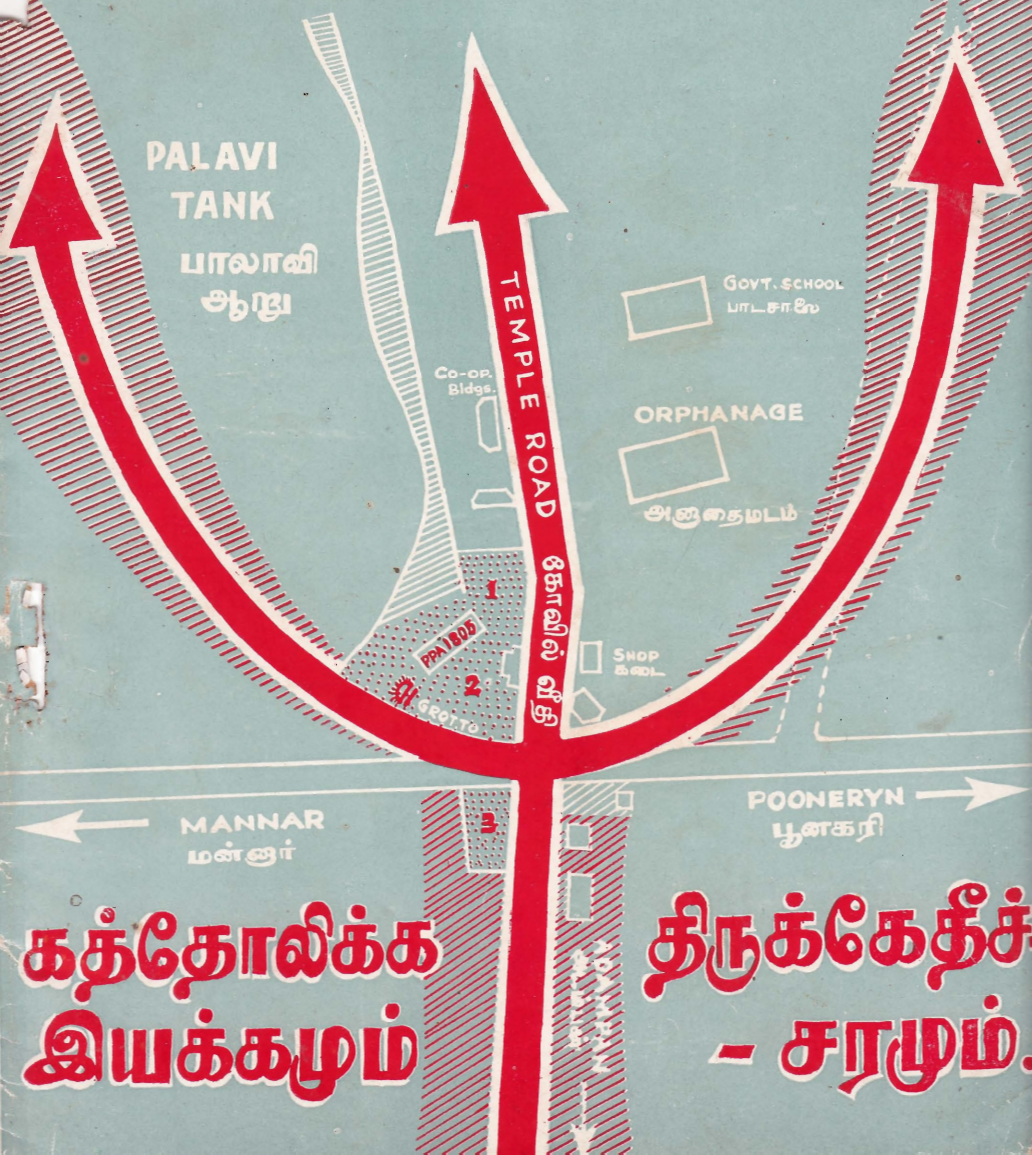


CATHOLIC & THIRUKETHEES- ACTION - WARAM



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CATHOLIC ACTION
and
THIRUKETHEESWARAM

by

SIR KANTHIAH VAITHIANATHAN. C.B.E. B.Sc. (LOND.)

