

THE FIRST INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION

Its Name and Affiliation to OCD

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Abstract: Thomas Mampra, in this entry, make a study on the name and the circumstances that led to the affiliation of the Indian Carmelite congregation, the first indigenous religious congregation for men in India, founded by Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukkara and Kuriakose Elias Chavara, to OCD as its Third Order, in the light of a few documents published recently. He begins with excurses through the letters and writings of Chavara to see what he says regarding the name of the congregation. Having explored the primary sources, he turns to the secondary sources and scans through the pages of the early historians and their writings on the issue. To explore further, the author subjects the letters sent to Rome by the members of the congregation protesting certain moves of the ecclesiastical authorities and the reply they received. He goes on to speak about the fact and process of affiliation into the Carmelite Order and the consequences of the affiliation. He concludes the study with a question regarding the say that the members of the congregation had in this matter.

Keywords: Congregation, religious, Discalced, Carmelite Order, Chavara, chronicles, biography, Palackal, monastery, Mannanam, Baccinelli, Constitutions, charism, scapular, Third Order, Porukara, community, Stabilini, Malabar, Mellano, affiliation, Tertiaries, Prior, Peschetto, Martini, Beccaro, Propaganda Fide, Vicariates.

The name of the first indigenous religious congregation for men in India, which later came to be known as CMI congregation, had some evolution in the past. The congregation was once affiliated or aggregated to the Discalced Carmelite Order. This article is an attempt to get some clarification on the matter, especially on the affiliation to the OCD as its Third Order, in the light of some recently published documents.

1. Chavara on the Name of the Congregation

St Kuriakose Elias Chavara, one of the founders of the CMI congregation, mentions the name of the Congregation on three occasions in his chronicles. Chronologically he mentions it first in the context of the first religious profession he and his companions made on 8 December 1855 at Mannanam.¹ Speaking of the constitutions given to the Congregation, he mentions its title as the *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Most Immaculate Mother of Carmel*. The religious habit consisted of the usual white cassock, a leather girdle and a small scapular worn inside the cassock.² The second instance is when Chavara speaks of the name of the Congregation in the introduction of the biography of his beloved Malpan Thomas Palackal, which he began to write in 1864 after reaching Koonammavu monastery in the same year. There, Chavara gives the name of the Congregation as the 'Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Carmel' which is the Third Order of Carmelites Discalced whom on 8 December 1855... etc.³ The third instance where Chavara mentions the name of the Congregation is when he gave the text of the Vicar Apostolic Msgr. Baccinelli's letter of 27 February 1861, announcing the aggregation of the congregation to the Carmelite Discalced Order. In that letter Baccinelli says that the congregation named the 'Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Carmel' which he founded in Malabar... etc.⁴

Looking at the text of these three instances, one can easily make the following observations:

- a. The first text speaks of the name given to the newly approved and ecclesiastically established religious congregation at Mannanam on December 8, 1855. The second text introduces it in 1864, three or four years after the affiliation of the already established congregation. Here Chavara juxtaposes the names of the Congregation before and after its affiliation to the Discalced Carmelite Order, maybe for clarity's sake. Although he was going to write the biography of the first among the founders of the religious community, he did not speak of the name of the community in 1841, probably because at that time there were only very few members belonging to it and hence no particular name was given to it. The third instance is a reproduction of the letter of

¹Complete Works of Chavara (CWC) I (2000), 75.

²CWC I, 75.

³CWC I (2000), 56.

⁴CWC I (2000), 168-170.

Baccinelli informing that the Congregation, which he claimed he had established in Malabar and its various houses and members were accepted and aggregated to the Carmelite Discalced Order as its Third Order etc. Baccinelli mentions only the name of the Congregation at the time of its official approval and establishment in 1855.

