

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, INDIGENOUS WORSHIP

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1. Introduction

Worship or religious cult plays an important role in the human destiny. The essence of religion is more intelligible in worship form than mere statement of its principles. Cult expresses a fundamental attitude of the human being because it manifests a relationship, namely a relationship between human being and the Divine. It affects the totality of one's being and he or she makes use of signs and symbols in order to express this relationship. Therefore, signs and symbols have got an important place in human life. Objects, gestures, colours, paintings, sound, etc., are symbols that contain experience of the Reality and they bridge the gap between the visible and the invisible. A religious symbol always contains the experience of the Divine.

In every act of cult or worship there is a realm of experience that culminates in the experiences of the Divine. When the worshipper offers flowers, fruits, or incense, he or she attains a divine manifestation. This inner experience of the Divine attained through the rituals is the fundamental phenomenon of every religion. As a result, a transformation takes place in the life of the worshipper and he or she becomes a real sharer in the Divine. This article is an attempt to evaluate the worship pattern of the early Christians in India. While an indigenous form of Christian worship is very much lacking here, we also come across with more foreign influences.

2. Indigenous Christian Presence in India

Christian faith was brought to India in the first century itself. The firm tradition of the Church is that Apostle Thomas arrived at Kodungalloor

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(Muziris, Malabar Coast) in 52 A.D. with the ‘Good News’ of Jesus Christ.¹ He founded seven churches, rather seven *Christian communities*, by baptizing the local people. This became the nucleus of the first Christian community in India. The seven churches or rather Christian communities were known by the name of the place, namely Kodungalloor, Palayoor, Kokkamangalam, Kottakavu, Kollam, Niranam, and Chayal. Today some of them are well-known pilgrim centres that attract many pilgrims both from India and abroad. Sources like *Jornada of Dom Alexis De Menezes* confirm that Thomas the Apostle also preached the Gospel in the Coromandel Coast (East Coast of South India), that is, in Mylapore in Tamil Nadu.² Later, due to some disastrous events, the Christians had to flee to Malabar side and join the other communities of St. Thomas. The martyrdom of the Apostle happened in 72 A.D. near Mylapore. His Tomb is in the Cathedral of Mylapore. From the 4th century, all ecclesiastical traditions confirm the foundation of Christian Church in India by Apostle Thomas.³ The Thomas Christians, both Catholics and other denominations, are proud to be called that they are the descendents of the Apostle Thomas. The Christians of St. Thomas were known ‘*Nazaranis*’ in ancient days resembling other names such as ‘*Namboothiris*’ and ‘*Nairs*’ in the Kerala society. Perhaps they were (are) the only Christians who were known by the name of the Apostle in the Christendom. The prefix ‘Syro’ (Syriac) was added to Malabar Church officially at the end of the 19th century in order to distinguish the Church which used Syriac as a liturgical language from the practices of the Latin Church in India.

¹Recently there was a negative remark regarding the South Indian Mission of St. Thomas by Pope Benedict XVI. Pope said: “Thomas first evangelized Syria and Persia and then penetrated as far as Western India from where Christianity reached also South India.” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 28 September 2006, 4. Since then, there appeared a number of studies commenting on and interpreting the statement of Pope Benedict. Later, an official correction was made to the Text. The corrected Text that appeared on the official Vatican website reads as follows: “Thomas first ... penetrated ... Western India *from where also he finally reached Southern India.*” What we lack in this regard is historical documents regarding the evangelization of St. Thomas in India. This does not mean that St. Thomas had not reached South India, especially Kerala state.

²P. Malekandathil, ed., *Jornado of Dom Alexis De Menezes*, Kochi: L.R.C. Publications, 2003, 14-15.

³M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984, 1: 26-28.

It was an early Christian tradition that wherever the apostles went, there they founded the church (community) and celebrated the Eucharist (Breaking of the Bread) with them, accepting many symbols and elements from the local culture of the people. The evolution of different Rites and formation of liturgical families originated out of the encounter of the early Church with different cultures. There is no doubt at all that there existed an indigenous form of Christian worship on the Malabar Coast in the first century itself, the author of which was none other than St. Thomas, the apostle of India. According to a strong tradition in Malabar, the Apostle ordained two bishops, one Kepha to the See of Kodungalloor and another Paul, both from native Christians.⁴ The Thomas Christians continued the Apostolic succession and liturgical tradition handed down to them by the Apostle till the arrival of the Syrian Christians.

