syrian liturgy reforming it along the line of protestant teachings. However, he

¹² BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 625-626; E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India ...*, 145; G. T. MACKENZIE, "History of Christianity in India" in *Travancore State Manual* vol. 2, 208-209.

¹³ Cf. F. THONIPPARA, *St Thomas Christians of India: A period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, Bangalore 1999, 142-167; X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 162-163.

¹⁴ Cf. PLACID OF ST JOSEPH, TOCD, "The Efforts for Reunion in Malankara, South India", in *Unitas*, 5 (1953) 89-92.

¹⁵ X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 138-139.

¹⁶ At present those who became Anglicans are members of the Church of South India (CSI). Cf. P. J. PODIPARA, *St Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, 125-126.

¹⁷ C. MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 91.

¹⁸ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India ...*, 147.

¹⁹ Cf. X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 139.

managed to keep the essentials of the Syrian Mass and of the other liturgical services.

In order to prevent the further flow of the faithful to the new movement Mar Dionysius IV excommunicated Abraham *Malpan* and his followers in 1837.²⁰ But with a view to safeguarding his position, Abraham *Malpan* sent one of his nephews, Mathew, to the Jacobite Patriarch, Ignatios Mar Elias II in 1841 with the request to consecrate him a bishop. After having acquired theological training, he received various orders, and was consecrated Metropolitan of Malankara on 2 February 1842; he took the name Mathew Mar Athanasius.²¹ The new bishop returned to Malabar in 1843. The King of Travancore acknowledged Mar Athanasius as the religious leader of the Jacobites. The situation in Malankara became complex due to the presence of two metropolitans who claimed jurisdiction over the community. Because of the report from Malankara, in 1846 the Patriarch sent Mar Kurillos (1846-1866) to Malankara to study the situation and to bring about reconciliation.

The Malankara Church witnessed some dramatic movements. Mar Dionysius IV resigned and handed over the hierarchical leadership to Mar Kurillos, who declared himself the metropolitan of the Malankara Church. Due to the jurisdictional conflicts of the two metropolitans, the intervention of the civil court became indispensable. The Travancore Royal Court verdict of 1852 was in favour of the Mar Athanasius and the court declared him as the metropolitan of the Malankara Church.²²

In 1866 the Antiochean Patriarch ordained *Malpan* Joseph Pulikkottil as Mar Dionysius V to succeed Mar Kurillos, who had remained in Malankara without having proper jurisdiction. Meanwhile in 1868, Mar Mathew Athanasius, the official metropolitan of the Malankara Church, recognized by the Royal Court, consecrated one of his cousins Thomas as his successor with the help of Thozhiyoor bishop. He took the name Thomas Mar Athanasius. On the continuous request of Dionysius V, the Patriarch decided to visit Malabar. Before starting to Malankara in 1874,

²⁰ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 148.

²¹ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 148. The Patriarch, Ignatius Mar Elias, consecrated him in good faith, because they neither revealed the situation in Malankara nor their intention of Protestant reformation to the Patriarch.

²² X. KODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 139.

the Patriarch went to London and secured the support of the British officials. In 1875, the Patriarch reached Malankara. With the support of the Travancore government and that of the British officials, in 1876, the Patriarch convoked a synod of the Malankara Church at Mulanthuruthy.²³ In this synod, the Malankara Church was completely brought under the supremacy of the Antiochean Patriarch.²⁴ The Patriarch excommunicated Mathew Mar Athanasius and his group from the Malankara Church and appointed Mar Dionysius as the metropolitan of the Malankara Jacobite Church.

On 12 July 1889, the Travancore Royal Court of Final Appeal pronounced its historic judgement in the litigation over the temporal properties of the Malankara Church, between Mar Dionysius V (appointed by the patriarch) and Thomas Mar Athanasius. The judgement was in favour of Mar Dionysius V, and the pro-Anglican group was finally defeated.²⁵ The reformers still with hope under the leadership of Thomas Mar Athanasius formed an independent church known as the 'Reformed Party' and later they adopted the name 'The Mar Thoma Syrian Church.'²⁶

The synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876, secured the position of the Antiochean Patriarch and he became the head of the Malankara Church with the full power over spiritual and temporal matters of the Church.²⁷ He created seven dioceses and consecrated six more bishops to govern them.²⁸ Even after the division of the diocese and the appointment of the new bishops, Mar Dionysius V (1866-1909), the then metropolitan, continued to be the local head of the whole Malankara Jacobite Church, as *primus inter pares*.

2.3. The Efforts of Mar Dionysius V (1866-1909) for Re-union

Parallel to Emmanuel Nidiry, Mar Dionysius V was the leader of the Jacobites, the separated group. He was troubled by the internal conflict in

²³ X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 140.

²⁴ FONTI, II-VIII, 69; C. MALANCHARUVIL, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 58-63.

²⁵ FONTI, II-IX, 30-34. For the judgements of the Royal Court, see A. P. URUMPACKAL, *The Juridical Statutes of the Catholics of the Malabar*, Rome 1977, 58-59.

²⁶ For details, see X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 156-159.

²⁷ FONTI, II-IX, 29-30.

²⁸ FONTI, II-VIII, 64-65.

the Church. At the same time, he wanted to keep up the old Suriani traditions. Therefore, he was searching for a permanent solution. The common interest brought the two leaders closer and closer. Moreover, Mar Dionysius's special regard for Emmanuel Nidiry was very personal; he was one of the numerous patients of Emmanuel Nidiry.²⁹ Understanding the important role of the Suriani community in the social set up of the country, with much expectation both leaders planned together various novel projects for re-union. The genuine efforts of Mar Dionysius V for the reunion are very clear from the letter of the Carmelite missionary Leopold dated 8 March 1874 to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*:

The subjections of the Latins and Suriani Catholics to a common superior (head) is a great obstacle for the return of the heretical Nestorians in the bosom of the Church. ... Among the four Nestorian bishops, Mar Dionysius is the most gentle. ... On last February, he has visited me secretly with a Suriani priest, a friend of ours and informed clearly his desire to reunite with the Catholic Church along with clergy and his 53,000 faithful. At last, he requested me to accompany him to visit the vicar apostolic. Late in the night, I took him to the vicar apostolic. They discussed the above mentioned matters. If such a unity is made possible, without much delay the union of Jacobites and Nestorians will take place. Both groups openly hate their own bishops and show their readiness for being under a superior exclusively for the Suriani Catholics.³⁰

2.4. The Resistance from the Part of the Missionaries

However, the *Puthenkoottukar* were divided into different sections, and their leaders, from the beginning of the division, continued their efforts for

²⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 400. Emmanuel Nidiry's reputation as a physician was well known to all.

³⁰ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 248^{R-V}, "I eretici Nestoriani a rientrare nel grembo delle chiese facendo sia un grande ostacolo il doversi a assoggettare ad un superiore comune ai Latini ed ai Soriani. ... Il vescovo Nestoriano di nome Mar Dionysius l'unico fra i quattro vescovi eretici Nestoriani che sia d'irrepreensibile condotto. ... Nel febbraio di spirato, si porta segretamente con un nostro sacerdote cattolico siriano suo accompagnatore presso di me sperandomi chiaramente il desiderio suo e del suo clero e popolo che conta circa di 53,000 (cinquantatremila) amici, di sottomettersi interamente alla S. Chiesa Cattolica, e infine mi pregò di accompagnarlo presso il Vic. ap. che desidera incontrare. Io lo accompagnai alla residenza del nostro Vic. ap. già a notte avanzata aveva si trattarono unanimemente le cose di cui sopra. Io credo dal tutto insieme poter aspirare che se tal Dionisio alquanto facilitato essa avverrebbe immediatamente e sarebbe senza serena dubbio seguita dall'unione del resto di Nestoriani e Giacobiti. Che protestano pubblicamente i loro vescovi e si mostrano apertamente disposti a sottomettersi ad un Vic. ap. che forse superiore esclusivo dei Soriani cattolici." Letter of Leopold to *Propaganda Fide* on 8 March 1874.

reunion with the Catholic Church.³¹ Among the reunion leaders of eighteenth century, the most important figure was Mar Dionysius I (1772-1808). Nevertheless, the missionaries looked at their re-union efforts with suspicion because they feared that they would lose their hold in Malabar, if Rome were to admit and appoint him as a bishop of the Thomas Christians.³² In the pastoral letter of Florence of Jesus dated 4 July 1874, the vicar apostolic of Verapoly, published a list of prohibitions for the Suriani Catholics in connection with their relation with the separated brethren.³³

The same negative approach of missionaries continued even in the nineteenth century. The reunion attempt of Mar Dionysius V with the help of Emmanuel Nidiry was detested by Bishop Marcellino, who wrote in favour of reunion. He recalled that the Suriani Catholics and Jacobites belonged to one and the same Christian community and formed one family and some of the Suriani Catholics had relations with the Jacobites.³⁴ But he later changed his views and criticized their reunion efforts.

In a deriding manner, he wrote to Rome that for the Malabar community, the Chaldean prelates were the absolute solution for all their sickness.³⁵ Regarding the rule of Mar Parambil Chandy, the first indigenous bishop of the Suriani Catholics, he accused that it was during his time that the Jacobites became well rooted in Malabar.³⁶ Seeing negatively the reunion efforts at the end of the report, he remarked, "therefore it is easier for the Catholics with their proper bishops to be united to the Jacobites than the Jacobites becoming Catholics."³⁷

³¹ X. KOODAPUZHA, *Christianity in India*, 161-164; P. PALLATH, *The Catholic Church in India*, 144-150.

³² J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar for the One True Fold", *OCP* 30 (1964) 148-192.

³³ APF, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. India-Cina*, 34, f. 76^R.

³⁴ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1175^R, "Questi giacobiti erano una sola Cristianità con i nostri e famiglie se né convertono sempre Sono moltissimi i Cattolici uniti con giacobiti." Report of Marcellino on Suriani Christians, to the *Propaganda Fide* in January 1883.

³⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1176^{Rv}, "Pure mi pare che la S. Congregazione debba esigere da me qualche parola circa il Vescovo Caldeo, o Malabaresse che si voglia, che quattro capricciosi, nelle loro lettere a Roma, mettono sempre innanzi come il farmaco a tutti i mali." Report of Marcellino on Suriani Christians, to the *Propaganda Fide* in January 1883.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 1177^v, "... così da scismatici divennero per generale conseguenza eretici, e così si confermarono nell'eresia nel tempo che il loro proprio vescovo li governava. Questi son fatti storici certissimi che nessuno può negare."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 1177^R, "Dico per tanto, che è più facile che i nostri cattolici col vescovo proprio si uniscano ai Giacobiti, che i Giacobiti farsi Cattolici."

We have another important letter of Aiuti, the apostolic delegate of India explaining the negative attitude of the missionaries regarding the reunion efforts through the new association:

Another point which seems to me of great attention should be given is the following. In the past times the apostolic vicars did not allow the Suriani Catholics to have any religious communication with the heretical Jacobites, out of fear that in case of a schism they would unite with the Jacobites, in that case their downfall would have been almost irreparable. For this reason, in spite of the various schisms no Catholic church [Catholic parish] ever passed to the heresy and those who passed to the schism, returned to the bosom of Our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, shortly after. As Your Eminence knows since sometimes the Satan has aroused a certain movement of mutual liking between the Surianis and the Jacobites to which it has given the name of national spirit, making them to believe that a great nation could be formed if they unite together in the field of education and in other similar matters and Mar Dionysius, who pretends since more than 20 years that he could convert together with a great part of his people, through his words and deeds tries all means to form this fraternity. The Holy See has already prohibited the union of the Catholics with the Jacobites in matters regarding education and for this reason there is no more danger. Mar Dionysius and other fanatics who stand for this union are dissatisfied of it. But they cannot do anything.³⁸

3. The Birth of Syrian National Union Association of Malabar (*Nazrani Jâthiaikia Samgham*)

In spite of the resistance from the missionaries Emmanuel Nidiry, ever proud of Suriani traditions, continued his efforts to bring together the two

³⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1431^r, "Un altro punto al quale mi sembra si dovrebbe fare attenzione grande sarebbe il seguente. Nei tempi passati i vicari apostolici dei soriani procurarono sempre che i cattolici di rito soriano non avessero alcuna comunicazione religiosa cogli eretici Giacobiti e ciò per timore che in caso di qualche scisma non si unissero coi Giacobiti, nel qual caso sarebbe stato quasi irreparabile la loro rovina. E per questo nei vari scismi che vi furono nessuna chiesa cattolica passò mai all'eresia e quelle che passarono allo scisma ritornarono poco dopo al grembo della santa nostra madre la chiesa cattolica. Ha da qualche tempo in qua il demonio, come l'eminenza vostra sa, ha suscitato tra i soriani e i Giacobiti, un certo movimento di vicendevole simpatia a cui ha fatto dare il nome di spirito nazionale, facendo loro credere che potrebbero formare una grande nazione se si unissero insieme nell'insegnamento ed in altre cose simili e Mar Dionisio che da oltre 20 anni sta fingendo di volersi convertire insieme ad una grande parte dei suoi, colla voce e coll'opera tenta ogni via per fomentare siffatta fratellanza. La s. sede ha già proibito l'unione dei cattolici coi Giacobiti in ciò che riguarda l'insegnamento, e per questa parte non vi è più pericolo. M. Dionisio ed altri fanatici per quell'unione, ne sono scontentissime, ma non possono far nulla." Letter of Aiuti to the *Propaganda Fide* on 13 April 1889.

groups more closely. Understanding that the reunion at the Church-level could not be effected soon, Emmanuel Nidiry put forward a new project of working together in social and educational fields and an action plan for a united association was developed by Emmanuel Nidiry in collaboration with Mar Dionysius under the name *Jāthyakya Samgham*.³⁹ The unity of the Suriani Church was a great dream of Emmanuel Nidiry and in Syrian national association of Malabar he anticipated the future unity of the separated brethren.

3.1. The Nature of the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar

The association was named as *Nazrani Jāthyakya Samgham*,⁴⁰ or the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar.⁴¹ When the governor of Madras visited Cochin in 1882, he gave his blessings to the organization.⁴² Its main objective was to work for the uplift of the Surianis in social, cultural, educational, and economic fields. Emmanuel Nidiry explained the purpose of the association in the preamble to its statutes:

The Syrians of Malabar commonly called Nazrances of St Thomas having been divided into two religious parties called *Pazhayacootoocar* (people of the ancient party) and *Poothencootoocar* (people of the recent party) have become two weak fractions as broken members of a body and deprived of the progress in the social status by education, civilization and elevation to high offices which should proceed from national union. Some of the promoters of the Syrian national union association, therefore, some years ago thought it proper to establish an association under the above said title and expressed their opinion to many of their friends and illustrious well-wishers of their community and having known their wishes proposed the following.

An association should be established among the Syrians of Malabar representing the St Thomas Christians composed of Antioch and Romo-Syrians and having charge to treat and conduct their national and social affairs and their ameliorations and this union should bear the title of "The Syrian national union association of Malabar."⁴³

³⁹ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 155.

⁴⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1259^R-1266^R, the Malayalam version of the statutes of the association.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 1267^R-1274^R, the English version of the statutes of the association. See also ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1005, fasc. I, 11.

⁴² Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 368-369.

⁴³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1267, original in English. For the Malayalam version, see *Ibid.*, f. 1259.

In his letter to the Holy Father written on 11 August 1888, while explaining the nature of Syrian National Union Association, Mar Dionysius wrote:

When I was lamenting over the weakness of our Church to protect the people whom I rescue from the mouth of Protestant wolf, from falling again into the claws of the same ferocious animal & over the failure of the endeavours done by my predecessors, the Great Mar Dionysius & others to remedy this evil & asking the Blessed Virgin Mother for the same & with the advice of Fr Nidiry a friend of mine for the last many years & after consultations & consents of many great men among the clergy & laity of both the parties, we (myself & Fr Nidiry) resolved to start an association called the Syrian National Union Association & to establish a college at Kottayam & some lower schools in some other parts & teach in them the Catholic Doctrine to oppose the Protestant errors & so to prepare the whole community for a great change ...⁴⁴

The bishops of both the groups were made the patrons and all the questions and doubts concerning the functioning of the constitution were to be referred to them. The Viceroy, the Governor of Madras, the British Resident of Travancore and the Maharajahs of Travancore and Cochin were also made patrons of the Association.⁴⁵

3.2. The Ecumenical Relevance of the Association

The aim of the association was not exactly as the Roman formula conveyed by Aiuti namely return or reunion or conversion.⁴⁶ Though in the rules of the 'Syrian National Union Association in Malabar' there is no explicit mention of the conversion of the Jacobites, in the annotation added by Nidiry, we read, "Note to the 9th rule. "This rule is made with the intention of converting the Jacobites by the means of good education given by the Catholic teachers or members of religious orders."⁴⁷ In another marginal note it is written, "Note to the section A of the same rule. This part of the rule is intended to refute the false histories written by Protestant authors etc. and to establish debating lecturers to prove the veracity of the Catholic faith and the inconsistency of heresies under the pretension that we

⁴⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2054^v, Letter of Mar Dionysius to Holy Father on 11 August 1888. (English translation by Nidiry).

⁴⁵ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 184.

⁴⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1363, Aiuti to Nidiry on 6 November 1888.

⁴⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1274^R.

are attacking the protestant errors which also is another means to convert the Jacobites.”⁴⁸

It is important to note here how Emmanuel Nidiry tried to correct the mistakes made by the missionaries and foreign historians about the history of the Suriani Church. In the statutes of the association as a sub-note to the 13th rule we read:

As many historians in the foreign languages on account of their ignorance of the facts, the vernacular etc. have adulterated the history of the Syrians and as their communication with the Protestants has grievously wounded their old faith and morals it is desirable that the association should try to establish prizes and scholarships to those who pass examinations in those controversial matters or write essays and books to rebut the said errors.⁴⁹

Emmanuel Nidiry hoped that the collaboration with Jacobites in diverse manners would eventually lead to the re-union of the divided Thomas Christians into a single community (*jāti*). Commenting on *Jathiaikasangham* P. Podipara says that Emmanuel Nidiry “anticipated the ecumenical movements of today.”⁵⁰

3.3. The Effort of Nidiry to Purchase of the Woodland Estate

For the realization of the association, the founders were confronted with the problem of fund-raising. It was really a tedious task for Emmanuel Nidiry, at the time he was residing at Alleppey as the vicar. He had a friend, Mr. Darrah, an American industrialist at Alleppey. Thanks to the influence of Emmanuel Nidiry, Mr. Darrah decided to help the new project of the Suriani community. He agreed to donate Rupees 20000 and to sell a plot of land at Kottayam, Woodland Estate consisting of 22 acres, at a reduced price of Rupees 3541.04.⁵¹ This sale deed was registered on 24 March 1866.⁵² On 1 May 1886, Agliardi wrote to Rome about the purchase of the Woodland Estate for the Syrian National Union Association, under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry and presented the request of Mar Dionysius to send missionaries to teach English at the schools going to be started by the association:

⁴⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1274^r.

⁴⁹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1270.

⁵⁰ P. PODIPARA, *Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Alleppey, 1976, 175.

⁵¹ For the details of the transaction see, V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 388-389.

⁵² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 392.

The Rev. Nidiry (an excellent Suriani Catholic Priest) and Mar Dionysius (metropolitan of the Jacobites) have purchased a property in Kottayam for the Syrian National Association of Malabar and the elected Metropolitan insists to have English teachers of some religious order.⁵³

I. C. Chacko reports that “the larger part of the amount required to buy the plot was raised from the Catholic side by the efforts of Fr Nidiry.”⁵⁴ A. Pareparambil, affirms that the Catholic Syrians contributed a sum of 4000 Rupees to purchase the Woodland Estate.⁵⁵ Bernard Thoma states, it was decided to start a college at Kottayam for the benefit of the Syrians belonging to both the *Pazhayacoor* and *Puthencoor* factions. Hopeful of paving a new path for the *Puthencoor* group to return to the Catholic communion, Emmanuel Nidiry bought the plot and a building, where the Manorama office is now located, from the famous Mr. Darrah. Emmanuel Nidiry collected the larger part of the price from the Catholic parishes with the permission of bishop Marcellino. Emmanuel Nidiry also persuaded Mr. Darrah to pay the Jacobite Archbishop Dionysius an amount of Rs. 20000 as a gift.⁵⁶

3.4. A Mixed College by the Syrian National Union Association

The constitution of the association was drafted in such a way as to provide facilities to start various institutions aimed at the all round development of the community. Education was the field most neglected by the missionaries, for them “education is danger for the Malabarians.”⁵⁷ On 5 December 1888 Mar Dionysius V wrote to Meurin explaining the aim of starting a college by Syrian National Association:

In proposing to start a national college, my intention as well as that of Fr Nidiry was to remove the disunion existing among Syrian sects, to promote divine love and Christly friendship among them, to exalt them in

⁵³ APF, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 2 Semestre 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 533^R, “Il Rev. Nidiry (Ottimo Sacerdote cattolico soriano) e Mar Dionysius (metropolitano dei Giacobiti) hanno acquistato una proprietà in Kottayam per l’associazione Nazionale Siro Malabarice e che il sull’eleto Metropolita insiste per avere maestri inglesi di qualche ordine religioso.” Agliardi to Msgr. Jacobini, secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* on 1 May 1886.

⁵⁴ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevidhavum Kalvum*, 498. For the details of the fund collection from the different parishes, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 390-391.

⁵⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of Very Important Period ...*, 148. Here he quotes Lavigne.

⁵⁶ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 803.

⁵⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Orig. Cong. Generale* 1877, s. n., “Scientiam Malabarensibus esse periculosam.” Report of Meurin on 4 September 1876.

education, from the low standard in which they now are, as compared with other sects and nations of Southern India, and to defeat the evil designs and snares of Protestant Missionaries against Syrian Christians. In short, the establishment of a college of the above nature would, no doubt, so fully defeat the evil designs of Protestants, that within a lapse of time ...⁵⁸

Therefore, Nidiry and Mar Dionysius drafted a joint project to start a college, which "should be opened to all castes and creed"⁵⁹ and of which "it is desirable that at least the principal and two of his assistants should be European British subjects who are not Protestants, Atheists, Agnostics or some other heretics or schismatics."⁶⁰ The association had envisaged, besides, high-schools both English and Malayalam, as well as schools for girls. It had a plan to send students for higher studies even to foreign countries, to start libraries in each parish, to give technical and industrial education to the students, to help the needy in the society, to start a bank, and so on.⁶¹

Unfortunately, the plan of Emmanuel Nidiry to start a mixed college at Woodland Estate under the Syrian National Association for providing opportunities to the Suriani Christians for higher education⁶² and for converting the Jacobites by means of good education was not materialised. His superior Bishop Lavigne could not tolerate a Catholic bishop cooperates with a heretical and schismatic bishop on an equal footing.⁶³ Informing the disinterest of Lavigne to start a college jointly by Catholics and Jacobites, on 5 December 1888 Dionysius wrote to Meurin:

Now, the rumour of Bishop Lavigne's dissatisfaction at the union and establishment of a joint college, has led to shine rays of gladness among Protestants, who expect a total failure of my plans by the interference of our new brother. May I therefore beg your Lordship to be kind enough to favour me with your advice and opinion in the matter, which I esteem as a revelation of God, and may I also beg you to be kind enough to

⁵⁸ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1005, fasc. I, 10, Dionysius to Meurin on 5 December 1888.

⁵⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1269^v, in English; *Ibid.*, f. 1262, in Malayalam.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 1269^v, in English; *Ibid.*, f. 1262, in Malayalam.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 1269^v-1274, in English; *Ibid.*, ff. 1262-1266, in Malayalam.

⁶² Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1274^a.

⁶³ "The college scheme was finally crashed by the opposition of the Romo-Syrians' European Bishops. Suspicious of any furtiveness with heretics, and distrusting Nidiry's claim that he had the secret consent of Mar Dionysius to abjure Jacobitism and become catholic after the establishment of the College; they forced the Romo-Syrians to drop the college proposal and the Wood land Estate in 1885." Cfr R. JEFFRY, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, New Delhi 1976, 124. We will see in the next chapter more about the unrealized mixed college.

convey your opinion to Dr. Lavigne and guide him in the right path, so that the plan of eradicating protestant heresy from Malabar may be carried out with his co-operation, and effected in his time, to the lasting memory of his name and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

4. *Propaganda* Inquires about the Syrian National Association of Malabar

In the beginning, there was no objection from the part of the *Propaganda* to the movement of new association in Malabar. Based on the information of Agliardi,⁶⁵ on 7 August 1886 *Propaganda* wrote a letter to Brother Maxwell, the superior general of Christian Brothers of Ireland asking an instructor to be sent to the educational institution of the Syrian National Association in Malabar.⁶⁶ In this letter the *Propaganda* quotes the information of Ferdinand Ossi, the administrator of Kollam, about the acquisition of property for the national association of Malabar by Dionysius and Nidiry.⁶⁷ This letter is a clear confirmation that the *Propaganda* and the administrator of Kollam positively considered the birth of the new association in Malabar under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry in collaboration with Mar Dionysius.

At the same time on 17 June 1886 Simeoni, the prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* requested accurate information from Mellano, the archbishop of Verapoly concerning the new association in Malabar.⁶⁸ According to the request of Mellano,⁶⁹ Emmanuel Nidiry presented the copies of the statutes of the association both in English and Malayalam with his own signature for transmission to *Propaganda Fide*. Since Nidiry was not able to present them to Mellano at the right time, he explained the reason of the delay on the English copy of the statutes:

⁶⁴ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1005, fasc. I, 10, letter of Dionysius to Meurin on 5 December 1888.

⁶⁵ APF, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Indie Orientali*, 2 Semestre 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 533^b, Agliardi to Msgr. Jacobini, secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* on 1 May 1886.

⁶⁶ APF, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 382, f. 460^v, letter of the secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to the superior general of Christian Brothers of Ireland on 7 August 1886.

⁶⁷ APF, *Lettere e Decreti* 1886, vol. 382, f. 460^v, "Il Metropolitano dei giacobiti insieme ad altro buon Sacerdote ha fatto acquisto di una proprietà in Kottayam per l'associazione nazionale Siro Malabarice." Letter of the secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to the superior general of Christian Brothers of Ireland on 7 August 1886.

⁶⁸ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 250, Simeoni to Mellano.

⁶⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1258, Mellano to Simeoni on 27 July 1887.

The delay to forward these rules was caused by a desire of Mar Dionysius to present it to a committee of his people for their approval, which he afterwards found could not be done till their dispute is over.⁷⁰

4.1. The Statement of Mellano on the Association

Almost after one year, on 27 July 1887 Mellano sent the statutes to *Propaganda Fide*⁷¹ with the following comments and suggestions of Marcellino and other missionaries of the Verapoly mission:

1. The idea of such an association seems to be based on the false supposition that the Malabarians of the Suriani rite belong to a different caste from the other Malabarians, and from that point of view it would be ridiculous...

2. The union of Catholics and Jacobites in the same common association governed by general vote or better to say, by few supporters of revolutionaries is contrary to the spirit of the Catholic Church and can produce nothing other than disastrous results.

3. This popular association is a revolutionary enterprise, which has the purpose of eliminating the legitimate authority of the bishops, and of substituting an exterior representative administration comprised according to the aspirations of the population, but in reality exercised by a few intriguers, impudent as well as imprudent, incapable of contributing anything to the common good. The temporal profit of the diocese will be centred on in the hands of few. It would be possible for bishop to found institutions in various places for the spiritual development and public good by making use of the resource of a diocese. To take away from the bishop the direction of the activities which naturally belong to him, is a condemnable enterprise, whatever be the pretexts that are put forward to justify it.

4. Whoever knows the nature of these native ones of Malabar, easily understands that the financial part of the project will be a continuous source of complaints, quarrels and injustice among the Christians, of which there are several examples.

5. The Cathanar Mani Nidiry, who is the head of this movement, except among the revolutionaries and few other light-minded people, does not enjoy the reputation of a good Catholic priest. No spiritual good can be

⁷⁰ ACO, *Scrl. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1274. The statutes were signed on 25 June 1887.

⁷¹ ACO, *Scrl. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1259^R-1266^R, the statutes of the association in Malayālm. For the English version by Nidiry, see *Ibid.*, ff. 1267^R-1274^R.

expected from him, given his worldly behaviour. His principal and specious motive is considered to be the conversion of the Jacobites; the Jacobites who know him laugh at him, it is only a subterfuge to deceive the Hoy See. ... The protestant newspaper of Cochin printed the discourse of Dionysius which he did in the meeting of Jacobites at Kottayam that we have to thank God for freeing us from the yoke of Rome. ... From this association as it is projected now there is no hope of the conversion of the Jacobites, but rather serious danger of the pervasion of the Catholics. ...⁷²

The above comments of Mellano are not reasonable, even his first comment itself contradicts the introductory part of the statutes of the association. It states,

The Syrians of Malabar community called Nazaranees of St Thomas, having been divided into two religious parties called Pazhayacootoocar (people of the ancient) and Poothencootoocar (people of the recent party),

⁷² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1258^{R-V} + 1275^R, "1° L'idea di questa associazione pare fondata sopra il falso supposto, che cioè i Malabaresi di rito Soriano appartengano ad una casta differente dagli altri Malabaresi, ed a questo punto di vista sarebbe ridicola, son anzi persuasa, che il popolo stesso di questo rito tra ben altra opinione, e ne danno prove quando nasce fin di loro qualche dispute, allora è che subito si viene a dichiarare a quel casta appartengono ciò che è noto abbastanza, specialmente per un decreto stesso del concilio di Udiampur ave indirettamente si fa abbastanza manifesta la loro condizione. 2° L'unione dei Cattolici e Giacobiti nella stessa associazione popolare governatesi per suffragio universale o per meglio dice, di pochi fautori rivoluzionari, è contraria allo spirito della Chiesa Cattolica, e non può che produrre i più fastidiosi risultati. 3° Questa associazione popolare e' una intrapresa rivoluzionaria che ha per lo scopo di eliminare l'autorità legittima dei vescovi, e sostituirvi una amministrazione rappresentante esteriormente le aspirazioni della popolazione in realtà però esercitata, da pochi intriganti quanto impudenti altrettanto imprudenti ed incapaci di provvedere al bene pubblico assorbire al profitto temporale di pochi individui la risorsa di una diocesi con cui potrebbe il vescovo fondare in vari luoghi istituti tendenti al bene spirituale e pubblico, togliere al vescovo la direzione delle opere che gli appartengono e' una intrapresa condannevole, qualunque siano i presetti che mettano innanzi per giustificarla. 4° chiunque conosce la natura di questi nativi del Malabar comprende facilmente che la parte pecuniaria di questo progetto sarà una sorgente interminabile di querele di frodi ed ingiustizia fra li Cristiani del che ben frequentemente sene hanno esempi. 5° Il Cattenar Nidiry che si mette alla testa di questo movimento, eccetto presso dei rivoluzionari e pochi altri di spirito leggiere e mondana, non gode sufficiente storia di buon sacerdote Cattolica da promettersi il bene spirituale, attesa la sua condotta mondana, e se si considera per il principale e specioso motivo che dice di avere in vista, la conversione cioè dei Giacobiti; del che li Giacobiti stessi che lo sanno se ne ridono, è un sotterfugio solo per ignorare anche la Santa Sede. Ebbi occasione già prima di informare V.E. chi sia questo Mar Dionisio principale motivo col Cattenar Nidiry di questa associazione, e di cui le trasmissiono copia di un giornale Protestante di Cochin ore trovarsi stampato il discorso, che lui fece in una riunione di Giacobiti in Cottayam, ed in cui fra le altre cose diceva pare doversi ringraziare Dio di essere liberi del giogo di Roma etc. e ciò dopo essere venuto a trovare me dopo alcuni anni questo Msgr. Marcellino pure sotto il pretesto di convertirsi alla fede Cattolica. Da questa associazione pertanto come sta presentemente ideata non vi può essere alcuna speranza di conversione dei Giacobiti, ma piuttosto grave pericolo di perversione dei Cattolici, che se non passeranno alla setta dei Giacobiti, purtroppo vi è da temere che diventeranno indifferenti disprezzanti la leggi stesse della Chiesa Cattolica." Letter of Mellano to *Propaganda Fide* on 27 July 1887.

have become two weak fractions as broken members of a body, and were deprived of the progress in the social status by education, civilization and elevation to high offices which should proceed from national union."⁷³

Here one can ask a question whether Mellano understood or not the statutes. His poor command of English language was well known and it seems that the comment of the newspaper Cochin Argus with regard to this was right.⁷⁴

4.2. The Attitude of Agliardi towards the Association

When the statutes were presented to Agliardi, pro secretary of the congregation for the *Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinarii*, for his assessment, he returned it with following comment: "I am constrained to return the statutes of Syro-Malabar Association because, being written in Malayalam language which I do not know, I cannot make any judgement on it."⁷⁵ Receiving the reply of Agliardi, a note was added by the Congregation to the front page of the reply, "there is an English version."⁷⁶ Emmanuel Nidiry had already presented the statutes in two languages, Malayalam and English. Though Agliardi did not read the statutes of the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar, he made his comment on it:

However, I am taking the liberty to express my preliminary opinion and it is that, being composed only by Malabarians and to the primary exclusion of the Carmelites, certainly would need reform, serious reform.⁷⁷

Though, Agliardi wrote indifferently to the question of *Propaganda* concerning the Syrian National Association, he had genuine appreciation for Emmanuel Nidiry for his zeal for the conversion of Jacobites. On 23 December 1887, he wrote to Emmanuel Nidiry:

⁷³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1267^R.

⁷⁴ "Il Cochin Argus Giornale di Cochin pubblicava quest'anno che dacché Msgr. Leonardo Mellano è arcivescovo di Verapoly non mando mai sue sole righe pastorali ai suoi fedeli, perchè non sa scrivere in inglese." Cf. APF, *Scritture Origine Congregazione Generale*, vol. 1017, f. 368^V. It is a very confidential letter without date and name, but the archivist has added on the margin '1881'. From the handwriting, it seems to be the letter of Persico. Here Persico quotes the comment of Cochin Argus daily on Leonard Mellano.

⁷⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1292^R, letter of Agliardi on 11 September 1887. "Sono costretto rimettere gli statuti dell'associazione Siro-Malabarica perché essendo scritti in lingua Malayali a me ignota-non posso fare di essi nessun giudizio."

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 1292^R, "Vi è una versione Inglese."

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 1292^R, "Mi permetto però esprimere un'opinione mia pregiudiziale ed è questa che essendo essi composti dai soli Malabaresi e con prevenzionissamente ai carmelitani certamente avranno bisogno di riformare e di riforme gravi."

I have but words of praise for your zeal to have the way to the conversion of our dissenting brethren in Malabar and I only exhort you to continue in this Apostolic work and not to mind the troubles that others might strive to cause, as even trials serve to give success to such efforts.⁷⁸

4.3. Aiuti's Observation concerning the Association

Aiuti, the delegate apostolic, published the Pontifical Brief *Quod jampridem*⁷⁹ with a covering letter dated 20 July 1887,⁸⁰ in which he mentioned the interest of the Holy See to start an educational institution in Malabar for the education of priests and laity.⁸¹

Aiuti wrote to Rome on 19 August 1887 that Emmanuel Nidiry had been already informed by Agliardi through a letter on 23 January 1887, about the plan of Rome to start a college in Malabar and exhorted him to desist from his attempt to do the same:

Of the college that the Holy See is considering to found in Malabar, I mentioned it without scruple because Monsignor Agliardi in his letter dated 23 January from Bangalore, to Fr Nidiry, who had written in the name of various Suriani leaders on 23 January, had already made the following known; "I request you to abstain from any other arrangement for your college at Kottayam, because I know for certain that the Holy See itself will take care to provide you with a college."⁸²

The basis of such a letter of Agliardi was that in the conference of the Cardinals held on 20 December 1886, they already decided to prevent the joint action of the Catholics and the Jacobites to start a college in Malabar⁸³

⁷⁸ ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31, 7*, letter of Agliardi to Nidiry on 23 December 1887

⁷⁹ For the Pontifical Brief, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 789-790.

⁸⁰ ACO, *Scrl. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi 1878-1889*, ff. 1284-1285; BERNARD THOMA, *Marthoma Christianikal*, 791-794. For the Malayalm version, see *Ibid.*, 794-798.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1284^v, BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 793, "Eo jucundius autem Nobis accidit hujusmodi santissimi Patris ordinationes Vobis nuntiare, quod addere insuper possimus S. Sedem serio in praesentiarum cogitare de ingenti Collegio in medio Vestrum instituendo, in quo Clerus et populus instruat ac efformetur." For the Malayalm version, see BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 796.

⁸² ACO, *Scrl. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi 1878-1889*, ff. 1280^v-1281^r, "Del Collegio che la Santa Sede sta pensando di fondare nel Malabar, ne ho fatto menzione senza scrupolo, perché Monsignor Agliardi con lettera del 23 Gennaio al sacerdote Nidiry che aveva scritto a nome di varii dei principali Soriani del 23 Gennaio p.p. da Bangalore, aveva già loro significato in proposito quanto segue: "Vi prego di astenervi da ogni altra cura per il vostro Collegio di Kottayam, perché si di certo che la S. Sede penserà essa stessa a provvedervi di un Collegio." Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 19 August 1887.

⁸³ ACO, *Ponenze 1886, 1092*, "S'impedisca l'erezione del collegio misto progettato in Kottayam dai cattolici e dai Giacobitii." Cf. ACO, *ACTA 1886*, vol. 17, f. 530^v.

and on the same day the Holy Father, approved the decision of the Cardinals.⁸⁴ Moreover, the *Propaganda* already informed Agliardi of the decision of the Cardinals, through a letter signed by both the Prefect Simeoni and the Secretary Cretoni on 23 December 1886:

Ultimately reserving to itself the S. Congregation is to adopt tentative measures to provide the ardent need of educating the Clergy and the people of Syro-Malabar, meanwhile the Congregation has forbidden to proceed with the proposed project of a mixed college among Catholics and Jacobites, which they have in mind to erect in Kottayam.⁸⁵

4.4. The Final Reaction of Rome to the Association

Ultimately, after the dramatic movements, the plan of Mellano to prevent the new Association for the unification of the Suriani Christians of Malabar under the joint leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry and Dionysius succeeded. Based on the decision of Cardinals in the general meeting on 20 December 1886,⁸⁶ the *Propaganda* directed Aiuti to reject informally the plan of the association with a letter on 19 September 1887:

As declared in the letter of Your Eminence to the Surianis on 20 July, the Holy See will take care to establish a College for them, being unable to permit the said dangerous association.⁸⁷

Moreover, Simeoni instructed Aiuti how he should prevent informally the foundation of the dangerous national Syro-Malabar association for education, planed by Nidiry in collaboration with the Jacobite Metropolitan Mar Dionysius.⁸⁸ Aiuti, in return promised his full support that was asked of him: "I will adhere scrupulously to the venerable and wise instructions of Your Eminence; and have confidence that I will

⁸⁴ Ponenze, 1886, 1092. Cf. ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530^v.

⁸⁵ ACO, ACTA 1887, vol. 18, f. 261, "Riservandosi da ultimo la S. Congregazione di adottare misure tendenti a provvedere all'imperioso bisogno dell'istruzione del Clero e del popolo Siro-Malabarico, intanto ha vietato che si dia seguito al progetto di un collegio misto fra Cattolici e Giacobiti che si ha in animo di erigere in Cottayam." Cf. *Ibid.*, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 19, f. 511.

⁸⁶ ACO, ACTA 1886, vol. 17, f. 530^v; ACO, Ponenze 1886, 1092.

⁸⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 336^{R-v}, "Quando per altro la S. V. Rma dichiarato nella lettera a stampa diretta ai Soriani nella data 20 Luglio p. p. che la S. Sede si prenderà la cura di fondare per loro un Collegio, e non potendosi in verun conto permettere la detta pericoloso associazione."

⁸⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1297; ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 336, Simeoni to Aiuti on 19 September 1887.

manage to impede the execution of that project without any sort of disorder.”⁸⁹

4.5. Emmanuel Nidiry Visits Aiuti at Ooty

In April 1888, Lavigne visited Aiuti at his residence in Ooty together with Mar Dionysius and Emmanuel Nidiry, the faithful and sure interpreter, for Aiuti, Lavigne and Mar Dionysius.⁹⁰ Aiuti managed to convince Nidiry of the impossibility of the realisation of the project.⁹¹ At the same time he was aware of the fact that the Catholics would lose their claim over the property jointly brought if they retreated from the association. Therefore, Aiuti played a diplomatic role in various conversations with Nidiry:

1. of persuading him of the impossibility of bringing such an association into fruition under the present circumstances; 2. of inducing him, in the meantime, to settle the financial question in a more prudent way and at a time more advantageous to the future college...⁹²

And Emmanuel Nidiry informed Aiuti of the obstacles of Mar Dionysius to join the Catholic Church all of a sudden:

As for the last part of his letter, I think that we should not push Mar Dionysius to decide immediately to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church. I feel that he is not anymore a formal heretic but only material. It is added that if he declares himself Catholic, the sentence of the royal court would be against him and he would lose all his rights over the Jacobite churches [parishes], to their benefits, and above all Mar Athanasius, the delegate of Antiochan Patriarch in Malabar, together with all the suffragan bishops would report the matter to the Patriarch, who would excommunicate him, and thus he would lose the influence, which he has now, for converting his people.⁹³

⁸⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1297, “Mi atterro scrupolosamente alle venerate e sapienti istruzioni di Vostra Eminenza”, e nutro fiducia che potro riuscire ad impedire l’attuazione di quel progetto senza strepito di sorta.” Aiuti to Simeoni on 17 October 1887.

⁹⁰ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1307, “Il sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry è stato l’interprete fra lui, Msgr. Lavigne e me. ... sacerdote Nidiry, il quale poteva servire d’interprete fedele e sicuro.” Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 April 1888.

⁹¹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1308-1309, Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 April 1888.

⁹² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1307^v, “Checché ne sia di queste supposizioni, i miei sforzi, nelle varie conferenze che ho avuto con lui sia in particolare sia in compagnia di Msgr. Lavigne, ebbero un duplice scopo: cioè 1. di persuaderlo dell’impossibilità di attuare siffatta associazione nello stato attuale delle cose; 2. di indurlo in pari tempo a comporre nel modo più prudente e ad un tempo più vantaggioso al futuro collegio la questione pecuniaria...”

⁹³ *Ibid.*, f. 1355^v, “Quanto all’ultima parte della sua lettera io penso che non dobbiamo spingere Mar Dionisio a risolversi a ritornare subito nel seno della chiesa cattolica, sento che egli attualmente non è

Aiuti had great appreciation for Nidiry's ecumenical efforts and he wrote: "I praise once more for your zeal for the conversion of the schismatics."⁹⁴ But it seems Nidiry's explanation for the delay of the conversion of Dionysius made him distrust. He wrote to Rome about the collaboration between Nidiry and Mar Dionysius, with his own observations:

They before, one being catholic and the other Jacobite, are Suriani [Christians] and therefore they do not have any other aim or other fundamental desire than seeing their nation independent from foreigners and glorious in the way they deem, i.e., with bishops of their rite as the head of the religion; it is for this goal that they direct all their efforts. The Catholicism for the one and the Jacobitism for the other are nothing but means toward that aim ...⁹⁵

4.6. Lavigne Turns against Nidiry regarding the Acquisition of Property for the College

Lavigne was also a strong opponent of the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar. By accusing Emmanuel Nidiry, of the acquisition of the property, on 11 December 1888, Lavigne wrote a long letter to the apostolic delegate, Aiuti:

Mr. Darragh [Darrah] came to see me and told me: Mar Dionysius and he had not changed their mind that means since the condemnation of the union, the direction of the College had to be exclusively between the hands of the Catholic Bishop.

Fr Nidiry had pleaded against the Catholic Bishop in favour of the interference of the Jacobite Bishop on an equal footing.

Fr Nidiry had entirely distorted his intentions and those of Mar Dionysius. Nidiry had written to me: we shall give half of the land to

più un eretico formale ma solamente materiale. S'aggiunge pure che se egli si dichiarasse senz'altro cattolico, la sentenza del regio tribunale sarebbe a lui contraria ed egli perderebbe qualsiasi dritta alle chiese Giacobite ai loro beni e dopo tutto il vecchio Mar Attanasio, il delegato del patriarca antiocheno nel Malabar, insieme a tutti i vescovi suffraganei riferirebbe la cosa al patriarca e lo scomunicherebbe, e così egli perderebbe tutta l'influenza che ora possiede per convertire il suo popolo." Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 9 November 1888.

⁹⁴ ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31, 5*; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 402, letter of Aiuti to Nidiry on 14 January 1888.

⁹⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1357^r, Aiuti to Simeoni on 9 November 1888. "Essi prima di essere l'uno cattolico e l'altro giacobita, sono soriani e come tali non reggono altro scopo e non hanno altro brama maggiore di quelle che vedere la loro nazione indipendente dallo straniero e gloriosa nel senso loro, cioè con Prelati del loro rito a capo della religione ed è a questo fine che dirigono tutti i loro sforzi. Il Cattolicesimo per l'uno e il giacobitismo per l'altro non sono che messi a quel fine e per quanto essi si facciano violenza i loro giudizi sempre sordescunt nazionali polvere."

the Catholic Bishop under the condition that he pays for it; while Mr. Darragh [Darrah] had told Mar Dionysius: give freely to Msgr Lavigne and it is I who will pay you.

Then he added a thing that I hardly dare to believe. As I had some difficulty to understand his English pronunciation, I asked him to repeat it a second time and I hardly understood better; it is why I give what I believe to have understood, without full guarantees.

“Fr Niridy is a cunning man ... a bad man a wicked man; hold him on your side, do not lower him too much.

I express my personal opinion, but I do not have any positive proofs; if Mar Dionysius would offer him a good church, he would make himself a Jacobite.” This coincides with a very recent conversation of Fr Candidus to Fr Ricard. If tomorrow Fr Nidiry becomes a Jacobite, I would not be surprised.

We went with Mr. Darragh [Darrah] to Mar Dionysius’ house; Fr Nidiry and Fr Aloys [Aloysius] were present. I said in substance that the Holy See did not forbid the Catholics to make with the Jacobites some associations of trade or others, but in the matters that touch to the religion, the defence was formal. In the present state of the question, it would affront the Holy Father to address him some new petitions, that Rome is better informed than they believe about the people and the things... The College would depend on me only, the Jacobites would be admitted there and we would have for Mar Dionysius all desirable considerations; in one word, we came back to what had been decided at Ootacamund.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1373^R-1374^R, “Peu à peu la situation s’éclaircit. Mr. Darragh chez qui s’étaient tenues les négociations relatives au Collège est venu me voir il m’a dit :

Que Mar Dionysius et lui n’avaient pas changé d’avis, c’est-à-dire que depuis la condamnation de l’union, la direction du Collège devait être exclusivement entre les mains du l’Evêque Catholique.

Que P. Nidiry avait plaidé contre l’évêque Catholique en faveur l’immixtion à titre égal de l’Evêque Jacobite.

Que P. Nidiry avait entièrement faussé ses intentions à lui et à Mar Dionysius. Nidiry m’avait écrit: on donnera à l’Evêque Catholique la moitié du terrain, à condition de le payer; tandis que Mr Darragh avait dit à M. Dionysius: donnez gratuitement à Msgr. Lavigne et c’est moi qui vous paierai.

Puis il a ajouté une chose que j’ose à peine croire. Comme j’avais de la difficulté à comprendre sa prononciation anglaise, je l’ai prié de répéter une seconde fois, et je n’ai guère mieux compris ; c’est pourquoi je donne sous toute réserve ce que j’ai cru comprendre. « P. Nidiry est un homme habile ... un homme mauvais (wicked man) ; tenez-le de votre côté, ne l’abaissez pas trop.

J’exprime mon opinion personnelle, mais je n’ai pas de preuves positives ; si Mar Dionysius lui offrait une bonne église, il se ferait Jacobite ». Ceci coïncide avec une parole toute récente du P. Candidus au P. Ricard. Si demain le P. Nidiry se faisait Jacobite, je n’en serais pas surpris.

But the letter of Emmanuel Nidiry dated 24 October 1888 to Lavigne concerning the purchase of property proves that Lavigne was well informed of all the actions regarding the purchase of the property:

If their proposals contained that the Right Rev. Dr. Lavigne should not have half of the property or some other expressions I would have styled them “contradictions” and not “modifications.” After I got your Lordship’s reply I tried my best as your Lordship directed me in the same to conduct the business by those 3 steps mentioned in the letter. Mr. Daragh being lick I am determined here to get the document of the sale from him. I think it dangerous to defer the matter any more. After getting that I have full hope to get half of the property exclusively for the Catholics.⁹⁷

While continuing the letter Lavigne wrote that on 11 December Nidiry came to him with Dionysius for getting permission to submit a common petition signed by them to ask the government for some concessions which had promised at the time of union. To which Lavigne responded:

I declared to Fr Nidiry, from whom comes this idea, that such a persistence to want to act per modum unius, appeared to me to cover the union revived under a new form. “Unable to enter through the door, you want to enter through the window; let us obey therefore with more simplicity and straightforwardness. The Pope condemned the idea that the Catholics per modum unius can form any kind of association with the Jacobites per modum unius. Some Catholics can do it, the Catholics cannot do it. “Fr Nidiry submitted himself only by his silence, and then Mar Dionysius said: “Well then, I will make a demand all alone, in my personal name, and it will not be anymore the union disapproved by the Holy Father.”⁹⁸

Nous sommes allés avec Mr Darragh chez mar Dionysius ; le P. Nidiry et le P. Aloys étaient présents. J’ai dit en substance que le St Siège n’interdisait pas aux Catholiques de faire avec des Jacobites des associations de commerce ou autres, mais que dans les matières qui touchent à la religion, la défense était formelle. Dans l’état actuel de la question, ce serait faire injure au St Père que de lui adresser de nouvelles pétitions, qu’à Rome on est mieux renseigné qu’ils ne le croient sur les personnes et les choses... Le Collège dépendrait de moi seul, les Jacobites y seraient admis et l’on aurait pour Mar Dionysius tous les égards désirables, en un mot nous sommes revenus à ce qui avait été convenu à Ootacamund.” Lavigne to Aiuti on 11 December 1888.

⁹⁷ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, VI, 5, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Lavigne on 24 October 1888. For the proposals of Lavigne, see ARSI, *Ibid.*, 4, letter of Nidiry on 20 October 1888.

⁹⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Congirg. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1374^R, “J’ai declare au P. Nidiry, de qui vient cette idée, qu’un telle persistance à vouloir agir per modum unius, me paraissait couvrir l’union ressuscitée sous une nouvelle forme. «Ne pouvant entrer par la porte vous voulez entrer par la fenêtre, obéissons donc avec plus de simplicité et de droiture. Le Pape a condamné que les Catholiques per modum unius forment avec les Jacobites per modum unius une association quelconque. Des Catholiques le peuvent, les catholiques ne le peuvent pas ». P. Nidiry ne se soumettait que par son silence, quand Mar Dionysius

Naturally there started conflict between Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry regarding the reunion of Jacobites, because the former could not fully understand the emotional bond of the two sections of the Suriani community. For Lavigne, the Jacobites were just one group that came under the negative term 'non Catholics' and no special plan for their reunion. On the other hand for Emmanuel Nidiry, the Jacobite reunion was an issue of paramount importance. The Syrian National Association was formed with the hope of achieving the reunion of all Suriani Christians.

When the negotiations failed regarding the ownership of the Woodland Estate,⁹⁹ Lavigne ordered his counsellors to leave the bungalow in the Woodland Estate and go to the parochial house at Etackad (Kottayam). Surrendering the plot to the Jacobites without any settlements was a heavy loss to the Catholic community and was extremely painful to Emmanuel Nidiry who was chiefly responsible for buying the plot. On 24 May 1899 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote a letter to Msgr. Bernard, the archbishop of Verapoly concerning the same:

I tried my best to acquire the friendship of all Jacobite prelates and many of the chief members of their community, both clergy and laity, and after long discussions and consultations for many years I got their consent to make an association which, as Your Grace may have known, was called the Syrian National Union Association, and brought the property, which is at present called 'Manorama', in the name of Mar Dionysius and myself as founders of such an association in order to establish there a college which should be conducted by the European Roman Catholic teachers and likewise got the secret consent of Mar Dionysius to abjure Jacobitism and become Catholic after the establishment of such a college. Moreover, I took Mar Dionysius secretly to the residence of H. E. Msgr. Aiuti, the then Delegate, at Ootacamund to discuss the establishment of that college and further steps to be taken for the conversion of the whole community of Jacobites. But alas! The whole plan was upset by the opposition of His Lordship Msgr. Lavigne, who thought the conversion of the Jacobites was a very easy matter as their head. Mar Dionysius was in our favor and that a Jesuit college on the proposed spot would be better than a joint

a dit: « Eh bien alors, je ferai une demande tout seul, en mon nom personnel, et ce ne sera plus l'union désapprouvée par le St Père." Lavigne to Aiuti on 11 December 1888.

⁹⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 451-452.

college of Syrians and, therefore, pressed me and Mar Dionysius to make over the property in His Lordship's name and when we did not consent to that H. L. compelled me to quit the association bungalow and property which were in my sole possession and consequently the Jacobites became masters of the same.¹⁰⁰

It was very painful for Emmanuel Nidiry to see the negative attitude of Lavigne towards the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar, and surrendering the property of the Association to Jacobites unconditionally.

4.7. The Attempt of Lavigne to Start a College

In between these hot discussions and problems on 30 April 1888 Aiuti informed *Propaganda* of the interest of Msgr. Lavigne, the apostolic vicar of Kottayam to start a Catholic college. Lavigne preferred to entrust the college to the Society of Jesus. Therefore, he made a visit to Tiruchirappilly where he stayed at the Jesuit College for twenty days to study the administrative systems and he found that there was no danger for the faith of the Catholic students being mixed with the students of other religions. In the same letter Aiuti informed *Propaganda* of the positive opinions of Hühne S. J., the rector of Mangalore College and Bochum S. J., a missionary priest at Bombay, concerning the mixed college.¹⁰¹

Through the letter of Aiuti on 30 April 1888, Rome was well informed of the proper functioning of the mixed colleges in different parts of India, with no danger or harm to the faith of Catholics. If so why did Rome respond negatively to the new association in Malabar which anticipated the all round progress of the community and there by to achieve the Syrian Christian

¹⁰⁰ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 219. The original was quoted from the personal diary of Emmanuel Nidiry.

¹⁰¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1309^{r-v}, "Intanto prego umilmente la cortese umanità della medesima a compiacersi di farmi conoscere se realmente la s. sede intende di tollerare che nel ridetto Collegio vengano ammessi non solo i Cattolici, ma anche gli a altri senza distinzione di pagani e Giacobiti. Msgr. Lavigne che si è trattenuto in Trichinapally circa 20 giorni per conoscere l'andamento di quel gran Collegio e prendere gli appunti necessari intorno al modo di regolare e dirigerete un altro dello stesso genere, assicura che attese le precauzioni adottate dal regolamento vigente nel medesimo i giovani cattolici per una tal mescolanza non corrono rischio alcuno di perversione, la stessa assicurazione mi diede ieri il P. Hühne S.J. Rettore del gran Collegio di Mangalore, dove pure vengono ammessi indistintamente cattolici, pagani ed altri. Alla ricezione relazione presentata dal mio illustre Predecessore Msgr. Agliardi all'Eminenza Vostra intorno alla Missione di Bombay il 16 dicembre 1884 va unita una lettera del P. Bochum S.J. in cui quel missionario esprime il parere che la presenza dei pagani in quel collegio non è nociva ai cattolici, e che anzi l'istruzione che ivi si dà torna utile alla conversione dei pagani medesimi." Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 30 April 1888.

unity? It was due to the wrong mentality of missionaries especially of Carmelites who feared that education would cause to lose their power and authority in Malabar.¹⁰² Though the attempt of Syrian National Association of Malabar was aborted by Rome, Emmanuel Nidiry continued his reunion efforts.

5. The 'Nazrani Deepika'

In the course of time, Emmanuel Nidiry felt the need of a journal especially as the organ of the Syrian National Union Association to communicate its projects and mission to the people. However, the association in its nascent stage was not in a position to afford a new press. Since there was a press at Mannanam, it was easy to get it printed there. A petition was submitted with the signature of more than 30 priests and leaders of the community to Marcellino for the permission.¹⁰³ The response was positive:

I grant permission according to the request. But, I appoint Rev. Fr Mani Nidiry as the chief editor and the responsible person for this mission. There should not be any trouble to the members of the convent and no involvement of the members of the convent should be expected.¹⁰⁴

The sanction of the bishop was really recognition of Nidiry's talent as journalist and the approval of the new movement. Moreover, the bishop did not want the Carmelite priests to be involved in this undertaking. Emmanuel Nidiry was too busy to take over the responsibility of publishing a newspaper. He signed the declaration before the government and suggested the name *Nazrani Deepika*.

The first copy of the *Nazrani Deepika* was published on 15 April 1887,¹⁰⁵ with the editorial of Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁰⁶ As a slogan, a passage from the letter of St Paul to Ephesians was written below the main title that was a

¹⁰² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1876, 775, "Atque missionarios postulamus qui nos docent, nam qui nunc nos regunt, nolunt nos instrui." Letter of Meurin to *Propaganda* on 10 June 1876; ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1428^b, "la scienza non è pane per loro anche perchè se insegnassimo loro qualche cosa essi dopo averla impartita si gonfierebbero, diverrebbero superbi e non ci rispetterebbero più. Bell ragione da vero!" Aiuti to *Propaganda* on 13 April 1889.

¹⁰³ For the petition, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 389.

¹⁰⁴ For the original letter, see the records of the Mannanam Ashram press. Cf. J. J. NIDIRY, *Nidhiyirickal Manikathanar Kalathinte Saradhi*, 31.

¹⁰⁵ T. MOOLAYIL, *Nidhiyirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁶ For the editorial of Emmanuel Nidiry, see J. J. NIDIRY, *Nidhiyirickal Manikathanar Kalathinte Saradhi*, 117-118.

call for Christian unity and fellowship.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Emmanuel Nidiry became the founder-editor and the Verapoly-appointed manager of the first Malayalam Daily,¹⁰⁸ which later evolved gradually into the most important Catholic newspaper of India with only a slight change in name.¹⁰⁹ Later, it was under the inspiration and blessing of Emmanuel Nidiry that another daily called *Malayala Manorama* was established by his Jacobite friend Kandathil Varghese Mappila.¹¹⁰

6. Mar Dionysius Visits the Delegate Apostolic at Ooty

Aiuti had much interest in the conversion and reunion of Jacobites. He wrote: "How cheerful it would be, if the Jacobites also happened to return to the bosom of the Holy Mother, the Church! It is better to remind you that I am invested by the Holy See with all faculties that might be required in such matter."¹¹¹ Based on personal invitation of Aiuti on 7 April 1888,¹¹² Mar Dionysius along with Lavigne and Nidiry reached the residence of the apostolic delegate Aiuti at Ooty on 26 April 1888, where they stayed for two days. They discussed the issue of reunion and the questions regarding the same included the following:

1. Whether the Jacobite hierarchy would be conserved; 2. Whether Mar Dionysius and the other bishops who would be converted along with him would be left in their respective sees, and whether they would be provided with an annual financial allowance unless there were another stable provisions for their subsistence; 3. Whether married priests at the time of the reunion would continue to live with their wives, by requiring

¹⁰⁷ "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace", Ephesians 4: 3. Cf. T. MOOLAYIL, *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 804.

¹⁰⁹ From 1938 onwards, this daily is known as *Deepika*.

¹¹⁰ "In 1887 under the auspices of the Syrian National Union Association, Fr Nidiry established Nasarani Deepika, the oldest Malayalam Newspaper. Two years later Varghese Mappilai formed the first Joint Stock Company in Travancore to found Malayala Manorama the most famous Malayalam newspaper, whose present offices stand on the land Fr Nidiry acquired for the unsuccessful college" Cf R. JEFFRY, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, 124; T. MOOLAYIL, *Nidhirickal Manikathanar Anayatha Deepam*, 33.

¹¹¹ ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31*, 5, letter of Aiuti to Nidiry on 14 January 1888.