- b. There is no compelling reason why Baccinelli should give the community the name 'Servants of Mary Immaculate' either before its formal approval as a religious congregation or after that. On the other hand the fact that they were formally approved and accepted under the Rule and Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Order with certain changes according to the climate and culture,⁵ had a strong claim for considering it as a congregation with the Carmelite charism.
- c. In his letter to the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelite Order in September 1855, Baccinelli even mentioned that with their prayerful/contemplative life on the one hand and their apostolic life on the other, the community of the 'Cathanars' were leading a life similar to that of their own OCD missionaries.⁶ Again, the fact that as part of their religious habit he gave them a small scapular to be worn inside the cassock was probably indicative of the charism of the congregation, namely Carmelite charism. It may also have been one of the early steps taken by Baccinelli to establish a juridical relationship between the Discalced Carmelite Order and the indigenous Carmelite Congregation by accepting and aggregating the congregation as its Third Order. From all these facts it is reasonable to think that Baccinelli added that part of the

⁵*I cassanari di un convento o Rritiro esistente gia da molti anni in questo vicariato, avendomi domandato di dargli una regola et forma di religiosa congregazione, coll'aiuto del P. Marcellino, che si e reso ben capace in questa lingua malabarica, vado adattando al detto oggetto la nostra regola dataci del Patriarcha S. Alberto, e la nostre Costituzione, dataendo, locali e lo scopo dell'istituto richiedono, e non solo per loro spirituale vantaggio, ma anche di queste cristiani ossia battezzati, e desidero mandare ad effetto questa Istruzione nel giorno 8 dicembre, in cui faranno i voti semplici e si dare principio alla Regolare osservanza.* See Sunny Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary* (2005), 190, 113.

⁶In his report on the Vicariate, Mgr Baccinelli wrote about the Congregation: "Hanno le medesima nostra regola nelle Costituzione pero vi ho fatto qualche variazione onde adattarla al di loro principale scopo, che il medesimo di quello dei Missionari ed alle circostanza, ben diverse dalla nostra di questa regione." Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 190, 113.

name namely 'Mother of Carmel' to the already existing name of the rather sizeable number of the members of the community called 'Servants of Mary Immaculate', though we do not have so far any documentary evidence to support it. However, there is a letter of Fr Marceline OCD dated 14 August 1857 to Chavara addressing him as Rev. Fr Kuriakose Chavara, Servant of Mary Immaculate, Prior of Mannanam Monastery.⁷

2. Historians about the Name

The chronicles of Chavara and the history of the congregation written by Fr Bernard of St Thomas⁸ and Fr Valerian⁹ speak of some evolution in the name of our congregation. Malpan Thomas Palackal had a special devotion to St Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers and he had taken St Dominic as the patron of the Malpanate at Pallipuram.¹⁰ He and his friend Fr Thomas Porukara, the pioneers of the congregation, were convinced of the great need of preaching the gospel to the Catholic community of Malabar for making it a vibrant Christian community. That may have been the important reason why the patronage of St Dominic was accepted. Palackal had also thought of giving shape to the proposed religious congregation according to the ideals of the Dominican Order.¹¹ At the time of laying the foundation stone for the first religious house and the church at Mannanam on 11 May 1831, Palackal suggested St Dominic as patron though finally all agreed on the name of St Joseph as the patron as suggested by Fr Thomas Porukara.¹² Though a seminary started functioning at Mannanam from 1833, no particular name seems to have been given to it, although it is mentioned that after the demise of Malpan Palackal the seminarians from Pallipuram used to bring the statue of St Dominic to Mannanam for the feast there and had special prayers in his honour. Community life started at Mannanam on 18 June 1840, but no name seems to have been given to the community. Even at the time of the death of Malpan Porukara on 8 January, 1846, the community did not seem to have taken any particular name.

⁷*Positio*, Vatican: 1977, 179.

⁸Bernard of St Thomas, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades* (Mal.), 1908.

⁹Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Mannanam*: 1939.

¹⁰CWC I, 13, 24.

¹¹*Letters*, CWC IV, 2011, 99.

¹²CWC I, 24; Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 14.