“ KODDIL ”
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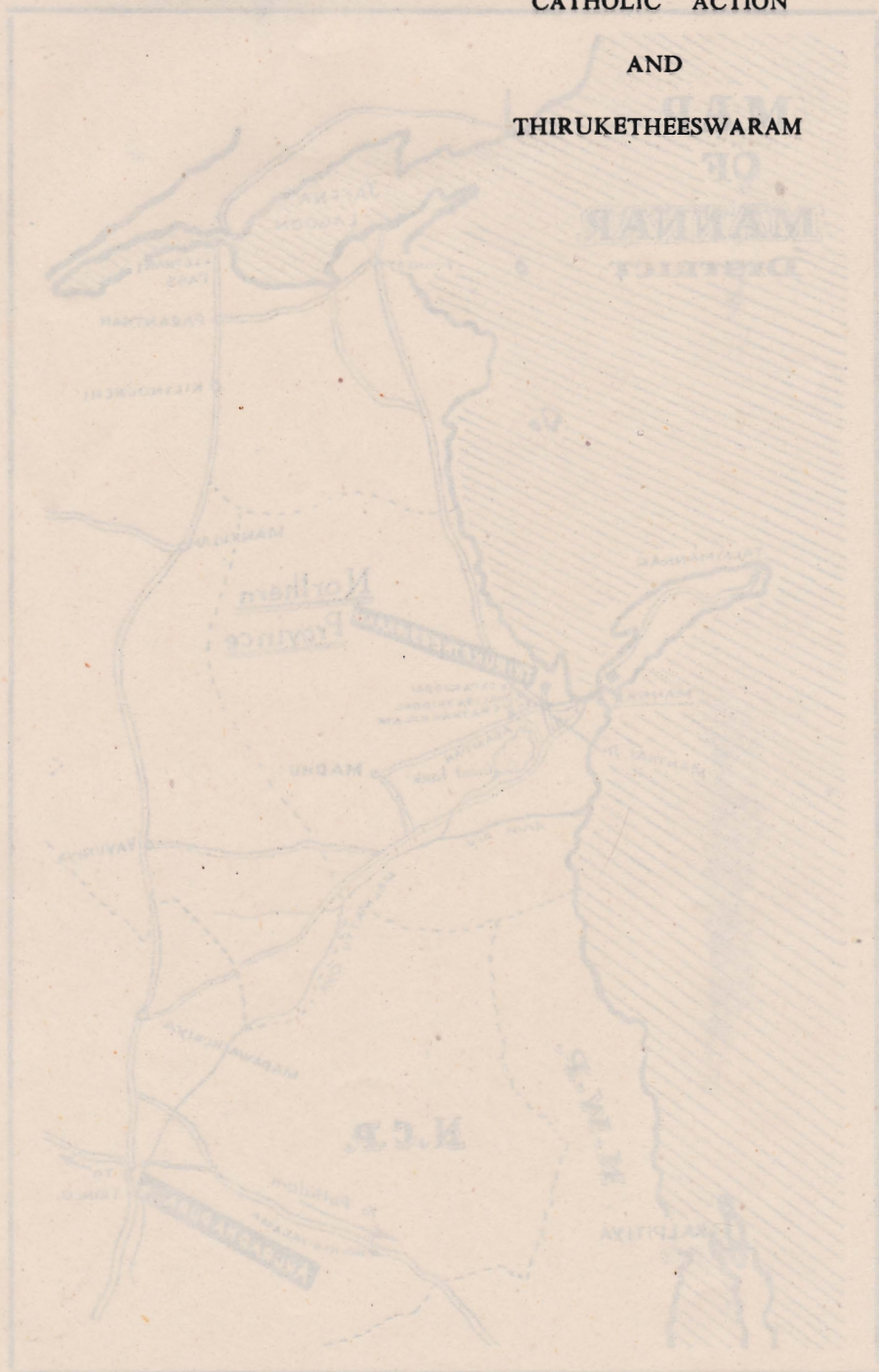
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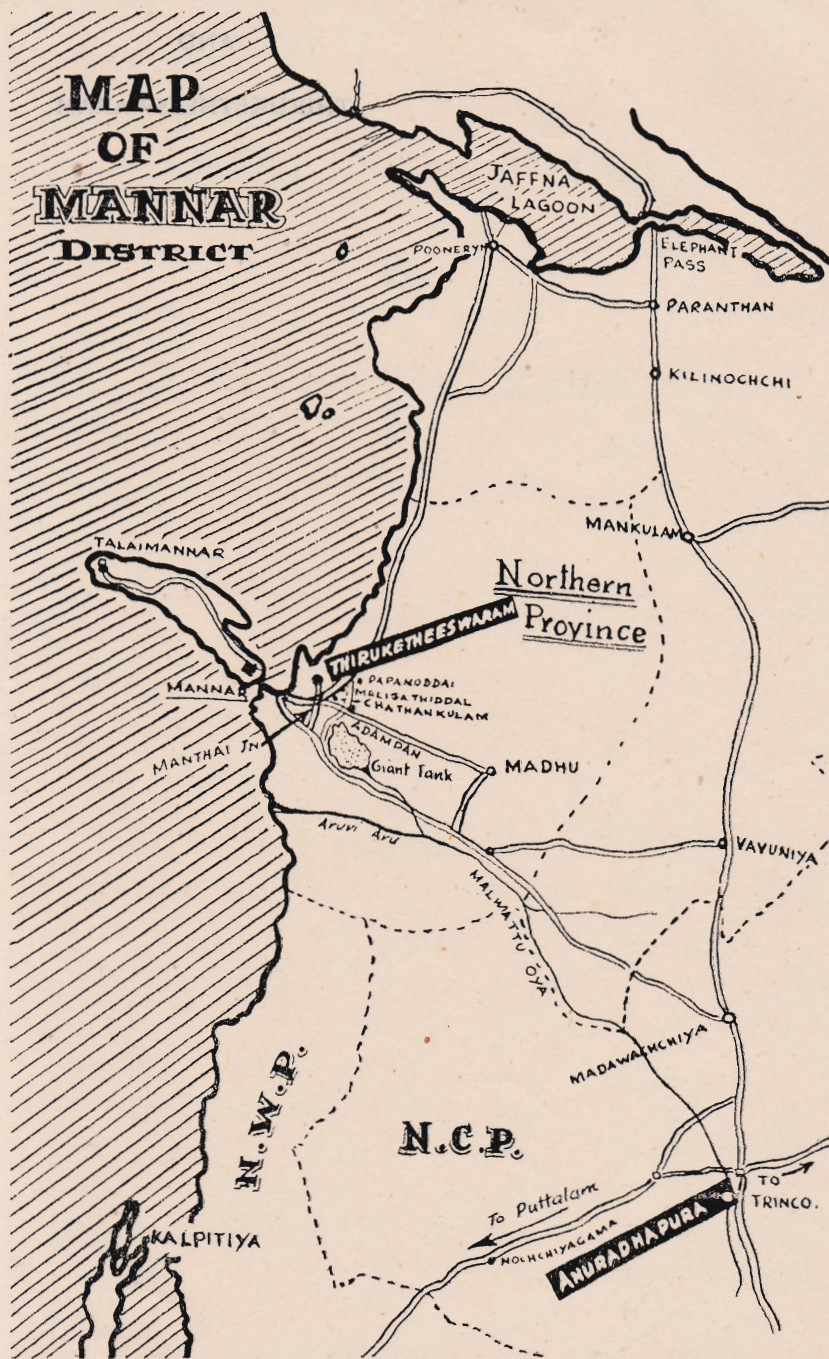
CATHOLIC ACTION