¹¹² ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31*, 5; Cf. A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 403. Letter of Aiuti to Nidiry on 7 April 1888. Confidentially, he wrote to Emmanuel Nidiry the difficulty of the situation that "I cannot however hide from you that if he comes at the same time with Msgr. Lavigne, he will find himself very uncomfortable, for I have but a few rooms I can dispose of. Where as he comes later on nay immediately after Dr. Lavigne will have left (of course you could come stay back to Ootacamund, and accompany him), then he would here with all his comforts. I speak only from the point of view of giving convenient and comfortable lodging to Mar Dionysius."

celibacy of the unmarried priests and also those who would become priests afterwards; 4. Whether the clergy and people would be permitted to keep the Antiochene Catholic rite of the missal and the breviary; 5. Whether some colleges or seminary would be established for them through one or more religious institutes so that they might save the clergy and people from tremendous ignorance.¹¹³

During their discussions, Mar Dionysius asked Lavigne for a loan of 20 to 25 thousand rupees, to offer to the Thiruvithamcore *Rajah* to effect a favorable decision for the Jacobites in civil court cases. Since Lavigne was not able to contribute such a large amount, remembering the advice of Marcellino, which he had given to him in the past to the same question, Mar Dionysius decided to write to Holy Father for help.¹¹⁴

6.1. The General Meeting of *Propaganda* on 25 June 1888

Considering the importance of the conversion of Mar Dionysius and his community, the Cardinal prefect appointed Fr Jerome of Immaculate Conception, ocd, General of the Carmelites to study the situation.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the general meeting of the *Propaganda Fide* on 25 June 1888 took the matter under discussion:

1. Whether the baptism conferred by the Syrian Jacobites of the Malabar is valid; 2. Whether the sacred ordinations conferred by their bishops are valid; 3. Whether and how to respond to Mar Dionysius about the two conditions on the conversion of the Jacobites: (a) will their hierarchy be preserved; (b) will the jurisdiction of the bishops in their respective dioceses be maintained; 4. Whether and how is it fitting to conserve the Jacobite priests who would be converted in the exercise of their orders and in the respective offices; 5. Whether and how is it beneficial to guarantee Mar Dionysius that the Jacobites who would be converted will be left in their Syriac rite; 6. Whether and how is it possible to declare that the use of leavened bread for the matter of the Eucharist will be permitted to them; 7. Which disposition to be adopted on the married clergy and ecclesiastical celibacy; 8. How to respond to other

¹¹³ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, f. 146, copy of Aiuti to Simeoni on 1 May 1888. Cf. C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...*, 266.

¹¹⁴ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, f. 145^v, copy of Aiuti to Simeoni on 1 May 1888.

¹¹⁵ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, ff. 143-144.

questions of Mar Dionysius; 9. What are the instructions to be given Msgr. Aiuti with regard to the conversion of the Jacobites.¹¹⁶

In the general meeting, the Cardinals on 25 June 1888, discussed the mater concerning the conversion of Mar Dionysius and took the following decisions:¹¹⁷

1. that the general meeting suggested an examination of the Baptism, form and the mode in use by the Jacobites in order to stabilize norms for the future; 2. that the apostolic delegate, through the apostolic vicars of Kottayam and Thrissur, explore whether or not the actual bishop were validly consecrated. If they were validly consecrated, they could be received accordingly, but if found null or dubious, they were to be consecrated absolutely or conditionally according to each case; 3. & 4. that their hierarchy be conserved with the converting bishops having jurisdiction in their respective sees and the converted priests allowed to exercise their occupations in their respective offices; 5. that they be allowed to maintain their rite after examining the books and use of the rituals of the Jacobites; 6. that regarding the use of the leavened bread, the apostolic delegate should try to eliminate it but, in case of difficulty, he should collect information on the quantity of salt and oil used and the motive for such a mixing; 7. that there was no problem regarding priests married before their ordination, but the case of each priest married after ordination would be treated individually. For the future, the apostolic delegate should investigate whether there was and is any basis for Mar Dionysius' declaration in favour of celibacy; 8. that Mar Dionysius' requests for subsistence and books were to be answered positively; 9. that Aiuti should continue encouraging the good dispositions of Mar Dionysius.¹¹⁸ The Holy Father approved the decision of the Cardinals on the same day.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, ff. 129-147. The particulars discussed were: "1. Se il battesimo conferito dai Siri Giacobiti del Malabar sia valido; 2. Se siano validi gli ordini sacri conferiti dai loro vescovi; 3. Se e come rispondere a Mar Dionisio circa le due condizioni apposte alla conversione dei Giacobiti: a) che si conserverà loro la gerarchia; b) che si conserverà ai vescovi la giurisdizione sulle rispettive diocesi; 4. Se e come convenga conservare i preti Giacobiti che si convertissero, nell'esercizio dei loro ordini e nei rispettivi loro uffici; 5. Se e come convenga garantire a Mar Dioniso che si lasceranno nel loro rito siro i Giacobiti che si convertissero; 6. Se e come inspecie dichiarare che si lascerà loro l'uso del fermentato per la materia eucaristica; 7. Se e quali disposizioni adottare circa i pretti coniugati ed il celibato ecclesiastico; 8. Se e come convenga accogliere le altre domande di Mar Dionisio; 9. Se e quali istruzioni dare a Msgr. Aiuti per procurare la conversione dei Siri Giacobiti." Cf. *Ibid.*, 131^v.

¹¹⁷ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, 132^{r-v}. The English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...*, 267.

¹¹⁸ The Congregation informed Aiuti of the resolutions of the meeting on 30 June 1888. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, ff. 231^v-232^r; ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1398-1404, Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 March 1889.

¹¹⁹ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, f. 132^v.

6.2. Aiuti Meets Dionysius at Kottayam

The apostolic delegate Aiuti met Mar Dionysius at the residence of bishop Lavigne, at Kottayam. Nidiry was present there as an interpreter. The central theme for the discussions was the reunion of the Jacobites. When Aiuti asked about the declaration of reunion, in front of some specially invited bishops and priests, Aiuti wrote, "like a fish that try to escape from the hands, Mar Dionysius was trying to escape."¹²⁰ For this Mar Dionysius had his own explanation that he was trying to influence first, those parish priests having more members and the priests having some affection to the Catholic Church and thus slowly to convert the whole community.¹²¹

After the conference, Aiuti had gathered a negative impression about the conversion and reunion of Mar Dionysius and therefore he openly wrote to Rome:

For me Dionysus has been a true mystery until now and I fear that he will be always the same ... Further, he is always a hesitant and undecided man. The fixed idea in his mind is to make the union of the Jacobites and Catholics of Malabar as a nation, and to become the spiritual head of that community under the title of Patriarch of Malabar.¹²²

6.3. The Letter of Mar Dionysius to the Holy Father

Meanwhile Aiuti reminded Nidiry about the promised letter of Mar Dionysius to Holy Father.¹²³ Mar Dionysius informed Aiuti of his reasons for the delay in writing to Holy Father, namely the absence of trustworthy person to translate the letter to English and the delicacy of asking money from the Holy Father in the first letter.¹²⁴ Believing the words of Mar Dionysius, Aiuti wrote a letter on 25 July 1888 informing Nidiry of the

¹²⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1402^v, "Gli proposi d'intendersi fin da ora con una parte i quei Vescovi, di scegliere un buon numero di preti, e di riunire gli uni agli altri in una specie di Sinodo e la dichiararsi Cattolica. Molti seguirebbero lui quei Vescovi e quei preti. Egli pero che quando si trova alle strette è solito di sfuggire come un pesce sfugge dalle mani." Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 March 1889.

¹²¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1402^v.

¹²² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1403^h, "Per me Mar Dionisio è stato finora un vero enigma e temo che lo sarà sempre... oltre diche egli è un uomo sempre titubante ed indeciso. Ha in mente l'idea fissa di fare l'unione dei Giacobiti e cattolici del Malabar in una sola nazione, e di divenire egli stesso il Capo spirituale sotto il nome di Patriarcha del Malabar." Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 March 1889.

¹²³ Letter of Aiuti to Nidiry on 21 May 1888. See V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 405.

¹²⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2031^v-2032, Aiuti to Simeoni on 18 August 1888.

same reasons and asking him to encourage and to dispel the fears of the archbishop,¹²⁵ to which Nidiry replied.

I do not believe that Mar Dionysius is afraid to write to His Holiness. He only fears the people and the patriarch for the reason that if they might become aware of his intentions before the propitious time, his plan of action would be ruined. However, I assured him that in this matter the Holy See and Your Excellency would observe the strictest confidence, which they will not violate as the Carmelites did previously.¹²⁶

At last on 11 August 1888, Mar Dionysius wrote to the Holy Father,¹²⁷ and sent his letter to Aiuti with a covering letter,¹²⁸ also the English translation of the letter from Nidiry.¹²⁹ In the covering letter Mar Dionysius explained his need for help.¹³⁰ Aiuti sent both letters, Malayalam and English to Rome with an Italian translation.¹³¹ Referring to the objection of Lavigne to begin a mixed college, Mar Dionysius requested the Pope to grant necessary permission to start lower schools jointly:

If it be so a permission granted to establish a great college by them in order not to violate the usage of their order & some lower schools by us & the Catholics jointly to avoid the above mentioned obstacles & spirit of animosity, would be the means of removing all the difficulties.¹³²

Mar Dionysius informed bishop Lavigne that one half of the part of the property would be given to the Catholics for a college and the rest of the property would be utilized to start a school jointly. For this, Mar Dionysius

¹²⁵ For the letter of Aiuti to Nidiry on 25 July 1888, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 406.

¹²⁶ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2032^{R-V}, "Io non credo che Mar Dinisio abbia timore di scrivere a Sua Santità. Egli ha unicamente paura del popolo e del Patriarca, per la ragione che se questi venissero a conoscere le sue intenzioni prima del momento opportuno, tutto il piano della sua azione andrebbe in rovina. Ma io l'ho assicurato chi la S. Sede e V. E. osserveranno il più stretto segreto su questa materia e non faranno certo conoscere le cose pubblico, come già altra volta faceva i Carmelitani." Aiuti to Simeoni on 18 August 1888. Nidiry's letter is quoted by Aiuti. English translation is from C. VARICATTI, *The Suriani Church of India...* 268.

¹²⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2049^R-2052^R. This is the original Malayalam letter with the emblem and the signature of Mar Dionysius, written from Alappuzha.

¹²⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2047-2048, the covering letter of Dionysius to Aiuti on 19 August 1888.

¹²⁹ ACO, *Ibid.*, ff. 2053^R-2056^R. The English translation by Nidiry.

¹³⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2047^V, "The Royal appeal which I mention of in that letter is to come on within two or three months. Therefore, if I am get any help I desire that it should be as early as possible."

¹³¹ For the Italian translation of Aiuti, see ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2034^R-2044^R.

¹³² ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2056.

had sufficient reason, "to convince the Jacobite community that the money collected from them is used properly."¹³³ He also suggested that the administration of the school must be under the two bishops.

In spite of all these assurances, doubting the proposals of Mar Dionysius, Aiuti wrote to Rome that he decided to inform Lavigne not to have any relation at any level with Mar Dionysius and requested guidance from *Propaganda Fide*:

It seems to me that Mar Dionysius after having taken back many churches from the hands of the Protestants, as he narrates in the letter to the Holy Father, he also desires to acquire the glory of having succeeded to begin among the Catholics and the Jacobites, I would say, a certain reconciliation which would follow probably infiltration and stabilise the indifference between the churches. Hence I would be inclined to exhort Msgr. Vicar Apostolic not to accept any union with the Jacobites in that sense...¹³⁴

Again, out of anxiety Aiuti wrote to Rome on 9 November 1888 that such a united action with the Jacobites could create a religious indifference in the Catholic community. Moreover, following Mar Dionysius as indigenous bishop, more Catholics might become Jacobites.¹³⁵ Due to

¹³³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1349^v-1350^r, "In questa occasione M. Lavigne è tornato nuovamente a parlarmi del collegio esponendo come Mar Dionisio propone ora: 1°. che la metà del terreno esistente in Cottayam sia data al Vicario Apostolico in piena proprietà per fondarvi un gran collegio, e 2°. che nell'altra metà si apra una scuola inferiore dipendente dal collegio la quale però dovrebbe avere un carattere misto a fine di salvare l'amor proprio dei Giacobiti e mostrar loro che le collette di denaro fatte in mezzo a loro hanno prodotto un frutto." Aiuti to Simoni on 16 October 1888. Here Aiuti quotes the letter of Lavigne to Aiuti on 8 October 1888, see *Ibid.*, ff. 1353^v-1354^r.

¹³⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1350^r-1351^r, "Mi sta sembrando che Mar Dionisio dopo avere avuto il vanto di aver ripreso dalle mani dei protestanti molte chiese, come narra nella lettera al S. Padre, voglia anche aver la gloria d'essere riuscito ad iniziare tra i Cattolici ed i Giacobiti una certa direi quasi conciliazione per la quale in seguito probabilmente s'infiltrerebbe e stabilirebbe l'indifferenza per l'una e per l'altra chiesa. Onde è che sarei inclinato ad esortare Msgr. Vicario Apostolico di non accettare nessuna unione coi Giacobiti in quel senso, ma non so farmi ardito nel dare il passo senza che l'Eminenza Vostra nella sua profonda penetrazione e lunga esperienza di queste cose non avrà avuto la bontà di accennarmi la via, che dovrò seguire." Aiuti to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* on 16 October 1888.

¹³⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1357^v, "In Mar Dionisio poi s'aggiunge altresì la smania grandissima di potere avere il vanto di avere inaugurato una unione qualunque cattolica Giacobita. Non saprei dire con sicurezza quale nell'animo di Mar Dionisio sia la vera ragione di tale smania, ma posso assicurare l'Eminenza Vostra che qualsiasi unione dei Cattolici coi Giacobiti porterebbe seco conseguenze funestissime. La prima sarebbe l'indifferenza religiosa e la seconda il conseguente imminente pericolo che in un giorno di entusiasmo i Giacobiti traessero seco i cattolici nella perdizione. Quel che fin d'ora ha trattenuto i siriani cattolici dall'unirsi ai loro fratelli Giacobiti non ostante l'ardente loro brama di avere un vescovo del loro rito e nazione è stata la barriera di separazione e di avversione che dall'autorità ecclesiastica fu mantenuta alta tra il Cattolicissimo il Giacobitismo. Una volta atterrata questa, il Cattolicissimo soffrirebbe moltissime perdite tra i siriani, i quali in un dato momento di contraddizione

continuous objection from all areas, Emmanuel Nidiry understood well, how difficult it is to move ahead with the new association. Therefore, he tried to dissuade Mar Dionysius from the project of mixed school and he wrote to Lavigne:

In these days I was trying to dissuade Mar Dionysius and Mr Darragh from their intention of establishing a lower school for both the Catholics and Jacobites in the said property with or without the consent of your Lordship on the ground that it being a social affair the bishop has no more authority than to examine and correct, if things go against faith and morality are taught.¹³⁶

6.4. The Negative Response of Rome and the Reaction of Mar Dionysius

The response from Rome to the letter of Mar Dionysius was not positive. Based on the instructions received from Rome¹³⁷ Aiuti informed Lavigne that even in the case of the school there should not be any relation with the Jacobites.¹³⁸ Informing the decisions of Rome, Aiuti wrote to Nidiry on 6 November 1888 that Holy See already entrusted the Apostolic Vicars to start schools for the instruction of the youth and asked Nidiry to inform Mar Dionysius that the admission in the school would be opened to Jacobites on the basis of certain conditions. The letter further affirmed the negative response of the Holy See to the question of a mixed college by the association. Moreover the letter made it clear not to expect Rupees 10,000 from the Holy See which Mar Dionysius requested as a help from Rome.¹³⁹

o di eccitamento probabilmente passerebbero in massa sotto il prelado Giacobita." Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 9 November 1888.

¹³⁶ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, VI, 6, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Lavigne on 30 October 1888. Emmanuel Nidiry informed the same to Aiuti on 27 October 1888, ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f.1360^v, letter of Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 November 1888.

¹³⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, ff. 335^v-336, 21 September 1888, reply to Mar Dionysius.

¹³⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1360^v, Aiuti to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 November 1888.

¹³⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1363^{rv}, "Mi è altresì pervenuta la sua pregiatissima del 30 u.d. dalla quale ho appreso con piacere come ella stiasi adoperando da oltre tre settimane per indurre. Mar Dionisio a recedere dal proposito di stabilire una scuola bassa nella nota proprietà esistente in Cottayam. Tali suoi sforzi mio caro reverendo sono tanto più lodevoli in questo che corrispondono pienamente alle disposizioni del S. Padre su quest'argomento. Intanto a siffatte scuole faccia a sua Grazia che il S. Padre nella sua sollecitudine verso i Malabaresi non ha perduto di vista il bisogno di istruzione che si sente fra loro, che inerendo alle istruzioni ricevute, i due vicari apostolici si daranno premura di aprire tali scuole le quali prepareranno la gioventù all'insegnamento superiore, che anche i Giacobiti se vogliono potranno esservi ammessi, osservando le norme e condizioni prescritte per simili casi. La prego pure di dire a Sua Grazia che non vi è nessuna probabilità di ottenere almeno per ora, le 10000 rupie che Essa desidererebbe. Altri particolari intorno alla risposta del S. Padre li darò a sua grazia, quando mi recherò nel Malabar. Per adesso basta che sappia bene che la risposta di Sua Santità quanto alle

Emmanuel Nidiry gave the word for word translation of the letter to Mar Dionysius. He was not pleased with the reply from Rome. Therefore Emmanuel Nidiry reported Mar Dionysius' reaction to Rome's reply:

Since His Grace already had received 10,000 Rupees from one friend and another promised to give him an additional Rupees 10,000, that part of the letter of Your Excellency concerning 10,000 Rupees did not create any impression on him. But His Grace declared to me that his hope in the magnanimity of the Holy See was deluded and that he found a private individual friend more truthful, and that if he had placed his whole confidence in the Holy See only, he would now be a victim of the wickedness of the Protestants.¹⁴⁰

The letter of Rome did not create a good impression on Mar Dionysius. He expressed his discontentment on Rome's refusal even to the idea of the lower school jointly by the Catholics and the Jacobites under the name of national association of Malabar. He told Nidiry:

That to him no other alternative remains than that of opening a school in the place that was previously bought with the purpose of establishing a school under the title 'School of National Union'. If the Catholics are not ready to join this project and not interested to send their children to this school, they can take any part of the property of the Kottayam as a donation of Mr. Dharrah.¹⁴¹

scuole è negativa, e che per le 10000 rupie non c'è speranza." Aiuti to Nidiry on 6 November 1888. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, ff. 335^v-336, 21 September 1888, reply to Mar Dionysius. For the Malayalam translation of the letter, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 440-442.

¹⁴⁰ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* (1890-1892) 3, fasc. 2, f. 2058^r, "Appena ricevutala mi recai da Mar Dionisio, che allora trovai in Kottoyam, e gliene feci la traduzione parola per parola. Siccome Sua Grazia trovai di aver ricevuto diecimila Rupie da un amico e siccome pure gli era stata fatta da un altro la promessa di altre diecimila Rupie, la parte della lettera di V.E. concernente le diecimila Rupie non gli fece grande impressione, Sua Grazia mi esprime solamente che le sue speranze nella magnanimità della S. Sede erano state deluse e che aveva trovato più verace un privato individuale amico, e che se egli aveva riposto tutta la sua fiducia unicamente nella s. sede, ora sarebbe preda della malvagità dei protestanti." Copy of the Nidiry to Aiuti on 16 November 1888. Aiuti sent its Italian version, *Ibid.*, 2058^r-2059^v, with a covering letter. Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 2057^{r-v}. The citation is from the Italian version of Aiuti. The Italian translation of Nidiry's letter is given as appendix II.

¹⁴¹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 2, f. 2058^{r-v}, "Quanto alla parte della stessa lettera la quale non accorda l'erezione di una scuola inferiore per l'unione nazionale cattolica Giacobita sua grazia mi esprime il più profondo dispiacere, e mi disse che egli ormai non ha altra alternativa che quella di aprire una scuola nello stesso luogo, che precedentemente era stato comprato allo scopo di stabilirvi una scuola sotto il titolo di Scuola Dell'Unione Nazionale, che se i cattolici non ameranno di unirvi a quest' opera ne vorranno mandare i loro figli a siffatta scuola, allora prenderanno la parte che loro compete tanto nella comune proprietà esistente in Cottoyam come nella donazione di Mr. Darragh." Copy of the Nidiry to Aiuti on 16 November 1888.

Meanwhile, Mr. Dharrah told him to start a school for the Jacobites in case the Catholics refused to join under the national union and promised to pay for the building and its maintenance.¹⁴² Nidiry concludes the letter with deep grief:

Finally, Mar Dionysius with a profound sigh and with tears in his eyes told me: "Dear Father Nidiry, let us not be discouraged, but let us hope that our works of these preceding 12 years will be crowned with good success through the grace of the almighty God; but let us pray also that He may illuminate the mind of those dignitaries of the Catholic Church, so that they may perceive that this is the better opportunity and these are the better means to unite the Suriani Jacobites to their Catholic brothers."¹⁴³

The negative response of Rome to the letter of Mar Dionysius certainly decelerated the unification movement. But with hope Mar Dionysius continued his efforts for reunification. Meanwhile Nidiry informed Aiuti of the new development in Malankara:

In order to avert the unification movement of Jacobite community with the Catholics and to check the relations of Jacobite priests with bishop Lavigne and Mani Nidiry, the Jacobite bishops planned to convene a synod. Therefore if the permission is granted all of a sudden either to Your Grace [Aiuti] or to Msgr. Lavinge for the absolution of the married clergy, it would help to receive many Jacobite priests to Catholic communion before the synod and thereby with the help new converted priests to make propagation against synod.¹⁴⁴

7. Emmanuel Nidiry Continues His Efforts for Unification

Though there was strong opposition from the part of Rome to the unification efforts of Syrian National Union Association, Nidiry continued his efforts to bring back the separate brethren to the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁵ The letter of three Jacobite priests, re-united to the Catholic Communion,

¹⁴² Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 2, f. 2058^v.

¹⁴³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 2, f. 2059, "In fine M. Dionisio con profondo sospiro e colle lagrime agli occhi mi disse: "Caro Padre Nidiry non ci scoraggiamo, ma speriamo che i nostri lavori di questi ultimi 12 anni saranno coronati di buon successo per la grazia di Dio Onnipotente, ma preghiamo altresì che Egli illumini la mente dei dignitari della Chiesa Cattolica, affinché i medesimi comprendano che questa è la migliore opportunità e questi sono i migliori mezzi per unire i soriani Giacobiti ai loro fratelli cattolici." Copy of the Nidiry to Aiuti on 16 November 1888. English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...* 269.

¹⁴⁴ Letter of Nidiry to Aiuti on 29 August 1890, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 541.

¹⁴⁵ Letter of Nidiry to Aiuti on 9 August 1890, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 535.

reveals the endeavours of Emmanuel Nidiry and the obstacles for further conversions.¹⁴⁶ They wrote:

II. The Carmelite missionaries and especially the good Bishop Marsellinus among them, had laboured much to convert the Jacobites, but as they are not the natives of the country and of the Syrian rite, the Jacobites had not confidence in them and so their labours were not successful.

III. Fr Nidiry, as soon as he became a priest, began to make some preparations for the conversion of the Jacobites, by courting the friendship of all the Jacobite Bishops, priests and chief lay men by visiting and helping them, by his advises and the influence he has with the Travancore and Cochin governments and he availed himself of all opportunities he had to exhort them directly or indirectly to the union through the Catholic Faith.¹⁴⁷

In their letter they expressed their fear that if that occasion was not utilized well there would be no hope of reuniting the Jacobites to the Catholic Church in the future. Therefore, "if the Holy See entrust to Fr Nidiry or to some other native Syrian priests, the great work of labouring for the conversion of the Jacobites," there would be better results, with hope they wrote.¹⁴⁸

7.1. The Attempt of Nidiry for the Reunion of Mar Abdiso

Antony Thondanat, born circa 1827 in Anakallingal near Bharananganam, was ordained a priest under Verapoly c. 1850. He accompanied *Kathanar* Kudakkachira Antony to Babel in 1857 and returned to Malabar with Rocos in 1861. When the excommunicated Rokkos returned to Babel in 1862, Thondanat followed him. There he was consecrated bishop by the Nestorian Patriarch in 1862 and took the name Mar Abdiso. Mar Abdiso returned to Malabar in 1863, but the people did not accept him and later he submitted to Verapoly in 1865.

When Antony Thondanatt returned to Kerala after his consecration as Mar Abdiso in 1863, the faithful of Malabar did not accept him. It was a clear proof for the obedience and the submission of the Surianis to the Roman Pontiff. Owing to his continuous request on 18 February 1865,

¹⁴⁶ The returned priests are Abraham Edampadam, Joseph Chamakala and George Karapulay. Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 1, ff. 1880^R-1882^R, the letter of the above mentioned three priests to Aiuti on 28 June 1891. It was a strictly confidential letter. Cf. also V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 592. The letter is given as appendix III.

¹⁴⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 1, f. 1880^V. Original in English.

¹⁴⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, fasc. 1, ff. 1880^R-1882^R.

Propaganda Fide gave Msgr. Bacinelli, the then apostolic vicar of Verapoly the necessary faculty to absolve Mar Abdiso. He was absolved and received as an ordinary priest in Mannanam TOCD convent.¹⁴⁹ Later in a letter of thanksgiving to the *Propaganda*, Bacinelli wrote about Mar Abdiso, “he continues to remain withdrawn in the religious house, most content to have re-entered into the vineyard of Jesus Christ and in the way of salvation.”¹⁵⁰ Nine years after the reunion of Antony Thondanat, on 16 February 1874 Mellano wrote to Rome, appreciating him:

This *Kathanar* Antony now behaves well and is in a chapel, which I will now make a parish for greater convenience of those Christians. I visited that [church] the other day and above all I liked the neatness, a very extraordinary thing in this land, with which he kept the church and its possessions.¹⁵¹

But when Mellus arrived in Malabar, Antony again changed his mind and joined him. About this Mellano wrote, “I believed that he was truly converted as another Saul, remaining so content that it even led to generating envy among other *Kathanars*. He lives in Thrissur in the company of Mellus, from whom, however, there is little to fear.”¹⁵² Later, after four years of association with Mellus, for a second time he reunited with the Catholic Church.¹⁵³ Consequently, many parishes, which embraced Mellusian schism, including *Kathanar* Palakunnel Mathai Mariam, the vicar general of Mellus returned to the vicariate apostolic of Verapoly.¹⁵⁴ The Holy See was also happy about the conversion of Antony Thondanatt.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, f. 5.

¹⁵⁰ ACO, ACTA 1888, vol. 19, f. 6, “Egli prosegue a starsene ritirato nel convento, contentissimo di essere rientrato nell’orile di Gesù Cristo e nella via di salute.” Letter of Bacinelli to Barnabò, on 24 September 1865. Cf. also ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 39.

¹⁵¹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 244, “Questo Cattenar Antonio ora si diporta bene; è in una cappella che ora la farò parrocchia per maggior comodità di quei cristiani, l’ho visitato l’altro giorno, e mi è piaciuto soprattutto la pulizia, ben straordinaria cosa in questi prati, con cui tiene la chiesa e gli oggetti appartenenti ad essa.” Letter of Mellano to Alessandro Barnabò, the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide*.

¹⁵² ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 332, “Due dei miei Cattanari si sono recentemente uniti al Mellus, ed uno di questi è quel celebre Antonio consacrato vescovo in Baghdad da Patriarca Giacobita, di cui ebbi occasione di scrivere tante lodi l’anno scorso stando in visita nella chiesa di Cadelnatto. Io lo credevo veramente convertito come un altro Saulo, e ne era rimasto così contento che l’aveva favorito fino a far nascere l’invidia fra gli altri Cattanari, ed abita in Trichoor in compagnia di Mellus, di lui però vi è poco a temere.” Mellano to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* on 20 January 1875.

¹⁵³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 834.

¹⁵⁴ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 759.

¹⁵⁵ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1878, vol. 11, f. 383^v.

After the reunion, Antony Thondanatt served as an ordinary priest in his parish Anakallumkal until 10 January 1882, when again he changed his loyalty from Verapoly to Mellus. Understanding the lack of pastors to lead the communities of north, Mellus called Antony Thondanatt to Trichur and requested him to take care of the Mellusians of the south. Mar Abdiso Thondanatt, the new auxiliary of Mellus started administering the Mellusians of the south by staying at Elamthottam.¹⁵⁶ On 5 March 1882, Mellus returned from Malabar entrusting the Mellusians to Mar Abdiso Thondanatt and the Chaldean monk Augustine.¹⁵⁷ Though Mellus himself left the schism his followers continued under the leadership of Mar Abdiso Thondanatt.

While Mar Abdiso Thondanatt was staying in Elamthottam near Palai in the Kottayam vicariate on 8 September 1887, Emmanuel Nidiry secretly visited Mar Abdiso Thondanatt to discuss the issue of reunion¹⁵⁸ and he presented his concerns to Nidiry in detail:

1. That he has decided and is determined not to submit again to any Carmelite prelate, because for a long time the Carmelites treated him badly, and he considered this as the underlying reason for the state, which prevailed.
2. Since his consecration is valid, he cannot permit that those who have been ordained by him are treated as non-ordained.
3. He cannot renounce the episcopal dress, which he wears now.
4. That I (Nidiry) and the religious house of Mannanam may make a contract with him; guaranteeing him residency and subsistence under well-determined conditions.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ L. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 24; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 756. Here the author gives the list of the priests and the deacons who joined the schism.

¹⁵⁷ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 761.

¹⁵⁸ ACO, *Scritture Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2096^v-2097, Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890, here he quotes the letter of Nidiry on 29 August 1890; ACO, *ACTA*, 1888, vol. 19, 7^v-8, copy of the letter of Nidiry.

¹⁵⁹ ACO, *ACTA*, 1888, vol. 19, ff. 8 & 18, "1. Ch'egli ha risoluto e determinato di non sottomettersi mai più a nessun Prelato Carmelitano, avendolo i carmelitani trattato male per lungo tempo: i quali cattivi trattamenti sono la causa per cui egli trovasi in questo stato. 2. La sua consacrazione essendo valida, non può permettere che quelli i quali sono stati ordinati da lui sino trattati come non ordinati. 3. Egli non può rinunziare a vestire l'abito da vescovo, che porta presentemente. 4. Che io (Nidiry) ed il convento di Mannanam facciamo un contratto con lui, e gli garantiamo l'abitazione ed il mantenimento sotto le condizioni esposte."

7.2. The Conference of the Propaganda on 6 February 1888

Aware of the seriousness of the issue and his inability to give necessary instruction regarding the conversion of Mar Abdiso Thondanatt,¹⁶⁰ the Prefect of the Congregation convened a general meeting on 6 February 1888. In the meeting of the Cardinals, they discussed the demands of Mar Abdiso¹⁶¹ and decided to give Aiuti the faculty to receive him after the completion of the necessary spiritual demands of the Holy See. Aiuti was also given the capacity to absolve him from ecclesiastical punishments. However, no Episcopal ministry or insignia would be granted to Mar Abdiso.¹⁶²

The Prefect of the Congregation on 10 February 1888 communicated to Aiuti the decisions and the directives of the general meeting of the *Propaganda* as follows:

1. Keeping the faculty secret, Aiuti should above all expect that Thondanatt seek reconciliation with the Catholic Church; 2. Before using the faculty itself, he was to make arrangements with the apostolic vicar, delegating him to absolve when he believed it to be opportune; 3. He should refuse permission to Thondanatt to continue using even the simple Episcopal dress and, if that created an insurmountable difficulty, refer it to the Congregation; 4. Aiuti should assure him of subsistence and residence in a religious house for which Aiuti was authorized to effect an agreement with the apostolic vicars; 5. Regarding those who were ordained by Thondanatt, Aiuti should reply that, whenever those priests wished to be converted, it was reserved for the Holy See to dispense them from the irregularity. In the meantime, Aiuti should secretly collect for the Congregation the essential information regarding the validity of the ordination and the quality of the ordained; 6. Aiuti should continue to act so that the Suriani people might be instructed on the advantages that would derive from the Pontifical Brief of May 20, 1887, and to encourage the schismatics to convert.¹⁶³

Mar Abdiso Thondanatt, who did not want to be placed under the Carmelite bishops, now switched off Emmanuel Nidiry and turned to

¹⁶⁰ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21. f. 12, letter to Aiuti on 9 January 1888.

¹⁶¹ For the procedure of the discussion and resolutions, see ACO, *ACTA*, 1888, vol. 19, 8-9^v.

¹⁶² ACO, *ACTA*, 1888, vol. 19, 9^r.

¹⁶³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21. f. 61^v, letter to Aiuti on 10 February 1888. English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 279-280.

Marcellino Berardi, ocd., and found more confidence in him for his conversion.¹⁶⁴

7.3. Emmanuel Nidiry and Lavigne Encounter Abdiso Thondantt at Palai

Emmanuel Nidiry, continued his work for the conversion and reunion of Mar Abdiso Thondanat even after he became the first pontifical vicar general of the vicariate of Kottayam.¹⁶⁵ The first Pontifical Mass of the new vicar general was arranged on 14 November 1889. Palai was chosen as the venue, for two reasons. Firstly, Palai was an important centre of the Surianis; secondly, it was near the abode of the schismatic bishop Mar Abdiso. It was generally believed that the historic ceremony would attract many schismatics to the Catholic communion. Moreover, a meeting of two bishops, Lavigne and Abdiso under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry was arranged there.¹⁶⁶

On 13 November, the eve of the first Pontifical Mass by Emmanuel Nidiry, Mar Abdiso reached the Palai church. He had preliminary discussions with Emmanuel Nidiry, Varkey Tharakan and others.¹⁶⁷ About the discussion Lavigne reported that they talked until 3 o'clock in the morning.¹⁶⁸ Mar Abdiso laid down his conditions: recognition of his Episcopal status and a monthly allowance. The next day after the Pontifical Mass, the two bishops met together. Lavigne enquired whether he had come to any conclusion. Abdiso replied, "I want to be reconciled but only on certain conditions which I have communicated to Fr Nidiry, Mr. Parayil Tharakan and others." A few minutes later, he took his leave.¹⁶⁹

After witnessing to the dramatic movements Lavigne wrote to Aiuti and expressed his doubts about Mar Abdiso's sincerity.¹⁷⁰ Mar Abdiso soon wrote a letter to Varkey Parayil, informing that he was in continuous contact with Marcellino for his conversion and requested his financial help of Rupees 300 to settle the debts in Elamthottam, and expressed that it would help

¹⁶⁴ For the details, see C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 280-285.

¹⁶⁵ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 496.

¹⁶⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 496-497.

¹⁶⁷ L. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 25.

¹⁶⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2121^R, letter of Lavigne to Aiuti on 2 December 1889.

¹⁶⁹ L. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 26.

¹⁷⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2119, copy of the letter of Lavigne to Aiuti on 16 November 1889; *Ibid.*, ff. 2110-2113, copy of Lavigne to Aiuti on 2 December 1889.

him to start soon for Verapoly.¹⁷¹ After getting the promise of loan from Varkey Parayil, he continued to maintain the same position without relating to Verapoly. Learning this Marcellino wrote that delay without sufficient cause could create a bad impression and the apostolic delegate would doubt his sincerity.¹⁷²

Meanwhile, due to the continuous request of the followers of Mellus, Mar Abdiso moved to Trichur without hearing the advice of Marcellino.¹⁷³ On 29 December 1889, Marcellino informed Aiuti of the sad news that Mar Abdiso gave ordination even to priesthood.¹⁷⁴ With hope, Aiuti again requested to Marcellino to contact Mar Abdiso,¹⁷⁵ whose reply was negative. Marcellino had no more hope for the conversion of Mar Abdiso and he informed the same to Aiuti.¹⁷⁶

7.4. The Final Attempt through Emmanuel Nidiry

In this context Aiuti wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry to find out a better solution either for the reunion of Mar Abdiso or for his departure from Malabar.¹⁷⁷ Emmanuel Nidiry planned a new project, to initiate court proceedings against Mar Abdiso. Nidiry believed that Mar Abdiso as the successor of Mellus could be sued to pay around 5000/- rupees which Mellus was fined to pay in the Plassanal church case;¹⁷⁸ this would force Mar Abdiso to convert or leave Malabar.¹⁷⁹ Aiuti gave his blessings to the new mission

¹⁷¹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2123-2124, copy of Mar Abdiso's letter to Parayil on 15 November 1889, Allegato 'I' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, ff. 2126-2128, copy of the letter of Marcellino to Aiuti on 15 December 1889, enclosure 'L' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷³ Marcellino already informed him if the people from Trichur wanted him there, it was only to ordain there clerics and that that if he went, he would not reunite. Cf. ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2129-2130, copy of Marcellino's letter to Aiuti on 19 December 1889, with a copy of his letter to Mar Abdiso on 19 December 1889, enclosure 'M' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷⁴ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2133, copy of Marcellino to Aiuti, enclosure 'O' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 2096, Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷⁶ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2134-2135, copy of Marcellino to Aiuti on 10 January 1890, enclosure 'P' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2096, Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁷⁸ When Antony Thondanatt became the head of the north part of Mellus schism, he occupied the Plassanal church. In order to recapture the church, under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry a suit was filed. The court judgment was in favour of Catholics and the schismatic groups were asked to meet the court expenses of the other party. But by this time Mellus had already left Malabar. For details of Plassanal church case, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 360-364.

¹⁷⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 540-541.

of Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile doubting the sincerity of Mar Abdiso, Nidiry wrote to Aiuti: "he is unstable, having a nature of frequently changing his own ideas. Therefore, only out of the forceful circumstances his conversion is possible."¹⁸¹ After getting the letter of Aiuti dated 7 September 1890, the *Propaganda* Congregation discussed the issue and its decision was reflected in a small note, "It is necessary to proceed with caution in accepting such conversions."¹⁸² After all these continued efforts the dream of Emmanuel Nidiry did not realize; the reunion of Mar Abdiso did not happen. Thus, there added an indelible mark in the history of the Suriani Church of Malabar.

8. Further Attempt for the Reunion of Mar Dionysius

Though the response of his letter to Holy Father was negative, Mar Dionysius continued his attempts for the reunion. He asked Aiuti for an extract of the decisions of the Congregation. Aiuti sent it through Nidiry and asked him to translate it into Malayalam and to help him as far as possible.¹⁸³ Nidiry wrote to Aiuti¹⁸⁴ with the reply of Mar Dionysius expressing his gratitude for the favours and for the copies of missal. In the same letter he also conveyed his desire to visit the Holy Land and the Eternal City with Nidiry:

Father Nidiry has told me that he will make a short visit in Europe with some of his ecclesiastical colleagues. Since a long time I desire to visit the Holy land and the Eternal City. As I have told You before, in my journey I would like to be accompanied only by Father Nidiry, without the other priests from Malabar accompanying us, because it is my intention to keep secret everything what I will do during my journey. Since the verdict of the judge on the great trial has not yet been pronounced, which is pending in the Thiruvithamcore tribunal, I would not be able to embark

¹⁸⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2096^v-2099, Aiuti to Simeoni on 7 September 1890.

¹⁸¹ Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 540.

¹⁸² "Bisogna proceder con cautela nell'accettar quale tali conversioni." Cf. *Ibid.*, Protocol R. O. 1520^v [f. 2136, iiv] note of the congregation dated on 16 November 1890.

¹⁸³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2149^v-2150, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890; Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 2159, copy and version of Aiuti to Nidiry on 31 March 1889, enclosure A of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890; *Ibid.*, f. 2160, copy of Aiuti to Mar Dionysius through Nidiry on 31 March 1889, enclosure 'B' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁸⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2150, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

now. I shall be grateful to You if the journey of Father Nidiry to Rome could be postponed.¹⁸⁵

Aiuti had no objection regarding the trip of Mar Dionysius to Rome with Emmanuel Nidiry, provided Lavigne also agreed.¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the journey of Nidiry was not realized.¹⁸⁷ In the meantime, Rome insisted on strict regulations on Catholics regarding their relationship with Jacobites¹⁸⁸ and exhorted the apostolic vicars of Kottayam and Trichur for their implementation.¹⁸⁹ Though the union of Jacobites and Catholics for the educational institutions was prohibited by the Holy See, in other circumstances the cooperation was allowed with the motive of the formation of the National Union.¹⁹⁰ But in all conditions the Surianis were strictly forbidden:

1. to cooperate with the Jacobites in the religious ceremonies that they make in their houses on the occasion of the death of some heretics and to give on various occasions to the priest or to others the sign of peace called *casturi*;
2. to kindle lamps and to hang out the clothes on the streets when Jacobites' processions pass in front of the Catholics' houses; and
3. to take part in the nuptial feasts of Jacobites or to go to their churches when they celebrate their liturgical functions.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2161^v, "Il sacerdote Nidiry mi ha detto che egli ed alcuni suoi colleghi ecclesiastici andranno fra breve in Europa. Da molto tempo desidero di visitare la Terra Santa e la Città Eterna. Come già le ho detto altra volta, nel mio viaggio vorrei essere accompagnato dal sacerdote Nidiry solo, senza che venissero con noi altri preti del Malabar, perchè è mia intenzione di tener segreto tutto quel che farò durante il mio viaggio. Siccome ancora non è stata pronunziata dal giudice la sentenza gran processo, che ho pendente nel tribunale di Travancor, così non poter partire per ora. Le sarò quindi riconoscente, se il viaggio di sacerdote Nidiry a Roma vera posposto." Version of Mar Dionysius to Aiuti on 14 April 1889, enclosure 'C' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. In this letter, Aiuti mentioned the trip of Nidiry to Rome with a group of pilgrims from Kottayam.

¹⁸⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2151, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁸⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2151^v, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁸⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1431f. Aiuti to Simeoni on 13 April 1889.

¹⁸⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2151^v-2152, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 2163, copy of Aiuti to Lavigne and Medlycott on 19 June 1889, enclosure 'D' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁹¹ ACO, *Scritture Riformate Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2163, "Ai Cattolici Soriani fu per questo sempre proibito 1 di unirsi ai Giacobiti nelle Cerimonie religiose, che si fanno nelle loro case in occasione della morte di qualche eretico e di dare nelle varie circostanze al Sacerdote e agli altri il segno di pace che essi chiamano Casere, 2° di accender lumi e stender panni sulle strade quando le processioni dei Giacobiti passano davanti alle case dei Cattolici, e 3° di intervenire alle feste nuziali che fanno i Giacobiti e di andare nelle loro chiese quando celebrano i loro uffici." Copy of Aiuti to Lavigne and Medlycott on 19 June 1889, enclosure 'D' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. Cf. also V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 467-468.

The fear and misunderstanding of Aiuti that all Surianis of Malabar might unite with Jacobites and Mar Dionysius might become their spiritual head under the title of Patriarch of Malabar,¹⁹² forced him to introduce the regulations on Catholic-Jacobite relations in the daily life of the faithful through the apostolic vicars.¹⁹³ The two apostolic vicars Lavigne and Medlycott published the letter of Aiuti with a pastoral letter. Aiuti wrote to Rome about the reaction of Mar Dionysius to the pastoral letter:

I learned a little later that Mar Dionysius found it very much annoying that such a publication had definitively and irreparably shattered his hope for the national union according to his perception. This prelate has a fixed idea, as is well known, to make a union of Jacobites and Catholics of Malabar in one and single nation, and to become the spiritual head of the same under the possible name of the Jacobite Patriarch of Malabar, reuniting under him, all united together in schism, Catholics and Jacobites.¹⁹⁴

Aiuti asked Nidiry for more information¹⁹⁵ on Mar Dionysius, especially about his internal disposition after the pastoral letter. Nidiry, after visiting Mar Dionysius, informed Aiuti of his internal disposition.¹⁹⁶ Nidiry quotes the words of Mar Dionysius:

We both have done whatever we could to unite our nation, and those who oppose us with their circulars and proclamations will be responsible before the Eternal Judge for their perfidious acts. On the other hand, if they had prepared my people with preaching and instruction, how much more easily the day of union and peace would progress.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1403^R, "Per me Mar Dionisio è stato finora un vero enigma e temo che lo sarà sempre... oltre diche egli è un uomo sempre titubante ed indeciso. Ha in mente l'idea fissa di fare l'unione dei Giacobiti e cattolici del Malabar in una sola nazione, e di divenire egli stesso il Capo spirituale sotto il nome di Patriarcha del Malabar." Aiuti to Simeoni on 30 March 1889.

¹⁹³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2163^V, copy of Aiuti to Lavigne and Medlycott on 19 June 1889, enclosure 'D' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁹⁴ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2152, "Seppi poco dopo che a Mar Dionisio riusciva assai incomoda siffatta pubblicazione, come quella che definitivamente ed irreparabilmente rompeva le sue speranze per l'unione nazionale sul senso suo. Questo Prelato ha l'idea fissa, così è stato, di fare l'unione dei Giacobiti e Cattolici del Malabar in una sola nazione e di divenire il Capo spirituale della medesima possibilmente sotto il nome di Patriarca Giacobita del Malabar, riunendo sotto di lui tutti, riunalgamoi insieme nello scisma, Cattolici e Giacobiti." Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. English translation is from C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India...* 272.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 2165^{R-V}, copy of Aiuti to Nidiry on 8 March 1890. It was personal and reserved letter of Aiuti.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. V. C. GEOGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 555.

¹⁹⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2154, "Noi abbiamo fatto ambedue tutto quel che era in nostro potere per unire la nostra nazione, e quelli che ci fanno opposizione colle loro circolari e coi loro proclami saranno responsabili dinanzi all'Eterno Giudice per i loro atti sleali, se essi avessero

Moreover, understanding the reaction of Mar Dionysius to Aiuti's letter and to the pastoral letter of Lavigne, Nidiry earnestly tried to convince him. He explains:

I understood that he was referring to Your Excellency's letter and to the pastoral letter of Msgr. Lavigne, and I took the trouble to convince him that none of the two letters had the least intention to offend him or me through those publications; otherwise, I would not have been nominated vicar general, etc. Although my arguments might have convinced him, still he concluded the colloquium telling me that since his people were annoyed with the Catholic authority because of such a publication, it needed time to appease them and required additional patience on our part.¹⁹⁸

Nidiry continued in his letter that Mar Dionysius became more acceptable in his community after he won the case against Mar Athanasius, the protestant Jacobite bishop, in the high court of Trivandrum. Since he was busy with celebrations of the victory, Nidiry could not meet him personally.¹⁹⁹ With a great desperation he narrated the story of his encounter with Mar Dionysius.

And then he told me: our ancestors were governed by bishops of our nation. The Latins were envious and they changed the things in the Synod of Diamper. After this our ancestors humbly requested repeatedly to the Holy Father in Rome for about half a century to have a Bishop of their own nation, and after having seen that their just supplications were not granted, they unanimously swore in Mattanchey that anymore they would subdue themselves to the Latin bishops and they made some Bishops to come from the Holy See of Antiochia, whose successors continue until now to govern our nation.²⁰⁰

invece preparato il mio popolo colla predicazione e coll'istruzione, quanto più facilmente si sarebbe andato approssimando il giorno dell'unione e della pace." Copy and version of Nidiry to Aiuti on 18 April 1890, cited by Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

¹⁹⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2154^{R-V}, "Compresi che egli si riferiva alla lettera di V. E. ed alla pastorale di Msgr. Lavigne, e mi adoperai a persuaderlo che nessuno dei due avevano avuto la minima intenzione di offendere lui o me per quella pubblicazione, altrimenti io non sarei poi stato nominato Vicario Generale, etc. Quantunque i miei argomenti lo avessero convinto, tuttavia egli chiuse il colloquio con il dirmi che siccome il suo popolo era rimasto irritato contro le autorità cattoliche a motivo di tale pubblicazione ci voleva qualche tempo per pacificarlo e che dovevamo avere pazienza per un po' di tempo ancora." Copy and version of Nidiry to Aiuti on 18 April 1890, cited by Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. For the Malayalam translation of the letter, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 533.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2154^V, for the Malayalam translation of the letter, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 533.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 2166^{R-V}, "E poi mi disse: i nostri antenati furono governati da vescovi della nostra stessa nazione. I Latini che erano invidiosi, cambiarono le cose nel Sinodo di Diamper. I nostri antenati dopo di aver

Mar Dionysius continued:

Instead all of you, breaking such an oath again went under Latin bishops and did everything possible to have a native bishop with the sanction of Rome. You have not succeeded to have any and are still under Latins, although you go on saying that you hope finally to see your prayers granted.²⁰¹

Being so (they are textual words) how could one believe your words, which are contrary to the experience of around three centuries? It is a great folly to think that I may give mitre to place under the pillow of the Latin bishops so that they may sleep over it with more confidence. If you trust the Latin bishops and try to convert my priests before obtaining a native bishop, you will be considered as a violator of the oath of our ancestors and as an enemy of the freedom and dignity of our nation.²⁰²

This statement of Mar Dionysius became a sound proof for Aiuti to affirm his doubt about the sincerity and steadiness of Mar Dionysius. Aiuti who expressed previously his joy: "how cheerful it would be if the Jacobites also returned to the bosom of the Holy Mother, the Church,"²⁰³ finally, made a comment that "without a very special miracle from the Grace of God, Mar Dionysius would never convert."²⁰⁴ After getting the report from

umilmente pregato la S. Sede di Roma con ripetute suppliche, per lo spazio di circa mezzo secolo a fine di avere un Vescovo della loro propria nazione, e dopo aver veduto che le loro giuste suppliche non venivano esaudite, giurarono unanimemente in Mettanchey che mai più si sottometterebbero ai vescovi latini e fecero venire alcuni Vescovi della S. Sede di Antiochia, i successori dei quali continuano tutt'ora a governare la nostra nazione." Italian version of Nidiry to Aiuti on 9 August 1890, enclosure 'F' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890; Cf. also, *Ibid.*, f. 2155, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. Cf. also, V. C. GEOGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 554.

²⁰¹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2166^v, "Voi altri invece che rompendo un tal giuramento andaste di nuovo sotto i prelati latini, e faceste tutto il possibile per avere un vescovo nativo colla sanzione di Roma, non siete riusciti a nulla, siete ancora sotto i latini, sebbene andiate dicendo che avete speranza di vedere finalmente esaudite le vostre preghiere." Italian version of Nidiry to Aiuti on 9 August 1890, enclosure 'F' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890; Cf. also, *Ibid.*, f. 2155, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

²⁰² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2155^{r-v}, "Stando così le cose (sono parole testuali) come si potrà credere alle vostre parole, che sono contrarie all'esperienza circa tre secoli? L'una grande follia il pensare che io dia la mia mitra per farla porre sotto il cuscino dei vescovi latini affinché i medesimi possano dormire sopra con maggior sicurezza. Se Ella presta fede ai prelati latini e tenta di convertire i miei preti prima di aver ottenuto un vescovo nativo, dovrà esser considerato come un violatore del giuramento dei nostri antenati, e come un nemico della libertà e dignità della nostra nazione." Italian version of Nidiry to Aiuti on 9 August 1890, enclosure 'F' of Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890; Cf. also, *Ibid.*, f. 2166^v-2167^r, Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890. The underline is seen in the version of Aiuti.

²⁰³ ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31*, 5. Letter of Aiuti to Emmanuel Nidiry on 14 January 1888.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 2155^v - 2156, "Sembra pertanto che senza un miracolo specialissimo della grazia di Dio, Mar Dionisio non si convertiva." Aiuti to Simeoni on 10 September 1890.

Aiuti, *Propaganda* added the following observation: "The consultation received; it is necessary to proceed with caution before recognizing the sincerity of such conversions."²⁰⁵

Still Nidiry continued his unification efforts with much enthusiasm. He was acceptable to the Jacobites like one of their own leaders. He spent much time in conversation with the Jacobite priests and met them personally.²⁰⁶ He was given a warm welcome in main Jacobite centers like Tripunithra, Ampalloor, Kandanad, Mulanthuruthy and Udayampéroor (Diamper)²⁰⁷ and he succeeded in converting many into Catholic Church keeping their West Syrian rite.²⁰⁸ Appreciating the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for reunion, Tisserant writes:

In recent times, a very zealous and learned priest of then vicariate apostolic of Kottayam, Fr Emmanuel Nidiry, worked under the direction of Bishop Lavigne for the reunion of the Jacobites.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile Emmanuel Nidiry clarified on 17 September 1890 the main objections for the reunion efforts:

I gathered that their chief objections to be converted were two, namely 1st their forefathers after the Synod of Diamper having for half a century petitioned Rome to get Bishop of their own nation and rite had left the religion for not having heard their just petition. Now to return before being granted their petition, was to show that their forefathers were wrong in doing so. This is shameful. Second their forefathers when they left the Catholic religion had sworn at the Cross in Mattancherry (Cochin) never more to accept a Latin Bishop as their pastoral head. Now to submit to Monsignor Lavigne, who is a Latin Bishop, is to break the oath of their forefathers. This is against their conscience and is against the practice of all Churches in the world, the Bishop of a quite different nation, rite,

²⁰⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2168A^v, Protocol No. 1539, "Il consulta ricevuta, bisogna proceder con cautela prima di riconoscere la sincerità di tali conversioni." Note of the *Propagand Fide* dated on 16 November 1890.

²⁰⁶ Tisserant writes: "The reunion of the Jacobites become also one of the main objects of Msgr. Lavinge's activity. ... Msgr. Lavingne favoured very much the approaches made by Fr Emmanuel Nidiry." E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 130.

²⁰⁷ For the details, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 533-568.

²⁰⁸ "Under Mons. Lavinge, S. J. (1887-1896), through the effects of Emmanuel Nidiry (a Thomas Christian priest), 9 (or 11?) Jacobite priests became Catholic, and they were allowed by the Holy See to use the West Syrian rite." Cf. P. PODIPARA, *The Thomas Christians*, London-Bombay 1970, 215.

²⁰⁹ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India* ..., 138.

and liturgical language shred govern the priests and people of another nation, rite and liturgical language.²¹⁰

It was clear that the objections raised by Nidiry were non-theological factors and the *Jâthaikya Sangham* was envisaged as the practical ecumenism to lead the non-Catholics to the full ecclesial communion that is modern ecumenism. Unfortunately his authorities could not tolerate the prophetic vision of Emmanuel Nidiry. Therefore the non-theological factors gradually underwent a mutation into dogmatic questions, investing division with dignity and destined to figure on the agenda of modern ecumenical dialogues.²¹¹ Thus the grave tragedy which took place at Mattanchery on 1653, the *Coonan* Cross Oath, remained as an incurable wound in the heart of the Malabar Church.

Emmanuel Nidiry was an ecumenist in the true sense of the word and he dreamt of the union of Suriani Christians. He worked hard day and night for the same in spite of the resistance from his ecclesiastical superiors. Though his attempts for unity were discouraged and misinterpreted by the then foreign authorities in Malabar, later the Second Vatican Council would ratify his vision as ideal and genuine. While fighting against schism inside the Church, he had a wider vision of Christian unity. For Nidiry unity of the Church was a communion of Churches and not mere conversion of persons in to the Catholic Church. If the union efforts of Nidiry were realised at his time there would have emerged another picture of the Malabar Church in modern times. Unfortunately the main concern of the foreign prelates was to prolong their authority in Malabar and they feared the unity of the Suriani Christians as an obstacle to their goal. Moreover they failed to keep the order of the Pope namely to appoint a pontifical vicar general for both vicariates. Therefore in the next chapter we will see the dramatic events in relation to the appointment of pontifical vicar general.

²¹⁰ ACO, *Fascicolo Prot. No. 990/31, 4*; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, appendix III, F. 409, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Aiuti on 17 September 1890.

²¹¹ Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", *OCP* 70 (2004) 337.

THE FIRST PONTIFICAL VICAR GENERAL

Though the new apostolic vicars took possession of their vicariates, they deliberately delayed the appointment of the vicars general, which was ordered in the directives of the Brief *Quod iampridem*.¹ Finally Rome had to intervene for the appointment of the vicars general. In this chapter we are trying to study the reasons for the delay of the appointment of the vicars general by the apostolic vicars. We shall also see the reaction of Lavigne to the intervention and the proposal of Emmanuel Nidiry to the post of vicar general by Rome and the final submission of Lavigne to the order of Rome. Finally, we shall also analyse the conflicts between Emmanuel Nidiry and Lavigne which resulted in the nomination of a separate vicar general for the Southist community and the dramatic removal of Emmanuel Nidiry from the post of pontifical vicar general.

1. The Appointment of Vicar General

Medlycott and Lavigne took possession of their vicariate in December 1887 and May 1888, respectively. But even thirteen months after the publication of *Quod iampridem* there was no move on the part of the apostolic vicars to appoint vicars general. It seems that they wanted to reduce the pontifical privileges of their future vicars general to the minimum. Aiuti feared that such a delay in fulfilling a clear order might create a bad impression on the faithful that their apostolic vicars were the first ones who

¹ "... we hereby order that, after a ritual separation of the Syro-Malabar Catholics has been made from the Latins, two vicariates apostolic be constituted for them to be committed to Latin bishops, who should each appoint a Syro-Malabar Vicar General to whom should be given the privilege of exercising in his own rite pontifical ceremonies, and of conferring the sacrament of confirmation, with chrism nevertheless consecrated by a bishop; and they shall choose four ecclesiastics of the same nation and rite and shall avail themselves of their advice in all affairs." The apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887 in *Leonis XIII, Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. VII, Romae 1888, 106-108; *ASS*, vol. 19, 513-514. Original in Latin.

did not carry out the orders of Rome.² On 24 September 1888, Aiuti wrote to the prefect of *Propaganda Fide* concerning the appointment of vicars general:

In the meantime I pleasantly reminded the two apostolic vicars of their obligation not to unjustifiably postpone the nomination of the vicar general and the four councillors, which is incumbent on them respectively in virtue of that Brief. The four councillors were recently nominated by them; but I could not yet obtain the nomination of the vicar general.³

During the discussions between Aiuti and the apostolic vicars on the appointment of general vicars, they expressed their need for more time to know their clergy well. They also expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the model of the vestments of the vicars general during the Pontifical Mass,⁴ because in the pastoral letter of Aiuti on 20 July 1887, permission was already granted to the vicars general to celebrate Pontifical Mass.⁵ Though their reason was sound enough, Aiuti could easily reach another conclusion from their conversation. Aiuti wrote frankly to Rome about his observations:

Many times in speaking with me at Ootacamund [Ooty] and later also in writing to me they made allusions to the prelatical gown and to the pontifical ornaments which could be used by the two vicars general for the Surianis, showing certain anxiety; in the sense that before proceeding to nominate them to that office, the quality of the stuff and of the colour of their gowns both outside the church and during sacred functions as well as the quality and the richness of Pontifical ornaments...[had to be decided]⁶

² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1335^v, "Che l'uno e l'altro tirano da tal fatto la conseguenza, che i loro Vicari Apostolici sono i primi a non dare esecuzione agli ordini di Roma quando questi non sono di loro aggrado." Letter of Aiuti to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 24 September 1888.

³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1335^{r-v}, "Nel frattempo sono andato più volte ricordando con bel garbo ai due Vicarii apostolici il loro dovere di non differire troppo la nomina del Vicario Generale e dei Quattro consiglieri, che loro incombe rispettivamente in forza di quel Breve. I quattro consiglieri furono dai medesimi poco fa nominati; però la nomina del Vicario Generale non posso ancora ottenerla." Letter of Aiuti to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 24 September 1888.

⁴ Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1335, letter of Aiuti to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 24 September 1888.

⁵ BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 792-794 original in Latin. For Malayalam, see *Ibid.*, 794-798.

⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1335^v-1336, "E qui non posso a meno di dichiarare sinceramente all'Eminenza Vostra, com'io abbia fondamento di credere che la ritrosità di quei Prelati non si fondi più su quel bisogno, sebbene debba ormai ripetersi da tutt'altro motivo.

Essi più volte, parlando con me in Ootacamund e più tardi scrivendomi, fecero allusione agli abiti Prelatizii ed agli ornamenti pontificali di cui potranno fare uso i due Vicarii Generali pei Soriani, mostrando una certa ansietà; nel senso che prima di procedere a nominarli a quell'ufficio, la qualità della stoffa e del colore di quegli abiti tanto fuori di chiesa che nella sacre funzioni non che la qualità e la ricchezza degli ornamenti pontificali," Letter of Aiuti to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 24 September 1888.