According to Fr Bernard, the small community at Mannanam used to live a pious and devout life according to what they had known about religious life. They used to have meditation, they prayed the canonical prayers, offered the Holy Mass, prayed the fifteen decades of the rosary and several other prayers, preached homilies on Sundays in the parishes, hear confessions etc., and thus did their best to make the Christian community vibrant¹³ and the result was noticed by the Vicar Apostolic, priests and people alike. They used to follow some instructions, which Vicar Apostolic Maurelius Stabilini had given to them in the beginning, noted Fr Bernard.¹⁴ We come across a document reportedly given by Stabilini from Kudamaloor on the day after laying the foundation stone for the first religious house and church at Mannanam, as some guidelines for the observance of the future community there. It consisted of ten rules. The Vicar Apostolic addressed them saying that the following rules were given by Bishop Maurelius to all the Reverend Fathers for leading a devout life:

1. Words fly but actions remain.
2. Make confession often with contrition to devout confessors.
3. Spend half an hour daily in meditation and read some spiritual books at least for half an hour.
4. Celebrate the Holy Mass with adequate preparation and spend some time in thanksgiving after the Mass.
5. Pray the canonical prayers with devotion.
6. Keep moderation in eating and drinking; speak with lay people rarely and in a moderate voice.
7. Have the examination of conscience every day in the evening.
8. Vicars shall deal with lay people entrusted to their care with humility, consideration, love and truthfully.
9. At the confessional, be a father, a judge, a doctor and a teacher.
10. Visit the sick often and console them and as the vicars, take special care that you do everything necessary at the time of death, in order to lead them to a happy death. St Paul metes out excommunication to all those who not love Jesus Christ.

Fr Maurelius
E. P. Dole¹⁵

¹³Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 36-40.

¹⁴Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 36-37.

¹⁵J. T. Medayil, *Karmala Kusumam*, August 2016, 14-18.

Even in 1850, when Msgr Ludovic, the Vicar Apostolic visited the Mannanam community, he made no mention of the name of the community.

By 1855, when Bishop Bernardine Baccinelli decided to approve the community as a formal religious congregation by giving it the Rule and Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Order with some changes,¹⁶ the community had a sizeable number of priests and seminarians in its ranks.¹⁷ Was the community known by any name at that time is a pertinent question. We have not come across any document of that time bearing the name of the community. Fr Bernard notes that the name given to the community at that time was 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'.¹⁸ That name was later changed to Third Order of Carmelites Discalced at the time of the congregation's affiliation to the Carmelite Order.¹⁹ In his letter to Chavara and the Superiors of the various houses announcing the fact of the affiliation of the Congregation on February 27, 1861, Baccinelli says that the religious community, which he established in Malabar by the name 'Servants of Mary Immaculate of the Mother of Carmel' was aggregated to the Carmelite Order as its Third Order.²⁰ It is quite possible that he added 'of the Mother of Carmel' to the then existing name 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'. Since Baccinelli had given them the Rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order with some changes he considered it as a congregation with Carmelite charism, and in order to indicate this charism, he might have added 'of the Mother of Carmel' to the existing name 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'.

3. Complaints to Rome

After the affiliation of the congregation to the Carmelite Order, when Archbishop Mellano changed the constitutions of the congregation drastically, the members protested bitterly against the change and sent several letters to the Propaganda voicing their complaints.²¹ In one of

¹⁶Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 40; see also CWC I, 75; also above footnote 5; M. Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram, 2008, 103.

¹⁷Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 42-43.

¹⁸Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45.

¹⁹Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45-46.

²⁰CWC I, 169. The formula of Profession of Chavara and formula of patent given to members had this name; *Positio*, 118, 119, 180-181, etc.