AND

THIRUKETHEESWARAM



MAP OF MANNAR DISTRICT



CATHOLIC ACTION AND THIRUKETHEESWARAM

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreward	1—2
Chapter I <i>Historical — A brief outline of recent events</i>	3—6
Chapter II <i>A Grand Plan — Thrust into and encirclement of Thiruketheeswaram</i>	7—14
Chapter III <i>A Total attack on anything Hindu anywhere and everywhere—A few glaring instances only</i>	15—23
Chapter IV <i>The Slow Reaction and a “Caution”</i>	24—29
Chapter V <i>The Course of Prosecution of the Government Agent and Negotiation for Settlement</i>	30—34
<i>Memorandum of Settlement</i>	35—36
Chapter VI <i>The Present Position — Finality must be reached</i>	37—42
Appendix A <i>Statement by Mr. K. C. Thangarajah</i>	43—46
Appendix B <i>Letter to Land Commissioner dated 28th Nov. 63</i>	47—50

CONTENTS

Page	
1-2	Foreword
3-6	Chapter I Historical — A brief outline of recent events
7-14	Chapter II A Grand Plan — Thrust into and encouragement of Thirukkeswaram
15-22	Chapter III A Total attack on existing Hindu organisations and everywhere — A few flying instances only
23-29	Chapter IV The Slow Reaction and a "Caution"
30-34	Chapter V The Course of Prosecution of the Government Agent and Negotiation for Settlement
35-36	Memorandum of Settlement
37-42	Chapter VI The Present Position — Finally must be reached
43-46	Appendix A Statement by Mr. K. C. Thangarajah
47-50	Appendix B Letter to Lord Commissioner dated 28th Nov. 63

FOREWARD

"Burn the lot" said His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna, in jest no doubt, when in a happy mood after we had come to an Agreement, I pointed out to him a pile of files about a foot high on my table in Colombo and said, "All that, my Lord, are papers in connection with my troubles at Thirukettheeswaram with the Catholics and the Government Agent." In that happy mood I might have followed up the jest and made a gesture with a bon fire, but we were in a hurry to keep the appointment with the Land Commissioner on 21st January, 1964, to announce the Agreement and receive his blessing to it. It has been a most painful duty to me to delve back into these files again to extract a few of the salient facts necessary to drive my point home in this small pamphlet.

I have omitted from this pamphlet many other events and sordid details, however relevant to the issue, in order not to embarrass His Lordship or other Catholic friends of goodwill, who may still wish to explore ways and means of letting the Hindus alone for all time in their little restricted area of a mound which is Thirukettheeswaram, hemmed in by the sea and the saline marsh all round. We ask for little. We pray that we be assured of the free and unhinderable use of the only decent and direct approach to it of less than half a mile from the main road. We are anxious that the landless and homeless Hindus of the area should be allowed free and unobstructed right to enjoy the benefits of Government land regulations in respect of under about 10 acres only of buildable land which remains available for distribution in this neighbourhood. Above all, we wish to live at peace and harmony with

our neighbours. In pursuit of this ideal we have so far remained patient despite grave provocation and many acts of actual violence and injustice.

I have taken great responsibility on my own shoulders by keeping the knowledge of a nasty situation away from the public, both Catholic and Hindu. The present developments force me to come into the open without any further dilly-dallying. The responsibility for this publication falls now on other shoulders. I have honestly endeavoured to be factual as far as practically possible in such circumstances. I am prepared to prove the statements made in this publication before any impartial Tribunal.