There was also disagreement between Lavigne and Medlycott concerning the nature of general vicars' office. For the uniformity they wrote to Rome and requested for the regulations.⁷ Aiuti had sent his personal opinions to Rome with the suggestion that his proposals could be modified according to the desire of the apostolic vicars.⁸ However, to solve the problems Aiuti had given primarily two proposals:

1. to prohibit the aforesaid general vicars to perform pontifical ceremonies (implicit) without the previous permission of the respective apostolic vicar *singulis vincibus*; and 2. to allow the apostolic vicar to use the throne, at least in the cases in which he will be present for those pontifical functions.⁹

Aiuti also sent as models two designs for the ceremonial dress, which was to be used for the sacred functions and outside the functions.¹⁰ The proposals of Aiuti were sent to the Prefect of the Pontifical Ceremonies¹¹ and without any modification he approved it.¹² Finally, Rome sent to Aiuti the details with a covering letter concerning the privileges of general vicars.¹³

⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1344^{R-V}, letter of Lavigne to Simeoni on 29 October 1888; *Ibid.*, ff. 1347^R-1348^V, letter of Medlycott to *Propaganda Fide* on 21 October 1889.

⁸ Since Suriani Church being an Oriental Church in the suggestions Aiuti indicated the need of following the rites and rules of Oriental Churches. Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1336^V-1337^R. "Pensai una volta che i due vicarii generali fuori di chiesa potessero usare i distintivi Prelatizii ossia fascia paonazza, bottoni paonazzi etc. come i Protonotarii Apostolici ad instar, e che nel Pontificare dovessero seguire le regole prescritte per gli stessi Protonotarii Apostolici dalla Costituzione- Apostolicae Sedis Officium- emanata dalla Sa. me. di Pio IX il 29 Agosto 1872; ma poi ho riflettuto che essendo essi Prelati orientali i loro distintivi Prelatizii e le regole, che avranno a seguire nel pontificare dovranno piuttosto esser conformi ai prelati di quel rito. Gli uni e le altre però converrebbe fossero modificate nel senso desiderato dai due Vicarii Apostolici, facendo cioè: 1. che il colore degli abiti prelatizii sia temperato; 2. che sia ristretto quanto è possibile il numero degli ornamenti pontificali, limitandoli alla mitra semplice di tela bianca, all'anello ed alla croce pettorale ambedue pavimento privi d'ogni gemma, e sia pure limitata la ricchezza dei medesimi, ordinando che in tali occasioni si faccia uso di quelli che ordinariamente servono per le Messe cantate; e 3. che durante il Pontificale debbano sedere al banco coi ministri, senza mai poter fare uso del faldistorio. Così pure sarebbe forse prudente." Aiuti to Rome 24 September 1888.

⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1337^R, "1. di proibire ai vicarii generali suddetti di far pontificali senza il previo permesso del rispettivo vicario apostolico *singulis vincibus*; e 2. di permettere al vicario apostolico l'uso del trono, per lo meno nei casi in cui assisterà a quei Pontificali."

¹⁰ ACO, *Scritture Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1338^R, the model of robes for the sacred functions; f. 1339^R, the model robes for outside the functions. Aiuti to Rome on 24 September 1888.

¹¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21. f. 398^V, letter to the prefect of Pontifical Ceremonies on 28 November 1888.

¹² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1340-1343, letter of the Prefect of the Pontifical Ceremonies to secretary of *Propaganda Fide per gli Affari Orientali* on 2 February 1889.

¹³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22. f. 96. "Presso in considerazione il dispaccio di V. S. Rma in data 24 settembre 1888, N. 874, relativo agli indumenti dei vicarii generali Soriani, e tenuto conto dei punti sui quali, come mi riferiva Msgr. Lavigne con lettera del 29 ottobre successivo, i due vicarii apostolici di

Though Rome specified the privileges of vicars general through Aiuti, Lavigne was not happy to appoint the vicar general in his vicariate; he feared that it would cause to lose his power over the people and thereby the vicar general would dominate the vicariate. Therefore, Lavigne wrote to Rome on 14 April 1889: “he should be allowed to use throne to show the superiority over the vicar general and for the same reason also the *septième chandelier*.”¹⁴

1.1. The Nomination of Vicar General

Lavigne was aware of the urgent need of appointing the vicar general at the earliest.¹⁵ If so why did he delay the appointment of general vicar in his

Trichoor e di Kottayam si sono posti d'accordo sull'argomento e sull'uso dei pontificali accordato in massima ai predetti vicarii generali da Breve Quod iampridem dei 20 Maggio 1887.” For the instructions, see *Ibid.*, ff. 96-97. “1. I vicarii generali Soriani dei vicari apostolici di Trichur e di Cottayam potranno durante munere, che è ad nutum del rispettivo vicario apostolico, e tutte le volte che ne verrà loro concessa la venia dal medesimo, celebrare pontificalmente nel proprio rito la S. Messa o altre ecclesiastiche funzioni, come pure amministrarvi il sacramento della Cresima. 2. Celebrando la S. Messa con rito pontificale i predetti vicarii generali saranno assistiti dai due ministri, da un prete assistente, dai due accoliti, e da un altro ecclesiastico incaricato di portare la mitra. 3. Pontificale indossino la veste talare paonazza, a fascia con fiocchi del medesimo colore. 4. I paramenti sacri di cui useranno nei pontificali, e che in tale circostanza soltanto indosseranno all'altare, siano meno preziosi di quelli che suole indossare pontificando il vicario apostolico. 5. Si concede ai vicari generali nei pontificali l'uso della mitra semplice con zucchetto nero, dell'anello e della croce pettorale senza gemme; nella solenne amministrazione della Cresima poi usino anche del pastorale, cui vada appeso un velo bianco. Le insegne pontificali siano di proprietà e rimangano in custodia del Vicario apostolico. 6. Nella Messa pontificale usino del faldistorio, coperto di semplice stoffa di seta. 7. All' altare siavi una sola mensola o credenza, ove si pongano il calice, la mitra, il messale, i candelieri e gli altri arredi sacri occorrenti alla celebrazione del S. Sacrificio. 8. Nella Messa pontificale sia lecito ai vicari generali impartire al popolo la trina benedizione, tranne il caso che sia presente il vicario apostolico. 9. Il vicario apostolico essendo presente al pontificale del proprio vicario generale, dice il confiteor col celebrante, pone l'incenso nel turibolo, bacia il vangelo, benedice solennemente il popolo. Lo stesso vicario apostolico viene incensato con tre tiri, ed il vicario generale dopo di lui con due tiri, tranne il caso che il celebrante sia il vicario apostolico. 10. I vicari generali non accendo alla chiesa per pontificare, né allontanino accompagnati da ecclesiastici o laici. 11. Non è lecito usare nei pontificali del settimo candelabro. 12. Non possono fare pontificali fuori del proprio vicariato, sebbene vi consenta l'Ordinario del luogo, né possono usare delle insegne episcopali nelle processioni. 13. Non possono pontificare in chiese essente. 14. Non possono benedire il popolo camminando per la chiesa, sebbene siano vestiti degli abiti pontificali. 15. Non possono dare la benedizione ai predicatori. 16. Nella celebrazione della Messa privata non differiscano dai semplici sacerdoti. 17. In privato possono indossare la sottana filettata, con asole, bottone e faccia con frangia paonazzi. 18. Non è loro lecito assumere il titolo di monsignore, od altro titolo onorifico. Come la S. V. rileverà dai nn. 8 & 9, si suppone che talvolta i vicari apostolici assistano al pontificale del proprio vicario generale, quindi allo scopo di rilevarne vie maggiormente l'autorità agli occhi del clero e del popolo, non sarei alieno dal concedere loro l'uso del trono giusta il parere di V. S.; desidero per altro che in precedenza quei due prelati me ne facciano diretta domanda.” For the Malayalam translation of the privileges of general vicars, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar* 482-483.

¹⁴ ACO, *Scritture Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1464^B, “... la faveur personnelle d'avoir le trône quand office pontificallement, afin démarquer la supériorité par le vicairie général, et pour la même raison, le septième chandelier.” Lavigne to Simeoni on 14 April 1889.

¹⁵ ACO, *ACTA* 1889, vol. 20, f. 289, “... la nomination des vicaires généraux est urgente, très urgente.” Lavigne to Simeoni on 14 February 1889.

vicariate? Lavigne already told to Medlycott that he had 300 priests in his vicariate but he had no confidence in half of them.¹⁶ Among these priests Emmanuel Nidiry was qualified by Rome as an “excellent Suriani Catholic Priest,”¹⁷ “the most distinct priest among the Suriani clergy.”¹⁸ But Lavigne did not want this excellent and distinguished priest to be appointed as the vicar general of his vicariate, therefore he prolonged the appointment. It seems that Aiuti asked Lavigne directly or by letter about the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry to the post of vicar general, because the letters of Lavigne clearly prove that he would not support Emmanuel Nidiry. Lavigne wrote to Aiuti:

Father Nidiry is a clever man, ... *un homme mauvais* a wicked man; ... I express my personal opinion, but I have no positive proofs: if Mar Dionysius offered him a good church, he would become a Jacobite.¹⁹

Moreover, Emmanuel Nidiry was accused of suggesting equal rights for the Jacobite and Catholic bishops in the ill-fated college project.²⁰ In the same letter Lavigne affirmed his above mentioned ambiguity by quoting the observation of Fr Candid, ocd, “if tomorrow Fr Nidiry would become Jacobite, I would not be surprised.”²¹

1.2. Lavigne Plays a Trick to Evade Emmanuel Nidiry

Lavigne tried his best not to nominate Emmanuel Nidiry as his vicar general by prolonging the appointment. At the same time he perceived the general pulse of the people and even the position of apostolic delegate in favour of Emmanuel Nidiry. So Lavigne cleverly attempted for an alternative

¹⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1371, “Monsignor Medlycott mi scriveva test nei seguenti termini. Monsignor Lavigne mi ha pregato di far premure presso V. E. affine di indurre la S. Sede ad aprire al più presto possibile il Seminario centrale. Non vi è tempo da perdere. Monsignor Lavigne ha circa 300 preti. Della metà di questi mi diceva egli no si può fidare.” Aiuti to Simeoni on 15 December 1888. Here he quotes the letter of Medlycott.

¹⁷ APF, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Indie Orientali*, 2 Sem. 1885-1886, vol. 26, f. 533, “Il Rev. Nidiry, ottimo sacerdote cattolico Soriano.” Agliardi to Propaganda on 1 May 1886.

¹⁸ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f.183^B, “Il Nidiry sia la più distinta personalità del clero soriano.” Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

¹⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1373^Y, “P. Nidiry est un homme habile ... un homme mauvais wicked man; tenez le de votre cote, ne l'abaissez pas trop. J'exprime mon opinion personnelle, mais je n'ai pas de preuves positives; si Mar Dionysius lui offrait une bonne église, il se ferait Jacobite.” Lavigne to Aiuti on 11 December 1888. Here Lavigne quotes the words of Mr. Dharrah.

²⁰ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1373^B, “Que P. Nidiry avait plaidé contre l'Evêque Catholique en faveur de l'immixtion à titre égal de l'Evêque Jacobite.” Lavigne to Aiuti on 11 December 1888.

²¹ *Ibid.*, f. 1373^Y, “Si demain le P. Nidiry se faisait Jacobite, je n'en serais pas surpris.”

and wrote to Aiuti to procure for Nidiry and Pazheparambil the papal honours of *Cameriere segreto soprannumerario di Sua Santità*.²² By giving an ecclesiastical honour to Emmanuel Nidiry Lavigne wanted to evade him. Through a letter to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* on 23 March 1889 Lavigne presented his own explanation to prove that Emmanuel Nidiry was a deserving person for such a high ecclesiastical honour. He wrote:

Fr Emmanuel Nidiry will be the object of this letter which aims at getting for him an ecclesiastical dignity. My reasons are the following:

1. His past services. It is incontestable that his help was very useful to Msgr Meurin, to Msgr Agliardi and to H. E. Msgr Aiuti. Your Eminence knows better than me, the services he has rendered to the messengers of the Holy See. I will only add that he fought valiantly against Mellus, and once among other things to the peril of his life.

2. His current services. I am happy to declare that his help and the one of Fr Aloysius Pareparambil facilitated the beginnings of my administration. While taking into account the circumstances, the characters and the reserves that I will make in a little while, I am grateful to him. Presently, he conducts very well the legal proceedings, presage of many others, that I had to start against a Jacobite supported by the Protestants and by the first magistrate of Kottayam. Fr Nidiry is, I believe, honest in money business.

3. His future services. If Fr Nidiry remains faithful to the apostolic vicar, his help will be extremely precious for the temporal administration and also for the conversion of the Jacobites, for which he labours with his whole heart. If, on the contrary, Fr Nidiry openly or even in secret grew apart from the authority, he could create serious obstacles; in fact, he possesses the art to flatter the people and to find the words that raise and calm them; he has qualities that make him loved; and above all he is conscious of his influence on the people and on the clergy. Therefore, prudence imposes me the obligation to attach him to myself by a reward that flatters his self-esteem and that puts him, in a way, in the impossibility to part from the Apostolic Vicar.²³

²² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1423^R-1424^V, letter of Lavigne to Simeoni on 23 March 1889.

²³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1423^R-V, "Le P. Emmanuel Nidiry fera l'objet de cette lettre qui a pour but d'obtenir pour lui une dignité ecclésiastique. Mes raisons sont les suivantes:

1° Ses services passés. Il est incontestable que son concours a été très utile à Msgr Meurin, à Msgr Agliardi et à S.E. Msgr Aiuti. Votre Eminence connaît mieux que moi les services qu'il a rendus aux envoyés du Saint Siège. J'ajouterai seulement qu'il a vaillamment combattu contre Mellus, et une fois entre autres au péril de sa vie.

In the second part of the same letter Lavigne presents his fear of appointing Emmanuel Nidiry as the vicar general as well as the consequence of refusing the post to Nidiry. Therefore Lavigne hopes that by giving an ecclesiastical honour Nidiry will be more faithful to the Holy See and to himself:

After having thought well before God, I do not believe that I should name him Vicar General, at least for this first time; my main motive is that, accustomed to follow only his own ideas, to agitate a whole country to make his plans triumph, I shall never be sure that he will be another myself, and that he will not substitute his way to see things to mine, as he already did; it is with him especially that I may have to fear that the effective government passes from the apostolic vicar to the vicar general. On the other hand, the nomination of another person as vicar general will be for Fr Nidiry and his most intimate friends a shock of which I must ease the toughness, and I do not see a better means than to offer him from my hand a reward, a permanent honour that will attach him to my person and to the Holy Apostolic See. It seems to me that the title of secret supernumerary *camérier* of His Holiness answers perfectly the double goal that I have in mind: to reward the past and to assure the future; it is why I pray Your Eminence to solicit for him this favour from the great kindness of the Holy Father.²⁴

2° Ses services présents. Je suis heureux de déclarer que son concours et celui du P. Aloys Pareparambil m'ont facilité les débuts de mon administration. En tenant compte des circonstances, des caractères et des réserves que je ferai tout à l'heure, je lui dois de la reconnaissance. En ce moment-ci il conduit fort bien un procès, présage de beaucoup d'autres, que j'ai dû tenter à un Jacobite soutenu par les protestants et par le premier magistrat de Cottayam. Le P. Nidiry est, je crois, intègre dans les questions d'argent.

3° Ses services futurs. Si le P. Nidiry demeure fidèle au vicaire apostolique, son concours sera extrêmement précieux pour l'administration temporelle et aussi pour la conversion des Jacobites, à laquelle il travaille de tout cœur. Si au contraire le P. Nidiry se détachait ouvertement ou même en secret de l'autorité, il pourrait créer de sérieux embarras ; il a, en effet, l'art de flatter le peuple et de trouver les paroles qui le soulèvent et qui le calment ; il a des qualités qui le font aimer ; et par dessus tout il a conscience de son influence sur le peuple et sur le clergé. La prudence m'impose donc l'obligation de me l'attacher par une récompense qui flatte son amour-propre et qui le mette en quelque sorte dans l'impossibilité de se séparer du Vicaire Apostolique." Lavigne to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 23 March 1889.

²⁴ ACO, *Scritti. Riforma. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1423R-V. "Après avoir bien réfléchi devant Dieu, je ne crois pas devoir le nommer Vicaire Général, au moins pour cette première fois ; mon principal motif est, qu'habitué à ne suivre que ses propres idées, à agiter tout un pays pour faire triompher ses plans, je ne serai jamais sûr qu'il sera un autre moi-même et qu'il ne substituera pas, comme il l'a fait déjà, sa manière de voir à la mienne ; c'est avec lui surtout que j'aurais à craindre que le gouvernement effectif ne passât du vicaire apostolique au vicaire général. D'autre part, la nomination d'une autre personne comme vicaire général sera pour le P. Nidiry et ses plus intimes amis un coup dont je dois adoucir la dureté, et je ne vois pas de meilleur moyen que de lui offrir de ma main une récompense, un honneur perpétuel qui l'attachera à ma personne et au St Siège apostolique. Le titre de *camérier secret* surnuméraire de Sa Sainteté me

In the last part of the letter Lavigne turned against Nidiry and pictured him as the central figure of the movement for a bishop of the nation and the rite. Lavigne also criticised the Syrian National union started by Nidiry and Dionysius. Finally he concluded the letter to grant the requested ecclesiastical honour to Nidiry before the appointment of the vicar general:

At this point I must say the whole truth. The bottom of the heart of Fr Nidiry is unknown to me.

What was the role of personal ambition in this national movement of which he is the first driving-force to have a bishop of the nation and the rite? What was his part in the continually repeated requests to have at least a Coadjutor Bishop of the nation? What is there actually under this Union with the Jacobites imagined by Mar Dionysius and Fr Nidiry and about which the Jacobites and Catholics are very little worried?

To the various details contained in my letters to H. E. Msgr. the Delegate, I will add a small fact that will show not my personal impression, but the rumours that are spread even outside the vicariate. Fr Ricard having gone to Trichinopoly, wrote me two days after his arrival the following lines:

“One is informed of what is going on in Kottayam by some correspondences that arrive to the pupils; so one says for example that Fr Nidiry does not get along with Msgr. Lavigne because he would like the schismatic element to dominate in the College; one says that Fr Nidiry believed that he would drive the bishop by the tip of the nose and that he was mistaken. One says that he would be rather close to the schism (this is the meaning), etc... etc... etc... Prudence demands that I even foresee the hypothesis of a schism, although it appears rather unlikely to me. It would be very unfortunate that a Chamberlain of His Holiness joins to any schism; but because of this precisely we have less to fear from Fr Nidiry secret chamberlain of His Holiness, than from Fr Nidiry simple councillor of the Apostolic Vicar.

For these various motives I renew the demand of title of secret supernumerary Chamberlain for Fr Nidiry. It would be good for this nomination to come before the nomination of the Vicar General.²⁵

semble répondre parfaitement au double but que je me propose de récompenser le passé et d'assurer l'avenir; c'est pourquoi je prie Votre Eminence de solliciter pour lui cette faveur de la grande bonté du Saint Père.” Lavigne to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 23 March 1889.

²⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1424^{R-V}, “Mais ici je dois dire toute la vérité. Le fond du cœur du P. Nidiry ne m'est pas connu.

Quelle part a eu l'ambition personnelle dans ce mouvement national dont il est le premier moteur pour avoir un évêque de la nation et du rite? Quelle part a-t-elle dans les instances continuellement

1.3. Aiuti Stands for Emmanuel Nidiry

After getting the letter of recommendation of Lavigne, Aiuti sent it to Rome on 8 April 1889 together with his own personal observations about Emmanuel Nidiry:

This priest is indeed the most intelligent, the most instructed and the most active member of the entire Suriani clergy of the Malabar. He speaks Syriac, Tamil, Malayalam, Latin, Portuguese, and English fluently. He has a fair education in philosophy, theology and literature, acquired by dint of private study. His eloquence is charming. He carries on a staggering number of activities, knows how to deal with his people, belongs to a rich and prominent Suriani family, has fought against Mellus and is now busy with the conversion of the Jacobites to the Catholic Church. He is well known all over Malabar as the luminary of its clergy and has great influence over all his people. He has served the apostolic delegation under both Agliardi and the undersigned.²⁶

In the continuing part of his letter Aiuti plainly wrote what he had heard about Emmanuel Nidiry from others:

répétées pour avoir au moins un Evêque coadjuteur de la nation ? Qu'y a-t-il en réalité sous cette Union avec les Jacobites imaginée par Mar Dionysius et le P. Nidiry et dont Jacobites et Catholiques se préoccupent fort peu?

Aux divers détails contenus dans mes lettres à S.E. Msgr le Délégué j'ajouterai un petit fait qui montrera non mon impression personnelle, mais les bruits qui circulent en dehors même du vicariat. Le P. Ricard étant allé à Trichinopoly, m'écrivit le surlendemain de son arrivée les lignes suivantes :

«On est au courant de ce qui se passe à Cottayam par certaines correspondances qui arrivent aux élèves, ainsi on dit par exemple que le P. Nidiry ne s'entend plus avec Msgr Lavigne parce qu'il voulait faire dominer l'élément schismatique dans le Collège ; on dit que le P. Nidiry croyait conduire l'Evêque par le bout du nez et qu'il s'est trompé. On dit qu'il serait assez près du schisme (c'est le sens), etc... etc... etc... La prudence veut que je prévoie même l'hypothèse d'un schisme, quoiqu'elle me paraisse peu probable. Il serait très fâcheux qu'un Camérier de sa Sainteté passât à un schisme quelconque ; mais précisément à cause de cela nous avons moins à craindre du P. Nidiry camérier secret de Sa Sainteté, que du P. Nidiry simple conseiller du Vicaire Apostolique.

Pour ces divers motifs je renouvelle la demande de titre de Camérier secret surnuméraire pour le Père Nidiry. Il serait bon que cette nomination précédât la nomination du Vicaire Général." Lavigne to Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 23 March 1889.

²⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1421^R-1421^V, "Questo sacerdote infatti è il membro più intelligente, più istruito e più attivo dell'intero clero siriano del Malabar, parla speditamente il siriano, il tamul, il malayalam, il latino, il portoghese e l'inglese, ha una sufficiente istruzione filosofica, teologica e letteraria, acquistata a forza di studio privato, ha una facondia che incanta, possiede un'attività vertiginosa, e sa come prendere la sua gente, appartiene ad una delle ricche e istruite famiglie siriane, ha combattuto contro Mellus ed ora si sta occupando, almeno a quanto mostra, della conversione dei giacobiti alla Chiesa Cattolica, è noto in tutto il Malabar, come il luminaire di quel clero, ed ha conseguentemente una grande influenza su tutta quella gente, ha prestato servizi alla delegazione apostolica sia sotto M. Agliardi che sotto l'umile scrivente." Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 April 1889.

Nidiry was one of the revolutionary heads against Verapoly at every time, he is always ready to take part with those who are in crash with the apostolic vicar for any reason, he received the minor orders from the schismatic Roccas, it is said that he undersigned with other 29 priests in 1872 a letter to Mellus inviting him to Malabar. However he positively denies that fact. He is an intimate friend of Mar Dionysius and several of Jacobites both clergy and laymen. His late mother was a Jacobite, and for the same reason he has great number of relatives among them. Many fear that once he will join the Jacobites. Recently some said that Nidiry had already asked for a rich parish to Mar Dionysius, and due to the friendly relationship with the apostolic delegation he refused to give him. But this was a voice, perhaps mass out of some malevolent. Nidiry in the presence Msgr. Lavigne and me declared in the faith of a priest that this was a calumny of his enemies...²⁷

1.4. The Issue to Rome

Aiuti understood well that Lavigne would not agree to nominate Emmanuel Nidiry as vicar general. After writing to Rome the positive and negative opinions on Emmanuel Nidiry, he wrote that it would be a great stroke to Emmanuel Nidiry if somebody other than Emmanuel Nidiry himself was appointed to the post of vicar general. Therefore, Aiuti suggested two things to the consideration of Simeoni and requested to consult Agliardi, who was already in Malabar and knew well Emmanuel Nidiry:

... I request Your eminence to consider in your profound discernment, whether and how one should prevent the evils that are afraid of, by the exclusion of that priest from the office of general vicar and whether is it really worthwhile to beg to the Holy Father such an honour. Mons.

²⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1421^v-1422^r, "Di fronte a tutte queste belle cose, che parlano in favore di quel sacerdote, stanno alcune considerazioni serie e gravi; il Nidiry fu uno dei capi rivoluzionari contro Verapoli in ogni tempo, si trova sempre pronto a prendere la parte di quelli che per una ragione qualunque sono in urto col vicario apostolico, ricevette gli ordini minori dallo scismatico Roccas, si dice che con altri 29 sacerdoti sottoscrivesse nel 72 una lettera a Mellus invitandolo a recarsi nel Malabar, cosa peraltro che egli nega positivamente d'aver fatto, è amico intrinseco di M. Dionisio e di moltissimi giacobiti sia laici che ecclesiastici ed ha tra i medesimi un grande numero di parenti per la ragione, a quanto sembra, che la defunta sua madre era giacobita, e molti temono ch'egli una volta o l'altra possa passare ai Gicacobiti, anzi alcuni dicevano ultimamente, che egli avea già chiesto a M. Dionisio una chiesa pingue, e che questi attesa le sue amichevoli relazioni con questa delegazione apostolica avea ricusato di dargliela. Ma questa fu una voce, forse messa fuori da qualche malevolo. Il Nidiry tanto in presenza mia che di M. Lavigne, dichiarò in fede di sacerdote, che questa era una calunnia dei suoi nemici, e che se gli si deve il permesso farebbe una causa a quel tale, che l'avea messa fuori il primo." Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 April 1889.

Agliardi knows Nidiry, and if Your Eminence will need it, he can furnish you clarification and information about him.²⁸

Aiuti knew well that Agliardi had high esteem for Emmanuel Nidiry. By purposefully referring the matter to Agliardi, Aiuti wanted to get his support in the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry as the vicar general.

1.4.1. Agliardi Speaks Well of Emmanel Nidiry

According to the order of Cardinal Simeoni, on 3 May 1889 the secretary of *Propaganda* transmitted the letter of Aiuti and Lavigne to Agliardi, the first Apostolic Delegate of India and the present Papal Nuncio of Bavaria, to collect his opinion.²⁹ Agliardi was already in Rome and replied on time:

The undersigned has known *kathanar* Nidiry as a very respectable priest of excellent manners, of high intelligence, devoted to the Holy See and filled with zeal for the conversion of Jacobites.³⁰

1.4.2. *Propaganda* Requests Lavigne to Reconsider the Matter

By receiving the letter of Agliardi, Simeoni, the prefect of *Propaganda Fide* recognized that “Nidiry is the most distinguished personality among the Suriani clergy and in addition, the most attached to his nationality or to his rite.”³¹ At the same time it seems that Simeoni was convinced of the reasons put forward by Lavigne for the exclusion of Emmanuel Nidiry. On 16 May 1889, Simeoni wrote to Aiuti:

... I don't dissimulate the weight of the reasons that one produces for such exclusion, but considering the intellectual capacity or the steadiness of character of Msgr. Lavigne, I am inclined to believe that at least the

²⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1422^r, “Concordo pienamente anche con tutti i rimanenti punti della lettera di Mons. Lavigne, ed oso raccomandare alla benignità dell’Eminenza Vostra anche il sacerdote Luigi Pareparanibill all’affetto a cui accenna M. Lavigne. Dopo di che prego l’Eminenza Vostra a voler vedere nella sua altissima penetrazione se e come si debbano prevenire i mali che si temono dall’esclusione di quel sacerdote dall’ufficio di vicario generale e se veramente convenga supplicare al S. Padre per quell’onorificenza. Mons. Agliardi conosce il Nidiry, e se Vostra Eminenza ne avrà bisogno, potrà fornirle schiarimento e notizie intorno al medesimo.” Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 April 1889.

²⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1425^r, letter of *Propaganda* to Agliardi on 3 May 1889.

³⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1426^v, “Il sottoscritto ha conosciuto il Catanaro Nidiry come sacerdote molto rispettabile, di ottimo costumi, di molto intelligenza, attaccato alla S. Sede e pieno di zelo per la conversione dei Giacobiti. +Antonio Arcivescovo di Cesarea.” Letter of Agliardi from Rome on 4 May 1889 to *Propaganda Fide*.

³¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f.183^r, “Il Nidiry sia la più distinta personalità del clero soriano, e per giunta attaccatissimo alla sua nazionalità od al suo rito.” Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

principal reason, namely the fear that Nidiry would get the upper hand over him and would dominate him is devoid of basis, but that on the other hand he would succeed to hold him in his duty all the more if, at least in the beginning, he [Lavigne] might confer on him [Nidiry] restricted power, limited as much as possible.³²

Moreover, Simeoni feared what would be the reaction from Emmanuel Nidiry if someone else were nominated and how would the Surianis respond to such an action of Rome:

Now what a shock it would be to Nidiry, if he would see others appointed to the said office (instead of him) to celebrate pontifical ceremonies and administer Confirmation in Syrian rite? Even if he would be nominated the Secret Chamberlain of the Holy Father, for the moment, would the gravity of the shock and its effect be long-lasting for a man inclined to public affairs, and I would say, to a wide range of activities? Would he tolerate the situation of being left aside for a long time or rather would it not that after calming down the satisfaction of the first period, might discontent follow? And for misfortune if he would join the schism, what a painful impression would it create in the Malabar Catholics who, like all the other Orientals, will naturally attribute a great value to any papal honour, and how greatly would it be to lament?³³

Therefore all these probabilities forced Simeoni to request Aiuti to advice Lavigne to reconsider the nomination.³⁴ On the basis of the letter of Simeoni

³² ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, ff. 182^v-183^r, "Delicata si ravvisa la questione che formava oggetto del dispaccio di V. S. Rma in data 8 Aprile p.p. N. 1149, relativa cioè al disegno fatto da Msgr. Lavigne di non nominare a suo vicario Generale il sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry, procurando di calmare il risentimento che questi sa ciò proverà coll'implorare per lui il titolo di Cameriere Segreto sopra numerario. Io non mi dissimulo il peso delle ragioni che il adducono per tale esclusione, ma considerando le doti intellettuali o la fermezza di carattere di Msgr. Lavigne, sono inclinato a credere che almeno la principale, il timore cioè che il Nidiry si imponga a lui e lo domini, sia destituita di fondamento, e che egli invece riuscirebbe a contenerlo nel dovere tanto più se almeno sul principio gli conferisse attribuzioni limitate nei più angusti confini possibili. D'altra parte sembra che il Nidiry sia la più distinta personalità del clero soriano, e per giunta attaccatissimo alla sua nazionalità od al suo rito." Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

³³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 183^r, "Ora qual colpo non riceverebbe egli se vedesse altri a sé anteposto in detto ufficio, e fare i pontificali ed amministrare la Cresima in rito Soriano? Ma dopo pure che la nomina a Cameriere Segreto del S. Padre venisse per il momento la gravità del colpo, l'effetto sarebbe esso durevole per un uomo rotto agli affari e che dicessi di un attività grandissima? Tollererebbe egli a lungo di esser lasciato in disparte, o non piuttosto, calmare il primo periodo di soddisfazione, succederebbe il malcontento? E se per sventura egli passare allo scisma, quale penosa impressione non se ne proverebbe dai cattolici Malabaresi che naturalmente come tutti gli altri Orientali attribuiranno un grande valore a qualsiasi onorificenza Pontificia, e quanto non sarebbe ciò a deplorarsi?." Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

³⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 183^r, letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

on 16 May 1889, Aiuti requested Lavigne to reflect seriously on his decision before God.³⁵ In the same letter Aiuti added that after reading the prudent suggestions of the Cardinal, if he were in his position he would have appointed Emmanuel Nidiry without any delay. Aiuti also explained the option of removing the vicar general at any time and of limiting the privileges which would be given to him.³⁶

1.4.3. Lavigne Remains Unchanged

Unfortunately, Lavigne adhered to his own prejudices and expressed his unwillingness to nominate Emmanuel Nidiry. On 21 June 1889 he wrote to Aiuti:

After reading the letter of His Eminence Cardinal Simeoni, I have reflected again and I have prayed before God to enlighten me. My feelings are not changed and my intentions remain the same as before. As a result Fr Nidiry will not receive the compensation [the honorary title], the compensation for which I do not insist anymore. To my eyes, the danger is lesser to be exposed to the manoeuvres of a disappointed ambition, than to give me as a Vicar General a man on whom I cannot rely.³⁷

Moreover Lavigne produced before Aiuti the testimonies of some persons against Emmanuel Nidiry:

³⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1480^v, "Je vous envoie ci-joint une lettre que Son Eminence Msgr le Cardinal Simeoni vient de me faire tenir avec ordre de porter à la connaissance de Votre Grandeur les considérations qui en constituent l'objet. Je crois que la meilleure manière de bien accomplir cet ordre soit celle de Vous soumettre le texte original de ce que Son Eminence m'écrit. Veuillez donc réfléchir, Monseigneur, et en me rendant la lettre de Son Eminence veuillez aussi me faire connaître votre résolution." Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889. Aiuti wrote two letters to Lavigne on 9 June and 17 June 1889. Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 1484, Lavigne to Aiuti on 21 June 1889.

³⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1480^v, "Quant à moi, je dirai franchement à Votre Grandeur, que après les considérations et les sages réflexions de son Eminence, si j'étais à votre place, je n'hésiterais plus et je nommerais le Père Nidiry Vicair Général. Il y a une autre considération aussi à faire, et c'est que l'office de Vicair Général étant amovible ad nutum de Votre Grandeur, l'individu choisi par Vous cherchera toutes les voies pour Vous plaire ; et d'un autre côté Vous pouvez limiter autant que possible même ses privilèges ou du moins leur exercice. Le mal serait toujours moindre que si on laissait de côté le Père Nidiry. Il est encore temps de prévenir les malheurs et les misères que nous avons toutes les raisons de craindre d'une telle prétérition. Votre Grandeur pourra réfléchir coram Deo là-dessus et voir si Elle aussi doit arriver à la conclusion à laquelle Son Eminence est arrivée." Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

³⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1484^r, "Après la lecture de la lettre de S. Em. le Card. Simeoni, j'ai réfléchi de nouveau et j'ai prié Dieu de m'éclairer. Mes sentiments n'ont pas été modifiés et mes intentions sont restées les mêmes qu'auparavant, alors même que le P. Nidiry ne recevra pas de compensation, compensation pour laquelle, du reste, je n'insiste plus. A mes yeux, le danger est moindre à être exposé aux manœuvres d'une ambition déçue, que à me donner pour Vicair Général un homme sur qui je ne puis pas compter." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

Testimony of Leo Meurin: Fr Nidiry is a good lawyer and a bad priest. I have not under the eyes a letter of last December of His Highness, but I shall give the content of the letter very precisely: "If you tell me about the schismatic tendencies of Fr Nidiry (it concerned the letter to the patriarch Audo) it grieves me but does not surprise me."

Testimony of Fr Augustine, ocd, of Verapoly mission that Fr Nidiry does not have a priestly spirit.

Testimony of Fr Candid, ocd, of Verapoly mission that he never saw that Nidiry reciting the Breviary.³⁸

Commending on the good opinion of the Cardinal about Emmanuel Nidiry, Lavigne wrote:

A few words about the letter of His Eminence. Fr Nidiry is not the most distinguished personality of the Syrian clergy; he is the most restless priest of them, and tried to make himself noticed from the time of his diaconate. ... Fr Nidiry does not understand anything, I say anything, regarding the administration even of a parish; he does not understand anything regarding the management of a college; he is opposed to the project of the central Seminary, etc.. etc..³⁹

Though Lavigne did not fear that Nidiry would impose himself on his apostolic vicar, he did fear that as vicar general Nidiry would pull all the affairs to himself.⁴⁰ Lavigne continued in his letter that he did not want to

³⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1484^v, "Permettez-moi de citer les appréciations de quelques personnes. On attribue à Msgr Meurin cette parole : « Le P. Nidiry est un bon avocat et un mauvais prêtre ». Je n'ai pas sous les yeux une lettre de S. Grandeur de Décembre dernier, mais j'en rapporterai le sens très exactement : « Ce que vous me dites des tendances schismatiques du P. Nidiry (il s'agissait de la lettre au patriarche Audo) m'afflige mais ne me surprend pas. » Quand la S.C. de la Propagande me demanda si l'on pouvait faire du P. Nidiry un Évêque, je me contentai de répondre qu'il n'avait pas la science suffisante, cette réponse suffisait alors, mais j'aurais pu donner d'autres raisons. » Le P. Augustin, religieux français qui vit avec les P. Carmes de Verapoly et qui aime sincèrement les syriens, m'a dit : « Le P. Nidiry n'a pas l'esprit sacerdotal. » Le P. Candidus affirme qu'il ne lui a jamais vu dire son bréviaire." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

³⁹ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485^r, "Quelques mots au sujet de la lettre de S. Eminence. Le P. Nidiry n'est pas la personnalité la plus distinguée du clergé syriaque ; il en est le prêtre le plus remuant, et s'est mis lui-même en vue depuis son diaconat. D'autres le valent en talents, en science et surtout en vertu, et je trouverai sans peine un bon Vicaire Général qui me sera fidèle et utile. Le P. Nidiry n'entend rien, je dis rien, à l'administration même d'une paroisse ; il n'entend rien à la marche d'un collège ; il est contraire au projet du Séminaire central, etc.. etc...." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

⁴⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485^r, "Je ne crains pas qu'il me domine, dans ce sens qu'il m'impose sa manière de voir ; grâce à Dieu j'ai ma conscience et ma volonté. Mais il y a une autre manière de dominer ; c'est d'attirer à soi le courant des affaires, et de mettre ainsi peu à peu l'autorité de côté ; et c'est cela que je crains quelles que soient les limites des attributions du Vicaire Général. On

exclude Nidiry from the post of vicar general forever but only for a particular period.⁴¹ Finally he concluded by expressing his readiness to obey the decision of the Cardinal.⁴²

1.4.4. The Counter Arguments of Aiuti

Aiuti was not happy with the reply of Lavigne and on 29 June 1889 he sent the letter of Lavigne along with his counter arguments to the Prefect: In its first part this testimony proves to be almost in favour of nominating Nidiry Vicar General, one of the reasons being precisely that of precluding him eventually passing to schism. Since Fr Augustine has always remained in the monasteries of Verapoly, Koonammavu and Manjummel, engaged in studying languages, translating books and teaching, he knows very little or nothing about Suriani Priests. Fr Candid's affirmation does not merit credibility. First of all, when in Malabar, Aiuti himself had seen Nidiry reciting the Breviary, as he travelled from one place to another in the vicariate at the request of Lavigne. Then, it is well known that Fr Candid and Nidiry disliked each other and they avoided each other's presence as a demon avoids a cross. How then could Fr Candid assert that Nidiry does not recite the Breviary?⁴³

passera pratiquement par dessus les limites ; l'Évêque ne sera pas informé ; et si un jour il veut changer son Vicaire Général, il devra méditer sur les vers : Turpius ejicitur quam non admittitur horpes. C'est alors surtout que ce blâme public aurait de fâcheux résultats." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

⁴¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485^v, "Or, je le répète, le P. Nidiry ne suivra pas ma direction, il agira à sa tête et ne me renseignera pas sur l'état du Vicariat. S'il faut prévoir l'avenir et ses dangers, il faut aussi songer au présent.

Mon intention n'a jamais été d'exclure le P. Nidiry pour toujours, mais seulement pour la première nomination. Un autre vicaire général, je le changerai sans inconvénients au bout d'un ou deux ans, et si d'ici-là le P. Nidiry a profité de la leçon et est devenu un instrument docile entre mes mains je n'aurai plus d'objections." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

⁴² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485^v, "Je termine en protestant que je suis prêt à obéir à la décision de Son Eminence." Lavigne to Aiuti from Kodaikanal on 21 June 1889.

⁴³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1481^r, "Ma questa testimonianza nella sua prima parte prova piuttosto in favore della nomina dell'individuo in questione all'ufficio di Vicario Generale, una delle ragioni essendo precisamente quella di precludere in tempo ogni via all'eventualità di egli possa passare allo scisma, e nella seconda è al tutto fuori di proposito. Aggiunge le testimonianze del P. Agostino di Verapoli e del P. Candido Carmelitano, il primo dei quali dice che il Nidiry non ha spirito Sacerdotale ed il secondo afferma che non l'ha veduto mai recitare il Breviario. Osserverò in proposito che il P. Agostino poco o nulla conosce del clero soriano, essendo stato sempre nei Conventi di Verapoli; Cunenmavo e Magnamel occupato in studio di lingue in versione di libri e nell'insegnamento; e quanto al P. Candido dirò che la sua affermazione non merita poi gran fede; primo perché io stesso allorché poco fa fui nel Malabar coi miei occhi ho veduto il Nidiry recitare sempre il Breviario, quando si viaggiava in barca per andare da un punto all'altro del Vicariato, dov'egli era stato invitato da Msgr. Lavigne e da me a recarsi; e poi perché è noto che il P. Candido e il Nidiry non si possono vedere l'unaltro e si fuggono a vicenda come il demonio fugge la Croce. Come potrà dunque egli asserire che questi non reciti il Breviario?" Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889. The letter of Aiuti is given as appendix IV.

Aiuti observed the contrary expressions and the preoccupation of Lavigne to diminish Nidiry's prestige, while at the same time admitting that Nidiry was the most active priest in Malabar.⁴⁴ Analysing the letter of Lavigne, Aiuti wrote to Simeoni:

The prelate [Lavigne], persistent in his decision not to nominate Nidiry his vicar general, rather than following the dictates of deliberation and of prudence, is firm in a resolve totally his own and wishes at any cost to have his preconceived idea realized, which is above all other things to have the satisfaction of seeing Nidiry humiliated and castigated, without seriously reflecting on the bad or rather the worst consequences which could emerge from the fact.⁴⁵

Therefore Aiuti concluded that the reasons given by Lavigne for the exclusion of Nidiry were not solid. Moreover, it would not demolish the fear and the explanation brought by Cardinal Simeoni. His steadiness seemed out of intention and it would affect the future serenity and welfare of the vicariate entrusted to him.⁴⁶ After narrating the consequences of the exclusion of Emmanuel Nidiry from the office of vicar general,⁴⁷ Aiuti requested Simeoni to force him affectionately to obey, though Lavigne was tenacious, or rather most tenacious, in his opinion and much more in his resolutions.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1481^v, "Contraddicendo in qualche modo alla lettera che scrisse all'Eminenza Vostra cerca di diminuire il prestigio del Nidiry, ma però confessa che il medesimo è il prete più attivo e faccendone di tutto il Malabar. Dice di non aver timore affatto che il Nidiry gli si imponga; ma teme che questi chiami a se tutta la corrente degli affari, e che finisca col metterlo da parte. Dice finalmente che non è mai stata sua intenzione di escludere per sempre quel Sacerdote dal posto di Vicario generale, ma che vorrebbe escluderlo solamente per la prima volta." Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

⁴⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1482^r, "Da siffatta analisi della risposta di Mongr. Lavigne, sembra potersi concludere che quel Prelato persistendo nella sua risoluzione di non nominare il Nidiry a suo Vicario generale, piuttosto che seguire i dettami della ponderazione e della prudenza, è fisso in un certo tutto suo particolare e vuole ad ogni costo la realizzazione di un'idea preconcepita, la quale avanti ogni altra cosa è diretta ad avere la soddisfazione di veder umiliato e castigato il Nidiry, senza poi stare troppo a riflettere alle cattive, anzi pessime conseguenze che potrebbero da questo fatto provenire." Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

⁴⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1482^r, "Non adduce infatti solide ragioni e non si occupa di distruggere i timori e le ragioni recate in merito dall'Eminenza Vostra, altrimenti che con qualche osservazione, che è espressione del suo modo di vedere individuale. La sua fermezza sembra fuori di proposito ed è positivamente piena di pericoli prossimi per la futura tranquillità e benessere del Vicariato a lui affidato." Letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

⁴⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1482^{r-v}, Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

⁴⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1483^{r-v}, "Msgr. Lavigne è tenace anzi tenacissimo della sua opinione e molte più delle sue risoluzioni, ma si lascia dolcemente violentare dall'obbedienza." Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

1.4.5. The Impractical Decision of Rome

It seems that Simeoni was convinced of the arguments presented by Aiuti in support of Emmanuel Nidiry. Now to end the crisis Simeoni had only to order Lavigne to nominate Emmanuel Nidiry as his vicar general. Moreover, in his letter to Aiuti, Lavigne already expressed his readiness to obey the decision of Simeoni.⁴⁹

Instead of giving Lavigne a direct order Simeoni found out another solution. The general meeting of Cardinals on 15 July 1889 decided to grant a separate vicar general for the Southists and on the following day Pope Leo XIII approved the decision.⁵⁰ Simeoni took this opportunity to solve the problem in Malabar. While informing Aiuti the decision of Cardinals, on 3 August 1889 Simeoni recommended Aiuti to appoint Emmanuel Nidiry as the vicar general of the Southists, thinking that he belonged to that community and in such a way to satisfy both Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry:

In that way Msgr. Lavigne would have the proper vicar general of his satisfaction and Nidiry would be content in seeing that he has been selected for such a dignity.⁵¹

Before receiving the reply from Rome, on 16 August 1889 Lavigne wrote to Simeoni asking permission for transferring his residence from Kottayam to Changanasserry.⁵² At the end of the letter Lavigne again wrote about Emmanuel Nidiry presenting him as Judas:

If the apostolic delegate has sent You my last two letters, you might have known the danger of appointing Fr Nidiry as the vicar general. Recently Msgr. Medlycott has told me that would be a big stupidity. The priests of his vicariate were astonished in the appointment of intriguer Fr Nidiry as councillor. Msgr. added it would be an occasion for the

⁴⁹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485^v, "Je termine en protestant que je suis prêt à obéir à la décision de Son Eminence." Lavigne to Aiuti on 21 June 1889.

⁵⁰ ACO, *Ponente*, 1889, 585. It seems to be very strange that even before the realization of the order given in the Brief *Quod iam pridem*, Cardinals decided to have another vicar general by splitting the community which was so united for many years.

⁵¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 288^v, "In questo modo Msgr. Lavigne avrebbe il suo proprio vicario generale di suo compiacimento e il Nidiry sarebbe soddisfatto nel vedersi prescelto a tale carica." Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 3 August 1889. Here the expression of Simeoni, "in that way Msgr. Lavigne would have the proper vicar general of his satisfaction", seems that the vicar general of the Northists is the proper vicar general. If so why Rome took such a decision by dividing the community into two sects?

⁵² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1502^{R-v}, Lavigne to Simeoni on 16 August 1889.

ambitious persons to have the honours through conspiracy. He also affirmed that he would be a 'Judas' near his bishop.⁵³

In his reply to Lavigne on 26 September 1889, Simeoni wrote that the apostolic delegate would present to him a new alternative⁵⁴ and promised Lavigne that the requested permission for the change of residence would be granted.

1.4.6. The Confidential and Secret Letter of Aiuti

On the basis of the letter of Simeoni on 3 August 1889, Aiuti wrote a confidential and secret letter to Lavigne.⁵⁵ Since Emmanuel Nidiry was a Northist, Aiuti found the impossibility of realizing Simeoni's plan.⁵⁶ Therefore in the confidential letter to Lavigne, Aiuti explained his reasoning for the argument in support of Nidiry and the problems that could be created owing to the exclusion of Nidiry:

There will now be two Vicars General in the Vicariate of Kottayam, one for the Northists and the other for the Southists. This circumstance invites us to reflect once again on the suitability of the nomination of Fr Nidiry as Vicar General. The blow that he would receive by the exclusion would be now doubly acute; and the consequences of it could be fatal.⁵⁷

⁵³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1502^v, "Si Msgr le Délégué a communiqué mes deux dernières lettres, Votre Eminence est au courant du danger qu'il y a à nommer le P. Nidiry comme Vicaire Général. Msgr Medlycott me disait dernièrement que ce serait un «spropósito madornale». Les prêtres de son Vicariat sont étonnés que le P. Nidiry «l'intrigant» ait même été nommé Conseiller; et il affirmait encore que c'était «un Judas» auprès de son Évêque." Lavigne to Simeoni on 16 August 1889.

⁵⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 343^v, "Per quel che concerne la nomina del sacerdote Nidiry a suo vicario generale, attenderò il riscontro che Ella darà al Rmo. Msgr. Delgto. Apco. Incaricato di farla sull'argomento una nuova proposta." Simeoni to Lavigne on 26 September 1899.

⁵⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1507^r-1508^v, Secret and confidential letter of Aiuti to Lavigne on 3 September 1889. Original in French.

⁵⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1503^{r-v}, "... manifestandomi, che per uscire dalle difficoltà che si creava la ripugnanza di Mons. Lavigne di nominare all'ufficio di vicario generale il sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry, sembrava forse opportuno che si nominasse il Nidiry all'ufficio di vicario generale dei suddisti, supposto però che egli appartenesse alla stessa casta, perché così Mons. Lavigne avrebbe il suo proprio vicario generale di suo compiacimento e il Nidiry sarebbe soddisfatto nel vedersi prescelto a tale incarico, e mi ordinava di farle conoscere se questo temperamento fosse tale da potersi mettere in esecuzione e se rispondesse tanto all'esigenze dei suddisti quanto a quelle di Mons. Lavigne.

Considerando che l'Eminenza Vostra nel proporre il savio e prudente temperamento di nominare il Nidiry a vicario generale dei suddisti, partiva dall'ipotesi, che il medesimo fosse della casta dei suddisti, e riflettendo che siffatta ipotesi non si verificava per esser quel sacerdote dalla casta dei nordisti," Aiuti to Simeoni on 14 September 1899. Attached also the copy of the letter to Lavigne on 3 September 1889.

⁵⁷ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1507^r, "Maintenant il y aura deux Vicaires Généraux dans le Vicariat de Cottayam, l'un pour les Nordistes et l'autre pour les Sudistes. Cette circonstance nous

Aiuti depicted Nidiry as one who generally spoke well of Lavigne and never complained about his ecclesiastical government.⁵⁸ Moreover, he frankly wrote that if he were in Lavigne's position he would not have the courage to place the Prefect of *Propaganda* in a difficult situation.⁵⁹ Finally concluding the letter Aiuti wrote:

As far me, I should declare that I refuse to take upon myself the responsibility of Nidiry's exclusion; and I consequently refuse all the responsibility for the bad consequences, which I foresee as very probable, of the undeserved punishment that Your Excellency wants to impose on Fr Nidiry, with a sure and imminent danger against the well-being and the prosperity of the vicariate of Kottayam. I speak well clearly, Monsignor [Lavigne], so that afterwards I may have the right to reject all responsibility whatever it may be.⁶⁰

1.4.7. Lavigne's Surrender to 'Ignatian Obedience'

After reading the letter of Aiuti on 3 September 1889, to the surprise of Aiuti,⁶¹ finally Lavigne changed his mind and he decided to appoint Emmanuel Nidiry as his vicar general. Lavigne replied on 7 September 1889 to Aiuti:

invite à réfléchir encore une fois sur la convenance de la nomination du R.P. Nidiry à Vicaire Général. Le coup qu'il recevrait par l'exclusion serait maintenant doublement pointu ; et les conséquences pourraient en être fatales." Aiuti to Lavigne on 3 September 1889.

⁵⁸ ACO, *Scritti. Riforma. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1507^R-1508^V, "Jusqu'à présent le P. Nidiry lui-même m'a généralement parlé bien de Votre Grandeur ; et du Vicariat de Cottayam il n'y a pas eu une seule plainte contre Votre Grandeur et Son Gouvernement ecclésiastique." Aiuti to Lavigne on 3 September 1889.

⁵⁹ ACO, *Scritti. Riforma. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1507^V-1508^R, "Je ne sais pas ce que Son Eminence le Cardinal Simeoni fera, s'il Vous laissera libre dans les choix du Vicaire Général ou bien s'il vous priera de nommer à cette place le P. Nidiry. Je vous dirai franchement, Monseigneur, que moi à Votre place, je n'aurais pas le courage de mettre Son Eminence dans une dure nécessité de ce genre ; attendu surtout l'évidence des raisons que Son Eminence Vous a exposées et vu tout ce que Son Eminence vient de faire pour Votre Vicariat dans le but de Vous aider à aplanir toute sorte de difficultés." Aiuti to Lavigne on 3 September 1889.

⁶⁰ ACO, *Scritti. Riforma. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1508^V, "Quant à moi je dois déclarer que je refuse de prendre sur moi la responsabilité d'appuyer l'exclusion du P. Nidiry ; et je refuse conséquemment toute responsabilité des mauvaises conséquences que je prévois comme bien probables du châtiment immérité que Votre Grandeur veut imposer au P. Nidiry, avec un danger sûr et imminent contre le bien-être et la prospérité du Vicariat de Cottayam. Je parle bien clairement, Monseigneur, afin qu'après je puisse avoir le droit de repousser quelque responsabilité que ce soit." Aiuti to Lavigne on 3 September 1889.

⁶¹ ACO, *Scritti. Riforma. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1505^R, "Dico la verità che mi aspettavo che ciò nonostante Mons. Lavigne insistesse nel suo proposito, ma quale non fu la mia sorpresa quando dopo pochi giorni, cioè in data del 7. c. mi rispondeva in questi termini" Aiuti to Simeoni on 14 September 1889.

Your Excellency, my responsibility is completely covered by the diligent information I gave to Your Excellency; it will be assured even more by my obedience. St Ignatius tells us that, after having informed the Superiors, we must obey at any sign of their will, without waiting for any formal order. The letter of Your Excellency manifests very clearly the will of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, which substitutes for me the Rev. Father General. Tomorrow without much delay, I will publish the desired nomination. Our Lord will bless my obedience and will turn all things for the greatest good of souls.⁶²

Thus respecting the order of the *Propaganda* and for the sake of obedience, to the surprise of all, on 8 September 1889 Lavigne nominated Emmanuel Nidiry his vicar general,⁶³ more than two years after his appointment. It was a surprise to Emmanuel Nidiry himself. He wrote to Aiuti on the following day:

Yesterday Mons. Lavigne called the councillors to his presence and nominated me vicar general for Northists. To tell the truth, I was astonished to see His Excellency Mons. Lavigne's sincerity towards me. Immediately I knelt down in front of him and asked his pardon for my uncharitable suspicion that he did not have a good opinion about me.⁶⁴

2. Emmanuel Nidiry the First Pontifical Vicar General

It was with great joy and jubilation that the Suriani Catholics welcomed the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry, the vicar general of Kottayam vicariate.⁶⁵ Emmanuel Nidiry had a warm reception at Mannanam.

⁶² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1505^r, "Excellence Révérendissime, Ma responsabilité est mise entièrement à l'abri par les informations consciencieuses que j'ai données à Votre Excellence, elle sera garantie plus encore par mon obéissance. H. Ignace nous dit, qu'après avoir informé les Supérieurs nous devons obéir sur un signe de leur volonté, sans attendre un commandement formel. La lettre de Votre Excellence manifeste assez clairement la volonté de la S. Congrégation de Propagande, qui remplace pour moi le T.H. P. Général. Demain sans plus tarder, je publierai la nomination désirée. Dieu bénira mon obéissance et tournera toutes choses au Plus grand bien des âmes." Aiuti to Simeoni on 14 September 1899. Here he quotes the letter of Lavigne to Aiuti on 7 September 1889.

⁶³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 486.

⁶⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1505^v-1506^r, "Aggiungerò che il 9 corrente il Nidiry mi scriveva dicendo "ieri Mons. Lavigne chiamò i consiglieri alla sua presenza e mi nominò vicario generale dei nordisti. Dico la verità che rimasi stupefatto nel veder la sincerità sì S. Eccellenza M. Lavigne verso di me: Immediatamente mi inginocchiai dinanzi a lui e gli chiesi perdono del mio non caritatevole sospetto che egli non nutrisse buoni sentimenti a mio riguardo." Aiuti to Simeoni on 14 September 1899, he quotes the letter of Nidiry on 9 September 1889.

⁶⁵ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1541^v, "Del resto la nomina del Nidiry a vicario generale che era generalmente tenuta come certa dalla massima parte dei malabaresi per quanto si può finora giudicare sembra esser riuscita graditissima ed aver incontrato l'applauso generale." Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 November 1889.

monastery and he received a number of felicitations and petitions from various parts of Malabar.⁶⁶ On 24 September 1889 the brothers George and Hormise Parayil wrote to Aiuti informing him of their pleasure in the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry.⁶⁷ Knowing the acceptance and positive feelings of Surianis in the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry, Aiuti wrote to Simeoni:

The Malabarians especially Surianis, when they are not satisfied of something manifest it soon by letters, petitions, meetings etc. But in this occasion nothing similar is verified. Everything goes on in peace and tranquillity.⁶⁸

On 9 September 1889 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote to Aiuti expressing his sentiments of joy and willingness to abide by the desires of superiors. He wrote:

Your Lord, I accept this new office as a sign of your generosity and benevolence towards your humble servant. Now I understood the meaning of your words which you have spoken to me before you left Kerala. I sincerely beg your pardon on kneeling posture for my worthless words which I used in my letter due to the intense apprehension of mind. Since I see myself as a humble instrument in the hands of my superiors, I am ready to accept all the experience from my superiors whether it is of sweet or bitter.⁶⁹

Aiuti was glad to see the peace of Malabar and hoped that if both Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry would turn to be good friends they could do together a lot for the good of the people of Malabar. Therefore he advised Emmanuel Nidiry to be submissive and obedient to Lavigne.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 486-490.

⁶⁷ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1541^v, "qui a titolo di semplice informazione mi accorre di rendere informata l'Eminenza Vostra, che i signori Marchesi Giorgio e Ormiso fratelli Parri in data del 24 settembre pr.p. mi scrissero per annunziarmi la nomina del Nidiry in questi termini. E con gran piacere che le facciamo conoscere come l'Illmo e Revmo Mons. Lavigne nostro vicario apostolico, il giorno 8. c. abbia nominato il R P. Emmanuele Nidiry vicario generale della missione di Cottoyam." Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 November 1889.

⁶⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1441^v, "I malabaresi ed in specie i soriani quando non sono contenti di qualche cosa la manifestano subito con lettere, petizioni meetings etc, ma in questa occasione nulla di simile si è verificato. Tutto cammina in pace e tranquillità." Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 November 1889.

⁶⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 478, letter of Nidiry to Aiuti on 9 September 1889.

⁷⁰ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1441^v, "Tutto cammina in pace e tranquillità. Il solo Nidiry mi ha scritto annunziandomi la sua nomina ed esprimendo belli sentimenti. Mons. Lavigne ed il sacerdote Nidiry furono finora assai sfiduciosi si l'un dell'altro, ma se ora arriveranno, come lo spero a guadagnarsi vicendevolmente fiducia faranno un bene immenso a quel vicariato. Il Nidiry ha fatto all'opportunità le

The appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry could pacify the Surianis who were agitating for their own bishops. As we have seen in the letter of Aiuti there was a universal satisfaction and acceptance from the part of the Surianis to the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry. The Dewan of Travancore, N. T. Rama Rao, the vicars of various parishes and lay leaders were among those who sent felicitations.⁷¹ In a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry on 22 January 1890, Meurin also congratulated him saying:

Many thanks for your most pleasing letter, from which I foresee that you, dear Fr Nidiry, have to be elevated to the dignity of the Episcopate. I am deeply moved by this news, first, because I recommended it very strongly after our great meeting at the Mannanam Convent, secondly, I made a vow to say a monthly Mass in thanksgiving, if this plan (of two bishops, a European and Syrian) would be carried out. Since then I said my monthly Mass for the conversion of pagans *instead*: now, it must return to its original intention: in thanksgiving for you. My hopes were kept up when I was in Rome, and was asked what I thought of you, Fr Nidiry, being made bishop. You can imagine how glad I was to learn from that question, that the plan was still under consideration. Of course, I could not tell you anything about it. Now then, I learn from you that at last, our Mananam Petition is granted in full. *Deo gratias!*...I am glad the *common* college came to nought. You will have your own without any binding conditions, and be your own full masters. Patience! this too will come in time...Your Church must be a *national* Church in the *full* sense of the word, not only of *one* caste, but of *all*.⁷²

On 12 September 1889 Emmanuel Nidiry visited Mannanam, a place which witnessed to grand receptions to different ecclesiastical dignitaries. But now the hero to be received was the organizer of the earlier receptions. The new vicar general at once put his all energy and talent to make his administration more efficient. He received innumerable petitions to the Episcopal court. They were all attended to promptly and disposed of quickly.⁷³ In the administration he was assisted by Fr Louis Pazheparambil, the secretary of the bishop.

più calde raccomandazioni di tenersi obbediente ed attaccato a Mons. Lavigne." Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 November 1889.

⁷¹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 237.

⁷² ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol* No. 990/31, protocol no. 6561.

⁷³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 486-494.