²¹Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 103-106.

those letters they mention, on the basis of the statement of four of the eleven fathers who had made their first profession on 8 December, 1855 and who were still alive, that the original name of the indigenous community at Mannanam was 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'. On the occasion of the first religious profession under the Rule and Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Order, which Baccinelli gave them, the addition 'of the Mother of Carmel' was made. Later, in 1861, at the time of the aggregation of the congregation to the Carmelite Order, the name was totally changed to 'Third Order of Carmelites Discalced', leaving out the original 'Servants of Mary Immaculate' completely.²²

4. Decision from Rome

When Rome approved the constitutions of the congregation in 1893 and finally confirmed it in 1903, the name referred to officially was the 'Third Order of Carmelites Discalced'.²³ That letter of the members of the congregation to Rome in 1877 seems to be the only document referring to the original name of the community at Mannanam as 'Servants of Mary Immaculate'. Fr Bernard notes that this name was chosen because it was around that time that the Immaculate Conception of Mary was defined as an article of faith.²⁴ Similarly, Fr Mathias Mundadan writes: "The pioneers of the Congregation, learning about the miracles worked and the conversion of sinners effected through the merits of the Sacred Heart of B.M. Virgin Immaculate, took this name, viz., 'Servants of Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate'."²⁵ Yet the congregation continued to be popularly known as 'Third Order of Carmelites Discalced' (TOCD) until 1958. When the renewed Constitutions was approved by Rome in 1958, the name of the congregation was changed to 'Carmelites of Mary Immaculate'.²⁶ That name is retained in the present constitutions approved by Rome in 1983.

²²Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45-46.

²³The official name of the Congregation became 'Community of the Third Order of Carmelites Discalced of Mary Immaculate of Mount Carmel existing in Malabar' (Sodalitas Fratrum Excalceatorum Tertiae Ordinis Beatae Virginis Mariae Immaculate de Monte Carmelo in Malabar existens); Carmelite Congregation of Malabar 1831-1931, Trichinapoly (1932), 102.

²⁴Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45.

²⁵Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 105.

²⁶Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 106.

5. The Fact of Affiliation

Historians of the CMI Congregation like Fr Bernard of St Thomas, the author of *The Syrian Carmelite Congregation of Malabar*,²⁷ Fr Valerian, the biographer of St Chavara,²⁸ and others have noted that Msgr Bernardine Baccinelli had sent a letter to the superiors of the then existing monasteries of the Congregation about its affiliation to the Discalced Carmelite Order. The letter was written from the Church of Amballoor on 27 February 1861. In the letter he wrote that he had received a decree saying that on 1 October 1860, the General Definitory of the Order presided over by the Superior General had accepted the Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Carmel, which he had founded in Malabar, as Tertiaries (Third Order) of the Discalced Carmelite Order.

Consequently, they would receive a share in the indulgences and other spiritual benefits which accrued to the Order. Chavara sent a letter to the Superior General of the Order as suggested by Baccinelli thanking him for the benevolence.²⁹ We are also informed that already towards the end of March 1860, the missionary Fr Marcelline had gone to Mannanam and made a canonical visitation of the community in the name of the Vicar Apostolic. There he told that the Congregation was aggregated to the Carmelite Order and was accepted as its Third Order, and it was in that connection that he was conducting the visitation. He made a similar visitation to the monastery at Koonammavu also.³⁰ Fr Bernard mentions that already on 25 December 1859, the members of the community were asked by Msgr Bernardine, the Vicar Apostolic to wear a long scapular above the cassock as part of their religious habit. The Vicar Apostolic himself got the scapulars stitched and sent them to the monasteries.³¹ In 1861, the name of the Congregation was changed from the 'Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Carmel' to 'Third Order of Carmelites Discalced'. Together with that, Fr Bernard notes that certain changes were made in the existing constitutions. However, no mention is made

²⁷Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45-46.

²⁸Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 109.

²⁹Maniakkunnel, (2005), 156-57; Bernard *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45-46; see also *Positio* (1977), 176-179.

³⁰Chronicles, CWC I (2000), 88; see also Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 70.