I count an innumerable number of friends among the Catholic community, to whom I can only say that if they have any doubts as to my goodwill and honesty of purpose, I am at their disposal to render a fuller account. To my Hindu friends I need only advice forbearance.

May the One God whom both Catholics and Hindus worship, in different forms and ways, grant them satisfaction to live side by side at peace.

Kanthiah Vaithianathan

“Koddil”

Thiruketheeswaram.

7-8-64.

Catholic Action and Thiruketheeswaram

Chapter I - Historical

A brief outline of recent events

The great Fort of Mathottai and the Siva Temple of Thiruketheeswaram occupied historically a pre-eminent position in Ceylon for over two thousand years until this region presented to the Portuguese Catholics "the opportunity of displaying their missionary zeal in a region insusceptible of political resistance." In 1520 Lope De Britto arrived on the Pearl Banks of Arippe. In 1544 the edict went out that all Hindu temples on the south coast of the Dekkan should be "plundered" and destroyed and an expedition was fitted out for this purpose, which summoned the King of Jaffna "either to submit and become tributary to Portugal, or to prepare to encounter the marauding fleet." At about the same time Mannar and, no doubt, Mathottai received the "benefits of conversion", and Thiruketheeswaram Temple itself was razed to the ground. Thereafter, "Jaffna was taken, the palace consumed and the King in his extremity being forced to make terms with the conqueror,was made to surrender the island of Mannar to the Portuguese, who forthwith occupied and fortified it." It needs only a little imagination to see from where the materials for the fortification came. With a series of further expeditions, the kingdom of Jaffna, including the Mannar District, "was competely reduced, and in 1617 the King was carried captive to Goa and there executed." Thiruketheeswaram was erased from even the memory of the people of Ceylon.

It was left to Sri La Sri Arumuga Navalar, 350 years later, to bring to light the lyrics sung by saint Sambanthar

Note : Quotations in the first paragraph are from "Ceylon" by Emmerson Tennent.

in the VII th century and saint Sundarar in the IXth century in which the glories of the Lord of Thiruketheeswaram, the greatness of the Port of Mathottai and the richness of this part of Jaffna kingdom were eulogised in no uncertain terms. It was Navalar also who edited and published Peria-Puranam (of XIIth century) which related the life history of these and other Saiva saints and made references to Thiruketheeswaram in Mathottai and Koneswaram in Trincomalee, which opened the eyes of the Hindus of Ceylon. In 1872 Navalar made an appeal to the Jaffna people that it was their prime duty to restore these temples, laying special emphasis on the restoration of Thiruketheeswaram which was in their own Northern Province. It was not until after Navalar's death that the Jaffna people formed a Restoration Society in 1893 to collect subscriptions and rebuild their time-honoured temple of Thiruketheeswaram. It is on record that even at that time opposition to this Hindu effort came from the Catholic hierarchy of the day. Nevertheless, a few acres of land was purchased from the Government at a public auction and a small temple was consecrated in 1903.

The central shrine which exists today was reconstructed and re - consecrated in about 1921 by the Hindu officers of Jaffna working in Mannar, at the Kachcheri as well as in the Railway Extension Dept constructing the Talai - Mannar line. With the passage of time the management of the temple passed into the hands of the Nattucoddai Chettiars of Colombo, who continued some form of regular daily service thanks to their religious zeal, by keeping at the site a brahmin priest and a care-taker, but the temple itself was getting into bad state of disrepair. The present "Thiruketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society" was formed in Colombo on October 19, 1948, and under its auspices the temple as it stood was repaired and the Kumbapishekam ceremony was performed in August 1952. The reconstruction of an entirely new temple somewhat reminiscent, of necessity on a much lower key, of the glory of its predecessor was planned with the advice of savants and sthapatys learned in the art of temple construction according to Hindu shastras, and foundation for it was laid on 27 th March, 1953. It has taken 10 years of hard

work to make a visitor appreciate what the future temple will look like and what facilities there are at present and are like to be developed for the benefit of pilgrims and resident devotees.

Beginning with Mr. Boake's (C.C.S.) comprehensive paper before the Royal Asiatic Society on November 7, 1887, entitled "Thiruketheeswaram, Mahatitha (Mahavamsa version), Matoddam or Mantoddai" and Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan's comments at that meeting, the references in the Society's journals throw much light on this ancient site. A well documented article by Mr B.J. Perera on "Mahatittha (Mantota)" as part of a series on Ports of Ancient Ceylon in the Ceylon Historical Journal of January 1952 should also be of interest to serious students who wish further information on the subject. The records of several months of excavations at the site by an Assistant Archaeological Commissioner (Mr. Shanmuganathan) in the late forties appear to have been lost or misplaced, but he claimed to have gone down from Pandiyan through Cholan to early Pallava strata of culture. What he found in the inspection pits we don't know, except for some remnants of stone and brick work exposed by him at the site. The early religious workers have, however, preserved for us the most ancient large Sivalingam and a Nanthi (Bull) of similar proportions, a small image of Ganesha - all of stone and now in worship - and a most fascinatingly exquisite complete set of Soma-skanda Moortham (Vira Sakti included) in Panchaloka (copper) in the best style of the Chola period also in worship, comparable with the best available in India itself, according to a learned Savant and Sthapathi. There is also an unmistakable piece of stone of late Pandiyan period, which guided us to decide on the style of the Avudayar that should be made for Mahalingam. In material prosperity, the temple was naturally at its best in the Chola period of the XI th century, and was probably overshadowed and suffered neglect when Nissanka Malla was on the throne of Lanka. Sundara Pandiyan I 1251-1280 A. D. claims, however, in his Chidambaram inscription, to have renovated it. It is probably this temple which was destroyed by the Portuguese about 300 years later in the XVI th century.