3. Relationships with Other Christians

In the history of Thomas Christians we come across with two major events that determined to a great extent their destiny, namely, encounters with the Church of Persia and the Western Church. These encounters, though invigorated their Christian life, had their own negative effects.

A. Persian Migration

The Thomas Christians lived in South India peacefully keeping their Christian faith intact fully integrating in the socio-cultural life of the local people. This made them an indigenous Christian community keeping its worship in the indigenous pattern, following the model of the Apostle. A change in the pattern of such worships started with the migration of a mercantile group of Persian Christians from Mesopotamia to Malabar Coast during the 4th century. Historians suggest various reasons for the migration of a large group of Persians to the Malabar Coast. It is a historical fact that the Persian Church was severely persecuted by Saphor II (309-379). The Church of 'Thomas Christians' was a strong Christian community in India at that time. Quite possibly, Christians from Persia might have come to India for their survival and livelihood. Some other authors say that Persian Christians were well-known tradesmen and their skill in trade led them to Malabar Coast to make trade relations with India. Indeed, the Malabar tradition seems to be very strong on the migration of

⁴M. Mundadan, *Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1970, 63.

72 Jewish Christian families from Nineveh, Mesopotamia, Jerusalem, etc., with a bishop, Joseph of Edessa, and a number of priests in 345 A.D., under the leadership of an able Persian merchant by name Thomas of *Kynai*.⁵ These Christian tradesmen soon won the favour of the King of Kodungalloor,⁶ an important seaport in South India during the early centuries. Seeing their skill in trade, King Cheraman Perumal of Malabar gave them many privileges written on copper plates. Unfortunately, those copper plates were lost in the later period. There is a consensus today in the Syro-Malabar Church that these Persian Christians brought the Syriac Liturgy and Syriac Rite to Kerala from Mesopotamia in the 4th century. This had a negative influence in the Christian life of the native Christians. They never developed a worship pattern as their own taking signs and symbols from the Malabar tradition. They were satisfied with the Syriac liturgy, brought to them by the Christians from central Asia. Thus, *Kynai* Thomas appears as a link, which managed Syrian bishops come to Malabar in the later centuries. An 18th century report (probably written by Joseph Cariattil) does not speak of Syrian bishops governing Indian Church. They “helped the nation in everything related to religious discipline and sciences. Therefore, the nation always considered the Babylonians (Persian Christians) as their benefactors. This is the reason why in the following years, for want of bishops from India, the Babylonians without any other motive governed the Christians of Malabar.”⁷ The descendents of these Christians, namely ‘*Knanites*’, today form the Archdiocese of Kottayam. They are an endogamous group keeping an identity as their own among the Thomas Christians. The last three Syrian bishops (who were also the bishops of Thomas Christians) of this community in Malabar during the 16th century were Mar Jacob (1498-1552), Mar Joseph (1556-1569), and Mar Abraham (1568-1597).

⁵Today most of the Church historians in India accept this view. See J. Thekkedath, “Christianity in India,” *Voice of St. Thomas*, July-September 2006, National Shrine of St. Thomas Basilica Madras-Mylapore, 9; J. Kollamparambil, *The Babylonian Origin of the Southists Among the St. Thomas Christians*, OCA 241, Roma 1992, 68. References to this event appear also in the above-mentioned volumes of M. Mundadan and P. Malekandathil.

⁶Malekandathil, ed., *Jornado of Dom Alexis*, 17.

⁷Mundadan, *Traditions*, 116.

B. Portuguese Colonisation

Towards the close of the 15th century, the Portuguese navigator Vasco De Gamma, along with his companions, reached the Malabar Coast. Starting new colonies in the Eastern land and improving their trade motivated the Portuguese to withstand any hardship to reach far distant land like India. The Thomas Christians warmly welcomed the Western Christians as their own brothers. Later, however, when they started to *purify* the existing Syriac Rite, they retaliated against them strongly because they were at home with the Syriac Rite and Syriac Liturgy by this time. Even though this process is named '*latinisation*' in the history of Malabar Church, the contribution of the Western Christians to the Malabar Church was praiseworthy both in the secular and ecclesiastical areas. They created a missionary zeal among the Thomas Christians. Starting of Christian schools, better seminary formation for the clergy, publication of Christian literature, and propagation of popular devotions such as Rosary, Way of the Cross, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, devotion to Mother Mary are some of their best contributions to the Thomas Christians. In fact, these popular devotions have greatly contributed for the growth of Christian life in the Malabar Coast. Even today these devotions have an important place in the spiritual life of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese documented all what they directly saw and heard from the local Christians. These accounts give a comprehensive view of the Christian life that was flourishing on the Malabar Coast during the 16th century.