³¹Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 68-69.

of the kind of changes made.³² These changes did not create any serious reaction among the members because of the excellent relationship Msgr Baccinelli had with Chavara and other members who, in deference to Chavara the common Prior, complied.³³

As far as we know, the only document given to the Congregation with regard to this radical change is the letter of Baccinelli on 27 February 1861.³⁴ Although the information does not have much relevance now, it may be of some interest to know how those things happened at the time. Several doctoral dissertations have been presented and defended in various ecclesiastical universities on subjects somehow connected to the period and rule of Msgr Baccinelli in which matters related to this topic are also discussed. Some of those dissertations were not published and some are published. In a recently published one by Fr Sunny Maniakkunnel OCD³⁵ a few documents concerning the affiliation of the Congregation to the Carmelite Order are presented. From Fr Marcelline's remarks in March 1860 at Mannanam, we come to know that the matter was decided already sometime in 1859, though the community received the official communication from the Vicar Apostolic only in 1861 but no copy of the text of the decision was made available. Neither Fr Marcelline nor the Vicar Apostolic in their communications provided the how and why and the circumstances related to that decision.

Maniakkunnel writes that the members of the religious group constantly requested Msgr Stabilini, the Vicar Apostolic and his successors down to Msgr Martini "to aggregate this community to the Carmelite Order, and to give them rule and constitutions."³⁶ Though

³²Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45-46.

³³Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 109.

³⁴*Positio*, 185.

³⁵Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary: A Historical Study of the Life and Activities of Fr Leopold Beccaro OCD in Malabar/Kerala 1860-1877*, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005.

³⁶Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 153. Here Maniakkunnel seems to have confused between Ecclesiastical approval and affiliation to OCD. The concerned sentence in the book of Fr. Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, as mentioned by Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 154, footnote 16 reads: "In the wake of the arrival of the Portuguese traders there came to Kerala, several religious orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites. The founding fathers became familiar with some of these. They found out that these religious had been approved by the Holy See either as Pontifical or exempt. Naturally Fr. Chavara desired to obtain for his

the second part of the sentence is correct, the first part namely requesting “to aggregate this community to the Carmelite Order” looks unrealistic. If Msgr Stabilini permitted the fathers to start a religious house only after repeated requests and then only reluctantly,³⁷ it is unlikely that the fathers again requested him for aggregation to OCD during the barely six months he continued to be the Vicar Apostolic and that too under disturbing circumstances. His successor Msgr Francis Xavier Peschetto is known to have been at first unfavourable and uncommitted though later he became friendly with the community. However, at the time, the community was so small that it is far from probable that the fathers asked for aggregation to the Carmelite Order. Mgr Ludovic Martini who succeeded him expressed his willingness to consider the approval of the community towards the end of 1850, but before taking any positive step in the matter, he had to leave Malabar early 1853.³⁸ There is no hint that the fathers requested him for aggregation either.

Msgr Bernardine Baccinelli then became first the Administrator of Verapoly and then the Vicar Apostolic. According to Fr Bernard, he was observing the life and activities of the community of priests at Mannanam, and after putting them to rather rigorous test for these years, decided to give them the rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order with some changes.³⁹ If so, the members of the fledgling congregation requesting for aggregation to OCD before 1855 also looks unlikely. The only document, we know of, speaking about the members requesting for aggregation to the Carmelite Order is a report submitted by the missionary Fr. Leopold Beccaro OCD to his Superior General in 1870.⁴⁰ But it is to be remembered that Leopold came to Malabar only in 1859 as a sub-deacon and was ordained a priest in 1860. Hence, his information on this event which took place several years before his arrival in Malabar needs to be taken only with a pinch of salt. If the General Definitory discussed the question of aggregating the secular order of Oriental rite to the Carmelite Order in May 1853, it

Congregation such an approbation from Rome. With this purpose he met the successors of Msgr Stabilini one after the other...” (Valerian, *Most Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 8.)

³⁷Maniakkunel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 150.

³⁸Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 38.

³⁹Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 36, 40; Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 101-102.