The first temple re-builders of 1903 located the exact site of the Holy of Holies from the Gopura Vasal well which the Cholas were accustomed to dig at a certain distance from the main shrine. They confirmed it by finding under the Katpa - graha the many chambered relic stone of great size, which they themselves being unable to fill compartment by compartment according to the Shastras, have left it out for their successors, the present Restoration Society to enshrine in a proper manner. We have ourselves spotted during our foundation operations, a Chola type pottery-ring-well in the correct situation of a Thiru - Manchana well. No one can assert now that the Hindus of Ceylon are not on their most sacred soil in Lanka, eulogised by two of their foremost saints and hallowed by the richest of the basic traditions of Hinduism. It is futile for the mushroom Mannar Welfare Association of whom we shall see more later to call any Hindu an "alien" to this sacred soil even though only a small number of Hindu devotees are resident near the temple, or for a matter of that, in the whole Mannar District, in small pockets here and there in fear of pressures from their neighbours and "insusceptible of political resistance" as observed by a shrewed British historian over a century ago, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Political pressure is again in the field at the present moment as an aid to Catholic Action in what they think to be a favourable atmosphere. Hence, the necessity to write and publish this document with no ill-will to any man, much less any disrespect to a religious leader who has to be dragged against my personal wish into this maelstrom.

Chapter II—A Grand Plan

Thrust into and encirclement of Thiruketheeswaram

The first impression of Thiruketheeswaram was gathered by the writer on a visit over 15 years ago, while on official duty to Mannar. There was then the present central shrine with two front Mandapams, all in a state of disrepair. A temple priest was living in a hut by the side of the temple and a caretaker called Kanakapillai, a little distance away. All these buildings were in the midst of a vast mass of low scrub jungle. It looked as if there was no other human habitation for many miles around the temple but for a broken down P.W.D Qrs at the Manthai Junction. What is now known as Ellupiddy village beyond the junction was also covered with scrub jungle at that time. I was told that a woman ascetic with peculiar habits was living in the jungle near Manthai Junction but I did not see her or make any note of her hut. The brahman priest was kind and hospitable, but the water which we drew from the well near his hut to wash our feet and face before entering the temple tasted pure saline. I had heard something of the antiquity of the temple and the richness of the surrounding lands in the old days and wondered how people managed to live in this area in any appreciable numbers.

About the year 1949, I was approached to allow my name to appear among the Vice-Presidents of a Society for the restoration of this temple at Thiruketheeswaram for the sake, I suspected, of lending prestige to the Society itself. I had no time to listen to the lyrics which a pioneer member of the Society was prepared to sing in his guttural voice to impress me with the ancient glory of Thiruketheeswaram temple. It was not until late in 1952 that I agreed to be President for the time being until the heavy weather into which the Society had run so early, was blown away.

In October 1950, however, His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna, Dr. Emilianus Pillai, D.D., (then in his capacity as Vicar-General of the Jaffna Diocese) approached me to use my influence (in my capacity as Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister) with the Land Ministry to stop the A.G.A., Mannar,

from demolishing a Grotto which the local Catholics had erected at that time on Crown land without permission, on the Mannar-Pooneryn Road at the turn off to Thiruketheeswaram Temple. He was accompanied by Mr. S. Sivasubramaniam, Proctor S.C., Colombo, who was the Secretary at that time of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society which had been inaugurated on 24-10-48 and which had by then completed a small Madam on the Temple site and organized a few pilgrimages in preparation for the restoration of the Temple. The move by the local Catholics was designed obviously to embarrass the Hindu revival in the area.

I was then only one of the many Vice-Presidents of the Society and not actively interested in the reconstruction of the temple. Mr. Sivasubramaniam explained that the sudden construction of the Grotto at the Junction had been brought to the notice of the A.G.A., Mannar, who was a regular visitor to the Temple, by a local Hindu who obviously feared that with the reconstruction of the temple and the vast increase in the Hindu pilgrim traffic which was expected, a Catholic place of worship at this Junction, however small, was likely to lead to future trouble between the Hindus and Catholics. His Lordship mentioned that whatever the case may be, now that a small Grotto had been constructed it would be a great blow to the prestige of the local catholies if it were demolished. He assured us that the Grotto would occupy no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of land and that it would be approached from the main Mannar-Pooneryn Road and not from the Branch road leading to the temple and further that the Church could always see to it that the local people give no trouble to the development of this ancient temple or to the Hindus who would be going there in the future on pilgrimages in large numbers. On this assurance it appeared to me to be safe enough to meet the wishes of His Lordship and informally, to see to letting the Grotto stand on the understanding that there would be no further extensions of any kind or other interference with the land on which it stood, which was admittedly Crown. Fortunately, the file on the subject is still available in the Mannar Kachcheri. Some months later, when the A.G.A. met me, he remarked, "Your interference to let the Grotto stand, as an illegal encroachment on Crown land, is sure

to give trouble to the Temple in due course. You don't know these Catholics as I do!" I now realise how right he was!