2.1. The First Pontifical Mass at Palai

Of all the most important privileges of the vicar general was the right to sing the Pontifical High Mass in full Episcopal insignia. The first Pontifical Mass was in Palai on 14 November 1889 where he was given a warm reception.⁷⁴ His Pontifical Masses and sermons attracted huge crowds in contrast to the formal scanty reception Lavigne got during the pastoral visits. Since the death of Alexander Parambil two centuries passed without any native Suriani Catholic in Kerala, wearing the emblems of a bishop. Though, Surianis had not yet got a bishop of their own nation, Emmanuel Nidiry dressed much like a bishop. Watching the delirious excitement of the crowd bishop Lavigne felt that he was being outshone by a native star.

The first Pontifical Mass of Emmanuel Nidiry was purposefully arranged; it was also an occasion to meet Mar Abdiso Thondanatt, the successor of Mar Mellus. Ever since the arrival of Lavigne, Mar Abdiso expressed his willingness to join the Catholic Church. Many believed that it would be an auspicious occasion for the conversion of Mar Thondanatt and he had already spoken with Emmanuel Nidiry and Varkey Tharaken.⁷⁵ Since his conditions were not acceptable to Lavigne, the dramatic event did not take place.⁷⁶

On the same day after the Pontifical Mass a conference of priests and lay leaders were convened under the leadership of bishop Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry to discuss the means of raising funds for building the bishop's house and starting a college.⁷⁷ On the basis of the assurance of Lavigne that the fund would be earmarked to build a house for a Suriani

⁷⁴ "... on the 13th of November, Msgr. Lavigne, accompanied by the vicar general, reached Pulyannoor bridge in a cart and was received by several priests and a huge crowd with cross, silk umbrellas, and flags. With this following, they went up to the market-ferry and got into a boat and reached the church. They were received by many priests, the Knight Commander Varkey Tharakan and countless people with gold and silver crosses, silk umbrellas etc. They got down from the boat; reached the *pandal*, wearing the official robes and amidst thunderous sounds and the ringing of bells entered the church, prayed and blessed the crowd." Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 495.

⁷⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 26.

⁷⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2119, copy of Lavigne to Aiuti on 16 November 1889. Mar Thondanatt had two main conditions. 1. His Episcopal condition must be retained after the reunion. 2. He must be paid highly in each month for his sustains. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 497.

⁷⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff.1579-1580, copy of Lavigne to Aiuti on 23 November 1889.

bishop,⁷⁸ the representatives of each parish consented to pay the income of one year spread over four years.⁷⁹

2.2. Emmanuel Nidiry as the Administrator

In the hot months of April to August 1890, Lavigne left for Ooty after entrusting the whole administration of vicariate to his vicar general. Though there was a great divergence between Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry in many matters, the bishop had confidence in the loyalty and efficiency of the vicar general:

I am convinced of that the vicariate will get a good administration from you; therefore I will stay here for some weeks still I get sufficient rest. The delegate apostolic had very gently spoken to me about you.⁸⁰

He had heavy responsibilities, innumerable church cases had to be settled. In spite of all these heavy works he continued his efforts for the reunion of Mar Thondanatt.⁸¹ His zeal for the conversion of the Jacobite brethren was so appreciable. On 10 October 1890 he wrote to Aiuti:

Likewise I received a letter from our vicar of Thripoonitharay informing me that my visit to the house of Mar Gregory [suffragan bishop of Mar Dionysius] pleased him much and he expressed his desire to see [present] me to different persons. I therefore went from here to Thripoonitharay, visited him on the next day the 1st instant at the Karingacherry Jacobite church where he resides at present, he and the priests received me very kindly and retained me there about 3 hours, during which I tried to speak to them about their union to the Catholic Church. I found them in error about the Catholic dogma of the incarnation of our Lord in whom they think that we believe in two natures and in two persons as Nestorians do. About the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff also they think that we are very wrong as the 1st See established by St Peter being Antioch as they say. I gave several reasons and showed the inconsistency of their faith. After that having lent a Syriac book which proves the supremacy of the Pope to Mar Gregory I returned. On the 2nd night, the 2 converted priests having been frightened by the false report of the Jacobites that the Holy See ordered Msgr. Lavigne not to accept any married priest to

⁷⁸ Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 496.

⁷⁹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 153.

⁸⁰ Letter of Lavigne from Ooty to Nidiry on 18 April 1890. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 518.

⁸¹ Letter of Nidiry to Lavigne on 23 April 1890. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 519-520.

the Catholic faith came here to ask me about it. The Cor Episcopus also accompanied them and returned well satisfied of my answer.⁸²

Seeing the delay in receiving the converted Jacobite priests to Catholic communion, Nidiry even requested Aiuti to get him necessary power from the Holy See to absolve the irregularities of the Jacobite converted priests. He wrote to Aiuti on 16 December 1890:

If he [Fr George Karapulay] and the other already converted priests be absolved soon from the irregularity, I hope that my labour under this new blessing will be much more fruitful than before. I therefore repeat my former request to obtain from the Holy See as early as possible the power to absolve the irregularities of some, at least a limited number of the Jacobite converted priests.⁸³

Emmanuel Nidiry starred as an administrator. Almost for four months priests and laity could enjoy the benefit of the efficient administration of their vicar general.⁸⁴ The administration of Emmanuel Nidiry was a clear proof against the argument of Carmelite missionaries who did not see among the natives any worthy candidate for episcopal ordination.⁸⁵ Unfortunately the good relation that existed between the bishop and the vicar general did not last long.

3. Lavigne Turns Against the Vicar General

It was a clear fact that the appointment of Emmanuel Nidiry was only for the sake of obedience but against the will of Lavigne. He feared that as vicar general Nidiry would pull all the affairs to himself.⁸⁶ Besides, the great demand of Emmanuel Nidiry for the Pontifical Mass and huge number of people gathered in each Holy Mass caused to create a kind of irritation in Lavigne towards Emmanuel Nidiry. The bishop felt that he was being outshone by a native star.

⁸² ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2173^{R-V}, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Aiuti on 10 October 1890. The underline is from original.

⁸³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2181^R, letter of Nidiry to Aiuti on 16 December 1890. See also *Ibid.*, f. 2183^{R-V}, letter of Nidiry to Aiuti on 10 December 1890.

⁸⁴ For the details on the administration of Emmanuel Nidiry, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 518-531.

⁸⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1430^V-1431^R.

⁸⁶ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1481, "Je ne crains pas qu'il me domine, dans ce sens qu'il m'impose sa manière de voir; grâce à Dieu j'ai ma conscience et ma volonté. Mais il y a une autre manière de dominer : c'est d'attirer à soi le courant des affaires, et de mettre ainsi peu l'autorité de côté; et c'est cela que je crains quelles que soient les limites des attributions du vicaire général." Lavigne to Aiuti on 21 July 1889.

3.1. The Harsh Letter of Lavigne

In connection with the settlement of the litigation against the schismatics who tried to occupy the Kuravilangad church,⁸⁷ Emmanuel Nidiry had to stay a few days in the bishop's house at Kottayam. Knowing this Lavigne wrote a letter on 4 June 1890 with unpleasing words:

Dear Fr Nidiry, I am told that since several days you are living in my house at Kottayam. I am surprised by this fact, because nobody dwells in other people's house without the allowance [permission] of the owner. My house is not a public bungalow. Therefore, you must return immediately to Codamalur. I regret to say that you do not understand the regard you owe to your bishop. I am still awaiting your frequent communication of the pending affairs. What has been done about the matters which I gave you a list of?⁸⁸

To the above unkind letter of Lavigne, on 14 June 1890 Emmanuel Nidiry gave a rational reply. After giving the sound reasons for his stay, he continued:

... 6th If "anybody" goes to defend the authority of the "other people" without any special recompense, to refuse him a lodging would be ungrateful if not uncivil, which (idea) I could not for a moment connect with that of Your Lordship's venerable person. 7th The profanation of the house of God in Coravilangad [Kuravilangad] by the introduction of the schism, I thought it would be more painful to Your Lordship than that of a corner of your hired house by being resided by your Vicar General for few days. Under such circumstances I presumed Your Lordship's permission to reside there.⁸⁹

Commenting on these letters I. C. Chacko wrote "it is clear that this letter is not befitting the status of either bishop Lavigne or Fr Nidiry."⁹⁰ He added, "Fr Nidiry's reply was logically sharpened and an attack of this type only aggravated the ill-feeling of the bishop, who was already ashamed of his meanness."⁹¹

⁸⁷ Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 524-528.

⁸⁸ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561, letter of Lavigne to Nidiry, from Ooty, on 4 June 1890.

⁸⁹ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, prot. no. 6561.

⁹⁰ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 539.
540.

The relationship between Lavigne and the vicar general became more widened day after day. Aiuti informed the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* about the difficult situation:

The prelate showed me always a certain contrariety towards Nidiry, and I fear that if he continues to treat him always with the little confidence or often opposing him, things could be set on a wrong foot.⁹²

3.2. Restrictions on Vicar General

The high popularity of the vicar general created a kind of resentment in Lavigne. Moreover, the people began to consider the pontifically privileged vicar general as a substitute for a native bishop. Lavigne hastily restrained Emmanuel Nidiry's use of the privilege regarding the pontificals without his proper permission.⁹³ Commenting on the restrictions of Lavigne, Kathanar Palakkunnel Mathai Mariam wrote:

In Bula it was said that the vicar general had the right to wear the mitre and the crosier, give confirmation and make visits. But now the bishop has taken the ring, the mitre and the crosier and locked them up and says that these should be used again only when he permits. When we view all this, it is clear that these Syrians are foolish and wretched. By this act at Palai it is clear to anyone with body and soul that we have been insulted.⁹⁴

On the same issue the historian I. C. Chacko writes:

To speak denouncing Fr Nidiry at the synod of Changanacherry, after appointing him vicar general and after that to control his rights and privileges openly and insultingly, in these acts we do not see the foresight, tact and magnanimity usually associated with the name of bishop Lavigne. If he had no confidence in Fr Nidiry, he should not have appointed him vicar general.⁹⁵

Though there was a strict ban for the use of the Pontificals in the Mass, Emmanuel Nidiry celebrated two more Pontifical Masses, one at his own native place Kuravilangad on 29 January 1890 and another at Tripunithura

⁹² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 1651, "Quel Prelato mi ha sempre mostrato una tal quale contrariata al Nidiry, ed io temo che s'egli continuerà a trattarlo mostrandoli sempre poca fiducia e contro dicendolo spesso, le cose potrebbero mettersi su di un piede falso." Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 June 1890.

⁹³ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 248.

⁹⁴ P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakkunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 300.

⁹⁵ I. C. CHACKO, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil Jeevithavum Kalavum*, 538.

on 8 September 1890, in connection with the anniversary of the appointment of the vicar general. Here the permission from the bishop was presumed.

3.3. Lavigne Launches New Projects for a College

The attempt of Emmanuel Nidiry to start a joint college in collaboration with Mar Dionysius was acceptable neither to Rome nor to Lavigne. Even the very foundation of the Syrian National Association had been wrong for Lavigne. He critically judged the aim of the association as entering a room through a window instead of going through the door.⁹⁶ He ordered Emmanuel Nidiry to produce the permission of Msgr. Marcellino to collect funds for the Syrian National Association.⁹⁷ In another letter to Emmanuel Nidiry on 31 December Lavigne wrote “obedience is better than lose of wealth.”⁹⁸ During his tenure as the counsellor to the bishop⁹⁹, Emmanuel Nidiry could not proceed independently. Though the scheme for a joint college failed, Emmanuel Nidiry welcomed the scheme of a Catholic college. At the same time Mar Dionysius continuously wrote to Emmanuel Nidiry regarding the Woodland Estate and the starting of the joint college.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, there was some difference between Lavigne and Medlycott regarding the location of the new college. Aiuti took the matter to *Propaganda* for the intervention.¹⁰¹ Rome had no objection to start the college at Kottayam, but remained firm to its former decision namely the prohibition of a joined venture of Suriani Catholics and the Jacobites.¹⁰² In the same letter *Propaganda* raised two objections: 1. the lack of financial means and 2. the lack of teaching personnel. Simeoni also wrote to Emmanuel Nidiry informing him that the congregation would not be able to pay annually to the vicariate for the running of the college.¹⁰³ Aiuti offered a grant of 20-25 thousand francs to begin the college, but

⁹⁶ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1374^v, Lavigne to Aiuti on 11 December 1888.

⁹⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 442, the letter of Lavigne to Nidiry on 14 December 1888.

⁹⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 442-443.

⁹⁹ As soon as Lavigne took possession of the vicariate he appointed four councillors and Emmanuel Nidiry was one among them. Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 141.

¹⁰⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 443-444.

¹⁰¹ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1371^r, Aiuti to Simeoni on 15 December 1888.

¹⁰² ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 67, letter to Aiuti on 13 February 1889.

¹⁰³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 304, Simeoni to Aiuti on 14 August 1889.

he was not sure that the *Propaganda* would agree to grant such a great amount.¹⁰⁴ Lavigne informed Aiuti the decision of the priests, and lay leaders of Kottayam vicariate to contribute for the college and for the bishop's house.¹⁰⁵ *Propaganda* sent a sum of 5,000 francs as a subsidy to Lavigne through the procurator general of Jesuits.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, on 1 February 1891 Lavigne transferred his residence from Kottayam to Changanacherry¹⁰⁷ and there he started the new college, which is today's St Berchmans College.¹⁰⁸

3.4. Lavigne Transfers Residence to Changanacherry

From the very beginning itself Lavigne had a dislike for Kottayam. First of all it was not a Catholic centre; secondly there was the controversy issue on the Woodland Estate concerning its ownership and also the difficulty he faced in the property which he bought for the new bishop's house. "Seeing that the compound was in the midst of the Jacobites and fearing trouble and treachery from them, His Lordship left the idea of building a house there."¹⁰⁹ On 16 August 1889, he wrote to Simeoni:

Kottayam, as I already explained, is not the place [either for the college], or for my residence; it is useless to repeat here the reasons, sufficiently clear. Changanassery is in a better position and I have the intention to settle there, if Your Eminence gives me freedom.¹¹⁰

Lavigne also asked the advice of Emmanuel Nidiry, then his councillor.¹¹¹ Emmanuel Nidiry proposed Kuravilangad and took the bishop over there.

¹⁰⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1516, Aiuti to Simeoni on 15 September 1889.

¹⁰⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1579-1580, copy of Lavigne to Aiuti on 23 November 1889; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhry Manikathanar*, 495-496. This decision was made in the on the day of the first pontifical mass of Emmanuel Nidiry, the first pontifical vicar of Kottayam vicariate on 14 November 1889. According to A. Pareparambil the decision of fund raising was made on another day since meeting on 14 November 1889 was very short and not all the councillors could participate in it, see A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 153.

¹⁰⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1891, vol. 24, f. 268. Letter to Lavigne on 4 July 1891.

¹⁰⁷ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ It took almost nine years for the beginning of College after the birth of Syrian National Association in 1882.

¹⁰⁹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a very Important Period ...*, 145.

¹¹⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1502. "Cottayam, ainsique je l'ai déjà exposé, n'est pas un lieu propice ni pour ma residence, inutile d'an redire ici les raisons assez claires. Changanassery est dans de melleures conditions, et j'ai l'intention de m'établir l'si Vostre Eminence m'on lasse la liberté." Lavigne to Simeoni on 16 August 1889.

¹¹¹ "He called for, therefore. Fr Nidiry and told him 'I came to Kottayam to build my house and dwell there and to establish a large school there. You told me that there was a large compound and house ready for

The proposed site was an extensive level ground and was away from populous centre, so the bishop was not impressed.¹¹²

Since it was clearly stated in the Brief *Quod iampridem* that the residence of the apostolic vicar would be in the city of Kottayam,¹¹³ further modification of the Brief needed the approval of the *Propaganda Fide* and the approval of the Holy Father. Therefore, Simeoni informed Lavigne that the procedure for the new arrangement would be considered at the earliest.¹¹⁴

Lavigne again wrote to Simeoni on 10 September 1889, expressing that his stay in Southist Church in Kottayam, was a matter of discontent for the Northists:

The history of the Syrians from all antiquity shows the prelates, who governed them, resided in different times and ages ruling over both the Northists and Southists community, but never a Southist Church was selected as Episcopal residence or Cathedral. If this novelty be done by your lordship we regret to say that it being an imprecise act would highly displease the whole Northist community.¹¹⁵

Later when Lavigne was at Kodaikanal he asked his secretary Louis Pareparambil to find a new place for the residence of bishop and Louis proposed Changanacherry as the suitable place.¹¹⁶ Changanacherry was then the second largest town with a great number of Catholics. The golden

it, that the Catholic had spent about Rs. 4000 to purchase that compound and the house with it, and the Jacobites contributed only a small portion of the sum to purchase it in order to erect a large school there, but now by the treachery of Mar Dynosius and his Jacobite subjects the Catholic are ejected. I purchased therefore another compound to build my house there but I experienced too a great deal of trouble from the treacherous Jacobites and therefore I left the idea of erecting my house there, and sought for another compound to purchase it and build my house and school but having found one I could not get even that compound owing to the treachery of some people. What I shall I do? Let me go out of this town and get a compound elsewhere for my purpose." Cf. A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 145-146.

¹¹² A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 146. "Fr Ricard remarked 'are we going to build a large school for the poor and destitute inhabitants of a few huts? Where shall we get pupils enough for the school? Where from can we get the commodities of life? Therefore this place is not good for the Episcopal house, much less for the school! Then Fr Nidiri said "when Your Lordship fixes your residences here, people also will come here."' "Very well" remarked the bishop "when people will come here I will also build my house here." Fr Recard was the personal secretary of bishop.

¹¹³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1899, vol. 22, f. 345, letter to Aiuti on 26 September 1889. "Quod iampridem dei 20 maggio 1899 si disse: cum ordinario residentia proprii vicarii apostolici in urbe cottayam."

¹¹⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22 f. 343^v, letter to Lavigne on 26 September 1889.

¹¹⁵ ACO, *Ponenze*, 1890, 626-628; ACO, *ACTA* 1890-1891, vol. 21, 1890, f. 284^v, Lavigne to Simeoni on 10 September 1889. Here Lavigne quotes the petition of some Northists on 12 June 1888.

¹¹⁶ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 148.

jubilee of the birthday of bishop fell on 6 January 1890. Lius Pareparambil and Emmanuel Nidiry took initiative to celebrate the day and Changanacherry was chosen as the venue. An invitation letter was framed and was sent to all parish priests with the signature of Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pareparambil.¹¹⁷ After the celebration, Louis Pareparambil and the parish priest of Changanacherry took the bishop to the site which he liked.

On 15 September 1890, in the general meeting of the *Propaganda* the request of Lavigne was taken in to consideration¹¹⁸ and was approved by the Holy Father on the following day:

The faculty is granted to Lavigne to reside in Changanacherry instead of Kottayam, however the Brief *Quod iampridem* remains unchanged. Retaining the title of the apostolic vicar of Kottayam, he should try to ameliorate the conditions of Kottayam, that it could be the ordinary residence of the apostolic vicar in future.¹¹⁹

After getting the above mentioned information of *Propaganda* through Aiuti,¹²⁰ Lavigne called his vicar general, secretary and some of the councillors and communicated the permission of the Holy See to transfer his residence from Kottayam to Changanacherry. On 1 February 1891 Lavigne blessed his new residence at Changanacherry and began to stay there.¹²¹ The change of residence, by ignoring the proposal of Emmanuel Nidiry increased again the conflict. Later Aiuti wrote the reason for the selection of Changanacherry as the residence of apostolic vicar:

... in Changanacherry instead the Catholics are more numerous and richer, there is a beautiful and great Church all new and really worthy to be destined to pro-cathedral of the Apostolic Vicar.¹²²

¹¹⁷ For the invitation letter, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 500-501.

¹¹⁸ ACO, ACTA 1890-1891, vol. 21, f. 287.

¹¹⁹ ACO, ACTA 1890-1891, vol. 21, f. 287, "Affirmative, che cioè si concede la facoltà a Monsignor Lavigne di risiedera a Changanacherry invece di Cottayam, rimanendo però fermo il Breve *Quod iampridem*, e ritenendo il titolo di vicario Apostolico di Cottayam, e che cerchi di migliorare la condizione di Cottayam, onde nel tratto successivo possa essere la residenza ordinario del Vicario Apostolico."

¹²⁰ ACO, ACTA 1890-1891, vol. 21, f. 287. Lavigne was asked to communicate Lavigne the decision of Rome. Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti*, 1890, vol.23, f. 403^v, *Propaganda* to Aiuti on 1 October 1890.

¹²¹ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 151.

¹²² ACO, *Ponenze*, 1890, 629-630, "... Changanacherry invece i cattolici sono più numerosi e più ricchi una bella e grande Chiesa tutta nuova e veramente degna di essere destinata a pro-Cattedrale del Vicario Apostolico." Aiuti to *Propaganda* on 29 October 1889.

3.5. Lavigne Projects a Series of Accusations against Emmanuel Nidiry

In spite of all good words of advice of Aiuti to Lavigne to maintain harmony with Emmanuel Nidiry,¹²³ he remained unchanged. Lavigne wrote well on the qualities of others,¹²⁴ but had no appreciation for Emmanuel Nidiry. It was intolerable for Lavigne to see the relation of Emmanuel Nidiry with Syrian National Association. Emmanuel Nidiry and Mar Dionysius even complained many times to Aiuti of the hard and distrusting treatment of Lavigne towards them.¹²⁵ Moreover, the reunion attempts of Mar Dionysius were seen by Lavigne with doubts.

Emmanuel Nidiry and Mar Dionysius jointly purchased Woodland Estate to start a union college under the Syrian National Association and the major part of the share was from the Catholic party.¹²⁶ But due to the disinterest of Lavigne the project was nipped in the bud and gradually Catholics lost their claim over the property. However, for the debts over the property Emmanuel Nidiry too was responsible and he entrusted Mar Dionysius to settle the debts.¹²⁷ On 28 February 1891, Lavigne wrote a letter to Aiuti in which he accused Nidiry of many matters including the Woodland litigation.¹²⁸ In order to reimburse, Mar Dionysius wanted to hypothecate the property to the government for loan of 5,000/- rupees. When government officially asked Emmanuel Nidiry whether he agreed to that mortgage, Emmanuel Nidiry replied that, as he was the representative of the Catholic community, he could not give the consent. Knowing this, Lavigne asked Nidiry about it, but Nidiry pretended to know nothing about Mar Dionysius' project. On the next day on 28 February 1891, under the fire of his questions, Nidiry gave Lavigne an account of the events. Lavigne expressed his displeasure in the fact that Nidiry did not inform his bishop of such an important affair. Nidiry answered giving the following reasons:

¹²³ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 1651, Aiuti to Simeoni on 8 June 1890.

¹²⁴ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1543^v, "Le Vicaire Général Sudiste, le P. Mathieu Makil, est jeune, instruit, humble et obéissant. Il n'est nullement pressé de célébrer sa première messe Pontificale."

¹²⁵ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1482^v, letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

¹²⁶ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 145-146.

¹²⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 502-504.

¹²⁸ ACO, *Scrit. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2199^R-2200^v, Lavigne to Aiuti on 28 February 1891.

1. I believed that it was good that the field of the Union remained in the present state. As I wrote several times to Your Excellency, he has the Union in the bottom of his heart and does not want to let it perish.
2. Since Your Excellency told me not to anymore occupy with the Union, I could not give my consent to the mortgage. To refuse the consent is also to make act of ownership.
3. As the affair of the field of the Union is not included in the duties of the Vicar General, I did not feel compelled to inform Your Highness about it. This is how he tells his Bishop about the affairs of public interest.¹²⁹

Another childish charge against Emmanuel Nidiry from Lavigne was that Nidiry gave his livery to his servant; Lavigne could not approve this action, Nidiry told Lavigne, each priest could give his servant a dress without consulting the bishop. Another charge of Lavigne was regarding the horse carriage (Tilbury) of Emmanuel Nidiry. Lavigne was not against Nidiry possessing his two-wheeled horse carriage and recognized that it was necessary for his work. However, Lavigne could not understand on what pretext, true or false because of the difficult character of the horse, he used to make Fr Aloysius Pazheparambil sit on the back seat, the very back where a servant sat. In addition, narrating the presence of a Catholic Chaldean priest and an Armenian priest who reached his vicariate to take a collection, Lavigne wrote that Nidiry was impressed by them, gave the Chaldean priest Posik a letter of recommendation in enthusiastic terms and even proposed to accompany him personally to the churches or at least to give another priest as a companion.¹³⁰ Another accusation of Lavigne was that Emmanuel Nidiry never supported the idea of a central seminary in Malabar.¹³¹ The hesitation of Lavigne towards Nidiry became an advantage to the Southist community which led to the appointment of a separate vicar general for them. Lavigne hoped that by appointing a vicar general for the Southist

¹²⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2199^v-2200^r, "1° Je croyais qu'il était bon que le champ de l'Union restât dans l'état actuel ». Il a, comme je l'ai écrit plusieurs fois à Votre Excellence, l'Union au fond du cœur et ne veut pas la laisser périr. 2° Puisque V.G. m'a dit de ne plus m'occuper de l'Union, je ne pouvais pas donner mon consentement à l'hypothèque ». Refuser le consentement c'est encore faire acte de propriétaire. 3° Comme l'affaire du champ de l'Union ne rentre pas dans les attributions du Vicaire Général, je ne me suis pas cru obligé à en informer Votre Grandeur. C'est ainsi qu'il met son Évêque au courant des affaires d'intérêt public." Lavigne to Aiuti on 28 February 1891.

¹³⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2200^r, Lavigne to Aiuti on 28 February 1891.

¹³¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1485, "Il [Nidiry] est contraire au projet du séminaire central, ..." Lavigne to Aiuti on 21 June 1889.

community he could easily gain their support. Lavigne played this perverse drama for degrading Emmanuel Nidiry and thereby to exercise control over his powers as pontifical vicar general.

4. Separate Vicar General for the Southists and the Degradation of Emmanuel Nidiry

From time immemorial there was a division of Suriani Christians in to Northists and Southists. Traditionally, for a long period the Northists and Southists had been equally under the rule of one and the same archdeacon, who was always a Northist. Moreover, during the time of Chandi Parambil (Alexander de Campo) a Northist bishop, who governed the Suriani Church efficiently for twenty-four years (1663-1687) there was no division and all accepted his authority.¹³² The same situation continued up to the second half of the nineteenth century until the separation of the Suriani Catholics from the Latins of the archdiocese of Verapoly was effected.

4.1. The First Representation from Southist Community

On 24 March 1876, due to the continued petitions from Malabar, the *Propaganda Fide*, decided to send Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor¹³³ to study the problems and to assess the real situation in Malabar.¹³⁴ Meurin reached Mannanam on 20 May 1876 and arranged a conference from 23 onwards. On the first day of the conference twelve priests were elected as representatives on the request of apostolic visitor¹³⁵ and they took an oath of secrecy. Seeing that those twelve priests selected were from Northists, in order to have the representation of all communities the following day two priests of Southists were also elected and they too made the oath to keep the secrecy.¹³⁶ In fact it was a new beginning in the history of the Southists. The Southist community which remained one and united with the Northist have got a public recognition for their particular identity.

¹³² A. THAZHATH, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam 1987, 176-178.

¹³³ Pope Pius IX appointed Meurin by the Papal decree *Opportet Romanum Pontificem*. Cf. ACO, *Scritta Riforma Cong. Malabaresi* 1862-1877, f. 465^{R-V}. For the Malayalam translation, see *Ibid.*, f. 464^{R-V}.

¹³⁴ The *Propaganda Fide* gave the apostolic visitor 12 regulations. Cf. ACO, *Ponente* 1876, 715-718.

¹³⁵ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 295.

¹³⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 295.

4.2. The Carmelites Support the New Movement

When Marcellino was appointed as the coadjutor to Mellano on 17 August 1877, with the charge of the Suriani Catholics¹³⁷ the situation became more favourable to the Southists. Marcellino appointed his former student Mathew Makil as his secretary, through whom the Southist priests became more attached to Verapoly and consequently received more favours.¹³⁸ Making use of this opportunity, the Carmelites who wanted to sustain their authority in Malabar supported the move of the Southists to have a third vicariate for them under the Carmelite bishops.

On 28 October 1887 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote a letter to Aiuti, in which he informed the protest among the Southist community with the support of the Carmelites against the appointment of the new apostolic vicars.¹³⁹ Later when there arose a rumour among the Southists that the bishops for the new apostolic vicariates would not be Carmelites but members of other Orders, the Southists feared that they would lose all the favours and positions which they got under bishop Marcellino.¹⁴⁰ Therefore as a protest to the new arrangements of Rome plenty of petitions were sent to *Propaganda* from the Southist community in favour of the Carmelites.¹⁴¹ Marcellino even notified that the complaints against the Carmelites were pure fiction created by some 3rd Order, Nidiry Emmanuel and some ex-Tertiary's [TOCD], and this was carried out secretly. Malabar knew nothing of it, and it remained calm.¹⁴²

4.3. The Deputation to the Apostolic Delegate

As a gratitude to the various favours received from Verapoly and in view of further favours in future, Mathew Makil together with Northist Varghese Valiaveetil went to Oottacamund and submitted a petition to the apostolic

¹³⁷ Cf. *Iuris Pontifici de Propaganda Fide*, VI. P. II, 370-371.

¹³⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 138.

¹³⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 415 - 415.

¹⁴⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 138; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 415.

¹⁴¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 438, *Propaganda* to Aiuti on 15 December 1887; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidiry Manikathanar*, 415.

¹⁴² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1302^R-1303^V, "Vostra Eminenza tenga per certo, che le notizie così dette allarmanti giunte a Roma contro i Carmelitani furono pura finzione di alcuni 3ⁱ, Nidiri Mani ed alcuni ex-Terziani, e ciò lo fecero in segreto che il Malabar ne seppe nulla, e stava tranquillissimo." Marcellino to *Propaganda* on 25 December 1887.

delegate.¹⁴³ A. Pareparambil reports, “the Carmelites, who were eager to get one of themselves appointed bishop for the Syrians and thereby to secure a firm hold on them, stirred up Fr M. Machil and other Suddist priests to go on a deputation to Oottacamund to obtain their end.”¹⁴⁴ On their petition he says:

They requested him not to place them under the jurisdiction of the new Bishops telling him that they were a separate nation, the descendants of a Colony from Mesopotamia and Persia. They had not mixed with the other people. They were always living separately and not making proselytes and therefore they had a right to be governed by a separate bishop. They brought also some letters of recommendation showing which they asserted their right to have a separate bishop for them.¹⁴⁵

Aiuti informed *Propaganda* about the project of a third vicariate for the Southists supported by Archbishop Mellano.¹⁴⁶ Followed by this on 21 November 1887 ten parish priests of the Southist community sent a letter to Holy Father requesting him to place them under Mellano or coadjutor Marcellino.¹⁴⁷ A. Pareparambil reports that for the second time after two or three months another deputation of the Southists went to Oottacamund for the same purpose:

They took some Northists also to induce them to tell His Excellency that the cause of the Suddists was rightful and that the Northists have no grudge against granting a separate Bishop to the Suddists.¹⁴⁸

4.4. The Response from Rome

Receiving the letter of Aiuti about the project of a third vicariate¹⁴⁹ and of some Southist representatives,¹⁵⁰ the *Propaganda Fide* informed Aiuti on

¹⁴³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 513. They visited the apostolic delegate on 12 October 1887 as representatives of the apostolic vicar of Varapuzha. Cf. C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India* ..., 157.

¹⁴⁴ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 138-139; BERNARD THOMA, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 799.

¹⁴⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 139. Makil as the representative of the Southist community submitted the letter to Aiuti.

¹⁴⁶ ACO, ACTA 1889, vol. 20. f. 281, copy of Aiuti's letter on 14 November 1887.

¹⁴⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1300-1301, “Quare Beatissime Pater, ut saepius fecimus ad Sanctitatem Tuam cum fiducia rogamus ut ns sub Illrmo. D. Archiepiscopo Verapolitano ab ejusdem Coadjutore regi et gubernari permittere dignetur, ut in sinu Ecclesiae, qua animae, qua mentio pace perfruivaleamus.” *Ibid.*, f. 1300^v, petition of the ten parish priests of the Southist community to Holy Father on 21 November 1887.

¹⁴⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period* ..., 139.

¹⁴⁹ ACO, ACTA 1889, vol. 20. f. 281, copy of letter of Aiuti on 14 November 1887.

¹⁵⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1298-1299.

15 December 1887 of the impossibility of modifying the dispositions of the Brief *Quod iampridem*.¹⁵¹ The Congregation states:

It is not possible to make modifications in the dispositions of the most recent Brief *Quod iampridem*; and much less would be possible to modify them in the sense of erecting a third Suriani apostolic vicariate exclusively for the Southists, because in such a way it would, I would say almost, canonize that division of caste which is a grievous sore of that country, and for which one should have all the interest to eliminate, if that is possible.¹⁵²

Taking to account the seriousness of the problem the Prefect asked Aiuti to remind Mellano of the decision of the apostolic vicars at Bangalore not to divide the apostolic vicariate for the Surianis according to caste. In order to make new arrangements the *Propaganda* proposed some suggestions too.¹⁵³

Again on 22 November 1877 Aiuti wrote to *Propaganda Fide* requesting instructions regarding the plan of erecting a third vicariate exclusively for the Southists under a Carmelite bishop.¹⁵⁴ *Propaganda* was well aware that Carmelite missionaries were the persons behind the move for the third vicariate exclusively for the Southist and Mellano too supported the same.¹⁵⁵ On 9 January 1888, in a reply to the letter of Aiuti, the Prefect of the congregation informed the difficulty of the execution of the project.¹⁵⁶ At the same time Lavigne agreed to appoint four counsellors, two each from Southists and Northists.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 439^{R-V}.

¹⁵² "Allo stato attuale delle cose, come saviamente V. S. Rma. fece osservare a Msgr. Mellano Arcivescovo di Verapoly, non è possibile modificare le disposizioni del recentissimo noto Breve *Quod iampridem*; e molto meno sarebbe possibile modificarle nel senso di erigere un terzo Vicariato Apostolico Soriano pei Suddisti esclusivamente, poiché in tal guisa si verrebbe, dire quasi, a canonizzare quella divisioni di caste che è una grave piaga di codesta contrade, e che si avrebbe tutto l'interesse a sopprimere, se fosse possibile." Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 439^{R-V}, letter to Aiuti on 15 December 1887.

¹⁵³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1887, vol. 20, f. 439^{R-V}, letter to Aiuti on 15 December 1887. See also C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 159-160.

¹⁵⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, f. 11^V.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. ACO, *ACTA* 1889, vol. 20, f. 281. The relator of the *Ponenze* states, "Di questo progetto, che era appoggiato dallo stesso Arcivescovo di Verapoly."

¹⁵⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, f. 11^V, *Propaganda* to Aiuti on 9 January 1888.

¹⁵⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1888, vol. 21, f. 11^{V-12}.

4.5. Lavigne Supports Southist Project

The arrival of bishop Lavigne became another occasion for the Southists to express their demands.¹⁵⁸ A short period after the enthronement of Lavigne, a group of Southists led by Mathew Makil, secretary of bishop Marcellino, met the bishop and informed him of their difficulty to remain under a Northist vicar general and further they explained that they always had their own separate churches and avoided intermarriage with Northists.¹⁵⁹ Being a foreigner, everything was too strange to Lavigne. Later the appointment of Fr Joseph Tharayil as one of the councillors of Lavigne was the second public recognition for the Southists.¹⁶⁰

Regarding the idea of Aiuti of giving separate administration for the Southists, for ending the problems and thereby hoping the conversion of the Jacobite Southists,¹⁶¹ Lavigne too agreed with the hope that:

a) it will reward the docility which they showed after my arrival; b) it will give them a great impetus to serious reforms when they are delivered from the oppression in which the Northists keep them; c) it will facilitate the conversion of the fifteen or twenty Jacobite Southist priests, who might possibly bring with them a part, if not the whole, of their parishioners.¹⁶²

4.6. Rome Decides to Give a Separate Vicar General

On 15 July 1889 the general meeting of *Propaganda* discussed the letter of Aiuti and took the decision to grant a distinct vicar general for the Southists with two councillors having all the privileges already granted to the other two vicars general.¹⁶³ The following day the Holy Father approved the decision.¹⁶⁴ A. Pareparambil with surprise comments:

¹⁵⁸ In the letter of Lavigne on 4 May 1888, to Aiuti, narrates that on the same day of reception at Mannanam the Southists requested him for an occasion to read a special address after the official one. But he encountered them only in the next day and received many petitions and he agreed to send two students from their community to Rome. Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1313, copy of the letter of Lavigne to Aiuti. See also C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...*, 161-162.

¹⁵⁹ M. MOOLAKKATT, *The Book of Decrees of Mar Mathew Makkil*, doctoral dissertation Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome 1992, 13.

¹⁶⁰ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 141.

¹⁶¹ ACO, *ACTA* 1889, vol. 20. ff. 287^v-288, Aiuti to Simeoni on 16 February 1889.

¹⁶² ACO, *ACTA* 1889, vol. 20. f. 282, "a) récompensera la docilité dont ils ont fait preuve depuis mon arrive; b) leur donnera un grand élan vers des réformes sérieuses en les délivrant de l'oppression où les tiennent les Nordistes; c) facilitera la conversion des quinze ou vingt prêtres Jacobites Suddistes, qui pouvaient entraîner avec eux une partie de leurs paroissiens, si non la totalité."

¹⁶³ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22. ff. 267^v-268, "due Vicari apostolici si concede ai cattolici Soriani detti Suddisti un distinto Vicario Generale con due consiglieri, colle stesse norme ed uguali attribuzioni e privilegi già concessi agli altri due Vicari Generale." Letter to Aiuti on 24 July 1889.

¹⁶⁴ ACO, *Ponenze* 1889, 585.

What a wonderful thing. What a holy vengeance! They who refused to accept a bishop to reign over them were recipient of all kinds of favours from the same bishop till his death.¹⁶⁵

Actually the decision of the Cardinals to grant a separate vicar general was not meant to satisfy or to favour the Southist community but to end the conflict between Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry. It was clear from the letter of Simeoni to Aiuti asking him to appoint Emmanuel Nidiry as the vicar general of the Southists, thinking that he belonged to that community and thus to satisfy both Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry:

In that way Msgr. Lavigne would have the proper vicar general of his satisfaction and Nidiry would be content in seeing that he was selected for such a dignity.¹⁶⁶

4.7. Mathew Makil, Vicar General for the Southists

Finally, according to the decision of the general meeting of Cardinals on 15 July 1889,¹⁶⁷ Lavigne nominated Fr Mathew Makil as his second vicar general for the Southists and later two councillors were also appointed from among the Southists. It seems that this appointment was an act of revenge of Lavigne towards Northists especially towards Nidiry. Lavigne wrote to *Propaganda* "the Southist vicar general Fr Mathew Makil is young, instructed, humble and obedient. He is not at all in a hurry to celebrate his first pontifical mass."¹⁶⁸ The official ceremony of taking over of the office of Makkil took place on 8 January 1890 at Kaipuzha parish under the presidency of Lavigne.¹⁶⁹ It was on the following day of the funeral of Fr Porookara Kuriakose Elias, the prior general of the Carmelite Tertiaries. Bishop Lavigne who refused to officiate at the funeral of Fr Porookara Kuriakose, reached Kaippuzha and on the next day appointed Mathew Makil.¹⁷⁰ Fr Palakunnel writes about these events:

¹⁶⁵ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 140.

¹⁶⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f. 288^v, "In questo modo Msgr. Lavigne avrebbe il suo proprio vicario generale di suo compiacimento e il Nidiry sarebbe soddisfatto nel vedersi prescelto a tale carica." Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 3 August 1889.

¹⁶⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, ff. 267^v-268^r.

¹⁶⁸ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni* 1878-1889, ff. 1543^v-1544^r, "Le Vicaire Général Sudiste, le P. Mathiew Makil, est jeune, instruit, humble et obéissant. Il n'est nullement "presse de célébrer sa première messe Pontificale." Letter of Lavigne to Simeoni on 29 November 1889.

¹⁶⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 505.

¹⁷⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 505.

When this father, prior and patriarch of the Suriani community and a saint by common consent died, the vicar general Fr Emmanuel Nidiry, the vicar of the monastery and other priests most sincerely invited Charles Lavigne, who then stayed at Kottayam, to officiate at the funeral. The next day he went to Kaipuzha and consecrated a priest as vicar general. From this and from the fact that he is favouring the Southists and angry with the Northists, it is clear that he is partial and bent upon creating a split among the Surianis forever.¹⁷¹

The Southists were very happy with the new appointments¹⁷² and they expressed their gratitude to Simeoni, the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* and promised their obedience to Lavigne.¹⁷³ Thus the Northist-Southist divide, which till then was chiefly sociological, obtained an ecclesiastical stamp and structure.¹⁷⁴ The Carmelites who were the proponents of a separate vicariate for the Southists never expected such a decision of Rome, their intention was only to sustain their authority over the Suriani Catholics under the title of apostolic vicar.

4.8. The Reaction of Emmanuel Nidiry to the Appointment

The appointment of the separate vicar general for the Southist community was very painful for Emmanuel Nidiry who worked hard for the integration of the Northist-Southist community by abolishing the division based on “sects” or “castes,” in the one Church of Christ.¹⁷⁵ On 20 November 1896 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote to Zaleski, the apostolic delegate:

As to the agitation in this Apostolic Vicariate, I have to submit to your Excellency's kind consideration that I was the first person to advocate the abolition of the caste distinction between the Northists and the Southists after consulting the late Fr Joseph Tharrayil, the Southist councillor to His Lordship Bishop Lavigne, and some other chief members of the Southist

¹⁷¹ P. J. SEBASTIAN, *Palakunnel Valliachante Nalagamam*, 300.

¹⁷² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1543^v-1544^r, letter of Lavigne to Simeoni on 29 October 1889.

¹⁷³ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1878-1889, ff. 1545^r-1546^v, letter to Simeoni on 24 October by 12 priests of the Southists community.

¹⁷⁴ G. NEDUNGATT, “Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect”, *OCP* 70 (2004) 333.

¹⁷⁵ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, fasc. VI. 3. When the Southist community submitted a petition to Lavigne requesting him to send two Southist students to Rome for studying at *Propaganda*, Emmanuel Nidiry, then the counsellor of Lavigne wrote to him “... which any prudent man can from *prima facie* understand is a measure to widen the discord between the Nordists and Sudists and consequently it would become a nursery of caste distinction in case their request be granted”, letter of Nidiry to Lavigne on 12 June 1888. Letter of Emmanuel Nidiry is given as appendix V.

community, and resolved to get a written consent of the influential men of both the parties to appoint some Southist priests in the Northist churches and *vice versa* as vicars and through their exhortation and influence to get consent and commence to intermarry between the two sects, which would gradually lessen and finally abolish the long existing distinction without any violent measure as at present. But that idea was abandoned on account of the premature death of the said Fr Joseph Tharayil and my removal from the Vicar-Generalship.¹⁷⁶

Fr Joseph Tharayil, the representative from Southist community, was a good friend of Emmanuel Nidiry and they worked out a project for demolishing the Northist-Southist division. Unfortunately due to the sudden death of Joseph Tharayil, the dream could not be materialized.

Expressing their negative feelings on the appointment of a new vicar general for the Southist community, Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pazheparambil together wrote a letter to Agliardi and Meurin. In the letter to Meurin they stated:

You already know that within the Kottayam Suriani vicariate there is a small community called Southists, having 12 parishes, who numbered between 10,000-12,000, with less than 25 priests. By his efforts bishop Lavigne obtained permission from the Holy See to appoint a vicar general for them with all pontifical privileges and attribution granted to vicar general of our community which is fifteen times greater than that community in parishes, priests and number of members. Fr Mathew Makil was already nominated to that post and two councillors were elected from their community. Moreover, the public opinion is that Lavigne has more favour to Southists than the Northist Suriani Christians.¹⁷⁷

On 20 January 1890 and on 22 January 1890, Agliardi and Meurin replied to the letter of Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pazheparambil respectively.¹⁷⁸ In their reply they justified the appointment of the separate vicar for the Southist community thinking that it would help the reunion of the separated brethren. Though Emmanuel Nidiry did not favour the division of Surianis in to Southists and Northists, he was the acknowledged leader of the whole Suriani community. Recognizing the greatness of

¹⁷⁶ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, letter of Nidiry to Zaleski on 20 November 1896.

¹⁷⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 515, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry and Louis Pazheparambil to Agliardi and Meurin. The date of letter is not given.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 514-516.

Emmanuel Nidiry even the Southists too used to invite him to preach in their important churches.¹⁷⁹

5. The Issue of Fund Raising and the Final Climax

The very important issue which created a deep distrust between Emmanuel Nidiry and Lavigne was the collection of one-fourth of the annual income from the people for the construction of the bishops' house. On 1 January 1891 Lavigne issued a pastoral letter fixing the rates of contribution of each parish. Vicars of first grade parishes were to pay Rs. 50/- each, of second grade parishes Rs. 35/- each, of third grade parishes Rs. 25/- each, and priests having no parishes were to pay Rs. 15/- each. Moreover each parish was to pay a fourth of the gross annual income for six consecutive years. The share of the families was to be fixed by their vicars and trustees.¹⁸⁰

As an open protest to the pastoral of Lavigne, a memorandum was submitted to the bishop by the vicars of important parishes. In the petition they pointed out that the procedure fixed at Palai was not carried out.¹⁸¹ Moreover they demanded a receipt for the sums paid, specifying that it was for a Suriani bishop. A protest meeting was held at Palai on 7 February 1891, and another meeting was held at Kuravilangad on 4 May 1891,¹⁸² in which resolutions were passed protesting against the bishop.¹⁸³ The Malayala Manorama reported about the events in the following words:

Dr. Lavigne, at the time of his arrival, assured that the Pope had decided to give a Syrian bishop for the Syrians and that there was the need of a patrimony and the parishes agreed to pay one fourth of the annual income

¹⁷⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 923.

¹⁸⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 580-581.

¹⁸¹ At Palai conference Lavigne assured that fund will be utilised to build a house for a Suriani bishop. See, Footnote 78, 79.

¹⁸² ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol.1, fasc. 3, ff. 9-19, "The cause of said meeting and the previous one at Lalam near Palai, was some acts of His Lordship Bishop Lavigne led to great dissatisfaction and disturbances as well as the introduction of Schism in many churches." Letter of the representatives of the priests, of the vicariate of Kottayam, to Zaleski on 6 April 1892. The letter of the priests is given as appendix VI.

¹⁸³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 661-669. Since the bishop had banned all the meetings within the church compound, the representatives of 72 families gathered out side the churchyard. An oil portrait of the former Suriani bishop Alexander Parambil (1663-1687) in the presiding chair signified their future realisation of the bishop of their own nation. Together with the resolutions they felicitated Zalesky the new delegate, who was being consecrated in Calcutta the same day.

and some paid. Afterwards, the Bishop said definitely that the patrimony was for himself and his Latin successors. Hence people from many parishes assembled at Palai and Kuravilangad and resolved not to pay.¹⁸⁴

Though Emmanuel Nidiry was then undergoing a treatment at Ayamkudi, and did not actively participate in the meetings, it was impossible to believe that the protest meetings were held without the blessing of vicar general.¹⁸⁵ Soon after the protest meetings on 21 May 1892 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote to Ladislao Michele Zaleski, the new apostolic delegate,¹⁸⁶ explaining the situation of Kottayam vicariate and the indifference of Lavigne towards him:

.... The people who are disinterested by the regulations of bishop gathered together and selected some as their representatives for sending their petitions to the Holy Father. A great amount of my time I have spent to do away the schism from Malabar. With deep sorrow I too have notified about the indifference of people to the policy of the bishop. The disappointed bishop for this reason has decided to remove me from the post of vicar general. I attach here some copies of the letters of the bishop to me, which would help you understand better the background which persuaded the bishop to take such an action against me.¹⁸⁷

As a result of such events the gap between Lavigne and Emmanuel Nidiry still widened. A. Pareparambil writes:

The collapse of the project of collecting a quarter from the churches for the fund of the vicariate and the disagreement in the affairs of the administration of the churches between the bishop and the vicar general, made a breach between them. Sometimes heated discussion arose on the matter that the bishop could not do anything without the consent of the vicar general and the counsellors. In course of time, this dispute came to a climax. ...Twice or thrice he expressed his mind to some of his intimate priests that he was intending to change the vicar general. But friends of the bishop dissuaded him from doing so.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ MALAYALA MANORAMA 4-6-1891; Cf. A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 264.

¹⁸⁵ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 264.

¹⁸⁶ Ladislao Michele Zaleski was born in Poland and was already in India as secretary to Agliardi. In 1891 He was appointed as the new apostolic delegate of India.

¹⁸⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 670-671. Letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Zalesky from Kuravilangad on 21 May 1892. Original in Malayalam. This letter of Nidiry indicates that he was already informed by Lavigne about his removal from vicar generalship.

¹⁸⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 171.

5.1. The Removal or Resignation of Emmanuel Nidiry

The advice and assistance of an Indian priest was not tolerable to a European bishop and at any rate Lavigne wanted to remove his vicar general. Moreover, the vicar general's health was declining.¹⁸⁹ In a letter written on 31 April 1892, Lavigne reminded again Emmanuel Nidiry:

I have no plan to sustain my vicar general in his position for ever. I hope that you were still remembering what I have told many times in last year concerning the transfer after a definite period. Since you have expressed your unhealthy condition to carry out the duties of the vicar general, now I hope that the right time has come. Though only limited time for the blessing of Mannanam Church, you could send your resignation letter to Mannanam. Therefore, I hope that I could publish the name of new vicar general on the same day on which the curia opens after the holidays. I thank you for your last years' services. You will be continuing as a member of my consultative body. You will get a good parish. I bless you sincerely.¹⁹⁰

Meanwhile, *Propaganda* had a new prefect, and the apostolic delegate of India had been changed. Simeoni and Aiuti were replaced by Mieczyslaw Halka Ledochowski and Ladislao Michele Zaleski respectively. Thus the long awaited time arrived for Lavigne.¹⁹¹ On 4 May 1892, Lavigne again wrote to Emmanuel Nidiry suggesting him to submit his resignation due to sickness.¹⁹² It was not at all a heart breaking letter to Emmanuel Nidiry.¹⁹³ Finally Lavigne executed his decision by issuing an edict on 11 May 1892 granting Emmanuel Nidiry the "requested exoneration" from the office "for sickness"¹⁹⁴ and appointing him parish priest of Kuravilangad,¹⁹⁵ and

¹⁸⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 506, 534, 564.

¹⁹⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 675. Original in Malayalam

¹⁹¹ It was out of strong pressure of Simeoni and Aiuti that Lavigne nominated Emmanuel Nidiry as his vicar general. Since they were transferred Lavigne could easily execute his plan of the removal of Nidiry.

¹⁹² V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 676.

¹⁹³ A. M. Nidhiry reports that "being convinced of the futility of continuing in office, Fr Nidiry gallantly offered his resignation. He requested the bishop to relieve him." A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 266. On the contrary we have clear proof from the letter of Lavigne to Nidiry on 11 May 1892 and Nidiry to Lavigne on 11 June 1892, that Nidiry did not submit his letter of resignation. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 679, 681.

¹⁹⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 1980v, "... I have informed Fr Nidiry that he is no longer Vicar General. My letter does not contain anything that may offend him; he can show it without dishonour. I use reasons of health and others ..." Lavigne to Ledochowski on 1 May 1892. Original in French.

¹⁹⁵ For the edict, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 678; ACO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 75-76, Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

informed Nidiry the same, 'thanking him with a fine letter.'¹⁹⁶ The pastoral letter of Lavigne confirms that Nidiry submitted voluntarily his resignation. In the above letter Lavigne wrote: ... Due to illness our vicar general Emmanuel Nidiry, the parishioner of Kuravilangad was not able to carry out his high responsibility as vicar general. And he requested many times to relieve him from general vicarship. Since I am convinced that his petition was just, he was removed by me from that position.¹⁹⁷

5.2. The Priestly Obedience of Emmanuel Nidiry

The action of bishop did not cause any shock to Emmanuel Nidiry; it seems that he was well prepared for this climax. He responded to the bishop, "I submit without enquiring into the motives of your decision."¹⁹⁸ Fr Peedyekel narrates an anecdote, which reveals the attitude of the vicar general at this peak of divergence: "once in the presence of this writer, the vicar general returned to his room from the bishop's council meeting and then unclosing his red belt and holding it in his hands, said, 'unless this be sacrificed my people would not get anything good, nor their own bishop' and then he threw the belt on the table."¹⁹⁹

In a letter to the bishop dated 22 May 1892, Emmanuel Nidiry responded very silently,²⁰⁰ due to his serious illness he even requested the bishop to relieve him from the office of parish priest of Kuravilangad. For Lavigne the vital issue was power and he was not glad to see "two stars at the same level."²⁰¹ Lavigne was ignorant that he would lose the soil under his feet. As soon as Nidiry received the letter of removal he reached Kuravilangad and took charge as the vicar.

¹⁹⁶ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1892, vol. 25, ff. 200-201. "Con bella lettera ringraziato dall'ufficio il suo vicario generale il Sac. Emmanuele Nidiry." Letter of Lavigne to Zaleski on 31 May 1892. For the pastoral letter of Lavigne on 11 May 1892, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 678.

¹⁹⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 678. Original in Malayalam.

¹⁹⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 679, letter of Nidiry to Lavigne on 22 May 1892.

¹⁹⁹ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 265-266.

²⁰⁰ For the letter of Emmanuel Nidiry, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 679.

²⁰¹ Emmanuel Nidiry writes about the action of Lavigne: "... that displeasure moved His Lordship to change the mode of the government of the churches hitherto adopted and give some orders without consulting me and the councillors which, being unreasonable and contrary to the exigencies of the time and circumstances, were disobeyed and consequently His Lordship was obliged to alter them, as in the case of Coodalloor Chapel etc. The said calumniators, availing themselves of the above mentioned opportunity of the disobedience of the people persuaded His Lordship that, as the people had great confidence in me to defend them, His Lordship could not freely govern them and make them obey his orders till I be removed from the vicar-generalship and consequently he moved me from that office." A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 267.

5.3. The Reaction to the Removal of Emmanuel Nidiry

Expecting a negative reaction from the Surianis, Lavigne already wrote a letter to the Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* explaining his reasons and justifications for the removal of the vicar general.²⁰² He wrote: “when talks about the nomination came to the fore, I exposed my grievances against him, it is then unnecessary to go over them again now. A struggle of almost three years only confirmed my opinion, and new facts came to support it.” He continued:

1) Fr Nidiry, very clever in the quibbling of the courts, did not show any aptitude for the administration. The affairs entrusted to him drag indefinitely in length to the great detriment of the public good.

2) If a decision is not in conformity with his ideas, not only he does not do anything to sustain it, but he does not mind telling that he has nothing to do with this decision.

3) He purposely hides from me very important affairs regarding the public good, and if a faithful priest informs me, he publicly shows his discontent about it. To such a point that now the good priests, while giving me some information, beg me not to say anything about it to Fr Nidiry.

4) In different difficulties that presented themselves, I found the hand of the Fr Nidiry more or less hidden.

5) Apart from a few exceptions, the friends of Fr Nidiry are the priests with schismatic tendencies. Very good priests begin to complain that Fr Nidiry hound them because they compel the people to obey the Bishop's orders.

6) I reflected for a long time about the words that I am going to write now, and my conscience does not hesitate anymore. “The heart of Fr Nidiry is not in Rome.” ... My nearly daily conversations with him have allowed me to know him rather well. I will mention only one word. As I asked him one day why India was so slow to enter the way of progress, he answered me: “How can we do it? Europe has seized the whole power, England for the temporal, and Rome for the spiritual.”

7) The conversion of the Jacobites for which we hoped that Fr Nidiry would be a useful instrument, made his nomination as Vicar General decided, in spite of the reasons exposed above. ... Fr Nidiry has a real influence only on the bad Jacobite priests. He has for the Jacobites a predilection that sometimes frightens me.

²⁰² ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 1977^R-1980^V, Lavigne to Ledochowski on 1 May 1892.

8) Although from the beginning, Msgr. Medlycott had pointed out to me a financial dishonesty of Fr Nidiry, I persisted to believe that, on this point at least, he was upright. Alas, he proved me the contrary.

9) The church of Fr Nidiry, Kuravilangad, led by three priests, friends of Fr Nidiry, is agitating to lead the other churches to disobedience and to the refusal to pay what had been agreed for the establishment of an Episcopal *mense*. [Subsidy for the maintenance of the Bishop] Fr Nidiry is on the spot, at Kuravilangad, and does not inform me about anything. ... What Fr Nidiry and his friends do really think is this of which I do not fear to affirm the exactitude for these are his words said in various circumstances that I summarise here: "We do not need a Latin bishop who comes from abroad; we need a native bishop. If Rome wants to have in Malabar a bishop of Latin race, then let them pay for his maintenance; we shall give money only for a native bishop. ... A secret meeting of revolt must be held in Kuravilangad in three days, and Fr Nidiry does not inform me about anything.

For all the reasons exposed above, and seen the emergency of the situation I have informed Fr Nidiry that he is no longer Vicar General. My letter does not contain anything that may offend him; he can show it without dishonour. I use reasons of health, and others; but himself will very well understand the true motives for his dismissal.²⁰³

The Prefect of the *Propaganda* after getting the letter of Lavigne asked Zaleski to take interest in the affair.²⁰⁴ The removal of Emmanuel Nidiry was widely criticized.²⁰⁵ On 11 June 1892, a group of twenty-seven priests sent a letter of complaint to the new apostolic delegate.²⁰⁶

After evaluating and studying the problems and the letter of the priests and the complaint of Nidiry on 22 July 1892 the apostolic delegate informed

²⁰³ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 1977^r-1980^v, Lavigne to Ledochowski on 1 May 1892. For the letter of Lavigne see appendix VII.

²⁰⁴ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1892, vol. 25, ff. 200^v-201, "Ora siccome si tratta di persona molto influente presso i Soriani e presso gli scismatici, qual è il Nidiry, e molto pericoloso per la sua indole, e inoltre siccome era stato nominato a quell'ufficio per consiglio della propaganda ad evitanda maggiore male, perciò prego la S. V. Rma. Ad interessarsi di quest'affare esprimendo al tempo stesso il suo saggio parere sulla determinazione da prendersi in proposito per evitare tristi conseguenze." Letter to Zaleski on 31 May 1892.

²⁰⁵ Emmanuel Nidiry himself wrote a letter to apostolic delegate asking clarification for his removal. Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2019^r.

²⁰⁶ Cf. ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2019^r, Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 22 July 1892; ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1003, (1886-96) fasc. III, Zaleski to Lavigne on 22 July 1892. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 680-681.

his observations: Emmanuel Nidiry's ambition to become a bishop was known from the time of Agliardi. Lavigne wanted to collect fund for the *mensa episcopale*. Emmanuel Nidiry pretended that in order to obtain this fund Lavigne declared in public that the Holy See would give the Suriani Catholics a native bishop if they erected a residence for the bishop and a fund for his maintenance, which made the Suriani parishes, priests and laity agree upon a good contribution. Zaleski did not believe that Lavigne made such an imprudent promise. Therefore Nidiry started to stir agitations among the Surianis because the fund they collected among them would not be used for a bishop of their nation. Naturally, Emmanuel Nidiry instigated *Propaganda* against Lavigne.²⁰⁷

On 10 September 1892, Lavigne submitted a report on Kottayam vicariate to Rome in which almost five pages were criticism on Emmanuel Nidiry. It seems that Lavigne was happy to present Nidiry in a most humiliating way.²⁰⁸ Lavigne accused Nidiry that he supported the meetings held at Palai and Kuravilangad to prevent the decision of collecting fund for the maintenance of bishop (Episcopal mense) and Lavigne pictured in his letter that such meetings were having schismatic tendencies.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Lavigne depicted in his letter the traditional parish of Kuravialangad as the centre of schisms:

²⁰⁷ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, ff. 2019^v-2020⁸, "Già quando stava in India con Mons. Agliardi era nota l'ambizione del P. Nidiry di essere elevato alla dignità episcopale.