⁴⁰*Positio* (1977), 190.

must have been based on reports or even requests of some Carmelite missionaries, and not from the community at Mannanam.⁴¹

6. Process of Affiliation

It is known that Baccinelli had written to the Propaganda Fide and the Superior General of the Carmelite Order in Rome about a group of secular priests living in a monastery a form of religious life, who requested him to give them a rule and form of religious life. He also mentioned his intention to give them the Rule and the Constitutions of the Carmelite Order with some changes, and to permit them to make their first profession on 8 December. He also requested the approval and blessing for that venture.⁴² The Propaganda Fide gave a gracious response on 12 December 1855.⁴³ We do not know if that was the first letter of Baccinelli to the Superior General on this matter. However, this letter proves that at least from the end of 1855, the Superior General and possibly others came to know that an independent and indigenous community named after the Immaculate Mother of Carmel had come to being in Malabar. The letter informed the Superior General that the Vicar Apostolic was giving them the Primitive Rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order with some changes in the Constitutions, suitable to the clime and culture. He also wrote that with those changes made in the constitutions, the members of the new Congregation would be similar to their missionaries who were following the Constitutions with appropriate changes.⁴⁴ The new Congregation came into being on 8 December 1855, with the profession of the simple vows of Chavara and ten of his companions. Chavara was made the Prior of the religious community. The Rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order given to them and their name with the addition of the 'Mother of Carmel' to their possibly original name 'Servants of Mary Immaculate' were indicative of its Carmelite spirit.⁴⁵ The life of prayer (contemplation) and preaching (homilies,

⁴¹The Congregation has clarified that "the affiliation was not asked by the fathers of the Congregation." The Carmelite Congregation of Malabar (1932), 45.

⁴²Gregory Neerakal, *A Concise History of the CMI Congregation* (Mal.), 1970, 14-15; see also Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 190, footnote 113.

⁴³Neerakal, *A Concise History*, 15-16.

⁴⁴Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 190.

⁴⁵Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 45; see also Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 190.

retreats and priestly ministry)⁴⁶ must have looked fairly similar to the life of the Carmelite missionaries. And the Vicar Apostolic was familiar with the Rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order, and so he gave the new congregation the same Rule and the Constitutions with appropriate changes and not the constitutions of the Carmelite Tertiaries.⁴⁷

The Rule and Constitutions given to them do not seem to have made any significant change in the spirit and the lifestyle of the community. For one thing the devotion to the Mother of Carmel and the scapular was known and practised in Malabar at least from the 17th century.⁴⁸ It is known that Malpan Palackal himself, though an ardent devotee of St Dominic, established confraternities of the Mother of Carmel and the scapular and started celebrating the feast of St Teresa of Avila, the famous reformer of Carmel in parishes like Pallipuram and Kalluorkad (Champakulam).⁴⁹ Malpan Porukara was devoted to St Joseph. He had started practising the devotion in the seminary at Verapoly, which was managed by the Carmelite Fathers.⁵⁰ That devotion was taken up by the Carmelites following St Teresa of Avila who was devoted to St Joseph in a special way. Since devotion to the Mother of Carmel was known and practised in Malabar and since it was also practised by the two elder founding fathers of the Congregation, the community may not have had much difficulty in accepting the new name given to it, although the community was raised in the beginning, as Chavara himself testified, in the Dominican spirit. It may not be far from the truth that it was this apparent tilt from the Dominican to the Carmelite spirit which Chavara considered as effected not by any human calculation but by divine Providence and by Our Lady's special concern for us, noticing our weakness.⁵¹

Both Carmelites and Dominicans are mendicant orders formally founded in the Middle Ages. Although both of these orders had contemplation and preaching in their charism, the Carmelites emphasized contemplation in their way of life whereas the Dominicans put greater emphasis on preaching what was

⁴⁶Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 37.

⁴⁷Maniakkunel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 190, footnote 113.

⁴⁸Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 8.

⁴⁹*Chronicles*, CWC I (2000), 73; Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, 43.

⁵⁰Porukara Kuriakose, *Biography of Thomas Porukara: Founding Fathers* (Mal.), (1905), 21.