In about 2 years thereafter, however, the Church authorities, without any notice to the Temple Society, applied to the Government for disposal to them of about 4 to 5 acres of land round about Thiruketheeswaram Junction on both sides of Mannar-Pooneryn Road which was surveyed as P.P.A. 1805 dated 4-3-53. Lots 1 and 3 of the P.P. are described in the Tenement List as "to be reserved for Government purposes," though required by Church authorities. It is obvious as to who had applied for the land. Lot 2 is described as P.W.D. Quarters, allotted to complete plan. It would appear that some kind of mapping-out procedure of the Land Ordinance has been gone through for the tenement list to carry these particulars on instructions of the Land Commissioner. The Church authorities however, appear to have accepted these decisions of both 1950 and 1953 only as a temporary set-back!

What happened in 1962/63, 10 years later, can be the subject of a treatise on "Catholic Action"—a word, I believe, used popularly to denote their excessive missionary zeal. On 25-11-62, the Church authorities proceeded to take forcible possession (operation directed by two priests in person!) of not only the areas Lots 1 & 2 to the west of the Mannar-Pooneryn road, extending far along the branch road to the temple and encroaching on the compound of the P.W.D. Quarters at the Junction and obstructing a public pathway and water-course leading to the Palavi, but also Lot 3 in P.P.A. 1805 which lies to the east of the P.W.D. road and which had also been "reserved for Government purposes" after due inquiry in 1953. Financed, I am told, by the Church and by illegal grants by the Govt. Agent himself, wealthy people who could not qualify for allotments of land for houses under Land Development Ordinance (at any rate, not without competition with others under proper L.D.O. procedure) entered into forcible possession and fenced in a day and speedily constructed permanent cement concrete houses. One house actually having about nine rooms! They were actively assisted by the Govt. Agent, despite specific ad hoc Government instructions sent to him against any alienation of lands in that area. The Catholic

Govt. Agent also proceeded to put private parties in possession of Crown lands which had been previously handed over to Government Departments with proper land marks and possessed by them and in addition, connived at about 15 encroachments far down the Road to Adampan.

The strengthening of a Catholic stronghold at Thiuketheeswaram Junction did not stop with illicit constructions on lands depicted in plan P.P.A. 1805. Many unlawful constructions were pressed on all along the line on the strip of land between the Road to Adampan and Palavi Extension. In addition, a permit was granted to a Catholic to build a Barber Saloon on a portion of land previously given to the Thiruketheeswaram Rural Development Society and adjoining its pilgrims' Madam at the Junction. The land previously given to the Telecommunication Engineer for an Auto Exchange and quarters was subdivided without any authority and the portion reserved for quarters was given over to a Catholic to put up a permanent cement house quickly. To cap it all, land in extent about 20 perches already given four months earlier to a carpenter, a Hindu, to construct his house and a workshop was unlawfully entered into by the Govt. Agent with a crowd of about 50 people, his workshop was demolished, his working materials and implements scattered and the foundation for a permanent cement concrete house on that portion for a Catholic was completed on that day itself, while the Govt. Agent was standing by practically throughout the whole day to prevent any obstruction by the lawful owner. This was the subject of a prosecution of the Government Agent and others by the Hindu for unlawful assembly and mischief. The full story of this prosecution is related in another chapter.

While strengthening the Catholic stranglehold at the Junction and along the Adampan Road, a well-planned three-pronged attack was made on all possible and impossible lands leading to the Temple, west (i.e. the Temple side) of the Mannar-Pooneryn Road:-

1. To the right of the Junction there was a draper's remnant of a long strip of Crown land in extent about 5 acres running towards the temple, which the Govt.

Agent on October 19th, 1962, proceeded to develop illegally with about 20 Catholic families. This was fortunately effectively prevented by the local Hindu villagers by themselves bar wiring the area in anticipation of the Govt. Agent's move and putting up temporary huts on the night before the day the Government Agent led the Catholic hordes to settle down there.

2. Enraged probably by this stand by the landless and homeless Hindus in defence of the remaining bits of lands due to them and their sacred Temple, the Government Agent and the Catholic priest proceeded to the left of the Junction, accompanied by some Catholic officers at the Kachcheri, invited some Catholics one dark night after 8 p.m. in mid February 1963, to form a colony of illicit squatters (in new houses of course) on the narrow Tank Bund of the Palavi, opposite the sacred place of Hindu Theertham ceremonies. This illegal move too was nipped in the bud by an inspection (arranged by the writer) by the Assistant Land Commissioner from Colombo, who saw for himself all the preparations for this "shanty town" and other illegal operations in the neighbourhood and reported to the Land Commissioner early in 1963.
3. Undaunted by this and other exposures and despite instructions from Government to the contrary, the Government Agent explored other ways and means and planted or attempted to plant Catholic families on both sides of the P.W.D. Branch Road to the Temple from the Junction and in many instances, here and elsewhere, actually gave irregular title deeds (L.D.O. Permits) to regularise the inspired encroachments:—
 - (i) He gave an old eccentric widow $\frac{3}{4}$ acre or more of undefined land presumably out of Lot 1 in P. P. A. 1805 and along the Temple Road to "construct a house" for herself, but believed to be a residence for the occasional visits of the Parish Priest of the area. This annual permit is said to have

been also converted into an L.D.O. permit illegally, against the earlier Government instructions.