4. Socio-Religious Life of Thomas Christians

According to the 16th century traditions, the socio-cultural life of the Thomas Christians resembled very much that of the local people. We get information regarding their socio-religious life from the local traditions and writings of the Portuguese writers. Thomas Christians did not mix up with the lower caste and conversions from them were not encouraged.⁸ The Christians had a number of privileges from the local kings. The local customs connected with childbirth, marriage, and death were adapted almost intact by the Thomas Christians. Christian children were trained under Hindu masters together with children of high caste in the traditional way of learning. Christians were good merchants and military men that earned good reputation from the kings as well as the people. They dressed

⁸L. W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of Thomas*, Cambridge, 1982, 167-209.

like Hindus and actively took part in national festivals. Externally, their churches resembled very much the Hindu temples. It was strange for the Portuguese to see that they could not notice much difference between Thomas Christians and native Hindus in their social life.⁹

Regarding the church life, the administration consisted of a bishop, who was always sent from Persia, and usually a monk from a monastery. He was the spiritual head of the community, who administered only the sacraments and not at all involved in the day-to-day affairs of the churches.¹⁰ The local administration of the church was the task of the Archdeacon who was a priest from the Thomas Christians with a decisive power over the native Christians. Very often he, in consultation with representatives of the Christians, took decisions on all important matters. That is the reason why we observe long absence of Persian bishops in Malabar from 10th century, except the last three bishops in the 16th century.

The origin of the apostolic community would naturally imply that St. Thomas the Apostle gave them a way of worship with local adaptations, possibly in the local language of the people. A shift to this practice might have taken place only when the Christians from Persia came with their own liturgy in the 4th century. Even though there were contrary reports, most of the accounts agree that fermented bread was used for the celebration of the Eucharist. According to Penteado, it was wheat bread mixed with salt and olive oil that the local Christians used in their Eucharistic celebrations. Barreto wrote that the priest consecrated fermented bread mixed with certain oil, which they believed was consecrated by Our Lord Himself. The description about the Eucharistic bread, given by Monserrate, another Portuguese writer, is interesting:

Previously they had many rites in the Mass, which they call *Qurbana* meaning oblation; because they make a round loaf of rice with a ball in the middle, do not know whether of the same material or of wheat flour; I do not know whether only this ball is consecrated or the

⁹Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 1: 195.

¹⁰Placid Podipara, "The Hierarchical Subordination of the Pre-Seventeenth Century Church of the Thomas Christians of India" in *Four Essays on the Pre-Seventeenth Century Church of the Thomas Christians of India*, Changanacherry: Sandesanilayam Publications, 1977, 28-39.

whole loaf; the procedure is this, the priest consumed the ball and distributed the loaf among the people.¹¹

Obviously, there were different practices in the celebration of Holy Mass. Priests celebrated in different forms. As regards the wine used, it was prepared from dried grapes by putting them in water and then pressing juice from them. This juice was consecrated because grape wine was not available in India at that time.¹²

According to Dionysio, the *cathenars*¹³ did not baptize or say Mass except now and then, as the bishops reserved to themselves the privilege of celebrating the Eucharist. From this it seems that there were some restrictions on the clergy in the matter of celebrating the Mass. Similar was the case of sacrament of Baptism. There were many unbaptized among the Thomas Christians because priests were not allowed to administer this sacrament. Very little is mentioned about the sacrament of confirmation. According to bishop Roz, who was the Portuguese bishop of the Thomas Christians, confession was introduced among the Thomas Christians by Mar Joseph (1504-1550). For this he translated the Latin formula of absolution into Syriac. Even at this time, matrimony was predominantly a social celebration with many adaptations from Hindu marriage.