Mons. Lavigne, che cominciò la sua amministrazione con saviezza ed energia cerco fino da principio a formare un fondo che doveva servire di mensa episcopale. Il P. Nidiry poi pretende che, per ottenere questo fondo dai Soriani, Mons. Lavigne dichiarò pubblicamente in diversi meetings: Che la S. Sede era inchinata a dare ai Soriani un vescovo nativo, ma che essi non potranno ottenere questo favore, prima che abbiano eretti una residenza Episcopale ed un fondo per il mantenimento del Vescovo e che i Soriani desiderosi di vedere uno di loro elevato alla dignità vescovile, hanno consentiti ad alzare contribuzioni dalle Chiesa dal Clero e dal Laicato.

Non so quanto è vera questa dichiarazione imputata a Mons. Lavigne non la credo vera, perché sarebbe cosa troppo imprudente. Il fatto è che il P. Nidiry cominciò a fare tra i Soriani agitazione perché significassero, che questo fondo che raccoglievano tra loro non poteva essere applicato che per un vescovo di loro nazione e che esigessero un vescovo nativo. E così, naturalmente faceva *propaganda* contro Mons. Lavigne." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 22 July 1892.

²⁰⁸ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2208⁸, "Un élève de notre école à Changanacerry, qui se destinait au noviciat des religieux natifs se vanta à ses condisciples d'avoir eu des rapports criminels avec le P. Nidiry alors Vicaire Général, et à cette occasion il raconta contre le P. Nidiry d'autres faits de grave immoralité. Je ne fis pas d'enquête 1° parce que le caractère du dénonciateur ne m'inspirait pas beaucoup de confiance." Lavigne to *Propaganda* on 10 September 1892.

²⁰⁹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2208^{8-v}. Lavigne to *Propaganda* on 10 September 1892.

The S.C. of *Propaganda* probably knows that the church of Kuravilangad is since the synod of Diamper, the home of schisms and revolt; it is the reputation it has in the entire country that it [Kuravilangad] is not to be able to live without a schism and according to a picturesque expression, "The Catholic faith never entered to Kuravilangad."

Presently the last partisans of Fr Nidiry, i.e. the people of Kuravilangad are circulating a petition requesting to appoint him as national bishop. Finally the mask is removed and the blinded ones see what was the goal pursued by Fr Nidiry in his struggle against Verapoly. Following the nomination of another vicar general, this too overtly interested petition is coldly received except by the declared schismatics. Kuravilangad is isolated and little by little I shall isolate it still more in order to limit its dreadful influence.²¹⁰

Lavigne continued that a priest had even warned him before the dismissal of Fr Nidiry that the goal of the Catholics by fomenting schism was to prove that a Latin bishop was powerless and Fr Nidiry would be needed as bishop.²¹¹

5.4. The Further Degradation

It seems that Lavigne found pleasure in humiliating his first vicar general. Lavigne deprived the historical parish of Kuravilangad of its forane status,²¹² which was transferred to Muttuchira.²¹³ Moreover Lavigne informed Zaleski that the removal of Emmanuel Nidiry made no impact on the Suriani clergy

²¹⁰ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2208, "La S. C. de Propagande sait sans doute que l'Eglise de Corvalengat est depuis le synode de Diamper, le foyer des schismes et des révoltes; c'est la réputation qu'elle a dans tout le pays de ne pouvoir pas vivre sans un schisme, et selon une expression pittoresque «la foi Catholique n'est jamais entrée à Corvalengat».

En ce moment les derniers partisans du Père Nidiry, c. à d. les gens de Corvalengat, font circuler une pétition le demandant nommément comme Evêque national. Le masque tombe enfin, et les plus aveugles voient quel était le but poursuivi par le P. Nidiry dans la lutte contre Verapoly. Par suite de la nomination d'un autre Vicaire Général, cette pétition trop ouvertement intéressée, est froidement accueillie, si ce n'est pas les schismatiques déclarés. Corvalengat est isolé, et peu à peu je l'isolerais encore de manière à limiter sa funeste influence." Lavigne to *Propaganda* on 10 September 1892.

²¹¹ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, 3, fasc. 2, f. 2209, "Un prêtre m'avait même averti avant la destitution du P. Nidiry, que le but des Catholiques qui fomentent le schisme était de prouver qu'un évêque latin était impuissant et qu'il fallait le P. Nidiry pour évêque." Lavigne to *Propaganda* on 10 September 1892.

²¹² Kuravilangad was one of the most ancient Christian centres of Surianis. It was the prestigious headquarters of Archbishop Parambil Chandi (1663-1687) the first native bishop of the Suriani Catholics and for many years, Kuravilangad was the residing place of the Archdeacons.

²¹³ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 279-280.

and laity and only a few priests were discontent.²¹⁴ While Nidiry was the parish priest of Kuravilangad he had to face troubles from Mar Abdiso, who appointed Fr Nellikadan as the vicar (schismatic) of Kuravilangad. Nidiry filed a suit against him; the judgement was in favour of Nidiry and the trespasser was punished to one week's imprisonment and was fined Rs. 200. The success of the case was a proof for Nidiry's ability and he was still powerful enough to fight against the schism as a normal parish priest.²¹⁵

Moreover, Lavigne asked Nidiry to execute the decree of excommunication against his brother Abraham.²¹⁶ Lavigne wrote to Nidiry that "the orders given to you were somewhat painful to fulfil, chiefly on account of your brother; but as you are the vicar, there was no way to avoid such a grief; your obedience is more meritorious."²¹⁷ This was the most frustrating experience in the life of Nidiry. He felt tremendous conflict between the sense of duty and the love for a brother. His disciplined personality helped him to carry out the order of the bishop.

Later, on the basis of some false allegations²¹⁸ the bishop wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry on 24 October 1894, ordering him not to continue his punishable efforts and exhorted him that Babel could not save him from eternal punishments.²¹⁹ Besides, Lavigne wrote to Zaleski that the parish of

²¹⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2206^v, "A proposito del Nidiry mi scrisse ultimamente Mons. Lavigne che la sua destituzione non ha prodotto nessuna impressione sul clero Soriano del vicariato e che non ci sono che pochissimi sacerdoti che se ne mostrano malcontenti." Zaleski to the secretary of the *Propaganda Fide* on 10 September 1892.

²¹⁵ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 688-691.

²¹⁶ Abraham was admitted to seminary by Marcellino, but Lavigne found that he had no vocation to priesthood and ordered that he should seek his eternal salvation as a layman. After long clerical formation, this was indeed a humiliation for him. He left the place and went to Madras; after studies he returned and appeared wearing the clerical dress in public. Lavigne was angry and on 25 October 1894 wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry asking him to command Abraham to change his clerical dress, on failing of which he was to be excommunicated. For the letter of Lavigne Cf. ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561. Emmanuel Nidiry summoned his brother and read out the bishop's order. On replying to Lavigne on 30 October Emmanuel Nidiry quoted the response of Abraham that he had a share of his father's property and could very well build a church of his own and live independently. Bishop Lavigne at once sent the excommunication order and ordered Nidiry to read it in the church during the Holy Mass. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 698-702; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 276-278.

²¹⁷ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561, Lavigne to Nidiry on 25 October 1894. Letter of Lavigne is given as appendix VIII.

²¹⁸ There spread a rumour that Emmanuel Nidiry had decided to leave the Catholic Church and become a Jacobite, for Mar Dionysius had promised to make him a coadjutor bishop. See A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 279.

²¹⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 693.

Kuravilangadu where Nidiry was vicar, and the schismatics of Thrissur have contributed Rs. 500/- each for the efforts to get a Chaldean bishop.²²⁰ As a reply to the above letter of Lavigne, on 30 October 1894 Emmanuel Nidiry wrote to him:

A few days ago there was a rumour here that Nellikadan, the schismatics of Lalam, Puthenpally and Elangi made a collection of Rs. 500 and received a postal order for the same and wrote to the Thrissur people that Fr Nidiry from the treasury of the Kuravilangad Church has taken and given us Rs. 500 to get a Chaldean bishop and you should take an equal sum and remit to bishop Mellus in order to get a bishop from there. I did not believe the rumour, but now I think they have done so and have gained double ends they had in view, 1st, to encourage the Thrissur schismatics telling them that I am helping them with a good sum of money and the church of Kuravilangad takes great interest for the progress of the schism, 2nd, to make a discord between myself and your Lordship.²²¹

As a consequence of the above letter of Nidiry, Lavigne realized the error and regretted it. He asked his secretary to write to Nidiry "some information came to His Lordship against you, but having examined that point, he has gladly found it to be false and therefore, he has ordered me to write to you about it."²²²

5.5. Zaleski Justifies the Removal of Emmanuel Nidiry

The new apostolic delegate had no admiration for the Suriani Church and Suriani priests. Though, Zaleski admitted "Nidiry as the most intelligent and highly educated person among Suriani priests,"²²³ he had no appreciation for Nidiry. On 30 November 1892 Zalesky, the new apostolic delegate submitted the report on Kottayam vicariate to *Propaganda*. In this he gave another picture of the events concerning the removal of Nidiry and accused

²²⁰ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol.1bis, fasc. 14, ff. 183-184, "Les conciliabules se tiennent à Coravalengat sous les yeux et certainement sous la direction du P. Nidiry. Mais je ne sache pas que les protestants entrent dans le complot. L'Eglise de Coravalengat contribue, dit-on, pour 500 Roupies ; les schismatiques de Trichur pour 500." Zaleski to Ledochowski on 2 November 1894. He is quoting Lavigne's letter to Zaleski on 23 October 1894.

²²¹ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561, letter of Nidiry to Lavigne on 30 October 1894.

²²² ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561, Nidiry to Zaleski on 20 November 1896, Here Nidiry quotes Louis Pazheparambil's letter to Nidiry on 27 November 1894.

²²³ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 67, "Il Nidiry più intelligente ed anche probabilmente più istruito dei altri preti soriani." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

Nidiry as the principal person behind protest meetings in connection with the fund raising programme of the bishop. The vicar apostolic of Kottayam had neither a residence nor fixed income for his maintenance. Therefore it was decided to build a house for the bishop at Changanacherry and to collect toll from all parishes to meet the expenses. According to the decision each parish had to pay 24% of annual income for six consecutive years. Lavigne affirmed that this 24% was fixed by Fr Nidiry. Msgr. Medlycott was of the opinion that Fr Emmanuel Nidiry cunningly proposed this amount²²⁴ to spread hatred of the people towards the vicar apostolic.

Zaleski continues in his letter, on the occasion of the first pontifical mass of Fr Emmanuel Nidiry on 14 November 1889 at Palai, Lavigne convened a meeting of all vicars and representatives of the parishes. In the meeting they discussed the toll collection and on the basis of the following two conditions they agreed to the decision: (1) the residence of vicar apostolic must be at the centre of the vicariate; (2) the fund to be collected for the construction of bishop's house would remain as the property of the Suriani Catholics of the Kottayam vicariate. Though Lavigne said nothing concretely about the conditions, he made no comments of objections. This silence was considered as consent.²²⁵

Lavigne made an allusion to a native bishop to enjoy the benefit of the residence and the expenses. It was said that Lavigne made such an imprudent allusion simply to accept more voluntarily the decision of the toll of the 24%. Commenting on the allusion Zaleski stated that Lavigne had said it in his own general language but Emmanuel Nidiry and other agitators had given a false explanation to Lavigne's words to the ordinary and uneducated people, creating the impression that Lavigne was not asking money for himself, but for a native bishop whom Rome promised to appoint when

²²⁴ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 69-70, "... Mons. Lavigne mi affermò che questo di 24% fù proposto da lo stesso Nidiri e Mons. Medlycott non dubita che egli lo fece per pura malizia per spargere odiosità sopra i vicario apostolico" Report of Zalesky on 30 November 1892.

²²⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 70-71, "Il 14 novembre 1889, all'occasione della prima messa pontificale del Nidiry nella chiesa di Palayi Mons. Lavigne tenne un meeting coi vicarii e rappresentanti delle parrocchie nello quale si trattò della sopradetta tassazione che fù accettata da questi Soriani sotto due condizioni: . Che il residenza per il Vicario Ap. sarà stabilita nel centro del Vicariato 2. Che il fondo che si formerà per la mensa vescovile rimanere proprietà della comunità cattolica Soriana del Vicariato Ap. di Kottayam. Mons. Lavigne non diede consenso esplicito a queste condizione, ma non fece obiezione nessuna, cosa che fu considerata come consenso tacito." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

the necessary fund would be collected for the expense of the episcopate. Many understood it in such a way and again the hope for a native bishop became active.²²⁶

After narrating the change of residence of bishop Lavigne to Changanacherry and the negative reaction of the people, Zaleski wrote about the meeting of representatives of seventy parishes at Kuravilangad on 1 May 1892. Though there was no participation of the priests he critically wrote that the priests were the instigators of that meeting. In the meeting they took a resolution not to pay the toll if the bishop did not recognise it for the patrimony of a native bishop.²²⁷ Quoting a letter of Lavigne on 21 September 1892, he wrote:

After Nidiry became the vicar general, the conduct of Kuravilangad has been changed. I insist on this point because the aim of the priests at Kuravilangad is to prove that the European bishop could do nothing against the schism and that Nidiry should become a bishop.²²⁸

Commenting on the removal of Emmanuel Nidiry Zalaeski informed Rome that the removal made no much impact on the people. He wrote:

In the beginning the dismissal of the Nidiry did not even make any impression or great emotion. Those who were not too much bad and ignorant already expected it since some time. As all knew that his health

²²⁶ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 70-72, "Si dice che, per fare accettare più facilmente la tassa di 24 per cento, Mons. Lavigne fece qualche allusione alla speranza di un vescovo nativo che godrebbe della residenza e della mensa futura – allusione assai imprudente. E perciò mi pare più probabile che non abbia parlato che in termini generali e che il Nidiri ed i altri agitatori abbiano dato a questa gente semplice e poco istruita una spiegazione falsa delle sue parole, facendo credere a loro che non era per sé che Mons. Lavigne chiede va quel denaro ma bene per il vescovo nativo che Roma aveva promesso di concedere appena sarà compiuta la somma necessaria per formare il fondo della mensa episcopale. E così lo capirono molti. Ed in questo modo la speranza di avere un vescovo nativo fu di nuova messa sul tappeto." Report of Zalesky to Rome on 30 November 1892.

²²⁷ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 73, "Si tenne un meeting dei malcontenti prima a Lalam, poi un altro a Corrovelangat (4 May 1892) patria del Nidiri. I preti non presero parte a quest'ultimo, ma si sapeva che essi ne erano i istigatori. In questo ultimo meeting dove erano radunati i rappresentanti di 70 parrocchie (più della metà del vicariato) fù presa la risoluzione di rifiutare il pagamento della tassa se il vicario Apostolico non voleva riconoscerla come patrimonio del vescovo nativo." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

²²⁸ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 75, "Nella lettera del 21 settembre, Mons. Lavigne mi scrisse: Il faut remarquer que cette conduite de Corrovelangat date du temps où le père Nidiri était Vicaire général. l'insiste sur ce point, parce que le bu des prêtres de Corrovelangat est de prou ver qu'un Evêque Européen est inpuissant contre le schisme et qu'il faut le père Nidiri pour Evêque." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892. Here he quotes the letter of Lavigne on 21 September 1892.

was really weakened, for this reason it has been accepted but later the new agitation again started.²²⁹

Though Zaleski was not ready to admit the removal of Emmanuel Nidiry as an unfair action,²³⁰ he admitted that the 24% of toll collection as excessive.²³¹ Finally he advised the Prefect of the *Propaganda* that it would be better to keep silence concerning the action of Lavigne.²³²

In a reply to Zaleski on 24 January 1893, *Propaganda* asked not to disagree with the action of Lavigne. However, *Propaganda* asked Zaleski to give direction to Lavigne, to bring an end to the extra payment demanded from each parish.²³³ As directed by the *Propaganda* the apostolic delegate communicated the order to Lavigne and he put an end to the extra collections from the parishes.²³⁴

5.6. Rome Asks to Regain Emmanuel Nidiry

For Lavigne, Emmanuel Nidiry was a dreadful and dangerous person.²³⁵ In the report on Kottayam vicariate Lavigne wrote that the course of the events did not suffer at all from the absence of Fr Nidiry.²³⁶ Nevertheless

²²⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1896, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 76, "Nel principio la destituzione del Nidiry non fece impressione neppure reco grande emozione. Quelli che non erano troppo cattivi ed ignoranti l'aspettavono già da qualche tempo. Come tutti sapevano poi che la sua salute era veramente molto indebolita, questa ragione è stata accettata ma poco tempo dopo l'agitazione ricominciò di nuovo." Zalaeski to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 30 November 1892.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 81, "Che non potrei disapprovare la condotta di Mosn. Lavigne verso il P. Nidiry." Zalaeski to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 30 November 1892.

²³¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1896, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 81, "Il mio parere sulla questione della contribuzione: La tassa di 24 per cento messa sulle chiese, nessuno può negare, era esorbitante." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

²³² *Ibid.*, 83, "Si deve tacere assolutamente sulle questioni del vescovo nativo e della destituzione del Nidiry - e non toccare che quella del terzo vicariato." Zalaeski to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 30 November 1892.

²³³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 89, "S. C. esaminato attentamente il suo ben dettagliato rapporto circa gli affari del Vicariato Apostolica di Kottayam e preso anche in natura considerazione il parere dalla S. V. Revmo. espresso su tale oggetti; credo opportuno dovrà prendere seguenti misure. 1. quanta alla decisione dal P. Nidiry non è a disapprovare i condotti di Mons. Lavigne di avrebbe allontanato da lui 2. rispetto poi alla contribuzione imposta dal suddetto apostolico credo più esperienze alle attuale circostanze che sia tolta affatto come cosa obbligatoria." *Propaganda* to Zaleski on 24 January 1893. It was really an approval to the demand of Emmanuel Nidiry.

²³⁴ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 673.

²³⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 5, 224, "Questo Nidiri è un uomo pessimo e pericoloso." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 12 July 1896.

²³⁶ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, vol. 3, fasc. 2, f. 2209, "La marche des affaires ne se ressent nullement de l'absence du P. Nidiry." report of Lavigne on Kottayam vicariate to *Propaganda Fide* on 10 septembre 1892.

there was a positive opinion for Emmanuel Nidiry in Rome. As the *Propaganda* already stated, "Nidiry is the most distinguished personality among the Suriani clergy and in addition the most attached to his nationality or to his rite."²³⁷ Understanding the great influence of Emmanuel Nidiry among the people, in a letter to Zaleski on 13 September 1893 Ledochowski instructed Zaleski that the best way of solving problems and ending the divisions in Malabar was to win over Emmanuel Nidiry with good manners.²³⁸

On 7 October 1893, replying to the letter of Ledokowsky, Zaleski expressed the difficulty to meet Emmanuel Nidiry in Malabar before the provincial Synod of Verapoly in the month of April. He was not sure of meeting him. One year ago when Zaleski was at Allaphey, Cochin and Verapoly Nidiry did not come to meet him, therefore Zaleski concluded out of his previous experience that Nidiry would not come to him. Then to call him to Kandy or to have correspondence with him would still worsen the situation, as his relationship with the apostolic delegate would help to generate a grand prestige for Nidiry especially before his followers and thereby to increase his influence among them. It was always presented with exaggeration how influential this priest was among his fellow countrymen. He had influence only among those who paved the way for schism and therefore Zaleski believed that it would be more prudent to treat Nidiry well, in case there would arise an occasion, but not to treat him with too much distinction.²³⁹

²³⁷ ACO, *Lettere e Decreti* 1889, vol. 22, f.183⁸, "Il Nidiry sia la più distinta personalità del clero soriano, e per giunta attaccatissimo alla sua nazionalità od al suo rito." Letter of Simeoni to Aiuti on 16 May 1889.

²³⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1889-1900*, vol. 1, fasc. 2, 57, "Dalla considerazione dei medesimi apprendo la gravità del movimento fra i soriani e causa principale non unica del medesimo credo che sia il sacerdote Nidiry ex vicario generale di Mons. Lavigne. Non sarebbe inopportuno, anzi penso che potrebbe riuscire di ottimo effetto, se la S. V. avvicinasse il detto prete, la cui influenza è gravissima presso i suoi connazionali, e cercasse con le sue buone maniere di guadagnarselo in modo che cessasse di suscitare turbolenze e ribellioni. E' veramente deplorabile che varie chiese del Vicariato Apostolico." Letter of Ledokowsky to Zaleski on 13 September 1893.

²³⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1889-1900*, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 49-51, "Temo che questo riuscirà assai difficile: non potrò recarmi sulla costa di Malabar che verso il mese di aprile per il Synod provinciale di Verapoly ed allora probabilmente non avrò occasione di vedere in Nidiry che non verrà trovarmi, come non era venuto quando un anno fa stavo a Allappi, Cocino e Verapoly. Chiamarlo poi a Kandy oppure entrare collui in corrispondenza avrebbe peggiorato ancora le cose perché queste relazioni col Delegato Apostolico avrebbero dato al Nidiri, ai occhi dei suoi seguaci, più grande prestigio e più grande influenza. È un poco esagerata l'influenza che si ascrive a questo sacerdote sopra i suoi connazionali. Questa influenza si esercita solamente sopra una cotteria di scismatizzanti [categoria di scismatici] e perciò credo che sarà più prudente da parte mia di trattare bene il Nidiri quando si presentasse qualche occasione, ma non trattarlo con troppa distinzione." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 7 October 1893.

It seems that Zaleski was neither ready to change his convictions nor to tolerate the idea of an autonomous bishop. For him the reason for all rebellions was the lack of proper education.²⁴⁰ He acknowledged the failure of the missionaries to raise the standard of the Suriani priests to a high level.²⁴¹ Finally, through a letter of 28 November 1893 *Propaganda* asked Zaleski to wait for an opportunity to speak with Nidiry.²⁴²

Though through the above letter Rome closed the discussion regarding Nidiry's removal, on 30 August 1894 Zaleski again wrote to *Propaganda* that Emmanuel Nidiry was imposed on Lavigne as vicar general. Moreover Nidiry tried to make him as odious as possible to the clergy and the people. It was not difficult for Nidiry as Lavigne was ignorant of the language of the place and since Lavigne was depending on Nidiry, he exploited the situation to make him commit many mistakes.²⁴³

Based on the information of Bernard of Jesus on 7 October 1894 Zaleski reported to *Propaganda* about the movement in Malabar for having a bishop from Mesopotamia under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry together with Mar Dionysius and the Protestant bishop of Kottayam and they planned to set up a bishop's house and seminary at Kuravilangad, where Emmanuel Nidiry was vicar.²⁴⁴ To affirm it Zaleski quoted the letter of Lavigne on 8 October 1894, informing of a movement for schismatic relation with Mesopotamia coming up from Kuravilangad,

²⁴⁰ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 51, "Il male sta nella radice sta nella formazione diffettuosa che si dava al clero da secoli, di modo che questo clero incapace di condurre e tenere il popolo nella fede cattolica, era sempre duce delle ribellioni. Il male sta nella mancanza di educazione cattolica del popolo stesso." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 7 October 1893.

²⁴¹ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 64, Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 30 November 1892.

²⁴² ACO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, 57, "Esaminato attentamente lo stato delle cose, ritengo giusto le riflessioni da lei fatte in proposito, ed approvo il saggio parere da lei espresso sia quanto all'aspettare opportunità lo parlare al Nidiry." *Propaganda* to Zaleski on 28 Novembre 1893.

²⁴³ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, 130, "Mons. Lavigne venne in India con molte illusioni e con idee preconcelte, così che nel principio non voleva sentiva l'avviso di quelli che avevano l'esperienza di questo paese e gente, neppure dei suoi confratelli di Trichinopoly, e così si sbilanciò dal principio.

Gli fù poi imposto per vicario generale il noto Nidiri, il quale lavorò quanto poteva per comprometterlo e renderlo odioso agli occhi del popolo e del clero – cosa che non era difficile nel principio quando Mons. Lavigne non conosceva ancora la lingua del paese ed era perciò dipendente da lui, Nidiri se ne approfittò per fargli commettere più di uno sbaglio." Letter of Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 30 August 1894.

²⁴⁴ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, f. 169-175, copy of Bernard of Jesus, ocd, to Zaleski without date, enclosure of Zaleski to Ledochowski on 7 October 1894.

under the leadership of Emmanuel Nidiry assisted by Fr Matthew Panakurekel.²⁴⁵ Lavigne also charged Nidiry that “externally he fought with schismatics, with whom he maintained secret relations.”²⁴⁶ After assessing all information Zaleski accused Nidiry as the leader of such movements.²⁴⁷ Later, on 2 May 1895 Zaleski sent the list of agitators who supported the move for the native bishops, and presented Nidiry as the kernel of all agitations.²⁴⁸ In the same letter Zaleski wrote that “the well known priest Emmanuel Nidiry, ex-vicar general of Msgr. Lavigne, is the soul of the whole nervousness and he always hopes that at the end he will be the bishop.”²⁴⁹

Though Lavigne appointed Emmanuel Nidiry as the pontifical vicar general after two years of taking possession of the vicariate, he was not in favour of Nidiry. In fact the appointment of Nidiry was only for the sake of obedience and to please the higher ecclesiastical authorities, but it was against his own will. On the other hand the nomination of Nidiry was an act of recognition for his personality and the well acceptance of Nidiry among the higher ecclesiastical authorities. It was only for Lavigne, Zaleski and for some missionaries that Nidiry was a problematic person, because they feared the popularity and the mass support of the people in favour of Nidiry's efforts for autonomy. For them Nidiry was a hindrance to maintain their power in Malabar. So they pictured Nidiry as a dangerous and even schismatic person. But the letters of Agliardi and Aiuti show the incorruptible character of Nidiry, in addition to his loyalty and devotion to the Holy See. The dislike of Lavigne for Nidiry and the nomination of a separate vicar general for the Southist community inflicted a further deep wound in the heart of the Suriani Church and an ecclesiastical approval for a division on ethnic level. However, Nidiry with much enthusiasm continued his work for attaining unity and autonomy of the Suriani Church.

²⁴⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, 195, copy of Lavigne to Zaleski on 8 October 1894, enclosure of Zaleski to Ledochowski on 23 October 1894.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 195, “Il combattait extérieurement les schismatiques avec lesquels il entretenait des relations secrètes.” Copy of Lavigne to Zaleski on 8 October 1894.

²⁴⁷ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, f. 192, “... E si sa che il centro di questo partito è il Nidiri.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 23 October 1894.

²⁴⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14, f. 245, Zaleski to Ledochowski on 2 May 1895.

²⁴⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14, f. 245-246, “Il noto sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiri, ex-vicario Generale di Msgr. Lavigne, che è l'anima di tutta l'agitazione e spera sempre che in fine egli sarà il vescovo.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 2 May 1895.

UNTIL THE LAST BREATH FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH

Although Emmanuel Nidiry was removed from the position of vicar general, he continued his efforts for the autonomy and unification of the Suriani Church. Lavigne hoped that by changing the vicar general he could control the vicariate according to his wishes. Since Lavigne was supported and protected by the apostolic delegate Zaleski, Nidiry had to pay much for achieving his aim. Therefore he turned again to the Chaldean Patriarch for mediation. In this chapter we analyse the final attempt of Emmanuel Nidiry for the autonomy and how he acted as a peace maker of the community in the context of the appointment of Makil. We shall also study the circumstances of the appointment of native vicars apostolic, their reaction to the agitation movements and the role of Nidiry in protecting the faith of the Suriani Church.

1. Turning to Chaldean Patriarch

Seeing that their laments were not listened to, the Surianis sent many petitions and letters to the Chaldean Patriarch requesting his help for getting a bishop of their own rite and nation. The Chaldean priest Fr Joseph Stepho was the person who acted as a connecting link between Emmanuel Nidiry and the Patriarch.¹ In their letter they even requested the Patriarch to make mediation for them before the Pope.² This movement of petitions to the Patriarch asking his help for obtaining indigenous bishops made a distress to the missionaries. Understanding the role of Emmanuel Nidiry in such a

¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 714.

² ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 59, "Oremus omni supplicatione ut bis mediator pro nobis apud Sanctitatem Domini Papae." Latin translation of the Syriac letter sent to Pope by the patriarch. For the original in Suriani, Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 74, letter of several priests to the Patriarch on 16 July 1895.

new movement Lavigne wrote a letter to the secretary of the *Propaganda* on 22 July 1896, saying that:

If the Malabarians select two priests I will give them Episcopal ordination. Thus wrote the Babylon Patriarch to a priest [Mani].³

After citing this Lavigne indicated that this reference is to “Fr Emmanuel Nidiry or Emmanuel who was a definite agitator of Malabar for 29 or 30 years.”⁴

The attachment of Suriani Church of Malabar to the Chaldean Church was not on the basis of submission but on the basis of the same apostolic tradition and origin. Unfortunately the genuine attempt of Surianis under the leadership of Nidiry for the restoration of the original identity and rite in relation with Chaldean Church was misinterpreted by missionaries.⁵ E. R. Hambye writes:

The most vocal and influential among them was the famous priest, Emmanuel [Mani] Nidiry, who until death in 1904 at the age of 62, wrote spoke and led the movement on the behalf of restoring the East Syrian character of his church. He had, however given up the idea of any type of link with the Irak patriarchate.⁶

On 19 March 1895, seven priests of Malabar sent a petition to Pope Leo XIII requesting him to grant them “a bishop of our own nationality.”⁷ In the letter they complained to the Pope:

³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 197-198, “Accepisse epistolam a Patriarcha Babilonensi, et Malabarenses elegunt duos sacerdotes, se ordinatum esse eos. Sic dicit mihi P. Hiacinthus. Non praevideo bonum exitum.” Letter of Lavigne to Ciaska, the secretary of the *Propaganda*. Lavigne quoted here the words of Boniface to Fr Richard on 3 June 1896.

⁴ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 197-198, “Dicunt aliquem sacerdotem (Mani?) (ils agit du P. Nidiry Emmanuele ou Many, qui est vrai agitateur du malabar depuis 29 au 30 ans accepisse epistolam i Patriarcha Babilonensi, et Malabarenses elegunt duos sacerdotes, se ordinatum esse eos. Sic dicit mihi P. Hiacinthus. Non praevideo bonum exitum.” Letter of Lavigne to Ciaska, the secretary of the *Propaganda*. Lavigne quoted here the words of Boniface to Fr Richard on 3 June 1896.

⁵ A petition signed by priests and the vicars of all the vicariates of Malabar to Rome through the mediation of Giamil on 19 March 1899. In their petition they requested the Holy See for the complete restoration of the ‘rite’ and original identity, but it does not speak of any juridical relation with Chaldean patriarchate. Cf. S. GIAMIL, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam at Assyrorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, Rome 1902, 622-629.

⁶ E. R. HAMBYE, “Autonomy and its Vicissitudes among the Thomas Christians in the Twentieth Century”, *JCHR* (1977) 91.

⁷ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 195-201, letter to Pope Leo XIII, by seven priests on 19 March 1895.

That we who have been known from time immemorial as “Malabar Chaldeic Syrians” and belonged to the same Rite, are now called by the vicar apostolic as “Malabar Syrians.”⁸

Later, on 29 March 1900, a mass petition was submitted to Pope Leo XIII complaining against the change of their traditional name to Malabar Syrians.⁹ It seems that Zaleski was not tolerant to use the traditional designation Malabar Chaldean Syrians. In a document Zaleski gave an advice to his successors:

In his correspondence then with the Bishops and with others, the Delegate, speaking of the Syrians, should always has to avoid to give to their rite the name of Siro or of Siro Chaldean, that could be interpreted as an approval of their vain ambition to be united with Babylon. It is better to use some customary word Syrian rite or Malabar rite showing so that it is a special rite that it has nothing to do with that Patriarch of Babylon, as it is of fact.¹⁰

In a letter on 10 April 1896 to Pope Leo XIII the Surianis wrote that the cause and origin of all disorders in Malabar was the lack of a bishop of their own proper rite.¹¹

1.1. Zaleski Opposes the Idea of Native Bishops

Zaleski wrote more than one hundred letters to *Propaganda* concerning the problems and issues of the Suriani church. Though he approved the right of ancient churches for having their own bishops,¹² he was never in favour of giving indigenous bishops¹³ to the Suriani Church of Malabar. Therefore he instructed *Propaganda*:

⁸ A. PAREPARAMBIL, *An Account of a Very Important Period ...*, 200.

⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, b. 6 bis, protocol no. 11219, petition to Pope Leo XIII by priests from Palai on 29 March 1900.

¹⁰ APF, *Miscellanea Diverse 4, Appunti Confi. sullo Stato della Dela*. 237, paragrafo 181, “Nella sua corrispondenza poi coi Vescovi con altri, il Delegato, parlando dei Soriani, deve sempre evitare di dare al loro rito il nome di Siro o di Siro caldaico, cosa che potrebbe essere interpretata come un approvazione della loro velleità di unirsi con Babilonie. È meglio di usare della parola di rito Soriano o rito Malabarico mostrando così che è un rito speciale, che non ha di nulla da fare con quello del patriarcato di Babilonie, come è di fatto.”

¹¹ ACO, *Fondo Leone*, prot. no. 632/29, Malabar, fasc. 3, f. 13, “Causa et origo dissensionum in Malabar est quod non possident Episcopum proprii ritus.” Letter to Pope Leo XIII on 10 April 1886 by the people of Malabar.

¹² ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1. f. 65, “Certo, le cristianità antiche e numerose hanno diritto di chiedere un pastore preso dalla loro gente e questo desiderio è giusto.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 30 November 1893.

¹³ For the details see C. VARICATT, *The Suriani Church of India ...* 439-455.

... that it is the most dangerous thing in India to raise the question of Native bishops. In no diocese is the native clergy so developed as to give today capable subjects to become bishops. Perhaps there could be found priests worthy enough and learned, but there is no one capable of governing, singularly among the Suriani.¹⁴

So perturbing the future of the Catholic Church in India Zaleski warned the Holy See: If the Holy See granted the Suriani Catholics a native bishop, all other Christian communities would wish to have one; this would create great disturbance and could destroy the future of the Catholic Church in India.¹⁵ According to him among the numerous Suriani clergy there was not a single one capable of being elevated to the episcopate.¹⁶ Zaleski continued: "although the majority were Catholics in heart, they shared ideas more in common with the Jacobites than with the Catholics, and they did not even understand clearly what it really was to be Catholics, i.e., 'there never did exist a feeling of brotherliness between the white missionaries and the black priests.'¹⁷ Therefore he informed *Propaganda*, "in the present situation of India the institution of native bishops would be the ruin of the Catholic religion and a complete ruin."¹⁸

The General Assembly of Cardinals on 7 January 1895 reached the conclusion:

To write to the apostolic delegate and to the apostolic vicars for the Suriani to know whether among the secular or regular clergy and especially among

¹⁴ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2020^v, "In ogni caso però devo prevenire Vostro Eminenza Revma, che è cosa molto pericoloso in India di sollevare la questione di vescovi nativi. In nessuna diocesi il clero nativo è tanto sviluppato per poter dare oggi soggetti capaci di essere vescovi. Si troveranno forse sacerdoti assai degni e dotti, ma non si troverà uno capace di governare, singolarmente poi tra i Soriani. Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 22 July 1892.

¹⁵ ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* 1890-1892, f. 2020^v, "Se la S. Sede concedesse ai Soriani un vescovo nativo, tutte le altre comunità cristiane dovrebbero anche averne uno - cosa che creerebbe gravissimi disturbi e potrebbe compromettere l'avvenire della chiesa cattolica in India." Zaleski to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 22 July 1892.

¹⁶ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 1, f. 62, "Nel loro numeroso clero non c'è un solo uomo capace di essere elevato all'Episcopato." Zaleski to Ledochowski on 30 November 1892.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 63-64, "... benché in maggior parte cattolico di cuore, sta però in comunità di idèe più coi Giacobite che coi Cattolici e neppure si renda chiaramente conto cosa è essere cattolico da vero. E questo si spiega facilmente: non ci è stata mai fratellanza tra missionarii bianchi e sacerdoti neri." Zaleski to Ledochowski on 30 November 1892.

¹⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, f. 125, "Ora nello stato dell'India l'istituione di vescovi nativi sarebbe la rovina della religione Cattolica ed una rovina completa." Zaleski to Ledochowski on 30 August 1894.

the priests called by them to fulfil the office of vicar general, there were subjects worthy to be adorned with the Episcopal character. Then to invite the apostolic delegate, if he saw suitable and if there was no fear of major tumults and agitation, to make it known to the Suriani prudently that the Sacred Congregation is disposed to give them native bishops and that such a design would be put in to effect as early as possible.¹⁹

Later replying to the letter of Ledochowski,²⁰ Zaleski wrote that the concession of native bishops for the Suriani Catholics would be the greatest disaster, not only for Malabar but for the whole Indian mission.²¹ He continued, the Suriani clergy was not truly Catholic and, due to the formation they received, there was not a single worthy candidate.²² The question of granting native bishops was not tolerable to Zaleski. Two days after the above letter, on 10 February 1895 he wrote that “one can find among them good workers but they are most incapable to lead and govern.”²³ Therefore, he suggested the importance of forming the native clergy to prepare future candidates for the episcopate but not to consider appointing native bishops until the clergy has attained maturity and an Indian bishop would be capable of representing the Catholic Church before the English with honour and dignity.²⁴

Unfortunately, Zaleski always depended on the missionaries and relied on their false opinions and wrong judgements. It was clear from the letter of 20 October 1905, signed by several priests to the Pope Pius X. In the

¹⁹ ACO, ACTA 1895, vol. 25, f. 31.

²⁰ After the decision of General Assembly of *Propaganda* on 7 January 1895, Ledochowski wrote to Zaleski informing the decision of the *Propaganda*. Cf. ACO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14. ff. 225-228, Ledochowski to Zaleski on 21 January 1895. In the letter Zaleski was asked to give exact information as to whether there were among all the secular and regular clergy any priest worthy to be elevated to the Episcopal dignity. Cf. ACO, *Ibid.*, f. 226.

²¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14. f. 188, “Secondo il mio umile parere, appoggiato sull’esperienza che ho potuto acquistare dell’India – il concedere ai Soriani Vescovi della loro nazione, sarebbe il più grande disastro, non solo per il Malabar, ma anche per tutte le missioni dell’India, la rovina di queste missione.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 8 February 1895.

²² ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14. f. 188, “Il clero Soriano non è cattolico e colla formazione che ha ricevuto, esigendo anche il minimo, non c’è un solo soggetto tra loro capace di essere Vescovo.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 8 February 1895. Here Zaleski contradicts himself to his former letter that “benché in maggior parte cattolico di cuore.” Cf. footnote, 16.

²³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 14. f. 200, “Possono trovarsi tra loro buoni operarii ma sono in capacissimi per dirigere e governare.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 10 February 1895.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 200^o, “... ma non pensare a fare vescovi nativi fino che questo clero non sarà maturo e che il vescovo Indiano potrà rappresentarci le chiesa cattolica davanti all’Inglese con decoro e dignità.”

letter they complained that the person who was among them as the representative of Holy Father, Msgr. Zaleski, the delegate apostolic, was by nature irritable and that he always depended on his own proposals and judgements and any request and reasoning would not change him. He accepted the negative opinions and information against them from the missionaries and sent the same to the Holy Father.²⁵ In their letter they also mentioned the names of three missionaries, Bensiger, the former secretary of Zaleski and present bishop of Kollam, Boniface the rector of Puthenpally seminary and Bernard, the archbishop of Verapoly.²⁶ In many of the letters of Zaleski to Rome, he quoted the letter from Boniface. Zaleski also recommended to *Propaganda* to ordain Boniface as the archbishop of Suriani Catholics.²⁷ Moreover Zaleski, being a Polish man might have taken much freedom before the Prefect of *Propaganda* who was also from the same land. And this acquaintance of the higher ecclesiastical authorities closed the openness to see the truth of the situation and to study the condition of an ancient church, in spite of the petitions and letters of requests from Malabar.

1.2. Lavigne Resists to the Project of Native Bishops and Accuses Nidiry

In 1895 Lavigne left for Europe to take care of his health and to collect funds for the school. While he was in Belgium he wrote a letter to *Propaganda* explaining that immediately after his departure for France, the priests with schismatic tendencies organised a movement against him and against Rome.²⁸ The movement was against the letter carried by Lavigne to Rome in which he used the term Syro-Malabar instead of Syro-Chaldean:

²⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1883-1910, vol. 2, s. n. "Persona utique adest in medio nostro Sanctissimam Sedem representans Excel-mus Dom, L. M: Zaleski Delagatus Ap. Indiae Orientalis, natura sua iracundus et in propositis et iudiciis suis ita tenex atque durus, ut nullis precibus et rationibus neque quocumque clamore moveatur quique fertur, Beatissime Pater! Accipere informationes et opiniones nobis adversaries a quibusdam missionariis et ita ripresentare S-ae Sedi uti ab eis delatae sunt illi." Letter to Pope Pius X, on 20 October 1905, signed by several priests of Malabar.

²⁶ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1883-1910, vol. 2, s.n.

²⁷ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, fasc. 2, 53. "In questo caso i vicari apostolici potrebbero rimanere ai loro posti passando al rito siriano e per arcivescovo (Metropolitano) potrebbe forse essere scelto lo stesso Padre Bonifacio, che è persona degnissima e capace e che conosce bene la lingua del paese." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 3 December 1895.

²⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 113, "Aussitôt après mon départ pour la France, les prêtres à tendances schismatiques ont organisé un mouvement contre moi et aussi contre Rome." Lavigne to Ledochowski on 4 April 1896.

Their rite is called Syro-Malabar, in accordance with the usage adopted by Rome in official acts, with the usage of the apostolic delegates in their circulars, with the usage of the breviary printed in the very same country by the bishops of Varapuzha. The suspected priests there found the occasion to protest because the term the Syro-Chaldean rite is not employed.²⁹

Attributing the source of the protest letter³⁰ to Emmanuel Nidiry, Lavigne described him as the “evil genius” of the Malabar Christians,³¹ and accused that Nidiry supported the movement of insurrection if Rome refused to give them a native bishop.³² In the same letter he informed the Prefect of the Congregation that the nomination of a bishop of the locality or the authority of Patriarch would shortly lead the St Thomas Christians to ruin.³³ Lavigne feared that if a new bishop were to be elected rather than appointed by Rome, Emmanuel Nidiry would be elected as the unique leader of Suriani Catholics. Eugene Tisserant comments that “such was the weight of prejudice that nobody dared to appoint Syro-Malabar prelates immediately.”³⁴

Here it is important to note that there was also objection among some of the Suriani priests to the movement for autonomous bishop. In a letter to the prefect of the *Propaganda* they wrote: “we beg to be permitted to bring to Your Eminence’s kind notice, that advantage has been taken by some half a dozen discontented priests of this vicariate, of His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Lavigne’s absence, to foster discontent among the people, to carry on correspondence against His Lordship, and even to carry on

²⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 113-114, “Leur rite y est appelle rite Syro-malabar, conformément all’usage adopté à Rome dans les actes officiels à l’usage des Délégués apostoliques dans leurs circulaires, à l’usage du bréviaire imprime dans le pays même par les évêques de Verapoly. Les prêtres suspects y ont trouve l’occasion de protester parce qu’on ne disait pas le rite Syro-chaldéen.” Lavigne to Ledochowski on 4 April 1896.

³⁰ The protest letter was against the change of the use in the traditional expression Syro-Chaldean to Syro Malabar. See footnote, 7, 8.

³¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 114, “La protestation a été écrite, dit on par le Père Nidiry qui est le mauvais génie des chrétiens du Malabar, les religieux tertiaires de Mannanam qui cherchent en tout occasion à se soustraire à l’autorité des évêques, ont imprimé cette protestation dans leur journal.” Lavigne to Ledochowski on 4 April 1896.

³² ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 115, “Ceci me rappelle que lors des pétitions contre Vérapoly, le Père Nidiry dit au Père Georges, religieux tertiaire et définiteur, et son grand appui dans ce mouvement d’insurrection: “Si Rome nous refuse un évêque national, il faudra lui forcer la main en allant loin.” Ce qui signifiait “en faisant un commencement de schisme.”

³³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 115, “... je dois déclarer que la nomination d’un évêque indigène ou l’autorité d’un patriarche seraient à délai de la chrétienté de St Thomas.” Lavigne to Ledochowski on 4 April 1896.

³⁴ E. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity in India ...*, 120.

negotiation with the Patriarch of Babylon.”³⁵ But in spite of the objections from Zaleski and Lavigne, Rome decided to grant native bishops for the Suriani Catholics.³⁶

2. The Erection of Three Vicariates and Nomination of Native Bishops

On 28 July 1896, the Holy Father Leo XIII with the brief *Quae rei sacrae* erected the three apostolic vicariates, namely, Changanacherry, Thrissur and Ernakulam.³⁷ To the surprise of Zaleski and Carmelite missionaries, Pope appointed three Malabar priests as vicars apostolic: Mathew Makil for Changanacherry, John Menacherry for Trichur and Aloysius Pazheparambil for Ernakulam.

Before reaching the final decision of the Pope to Malabar, Fr Boniface, rector of Puthenpally seminary, reported the discontent and the new movement in Malabar to the decision of Cardinals on 23 March 1896. In the letter of Boniface, he pointed out that there was a major support for Fr Nidiry to the episcopate.³⁸ On 3 July 1896 while transmitting a letter of a young priest, Boniface informed Zaleski that the priests would not admit those who were elected by the preliminary decision of someone.³⁹ In the same letter of Zaleski he informed the Prefect of *Propaganda* that the Surianis preferred to have a synod of all priests and lay leaders under the chairmanship of Parayil Tharakan and suggested that their bishop must be elected by the clergy.⁴⁰ Zalesky was sure that if such a synod was convened the one who

³⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 122. There was no date and place in the letter. It was written by vicars of eleven parishes and they signed in Syriac. In the beginning it was written “The humble memorial of the Romo-Syrians of Malabar, Kottayam mission.”

³⁶ The General Assembly of *Propaganda Fide* on 23 March 1896, took a decision to divide the present vicariates into three and to grant native bishops for the new vicariates. Cf. ACO, *ACTA*, 1896, vol. 26, f. 82-83.

³⁷ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 210-212, Ledochowski to Zaleski on 19 August 1896. The apostolic constitution *Quae rei sacrae* of 28 July 1896 in *Leonis XIII, Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. XVI, 1897, 229-232.

³⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 227, letter of Zaleski to Ledochowski on 12 July 1896, quoted here from the letter of Boniface to Zaleski on 18 June 1896.

³⁹ There was already a rumour that Boniface was being summoned to Kandy to indicate worthy candidate for the episcopate from the Suriani Catholics. Cf. ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 221-222, “Novus rumor est hic non parvus. Quod Rev. Vostra vocabus fuerit in Kandy ad indicandum quidam digni sint pro episcopatu inter Syrianos. Dicunt ergo sacerdotes: non admittemus eos, qui ex praejudicio alicujus eliguntur.” Zaleski to Ledochowski on 12 July 1896.

⁴⁰ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 221-222, letter of Zaleski to Ledochowski on 12 July 1896. Quoted here from the letter of Boniface to Zaleski on 26 June 1896.

elected would be Nidiry. Therefore, out of fear Zaleski tried to depict Emmanuel Nidiry as a dangerous and schismatic person.

2.1. Zaleski Presents Nidiry as a Schismatic Person

In a letter to *Propaganda* on 12 July 1896 Zaleski reported the reaction in Malabar to the persons proposed to be the bishops for the new vicariate.⁴¹ Quoting a letter of Boniface on 18 June, concerning the response of Malabar Zaleski wrote that “the major preference was for Fr Nidiry. That was, at any rate, not a good sign and he wished that at last - at some time - the true nature of Nidiry would be known.”⁴² In the same letter Zaleski even presented Emmanuel Nidiry as a schismatic person. Reporting to Rome a groundless rumour that there was arranged a gathering of priests and laity in Malabar and the possibility of electing Nidiry as the bishop, Zaleski continued:

If also possible such an election there is no doubt, that the famous priest Emmanuel Nidiry would be the elected one, that he has role in these troubles, not because he is accepted in Malabar, but only on the reason that he has influence and he would be enough clever to conduct the things to his advantage.

He has the mania to become bishop and it is he who conducted all the agitations to separate the Surianis from Verapoly and to create the apostolic Vicariate with the hope that he will be chosen as apostolic vicar.

This Nidiri is an awful and dangerous man, nobody knows whether he is Catholic or schismatic, and my personal opinion is, that he is schismatic. But he is not declaring it because he would lose his influence that he exercises on the Suriani Catholics and also the benefits which he enjoys, being vicar of Kuravilangad. However he works for the schism.⁴³

⁴¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 66, letter of Ledochowski to Zaleski on 1 April 1896, regarding the decision of the Congregation on the new vicariates and its approval by the Holy Father. For the decision of Congregation see, ACO, *ACTA* 1896, vol. 26, f. 83. The approval of Holy Father see, *Ibid.*, Ex Audentia SSmi, Di 28 Martii 1896.

⁴² ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 227, “Inclinato maior est erga P. Nidiri. Hoc est utique sinum non bonum. Spero quod tandem aliquando cognoscatur vera natura P. Nidiri.” Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 12 July 1896.

⁴³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 224, “Se anche forse possibile tale elezione non c'è dubbio, che l'eletto sarebbe il famoso sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiri, che ha la mano in questi disturbi, non perché è accetto nel Malabar, ma solo la ragione che ha influenza e sarebbe abbastanza furbo per condurre le cose a suo vantaggio.

Egli ha la mania di diventare vescovo ed è lui, che condusse tutta l'agitazione per separare i Soriani da Verapoly e creare i Vicariati apostolici, nella speranza, che sarà eletto vicario apostolico.

Zaleski feared a possibility of schism in Malabar after the official publication of the list of the new elected bishops and he attributed on Emmanuel Nidiry the responsibility of all those actions.⁴⁴

2.2. The Response to the Appointment of Mar Makil

Though Rome finally granted native bishops, it did not satisfy fully the Suriani Catholics.⁴⁵ For them it was a surprise to see Emmanuel Nidiry, the worthiest person to the episcopate was excluded from the list of the *Propaganda*. By appointing Mathew Makil as the apostolic vicar of Changanacherry vicariate, the Northist and Southist division became more complicated. In the letter of 14 January 1897 to the Prefect of *Propaganda* the Chaldean Patriarch, Gregory Ebdeso V Khayyath, explained the situation of the Changanacherry vicariate after the appointment of Mathew Makil. After writing that the people of Changanacherry vicariate wanted apostolic vicar of their own rite, he continued:

... they would be given in the place of Msgr. Mathew Makil, the well known priest Emmanuel Nidiry, who they say in their letters, has much probity, ability and active zeal for the Catholic faith, and for his favour it is confirmed by the undeniable testimonies of their Excellencies, Monsignors Mellano, archbishop of Verapoli, Antony Agliardi, Andrea Aiuti and Meurin. Moreover they say that this priest if endowed with Episcopal dignity, could dissipate the present tumults caused by the so called disparity and inferiority of races, existing among the Christians and gentiles. On account of his celebrity and strength of words among the dissidents it is hoped that he would bring them, if not all, at least a big part of the heretics and schismatics of Malabar to the holy Church. These Malabarians made me fatigue with repeated letters begging me to intercede for them before Your Eminence by exposing the gravity of this new confusing incident. Moved by the fidelity to You and by the attachment to the Holy See and to the Sacred Congregation I gladly undertake it. I am convinced that there would be an opportune, easy and blameless remedy for tranquilizing this people. Moreover, I received

Questo Nidiri è un uomo pessimo e pericoloso non si sa se è Cattolico o scismatico, e la mia opinione personale è, che è scismatico, ma non si dichiara perché avrebbe perduto l'influenza che esercita sui Soriani Cattolici ed anche il beneficio dello quale gode, essendo parroco di Coralavengat. Lavora pero per lo scisma." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 12 July 1896.

⁴⁴ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1889-1900*, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 230, "Singolarmente a Trichur, gli spiriti sono molto inaspriti contro il Re. Menacherry ed anche a Kottayam, contro il Rev. Aloioso Pareparambil. Tutto questo è l'opera del Nidiri." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 12 July 1896.

⁴⁵ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae) 1006 (1889-1897)* fasc. V, 11. The Northist community sent many petitions and telegrams to Rome against the nomination of Makil.

convincing knowledge from other sources that Msgr. Lavigne himself was astonished by the fact that differing from what he thought and indicated a bishop was given to the Northists from the Southists.⁴⁶

Many sent letters to Rome expressing their unpleasant feelings to the appointment of Mathew Makil⁴⁷ and to the action of Lavigne.⁴⁸ Rome did not take into account the humiliation of the 96,000 Northists with 141 parishes and 271 priests, who had been demanding a native bishop for years, and now being subjected to a Southist bishop,⁴⁹ who had been the foremost champion of the Southist demand for segregation. The wounded Northists started revolt against the new arrangement of Rome.⁵⁰

Zaleski also reported the protest from Malabar to the appointment of Makil.⁵¹ In a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry on 27 October 1896, Zaleski

⁴⁶ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, 379-380, "... dignità secondo le loro tradizioni, le quali, benché nel cristianesimo a rigore non siano di valore alcuno, supplicano però vengano rispettate onde evitare grandi perturbamenti. Supponendo poi che la sua Santità degnarà condiscendere ad esaudire questa loro preghiera, supplicano di più, che il vescovo Vicario Apostolico del loro rito che sarebbe loro dato in luogo di Msgr. Matteo Machil, sia il noto sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry, il quale dicono essi, nelle loro lettere, avere molta probità, capacità e zelo attivo per la fede cattolica, ed essere ciò confermato in suo favore, da testimonianze irrefragabili, cioè quelle di LL. EE. Rev.me Monsignori Milano già arcivescovo di Verapoli, Antonio Agliardi, Andrea Aiuti e Morini. Dicono di più che questo sacerdote una volta investito del grado episcopale, oltre al dissiparsi i tumulti presenti causati da detta disparità ed inferiorità di razza, cosa in via assai considerevole presso tutti cristiani e gentili, si spera assai che il medesimo ridurrebbe al seno della S. Chiesa, se non tutti, almeno una gran parte degli eretici e scismatici del Malabar, attesa la di cui celebrità in cui credito ed in forza di parola presso gli stessi dissidenti. In siffatto senso, con ripetute lettere, quei Malabaresi mi hanno faticato pregandomi d'intercedere per essi esponendo la gravezza di questo nuovo incidente che li scompiglia pesantemente presso la Vostra Eminenza, il che volentieri faccio mosso dalla fiducia che posseggo da Essa e l'attaccamento che mi stringe alla S. Sede ed a codesta Santa Congregazione e convinto esservi un opportuno rimedio, facile ed innocente, onde tranquillizzare quella gente, avendo in oltre saputo da parte sicura, che M. Lavigne stesso fosse, esso pure stupefatto che alla parte del Nord fosse dato per vescovo una persona del Sud, diversamente di quanto esso aveva divisato ed insinuato." Letter of Patriarch Gregory Ebdeso V Khayyath to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 14 January 1897.

⁴⁷ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol nos, 11678, 11781, 17445, 18315; ACO, *Ibid*; 109, 1889-1900, vol. 1, prot. no. 10474/1896; ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1888-1897, 1006, fasc. IV, 20.

⁴⁸ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1007 (1878-1899) fasc. VII.

⁴⁹ The Southists numbered about only 10,000 with 11 parishes of which two were jointly owned with the Northists.

⁵⁰ The *Sathya Nadam* daily on 20 October 1896 reported that the appointment of Mathew Makil as the vicar apostolic of two groups [Northists and Southists] was the root cause of present troubles in Changanacherry vicariate. Cf. V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 750.

⁵¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 224, "Dopo il mio ultimo rapporto ho avuto altre proteste contro la nomina del R. P. Makil a vicario apostolico ed il peggiore è che, egli essendo suddista, sono i nordisti che gli negano l'ubbidienza, ora questi sono 90,000 nel nuovo vicariato, gente irrequieta et pronta a fare scismi." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 10 October 1896. There are also many letters against the appointment of Makil Cf. ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006 (1888-1897) fasc. IV, 8, 9, 10; fasc. XII.

expressed his suspicion that Nidiry was one of the agitators of the people to the appointment of Mathew Makil, to which on 20 November 1896, Emmanuel Nidiry responded the following:

As to the agitation in this Apostolic Vicariate, I have to submit to your Excellency's kind consideration that I was the first person to advocate the abolition of the caste distinction between the Nordists and the Suddists after consulting the late Fr Joseph Tharrayil, the Suddist councillor to His Lordship Bishop Lavigne, and some other chief members of the Suddist community, and resolved to get a written consent of the influential men of both the parties to appoint some Suddist priests in the Nordist churches and *vice versa* as vicars and through their exhortation and influence to get consent and commence to intermarry between the two sects, which would gradually lessen and finally abolish the long existing distinction without any violent measure as at present. But that idea was abandoned on account of the premature death of the said Fr Joseph Tharrayil and my removal from the Vicar-Generalship.⁵²

2.3. Emmanuel Nidiry Acts as a Peace Maker

The reaction of the Northists was so strong that many were sceptical of the peaceful enthronement of Mathew Makil. Many wrote letters to Emmanuel Nidiry, who was under treatment at Trivandrum, asking him to return to Alleppey because they all believed that Emmanuel Nidiry could calm the general agitation and control the situation. About the circumstance Nidiry writes:

When the Northist people heard that His Lordship Mathew Makil was nominated over the Northist churches also, a general agitation arose in the Nordist community and as I was absent from this vicariate and residing at Trivandrum under medical treatment and as the Syrian community in general had confidence in me, I received many letters from the priests and principal laymen requesting me to return soon and to prevent by advice or some other means the vehement current of fury of the great mass of ignorant people who took the said nomination as an insult to the whole community. ...⁵³

Emmanuel Nidiry returned to Alleppey and he attended a meeting of priests at Changanacherry in which they decided to send a telegram and a

⁵² ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561, letter of Nidiry to Zaleski on 20 November 1896. This text is already quoted to show the response of Nidiry to the appointment of Southist vicar general. The letter of Nidiry is given as appendix IX.

⁵³ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 302.

letter to the Holy Father in reaction to the appointment of Mathew Makil as the bishop of the Northists. With the approval of vicar general on 10 October 1896 they sent a telegram to the Holy Father in the name of the *Conciliari Foranei Sacerdotes Nordistae* of Chnaganassery vicariate requesting him to postpone Makil's consecration or that he be consecrated for the Southists⁵⁴ and later they dispatched a letter to the Pope too.⁵⁵

Again on 15 October 1896 the discontented and humiliated Northists sent a petition to the Holy Father.⁵⁶ On 30 October 1896 Zaleski wrote to Rome:

I fear some dreadful happenings in Changanacherry. The Northists, who number about 90,000, are always protesting against the nomination of Msgr. Makil.⁵⁷

Later, in the meeting of Northist leaders at Changanacherry to plan a protest meeting at Kottayam, Emmanuel Nidiry intervened and acted as a statesman. Admitting the right of Northists he asked them "first to obey, and then protest using all lawful means."⁵⁸ Thanks to the intervention of Emmanuel Nidiry the programme was cancelled and they decided to give a peaceful reception to Makil.⁵⁹ Seeing the large protest in Malabar Zaleski telegraphed to the Prefect of *Propaganda* with code numbers on 30 September 1896:

Danger of Suriani schism increases - Makil KL unexpected renunciation

Should I consecrate the bishops or should wait for instructions.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, ff. 259-262.

⁵⁵ A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 304; ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, ff. 408-415.

⁵⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 763-767. It was a long petition written in both Syriac and Latin; ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, ff. 408-415.

⁵⁷ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 315, "A Changanacherry invece temo brutte cose. I Nordisti, che sono circa 90,000 protestano sempre contro la nomina di Msgr.. Makil", Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 30 October 1896.

⁵⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 754.

⁵⁹ Zaleski feared the unity of the Northist community under some leaders. Cf. ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1, prot. no. 5972/1896.

⁶⁰ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 254, CARDINALE PREFETTO PROPAGANDA ROME

ROMA KANDY 0 25/45 6 5 S

Non c'è*

16605 56187 11073 22554 21261 11187 11168 20529 40951 20583 19264 20584

Propaganda replied to Zaleski by a telegram in the following words, "Consecrate, bring all together."⁶¹ On 25 October 1896 Zaleski consecrated the three apostolic vicars in the Cathedral Church of Kandy.⁶² In spite of his disagreement over the choice of the bishop, Emmanuel Nidiry was the first to congratulate the new bishop on the day of his consecration at Kandy.⁶³

After the arrival of Mathew Makil in Changanasserry, they continued to maintain their friendly relations. Emmanuel Nidiry served him as a councillor and the bishop was satisfied with the ability and loyalty of Nidiry to the Church. Seeing that he was being accused⁶⁴ in spite of his great work for peace and concordance in Malabar Nidhiry wrote in a letter to Ledochowski, Prefect of *Propaganda*: "I am not an agitator but a promoter of the peace, who listens to the words."⁶⁵

It was Emmanuel Nidiry who saved Makil in a conference of priests and lay people convened on 17 December 1897 at Changanacherry.⁶⁶

96675 51893 12437 20544 68796 16895 24847 44008 Zaleski

Pericoloso scisma Soriani cresce- Makil KL inatteso de rinunzia-
Devo Consacrare vescovi oppure aspettare istruzioni.