(ii) He made a false report that the land of about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre leased for a Co-operative shop on Temple road was going to be used by the Co-op for irregular purposes and demanded that it should be sub-divided into five other shopping sites also to be given to "local people."

(iii) He looked a little beyond and found the land already leased for an orphanage and Womens' Welfare Centre (Lease Bond had actually been signed by the Governor-General !) on which a substantial building was already under construction, and reported that the lease should be cancelled, as the building was likely to be a centre for illicit immigrants, etc., etc. He wanted the land divided into "32 allotments of 20 perches each for alienation to local people." 32 Catholic families herded together in a jungle in a slum on the door step of a Hindu Temple. That was the Government Agent's nobility of thinking on Welfare of his District.

(iv) Earlier, in April 1962 he had recommended the break-up of the Thiruketheeswaram Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society and in that hope, was preparing plans to cut up "for local people" the lands reserved for the Co-op buildings opposite the Orphanage. He made frequent personal visits inquiring from occupants of homes along the Temple Road.

"Local people" in the mind of the Government Agent were only Catholics (often wealthy) drawn from all over the district and no Hindus from adjoining Hindu villages even though they may be landless or poor could be 'local'.

The facts in the foregoing paragraphs have not been recorded in chronological order to bring out the various actions as parts of a phased Grand Plan, details of which were sprung in different

places at different times. It took several months to unroll itself fully and raise its hydra-like heads. It is my belief that it was evolved by the Parish Priest of Mannar who was also the Superior of Mannar District, a convert/scion of a distinguished and brilliant Hindu family. This Grand Plan may be likened to a Tri-sula (Trident) in action, the side prongs of the Tri-sula proceeding in an encircling movement on either side of the temple while the centre prong was pressed into the heart of the nascent temple organisation. Even the stalk or handle of the Tri-sula was to be effective as a rear force in depth and a base to consolidate and supply a continuous and never-ending attack. Perhaps the Plan itself was not fully disclosed to anybody, except perhaps to the Government Agent (and a good lady who is now no more) who were the principal instruments in the planner's hands. The missionary zeal of this much respected priest is to be envied from his standpoint.

We now understand why a most liberal-minded wise man of peace and goodwill to all, like Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, when introducing the Parameshwara College Bill in the Legislative Council on 28th of June, 1925, had to say that "some education - alists among us think that they should support their own religion only, and that every other religion on the face of the earth must be undermined and damned.....that when some non-Christian religionist is addressing himself to God who is within and beyond him, he is worshipping the devil. **This hatred of other religions and opposition to the work of other religionists have had a most degrading effect.**" But for this basic Christian outlook, one might have expected the present generation of Catholics in Mannar to have looked on with charity and understanding the humble effort of the Hindus to rebuild their own ancient Temple and the revival of a truly Tamil culture in and around the small Temple area. It is not as if the Hindus were trying to appropriate to themselves vast areas of land as has been done by the Catholics at Madhu or Talawila, not far from our neighbourhood, or in many other places wherever they were able with vast resources of men and money, to secure a small foothold to start with. The buildable land in and around Thiruketheeswaram (including the newly founded Ellupiddy settlement, preponderatingly Catholic) is perhaps about a

hundred acres, most of it reserved by Government for its purposes as well as for future archeological work. The Temple authorities do not violate these reservations. The buildable saline scrub land now available for development on the Temple side of Mannar-Poonerya road could not be more than about 10 acres. A small matter indeed; but what hurts so mortally is the "hatred" endangered which has almost 'degrading effect' as Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan aptly described in 1925, which still seems to survive undiminished in fervour.

Chapter III—A TOTAL attack on anything Hindu anywhere and everywhere.

A few glaring instances only

The religion of the majority of people in the Mannar District is Roman Catholicism. It would be correct, I think, to say also that the most popular Catholic pilgrim centre of Ceylon, Madhu, is in this district. It is a welcome feature, however, for the good of Ceylon as a whole that the pilgrims of this Sacred Shrine comprise as many, if not more, Sinhalese as Tamils. To a visitor like me it is pleasant to note that Tamil and Sinhala combine in pleasant alternates succession in the Worship of One God. The loud-speakers there establish a linguistic harmony which should be an object lesson to extremists elsewhere. The Muslims are only slightly less than the Catholics in the District. The Hindus, who are nowhere near either of them in numbers, are only a few groups, some in isolated villages and some in the towns. Thiruketheewaram can only develop into another such isolated village centering round the Temple. It is unthinkable, therefore, why there should be such tremendous and sustained opposition to it. A false propaganda which I have myself heard from some uneducated villagers has been put out that the few early Catholic pioneers of Madhu settlement fled there to the safety of the then Kandyan suzerainty against Hindu persecution, ignoring the fact of history that the persecution of the Catholics was by the Dutch regime in Mannar, which was Protestant Christian, and that the community in whose midst they found shelter at the time was Hindu Chieftains of Wannī, under perhaps nominal Kandyan overlordship, c.f., the present Hindu village of Palampiddy adjoining Madhu. This double edged propaganda was designed to instil fear into the minds of the local uneducted Catholics that Thiruketheeswaram, though many miles away from Madhu, may become a serious rival and danger to it.