The Ecclesial life of the Thomas Christians was very much affected by the contact with Portuguese (Western) Christians. By the time the Portuguese arrived on the Malabar Coast in 1498, the East Syriac liturgy was well-rooted there, even though the Thomas Christians did not know its language and Semitic origin. They had deep attachment to this liturgy, one reason being the 'sacredness' that they attributed to Syriac language. Portuguese missionaries knew this and while they intended to purify the Thomas Christians' Rite they did not change the language. That was why Syriac continued as the liturgical language of the Thomas Christians after the Synod of Diamper in 1599. It is to be admitted that except the Eucharist all other sacraments were thoroughly *Latinised* by the Portuguese. According to Church historians, it was not Synod of Diamper and Archbishop Menezes that made all the changes in the ecclesial life of the Thomas Christians, instead bishop Francis Roz who was appointed by

¹¹Mundadan, *Traditions*, 165; J. Madey, ed., *The Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, Kottayam: Name of the Publisher, 1982, 255-256.

¹²Mundadan, *Traditions*, 166.

¹³Malayalam form of the Syriac word *Kasisa*, meaning the priest.

Menezes as bishop of Thomas Christians (1600-1624). The Portuguese introduced many Latin customs in the Church life of the Thomas Christians, such as Roman vestments of different colours for the liturgy of each day, the use of unfermented bread, auricular confession, statues of Western saints, etc. They imposed priestly celibacy and western type of cassock and tonsure for priests. New churches were constructed in the Western style and popular devotions were encouraged. The Latin Pontifical came into use and confession before Holy Communion was made compulsory. The Latin liturgical calendar was introduced for all liturgical purposes. Thomas Christians protested against these new Latin customs. The protest reached such an extreme that it divided the community, and one party eventually sought communion with the (Jacobite) Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1653.

5. Why a Crisis in the Syro-Malabar Church?

It is quite certain that the above mentioned two Christian groups, who were primarily tradesmen and later took the mandates of official Church, had great role in making the destinies of the Malabar Church. But first and foremost Malabar Church is an Apostolic Church, founded by Apostle Thomas in Malabar and it must grow as an indigenous Church well-rooted in the socio-religious environment of India. The crisis in the Malabar Church directly points to the Church's ancestral tradition (heritage), which eventually seems to have been reflected in the 'Liturgy' of the Church. Vatican Council II called for a reform in the Church, especially a reform in the liturgical life in view of a renewal in the Christian life of the faithful. As far as the Malabar Church was concerned, for a long period the Church was following the liturgy of the Persian Church in (East) Syriac language. During the 16th century and later the liturgy was thoroughly Latinised. The spiritual and theological formation of the faithful, however, continued to be in the Western style. It created a complex and knotty situation.

During the later renewal of liturgy in the 1980s and later, a minority group of bishops strongly supported a total restoration of the Persian (Syrian) liturgy for the use of the Malabar Church.¹⁴ For them, return to 'ancestral heritage' was confined only to pre-sixteenth century Persian (Syrian) tradition and liturgy. They were never concerned about the

¹⁴See the document "Final Judgement of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches Concerning the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana" in *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, Kottayam: OIRSI Publications, 1995, 96.

situation of the Malabar Church in the first four centuries before the Persian immigration and the period of Latin rule after the Synod of Diamper and the present context of the Malabar Church. But a majority of the dioceses never desired for a total restoration of the Persian liturgy. Bishop George Alapatt of Trichur (bishop since 1944) wrote a long letter to Eugene Cardinal Tisserant¹⁵ in 1938, entitled “No Return to Chaldeism.” In the letter he mentioned the possible after effects of a total restoration of the Chaldean liturgy in the Malabar Church: “Both people and clergy have come to love our *modified* Chaldean Rite to such an extent that the pure Chaldean Rite is looked upon as a strange and foreign Rite. A reversal to the pure Chaldean Rite would seriously affect some of the popular and cherished devotions in Malabar.”¹⁶ He, along with a majority of bishops and faithful, wished for a renewal in the liturgy taking into consideration the principle of restoration, reform and adaptation promoted by the Vatican Council II.¹⁷ They stood for new experiments and new Eucharistic Prayers in the Liturgy along the practices in the Latin tradition. These two views truly created a tension, which eventually developed into a crisis in the Malabar Church.