* The 'non c'è' is a note later added.

⁶¹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1889-1900*, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 255, telegram to Zaleski on 2 October 1896.

⁶² ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1889-1900*, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 309, Zaleski to Ledochowski on 31 October 1896.

⁶³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 757.

⁶⁴ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, "Quamvis jam Reverendesimum Episcopum Carolum Lavigne ac Missionarios Verapolytanos, qui suam, qua pollebant super nos Syro-Chaldeos, ditionem Aamittendi auctorem me fuisse putarunt, accusationes aliquas contra me ad Eminentiam Vestram et Excellmum Del. Ap. Detulisse audieram, hoc tamen falsum esse rumore credabam.

Ast ex litteris ab Excellmo Del. ap. 4^o Decemb. 1896 ad me directis, supradictum rumore haud falsum fuisse mihi omnino compertum fuit. Causa autem cur Rmus Epis Lavigne inductus fuerit ut contra me scriberet, fuit falsa accusatio, quam, sub nomine Catholicorum, detulerunt Jacobitae et Schismatici a me saepe in foro civili et criminali agitatti atque devicti, quorum calumniae, etsi serius, attamen investigatae atque patefactae fuerunt." Nidhiry to Ledochowski on 8 February 1897.

⁶⁵ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, "Ex his me non agitatore sed pacis fautorem et dicto audientem esse patebit", Nidiry to Ledochowski on 8 February 1897. Letter of Nidiry is given as appendix X.

⁶⁶ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar, 1890-1926*, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 17445, "... after seeing such a constrained obedience of our people His Lordship Dr. Makil thinking that if he convoked a meeting of the representatives of all the churches under his jurisdiction he would be able to pacify them and get subscriptions from them for the High School at Changanacherry, convoked a meeting of the representatives of all the churches in the mission on the 17th December 1897 in the Changanacherry Cathedral where His Lordship Dr. Makil and Very Rev. Fr Joseph Thayil, his Vicar General and the Very Rev. Fr E. A. Nidiry his councillor and ex-Vicar General, tried their best by their elaborate lectures to persuade

Unfortunately, Makil could not pacify the Northists who demanded a Northist bishop. Lot of petitions were sent to the apostolic delegate and Rome explaining the unfair affairs of the bishop and they even requested the removal of Makil for establishing peace in the vicariate. But Emmanuel Nidiry, the leader of the cause for a Northist bishop, never put his signature on any of those petitions.⁶⁷ Still bishop Makil showed his apathy to Nidiry by denying a joint proposal to build a memorial to honour their late leader by different communities shortly after the demise of Emmanuel Nidiry.⁶⁸

Understanding that the agitation of Northists was getting more strength and support, as a solution to the problems in Malabar, Zaleski wrote to *Propaganda* on 26 September 1900 with his own proposals:

Msgr. Pareparambil should certainly be discharged of the office of Vicar Apostolic of Ernakulam and replaced by another Vicar Apostolic, Syrian native. The priest Emmanuel Nidiry and Tertiary fathers George of St Joseph and Alexander of St Joseph are to be suspended under ex informota conscientia.⁶⁹

Later, to check the petition movement on 3 December 1903, Zaleski published a decree containing regulations and restrictions.⁷⁰

2.4. A New Mission

While opposition was gaining momentum in different parts of the vicariate there spread another rumour about the appointment of Fr Boniface as the archbishop, a new head over all the three bishops.⁷¹ Seeing that government of the Malabar Church might be again in the hands of a Latin bishop, the Northist leaders informing the same with their anxieties submitted a mass petition to Mar Louis Pazheparambil, the vicar apostolic of Ernakulam.⁷² He wrote a letter to Emmanuel Nidiry explaining the

and pacify the people in order to obey the bishop and subscribe for the High School." Letter of some priests of the vicariate of Changanacherry on 2 November 1903, to Zaleski.

⁶⁷ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 805.

⁶⁸ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 955.

⁶⁹ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6bis, protocol no. 11830, x part. "Che, se la presente agitazione non cessi, o se si rinnova, Msgr. Pareparambil sarà senz'altro dimesso dell'ufficio di Vicario Apost. d'Ernakulam e rimpiazzato da un altro Vicario Apost. nativo soriano. Il sac. Emmanuele Nidiry ed i Padri Terziari Giorgio di Giuseppe ed Alessandro di S. Giuseppe sospesi ex informata conscientia." Letter of Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 26 September 1900.

⁷⁰ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 769-770. The new law of Zaleski was an entirety of 10 regulations.

⁷¹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 814.

⁷² For the petition see, V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 814-816.

situation and requesting his presence at Ernakulam for consultation. Nidiry was seriously ill and sent a reply expressing his reactions and suggestions.

Later in a conference at Ernakulam, attended by Nidiry, a decision was taken to send a deputation to Rome. Emmanuel Nidiry and Fr Stanislaus Vettikkel were elected for the deputation. Fr Stanislaus first applied for permission to go to Europe. Smelling danger of the situation bishop Makil delayed the reply and finally rejected the application. Thus the new Northist mission was blocked again. Still with hope the Northists continued to write petitions to Rome. In the petition of Northists to Holy Father on 15 October 1901 they mentioned the denial of permission by the bishop to their representatives to visit the Holy Father.⁷³

2.5. The Response of the New Apostolic Vicars to the Agitation Movements

The reaction of the new apostolic vicars to the petition movement was very negative. Once they were appointed as the apostolic vicars and obtained the power and position they were concerned neither to unify nor to regain the traditions and customs of the very ancient and apostolic Church, which claims an apostolic origin.⁷⁴ In their letter to Rome they indirectly or directly accused Emmanuel Nidiry as the centre of all problems in Malabar even after the establishment of the three vicariates. Realising the strong objection from the Northists to his appointment, bishop Makil wrote to Zaleski on 22 September 1896, with a view to informing the Cardinal about his resignation.⁷⁵

Later to the question of *Propaganda* on 25 September 1897, to unite the Suriani Church of Malabar under the Chaldean Patriarch, Louis Pazheparambil frankly expressed his attitude towards such movements and to their promoters. He wrote:

⁷³ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 825 - 826.

⁷⁴ "For in those churches, which are distinguished by their venerable antiquity, there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the apostles through the Fathers and which is part of the divinely revealed, undivided heritage of the Universal Church. This holy, ecumenical synod, therefore, has a special care for the Eastern Churches, which are living witness of this tradition, and wishes them to flourish and to fulfil with new apostolic strength the task entrusted to them." VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 1. A. FLANNERY (ed.) *Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Bombay 1983, 402.

⁷⁵ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 274 - 275, "In questa circostanze il Rev. P. Makil mi scrisse in data del 22 settembre, chiedendomi di sottomettere all'Eminenza V. Revma la sua rinunzia, per non essere causa di disordini nella chiesa soriana e per alleviare la sua coscienza." Quoted in the letter of Zaleski to Prefect of *Propaganda* on 1 October 1896.

The clergy and the people of my vicariate apostolic are very content and they express their gratitude towards the Holy See for granting three native bishops to govern the Syro- Malabar parishes. They do not like to unite the Syro-Malabar church with the Chaldean Patriarch. The letters which were sent from Malabar to Rome were the works of some ambitious priests and their supporters. I believe that their centre is at Kuravilangad [Implicitly referring to Emmanuel Nidiry].

In some petitions there were original signatures but most of them were fabricated. If their leaders were properly controlled, Malabar will once relieve from such ruinous agitations. My apostolic vicariate is quiet and free from such agitations. I hope that my priests will fight against such agitations and against the letters which Your Eminence mentioned.⁷⁶

John Menacherry in a letter to Zaleski on 28 August 1900 accused explicitly Emmanuel Nidiry of being the leader of agitations in Malabar. He wrote:

Meanwhile writing on the same thing, Msgr. Menacherry Vicar Apostolic of Trichur, nominates the known priest Emmanuel Nidiry and P. Alexander the Tertiary as the heads of the new agitation. And it does not marvel me at all, since Nidiry, Fr Alexander and Msgr. Pareparambil were always known as the first among the Syrian agitators.

The leaders of this movement are contrary to the translation of the Latin Pontifical into Syriac language and they desire that the Suriani Vicariates are to be placed directly under the Patriarchate of Babylon, rather than making them dependent on the S. C. of *Propaganda*. This is their intimate

⁷⁶ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, f. 392 – 393, "Accepi litteram Eminentiali Vestrae datam 25 septembris sub numero 7403 et trasmissam mihi per medium delegati apostolici de petitionibus a malabaribus S. Con. de Pro. Fide facito circa annexationem ecclesiarum Syro-Malabaricarum Patriarchatui Chaldaeorum.

In quantum scio nulla folio petitio missa est ex meo vicariatu apostolico Ernacolameusi et nullius sacerdos eius implicatus in illa re. Clerus et populus Vicariatus apostolici mei sunt omni contenti et sunt grati erga Sanctam Sedem pro favore trium episcoporum natorum ad gubernandum ecclesias Malabaricas Concessorum. Fati detestant annexationem ecclesiarum Syro-Malabaricarum cum Patriarchatu Chaldaico.

Petitiones a Malabaribus in Romam missae sunt uti dicitur a quibusdam ambitiosis sacerdotibus nec non et eorum fautoribus in Vicariatu apostolico Changanacherensi et eorum centrum est ut credo in Coravilangad.

Aliquae petitiones possunt esse serio subscriptae sed majoritas earum est fabricata. Si capita eorum coerceantur aliquando spero Malabariam fore liberam ab illis ruinosis agitationibus.

Vicariatus apostolicus meus est quietus et liber a talibus agitationibus. Spero clerum meum protestantarum fore contra istas litteras et agitationes in littera Eminentiali Vostrae memoratas." Letter of Louis Pazheparambil to Prefect of *Propaganda* on 9 November 1897.

desire. Nidiry and Fr Alexander publicly exposed it in the presence of the three apostolic vicars and in the great meeting of the clergy assembled for the blessing of the new bishop's house of Ernakulam in the month of January.⁷⁷

On 17 September 1900, Menacherry again wrote to Zaleski with a detailed explanation. The latter transmitted the same words of Menacherry to *Propaganda* through his letter of 26 September 1900. Zaleski quotes:

As Your Eminence will see the Suriani names of Rev. Emmanuel Nidiry and of the Fr Alexander tertiary are not found attached to the petition, nevertheless I don't have any hesitation to declare that it is their work, especially of Fr Nidiry.

Msgr. Makil Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry told me, that Nidiry visited those parishes which sent the petitions with the purpose of encouraging them. He also wrote to many of my priests to use all their influence to persuade me to unite with him for insisting before the Holy See to put the three vicariates under the administration of the Patriarch of Babylon and to introduce Chaldean liturgy in Malabar.

The main concern to this anxiety is based on a rumour that Rev. Fr Boniface, Rector of Puthenpally will be nominated as archbishop of Ernakulam, Metropolitan of the Surianis and Superior General of the Tertiary. Later it was said that the Holy See will nominate a Latin bishop for the Northists of Changanacherry.

In my opinion all this was an invention of the restless brain of Nidiry. Seeing that his [Emmanuel Nidiry] strange ideas in respect to the Patriarchate of Babylon are not approved by the apostolic vicars he wanted to create agitations.

⁷⁷ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 11740, "Intanto Msgr. Menacherry vicario ap. di Trichur, scrivendo sulla stessa cosa, nomina come capi della nuova agitazione il noto sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry e il P. Alessandro Terziario. E questo non mi meraviglia affatto, giacché il Nidiry, il P. Alessanadro e Msgr. Pareparambil erano sempre noti come i primi tra gli agitatori Soriani.

Msgr. Menacherry scrive in data del 28 agosto: "I capi di movimento sono contrarii alla traduzione in lingua Soriana del Pontificale latino e desiderano che i Vicariati Soriani siano direttamente sottomesi al Patriarcato di Babilonia, piuttosto che dipendere dalla S. C. di Propaganda. Questo è il loro intimo desiderio. Il Nidiry ed il P. Alessandro l'esposero pubblicamente in presenza dei tre vicarii apostolici e di un grande concorso del clero radunati per la benedizione del nuovo vescovo di Ernacolum nel mese di gennaio." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 29 August 1900, Zaleski quotes the letter of Menacherry to Zaleski on 28 August 1900.

In the beginning of the agitations Nidiry went to Puttenpally to make a visit to Fr Boniface and after that he and the Tertiaries started spreading these agitations.⁷⁸

Instead of unifying and preserving the valuable heritages and traditions of the Suriani Church, the main concern of apostolic vicars was to make sure their position and power. Moreover, they depicted the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for the same as the “invention of the restless brain” and “submission to the Babylon Patriarch.” If they would have worked properly at the beginning we would have another picture of the Suriani Church at present.

The faithful of Changanasserry vicariate still continued to send protest letters to Rome.⁷⁹ In a letter to Rome they accused Zaleski of having preferred Makil and pursuing the old policy of divide and rule. Moreover they asserted that the appointment of a Southist to Changanacherry was the cause of all the unrest and agitation in Malabar.⁸⁰ Later in a letter to Pope Pius X on 6 October 1910 they emphasised the role of Emmanuel Nidiry for saving the church from another division, due to the appointment of Mathew Makil:

Most Holy Father, after 12 years of complaining without any response from Rome, we, the Nordists, begin to suspect, that if the Holy See has innocently made a mistake in the appointment of Dr. Makil over us, we

⁷⁸ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 11740, “Msgr. Menacherry, Vicario Apost. di Trichur scrive il 17 settembre. “Come lo verrà V. S. i nomi del Rev. Emmanuele Nidiri e del P. Alessandro terziario soriano non si trovano apposti alla petizione, nondimeno non ho nessuna esitazione di dichiarare che è l’opera loro, singolarmente del P. Nidiri.

Msgr. Makil Vic. Apost. di Changanacherry mi disse, che il Nidiri visitò allo scopo di agitare le parrocchie dalle quali emana la petizione. Egli anche scrisse a parecchi sacerdoti miei d’usare di tutta loro influenza per persuadermi di unirmi colui per insistere presso la S. Sede perchè i tre Viuariati Apostolici siano messi sotto il governo del Patriarca di Babilonia e che s’introduca nel Malabar la liturgia Chaldaica.

Riguardo all’agitazione, questa è basata sopra rumori che il Rmo. P. Bonifacio Rettore di Puthenpally sarà nominato arcivescovo d’Ernaculam, Metropolitano dei Soriani e Superiore Gle. dei Terziarii. Dopo si diceva che la S. Sede nominerà un vescovo Latino pei Nordisti di Changanacherry.

Nella mia opinione tutto questo fù un’invenzione del cervello irrequieto del Nidiri, il, quale, vedendo che le sue strane idee riguardo al Patriarcato di Babilonia non sono approvate dai Vicari Apostolici voleva creare un’agitazione.

Nel vero principio dell’agitazione il Nidiri andò a Puttempally fare visita al P. Bonifacio, dopo di che si messe a spargere questi rumori egli ed i Terziarii.” Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 26 September 1900. Zaleki quotes the letter of Menacherry to Zaleski on 17 September 1900.

⁷⁹ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1883-1910, vol. 2, protocol no. 18139, letter to Pope Pius X, by the parishioners of Athiranpuzha, Kudamaloor and Ikkarachiray on 20 August 1904.

⁸⁰ ACO, *Ibid.*, prot. no. 19099/1907, letter to Rome entitled *Libellus supplex* of 1907, signed by the many Northist priests of Malabar.

have committed a greater blunder in receiving him since we then had a pontifically appointed administrator already. This blunder we might have avoided but for the persuasion of our clergy especially of the Very Rev. Father Nidiry of revered memory and our firm belief that obedience will be sooner attended to than resistance. ... to appoint, as a good pastor ever zealous for the safety and advancement of his flock, a NORDIST VICAR-Apostolic, for the peace, happiness and salvation of our community.⁸¹

Though Zaleski presented Nidiry as the principal cause of all the evil in Malabar, finally he had to admit the mistake of Rome. While assessing the problems of Malabar, Zaleski wrote to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* on 11 April 1911:

...if the [agitation] still continues in Changanacherry, it is because of the mistake that was made, giving them a bishop of different caste or nation, considered a much lower, for the great majority of the people.⁸²

It seems that this conclusion of Zaleski considering the appointment of Mathew Makil, ratifies the expression "Holy See has innocently made a mistake" used in the letter of priests from Malabar on 6 October 1910 to Pope Pius X.

3. Emmanuel Nidiry Protector of the Faith of Suriani Church

The efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry to establish the fact that Suriani Christians were loyal Catholics even before the Synod of Diamper have made him the protector of the faith of the Suriani Church. Based on the mistaken narration of the missionaries there was created a wrong and false notion in the western world, even at the ecclesiastical level, that Suriani Christians were under the Nestorian heresy and by the effort of Meneses, the archbishop of Goa through the Synod of Diamper, they were reintroduced to the Catholic Faith. Even in some of the Papal documents too we could see the same wrong concept on the Suriani Church.⁸³

⁸¹ ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1883-1910, vol. 2, protocol no 29174, This letter was signed by 300 faithful, and was written after 8 years of the death of Nidiry.

⁸² ACO, *Rubr.* 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1883-1910, vol. 2, s.n. "... Se continuano ancora a Changanacherry è per ragione dello sbaglio che fu fatto, dando loro un vescovo di altra casta ossia nazione, considerata poi come più bassa, che l'immensa maggioranza del popolo." Letter of Zaleski to Gotti on 25 April 1911.

⁸³ ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 711, "... Etenim postquam, urgentes in primis Clemente VII rec.me. praedecessore Nostro, ac strenue adlaborante Alexio de Menezes Archiepiscopo dum viveret Goano, a Nestoriana haeresi ad catholicae fidei veritatem revocati fuissent, primum Angamalensem Sedem idem Clemens Pontifex

Emmanuel Nidiry got an opportunity to reveal the truth when the government of Travancore decided to publish a State Manual containing an exhaustive history of the State and its people belonging to various religious affiliations. Mackenzie, the then British Resident in Travancore was entrusted to write the history of the Christianity in Travancore. Mackenzie was already under the influence of European historians and wrote that the Surianis were Nestorians and in the Synod of Diamper they were made to return to the Catholic faith. It was really a shock for Nidiry. Therefore he, with the help of Fr Bernard Thoma TOCD, prepared a statement comprising some 76 pages and sent it to Mackenzie. Though Mackenzie published his work before the arrival of the statement of Emmanuel Nidiry and Bernard, later he included it in his book as an additional note.⁸⁴

Besides Mackenzie sent the original manuscript to Bernard of Theresa the archbishop of Verapoly. Archbishop Bernard with his covering letter⁸⁵ sent the same manuscript to Rome.⁸⁶ In the covering letter Bernard testified that the manuscript was sent by Mackenzie, British resident in Travancore and Kochin.⁸⁷

3.1. Rome Seeks Explanation from Apostolic Vicars

The truth that St Thomas Christians were always devoted to the Catholic faith was not acceptable to Roman authorities, who still adhered to the wrong

apud illos erexit, quae deinde Archiepiscopali titulo ad Cranganornsem civitatem translata est: eosque postea, ita rerum exigentibus adiunetis, Romani Pontifices per Vicarios Apostolicos gubernarunt et gubernant." From the appointment order of Meurin as the apostolic visitor of Malabar by Pope Pius IX on 24 March 1876.

⁸⁴ Cf. G. T. MACKENZIE, *Christianity in Travancore*, Trivandrum 1901, 92ff. note 116. Mackenzie wrote "While these sheets were in the press I received from two Romo-Syrian priests, the Rev. E. A. Nidiry of Kuravilangad, the Rev. Father of Bernard of St Thomas of the Mannanam monastery, a manuscript of 76 pages in which it is concluded that the Thomas Christians were never Nestorians but were Chaldeans in communion with Rome and that the Portuguese, in describing them as Nestorians, made a mistake which has been handed down from one author to another. Much that is said in this manuscript I have already mentioned in the texts or notes above." For the above book of Mackenzie, see ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1007 (1887-1899) fasc. VIII.

⁸⁵ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 14742, letter of Bernard to the Prefect of Propaganda on 14 July 1902. In the covering letter Bernard wrote his dissatisfaction and disagreement to the manuscript prepared by Nidiry.

⁸⁶ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 14742. *The Catholic Faith of Christians of St Thomas before the Synod of Diamper*, manuscript of Fr Emmanuel Nidiry and Fr Bernard tertiary Def. General, 4 July 1902. Comprehensive of 76 pages.

⁸⁷ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 14742, though Bernard certified that the manuscript as original and was prepared by Nidiry and Fr Bernard, expressing his disagreement to the manuscript on page number 62, he wrote on the original manuscript 'nota in paginam 62 manuscripte' and signed with date on 10 July 1902.

concept presented by the missionaries. Moreover, the manuscript which proves the constant and undivided faith of the Suriani Christians was not tolerable to Rome. Therefore based on the letter of archbishop Bernard, through a letter dated 19 August 1902 Cardinal Gotti, the Prefect of the *Propaganda* asked explanation from three apostolic vicars:

Form the various accounts come to me, I have learned that in Malabar, through the medium of some writings, compiled by two Suriani priests and destined for publication, false and mischievous information about the history of Christianity is sought to be propagated in that country. For instance, it is held that there reigned always in Malabar full and continuous Orthodoxy, as it goes insinuating that the religious peace was never disturbed till the arrival of the Latin missionaries sent by the Holy See to whom therefore should be ascribed the responsibility of the disorders that happened in that country. What pains me principally is the information that the public opinion attributes, if not the origin, at least the inspiration of these writings to the Suriani apostolic vicars. In order to remove every basis for such voices and to avoid the danger of new conflicts and discords, I invite Your Lordship to adopt stringent and efficacious means to put a bridle to such publications which make disfavour to the Holy See.⁸⁸

The letter shows the rigidity of some Roman authorities to the truth, a policy that attributes heresy and schism to all which comes outside the Roman Church. Out of obedience the apostolic vicars responded without delay.

3.1.1. The Letter of Louis Pazheparambil

On 15 October 1902, Pazheparambil replied to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* asking how he could have given inspiration since he had not made any comment on the topic. Though he doubted that the matter published here was read by only 20 persons, he promised to the Prefect that

⁸⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 14742, "S. C. Da parecchie relazioni pervenutemi ho raccolto che nel Malabar si diffondono mediante scritti testimoniati alla pubblicità e compilati da due sacerdoti soriani notizie false e tendenziose, circa la storia del cristianesimo in coteste provincie. Si sostiene, ad esempio, che nel Malabar regnò sempre una piena e perenne ortodossia come pure si va insinuando che la pace religiosa non fu mai così turbata sino all'arrivo dei missionari latini spediti dalla S. Sede ai quali, perciò si vorrebbe far risalire la responsabilità dei disordini svoltisi in coteste provincie. Ciò che poi mi addolora principalmente è il sapere che l'opinione pubblica attribuisce se non la paternità almeno l'ispirazione di questi scritti ai vicari apostolici soriani. Per togliere ogni base a queste voci e per i scongiurare il pericolo di nuovi screzii o dissidii, invito V. S. a prendere solleciti ed efficaci provvedimenti onde porre un freno alla diffusione di queste notizie così evidentemente false e lesive dell'onore della Santa Sede." Letter of Gotti, Prefect of *Propaganda* to apostolic vicars on 19 August 1902.

he would control in a fruitful manner those incorrect publications and fake news which would negatively affect the noble dignity of the Holy See.⁸⁹

3.1.2. The Reply of John Menachery

In his reply letter to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902 John Menachery wrote that he never heard of any priest in his vicariate who wrote the history of Christianity in Malabar as mentioned in the letter of the Cardinal. At the same time he requested the Cardinal not to believe those who were sending false letters and petitions with false signatures. Mentioning the letter published in the book of Giamil,⁹⁰ Menachery told that the letter was written without his consent and the knowledge of his priests, moreover about the same letter there was no information to him and to other apostolic vicars.⁹¹ Without giving any clarification to the question of the Prefect, Menachery affirmed that the allegation in the letter, “inspiration of these writings to the Suriani apostolic vicars,” was made by his opponents.⁹²

⁸⁹ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15175, “In illa epistola iterum dicitur ‘Per scongiurare il pericolo di nuovi screezii o dissidii.’ Licet dubitem utrum 20 personae ex tot nicoli Malabariae legerint illam publicationem, attamen adhibeto omnem conatum atque media efficacia, ut diffusiones falsarum notitiarum et omnium publicationum quae tendunt ad imminuendum honorem S. Sedi debitum coarceantur.” Louis Pazheparambil to Prefect of *Propaganda* on 15 October 1902.

⁹⁰ Cf. S. GIAMIL, *Genuinae Relations inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, Roma 1902. In this book Giamil published the letter of the priests and laity of the three apostolic vicariates on 19 March 1899 to Pope, see 622-624 and to Satoli, Prefect of the *Propaganda*, see 625-627. By quoting this letter Menachery was trying to give an example to the false letters and petitions with artificial signatures to Rome.

⁹¹ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15075, “Eminenza Reverendissima, come ho accennato di sopra in Malabar in maniera particolare vi sono molti che inviano delle lettere contenenti false notizie ed anche delle petizioni colle firme false al Romano Pontefice ed alla Congregazione della *Propaganda Fide* ed anche alle persone riguardevoli in Roma. Per dirle un esempio, pregola di guardare l’opuscolo che ha fatto recentemente stampare dal Rev. Gg. R. P. Samuele Giamil, procuratore del Patriarca Caldeo di Babilonia a Roma. In quell’opuscolo Ella troverà due lettere in Inglese in nome di tutti i sacerdoti dei vicariati apostolici di Trichur, Ernaculam e Changanacherry, una diretta al Santo Padre Leona XIII. L’altra all’Eminentissimo Card. Satolli Ma in punto di verità quelle lettere sono affatto senza la cognizione mia e i miei sacerdoti. So anche di certo che sieno anche senza la cognizione degli altri due vicari apostolici. Anzi l’opinione nostra è diametralmente opposta a quella contenuta in quelle lettere.” Letter of John Menachery to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902.

⁹² ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15075, “A ciò che dico altra prova non si vuole che quelle recenti relazioni pervenute circa la storia del Cristianesimo in Malabar, ciò è relazioni tali in cui i miei e avversari vogliono attribuirmi l’ispirazione degli scritti contenenti false notizie e che ledono l’onore della Santa Sede. Qual vescovo Eminenza, non sentirebbe dolore ad una accusa si sfacciata come questa? Ecco la ragione perché dissi in principio che la sua lettera mi fu anche motivo di gran dolore.” John Menachery to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902.

3.1.3. Mathew Makil Responded through Emmanuel Nidiry

Soon after receiving the clarification notice of the Prefect of *Propaganda*, Mathew Makil asked more explanation from Emmanuel Nidiry. In his reply to Makil on 19 September 1902, Nidiry presented his reasons in an explanatory manner for correcting the drawbacks and fake descriptions found in the book of Mackenzie and sent an Italian translation of the same letter to Makil for sending to *Propaganda*.⁹³ In addition, Nidiry sent to Makil a copy of the booklet “Were the St Thomas Christians Nestorians?”⁹⁴ and the copy of the letter to Aiuti, apostolic delegate addressed by the clergy of the South on 31 August and of the North on 15 September 1887.⁹⁵ Mathew Makil courageously sent the copies of all the documents received from Nidiry to *Propaganda* together with his personal letter of 27 September to the Prefect of *Propaganda*.⁹⁶

In his letter to *Propaganda* Mathew Makil expressed his distress to the attribution of the Prefect that the manuscript was inspired by the apostolic vicars. Writing that the manuscript was prepared by Emmanuel Nidiry, Makil informed the Prefect of Nidiry’s reasons and backgrounds for such a manuscript. Then he wrote an important statement:

... It is evident the orthodoxy of the Syro-Malabarians is not something newly made in these days but continues up to now through the tradition of the ancestors.⁹⁷

Being aware of the after-effect of the wrong notes prepared by Mackenzie concerning the origin of Christianity in India, in his well studied and illuminative letter Emmanuel Nidiry wrote:

⁹³ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Mathew Makil on 19 September 1902. The letter of Nidiry is given as appendix XI.

⁹⁴ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076. A small book titled “Were the St Thomas Christians Nestorians?”, written by Emmanuel Nidiry in 1902.

⁹⁵ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076, copy of the letter to Aiuti by the clergy of North on 31 August and of the South on 15 September 1887. The letter is given as appendix XII.

⁹⁶ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076, letter of Mathew Makil to the Prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902. Original in Latin. The letter of Makil is given as appendix XIII.

⁹⁷ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076, “... Ex eis clare patebit orthodoxiam Syro-Malabarensium non esse quid novi in hisce diebus, sed per traditionem veterum usque nunc perdurare” Letter of Makil to Prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902.

... As it is improbable that the Catholic Syrians, if they lose this opportunity, can any more get a chance of correcting these mistakes, and as such serious errors in a history accepted by government for future reference concerning Christians would lead to many evil consequences in both religious and temporal affairs. I, having consulted many learned men and examined all available records, wrote with the help of these some historical notes or observations and forwarded them to the Resident. But in these notes, I took particular care to omit the mention of several disgraceful facts that happened in this country, because I did not want to give offence to anybody. The manuscript in question, mentions only what is absolutely necessary to defend the Syrian cause and set right the errors in the draft pamphlet of the Resident and has avoided many more things which could have been added to make the matter clearer. ... So meet this challenge, I consulted many learned men and reliable authorities and made a critical examination of those histories which were advanced to prove their heterodoxy. In a pamphlet headed 'Were the St Thomas Christians Nestorians?' a copy of which is herewith forwarded. Moreover, the same or another under the disguised name of P. P. M. repeatedly goes on publishing articles dishonourable to the Syrians in a paper belonging to the archdiocese of Verapoly and managed by the Carmelite missionaries, named "The Voice of Truth." It is painful to the Syrians that no authority puts a bridle to such publications, which besides being offensive to Syrians, are erroneous misrepresentation of facts. ... it is the interest of the Holy See to establish by evidence that the Catholic religion which was planted here by the apostle St Thomas was, by a special grace of God and as an additional evidence to the Catholicity of the church, preserved here in the midst of idolatry and that therefore publications in defence of the orthodoxy cannot be dishonourable to the Holy See, but on the contrary, highly conducive to the greater glory of God and His Church.⁹⁸

At last after the logical and reasonable explanation of Emmanuel Nidiry the short drama ended and it seems that the letter of Nidiry would have satisfied *Propaganda* too because no further correspondence was made concerning the issue. Thus Emmanuel Nidiry succeeded to protect the apostolicity of the faith of the Suriani Church as it was transmitted through the apostle Thomas from the very ancient times.

⁹⁸ ACO, Rubr. 109, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076, letter of Nidiry to Mathew Makil on 19 September 1902. Original in English.

4. The Last Days of Emmanuel Nidiry

In spite of his illness he worked hard throughout night and day for the unity and development of the Suriani Church. Notwithstanding his zealous efforts and programmes he never left his prayer and spiritual life behind. He was a holy priest, a man of prayer and penance and his personal diary testifies to it.⁹⁹ His contribution in the social, educational, cultural and even political fields was significant.¹⁰⁰ He wrote many articles and memoranda, even research works concerning the history of Thomas Christians.¹⁰¹ Moreover, his mastery of Latin and Italian helped him raise his voice through different publications like *L'Osservatore Romano*, *Civiltà Cattolica*, *Vera Roma* and *Giornale di Italia* and it helped to get the attention of the Church authorities.¹⁰² He also tried to contact S. Giamil, a representative of the Catholic Babylon Patriarch in Rome, who had direct access to the Pope and could make representations personally. The friendship of Emmanuel Nidiry with Giamil opened a new way to present the problems of Malabar before the Holy See and for this purpose they exchanged a number of letters.¹⁰³

In 1904 shortly before Nidiry's death, the *Civiltà Cattolica* had published an article on India in connection with the apostolic delegate Zaleski's visit to Malabar. Referring to the situation in Malabar the article pointed to the danger of a Northist exodus to the Jacobite fold.¹⁰⁴ It was an addition by the editor to the original text. This expression 'Northist exodus to Jacobite schism' was very painful for Nidiry who always propagated the orthodoxy

⁹⁹ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 429-432.

¹⁰⁰ For the contribution of Emmanuel Nidiry other than that of ecclesiastical level, see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 827-869; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 346-365.

¹⁰¹ His research works in the history of St Thomas Christians are published into a book "The Orthodoxy of the St Thomas Christians" by P. Kurian Palliveetil. Also Nidiry's writings helped very much Bernard of St Thomas in writing the historical books. (1) *Marthoma Kristianikal*, 2vols. Palai, 1916, (2) *A Brief Sketch of the History of the St Thomas Christians*, Trichinapoly 1924.

¹⁰² Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", *OCP* 70 (2004) 347-348; V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 889-908.

¹⁰³ At the Chaldean monastery of Our Lady of the Seeds, near Al-Kosh, in northern Iraq, there is a manuscript containing a copy of a correspondence pursued between Fr Emmanuel Nidiry and S. Giamil. Cf. E. R. HAMBYE, "Autonomy and its Vicissitudes among the Thomas Christians in the Twentieth Century", *JCHR* (1977) 91.

¹⁰⁴ It was an unsigned article by the editor Father Bartoli, s.j. on India under the rubric "Contemporanea." Cf. "India, nostra Corrispondenza", *Civiltà Cattolica* 55 (1904) 113-123. "Il Delegato apostolico Msgr. Zaleski in vista negli Stati di Travancore e Cochín", 120-122. See G. NEDUNGATT, "Manikathanar in Centenary Retrospect", *OCP* 70 (2004) 347.

of the faith of the Suriani Christians. He at once wrote to seminarian Mathai Kochikunnel,¹⁰⁵ to give a correction in the same periodical denying that there was any such schismatic tendency among the Northists.¹⁰⁶

It seems that he had foreseen his death. The day prior to his death, "on Sunday the 19th he made his confession and desired that a crucifix which he had nearly, should be suspended exactly over his face, by a thread from the ceiling of his room, that he might kiss it at the time of his death."¹⁰⁷ The next day on 20 June 1904 at 9 am, after receiving the sacrament of anointing the sick he died peacefully.¹⁰⁸ The funeral took place on 21 June Tuesday in the presence of 50 priests and 7000 people.¹⁰⁹ In honour of his unique status Emmanuel Nidiry was buried inside the St Mary's church at Kuravilangad, a rare privilege accorded till then only to Bishop Parambil Chandy and the saintly Fr Panamkuzhakal.

Letters of condolence flowed to Kuravilangad from the people of different status irrespective of religion and sects.¹¹⁰ The daily 'Malayala Manorama' wrote,

¹⁰⁵ Mattai Kochikunnel was a seminarian and student of Suriani Church at *Propaganda*. He acted as a correspondent to Nidiry in Rome and through him several letters and other correspondences of Nidiry reached at the offices of high ecclesiastical authorities of Rome.

¹⁰⁶ V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar*, 894-899.

¹⁰⁷ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, fasc. X, letter of Abraham Nidiry to Lavigne on 6 July 1904. In a letter to Abraham Nidiry on 28 June 1904 Lavigne wrote that Emmanuel Nidiry died without the last sacraments of church. Replying to Lavigne, Abraham Nidiry wrote "I am very sorry to have seen in your Lordship's letter the expression that my brother the Rev. Fr Nidiry, who gave his soul to the Lord, fortified by the rites of the Holy Catholic Church and surrounded by seven priests, "died without the last sacraments of the church." Cf. ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, fasc. X, letter of Abraham Nidiry to Lavigne on 6 July 1904. Later Zaleski also used the same expression of Lavigne in his letter to *Propaganda*, see footnote, 114.

¹⁰⁸ "As he felt a severe pain in the chest, he called for the priests who were in the neighbouring rooms. They, seven in number, hastened to the spot gave extreme unction and the last blessing and he passed off at 9 A.M. on Monday the 20th June." Cf. ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, (1886-96), fasc. X, letter of Abraham Nidiry to Lavigne on 10 September 1904. There spread a wrong rumour that Emmanuel Nidiry died vomiting the blood and it was misinterpreted by Lavigne that Nidiry died without receiving any sacrament. Therefore to correct the wrong information of Lavigne at the end of the same letter Abraham Nidiry added "P.S. There is absolutely no truth in the information your Lordship received from Changanacherry that Fr Nidiry vomited blood." See also, ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, fasc. X, letter of Abraham Nidiry to Lavigne on 20 June 1904 informing the death of Emmanuel Nidiry.

¹⁰⁹ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1006, (1886-96), fasc. X, letter of Abraham Nidiry to Lavigne on 10 July 1904.

¹¹⁰ For the details see V. C. GEORGE, *Nidhiry Manikathanar* 927-1008; A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times* 376-390.

... His two great ambitions were to obtain bishops for the Roman-Syrians from among them, and to unite all the Syrian Christians divided into different branches under a *Jathyaika Sangham*. The first of these was realized and, as a preliminary step towards it, he himself held the vicar-generalship. The efforts to change the old set-up inevitably brought about opposition, which, unfortunately, was more than usual in Fr Emmanuel's case and hence the other could not be realized ...¹¹¹

The same newspaper wrote after seven years on the appointment of Northist bishop, "we should remember the man who was the cause of all this, Fr Nidiry whose greatness transcends the ages ..." ¹¹²

5. The Outstanding Personality of Emmanuel Nidiry

The sudden death of Nidiry was really a shock to all. The former apostolic delegates Agliardi, Auiti and bishop Lavigne wrote letters of condolence; the then delegate Zaleski did not. The same Zaleski who wrote no condolence letter on the death of Emmanuel Nidiry, wrote a letter to *Propaganda Fide* under the title 'The death of Nidiry' one month after his death on 26 July 1904.¹¹³ In the letter he presented Emmanuel Nidiry as the cause of disturbances and agitations for the last twenty-five years in the Suriani Church of Malabar and stated that he died without confession and viaticum:

Perhaps Your Eminence will have already known the news about the death of the famous Priest Emmanuel Nidiry, who had been the cause and the centre of all the troubles and nervousness among the Syrians of the Malabar for more than 25 years.

He was certainly a man of superior intelligence, of really diabolic astuteness and of very little faith. He was influential among the Syrians. His ambition was always to become a Bishop and, frustrated in his hope, it was not without fear in the last times to see him going to the schismatics for the Episcopal consecration.

He had an unexpected death: He lost the senses suddenly and within ten minutes died. He received neither confession nor viaticum. It is said that a priest gave him the extreme unction, but it's less probable ...

¹¹¹ 'The Malayala Manorama', 13/07/1904, Quoted in A. M. NIDHIRY, *Father Nidhiry A History of His Times*, 379.

¹¹² 'The Malayala Manorama' 16/12/1911, *Ibid.*, 379.

¹¹³ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, "Morte del Nidiry", letter of Zaleski to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* on 26 July 1904. The letter of Zaleski is given as appendix XIV.

The important point about today's situation is to repress every vain ambition of whatever priest, who would want to be the successor of the late Nidiry.

The essential point is to make it publicly known to everybody, that it won't be tolerated anymore in Malabar similar disorders and agitations. And in consequence to act then on the traces of the Nidiry, generally, a threat will be enough; rarely it would need recourse to a censorship ...

From the beginning onwards if it were shown a little more steadiness to Nidiry, a lot of troubles would have been avoided in the Syrian Church. Since seven years I held him in check straight with simple threats and he who succeeds him surely would not have his intelligence nor his diabolic astuteness or his non scrupulosity.¹¹⁴

In the same letter Zaleski expressed his fear that somebody would take up the inauspicious mission of Nidiry in future. As a solution to this Zaleski suggested to attack them at first attempt by a serious threat. He also made a remark that the Malabar priests did not fear anything more than a suspension 'a divinis'.¹¹⁵ Therefore Zaleski requested the Congregation:

It is the moment to ban this system of continuous agitations organized by the late Nidiry and to re-establish the discipline and the order. But

¹¹⁴ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 18023, "La Eminenza V. Revma avrà forse già saputa la notizia della morte del famoso Sacerdote Emmanuel Nidiri che per più di 25 anni era stato la causa ed il centro di tutti i disturbi ed agitazione tra i Soriani del Malabar", letter of Zaleski on 26 July 1904 to the Prefect of *Propaganda* under the title "Morte del Nidiri."

Era un'uomo d'intelligenza certo superiore, d'un'astuzia veramente diabolica e di assai poca fede. Era influente tra i Soriani. La sua ambizione era sempre stata di diventare Vescovo e, frustrato nelle sue speranze, non era senza timore nei ultimi tempi di vederlo andar cercare dai scismatici la consacrazione episcopale.

La sua morte era inaspettata: perdette all'improvviso i sensi e dici minuti dopo spirava. Non ebbe ne confessione ne viatico. Si dice che un sacerdote gl'amministrò l'estrema unzione, ma sembra poco probabile ...

Il punto maestro dunque della situazione sta oggi di reprimere ogni velleità di qualunque prete, che vorrebbe erigersi in successore del defunto Nidiri.

L'essenziale è di fare pubblicamente sapere a tutti, che non si tollereranno più nel Malabar simili disordini ed agitazioni. Ed agire poi in conseguenza sulle tracce del Nidiri, generalmente, una minaccia sarà sufficiente, raramente si dovrà avere ricorso ad una censura.

Se dal principio si avesse mostrato un poco più di fermezza al Nidiri, molto mal sarebbe stato risparmiato alla Chiesa Soriana. Da sette anni io lo tenevo in freno con semplici minacce, e quello che gli succederà non avrà sicuro né la sua intelligenza né la sua astuzia diabolica né la sua inscrupolosità [non scrupolosità]." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 26 July 1904.

¹¹⁵ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 18023. Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 26 July 1904.

to do this I would have to be always sure of the strong and effective support of the Sacred Congregation.¹¹⁶

It was so hurting for Zaleski to see the good words on Emmanuel Nidiry which was published in the daily Catholic Herald by Fr Ephrem CMI soon after his death. Commenting on the news on 27 July 1904 Zaleski wrote to the superior general of Carmelites that it was really a surprise for him to see those words of esteem by a member of your congregation about a man who died without sacrament and who made all the troubles and scandals in the Church.¹¹⁷

The negative attitude of Zaleski towards Emmanuel Nidiry remained unchanged even after one year of his death. On 6 July 1905 Zaleski wrote to the Prefect of *Propaganda*:

... since the miserable Nidiry, who was the soul of all the troubles, died it is necessary to prevent at any cost that another priest takes his place and he becomes as Nidiry, father of the Country.¹¹⁸

In the same letter Zaleski again wrote that what was crucial was that no priest should come to imagine himself as the successor of Nidiry.¹¹⁹

On 2 December 1906, Zaleski visited Puthenpally seminary and in his reply to the address of the students and staff of the seminary, he again

¹¹⁶ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 18023, "È ora il momento di mettere un freno a questo sistema d'agitazioni continue organizzato dal defunto Nidiri e ristabilire la disciplina e l'ordine. Ma per fare questo avrei dovuto essere sempre sicuro dell' appoggio forte ed efficace della S. Congregazione." Zaleski to *Propaganda* on 26 July 1904.

¹¹⁷ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1003, (1886-96) fasc. III, "Merci pour la copie de la lettre du R. P. Rouffiac que vous m'avez eu noyée mais elle contient tant d'erreurs historiques que le reste ne peut pas être puis sérieusement en considération.

Votre Nidiry est mort sous sacrements. Il perdit subitement connaissance et dix minutes après il était mort. On dit qu'un prêtre lui donna l'extrême onction mais cela ne semble pas probable. On lui feta de grandes funérailles pendant lesquelles un pandel i écroula et blessa beaucoup de monde.

Quel scandal que l'article de Cath. Herald de Calcutta, ou vu l'appelle a great man, the light of St Thomas Christians, peerless amongst the Syrian priests et ou lui faut une gloire d'avoir été président d'une association a laquelle j'avais défendu aux Catholiques de prendre part. Veuillez agréer,

Mure seigneur l'expression de ma plu profonde vénération." Letter of Zaleski to the superior general of Carmelites on 27 July 1904.

¹¹⁸ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 11830, X part. "Perchè morto il misero Nidiri che era l'anima di tutti i disturbi bisogna impedire ad ogni costo che un altro sacerdote prenda il suo posto e diventi come il Nidiri Padre della Patria." Letter of Zaleski to the Prefect of the *Propaganda* on 6 July 1905.

¹¹⁹ ACO, *Rubr. 109, Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar*, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 11830, X part, "Ora l'essenziale è che nessun sacerdote venga ad erigersi successore di Nidiri."

opened his mind against Emmanuel Nidiry. He referred to Nidiry indirectly:

... God has called to his account the unhappy priest [Emmanuel Nidiry], who for a long time has been at the bottom of all these agitations, and who for more than thirty years has hindered by his evil doings the progress of religion and the progress of civilisation amongst the Catholics of Malabar. Let us hope that he will find no successor and no imitator amongst the clergy of this country and that his evil work will be soon repaired and forgotten.¹²⁰

This unkind and impolite words of Zaleski about a saintly man who died two years ago was really a surprise for many. Responding to the speech of Zaleski, about 5000 leading members of the Syrian community in Malabar in 1906 under the leadership of Palliveetil Kurien wrote:

We are at a loss to identify any priest in Malabar with the one hinted at in the description above quoted. But from the reports that have reached us about Your Excellency's conversations at several stations in your recent tour in Malabar vilifying the character and the noble deeds of the late Very Revd. Father Nidiry of happy memory, whom we almost venerate as our Moses who delivered the ancient Syrain See of Malabar from the hands of the Latin Bishops, we are led to infer that the unhappy and uncalled for reference is to that distinguished countryman of ours, who is the last person to deserve such treatment at your hands ...

If your Excellency's reference is about the late pontifically privileged Vicar General Father Nidiry, we are very sorry to observe that the same is untrue ... Fr Nidiry was not at the bottom of any agitations whatever. We know only of two agitations among us. One began from the time of Arch Bishop Menezes who reduced the ancient Syrian See of Malabar under the jurisdiction of the Latin Bishops. The second agitation is for removing the jurisdiction which the Sudist Bishop Dr. Makil holds over the Nordists. Its cause, we cannot help saying, originated from Your Excellencies imprudent and ill considered recommendation to Rome for appointing a low-caste Sudist Bishop over the high caste Nordists, against the ancient and time honoured practice that exists in Malabar that the Bishops and Vicar Generals should always be chosen from the Nordists. But on the contrary he was a peace maker. Any person who

¹²⁰ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)* 1004, fasc. I, 82^A E, the reply of Zaleski to the address of the students of the Puthenpally seminary on 2 December 1906. The printed copy of the speech of Zaleski was circulated in Malabar.

knew him would admit this...We do not know why Your Excellency calls him unhappy. He must be considered the happiest person in every sense of the word, both spiritually and temporally. He was straightforward and simple hearted just like a child. He was extremely pious...¹²¹

After citing the letters and the testimonies of Agliardi, Aiuti and Meurin, they wrote that those letters would show clearly that Emmanuel Nidiry zealously worked and succeeded in annihilating the schism by establishing the authority of the Catholic Church in Malabar and thus helped very much the progress of the true religion. The letter continues:

His devotion to the Sacred-Heart was so great that it may be said that he died almost a martyr for its cause...He was personally known and respected by the Maha Rajahs, their ministers, governors, British Residents and a host of European and native gentlemen. To see him was to love him and respect him; to hear him was to be edified and enabled. As a scholar, poet, physician, linguist, public speaker and writer he was unrivalled in the country...Though his plan to bring whole Jacobites of Malabar into the Catholic fold was frustrated by some imprudent acts of Dr. Lavigne, yet he has paved the way for their conversion by proving that the Syrians of Malabar were Catholics from the time of Apostle St Thomas.¹²²

Commenting on the wrong notion that the Church of Malabar was up to the 16th Century under the Jacobite and Nestorian Patriarchs, a mistaken theory supported also by Portuguese historians, they wrote:

But Fr Nidiry, towards the close of his career has, to the greater glory of the Catholic Church, succeeded in providing to the world by convincing arguments that the Church in Malabar was Catholic from the time of the Apostle St Thomas down to the Portuguese period.

His polite manners, sense of self respect, and spirit of independence won for him universal respect from the heathen officers and induced them to think that all Catholic priests who wore the same garment as Fr Nidiry, deserved such treatment. Even the European Bishops, who refused to dine or sit with the native clergy, used to dine with Fr Nidity and offer him seat on account of his personal worth and civilised manners.

¹²¹ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)*, 1004 (1888-1896) fasc. I, 82^AF, letter of 5000 leading members of the Syrian Community in Malabar under the leadership of Palliveetil Kurien to Zalaeski. The letter is given as appendix XV.

¹²² ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)*, 1004 (1888-1896) fasc. I, 82^AF.

Further, Your Excellency's statement would amount to this: that your worthy and distinguished predecessors, Cardinals Agliardi, and Ajuti, and the Visitor Apostolic Archbishop Meurin, who had very close acquaintance with him and who considered him as one of the best priests in Malabar in every respect, and even worthy of being consecrated as a Bishop.¹²³

Though Emmanuel Nidiry was misunderstood and misinterpreted by Lavigne and Zaleski, the colleagues and the people of Malabar acknowledged his greatness. The above letter of Suriani Christians was really an approval and recognition of his prominence and personality.

The Suriani Church after the long years of struggles and efforts finally achieved its goal. It was greatly painful for the Surianis to see that their great leader was excluded from the higher ecclesiastical post. For Emmanuel Nidiry the unity of the Suriani Church was more important than power and position. Even to the last moment he acted as the peacemaker during the period of the strong protest and agitation on the nomination of Makil. Moreover he had the courage to proclaim the truth to the higher ecclesiastical authorities that the Suriani Church always maintained the Catholic faith. Above all he himself remained faithful and obedient to the Church.

¹²³ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)*, 1004 (1888-1896) fasc. I, 82^AF, letter of 5000 leading members of the Syrian Community in Malabar under the leadership of Palliveettil Kurien to Zalaeski.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Nineteenth century was an era of uncertainty and ambiguity for the Suriani Church of Malabar and by the second half the problems became more profound and intense, both politically and ecclesiastically. The two important organs of evangelisation of the Western Church, *Propaganda Fide* and *Padroado*, occupied their position sturdily over the Suriani Church by dividing this ancient and apostolic community into two under the guise of making them more Catholic by abolishing the law of Thomas and bringing them under the Latin rule or Latin ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Through the synod of Diamper in 1599, the Suriani Church was separated from the Chaldean Patriarchate and was put under the *Padroado* jurisdiction. Later as a consequence of the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653 a section of Suriani Church was put under the *Propaganda* Congregation without suppressing the *Padroado* jurisdiction. Still their leaders continued their relationship with the Chaldean Patriarch with the hope that their old ecclesial heritage would be re-established in future. Therefore they felt no insecurity in approaching the Chaldean bishop Mar Rokkos for Ordinations since there was no *Padroado* bishop in Malabar since 1853. Emmanuel Nidiry, the hero of emancipation movements was among those who received minor orders from bishop Rokkos. In fact the arrival of Rokkos in Malabar without the permission of the Pope created confusion.

Father Varkey Nidiry, uncle of Emmanuel taught him Syriac and oriented Emmanuel towards priesthood. The young Emmanuel started his basic clerical studies under different *malpans*. In 1861, as a teenager, Emmanuel was appointed as the noble secretary to the administrator of Kodungallur. He worked under different administrators and the adolescent Emmanuel

was well appreciated by all for his elegant qualities. Later when he became professor of Mangalapuzha seminary Emmanuel Nidiry gave leadership in writing petitions demanding a *Padroado* bishop for Kodungallur. But seeing that their efforts were in vain the noble and the loyal secretary of *Padroado* authorities finally decided to join the *Propaganda* camp. Following him many priests, seminarians and parishes left *Padroado* jurisdiction and joined Verapoly, which was under the *Propaganda*.

As a seminarian at Mannanam seminary Emmanuel Nidiry mastered himself in philosophy, in various branches of theology and in the history of the Church. His stay at Mannanam seminary helped him enter into contact with many eminent Suriani priests. Though Emmanuel Nidiry was in a new camp his mind was filled with the spirit for unity of the Suriani Christians and self rule for the protection of their own rite. While he was a seminarian he very zealously endeavoured to inform the Supreme Pontiff that the spread of schism in Malabar was due to the absence of separate bishops for the Surianis and to request the Pope to send a visitor to India to study the problems of Malabar.

The rivalry between *Propaganda* and *Padroado* occasioned the coming of another intruder bishop Mellus and the misbehaviour and maltreatment of archbishop of Verapoly towards the Surianis helped the spread of the schism named after Mellus in Malabar. Situation in Malabar became worse and many parishes under the jurisdiction of Goa joined the Mellus schism. The appointment of young priest Emmanuel Nidiry as the parish priest of Kuravilangad by the vicar apostolic of Verapoly was really a great setback to the tactics of bishop Mellus.

The presence of Mellus in Malabar became an eye opener to Rome. Finally Rome decided to send Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor to India to study the problems of Malabar. The intelligent Emmanuel Nidhiry was appointed as the interpreter to Meurin. Three years of Meurin's stay in Malabar helped Nidiry to convince him of the problems of Suriani Christians. By the tedious labour of Meurin-Nidiry team Mellus schism was brought under control. They had to suffer a lot from the missionaries and the vicar apostolic of Verapoly. Moreover, the missionaries reported negatively to Rome against the activities of Meurin-Nidiry team which caused the coming of Ignatius Persico, another apostolic visitor to Malabar.

Relying on the prejudiced report of Persico Rome nominated Berardi Marcellino OCD, as coadjutor to Leonardo Mellano with the special charge of Suriani Catholics. But the temporary arrangement of Rome did not function well due to many facts.

Since the situation in Malabar became worse Rome determined to appoint Antony Agliardi as the first apostolic delegate to India. Emmanuel Nidiry had got various opportunities to contact Agliardi and present the real situation of Malabar. Thanks to the friendship of Nidiry with Agliardi and Meurin the grievances and sorrows of Surianis were heard at the higher ecclesiastical level. Finally on 20 May 1887 on the basis of the report of Agliardi Rome decided to establish two apostolic vicariates for Suriani Catholics, but Latin prelates were appointed as vicars apostolic. The Surianis were not satisfied with the foreign prelates.

While continuing his work for the unification of the Suriani Christians, Emmanuel Nidiry took further steps to facilitate the reunion movement by founding the Syrian National Union Association of Malabar together with Mar Dionysius, the Jacobite Metropolitan. The intention of the association was to convert the Jacobites by means of good education given by the Catholic teachers or members of religious orders and to uplift the social and economic conditions of the Christian community in Malabar.

His ecclesiological vision was so wide and profound that he dreamt of a single Syrian Christian Community in Malabar. His goal was to lead the divided community to a concordance, namely to the unity of all the St Thomas Christians, as existed up to the *Coonan* Cross Oath. One could easily affirm that through his diverse approaches, novel and prophetic ways for regaining the separated brethren he was anticipating the mind of the Second Vatican Council, which gave a stimulus to the modern ecumenical movements. He was a prophet of ecumenism and a visionary far ahead of his time. The deprived western prelates Lavigne and Zaleski with their limited ecclesiological vision could not rise to his levels. His dream of Jacobite-reunion could be effected only twenty six years after his death through Mar Ivanios.¹ Pope John XXIII, who initiated a new path for Christian ecumenism was only a one year old child when Nidiry spelt out

¹ Mar Ivanios, the metropolitan of Bethany was appointed by the Synod of bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church held at Peumala in Thiruvalla on 1 November 1926, to carry out the reunion efforts with the Catholic Church.

an ecclesiology of communion and unity through Syrian National Union Association of Malabar or *Jāthyakya Sangham*.

Though Emmanuel Nidhiry was nominated as the privileged pontifical vicar general of Changanassery after the strong intervention of Aiuti, he was soon expelled by Lavigne. As vicar general he was given enthusiastic receptions both by Catholics and Jacobites and was appreciated by them for his great efforts for unity of the Syrian community. Unfortunately in Lavigne's eyes Emmanuel Nidiry, the leader of the movement for autonomous bishops, was 'the evil genius of the Malabar Christians'. Emmanuel Nidiry accepted every suffering in 'heroic holiness'. The poor foreign prelate thought that he would be dominated by a native priest. Moreover the reunion efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry with Mar Dionysius and working together under the Syrian National Union Association were not reasonable for him. Lavigne with his narrow minded ecclesiological vision was not able to appreciate the ancient apostolic heritage of an oriental Church. He nipped the project of Emmanuel Nidhiry in the bud. Later the revenge of Lavigne towards Nidiry caused his degradation and the nomination of a separate vicar general for the Southists. Thus the Northist-Southist divide, which till then was only a sociological or ethnic reality, got an ecclesiastical recognition by the revengeful act of Lavigne which created another deep wound in the heart of the Suriani Church by dividing the community on the basis of an ethnic line.

When Zaleski became the apostolic delegate of India, the situation of Suriani Church became more miserable. He was not in favour of giving autonomous bishops for the Suriani Church and he emphasized that it would provoke the total extinction of the Suriani Church. For him the theology of West was right and superior and everything non-western was inferior and unorthodox. But Emmanuel Nidiry believed that only the native bishops could preserve proper catholicity of the Church of Thomas Christians. Seeing Emmanuel Nidiry at the forefront of emancipation movement in Malabar, Zaleski presented him as a schismatic person and accused him as the root of all the evils in Malabar. Zaleski continued his hostile attitude towards Nidiry even after the death of the latter.

Emmanuel Nidiry fought for freedom and unity and he believed that it would be possible only under the autonomous bishops to preserve the heritage and traditions of an individual Church. He had foreseen the mind

of Vatican II, “the Churches of East while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church have the power to govern themselves according to their own discipline.”² Emmanuel Nidiry’s ecclesiological vision was based on unity and not uniformity. “... the entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, discipline and theology in their various traditions belongs to the full, catholic and apostolic character of the Church.”³ “Far from being an obstacle to the church’s unity, such diversity of customs and observances only adds to her beauty and contributes greatly carrying out her missions.”⁴ His ecclesial vision proposes unity in diversity and not ecclesial uniformity.

In spite of the serious objection of Lavigne and Zaleski, on 23 March 1896 *Propaganda Fide* decided to nominate John Menacherry, Loius Pazheparambil and Mathew Makil as vicars apostolic. Though the appointment of three autochthonous bishops was a matter of joy and the realization of their long expected dream, the Surianis were disappointed to see the exclusion of their great leader from the higher ecclesiastical post. Moreover it was a matter of great surprise to see the unjust adjustment of the Cardinals, by putting the 90,000 Northists with 64 parishes under the authority of a Southist bishop with 11 parishes and 12,000 members. The divergence created by the nomination of a separate vicar general for the Southists became more extended and intensified by the selection of a Southist priest as the bishop of the Northists.

Though vast amount of protest and agitation took place in Malabar against the appointment of Makil, the prudent interference of Emmanuel Nidiry had really helped pacify the agitators and to control the petition movements. His policy of ‘first to obey, and then protest using all lawful means’ has saved the Suriani Church from another schism. Though many petitions were sent to Rome requesting the removal of Makil from office, the hero Emmanuel Nidiry never put his signature to any of those petitions. Seeing that agitations still continued, the vicars apostolic in their letters to Rome directly or indirectly accused Nidiry as the centre of all problems in Malabar. Moreover, the apostolic vicars depicted the efforts of Emmanuel Nidiry for the unification of all the Suriani Christians and the restoration of the eastern tradition as the “invention of the restless brain” and “submission to the Babylon Patriarch.”

² VATICAN II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 16.

³ VATICAN II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

Zaleski and Lavigne often accused that the main aim of Emmanuel Nidiry was to become a bishop and thus to attain the name of the "father of the Suriani Church." When Emmanuel Nidiry celebrated his Holy Masses with the vestments of pontifical general vicar, people dreamt of him as the future bishop. Like Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom fighter of India, Nidiry was not interested in power or authority. Though Nidiry was highly tempted by Mellus, the intruder bishop for the higher ecclesiastical post, his habitual obedience and loyalty to the Holy See saved him from becoming a Malabar Luther and thereby inflicting further wounds in the Church.