⁵¹Letters CWC IV, 99.

contemplated. That is clear from their motto ‘to preach what has been contemplated’ (*contemplata praedicare*). Both the Dominicans and the Carmelites were devoted to Our Lady also. Malpans Palackal and Porukara gave an emphasis to preaching because they had found it absolutely necessary to make the Church in Malabar a vibrant Christian community. At the same time, we know that both of them were really men of prayer and penance, spending long hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.⁵² The community at Mannanam also used to spend long time in prayer, though they had also taken up various forms of priestly ministry like preaching homilies and retreats in the parishes.⁵³ That may be the reason why Vicar Apostolic Baccinelli found their life not very different from the way of life of the Carmelite Missionaries and gave them their Rule and Constitutions with some changes.⁵⁴ So at the time, there was not much difference externally or internally as the new Congregation was concerned except the addition of ‘Mother of Carmel’ to their name. The leather girdle given to them was a sign and symbol of their religious life and the small scapular was not an innovation in Malabar, though it was also a symbol of their Carmelite identity.

7. Carmelite Order and the Congregation

The net result of Baccinelli permitting the community of Mannanam to make their religious profession of simple vows under the Rule and slightly modified Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Order was the simultaneous presence of the members of the Carmelite Order and those of the new Carmelite Congregation in Malabar, but without any juridical relationship with the Carmelite Order. That may have given opportunities for discussion at various levels between the Vicar Apostolic and the higher superiors of the Order in Rome or between the Carmelite missionaries in Malabar and their higher superiors in Rome. Occasional reports on the Malabar mission also might have mentioned those facts along with explanations.⁵⁵ In his book on the life and activities of Fr Leopold Beccaro, OCD, the missionary,

⁵²Chronicles, CWC I, pp. 63-66; Porukara Kuriakose, *Founding Fathers*, 30; Valerian, *Most Rev Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, pp. 99-100.

⁵³Chronicles, CWC I, 32-33; Bernard, *CMI Congregation in Early Decades*, 39-40.

⁵⁴For example, Baccinelli’s Circular Letter to the Provincials, Priors and Religious of the Order dated June 29, 1860; Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 185-86, footnote 101.

⁵⁵Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 153.

Maniakkunnel has brought to light several such documents which are published for the first time. Parts of some letters of Msgr Baccinelli to the superiors of the Order, certain decisions related to the 'aggregation' of the new religious Congregation in Malabar to the Discalced Carmelite Order as its Third Order etc. are presented in the book. In a decision made by the General Chapter of the Order in relation to the appointment of a Vicar Provincial for the Vicariates Apostolic in India on 20 May 1859 and approved by the Propaganda Fide on 11 June 1859, we read: "The three Apostolic Vicariates together will have one regular superior, who has the authority and the title of the Vicar Provincial... His jurisdiction shall extend to all the missionaries of the three Vicariates, and also to all the residences, and to the monasteries of the Tertiaries, both founded and to be founded, with regard to the general discipline, and to his authority shall be submitted all the missionaries and the Tertiaries."⁵⁶

From the text it is abundantly clear that the decision pertains to the situation in the Malabar Vicariate where there existed both the Carmelite missionaries and the Tertiaries and their monasteries. There is no mention here who the Tertiaries were, or how those other than the missionaries became 'Tertiaries'. However, in order to bring the Tertiaries and their monasteries already founded and to be founded under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Provincial, a new post created.⁵⁷ There is also an indirect acknowledgment of the presence of the Tertiaries and their monasteries already existing in Malabar. Further ruling and specifics on the Tertiaries seem to have been left to the discussion and decision of the General Definitory of the Order.

8. Bishop Baccinelli's Request for Affiliation

We learn that Msgr Baccinelli had 'formally requested' the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites in Rome to incorporate the new religious congregation in Malabar into the Carmelite Order as Tertiaries and to give them all the privileges and indulgences of the Carmelite Order.⁵⁸ The text of that formal request remains unpublished. In the light of the decision of the General Chapter of the

⁵⁶Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 194.

⁵⁷Even though European Discalced Carmelite Missionaries were engaged in mission work in the Vicariates Apostolic for more than a century, it was for the first time that the post of the Vicar Provincial was created.

⁵⁸Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 156. AGOCD, Plut. 35 E-Letter of Mgr Baccinelli to the Superior General OCD, dated July 20, 1860.