6. Indigenous People, Indigenous Worship

Syro-Malabar Church is an Apostolic Church founded by Apostle Thomas in the first century. The Church must be indigenous in all possible ways, especially in the liturgical celebrations. The Indian *sadhanas* such as *mediation*, *namajapa*, *Kirthana*, *Pranidhana*, *bhajans*, *arathi*, *Deepanjaly*, *repeating Ista manthra*, *silenc*, *etc.*, must have an important place in the liturgy of the Church. As the other apostles, St. Thomas might have celebrated the ‘Breaking of the Bread’ with Indians accepting many symbols and elements from the life situations of the people. The above-mentioned *sadhanas* may be taken as ancestral heritage, which the Church accepted from the local pattern of worship of the people. New *anaphoras* (Eucharistic Prayers) must be formulated considering the need of the faithful. The Indian *anaphoras* composed by Dharmaram College, Bangalore (1969) and the Liturgical Centre in the Archdiocese of

¹⁵French Cardinal; he was the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches during 1936-59.

¹⁶See *Ernakulam Missam* (Diocesan Bulletin of Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly), 15, 8 (1975), 326.

¹⁷Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §24.

Ernakulam (1973) may be taken as models for the creation of new *anaphoras*. As far the Sources are concerned, the *Anaphora* of Addai and Mari was born in the theological centre of Edessa in the early centuries. New *Anaphoras* must emerge in the theological centres of India along the Edesean model. As far as possible, Indian *ragas* must be taken in composing new liturgical hymns. The liturgical text must contain symbols, language, philosophy, and literature taken from the living conditions of people.

From the 4th century (since the arrival of *Kynai* Thomas at Kodungallur) till the second half of the 20th century (Vatican Council II) the Malabar Church used Syriac as its liturgical language. Syriac was unknown to the faithful in Malabar. Nobody was bothered about what the priest was reciting in the Liturgy. Still those liturgical texts can be taken as an *Early Tradition* for further research, adaptation, and inculturation. As Cardinal Parecattil puts it, the Chaldean Liturgy may be taken as a *canvas* for drawing ‘beautiful pictures’ from the *life context of the people*.¹⁸

The contribution of the Western Church to the Malabar Church, especially in the field of liturgy, can be taken in the realm of popular devotions. From the 16th century onwards the Church developed a spirituality based on popular devotion, which was a contribution of the Western missionaries. Popular devotions such as rosary, way of the cross, first Friday devotion, forty hour adoration, Marian devotion on Saturday, Novenas to the saints, and remembering the departed in November are some of the most popular devotions that have contributed much to the spiritual growth of the Thomas Christians.

The Syro-Malabar Church is an individual Church with all the rights and freedom in liturgy. Inspired by the power of the Spirit the Church must take firm steps taking into consideration the past history of the Community. What happened in the past is simply that the official church concentrated on the restoration of the Chaldean liturgy. Mere restoration will not answer the aspirations of the faithful. For them what is necessary is the experience of the Divine; therefore, the Indian *sadhanas* mentioned above will serve better. The Eucharistic celebration, which is the principal

¹⁸Mundadan Gracious [or Gratian; also check the order of the names]; “Cardinal Parecattil: Avant-Garde of Liturgical Reform” in *Cardinal Parecattil: The Man, His Vision and His Contribution*, Mathias Mundadan, ed. Alwaye: STAR Publication, 1988.

liturgy of the Church must be in the model of a meditative chanting on the mysteries of Christ. Indian symbols, such as water, light, incense, flowers, etc., must get proper place in the celebration in the form of *arati*, decorating the altar, lighting the Indian lamp, garlanding the Image, etc. These elements are the very basic symbols of *puja* in the Indian tradition.