In spite of the objections and difficulties Emmanuel Nidiry took the courage to proclaim the orthodoxy of the Suriani Church. His meritorious efforts to establish the joy that Suriani Christians were loyal Catholics even before the Synod of Diamper acquires him the title 'the Mahatma of the Suriani Church'.

Apart from missionaries in Malabar the two prelates who accused Emmanuel Nidiry were Lavigne and Zaleski. They were afraid that the Latin Rite would lose its power and position in Malabar. For them it was so difficult to see the great popularity of Emmanuel Nidiry among the Christians of Malabar. Often Jacobite bishops have pointed out the main objection for unity was the absence of indigenous bishops. The foreign prelates feared that once Emmanuel Nidiry was elevated as the bishop the whole divided Christian community of Malabar would unite themselves under him and naturally the foreigners would be expelled from Malabar. Therefore, they tried to present Emmanuel Nidiry as a schismatic before high ecclesiastical authorities. In their letter to Zaleski the contemporaries and collaborators of Emmanuel Nidiry while defending him against the accusation of Zaleski wrote:

We think it is part of our filial obligation which we owe to your august person as representing the Sovereign Pontiff in India, to inform you that the ill advised and unhappy utterances about a deceased priest who had so devoutly and faithfully served God and his Church and whose name is lovingly remembered and venerated, not only by the Syrian Community but by the whole people in Malabar, have almost scandalised the faithful and lowered the personal esteem of Your Excellency, in the eyes of the people.⁵

⁵ See appendix XV.

While Emmanuel Nidiry was a 'schismatic' person for Lavigne and Zaleski, he was qualified as an "excellent Suriani Catholic priest," by Agliardi and he was well appreciated by foreign prelates like Meurin and Auiti. Cardinal Tisserant qualified Emmanuel Nidiry as "a very zealous and learned priest of the then vicariate-apostolic of Kottayam."⁶ He was really a holy man and he practised all the Christian virtues in his life.

John Paul II said on the occasion of presenting *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (CCEO) to the twenty-eighth general Congregation of the Synod of Bishops on 25 October 1990 that "the Church itself gathered in the one spirit breaths as though with two lungs ... of the East and of the West and that it burns with the love of Christ in one heart having two ventricles."⁷ Emmanuel Nidiry was fighting his whole life for the above mentioned recognition of the identity and heritage of an ancient, individual and apostolic Eastern Church.

To conclude, the Surianis consider Emmanuel Nidiry as the Moses who delivered the ancient Apostolic See of Malabar from the hands of the foreign prelates. He accepted every suffering in "heroic holiness" and he was obedient to his legitimate ecclesiastical authority and showed the courage and confidence to proclaim the orthodoxy of the Suriani Church even to the last breath of his life. He will be remembered throughout the centuries as the promoter of autonomy and unity of the St Thomas Christians.

⁶ E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 138.

⁷ AAS, 82 (1990) 1037.

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APPENDIX I

LETTER OF FR NIDIRY TO ANDREA AIUTI, THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE OF INDIA¹

Alleppey
15th July 1889

To
His Excy. Msgr. A. Aiuti
The Delegate Apostolic in East Indies

Most Revd. and dear Lord,

Your Excy. might remember well the fact of my having complained of the act of Msgr. Lavigne which publicly condemned and censured in the Synod of Changanacherry my labours in making the Syrian Association and buying property for the same. These acts having been done with the permission of the then bishop the only authority whom I should have consulted, they were and still are well justified before the public, and therefore if those words were uttered in such a public assembly against another like Alvarez, Msgr. Lavigne would have been prosecuted before the Magistrate for the defamation. The last Friday I saw the translation of a letter of Your Excy. styling the said labours to make the Syrian Union Association as fruits of inconsistency or weakness in the faith, with a circular of Msgr. Lavigne prohibiting even some civil or social communications (just like those which are well allowed to have with Protestants) to have with Jacobites.

When I read the translation of Your Excy's. letter a priest remarked that "this is a repetition of the insult given to you in the Synod, with the only difference of the present being more public and proceeding from a higher dignitary of the Church." And I think that he is quite right, because the greatest insult to a Catholic priest is and should be that he is weak or wanting in faith. Yes my Lord, I think that this is the greatest dishonour I can expect at present. Oh! What a contrast when compared with Your Excy's last words when leaving Malabar. As our Merciful Lord gives me an ardent desire in these days to imitate one who "was crucified to the world and the world crucified to him" I accept this dishonour as a great reward from heaven, from the merciful hands of our Lord sent

¹ ACO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 6561.

through the right channel of his representative in the world and I offer them to him for the expiation of my manifold sins.

2. But my duty as a Counsellor of the Vicar Apostolic compels me to inform Your Excy. that the said publication prepared without consulting the majority of the counsellors will have a quite contrary effect. Mar Dionysius will be highly offended, and will lose all his confidence with Your Excy. and perhaps he himself will consecrate Alvarez, and the conversion of the Jacobites would be hindered at least for a quarter of a century more and the Catholics who see, that all these evils were caused by the dignitaries of their Church will be much excited. These are my humble opinions which I frankly submit to a kind consideration of Your Excy. that I may not be blamed in future and to discharge a duty of my conscience.

3. Bishop Lavigne a few months ago when he visited a church broke open the fabrica room as the church warden delayed to open it. This act offended not only the congregation of that church but that of others also. In another instance he broke open a box of Fr Alanicatt the present Vicar of Conthuruthy who was ordered to come to Thaveray and was prevented by a sudden illness which his Lordship did not know and thinking that he was intentionally absent opened his box by violent means. A friend of his immediately intended to send a pagan servant to the Magistrate to prosecute his Lordship for that criminal act which according to the Penal Code is punishable with rigorous imprisonment of not less than two or three years. Fr Alanicatt cited as a witness could not swear that he gave his consent to his Lordship to break his box. So the punishment was almost sure. I prevented that disgrace to His Lordship and to our Catholic religion.

4. Your Excellency might have heard that Msgr. Medlicott lost his civil suit against the schismatics of Trichoor. The vicar of Paroor showed me once the copies of that plaint and the written statement of the defendants. I then told him that I am sure that His Lordship will be defeated in the case. Had His Lordship consulted somebody in the country who has some knowledge of the law, he would not have had this disgrace. Likewise had Msgr. Lavigne accepted my advice not to give money to Itoop alone but to send at least his butler with money we would not have suffered that defeat at Kottayam. These new bishops seem to imagine to consult the natives is to diminish their power. I resign myself in such things to the will of God. Begging Your Excellency's blessing on bended knees, I remain, Your Excellency's Most Obedient and humble servant, E. A. Nidiry.

APPENDIX II

THE ITALIAN TRANSLATION OF THE LETTER OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY TO AIUTI ²

Kottayam
16 Novembre 1888

Versione dall'Inglese

Emi. e Revmo Signore

Mi è regolarmente pervenuta la sua pregiata lettera del 6, c. Appena ricevutala mi recai da M: Dionisio, che allora trovai in Kottayam, e gliene feci la traduzione parola per parola. Siccome Sua Grazia trovava sì d'aver ricevuto diecimila Rupie da un amico e siccome pure gli era stata fatta da un altro la promessa di altre diecimila Rupie, la parte della lettera di V.G. concernente le diecimila Rupie non gli fece grande impressione, Sua Grazia mi esprime solamente che le sue speranze nella magnanimità della S. Sede erano state deluse e che avea trovato più verace un privato individuale amico, e che se egli avea riposto tutta la sua fiducia unicamente nella s. sede, ora sarebbe preda della malvagità dei protestanti.

Quanto alla parte della stessa lettera la quale non accorda l'erezione di una scuola inferiore per l'Unione Nazionale Cattolico - Giacobita sua grazia mi esprime il più profondo dispiacere, e mi disse che egli ormai non ha altra alternativa che quella di aprire una scuola nello stesso luogo, che precedentemente era stato comprato allo scopo di stabilirvi una scuola sotto il titolo di Scuola Dell'Unione Nazionale, che se i cattolici non ameranno di unirvi a quest'opera ne vorranno mandare i loro figli a siffatta scuola, allora prenderanno la parte che loro compete tanto nella comune proprietà esistente in Cottayam come nella donazione di M. Darnagh. Sua Grazia dopo l'ultima lettera a V. E. chiese a Mar Darnagh, che cosa si dovrebbe fare nel caso che la risposta fosse negativa, e questi rispose che se i cattolici non permetteranno la Scuola dell'Unione Nazionale, sua grazia dovrà fabbricare una scuola distinta e rivale sul terreno dell'Unione esistente in Cottayam e che egli farà tutte le spese necessarie alla fabbrica ed al mantenimento dei maestri. Siccome la promessa di questo Signore è di grande vantaggio ai Giacobini e siccome alcuni del clero e del laicato, come pure Mar Atanasio, il Delegato del Patriarca

² ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazioni Malabaresi* (1890-1892) 3, fasc. 2, f. 2058^R - 2058^V.

nel Malabar la conoscono, Mar Dionisio non può fare a meno di erigere siffatta scuola, altrimenti potrebbe venire accusato presso il Patriarca di aver perduto la più bella opportunità di provvedere d'una scuola e relativi fondi la comunità Giacobita. Per questo sua grazia mi disse che il giorno seguente darebbe ordine di comprare mille rupie di mattoni per fabbricare la detta scuola, ed in conformità di tali ordini il suo agente sta già comprando quei materiali. In fine M. Dionisio con profondo sospiro e colle lagrime agli occhi mi disse: "Caro Padre Nidiry non ci scoraggiamo, ma speriamo che i nostri lavori di questi ultimi 12 anni saranno coronati di buon successo per la grazia di Dio Onnipotente, ma preghiamo altresì che Egli illumini la mente dei dignitari della Chiesa Cattolica, affinché i medesimi comprendano che questa è la migliore opportunità e questi sono i migliori mezzi per unire i soriani Giacobiti ai loro fratelli cattolici." Sua grazia mi disse inoltre che fra breve scriverebbe direttamente a V. E.

Chieggo la Sua Benedizione e mi rassegnò.

(sottoscritto)

Sac. E. A. Nidiry

APPENDIX III

THE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL LETTER OF FATHERS ABRAHAM EDAMPADAM, JOSEPH CHAMAKALA AND GEORGE KARAPULAY TO THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE³

To

His Excellency Msgr. A. Ajuti

The Delegate Apostolic

Pallazo Della Propaganda in

Piazza di Spagna, Rome

From

Fathers Abraham Edampadam, Joseph Chamakala and George Karapulay

Most Revnd Lord,

We the undersigned, considering Your Excy's exalted dignity and the preciousness of your time on one hand and our unworthiness and lowliness on the other, did not up to this dare to write anything to Your Excy. but now as certain circumstances connected with the glory of God and salvation of souls compel us, we take the liberty to submit the following to the kind consideration of your Excy.

I. After the death of Mar Alexander De Campo the second vicar apostolic of Malabar, who was a native Syrian Bishop consecrated by Msgr. Joseph Sebastiani the first Carmelite Vicar Apostolic in Malabar, no Jacobite priest was ever converted to the Catholic Faith in Malabar, till the happy days of Your Excy's Delegatorial regime in India.

II. The Carmelite missionaries and especially the good Bishop Marsellinus among them, had laboured much to convert the Jacobites, but as they are not the natives of the country and of Syrian rite, the Jacobites had no confidence in them and so their labours were not successful.

III. Fr Nidiry, as soon as he became a priest, began to make some preparations for the conversion of the Jacobites by courting the friendship of all the Jacobite Bishops, priests and chief lay men by visiting and helping them by his advices and the influence he has

³ Cf. ACO, *Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi* (1890-1892) 3, fasc. 1, ff. 1880^R-1882^R. The letter of three converted priests, Abraham Edampadam, Joseph Chamakala and George Karapulay to Aiuti on 28 June 1891.

with the Travancore and Cochin governments and he availed himself of all opportunities had to exhort them directly or indirectly to the true union through the Catholic Faith.

IV. When the Holy See wisely appointed him as the Pontifically privileged Vicar General of Kottayam, the honours conferred upon him pleased his Jacobite friends as to make them think it their duty to be grateful to the Holy See for the privileges conferred upon a distinct member of their nation, though different in faith. And addresses and congratulatory letters were showered upon him from the Jacobites and Hindus as well as from the Catholics. He (Fr Nidiry as his great granduncle Bishop Alexander De Campo) utilized these favourable opportunities also for the conversion of his Jacobite brethren and the topics of his conversation on visits or in replies to the assesses and letters, were the characters, the beauty, and nature of the Catholic Church and her faith and discipline and the magnanimity of His Holiness the present Pope and the virtues and the zeal of your Excy.

V. Such conversations and exhortations of the said Father accompanied by the grace of God moved us to embrace the catholic faith. Till that time we had not any opportunity to be acquainted with His Lordship Bishop Lavigne. 1st Fr Nidiry and then Bishop Lavigne told us that as we were to abandon the Jacobite church and that emoluments received from that church, we have nothing to fear as we would get equal emoluments as all the Catholic priests receive in Malabar.

VI. After our conversation many priests and people are willing to become Catholics, following our example. But the unfavourable circumstances which we state below delay their conversion.

(a) Fr Nidiry, through whose instrumentality we were converted and they also are willing to do so, has no power or jurisdiction over us after conversion, but are entirely left to the mercy of Bishop Lavigne.

(b) Bishop Lavigne who has spent more than ten thousand Rs. [Rupees] for their erection of a nunnery where he resides at present and for an orphanage in Chagnachery and for the walls of the compound, where his future residence is to be built, says that he has no money to build some small chapels for our and of the other Jacobite convert's use, which will cost only two or three hundred Rs. each.

(c) Bishop Lavigne, who told us in the beginning of our conversion, that we will get equal emoluments as the other Catholic priests, is not willing to give us more than 14 intentions of masses in a month and out of the alms of the same he takes a part and gives us only seven Rs. From this little amount we have to defray the expense of going to His Lordship twice, once to get the intention and then to get the alms, besides to pay the servants who accompany us daily to say mass in some neighbouring Catholic church which are not less than three or four miles distant from our houses.

(d) Some begottered Jacobites write anonymous letters to His Lop [Lordship] Bishop Lavigne stating that our conversion is owing to our ambition to get more money in the Catholic Church, which His Lop seems to believe.

(e) Up to the beginning of this month Fr Nidiry used to reside in the town of Kottayam, the centre of the Jacobitism and Protastantism and the capital of the northern division of the Travancore government, where he had almost every day good opportunities to meet the Jacobite Bishops, priests and lay men, but his present removal to Changanachery has lost a great deal of His influence and the means of converting the Jacobites.

VII. At present Mar Dionysius the metropolitan and Mar Paul Athanasius the Bishop of Cottayam diocese (not the other Mar Thomas Athanasius the reformed or protastantized Bishop) are not in good terms. The latter suspended some priests, who the former absolved. Likewise the former prohibited the erection of two churches which the latter afterwards permitted. Both have written to their patriarch complaining against each others. There are priests and lay men adhering to each of them. Now Mar Paul Athanasius, his priests and lay men knowing, that Mar Dionysius is not content with Fr Nidiry after his having converted us, consider Fr Nidiry as their good friend and adviser and desire frequently to consult with him.

VIII. Mar Thomas Athanasius his priests and chief lay men also are in friendly terms with Fr Nidiry. All these are favourable circumstances for the conversion of the Jacobites.

IX. In the last century there was once a much more favourable occasion to convert the Jacobites, viz the only Bishop then they had by the name Mar Joseph Dionysius was willing to become Catholic with his clergy and laity, if the Holy See would accept him in his dignity of the Archbishop. He submitted his petition to this purpose to the then vicar apostolic of Verapoly who being unacquainted with the state of the Jacobites, doubted whether he was validly consecrated.

X. As his petition was not granted by the vicar apostolic he sent a special representative to Rome with his petition which was sent to the vicar apostolic for enquiry. As the representative was Dr. Joseph Cariatty a Romo-Syrian priest of the Malabar, formerly a student of *Propaganda*, the vicar apostolic did not take interest in the matter as the petition did not go through the proper channel who is the vicar apostolic and so delayed the inquiry and threw some doubts in the mind of the Holy See about the validity of the consecration of the petitioner which disheartened that bishop and so the best opportunity to convert the Jacobites was lost.

XI. Now our conversion also being caused by Fr Nidiry a native priest the people at large think that the vicar apostolic does not or will not take an interest as if it were done by a European missionary or by the vicar apostolic himself.

XII. We fear that if the above stated favourable circumstances be not utilized immediately and time be lost, the conversion of the Jacobites might be more difficult hereafter.

XIII. The prudent act of the Holy See in conferring the Pontifical honours upon the Syrian vicar generals of Kottayam and Trichoor was the first attraction to convert us. Had the Holy See consecrated two coadjutor bishops in the said apostolic vicariates for the Nordist section and a third one for the Sudist section in the Cottayam apostolic

vicariates instead of the three pontifically privileged vicar generals, this act of the generosity of the Holy See itself would have converted the greater part of the Jacobites whose cause of separation from the centre of unity was the want of a bishop in their own nation and rite.

XIV. The valuable time of Fr Nidiry instead of employing for the great work of preaching exhorting and converting the Jacobites is exhausted in reading and endorsing petitions of the Catholics in the Episcopal Curia at present.

If the Holy See entrust to Fr Nidiry or to some other native Syrian priests, the great work of labouring for the conversion of the Jacobites and send some intentions of masses and some other pecuniary assistance to that person had hoc appointed, we hope that the conversion of the Jacobites can be effected better than at present.

If Your Excy. be pleased to give us a reply you will kindly forward it through the medium of Fr Nidiry.

Begging Your Excy's blessing on bended knees

We remain

Your Excellency's

Most obedient and humble servants

Fr Abraham (signature)

Fr Joseph (signature)

Fr George (signature).

Mollanthooroothy

28th June 1891

APPENDIX IV

LETTER OF ANDREA AIUTI TO PROPAGANDA ON 29 JUNE 1889⁴

Ootacamund li 29 Giugno 1889

A Sua Eminenza Reverendissima

Il Sig. Cardinale Giovanni Simeoni

Prefetto della S. Congre. di Propaganda Roma

Eminenza reverendissima

Mi reco a doverosa premura di rendere informata l'Eminenza Vostra reverendissima, che non indugiai ad esporre a Msgr. Vicario Apostolico di Cottayam le osservazioni che formavano l'oggetto dell'ossequiato dispaccio dell'Eminenza Vostra N. 794. del 16 Maggio p.p. invitandolo ad un tempo a voler riflettere ancor una volta sulla cosa.

La mia lettera a quel Prelato era concepita in questi termini: «Je vous envoie ci-joint une lettre que Son Eminence « Msgr le Cardinal Simeoni vient de me faire tenir avec ordre de porter à la « connaissance de Votre Grandeur les considérations qui en constituent l'objet. Je « crois que la meilleure manière de bien accomplir cet ordre soit celle de Vous « soumettre le texte original de ce que Son Eminence m'écrit. Veuillez donc réfléchir, « Monseigneur, et en me rendant la lettre de Son Eminence veuillez aussi me faire « connaître votre résolution.

«Quant à moi, je dirai franchement à Votre Grandeur, que après les « considérations et les sages réflexions de son Eminence, si j'étais à votre place, je « n'hésiterais plus et je nommerais le Père Nidiry Vicaire Général. Il y a une autre « considération aussi à faire, et c'est que l'office de Vicaire Général étant amovible « ad nutum de Votre Grandeur, l'individu choisi par Vous cherchera toutes les voies « pour Vous plaire ; et d'un autre côté Vous pouvez limiter autant que possible même « ses privilèges ou du moins leur exercice. Le mal serait toujours moindre que si on « laissait de côté le Père Nidiry. Il est encore temps de prévenir les malheurs et les « misères que nous avons toutes les raisons de craindre d'une telle prétérition ».

«Votre Grandeur pourra réfléchir corum Deo là-dessus et voir si Elle aussi doit arriver à la conclusion à laquelle Son Eminence est arrivée.»

⁴ ACO, *Scritture Riforme Congregazione Malabaresi* 1878-1889, f. 1480^R-1483^V, letter of Aiuti to Simeoni on 29 June 1889.

Ma come l'Eminenza Vostra potrà benignamente rilevare dalla risposta, che il medesimo mi ha dato in proposito, ritornandomi l'originale della lettera dell'Eminenza Vostra, e ch'io unisco al presente foglio, quel Prelato rimane fermo nel suo discorso di non nominare a suo Vicario Generale il Sacerdote Emmanuele Nidiry; e senza dirne espressamente il perchè dichiara di cessare d'insistere sulla domanda del titolo di Cameriere Segreto Soprannumerario a favore di quel Sacerdote. Dopo di che dichiara espressamente che se gli viene dato l'ordine di nominare quel Sacerdote a suo Vicario Generale obbedirà non solo senza mormorare ma con gioia sapendo bene, come religioso, qual sia il pregio dell'obbedienza e come la medesima sia la miglior soluzione nelle grandi difficoltà; e procedendo ad esporre quali siano le ragioni, che lo consigliano a rimaner fermo nella sua risoluzione, appella alla testimonianza di Msgr. Neurin, che ultimamente gli scriveva dicendo: «Ce que vous me dites des tendances schismatiques du P. Nidiry m'afflige mais ne me surprend pas.», e dichiarava che il medesimo non è stoffa da Vescovo. Ma questa testimonianza nella sua prima parte prova piuttosto in favore della nomina dell'individuo in questione all'ufficio di Vicario Generale, una delle ragioni essendo precisamente quella di precludere in tempo ogni via all'eventualità di egli possa passare allo scisma, e nella seconda è al tutto fuori di proposito. Aggiunge le testimonianze del P. Agostino di Verapoli e del P. Candido Carmelitano, il primo dei quali dice che il Nidiry non ha spirito Sacerdotale ed il secondo afferma che non l'ha veduto mai recitare il Breviario. Osserverò in proposito che il P. Agostino poco o nulla conosce del clero soriano, essendo stato sempre nei Conventi di Verapoli; Cunenmavo e Magnamei occupato in studio di lingue in versione di libri e nell'insegnamento; e quanto al P. Candido dirò che la sua affermazione non merita poi gran fede; primo perchè io stesso allorché poco fa fui nel Malabar coi miei occhi ho veduto il Nidiry recitare sempre il Breviario, quando si viaggiava in barca per andare da un punto all'altro del Vicariato, dov'egli era stato invitato da Msgr. Lavigne e da me a recarsi; e poi perchè è noto che il P. Candido e il Nidiry non si possono vedere l'un l'altro e si fuggono a vicenda come il demonio fugge la Croce. Come potrà dunque egli asserire che questi non reciti il Breviario? Andando innanzi confessa di non aver a rimproverare al Nidiry gran mancanze; ma allo stesso tempo intende tirar conseguenze gravi ed assai maggiori delle premesse dalle piccolezze che dice di poter produrre contro quel Sacerdote. Contraddicendo in qualche modo alla lettera che scrisse all'Eminenza Vostra cerca di diminuire il prestigio del Nidiry, ma però confessa che il medesimo è il prete più attivo e faccendone di tutto il Malabar. Dice di non aver timore affatto che il Nidiry gli si imponga; ma teme che questi chiami a se tutta la corrente degli affari, e che finisca col metterlo da parte. Dice finalmente che non è mai stata sua intenzione di escludere per sempre quel Sacerdote dal posto di Vicario generale, ma che vorrebbe escluderlo solamente per la prima volta.

Da siffatta analisi della risposta di Mongr. Lavigne, sembra potersi concludere che quel Prelato persistendo nella sua risoluzione di non nominare il Nidiry a suo Vicario generale, piuttosto che seguire i dettami della ponderazione e della prudenza, è fisso in un certo tutto suo particolare e vuole ad ogni costo la realizzazione di un'idea preconcepita, la quale avanti ogni altra cosa è diretta ad avere la soddisfazione di veder umiliato e castigato il Nidiry, senza poi stare troppo a riflettere alle cattive, anzi pessime conseguenze che potrebbero da questo fatto provenire. Non adduce infatti solide ragioni e non si occupa di distruggere i timori e le ragioni recate in merito dall'Eminenza Vostra, altrimenti che con qualche osservazione, che è

espressione del suo modo di vedere individuale. La sua fermezza sembra fuori di proposito ed è positivamente piena di pericoli prossimi per la futura tranquillità e benessere del Vicariato a lui affidato. Chi lo assicura che il Nidiry riceverebbe il colpo con sommissione e che non giungerebbe poi pian piano a passare allo scisma? E se si verificasse questa sventura, chi avrebbe egli da apporre all'attività, all'eloquenza e all'influenza di quel Sacerdote? Lo scisma non è ancora estinto nel Malabar. Vi è la Chiesa di Trichur che rimane ancora nello scisma, come pure vi è la piccola chiesa di KattaiKath nello stesso Vicariato di Trichur; che l'anno scorso nel mese d'Agosto ritorno allo scisma e vi resta tutt'ora; e quel che è peggio vi sono moltissimi preti (95 nel solo Vicariato di Cottayam) e chierici tornati dallo scisma, i quali sono assai malfermi nella fede e colla massima facilità seguirebbero chiunque se mettesse alla testa di un nuovo scisma. Mellus offrì positivamente e ripetutamente la mitra al Nidiry e volle consacrarlo Vescovo, ma questi, come si assicura, sempre ricusò di accettare l'offerta. La ragione principale del Mellus nel fare tale offerta era quella di eliminare per questo mezzo dal campo della lotta il principale e più valido oppositore all'opera sua. Quale non sarebbe ora la soddisfazione di quello scismatico, se il Nidiry si recasse da lui e chiedesse di venir consagrato Vescovo? Si riaccenderebbe la guerra nel Malabar ed essendone il condottiero un connazionale che non ha competitori nella sua attività, destrezza ed influenza, la lotta sarebbe micidiale. Oltre di che si può tener per conto che anche i Giacobiti presterebbero aiuto ad una ribellione contro il Vicario Apostolico; e si perderebbe pure ogni speranza che M. Dionisio potesse convertirsi. Egli ed il Nidiry sono così confidenti come un padre lo è col proprio figlio; e la freddezza esistente tra M. Lavigne ed il Nidiry, ha già, almeno apparentemente, un effetto scoraggiante sull'animo di M. Dionisio. M. Dionisio e Nidiry più volte mi si sono lamentati del tratto duro e fiducioso di M. Lavigne a loro riguardo e non mi farebbe meraviglia, che escluso che fosse il Nidiry dal posto di Vicario Generale, ambedue gettassero la maschera e si unissero a vomitar fiele contro il vicario apostolico per ogni modo, e cercando di sbazarlo via. Fino ad ora il Prelato Giacobita, a motivo principalmente delle buone relazioni che passano tra lui e questa delegazione, si è astenuto dal fare in varie occasioni del male alla chiesa cattolica. L'ultima volta che ero in Cottayam mi disse ripetutamente che qualunque comunicazione in futuro avessi a fargli dovessi mandargliela per il Nidiry, che è suo confidente, ed aggiunse che quando andrà a Roma vorrà essere accompagnato unicamente dal Nidiry.

Tali probabilmente sarebbero gli effetti dell'azzardo che M. Vicario Apostolico di Cottayam intenderebbe di fare contro il saggio e prudente avviso dell'Eminenza Vostra. Dico la verità che non avrei mica creduto, che egli avesse il coraggio o meglio la poca prudenza di opporsi alle sapienti considerazioni espresse nell'ossequiato dispaccio dell'eminenza vostra e prender così su di se una tremenda responsabilità, senza per altro avere a sua disposizione scuse sufficienti a tranquillizzarlo ed a giustificarlo quante volte le conseguenze del suo passo fossero per essere le disgrazie a cui si accenna.

C'è di buono però che M. Vicario Apostolico termina con queste parole la sua lettera: "Le termine en protestant, que je suis prête i obier à la décision de Son Eminence"

Così esposte le cose all'eminenza vostra, imploro dalla sapienza delle medesima la grazia di volermi far conoscere la definitiva sua risoluzione sulla questione in parola. M. Lavigne è tenace anzi tenacissimo della sua opinione e molte più delle sue risoluzioni, ma si lascia

dolcemente violentare dall'obbedienza. Ciò avvenne nel caso dei chierici espulsi dal seminario di Mannanam, che non voleva in nessun costo riammettere in quel seminario, e che poi finalmente riammise per dolce violenza da me fattagliene, violenza che egli poi si è trovato contentissimo di aver subito. Di questo caso ebbi l'onore di tener proposito all'eminenza vostra nel mio rapporto del 13 aprile p. p. assente l'oggetto, "Relazione sullo stato attuale dei vicariati apostolici di Trichur e Cottayam."

Dopo di che rimango in attesa dei sommi ordini, che all'eminenza vostra piacerà trasmettermi sul particolare che ci occupa e che io eseguirò colla maggiore esattezza, puntualità e buon volere del mondo, ed intanto chinato riverente al bacio della S. Porpora chieggo all'eminenza vostra la grazia singolarissima di accordarmi l'onore di rassegnarmi ancor una volta coi sensi del più profondo ossequio e della più devota venerazione.

Dell'Eminenza Vostra Reverendissima.

+Andrea arcivescovo di Acridia

Delegato Apostolico nelle Indie Orientali.

APPENDIX V

LETTER OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY AND ALEXANDER OF ST JOSEPH TO LAVIGNE⁵

Mannanam
12th June 1888

Right Rev. & Dear Lord

As your Lordship was pleased to select us both, as your counsellors from the Nordist party of your subjects we think it our duty to express to your Lordship the sentiments of the people to whose party we belong. As none of us is at present in the company of your Lordship the importance and immensity of the subject compel us to discharge the same duty by writing the following lines.

1st Your Lordship well remembers that on the first day after your Lordship's arrival in this convent the members of our secular clergy then present in this convent having heard that your Lordship promised to the Sudists who came that morning to you with an address that two of their children would shortly be sent to Rome to be educated in the *Propaganda* College, came to your Lordship in a body and requested you to be pleased to send to Rome children proportionate to the number of the clergy and laity of the two parties viz Sudists & Nordists. Your Lordship reply was that as the S. Congregation has already promised to take two children of that party it is not left to your Lordship's option to change the number. They then again told your Lordship that they themselves would represent the matter to Rome if your Lordship allow them to do so, to which your Lordship reply was that the first day after your arrival was not a day for pressure and complaints and all should be quiet and everything will have a satisfactory termination .

2nd From the above said words of your Lordship they understood that they are hinted not to write about that and that your Lordship who saw the vast difference of the number of the Sudists nad Nordists understood that while a single student from the Nordists of this vicariate alone is studying in *Propaganda* to send two of the other party would be impropportionate and unreasonable, would write yourself to the S. Congregation to arrange the matter as it should be.

⁵ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)*, 1006, VI, 3, letter of Emmanuel Nidiry and Alexander of St Josep to Charles Lavigne on 12 June 1888.

3rd Some priests of the Nordist party having heard that your Lordship went to Brammangalam to examine and choose the two students to be sent to Rome communicated their dissatisfaction to us, we think that people at large would follow them in their sentiments. We therefore request your Lordship not to be hurry in selecting and sending the students to Rome and waite till the Nordists also send their representation to Rome and get a resolution from there. As we think there is no student in Brammangalam who has all the qualifications which the *Propaganda* requires especially the knowledge of Latin as much as to express his own sentiments in that language, your Lordship has good reason to wait.

4th When some days ago Fr Joseph Pallikunnel with some students came to Mannanam to see your Lordship styling them as the seminarists of Brammangalam. We thought to inform your Lordship that Brammangalam was not a seminary and nobody studied there; up to this all the clergymen of the Sudists were educated either in Mannanam or in some other seminary together with the Nordists; the house at Brammangalam was made with the intention and title of a future convent. The students who are found at present in Brammangalam are persons picked up and borrowed from different places with a view to get to that house the name and title of a seminary from your Lordship which any prudent man can from prima facie understand is a measure to widen the discord between the Nordists and Sudists and consequently it would become a nursery of caste distinction in case their request be granted. As we kept silence at that time we thought it our duty to express this also in this letter.

5th There is another cause of dissatisfaction to the Nordists viz your Lordship styling the Edakatt church of the Sudists at Kottayam as your Cathedral. The history of the Syrians from all antiquity shows the Prelates who governed them resided in different times and ages' ruling over both the Nordist & Sudist community but never a Sudist church was selected as Episcopal residence or Cathedral. If this novelty be done by your Lordship we regret to say that it being an unprecedented act would highly displease to whole Nordist community.

Stating that nothing but frankness & loyalty moved us to write the above lines & begging your Lordships blessings on bended knees.

We remain

Your Lordships'

Most obedient and humble servant

Fr E. A. Nidiry (signature)

Fr Alexander of St Joseph (signature)

APPENDIX VI

THE LETTER OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARISH PRIESTS OF KOTTAYAM VICARIATE TO THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE⁶

6 April 1892

To
His Excellency Msgr. Zaleski
Delegate Apostolic to East Indies

Our lord

We, the undersigned deputies of the Romo-Syrian Churches of the Apostolic Vicariate of Kottayam legally elected by the representatives of the some churches assembled in a meeting at St Mary's Church in Coravalangad on the 4th May 1892, take the liberty to submit the following to Your Excellency's kind consideration.

1. The cause of the said meeting and the previous one at Lalam near Palai, was the some acts of His Lordship Bishop Lavigne led to great dissatisfaction and disturbance as well as the introduction of schism in many churches.

(A) The apostolic brief "*Quod jampridem*" had determined that the residence of he Vicar Apostolic should be at Kottayam, the centre of the mission by its being in quasi central position and the head quarters of the northern division in the Travancore government as well as the head quarters of the Jacobitism and Protastantinism and on account of the facility to go there by land and water. The above stated importance of the town and convenience for communication, made the whole Vicariate to be satisfied of the wise provision of the Holy See in selecting that place for the Eparchial residence; but to their great astonishment and grief, His Lordship Bishop Lavigne succeeded to transfer his residence from Kottayam to Changanacherry, the southern extremity of the mission and this has been done without consulting his vicar general and counsellors as he was bound to do according to the precept of the said apostolic brief.

(B) His Lordship Lavigne having assured several times the people that the Holy See is willing to give them a native Bishop, should they make a fund for the erection of a residence and maintenance of that Bishop, he made the clergy and laity consent to give

⁶ ACCO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1896-1900, vol.1, fasc. 3, 9-19, letter of the representatives of the priests, of the vicariate of Kottayam, to Zaleski on 6 April 1892.

a contribution from the churches, priests and people for the same, and accordingly when some of them brought the contribution His Lordship refused to grant them a receipt as required to the effect that it was for the maintenance of a native Bishop. Further His Lordship compelled the people, under pain of prohibiting feasts, to pay the contribution without sporting even the poor churches from which exacted the sacred vessels and other articles in lieu of the amount. Besides there he made the people understand that the contribution was not intended for the native Bishop, but for himself and his successors.

(C) The Palai and other six churches jointly wrote a petition to His Lordship complaining against his arbitrary proceedings, which petition His Lordship tore and threw it on the ground in the presence of those who presented it to him and gave strict orders to recover contribution from those who had refused to pay.

(D) The administration of the mission was satisfactory when he contributed in consultation with and advice of Vicar General and counsellors and it was still more satisfactory when he entrusted the government of the mission to the Vicar General and counsellors who used to render him once a week an account of their administration. During such administration of theirs the schism was on the eve its extinction, and five Jacobite priests were converted and many others were disposed to come over to the Catholic Church. But in the latter part of '91 when His Lordship changed his residence to Changanacherry he also made a change in the government of the mission i.e. issued orders according to his own opinions without consulting the Vicar General and the counsellors. Some of the orders disturbed the peace of the mission and a portion of the parishioners of Coravalangadu and most of the Manimally parish went over to schism with their respective churches. The people of Ampara and Antiyalam also, having built new church under the schism, submitted themselves to the schismatic Bishop Thontinatt. Moreover the churches of Lalam, New Lalam and Elengi as well as the Bazar chapel of Palai have lately gone over to schism and we hear that some other churches are also preparing their way to schism.

(II) The cause of all these and the former calamities among the Syrians has originated from the want of a native Bishop as may be seen from the following:

(A) Our forefathers after the synod of Diamber directly and through the medium of the Portuguese government forwarded several petitions to the Holy See, praying to give them a Bishop of their own nation and rite. (see page 194 History of Catholic Religion in Malabar by Marcelline Carmelite Missionary and afterwards the coadjutor of Verapoly).

(B) As they were not even favoured with a reply to their petition till the year 1632 they assembled at the St George's Church Edapally on 19th December of the same year and again petitioned to the Holy See through the medium of the Portuguese government for the purpose of getting a Bishop of their own nation and rite (see page 280 of the History of Malabar by the said Fr Marcelline; Idelphan's Chronicles of Malabar Orient Conquistado 2nd vol. 1st conquest part 2; Paulinus India Christiana pages 70 & 71; Iacроза Chiet-Ind. Vich As. Bible. Vol. 4 page 461) and waited for the long period of 20 years to see whether any justice would be done to their long standing petition, and at last being desperate of the delay they wrote to Patriarchs of Babylon, Antioch and Alexandria and one Mar Ignatius Ahthala was

sent to Malabar whom the Portuguese seized and murdered (see page 194 of the same History by Fr Marcelline Part second).

(C) The people, therefore having abandoned the Jesuit Archbishop Francis Gracia, admitted themselves to the Archdeacon Thomas De Campo and created a great schism (see the same History).

(III) The solitude of the Holy See stretched out into saving hand by the appointment of Bp. Joseph Sebastiani the first Carmelite Bishop in Malabar who consecrated Mar Alexander De Campo a native Syrian who converted a part of the present of the Romo Syrians whose descendants are the schismatics; and the other part, who remained under the Archdeacon is the numerous and important community now known as the Jacobites consisting of six Bishops about a thousand priests and more than 200,000 souls (see *idem*). After the death of Mar Alexander Campo, our forefathers repeatedly requested the Holy See to give us a Syrian Bishop, which not being attended to till the 18th century the people then having lost their hope of getting redress to their petition from Rome, they sent a man named Paul Pandari to the Catholic Patriarch of Babylon and got him consecrated as their Bishop and many churches and people submitted to him which made a second schism in Malabar (see the History of Malabar by Fr Marcelline).

(A) After his death although the people with their respective churches submitted to their lawful Bishop yet they continued to write petition to the Holy See to get a Bishop of their own nation and rite.

(B) As they did not meet with any favourable results of their petition they suspected that their petitions were intercepted by the influence of the Vicar Apostolic and Missionaries who then governed them and so they had recourse to the Patriarch of Babylon to forward their petition to Rome safely and get their request granted. Mar Joseph Audo the then Patriarch of Babylon having been pressed by the petitioners and deputies of Malabar sent here one Mar Thomas Roccas a Patriarchal visitor, to whom more than 130 churches joined and made a third schism.

(C) Mar Thomas Roccas was called to Babylon by the said patriarch Mar Joseph Audo, when the churches in the schism departed Fr Antony Thontinath to proceed to Babylon in order to bring another Chaldean Bishop, but the patriarch having refused to consecrate another, Fr Thontinath went to Mar Simon the Nestorian Patriarch there and was consecrated Bishop. The patriarch Mar Joseph Audo reclaimed the Bishop Thontinath from that schism absolved and sent him to Malabar. But the people having not accepted him he was obliged to take off his Episcopal dress and remain as a simple priest. The people again frequently petitioned the Patriarch Mar Joseph Audo to send them another Syrian Bishop, and so Mar John Ellias Mellus was sent here which originated a fourth schism.

(D) At the departure of the said Bishop Mellus to his native country he reinvested Mar Antony Abdeso Thontinath who was hitherto in the costume of a simple priest with the Pontifical and entrusted to his care all the churches which were schismatically governed by him. A part of Coravalangadu, Maimaly, the two Lallams, old and new as well as a

part of Palai with the Bazar chapel which separated themselves from Msgr. Lavigne and now joined the Schismatical Bishop.

(IV) The first schism which has subsequently formed the populous community of Jacobites, and four other subsequent schisms including that of Thondinath which even now prevails, are the results of not granting the long standing petition of ours, from the beginning of the 17th century up to the present day which facts are incontestable to all those who a knowledge of the history of Malabar.

(V) Although the Latin Bishop, and missionaries who governed us might have represented to the Holy See, that if we get a native Bishop we might join him in making some schism or heresy, yet the Holy See has seen by its own experience that their worldly prudence instead of guarding the people against schism and heresy, has created so many disorders Jacobitism and subsequent schisms.

(VI) They moreover might say that there was none, is a fit man among the native clergy to be consecrated a Bishop. To this we have only to point out the great number of native Syrian graduates of the universities who had responsible offices under Travancore, Cochin and British governments to prove the talent of our community and the much more greater number of our secular as well as regular clergy whose exemplary lives prove the piety and religion our nation.

(VII) If these foreign Bishops and missionaries were unable to educate a single priest as to make him fit to be made a Bishop during the long period of three centuries, they governed us how can we believe that they would hereafter do so.

(VIII) On the contrary if the fact was that although they were able to do so yet they did not do it up to this and are willing to do the same hereafter we think that their neglect in such a grave matter which has brought in the Jacobite heresy and so many subsequent schisms by which numberless souls have been cut off from the Catholic union, renders them unworthy to govern us hereafter and so we are compelled to ask the common father of the faithful through the medium of Your Excellency his worthy representative to take away from them the talent of our ecclesiastical government which they had hitherto kept hidden under the ground of carelessness and ambition and entrust the same to one of our religious priests (if the Holy See has no confidence in the secular priests) at least for a limited period and for the discontent churches which are far away from the present Episcopal residence as for an experiment to see whether the native priests would be able to govern the mission with better success than at present.

(IX) If those who govern us at present are opposed as they hitherto did to our own view of remedying the evil, the natural inference of their opposition is either they do not believe the Catholic dogma they themselves preach that all those who go out of the Catholic will be damned to the eternal flames of the hell fire, or they prefer the eternal loss of so many thousand of souls to a temporal loss of their power over our community, this sad inference scandalises the Jacobite and Protestant Syrians and deter their conversion.

(X) These foreign Bishops and missionaries after learning the rudiments of our vernacular tongue and acquiring a superficial knowledge of our church rites and social manners and

customs they comparing themselves with their brethren in Europe who are utterly ignorant of these things and entertain a self complaisance and undervalue the opinions of the natives in their dealings with them.

(XI) The Holy See in its usual prudence directed the new apostolic vicar of Trichor and Kottayam to accept the advices of the vicar generals and counsellors in all ecclesiastical matters in order to remedy the above stated evil, but Bishop Lavigne acts in direct opposition to that order, hence the disorder and the increase of schism. Even the offices of the vicar general and counsellors are not secure under His Lordship Bishop Lavigne who changes them when they do not give advices according to his whims which is evident from the charges he had made of his vicar general and counsellors during the short period of his government.

(XII) After a few months of the Bishop Lavigne's taking possession of this mission, he expelled some students from the seminary at Mannanam without due investigation of their faults and without consulting his counsellors (as there was no vicar general appointed at that time) and after they (the students) were readmitted into the seminary by the direction of His Excellency Msgr. Aiuti, the then Delegate Apostolic to whom the expelled students had appealed. This also shows that how recklessly and without due advice His Lordship Bishop Lavigne acts in such important matters.

(XIII) Moreover His Lordship first having persuaded the people that the contribution he receives from them is for the patrimony of a native Bishop, his subsequent refusal to give a receipt to that effect and his exacting the sacred vessels and church ornaments from and poor churches in default of such payments and prohibiting their feasts, show his breach of promise, despotism in church government as well as want of popularity on his part.

(XIV) The objection we have to give to the said contribution, made without giving an acknowledgement that it is for the maintenance of a native are as follows:

His Lordship Bishop Lavigne had told some of our priests that as a tenant who did not get a garden for a fixed period on lease would not plant trees in it, so the Jesuits who did not get the Apostolic Vicariate of Kottayam under management of their society would not do much benefit to our mission. This statement of His Lordship shows that he and his religious community are discontent for not having secured mission to their society and desire to get it through their efforts. If we give the contribution without any document to show the object for which it is given the Jesuits might represent to the Holy See, that although we have been governed a thousand years by the Chaldean for the last 3 centuries by the Portuguese and Carmelite Bishops yet without securing any fund for their maintenance. we had been constantly applying to the Holy see for a native Bishop and that after the arrival of the present Jesuit Bishop, not only we have ceased petitioning for a native Bishop but even started a fund for the maintenance of a Jesuit Bishop showing thereby that we prefer a Jesuit Bishop to any other European or native Bishops. Thus it would be a good means for the Jesuits to secure our mission under their control.

(XV) Even if the found above alluded to were determined to be for the joint maintenance of the present Latin Bishop and any Syrian Bishop who might in future be appointed by the Holy See to govern us it cannot be as useful as it ought to be for our

welfare, for the government law does not allow any change in the trust funds, and consequently as long as the trust continues, the government of two Bishops of different rites will be obligatory in our mission.

(XVI) Some priests and chiefs of our community requested is Lordship Bishop Lavigne to get the necessary permission from the Holy See to consecrate a native Syrian priest as his coadjutor. Had His Lordship done so the people would have given him the contribution. The present annual contribution of the five percent now given is quite adequate for the maintenance of a coadjutor Bishop and counsellors.

(XVII) The representatives of the St. Mary's church Coravalangadu in the beginning of the present year personally informed His Lordship Bishop Lavigne that he should not press the poor churches to give the contribution in question and that they and some other rich churches would give a sufficient fund for the maintenance of the native Bishop with a declaration in the document that the native Bishop will be entitled to take the product of the said fund property from the date of his being consecrated. But His Lordship without agreeing to their proposal despatched peremptory orders to exact the money from the churches prohibiting again their feasts.

(XVIII) Against the time honoured custom of the Syrian churches His Lordship tries to break down the power and influence which the congregation of every church exercised and has given orders to some vicars that they should take all the income of the churches and send them to His Lordship under the pain of suspension. These orders have excited the people more than before and we fear that many churches strenuously resist the execution of such orders. Some people are of opinion that His Lordship gives such difficult orders to meet with opposition and then to represent the Holy See that we are disobedient and consequently unworthy to get a native Bishop and so to confirm the government of the mission to himself and to religious society.

We therefore pay Your Excellency to be kind enough to submit this petition to the Holy See, so that we may get the following prayers granted to us.

1. To give us a Bishop of our nation and rite
2. To make the Episcopal residence in a central place of the mission
3. To give an order that the vicar general and counsellors should not be dismissed or changed till faults are found and proves and previous sanction of the Holy See.
4. That all possible efforts should be made by the Bishop and his Curia for the conversion of the schismatic Bishop Thontinath and those who have been ordained by him.
5. To alter or suspend the execution of the compulsory orders to exact the contribution above alluded to till the Holy See gives us a native Bishop.

We remain Our Lord

Your Excellency's

Most Obedient and Humble Servants

APPENDIX VII

LETTER OF LAVIGNE TO *PROPAGANDA FIDE*⁷

Changanachery, near Alleppey
1^{er} Mai 1892

Eminence Révérendissime,

(P. Nidiry) je dois informer Votre Eminence du changement de mon Vicaire Général pour les Nordistes, Père Nidiry. En voici les raisons.

“Quand il fut question de cette nomination, j'exposai largement mes griefs contre lui, il est inutile de les répéter maintenant. Une épreuve de près de trois ans n'a fait que me confirmer dans mon opinion, et des faits nouveaux sont venus à l'appui.

1) Le P. Nidiry très habile dans la chicane des tribunaux n'a montré aucune aptitude pour l'administration. Les affaires qui lui sont confiées traînent indéfiniment en longueur au grand détriment du bien public.

2) Si une décision prise n'est pas conforme à ses idées, non seulement il ne fait rien pour la soutenir, mais il se gêne pas pour dire qu'il n'y est pour rien, qu'il avait conseillé différemment, que l'Evêque n'a pas voulu l'écouter. Ces propos, qu'il a du m'avouer, ne sont pas ceux d'un Vicaire Général fidèle à son Evêque.

3) Il me cache à dessein des affaires très importantes pour le bien public, et si un prêtre fidèle m'informe, il en témoigne publiquement son mécontentement. A tel point que maintenant les bons prêtres, en me donnant une information, me supplient de n'en rien dire au P. Nidiry.

4) Dans différentes difficultés, qui se sont présentées, j'ai trouvé la main du P. Nidiry plus ou moins cachée.

5) A part quelques exceptions, les amis du P. Nidiry sont les prêtres à tendances schismatiques. De très bons prêtres commencent à se plaindre que le P. Nidiry les poursuit parce qu'ils obligent le peuple à obéir aux ordres de l'Evêque.

6) J'ai longtemps réfléchi à la parole que je vais prononcer, et ma conscience n'hésite plus « Le cœur du P. Nidiry n'est pas à Rome ». Quoiqu'il en soit de ses protestations par lettre ou de vive voix, je maintiens mon affirmation. Elle ne doit pas surprendre quand

⁷ ACO, Scri. Rife. Cong. Malabaresi 1890-1892, ff. 1977^h-1980^v.

on sait qu'il a commencé son éducation dans le séminaire schismatique des Jacobites à cottayam, qu'il a reçu la tonsure des, mains de l'Evêque schismatique Roros à un âge où il comprenait la portée de ses actes, qu'il a signé la pétition au patriarche d'Antioche à la suite de laquelle le schismatique Mellus a été envoyé au Malabar. Des conversations presque journalières avec lui m'ont permis de le connaître assez. Je ne citerai qu'un mot. Comme je lui demandais un jour pourquoi l'Inde était si lente à entrer dans la voie du progrès, il me répondit : « Comment le pouvons-nous ? L'Europe s'est emparée de tout le pouvoir, l'Angleterre pour le temporel, et Rome pour le spirituel ».

7) La conversion des Jacobites pour laquelle on espérait que le P. Nidiry serait un instrument utile; fit décider sa nomination comme Vicaire Général, nonobstant les raisons ci-dessus exposées. Et de fait cinq prêtres ont été convertis. Mais ici encore que n'ai-je pas appris, après que les conversions ont été sanctionnées par Rome ? Deux des prêtres Jacobites étaient suspendus par leur Evêque, et le P. Nidiry n'en avait rien dit. L'un d'eux était adonné au vin, et le P. Nidiry ne me prévint qu'après que ce prêtre eut célébré la Messe. Un autre dont le P. Nidiry accepta l'abjuration tandis que j'étais à Goa, était si notoirement connu par ses intrigues et ses fourberies, et si déprécié parmi les siens, que les Jacobites dirent à cette occasion : « Les Catholiques reçoivent nos excréments ». On ne doit pas s'étonner que de pareils débuts aient coupé court à toute nouvelle conversion. J'avais l'intention de donner ces détails à la S. C. de Propagande; ils viennent à propos dans la lettre d'aujourd'hui. Le P. Nidiry n'a d'influence réelle que sur les mauvais prêtres Jacobites. Il a pour les Jacobites une prédilection qui m'effraie parfois. Je l'avais envoyé en tournée dans des localités Jacobites pour occasionner un mouvement de conversion. Il s'est laissé « conduire dans leur église avec les honneurs qu'ils rendent à leurs Evêques ». Le danger était trop grand; j'ai interrompu cette prédication périlleuse. Notre Seigneur me donnera un meilleur instrument pour convertir les Jacobites.

8) Quoique dès les commencements, Msgr Medlycott m'eût signalé une indécatesse pécuniaire du P. Nidiry, je persistais à croire que, sur ce point du moins, il était intègre. Hélas, il m'a prouvé le contraire. Voici brièvement les faits. Le P. Nidiry examine et approuve les comptes des Eglises et reçoit la contribution due à l'Evêque, qu'il me remet ensuite. Un jour, il prit lui-même son salaire sur cet argent, sans autorisation. Je lui fis remarquer que cette conduite était irrégulière et qu'aucune administration ne la tolérerait. Quelques mois après il retombe dans même faute; et de plus je trouve dans les comptes un déficit de 130 fr. environ. « Où est cet argent ? » Il me répond : « J'avais des dépenses personnelles à faire, et n'ayant pas d'argent sous la main j'ai pris celui-là ». Deux faits ont été constatés ; n'y en a-t-il pas d'autres ? Une enquête eut difficile et déshonorante pour le P. Nidiry.

Troisième fait. Une Eglise est en procès avec les schismatiques, et le P. Nidiry est chargé de conduire l'affaire. Un jour il ne dit que 200 Rs, 400 fr. environ, doivent être déposés au tribunal comme gage. Je lui remets immédiatement ces 400 fr. A quelques mois de là un bruit m'arrive que l'argent n'a pas été déposé au tribunal. J'interroge le P. Nidiry. L'argent a-t-il été déposé ? – Oui. N'a-t-il pas été rendu ? D'abord le P. Nidiry nie que l'argent ait été rendu, puis il reprend qu'il l'a été. Pourquoi donc ne l'avez-vous pas rendu à l'Evêque ? – Le procès n'étant pas fini, je l'ai gardé pour les dépenses futures. Pourquoi ne m'avez-vous pas prévenu ? – Pas de réponse. – Qu'est cet argent ? – Ici même à Changanacherry entre les mains d'un tel. Pourquoi l'Evêque étant à Changanacherry même,

ne lui avez-vous pas remis à lui-même cet argent? – Pas de réponse. Le lendemain il me rendit les 400 fr. Mais voici où le voile se lève. J'appelle le séculier chargé du procès et je lui demande ses comptes. Sur ces comptes ne figurent pas les 400 fr. Et quand je lui demande où sont les 400 fr. déposés au tribunal par le P. Nidiry, il me répond que jamais aucun argent n'a été déposé au tribunal, et qu'il n'a jamais entendu parler de ces 400 fr. La conclusion à tirer est que le P. Nidiry voulait Quel besoin d'argent avait donc le P. Nidiry? Il était en ce moment en procès avec Msgr l'ont condamné, et afin que la justice n'ait pas prise sur lui, on dit qu'il s'est hâte de vendre frauduleusement son cheval et sa voiture. Un de ces jours-ci un mandat d'arrêt sera lancé contre lui.

9) L'Eglise du P. Nidiry, Corvalengat, menée par trois prêtres amis du P. Nidiry s'agite pour entraîner les autres églises à la désobéissance et au refus de payer ce qui avait été convenu pour l'établissement d'une mense épiscopale. Le P. Nidiry est sur les lieux, à Corvalengat, et ne m'informe de rien. Qui plus est, il de connivence avec les meneurs, s'il n'est pas lui-même l'un des premiers meneurs. Sa position de Vicaire Général l'oblige à se dissimuler mais sa personne est aisée à voir; et lui-même m'a avoué qu'il partageait les raisons de ceux qui ne veulent pas constituer une mense entre les mains de l'Evêque latin. Le vrai fonds de la pensée du P. Nidiry et de ses amis, est ceci dont je ne crains pas non plus d'affirmer l'exactitude car ce sont ses paroles dites en diverses circonstances que je résume ici: « Nous n'avons pas besoin d'un évêque latin venu de l'étranger; il nous faut un évêque natif. Si Rome veut avoir au Malabar un évêque de race latine, qu'elle paie son entretien; nous ne donnerons de l'argent que pour un évêque natif. Ce qui est souligné est textuellement sorti de la réfractaires. Après quoi il ajouta: Moi aussi je crois qu'il faut prendre des précautions pour que la mense épiscopale ne passe pas un jour aux latins.

Un conciliabule de révolte doit se tenir à Corvalengat dans trois jours, et le P. Nidiry ne m'informe de rien.

Pour toutes les raisons exposées ci-dessus, et vue l'urgence de la situation j'ai signifié au P. Nidiry qu'il n'est plus Vicaire Général. Ma lettre n'a rien d'offensant pour lui: il peut la montrer sans déshonneur. Je m'appuie sur des raisons de santé, et autres; mais lui-même comprendra très bien les vrais motifs de sa démission.

Avec un Vicaire Général fidèle, une foule de reforms auraient été accomplies sans difficulté. Il ne me sera pas difficile de trouver un Vicaire Général fidèle et qui jouit de l'estime universelle.

Le Vicaire Général des Sudistes se conduit parfaitement bien et dans cette partie de mon vicariat, je ne rencontre aucun embarras sérieux.

Je suis avec un profond respect
de votre Eminence Révérendissime
L'humble serviteur en J. C.
+Charles Lavigne, sj
Vic. Ap. de Kottayam

APPENDIX VIII

LETTER OF BISHOP LAVIGNE TO FR EMMANUEL NIDIRY⁸

25 October 1894

Reverend Father,

I know that you have exactly fulfilled my orders. Why did you not write to me such an agreeable thing? The orders given to you were somewhat painful to fulfil, chiefly on account of your brother; but as you are the Vicar, there was no way to avoid such a grief; your obedience is the more meritorious for that and I have communicated that good notice to His Excellency the Delegate. Yesterday I have received a letter from Abraham to whom I do not intend to reply directly. You must remember that his going to Madras was to spare him the first shame of being seen without clerical dress. When the first time he returned to Coravalangat and took again the clerical vestment it was without my knowledge and against my will, and I told you the same. Afterwards he never had any suspicion that he was living and dressing as a cleric. Only a few days ago I was informed of that fact. Your brother, as you told me had joined the seminary without your approval, nay against your counsels. He has not the vocation; for the sake of his soul, he must obey, and try to get the eternal salvation by the path of laity.

As the feast of your Church is coming near, do not delay the accounts, in order to avoid any further inconvenience.

I bless you,

(Signed)

Charles Lavigne

(V. A. Kottayam)

⁸ocol No. 990/31, protocol no. 6561.

APPENDIX IX

THE LETTER OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY TO ZALESKI⁹

Coravalangat
20th November 1896

To
His Excellency
Msgr. L. M. ZALESKI,
Delegate Apostolic in East Indies Candy
Most Revd. and Dear Lord,

I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency kind letter No. 1645 of the 27th October, and thank your Excellency for the kind warning and admonishing given me beforehand, which I accept, and promise to act accordingly.

From the nature of the letter, it appears that your Excellency has got some information against me as to make you suspect me as one of the agitators of the people, whom no other milder means than the threat or fear of some severe punishments would be able to restrain. Although the greater part of my life as a priest was spent in preaching and converting Schismatics, Jacobites and pagans and in defending the rights of the Church before secular tribunals against the schism and in making plans and labouring accordingly for the conversion of the whole community of the Jacobites (which latter was frustrated for want of discretion and co-operation on the part of His Lordship Bishop Lavigne I do not remember a single act done by me, from fear of punishments, but only from a sense of duty, fortified with blessings given to me by my ecclesiastical superiors, viz, His Grace the Archbishop Mellano, His Lordship Bishop Marcellinus, His Lordship Meurin the Visitor Apostolic, Their Excellencies Msgrs. Agliardi and Ajuti and lastly His Lordship Bishop Lavigne. Those pastoral blessings have done really wonders in me and through my feeble instrumentality, as they appeared to me and really were channels of efficacious graces. As for instance, a blessing conveyed to me in a letter of His Lordship Bishop Meurin from Madras addressed to me in Trichoor, encouraged me to exhort Mar Jacob, the Coadjutor Bishop to the Schismatic Bishop Mar Mellus for his conversion and to hold secret conferences with him, and lastly to take him away during midnight from the Schismatical residence of Bishop Mellus, and to escape from the fury of the Schismatic

⁹ ACCO, Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31, 6561.

mob, who pursued us with deadly weapons to kill both of us on the way. Other blessings granted to me by His Grace the Arch Bishop Mellano, made me an instrument to convert at once nine schismatic priests and eight hundred families under them in schism in this parish of Coravalangat and to win the famous law-suits of Arthungal, Manakodom, Chitatur, Cadanad and Plachenal Churches, and of Elathurt Convent, against the schismatics, and to escape from their several attempts to assault and kill me. Further another blessing of His Excellency Msgr. Ajuti conveyed in his letter directing me to go and receive Msgr. Medlicott at the railway station at Shoranoor on his first arrival, enabled me to watch a whole night exhorting the schismatics of Vadakancherry parish, whom a special grace converted on the next morning so as to receive Msgr. Medlicott in that then-and-there converted schismatic church, and to make the whole congregation without a single exception to adjure the schism at once, and to submit to the new Vicar Apostolic, on his way to Trichoor to take possession of his vicariate.