Order on 20 May 1859, and the formal request of Baccinelli on 20 July 1860, the General Definitory made the following decision on 1 October 1860: "The Definitory General approved the establishment of such monasteries in India to which can be admitted those from the secular indigenous clergy who desire the habit of the Order under the title of the Tertiaries, provided they in everything perfectly observe the rules of our Tertiaries, and in everything are subject to the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicar ad instar (just as) the missionaries, and also of the Vicar Provincial and Preposit General."⁵⁹

The text seems to approve the establishment of monasteries already founded in Malabar or to be founded in future, where members from the indigenous secular clergy could be members. It adds three important 'provisos' or conditions namely: i) who desire the habit of the Order under the title of the Tertiaries, ii) in everything perfectly observe the rules of our Tertiaries, and iii) in everything are subject to the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicar, the Vicar General and Preposit General just as the missionaries. As far as we know, the text of none of those decisions was handed over to the superiors or members of the new Congregation. Without publishing the text of those decisions nor giving them a choice, Msgr Baccinelli declared the aggregation of the Congregation as Tertiaries of the Carmelite Order as an established fact.⁶⁰ Similar to his claim that *he* founded the Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Carmel, he also claimed that the new Congregation was accepted and aggregated to the Carmelite Order as its Tertiaries. Though well-intentioned, the step was flawed to say the least. Unless otherwise proved, it may not be wrong to say that the aggregation of the Carmelite Congregation to the OCD as its Third Order was without the knowledge and consent of Chavara and other members of the new Congregation. We have no information of them receiving the Rules and regulations of the Tertiaries at any time. If Msgr Stabilini had wished to see the Mannanam community to grow as a Congregation of the sons of St Teresa of Avila,⁶¹ Msgr Baccinelli

⁵⁹Maniakkunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 135. AGOCD, Acta Definitori Generalis, 1835-63, 213.

⁶⁰For the full text of the letter of Baccinelli, see *Chronicles*, CWC I, 168-169.

⁶¹Probably from the beginning of the community, the Carmelite Vicars Apostolic had hoped or desired that in future it will become a Carmelite Congregation of St Teresa of Avila. In the report of Fr Jerome Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Superior General, OCD, about Tertiaries dated 18th March 1884, he wrote: "Stabilini contribui con 200 rupie del proprio alle

fulfilled that by giving them the Rule and Constitutions of the Carmelite Order and later aggregating it to the Order as its Third Order, without their knowledge or consent.

9. Consequences

A crucial question still remains unanswered, namely, whether St Chavara and the other members of the Congregation were made aware of the important juridical consequences of the aggregation that they had to sacrifice the internal autonomy of the Congregation and accept the authority of the Vicar Provincial and his Delegate and ultimately of the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelite Order?⁶² Were they aware of the fact that from then on they were reduced to mere spectators to both the helpful and hurtful rulings and actions of the new superiors without any say in the matter? From history we know that there were no serious problems as long as Msgr Bernardine Baccinelli and Chavara were still alive and Fr Leopold Beccaro was the Delegate of the Vicar Provincial. Though some changes were introduced by Fr Leopold, the Delegate into the Constitutions given by Baccinelli in 1855, it was known that it was in consultation with Msgr Baccinelli that he introduced them and so there was no much resistance from the part of the members of the Congregation. However, when Msgr. Leonard Mellano, Baccinelli's successor, started to make drastic changes in the Constitutions indiscriminately⁶³ with suppressive measures against some members reducing the other members to mere spectators and victims, the situation was moving to a point of no return.

fondazione di quell Retiro, sperando per avventura che avesse a divenire un giorno un regolare convento di religiosi di S. Teresa." ACO Ponzenza Maggio 1884, sommario 2. (Maniakunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*, 151. footnote 9). If that was the case, Msgr Baccinelli became the architect to make that dream a reality.

⁶²In the letter of Baccinelli dated 27 February 1861 there was no mention of such matters which carried important consequences.

⁶³Letters sent to Rome protesting against the changes made by Mellano, *Positio*, 178, footnote 28.