7. Unity in Diversity

The principle of ‘Unity in Diversity’ is far more appreciated today than ever. People in every field, whether educational or socio-cultural, are eager to establish new ways and means for presenting their findings. This dimension has also influenced the area of worship to an extent. The younger generations of today want to practise a religion that gives more importance to human values, adapting valuable elements from their own cultural ethos than a rigid uniform religious practice. Before Vatican Council II the Church demanded a rigorous practice of religion. Everywhere Roman tradition and way of worship were stressed. But the Council started a liturgical renewal in view of enhancing the Christian life of the faithful. The Constitution on Liturgy issued by Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, very clearly says: “Even in Liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples.”¹⁹ The mind of the Council is to foster local Churches giving importance to their cultural values, religious literature, philosophy, music, etc., while maintaining the ‘faith and moral’ of the Church intact. Before the Council, the official Church was nurturing the Roman tradition in every culture. The Vatican Council accepted the values of other cultures and traditions. Syro-Malabar Church is an individual church of Apostolic origin. But the Church is still confined to the Kerala situation due to various reasons. That is, indeed, a sad story. But from the 1950s we see migrations of large number of Syro-Malabarians to other parts of India, Europe, and the United States of America. The purpose of these migrations is mainly for new job opportunities and better living conditions. Obviously, they had to encounter diverse socio-cultural and ethnic communities at different places on earth. They had to adapt to new situations and assimilate many elements from other cultures. The principle of ‘Unity in Diversity’ seems

¹⁹*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §34.

to be a right model in this changing scenario. What is foundationally important for any Christian is the faith in Christ and unity of the Church; its sociological and religious expression may change according to time and circumstances.

Though Apostolic by origin, the liturgical form of the Syro-Malabar Church is a combination of Persian (Syrian) and Roman traditions. The Church has not yet developed a liturgy of its own. There are evidences of indigenous forms of worship in the early centuries. A research in this area, however, has not taken place. The Church had to accept the Persian *Anaphora* of Addai and Mari probably after the immigration of Persian Christians in the 4th century: even this remains inconclusive. Other liturgical texts reached India through Persian bishops in the following centuries. No creative work in liturgy has taken place in those centuries. In the 16th century, the extant Syriac text was thoroughly Latinised by the Portuguese colonizers and many Latin elements were subsequently added. Malabar Church followed the liturgical calendar of the Latin Church till the renewal of Vatican Council II. Now, there is a confusion regarding norm of liturgical renewal, namely, whether the renewal should start with the first century or the fourth century (i.e., since the migration of the Persian Christians with their own liturgy). Malabar Church is an indigenous church and her liturgy must be indigenous by all means. This is the tradition of all apostolic churches. At the same time the church must imbibe possible adaptations from other churches, cultures, and religions.

In the history of churches we come across two Patriarchal Churches, namely Armenian Church in Armenia and Maronite Church in Lebanon. Both these churches have their own liturgical traditions imbibing possible influences from other sister churches in the course of history. “While a distinctive Armenian liturgical tradition was being formed in the 5th to 7th centuries, there was strong liturgical influence from Syria and Jerusalem. Later, there was a period of byzantinization, and finally during the Middle Ages many Latin usages were adopted.”²⁰ The Armenian Church well accepted the influences from other churches in the liturgical realm as a sign of her growth, and never considered the same as a threat to her unity or uniqueness. In the case of the Maronite Church, the experience is not different altogether: “The Maronite liturgy is of West Syrian origin, but it

²⁰Roberson Ronald, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 2004, 25-26.

has been influenced by the East Syrian and Latin traditions. The Eucharist is essentially a variation of the Syriac liturgy of St. James.”²¹ These Churches are examples of evolving their own liturgies accepting possible influences from other liturgies. The principle of unity in diversity seems to be more relevant in those Patriarchal Churches.

8. Conclusion

Worship is very much related to Christian community. First of all, church is basically a worshipping community. When Christian communities were formed in different parts of the world in the early centuries, the principal form of their worship, namely ‘Breaking of the Bread’, gave them their unique religious identity. The rite of ‘Breaking of the Bread’ grew in different cultures and nations, assimilating signs and symbols from the life situation of the people. Therefore, we see diversity within the celebrations of the same Rite.

Syro-Malabar Church is an Apostolic Church of the first century. What is lacking today in this Church is ‘a consensus’ regarding the norms of liturgical renewal. Instead of a consensus what exists is a cold war between traditionalists and reformists. Traditionalists wish to see Syro-Malabar Church as an offshoot of Chaldean Church and its Chaldean liturgy; the reformists, however, insist that the Syro-Malabar Church is Apostolic and its liturgy indigenous, having a proper place for other influences and further evolution taking into consideration the time and place.

²¹Ronald, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, 166.