The congregation of Trichoor also, being moved by my advice and by the example of Vadakancherry people came after three days, to the house of Mr. Francis Cullien, the well known and wealthiest Syrian gentleman in the Apostolic vicariate of Trichoor, during night and desired him to have a conference with me and with Fr Paul Puthuchery, the then Vicar of Olloor Church, and with the said Mr. Francis Cullien who immediately got us down from the parochial to his house, and held a long conference, and they agreed to adjure the schism, if Msgr. Medlicott would appoint me as their Vicar at least for a short time, and if so that I should immediately take the patent letter from his Lordship and should inform them of it, so that they might prepare the whole congregation to adjure the schism solemnly on the next Sunday. As they were chief members and deputies of the whole congregation we believed them and promised to submit their proposal to the new Vicar Apostolic and let them know the result. A Carmelite Missionary (as I was subsequently informed) who was then at Trichoor, having heard the willingness of the schismatics to be converted informed His Lordship that "within a week the Schismatics would come and fall at his feet asking pardon for all their former faults, but if Fr Nidiry be allowed to remain any longer in Trichoor, he would carry with him the fame of converting the Trichoorian Schismatics also just as he did in the case of the conversion of the Vadakancherry Church." When the next morning Fr Alexander A. M. of Mannanam Convent, Fr Paul Puthussery, and Mr. Francis Cullien and myself went to His Lordship and submitted the proposal of the schismatics, His Lordship being more inclined to believe a European Missionary than the native priests told us "that he knew well the willingness of the Schismatics to submit to him, and that the mediation or help of Fr Nidiry who belongs to Kottayam Mission was not necessary for that", and he immediately ordered me and Fr Alexander to return to our mission.

This is, My Lord, a small but tremendous and lamentable cause of continuance of the Schism in the Trichoor Vicariate. Fr Paul Puthussery and Mr. Cullien and Fr Alexander A. M. will testify to the above mentioned facts. Like wise blessings given to me by their Excellencies Msgrs. Agliardi and Ajuti enabled me to advise and make Mar Dionysius correspond with the Holy See and the Delegate Apostolic and consent to establish a common college at Kottayam at the expense of both Jacobites and Catholic parties on the condition of making the teaching staff to be Catholic and religious men and some of

his best priests to become Catholics and religious men and to send some of his best priests to become Catholics in order to be trained to preach Catholic doctrine among the Jacobites and then after preparing his people thus to embrace the Catholic religion, to convoke a meeting and to abjure their errors in that assembly and again to take Mar Dionysius to the Delegatorial residence at Ootacamund to have a conference about the above mentioned proposals with His Excellency Msgr. Ajuti and His Lordship Bishop Lavigne there, on his way to Malabar before his taking possession of his Apostolic Vicariate, moreover a blessing of Msgr. Lavigne enabled me to convert five Jacobite priests and to get consent of twenty others (Jacobite priests) for conversion, which would have been surely effected, had His Lordship Bishop Lavigne a little more patience and meekness not to have offended Mar Dionysius and the Jacobites by an uncalled for circular and to treat the converted priests more kindly.

Since I have not got the happiness of seeing Your Excellency and of being acquainted with you I as was fortunate to be with the illustrious predecessors of Your Excellency. I believe that it is my duty to try to remove from Your Excellency's mind the suspicion you might have entertained against me. Perhaps such suspicion might have been originated from some information you got from Bishop Lavigne himself or some European Missionaries. I therefore take the liberty to enclose the copies of some of my letters to His Excellency Msgr. Ajuti and Bishop Lavigne and of their replies to me as well as some letters of His Excellency Msgr. Agliardi and H. L. Bishop Meurin marked as A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. & L. A perusal of A. and B. will convince Your Excellency that what I have mentioned in this letter about my labours for the salvation of souls, are true. C. to H. will like wise prove that those labours were not done by me, from fear of any punishment, but only from a sense of duty fortified with blessings. Some friends of the Carmelite Missionaries or the Missionaries themselves who think that I was the chief cause of removing the Carmelite control over the Syrians, finding that His Lordship's Government was a contrast to that of the Carmelites in its peacefulness and success in checking the schism and converting the Jacobites through my instrumentality which (latter) the Carmelites were unable to do during the last two centuries of their Government in Malabar, maliciously intended to disturb that happy state of His Lordship's Government by creating discord between His Lordship and myself for which they secretly calumniated me to His Lordship. One of those calumnies was discovered in the presence of Fr Alexander A. M. and the Vicar of Changanacherry when His Lordship told me that he knew that I misappropriated a part of money which His Lordship the late Bishop Marcellinus gave to the said Fr Alexander, A. M., and myself for the expenses of the Plachenal church case. Fr Alexander immediately told His Lordship that it was a great calumny as the money was in his custody and he himself spent the whole amount for that law suit and I had not touched a pie out of that though I was in his company and conducted the said case. I. and J. will show that Msgr. Lavigne's displeasure towards me was originated from a harsh letter His Lordship wrote to me (perhaps through some malicious reports) and from the reply I gave to His Lordship. That displeasure moved His Lordship to change the mode of the Government of the Churches hitherto adopted and give some orders without consulting me and the councillors which being unreasonable and contrary to the exigencies of the time and circumstances were disobeyed and consequently His Lordship was obliged to alter them as in the case of Coodaloor Chapel &c. The said calumniators availing themselves of the above mentioned opportunity of the obedience of the people persuaded

His Lordship that as the people have a great confidence in me to defend them His Lordship could not freely govern them and make them obey his orders till I be removed from the Vicar Generalship and consequently removed me from that office and appointed me against my will, as a degradation, as Vicar Foraneus or Dean of this church of Coravilangad my native parish where naturally my shame would be enhanced. Even there I defended His Lordship's authority against the schism before the Magistrates' Courts and got the schismatic priest who trespassed into our Church, punished. The schismatics and the chief Jacobites availing themselves of the displeasure of His Lordship towards me and my degradation in order to take revenge on me for my having defeated the former before the Government tribunals and converted some of the latter and in order to prevent further defeats by my reunion with His Lordship they spread a rumour and sent some false petitions to His Lordship as I mentioned in the enclosure L. that I was a secret friend of the schismatics and I promised Mar Thondinath the schismatic Bishop to move the Holy See to accept him with all the dignity and powers of a bishop and that I was going to become a Jacobite and that Mar Dionysius had already got permission from His Patriarch to consecrate me as his Coadjutor and future successor in his Metropolitan See which His Lordship easily believed as he mentioned in a letter to me and told Fr Jacob Thulil and some others priests and I think that he wrote about it to your Excellency and to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the *Propaganda*. And then thought it his duty to test more of my obedience and firmness in the faith and he degraded me and this church still more, by removing the title of Foraneus or Deanery and giving it to the neighbouring Vicar and church of Muttuchiray and directed me that I should read publicly in the church in a Sunday that order of degradation, as well as another order excommunication to my younger brother Abraham who was a seminarist under, and received tonsure from His Lordship Bishop Marcellinus and holds certificates of good conduct from the superiors of the Colleges and seminaries where he studied. However the blessings I got from the above mentioned dignitaries of the Church and from Msgr. Lavigne himself consoled and fortified me to suffer all these ignominies and to stand firm in the adversity as well in the former prosperity and to drive away all thoughts of temptations against obedience and to fulfil His Lordship's orders promptly and strictly so as to give His Lordship full satisfaction which moved him to write the original of the enclosure K. and to appoint me to the present post of Councillor to the Vicar Apostolic. In consequence of my letter dated 30th October 1894 (enclosure K.) His Lordship investigated the truth of those reports and petitions against me and found them to be false which moved His Lordship to direct his secretary (the present Vicar Apostolic of Ernakulam) to write me a letter dated 27th November 1894 in which he used the following words: "Some information came to His Lordship against you, but having examined that point he has gladly found it to be false and therefore he has ordered me to you about it."

Enclosure K will further show that the primary fault of my brother to deserve the great punishment of excommunication was no other than that of his joining the seminary without my consent and against my counsels which I do not remember, as it was many years previous to His Lordship Bishop Lavigne's arrival in India; and that His Lordship's opinion that he had no vocation is contradictory to that of His Lordship Bishop Marcellinus who, spontaneously, and without being requested by anybody except by the superiors of the seminary where he studied admitted him to the ecclesiastical state giving

him tonsure as well as to those of other superiors of the seminaries where he subsequently studied who had better chance of examining him daily concerning his vocation and gave him certificates for his good conduct, than His Lordship Bishop Lavigne who happened to see him once in a year or two when he visited the seminaries and that His Lordship Bishop Lavigne was unwilling to inform my brother what his fault was to be excommunicated either directly, or indirectly through me. Such are, My Lord, the cause of information against me if your Excellency got any, which I believe, as His Lordship stated in K, would have been changed by His Lordship's further information to your Excellency and His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect if His Lordship had charity conscience and courage to admit and correct the mistake of his former report against me based on misrepresentation and calumny.

As to the agitation in this Apostolic Vicariate, I have to submit to your Excellency's kind consideration that I was the first person to advocate the abolition of the caste distinction between the Nordists and the Suddists after consulting the late Fr Joseph Tharrayil, the Suddist councillor to His Lordship Bishop Lavigne, and some other chief members of the Suddist community, and resolved to get a written consent of the influential men of both the parties to appoint some Suddist priests in the Nordist churches and *vice versa* as vicars and through their exhortation and influence to get consent and commence to intermarry between the two sects, which would gradually lessen and finally abolish the long existing distinction without any violent measure as at present. But that idea was abandoned on account of the premature death of the said Fr Joseph Tharrayil and my removal from the Vicar-Generalship. When the Nordist people heard that His Lordship Msgr. Mathai Makeel was nominated as Bishop over the Nordist Churches also, a general agitation was spread all over the Nordist community and as I was absent from this vicariate and residing at Trivandrum under medical treatment and as the Syrian community in general have a good confidence in me, I received many letters from the priests and principal laymen requesting me to return soon, and to prevent by advice or some other means the vehement current of fury of the great mass of the ignorant people who take the said nomination as an insult done to the whole community by misrepresentation of His Lordship Lavigne or some European Missionaries in order to take revenge on them, for the several petitions they forwarded to the Holy See complaining of His Lordship's unpopular and selfish acts which he did without consulting the councillors as he was bound to do by the express order of the Holy See to use their counsels in all Ecclesiastical matters as well as for having petitioned to get native bishops. And I though unable to move about on account of fever and weakness, considering the emergency of the case and having learned from some of the letters, that the schismatics availing themselves of this opportunity try to excite the people more and more telling them that no redress can be got from Rome and to incline them to the side of the schism, I started immediately and came to Alleppey where a great number of people came to me in a greatly agitated state, and determined to acts of audacity to oppose the new bishop. I pacified them with the help of some other priests telling them that we priests would undertake to consider the matter properly and act prudently after having consulted with the neighbouring Bishops like Msgr. Ferreira of Cochin and Msgr. Bernard of Verapoly and in fact on the same evening I went and saw His Lordship Bishop Ferreira of Cochin at the Alleppey seminary with the above mentioned priests to have His Lordship's advice on the matter and then

Fr Leopold another councillor and vicar of Holy Cross at Alleppey and myself with some other priests who gathered there went to Changanacherry to consult with Fr Cyriac the third Councillor and vicar Foraneus of the Cathedral Church there, and after long discussions and deliberations with him and other priests assembled there, came to conclusion that, if we do not inform the Holy See of the present agitation of the people about the nomination of His Lordship Bishop Makeel a Suddist, as our Bishop, and the great repugnance the Nordist people have to accept him as such, in case it turns into a great Schism we as councillors might be responsible to the Holy See for the consequence of our silence or neglect of duty, we should send a telegram and a petition to the Holy Father and accordingly we made the drafts of them and got the sanction of the Very Revd. Fr Vicar General and sent the telegram without delay and the petition subsequently to His Holiness. As I am one of the signatories of the said petition I herewith forward a printed copy of the same to Your Excellency and I hope a perusal of the same will convince Your Excellency that the distinction between the Norddists and Sudists and their absolute abstinence from matrimonial, social and sacerdotal union is not of a recent origin and that generations and ages have passed away over it without making the least relaxation in the rules of this rigid system by wear and tear of the length of time and on the contrary widened the difference and distance between the two sects by the nomination of separate vicars general to each sect and driving a sect from the common churches they jointly possessed for centuries to another church or chapel within the walls of the same churchyard as if they were schismatics or heretics (vide the petition of the Punnathuray Nordists) under the late rule of His Lordship Bishop Lavigne, and that the cause of agitation in the hearts of the Nordists is at this occasion as it were innate in them, and no agitator is required to excite them and that my timely arrival at Alleppey and subsequently endeavours to pacify them attracted and guided them to the right path of having recourse to the Holy See for redress of their grievance that they might not go astray into the claws of schism or heresy, Enclosure H further shows that the Suddists whom His Lordship Bishop Meurin calls as 11½ churches were considered by him as low-caste people through the experience he had in Malabar as Visitor Apostolic.

Submitting all the above mentioned facts to your Excellency's kind and prudent consideration I await your Excellency's orders being ready to do whatever your Excellency commands me.

Begging your Excellency's blessing on bended knees,

I beg to remain,

Most Revd. and dear Lord,

Your Excellency's most obedient and humble servant,

E. A. Nidiry.

APPENDIX X

LETTER OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY TO THE PREFECT OF *PROPAGANDA FIDE*¹⁰

8 Feb. 1897

Emin.mo DD. Card. M. Ledochowski
Praefecto Sacrae Congr. De Propagand Fide

Humilis pettio P. E. A. Nidiry
Vcarii eccl. Corevelegnath et primi Consultoris
Rmi DD. Mathaei Makil
Epis. Tral. Et Vic. Ap. Changanachery

Eminentissime Princeps!

Quamvis jam Reverendesimum Episcopum Carolum Lavigne ac Missionarios Verapolytanos, qui suam, qua pollebant super nos Syro-Chaldeos, ditionem Aamittendi auctorem me fuisse putarunt, accusationes aliquas contra me ad Eminentiam Vestram et Excellmum Del. Ap. Detulisse audieram, hoc tamen falsum esse rumore credibam.

Ast ex litteris ab Excellmo Del. ap. 4° Decemb. 1896 ad me directis, supradictum rumorem haud falsum fuisse mihi omnino compertum fuit. Causa autem cur Rmus Epis Lavigne inductus fuerit ut contra me scriberet, fuit falsa accusatio, quam, sub nomine Catholicorum, detulerunt Jacobitae et Schismatici a me saepe in foro civili et criminali agitatti atque devicti, quorum calumniae, etsi serius, attamen investigatae atque patefactae fuerunt.

Hinc non dubitavit Remus Carolus Lavigne ad me scribere, accusationes, contra me delatas, falsas, veritatisque non fundatas, ac probationibus carentes, proindeque rejectas, esse, et mea agendi ratione se valde contentum esse.

Sic delecta veritate, in numero consultorum suorum me restituit.

Quoniam vero facile erat ut Rmus C. Lavigne et supradicti missionarii, impiorum calumniis decepti, eadem quae ad Excellmum Del. Ap. detulerunt et Eminentiae Vestrae scriberent, sicque de me suspicionem falsamque opinionem in ejus altam mentem

¹⁰ ACCO, *Fascicolo Protocol* No. 990/31, protocol no. 6561.

intruderent, ideo si forte aliquid adversi contra me E. Vestrae scripserint, quantum in me est illud ab ea eliminandum esse judicavi.

Ad hoc assequendum unam copiam ex litteris a me Excell.mo Del. Ap. datis, E. Vestrae, qua par est, veneratione offero, quae etsi propter longam expositionem Ei molestiam dare queat, humanissima tamen ac clementissima E. Vestrae natura fretus confido fore ut Ipsa aliqua minita pretiosissimi sui temporis, in inspiciendis meis relationibus consumere dignetur. Ex his me non agitorem sed pacis fautorem et dicto audientem esse patebit.

Haec ipsa obedientiae vis me impulit ad suscipiendum officium primi consultoris a Rmo. Ep. Mathaeo Makil mihi assignatum non obstantibus Nordistarum dissuasionibus. Imo Sudistae Cottoyamenses, qui propter suam inobedientiam contra Rmum. Carolum Lavigne ejusquae Vic. Generalem R. P. Mathaeum Makil factam, excommunicatione majori perculsi fuerant, laboribus, consiliisque meis ad obedientiam Rmo. Ep. Mathaeo Makil praestandam ante aliquot menses aducti fuerunt. Nunc etiam ad catholicam fidem illos, qui parti Schismatici episcopo Antonii Jonthenath addicti sunt, aducere adlaboro.

Sic quum aperiretur via conversionis Schismaticis, qui sunt in meridionali parte Malabariae, Schismatici Trichurenses arcessierunt sibi per litteras et telegramata unum Episcopum Nestorianum, consecratum ut dicitur a Simeone Patriarcha Nestorianorum, sperantes facile posse irretire in suum laqueum illos Catholicos, in Vicariatu Changnachery degentes muperrime agitados atque conturbatos ob consecrationem Rmi. Mathaei Makil Ep. Sudistae. Statim ac pervenit huc supradictus Episcopus misit omnibus Schismaticis et Protestantibus Missionariis Europeis cartulam ridiculos prorsus ac inauditos titulos continentem, cujus copiam hic inclusam mitto Eminentiae Vestrae.

Tandem ad osculum Sacrae Purpurae E. V. genuflectens humillime Eam supplico ut ap. ac pat. benedictione me munire dignetur.

Obedientissimus servus E. Vestrae

Pater E. A. Nidiry Vic ecclesiae Coravelegnath et Primis Consultoris

R.mi M. Makil Vic. Ap. Changanachery

Fr E. A. Nidiry (Ecclesia, Corevelegnath)

APPENDIX XI

LETTER OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY TO BISHOP MATHEW MAKIL¹¹

19th September 1902

To
His Lordship
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathew Makil
Bishop of Iralles and vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry
Rt. Rev. Lord,

In reply to Your Lordship's letter no. 684 of the 16th Instr. communicating to me the content of letter no. 14742 dated 19th August last of the Cardinal Prefect of the *Propaganda*, in which His Emce. asks Your Lordship to put a bridle to publications concerning the orthodoxy of the Syrians before the arrival of the Latin missionaries in India, which orthodoxy His Emce. says is false and causing dishonour to Holy See, I beg to admit the following facts.

The British Resident, as Your Lordship knows well, at the requisition of the Travancore govt. printed a pamphlet for private circulation and asked all those who received it, to assist him in writing a History of Christianity in Travancore for the use of that government and to correct the mistake they might therein find. As it is improbable that the Catholic Syrians, if they lose this opportunity, can any more get a chance of correcting these mistakes, and as such serious errors in a history accepted by government for future reference concerning Christians would lead to many evil consequences in both religious and temporal affairs. I, having consulted many learned men and examined all available records, wrote with the help of these some historical notes or observations and forwarded them to the Resident. But in these notes, I took particular care to omit the mention of several disgraceful facts that happened in this country, because I did not want to give offence to anybody. The manuscript in question, mentions only what is absolutely necessary to defend the Syrian cause and set right the errors in the draft pamphlet of the Resident and has avoided many more things which could have been added to make the matter clearer.

¹¹ ACCO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076. Letter of Emmanuel Nidiry to Mathew Makil on 19 September, forwarded to Prefect of *Propaganda* by Mathew Makil.

When the British Resident published his corrected pamphlet, several catholic missionaries evidently had also sent to it notes offensive to the Syrians, and those who stand against the orthodoxy in question began to write repeatedly and publicly opposing it, greatly offending the Catholic Syrians with the basest terms. One of these who is supposed to be a Carmelite missionary under the name *de Plumes* of 'Historicus Philalethes' in a paper called 'Mylapore Catholic Register' challenged the Syrians to prove their orthodoxy if they could. So meet this challenge, I consulted many learned men and reliable authorities and made a critical examination of those histories which were advanced to prove their heterodoxy. In a pamphlet headed 'Where the St Thomas Christians Nestorians' a copy of which is herewith forwarded. Moreover, the same or another under the disguised name of P. P. M. repeatedly goes on publishing articles dishonourable to the Syrians in a paper belonging to the archdiocese of Verapoly and managed by the Carmelite missionaries, named "The Voice of Truth." It is painful to the Syrians that no authority puts a bridle to such publications, which besides being offensive to Syrians, are erroneous misrepresentation of facts.

The Jacobites and the Protestants of this country, as Your Lordship knows but too well, always cry out in their abominable organs against the Roman Catholic Church stating that She, in imitation of the false prophet Mohamed who propagated his religion with sword and money, made use of the Portuguese sword and money to bring the Syrian nation to the obedience of Rome and that it is a noble duty incumbent on all Syrian to shake off the yoke of Rome whenever any opportunity offers itself and to try their best never more to submit to that which was violently imposed upon their forefathers. These calumnious misrepresentation and false assertion of heretics, I suppose, are likely to be more or less maintained by the publication of the above said Catholic paper to great dishonour of the Catholic Church. But lately I gave some printed copies of this pamphlet to some intelligent Jacobites who after reading it were astonished to find out the truth and cordially admitted that the forefathers of the Syrians were Catholics, and that this was the reason why the Roman Catholic Syrians were now called 'Palayakuttukar (i e the ancient sect) while the Jacobites are called Poothenkuttukar (i e the new sect). These names tell their own history just as "Catholics or Protestants" denote the nature of the Faith professed by those who are known by these names.

If His Emce the Cardinal Prefect reads the contents of this pamphlet, His Emce will, I believe, be convinced that the orthodoxy of the Syrians is not false but real as was once before proved by the Syrians in a historical sketch forwarded in 1886 to His Excy Msgr. (now Cardinal) Agliardi, the first delegate apostolic of India; that it is the interest of the Holy See to establish by evidence that the Catholic religion which was planted here by the apostle St Thomas was, by a special grace of God and as an additional evidence to the Catholicity of the church, preserved here in the midst of idolatry and that therefore publications in defence of the orthodoxy cannot be dishonourable to the Holy See, but on the contrary, highly conducive to the greater glory of God and His Church. Evidently therefore, the accounts His Emce has received on the subject, must be imperfect and one-sided. I indeed believe that the Holy See has no intention to condemn all the forefathers of the Catholic Syrians of Malabar as heretics if they really were not so.

For the facility of His Emce to know the contents of this letter, I herein enclose an Italian translation of the same which Your Lordship will be good enough to forward to His Emce with the copies of the pamphlet and the enclosures.

In conclusion, I beg to state that, if necessary, further proofs in support of the point may be submitted and that if anything in the printed pamphlet or manuscript are found adverse to the Catholic faith or morals I am ready to detract them.

I beg to remain

Your Lordships most obedient and humble servant

(Signed) Fr E. A. Nidiry

Vicar of St Mary's Church Koravalangaud

Enclosures

1. Italian translation of this letter 2. Pamphlet (Dialogue) 3. Copy of the letter to His Excy Msgr. A. Ajuti, the Del Apostolic addressed by the clergy of the South dated 31st August and of the North dated 15th September 1887.

True Copy

+ Mathew Makil Episcopus Irullemis et Vic. Ap. Changanacherry

APPENDIX XII

COPY OF THE LETTER TO ANDREA AIUTI, BY THE CLERGY OF THE SOUTH DATED ON 31 AUGUST & OF THE NORTH DATED ON 15 SEPTEMBER 1887, FORWARDED TO THE PREFECT OF *PROPAGANDA FIDE* BY MATHEW MAKIL¹²

To

His Excellency Msgr. A. Aiuti
Mannanam Convent

Most Rev. & dear Lord,

May it please your Excy. that we the undersigned vicars and other priests take the liberty to Submit to your Excy's kind consideration the following lines to express our feelings as well as our community's on the publication of the most prudent Brief dated the 20th May last together with your Excy's most important circular letter dated the 20th July last in our churches.

Though it is assumed by the Portuguese that they converted our forefathers from the Nestorian heresy and reduced them to the union of the Holy Catholic Church, in order to gain renown in Europe & the Patronage and other privileges from the Holy See and though they have for its establishment concocted several records and histories, yet we offer our grateful homages to the Almighty for having kept us away as a body from all heresies and preserved us in the union of the Holy Catholic Church from the time of the apostle St Thomas up to this as we have already proved from the words of the Archbishop Alexis Menezes, St Francis and other reliable authors quoted in a brief sketch of the history of St Thomas Christians (Part I para. VII) compiled by a committee of Syro-Roman priests dated 12 June 1886 and forwarded to the *Propaganda*.

The Syro-Malabarese were told by then ecclesiastical superiors that the Holy See does not give them Babylonian Syrian Bishops as the people of that country are less faithful to the Holy See, less instructed and civilised than the Syro-Malabarese.

That the Holy See that finds out from the said Babylonians competent persons not only for Bishops and Archbishops but also for the exalted dignity of Patriarchate there, does not find out a single person to be made a bishop, among the Syro-Malabarese

¹² ACCO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076.

regular and secular clergy here whose member is 7 or 8 times greater than that of the Babylonian clergy, is a source of grief and surprise to our people. And it does not appear the present arrangements made by the said Brief would be effectual for the desired conversion of the Jacobites.

Considering, however, the great opposition done by those who govern us at present through their own letters and those written in the names of others against our general petitions, we are grateful to His Holiness the gracious Sovereign Pontiff for the said decision by which we hope to get free from the present Carmelite Government and to get a new one which will pave the way for completing our design at least in future.

We request your Excy. Will be pleased to submit this to His Holiness and ask for Papal benediction upon us.

Begging your Excy's blessing on bended knees

We remain

Your Excy's most obedient servants

(Signed by all the priests joined here for the retreat)

True copy + Mathew Makil

Vic. Apo. Changanachery.

APPENDIX XIII

LETTER OF MATHEW MAKIL TO THE PREFECT OF *PROPAGANDA FIDE*¹³

Eminentissimo ac Reverendissimo Domino Cardinali Gotti Praefecto S. C. de
Propaganda Fide Romae

Eminentissime Princeps

Ad Eminentiae Vestrae manus epistolam gratulationis meae de elevatione Vestra ad
Praefectum S.C. de Prop. Fide jam Pervenisse arbitror.

Accipi Eminentiae V. litteras diei 19 augusti sub numero 14,742 de scriptis duorum
sacerdotum Syro-Malabariensium circa Orthodoxiam defensam veterum Syro-
Malabariensium, esprimentes publicam opinionem de supradictis scriptis attribuere
inspirationi Vicariorum Apostolicorum Syro-Malabarensium. Vereor dicere has litteras
Em. Vestrae utpote primas mihi attulisse maximum dolorem.

Inquirens autem quinam fuerint causa hujus publicationis, cognovi unum ex
scriptoribus fuisse R. P. Emmanuelem Nidiry ex hoc Vicariatu, qui fecit correctiones, ut
ipse fatetur in suo responsu, circa facta historica quae inventa fuerant in quodam opuscolo
nupir publicato a Representativo Britannico apud gubernium Travancore ac Cochin,
juxta propositum gubernii Travancorensis, et comunicavi eidem P. Nidiry per litteras
meas diei 16 hujus mensis sub numero 684. contenta litterarum Em. Vestrae, inquirens
ab eo ut mihi rationem redderet de re ab Emin Vestra quaesita; ille vero in responsu suo
diei 19 hujus mensis mihi exposuit rationes, quibus ipse motus fuerat scribendi tales
correctiones, et consequenter edendi opusculum quoddam, cuius titulus “Were the St
Thomas Christians Nestorians”? quod misit mihi una cum responsu suo et cum explaribus
documentorum, includens ea in hisce litteris Eminentiae V. remitto.

Ex eis clare patebit orthodoxiam Syro-Malabarensium non esse quid novi in hisce
diebus, sed per traditionem veterum usque nunc perdurare apud Syros Malabareses
catholicos, et sallem ab anno 1886, incepisse publice ad eam probandam apud S.
Sedem.

¹³ ACCO, *Deleg. India Soriani del Malabar* 109, 1890-1926, vol. 6 bis, protocol no. 15076. Copy of the
letter of Mathew Makil to the prefect of *Propaganda* on 27 September 1902.

In quantum ad observationem Eminentiae V. circa publicam opinionem de inspiratione quo ad scripta, quae attribuitur Vicariis Ap. Syro-Malabarensibus, teneor defendi quantum ad me attinte, aut causam explicare in quantum fas est.

Ad elucidam hanc veritatem circa orthodoxiam, sallem incepterunt publice Syro-Malabarenses coram S. Sede per eius Delegatos anno 1886 et 1887 dum tola communitas Syro-Malabariensium fuerat sub administratione vicariorum Ap. Carmelitarum Verapoly, ita continuatio eiusdem rei usque nunc perduratur.

Cum res ita se habeat, nescio, Eminentissime Princeps, quomodo Em. Vestra potuti attribuere meae inspirationi rem, quae abhinc saltem 16 annos ante incepta fuerat, dum incepti obire munus Vicarii Apostolici solum ex 161 annis abhinc!

Tandem spero Eminentiam Vestram habituram illam aestimationem ac bonam praesumptionem etiam erga Vic. Apostolicos Syro-Malabarenses, quam solet habere S. Sedes erga omnes Episcopos sibi Subjectos.

Sacram Purpuram humillime deosculans

Eminentiae Vestre

Devotissimus in Xto Servo

+ Mathew Makil

Changanacherry

Episcopus Irallensis et Vicarius apostolius

Dic 27 Sept 1902

Changanacherry

Includuntur

1. Exemplar epistolae R. P. Nidiry 2. Idem traductionis italicae 3. opuculum (dialogus)
4. Exemplar litterarum Syro-Malabarensium Excel^{mo} ac Rev^{mo} Do^{no} A. Ajuti Deleg. Ap. Anno 1887.

APPENDIX XIV

THE LETTER OF ZALESKI TO THE CARDINAL G. M. GOTTI, PREFECT OF THE *PROPAGANDA FIDE* ABOUT THE DEATH OF EMMANUEL NIDIRY¹⁴

Kandi
26 Luglio 1904

Morte del Nidiri

Eminenza Revma.

L'Eminenza V. Revma avrà forse già saputa la notizia della morte del famoso Sacerdote Emmanuel Nidiri che per più di 25 anni era stato la causa ed il centro di tutti i disturbi ed agitazione tra i Soriani del Malabar.

Era un'uomo d'intelligenza certo superiore, d'un'astuzia veramente diabolica e di assai poca fede. Era influente tra i Soriani. La sua ambizione era sempre stata di diventar Vescovo e, frustrato nelle sue speranze, non era senza timore nei ultimi tempi di vederlo andar cercare dai scismatici la consacrazione episcopale.

La sua morte era inaspettata: perdette all'improvviso i sensi e dici minuti dopo spirava. Non ebbe né confessione né viatico. Si dice che un sacerdote gl'amministrò l'estrema unzione, ma sembra poco probabile.

In questo modo dell'antico gruppo di agitati Soriani non rimane più che il vecchio P. Alessandro ora priore Generale dei Terziarii, persona assai influenza. Ma l'età avanzata e la vicinanza della morte, hanno cambiato le sue idee ed oggi non è più da temere. L'altro è Msgr. Pareparambil Vicario apost. d'Ernakulam il quale però, Vescovo, deve aver certi riguardi e se appoggerà sempre segretamente ogni genere d'agitazioni non si ardirà però di farlo apertamente.

Il punto maestro dunque della situazione sta oggi di reprimere ogni velleità di qualunque prete, che vorrebbe erigersi in successore del defunto Nidiri.

L'essenziale è di fare pubblicamente sapere a tutti, che non si tollereranno più nel Malabar simili disordini ed agitazioni. Ed agire poi in conseguenza sulle tracce del Nidiri,

¹⁴ ACCO, *Fascicolo Protocol No. 990/31*, protocol no. 18023.

generalmente, una minaccia sarà sufficiente, raramente si dovrà avere ricorso ad una censura.

A Roma generalmente si teme di agire, quando si tratta dei Orientali, ma qui sui luoghi uno conosce con chi ha da fare, e fino a che punto la prudenza permette d'amare.

Se dal principio si avesse mostrato un poco più di fermezza al Nidiri, molto mal sarebbe stato risparmiato alla Chiesa Soriana. Da sette anni io lo tenevo in freno con semplici minacce, e quello che gli succederà non avrà sicuro né la sua intelligenza né la sua astuzia diabolica né la sua inscrupolosità.

Temo che il P. Alessandro Priore di Mannanam alunno del Coll. Urbano, aspirerà un poco a prendere la successione nefasta del Nidiri. Egli è un buon giovane, ma di poca testa, di carattere leggiero e ambizione ed intraprendente. L'hanno fatto superiore quando non era ancora ma turo per questo; di fatto egli è oggi il primo nella Congregazione dopo il Priore Generale, ed era molto legato col Nidiri. Egli senza dubbio aspirerà a prendere la sua successione, però non è cattivo e credo che avrà sopra di lui influenza sufficiente per fermarlo a tempo.

Ma ci saranno anche altri che ambiranno alla posizione di Capo agitatore. Con questi l'essenziale sarà di colpirle al primo tentativo. Come ho detto sopra una minaccia seria sarà sufficiente. Il sacerdote Malabarese non teme nulla più che una sospensione a divinis, non tanto sempre per la censura stessa, che per la ragione che un sacerdote che è stato sospeso è screditato per sempre agli occhi del popolo, è un uomo finito e solo uno che ha perduto ogni sentimento d'onore e d'amor proprio si ardirà d'arrischiarlo.

È ora il momento di mettere un freno a questo sistema d'agitazioni continue organizzato dal defunto Nidiri e ristabilire la disciplina e l'ordine. Ma per fare questo avrei dovuto essere sempre sicuro dell'appoggio forte ed efficace della S. Congregazione.

Inchinato intanto al bacio della S. Porpora ho l'onore di rassegnarmi colla più profonda venerazione.

Dell' Eminenza V. Revma

Umilissimo e devotissimo servo:

+Ladislaco Michele Arciv. di Tebe, Delegato Apostolico

APPENDIX XV

LETTER OF 5000 LEADING MEMBERS OF SYRIAN COMMUNITY OF MALABAR UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PALLIVEETIL KURIEN TO THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE¹⁵

To
His Excellency
Msgr. L. M. ZALESKI
Delegate Apostolic in East Indies, Kandy

From

Palliveettil Kurien (lineal descendant of one of the four noble families, the members of which received ordinations at the hands of the holy apostle St Thomas, and a close relative of the native bishop Mar Alexander de Campo of happy memory) and 5000 other leading members of the ancient Syrian community in Malabar.

1. May it please Your Excellency,

We the Syrian members of the Holy Roman Catholic Church in Malabar had the pleasure of perusing a brochure, circulated in the country, which was a printed copy of the reply given by your Excellency to the address of the students of the Puthenpally seminary, on the occasion of your visit to that institution on the 2nd December last. While thanking your Excellency for the very valuable and fatherly admonitions to the young clerics as well as for emphasising the importance of educating them in secular science, we are compelled in filial duty to inform you that not only certain passages in the reply are based on incorrect information, but the same have also caused wide spread discontent and scandal among the faithful in Malabar.

2. Your Excellency says that,

“Few seminaries in Europe have such a staff of professors as you have here at Puthenpally.”

It is however a notorious fact that the Rector and the professor of that institution are hostile to English education and the study of modern secular sciences. They seem to

¹⁵ ARSI, *Missione Cottayam (Franciae)*, 1004 (1888-1896) fasc. I, 82^AF, letter of 5000 leading members of the Syrian Community in Malabar under the leadership of Palliveettil Kurien to Zalaeski.

think that the course of the study of an ecclesiastic is complete if he is taught Latin and the obsolete scholastic philosophy with scanty Church History and Aristotilian Logic. The result is that the young priest, who comes out of the seminary after spending seven or more long years of his useful life, has to study everything afresh to carry out the work entrusted to him. The study of Syriac which is unavoidable for saying the mass and administering the other Holy Sacraments, is almost neglected in the seminary and discouraged in every possible way by the Rector and other Latin professors. The study of English which has become the language of the learned, of the influential, as well as of the Government is condemned altogether in the seminary, so much so that any attempt on the part of the seminarists to study that language even in private, is looked down upon, as if it were a sin. The Malayalam language which is the vernacular of the country and in which the young priest is expected to preach when he comes out, is ignored altogether. Sanskrit which is the classical language of India corresponding to Latin in Europe, and which is highly necessary for a priest to carry on mission work among the high caste Hindus, who surround him, is unheard of in the seminary. How the study of the above languages would prove useful to a priest for successfully carrying out his mission was exemplified in the late and lamented Very Revd. Fr Emmanuel Nidiry of happy memory, who was made the first pontifically privileged Vicar General of Changanacherry from the Holy See. We therefore humbly request your Excellency to entrust the teaching work in the seminary to English Jesuit fathers as is done at the Papal Seminary at Kandy, or at least to get down English or Irish Carmelites or fathers of other orders who have sympathy with English education and to issue stringent orders to the authorities at Puthenpally to set apart fixed hours every day for teaching Syriac, Sanskrit, Malayalam and English, and, as is done at Kandy, to enforce talking in English instead of Latin.

3. We value very much the wise and significant timely advice contained on page 3 of your reply viz,

“As priests you will be leaders of the people and men follow willingly only those who are intellectually their superiors. A priest therefore must possess a large amount of learning in all ecclesiastical matters and not be backward in secular science. The time is past when little learning would do in Malabar. Now people go to school and the priest, in order to have influence, must be equal in secular learning with educated laymen.”

These were the very principles which guided the late Very Revd. Father Nidiry in all his memorable words and deeds. Indeed the value of such wise principles of far reaching importance to the success of a clergyman was shown by the illustrious and marked career of that distinguished and praiseworthy priest over 40 years of his very useful and public life. And let a good number of the future clergy imitate and follow his noble example and your Excellency's advice is the sincere prayer of all the people in Malabar.

4. Your Excellency alludes to an unhappy priest,

“God has called to his account the unhappy priest who for a long time has been at the bottom of all these agitations, and who for more than 30 years has hindered by his evil doings the progress of religion and the progress of civilisation amongst the Catholic of

Malabar”, in the last para on page 4 of the reply. We are at a loss to identify any priest in Malabar with the one hinted at in the description above quoted. But from the reports that have reached us about Your Excellency’s conversations at several stations in your recent tour in Malabar villifying the character and the noble deeds of the late Very Revd. Father Nidiry of happy memory, whom we almost venerate as our Moses who delivered the ancient Syrain See of Malabar from the hands of the Latin Bishops, we are led to infer that the unhappy and uncalled for reference is to that distinguished countryman of ours, who is the last person to deserve such treatment at your hands.

5. if your Excellency’s reference is about the late Pontifically privileged Vicar General Father Nidiry, we are very sorry to observe that the same is untrue. We in fact do not know what your Excellency means by the words “all these agitations.” We know only of two agitations among us. One began from the time of Arch Bishop Menezes who reduced the ancient Syrian See of Malabar under the jurisdiction of the Latin Bishops, and the other, since the appointment of the Sudist Bishop Dr. Makil. The first was to obtain a Syrian Bishop to rule over us and thus to remove the anomalous and awkward system that existed in Malabar of a Latin Bishop governing the Syrian clergy and laity, a form of hierarchy unprecedented in history and unknown in any other part of the Catholic world. This agitation lasted for about 3 centuries. The historic oath on Coonan Cross at Cochin, the getting down of the Syrian Bishops Mar Rockos, Mar Melos, Mar Jacob and Mar Thontanath and the numerous law suits that ensued, are the offshoots of that long standing and persistent movement which ended at last by the wise and prudent arrangement of His Holiness the late Pope Leo XIII in sanctioning the appointment of 3 Syrian Bishops to govern un in recognition of our legitimate and reasonable prayer. As this agitation commenced so early as the 16th century, Fr Nidiry could not be at the bottom of it. On the other hand it was he who by his indefatigable endeavours suppressed its development by converting Mar Jacob by removing him from the hands of the furious Schismatics of Trichur, at the risk of his own life and by defeating, and ultimately driving Mar Melos from Malabar. It was he who converted most of the Schismatic priests and parishes. So he was really a messenger of peace and not an agitator. The second agitation is for removing the jurisdiction which the Sudist Bishop Dr. Makil holds over the Nordists. Its cause, we cannot help saying, originated from Your Excellencies imprudent and ill considered recommendation to Rome for appointing a low-caste Sudist Bishop over the high caste Nordists, against the ancient and time honoured practice that exists in Malabar that the Bishops and Vicar Generals should always be chosen from the Nordists. This is observed by the Jacobite Syrians as well, for out of the seven Bishops that were recently consecrated by their Patriarch none is a Sudist. The infallible decision of the Holy See was that the Nordist & the Sudist sections should be governed separately, as is apparent from the fact of appointing two Vicar Generals one for each section. So it is no wonder that agitation and difficulties arose when the wise and infallible direction of the Holy See was disregarded. It is our firm conviction that whenever a person acts against the wishes of our Holy Father, he will be entangled in difficulties. So Father Nidiry cannot be said to be at the bottom of this agitation either. When the news of appointment of Bishop Makil reached Malabar, the whole Nordist community rose in a body against the appointment and

determined not to receive him. So His Lordship Dr. Makil was obliged to remain in Madras for a few months without taking charge of the diocese. Had it not been for the influence of Fr Nidiry who advised the people to accept him in submission to the orders of your Excellency and then an appeal about the appointment, Bishop Makil would never have been able to govern the Nordists nor remain at Changanacherry. His Lordship Dr. Lavigne, who knew well about the state of affairs in Malabar, wrote at the time to some Nordist priests here thus "I know well what timount [an amount] of unrest and agitation will be created among you on hearing about this appointment." From this also it will be seen that Fr Nidiry was not at the bottom of any agitations whatever. But on the contrary he was a peace maker. Any person who knew him would admit this.

6. We do not know why Your Excellency calls him unhappy. He must be considered the happiest person in every sense of the word, both spiritually and temporally. He was straightforward and simple hearted just like a child. He was extremely pious. When his death was announced to Dr. Makil, His Lordship wept aloud and said that he had never seen a priest performing mass with such piety as Fr Nidiry. His sermons used to draw crowds of people including heretics and heathens. His preaching was so powerful that it moved the people to such an extent as to make them cry aloud. He was not a priest who hoarded money. All his income, which was great, he spent on charity. He zealously worked, and with great success, for annihilating the schism in Malabar. His Eminence the late lamented Cardianl Ajuti your distinguished predecessor and a true friend of the Syrians, in his letter No. 438 dated the 14th January 1888 addressed to Fr Nidiry has thus testified to this,

"I praise once more for your zeal for the conversion of the schismatics. I congratulate you on the reconciliation of the Vadakancherry church and pray earnestly to the Almighty that he may let us see as soon as possible a full triumph of His Grace over all these schismatics. I hope I shall soon receive from Rome the last decision as regards Mar Thontinath meanwhile continue your work and don't rest until the schism be completely rooted out."

In another letter addressed to Fr, Nidiry, dated Rome 23rd December 1887, His Eminence Cardinal Agliardi the first Delegate Apostolic of India who also got votes at the last Papal election says,

"I have but words of praise for your zeal to pave the way to the conversion of our dissenting brethren in Malabar and I only exhort you to continue in this Apostolic work and not to mind the troubles that others might strive to cause as even trials serve to give success to such efforts. It is right however to let Msgr. Ajuti know the state of things in Malabar as you have done hitherto."

In another letter dated Rome 2nd October 1887, His Eminence again says, "Your kind letters of 11th August and 1st September and the telegram came to hand in due time. I am sure that by this time all your anxieties expressed in them are over as you must have already received the good tidings of what the Holy See has been pleased to do in behalf of St Thomas Christians in Malabar. I consider this the dawning of a new era for the

Syrian nation of India and I hope that you and your fellow priests under the wise directions of your Vicars Apostolics will leave nothing undone that your dissenting brethren may return to the bosom of the Holy and Apostolic Church of Rome. This is the craving and continual prayer of our Holy Father to whom the union and progress of the Syrian nation of Malabar are so deeply at heart and in which I have taken so much interest The confidence with which the new Delegate Apostolic (Msgr. Ajuti) has honoured you mianfests [manifest] your worth and the influence that you are able to exercise over your people for their spiritual improvement and welfare Wishing you all Heaven's blessing."

His Grace Arch-Bishop Meurin who was the Visitor Apostolic of Malabar has written as follows in his letter dated Port Louis, 22nd January 1890.

"I foresee that you dear Father Mani (Nidiry) have to be elevated to the dignity of the episcopate. I am deeply moved by this news, first because I recommended it very strongly after our great meeting at the Mannanam Convent; secondly I made a vow to stay a monthly mass in thanksgiving if this plan would be carried out. Since then I said my monthly mass for the conversion of pagans instead. Now it must return to its original intention in thanksgiving for you. My hopes were kept up when I was in Rome and was asked what I thought for you Father Nidiry being made Bishop. You can imagine how glad I was to hear from that question that the plan was still under consideration. Of course I could not tell you anything about it."

Though Fr Nidiry expressed his opinions boldly and impartially, yet his obedience to his superiors was exemplary. His Lordship Bishop Makil too has acknowledged in public that, even in cases in which Father Nidiry's views were quite opposed to those of the Bishops, he (Fr Nidiry) was obedient to the very letter when an order was passed by the Bishop, though it might be quite opposed to his own views and wishes. The following passage from a letter written by Dr. Lavigne to Fr Nidiry after the latter's resignation of the Vicar-Generalship, will also testify to this;

"I know that you exactly fulfilled my orders. Why did you not write to me about such an agreeable thing. The orders given to you were somewhat painful to fulfil chiefly on account of your brother, but as you are the Vicar there was no way to avoid such a grief. Your obedience is the more meritorious for that. I have communicated that good notice to His Excellency the Delegate."

When he was obliged to resign the Pontifically privileged Vicar-Generalship on account of some misunderstanding between him and Dr. Lavigne, the schismatics at Trichur and Mar Dynasius the Jacobite Metropolitan, seeing that he was not in good terms with Bishop Lavigne tried their best, each in turn, to get him over to their side and consecrate him as a Bishop which he flatly refused. This shows his piety and firmness.

His devotion to the Sacred-Heart was so great that it may be said that he died almost a martyr for its cause. While he was seriously suffering from heart disease, he preached at the Changanacherry Cathedral Church on the feast of the Sacred-Heart which ultimately brought about his death eleven days after. By the same devotion he died a happy death,

the date of which he knew before hand. As he had a great desire that the turbulent priest Fr Pauli should be reconciled with the Bishop, he persuaded him to withdraw the lawsuit he filed against Bishop Makil and he wanted to take him to his lordship to get his pardon so that he may be fully reconciled. His proposed journey to Changanacherry four days before his death to carry out this plan, was objected to by his relations and parishioners on account of his illness. He then said. "if I do not go now I will not be able to do it before my death." Two day's before his death he asked his nephew to leave his son with him since his brother might not be there when he dies, and his prediction proved true, since his brother cleric was obliged to go to visit a patient, when he died. His death took place on Monday morning 20th June 1904 in the month of the Sacred-Heart. On Sunday previous, he made his last confersion [confession], said mass and gave confession to several persons. In the evening he said his death would be sudden and that there would be scarcely any time to bring the crucifix for being kissed at the time of his death. So he ordered his clerk to hang the crucifix near his easy chair so that he may kiss easily the object of his special devotion viz the image of his crucified Lord. On Monday morning he sent an urgent messenger to his brother saying that he would die soon. But no one ever suspected that he would die that day. A little while after, he sat on the easy chair where the crucifix was hung, the priest was called, and he gave him the extreme unction and other last rites of the Church, at the end of which he handed his soul to the Almighty God in the midst of seven priests, who surrounded him praying for him. His death was so peaceable, that all around him thought for sometime, that he was sleeping.

In point of temporal happiness too we must say that Father Nidiry was very happy. He was born in an influential and famous family. His fame has spread throughout Malabar and has extended to other countries as well. He was revered and loved by all the people in the country. He was personally known and respected by the Maha Rajahs, their ministers, governors, British Residents and a host of European and native gentlemen. To see him was to love him and respect him; to hear him was to be edified and ennobled. As a scholar, poet, physician, linguist, public speaker and writer he was unrivalled in the country. Thousands of people including many clergymen attended his funeral which was far more solemn and grander than that of a Bishop. On hearing about the sad intelligence of his demise, St Berchman's High School and other institutions were closed by the order of Bishop Makil; bells were wrung, Requiem Masses were sung and special services were held in many of the Churches in Malabar. Even Cardinals, Arch-bishops, and Bishops, besides several high officers and other dignitaries of the state, sent condolence letters and messages to his family expressing their high appreciation of his merits. All the newspapers in the country published leading articles in praise of him and his works. Thus your Excellency will see that both spiritually and temporally he was the happiest of the persons of whom we know.

7. We are really surprised at your Excellency's statement that he has hindered the progress of religion and the progress of civilisation among the Catholics of Malabar, which we humbly submit is not true. On the other hand it must be rightly said of him that no other person in Malabar has helped the progress of religion and civilisation so much as Fr Nidiry. The testimonies of Cardinals and Bishops, we have quoted above will

show clearly that he has zealously worked and succeeded in annihilating the schism by establishing the authority of the Catholic Church in Malabar and has thus helped very much the progress of the true religion. Almost the whole of his long life of 63 years was spent in defending the cause of the Catholic Church both in courts and from pulpits, as is evidenced by the favourable decisions which he obtained in the famous church cases of Chittattoor, Arthungal Koravilangad, Plachenal, Marangatupilly &c. The only case that has been decided against the Catholic Church is the Trichoor case, and it is a well known fact that the case was lost simply because Dr. Medlycott thought it below his dignity to follow the advice given by Fr Nidiry. He has converted more than 1000 heathens, and has built a costly church at Korovilangad for their special use. The devotional songs and books published by him, as well as his edifying and convincing sermons were really powerful instruments for the progress of religion. He has converted several Jacobite priests, and had preached in several of their churches, and finally took Mar Dynasius the Jacobite Metropolitan to your predecessor at Oottacamund for the purpose of converting him and his flock. These, we think, are real indications of progress in our religion. Though his plan to bring whole Jacobites of Malabar into the Catholic fold was frustrated by some imprudent acts of Dr. Lavigne, yet he has paved the way for their conversion by proving that the Syrians of Malabar were Catholics from the time of Apostle St Thomas. The Jacobite and the Protestant theory is that the Syrian Church in Malabar was never under Rome, before the time of Arch-Bishop Menezes, and that the Syrians were brought under the Papal authority by force and bribery by the Portuguese power in the 16th Century and that the Church of Malabar up to that time was under the Jacobite and Nestorian Patriarchs. The Portuguese historians also supported this mistaken theory by their writings. As the people in Malabar are naturally averse to deviate from the religious rites and manners of their forefathers, the above said theory was a great obstacle for their conversion. But Fr Nidiry, towards the close of his career has, to the greater glory of the Catholic Church, succeeded in proving to the world by convincing arguments that the Church in Malabar was Catholic from the time of the Apostle St Thomas down to the Portuguese period. Though his arguments was at first opposed by Dr. Medlycott and others, the Catholic Resident Mr. Mackenzie after weighing the arguments on both sides, has finally upheld the view taken by Fr Nidiry, in his last edition of Christianity in Travancore which forms a chapter of the State-Mannual, published by the Travancore Government. The Portuguese Missionaries, who also opposed this view at first, were obliged to acknowledge the soundness of his argument (Vide the Life of St Thomas recently published in Mylapore). This has immortalised his name and has paved the way for the conversion of the Jacobites.

His praiseworthy acts for the progress of civilisation are too numerous to be mentioned here. It was he who raised the status of the clergy in Malabar. He acquired a thorough western culture by his long and close acquaintance with European Superiors. This culture he infused, both by example and precept, among his fellow priests and the people in general, thereby improving their manners and raising their position. Up to his time no native priest or Vicar general used to get seat in courts or before Government officers. It was he who first fought for it and succeeded in getting the privilege, and now, even a poor Catholic priest is honoured everywhere. His polite, manners, sense of self respect,

and spirit of independence won for him universal respect from the heathen officers and induced them to think that all Catholic priests who wore the same garment as Fr Nidiry, deserved such treatment. Even the European Bishops, who refused to dine or sit with the native clergy, used to dine with Fr Nidity and offer him seat on account of his personal worth and civilised manners. Through his endeavours this honor was gradually extended to others also. As there was not a Fr Nidiry among the Jacobite Syrians, they do not get the same honor either before Government officers or before their Bishops. The Vicar of the Paravoor Church was once disgraced and punished for contempt of court, by the Munsiff of that place, for his refusal under canon law, to allow a party to take an oath within the Church, as he knew the oath was false. Fr Nidiry took the matter before the British Resident, through whose advice, the Travancore Government, not only cancelled the punishment, but also suspended the Munsiff for 6 months, for disgracing the priest. This case established the authority of the Catholic priests, under cannon law, to refuse to allow any suspicious oaths being taken in Churches. He was a strong advocate for spreading western civilisation among the people in Malabar. It was he who started English education among the Catholic Syrians, though it was at first very much discouraged by the Carmelite Missionaries of Verapoly. Both by precept and personal example he tried his best to spread English education. So long ago as 1878, when there was no Catholic English School anywhere in Malabar, he brought down from Madras a European (Irish) Catholic teacher and opened an English School in his own parish church, meeting all the expenses from his own pocket. It may be mentioned in this connection that the first Catholic Syrian who passed the Matriculation and F. A. examinations is his own bother.

When the Presidentship of the Travancore and Cochin Christian Association fell vacant, it was Fr Nidiry that was unanimously voted for the honourable post by the Protestants as well as the Jacobites of the country. When he requested your Excellency's permission to accept the post, you have, without even giving him a reply, which ordinary courtesy requires, unwisely prohibited Catholics from joining the association, though similar mixed Christian associations like the Eurasian and Anglo Indian associations in Madras are not only not prohibited, but positively encouraged by his Grace Dr. Colgan and other distinguished prelates taking active part in them. At the last annual meeting it was Dr. Colgan who presided. The civilising influence of Fr Nidiry is almost proverbial, so much so that "the real progress" which your Excellency sees in the country among the Catholics, may almost be traced to his personality and influence. But we are afraid, that such unkind references proceeding from a person of your Excellency's position will really retard progress by discouraging the self-sacrificing and patriotic spirit of the coming generation of the clergy.

The disappearance of such a personality from the Changanacherry diocese is particularly deplored by the well wishers of the diocese, since it has now become in a chaotic condition as there is no one to pacify the people. Hence the fight between the Nordists and the Sudist Bishop has reached its zenith that in several churches like Kaduthuruthy and Malampuram the matter has been dragged into the court, to the great detriment of the sanctity and union of the Catholic Church. His absence is particularly felt in that diocese at this juncture, as the schismatics are trying to get down

a Babylonian Bishop from Assyria through the help of the Protestant Missionaries. We draw the particular attention of your Excellency about the safety and peace of Changanacherry diocese as one Revd Brown, a missionary working in Assyria had lately visited that diocese at the special request of the schismatics in Malabar.

Thus Your Excellency will see that the statement that he has hindered the progress of religion and progress of civilisation is not only true, but is entirely opposed to the real facts.

8. Your Excellency says in the same para, that he has hindered the progress, by his evil doings, and that his evil work will soon be forgotten. But you do not specify what were his evil doings and his evil work. We do not know any such things, and we are sure that no one will be able to point out a single instance of his evil doings or his evil work, in support of the statement. It will be seen from what we have stated, that all his works and doings, during the long career of his very useful life, were good and pious, heroic and exemplary, and he is truly considered as a great man of his times, not only by us, but by the heathens and heretics as well.

9. We are surprised at Your Excellency's remark that God has called such a person to his account. Truly God has called him to reward him for the various troubles and sufferings endured by him for His sake. Your Excellency paints him in the said passage as one of the most wicked of mankind destined to damnation. Your Excellency and Bishop Makil kept him as the principal Ecclesiastical councillor and the Vicar of the most important church in the diocese. If he were really such a person as you paint him to be, neither Your Excellency nor the Bishop would have allowed to retain him for a moment, as the first councillor of the Bishop of Changanacherry, or as the Vicar of the most important church at Korovilangad, both of which offices he held, till the last moment of his death; nay it was Your Excellency's and His Lordship's bounden duty to remove him from all ecclesiastical functions, and we are sure Your Excellency's conscience would not have allowed you to sit quiet if he were such a person. Instead of this, Your Excellency treated him with marked respect and consideration when you visited Malabar a few months before his death. Thus it follows that Your Excellency's words after his death are quite inconsistent with your acts during his life. The fact that Your Excellency was not bold enough to speak such calumnies against him, while he was alive, speaks much in favour of what we have stated. Further, Your Excellency's statement would amount to this: that your worthy and distinguished predecessors, Cardinals Agliardi, and Ajuti, and the Visitor Apostolic Archbishop Meurin, who had very close acquaintance with him and who considered him as one of the best priests in Malabar in every respect, and even worthy of being consecrated as a Bishop, and even His Holiness the Pope Leo XIII, who showed him a marked consideration by sending him a special blessing in recognition of his merits, were ignorant persons who could not understand the character of priests under them. Not even a child among the Syrians, nor any persons who was acquainted with Fr Nidiry even for a day, would believe the statement made by Your Excellency. On the other hand we should think that any one would have more faith in the words of your distinguished predecessors. Such being the facts, we do not know what effect there will

be for Your Excellency's wish, viz. "Let us hope that he will find no successor and no imitator among the clergy of this country and that his evil work will be soon repaired and forgotten."

10. Even apart from the merits of Fr Nidiry, we beg leave to inform Your Excellency that in India, it is an inviolable sacred custom, which is observed even by the heathens and Mahomedans that no one should speak ill of a person after his death, even though, he happens to be the worst of his enemies, and even though, there be nothing to be said in his favour, and that any enmity or vengeance should be buried with the departed person. We are not quite sure, what the custom in Poland, Switzerland, Russia, and other Western countries, is. But the well known Latin maxim "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*" is quite in keeping with our custom. Such unkind remarks proceeding from the Representative of the Vicar of Christ about a priest who had spent almost all his life for the cause of the Catholics Church, painfully remained us of the well know passage in Shakespeare, reprimanding the ingratitude of mankind viz. "*The good that men do is oft buried with their bones.*"

11. The Syrians of Malabar were for a long time under the jurisdiction of the Verapoly Mission, and the Syrian Vicar-General with the Bishop of Verapoly was of the Nordist section, and the Sudists had no complaint whatever about it. Because the jurisdiction over the Syrians was taken away from the Verapoly Bishops, through the instrumentality of Fr Nidiry and other Nordists, the Missionaries at Verapoly bore a grudge against the Nordists who formed the bulk of the Syrians and especially against Fr Nidiry, and tried to create some confusion among the Syrians by setting up the Sudists (with the ultimate object, we are afraid to think of getting back the Syrians under them) and making them to complain to obtain for them a separate Vicar-General, when Fr Nidiry was made the pontifically privileged Vicar General of the Kottayam Mission. The petition of the Sudists was very strongly supported by the Verapoly Missionaries and Bishop Lavigne, who being new to the country was also influenced by them. Their request was therefore granted from the Holy see, which has created ever since jealousy and quarrel among the two sections of the Syrians. When Your Excellency took your former Carmelite Secretary from Verapoly he had ample opportunity to harass Fr Nidiry and the Nordist section. It is our firm belief that Your Excellency must have been influenced by him in the selection of the Sudist Dr. Makil to rule over the high caste Nordists in order that the latter may be degraded, notwithstanding the former ruling of the Holy See that they should be governed separately. As Your Excellency is reported to be a very pious man, we are further led to conclude that the recent utterances of Your Excellency about Fr Nidiry are the result of the Verapoly influence over you. This our belief is further confirmed by the fact, that Your Excellency, who has such a mistaken notion about Fr Nidiry, selected your Secretary from the Verapoly Mission from which Fr Nidiry and the Syrians separated themselves while Cardinals Agliardi and Ajuti and Archbishop Meurin, all of whom held such high opinion about him (Fr Nidiry) had their secretaries from other quarters.

12. We think it is part of our filial obligation which we owe to your august person as representing the Sovereign Pontiff in India, to inform you that the ill advised and unhappy

utterances about a deceased priest who had so devoutly and faithfully served God and his Church and whose name is lovingly remembered and venerated, not only by the Syrian Community but by the whole people in Malabar, have almost scandalised the faithful and lowered the personal esteem of Your Excellency, in the eyes of the people.

We most humbly beg Your Excellency's pardon for venturing to address these few lines which was actuated by our filial obligations and trust that the same will receive a fatherly consideration from you, and we earnestly hope that Your Excellency would make repairs for the blemish brought about by your utterances on the fair name of a very distinguished and Pontifically Privileged Vicar General of the Holy Catholic Church.

Begging Your Excellency's blessing on bended knees.

We beg to remain

Your Excellency's most obedient and

Dutiful Sons

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Prof. Dr. Paul Pallath
Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome

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