It has taken all my patience through months and years to bear up with this organised opposition in silence, in the hope that I could wear down with time the ground for the opposition and raise a fresh outlook of goodwill and faith in the bona-fides of the Hindus in reviving Thiruketheeswaram, as a centre of their

worship. But I feel that the time has come to record some at least of the relevant events which bear on the current problem at Thiruketheeswaram only for both the Hindus and Catholics to see the futility of continued friction and live in harmony with each other, each in their own sphere.

1. Welfare Association for Catholics

The Mannar District Welfare Association was formed recently principally to oppose everything which might be of some little benefit to Thiruketheeswaram. This Association, supported by the Catholic Government Agent and the Catholic M.P. of the area, made an attempt even to deprive the use by the temple worshippers of the tarred road from the Thiruketheeswaram Junction to the Temple. They asked the question why the temple worshippers should not use the minor gravel road "on which", they said, "the Rural Development Department spent large sums of money to provide an access to the Thiruketheeswaram Temple". Obviously, they had planned that the metal and tarred P.W.D. road to the Temple should remain a preserve of the Catholics, not merely the lands surrounding the Manthai Junction, which they had taken forcible possession of or attempted to do so and failed. For some time there was even an attempt by some habitual drunken persons to scare away pilgrims and residents of Thiruketheeswaram from the P.W.D. road to the Temple. This Association made unfounded representations to Government that "Annually large sums of money provided by the Government..... are directed by the Hindu Public officers only for the development of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple....." It is relevant to place on record the Association's outburst in a reply dated 8-1-63 to a harmless remark from me about the tolerance of Hinduism:—

"When you are speaking about Hinduism according to your letter, you are not speaking of the way of life of Vivekananda, the proselytiser, but the off shoot kala-braism known as Saivaism that sprouted in the fifth century A.D., flowered in the 7th century A.D., bore fruit in the period between the 9th and 12th century A.D., in a remarkable system of natural philosophy....."

"Your contention 'that Hinduism is supremely tolerant and not aggressive' is not supported by history.....but what we say is "You alien from Jaffna keep your hands

off our Sacred Soil. We Hindus, Saivites, Catholics, Muslims and Buddhists of Mannar will preserve our sacred Institutions without allowing any more of your bulldozing away the Archaeological Treasures of our land".....

"So you need have no fear of us But what we are worried is about you - for we know what happened to the poor Arab when the camel started butting in."

Many such threats came to the writer in other direct and anonymous ways but were of no avail. In this connection, it would also be relevant to mention that the M.P. of the area called the small band of Hindu devotees living in Thiruketheeswaram "Vandals and Fanatics" in an official letter to the Government in connection with the damage to a street name board for which they were held responsible,

2. Co-operative Society

The Thiruketheeswaram Multi-purpose Co-operative Society was organised early in September 1961 and the Society applied to the Government Agent for necessary lands along the temple road for their (a) office and paddy store, (b) shop, (c) rice Mill and (d) Tractor Station, etc. This was in response to pressure from Government at that time for a net-work of Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies throughout the Island. very reluctantly, the Government Agent agreed to recommend the applications to the Land Commissioner. But within about 2 or 3 months the Parish Priest of the area saw danger in the Hindu villagers getting together to form a Co-operative Society. The Hindus comprise a few families mainly in two villages - Maligaithidal and Chetukulam - not far from the Temple. The priest misled the people of these 2 villages and took them to the Government Agent to protest against some imaginary inconvenience to them. On 7-4-62 the Government Agent wrote to the Assistant Commissioner, Co-operative Development, Mannar, thus:—

"On representations made to me by the people of Malikaithidal and Chettukulam, I phoned up the Commissioner of Agrarian Services. He has allowed all people of the villages formerly attached to the Adampan Society

and now transferred to Thiruketheeswaram to continue to give paddy at Adampan to the Union".

He followed it up with a strong recommendation (dated 8-4-62) addressed to Commissioner of Agrarian Services to break up Thiruketheeswaram M.P.C.S. & detach the Hindu Villages. It should be noted that the Adampan Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society had been dissolved by the Government on account of several defalcations and the Union's business was merely to look after the Society's paddy work as a temporary arrangement. This was, therefore, an effort to stifle the infant Thiruketheeswaram Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society by depriving it of its only source of income, which was the purchase of paddy on behalf of Government. It was with great difficulty that this danger was averted, owing to certain irregularities committed by the Government Agent himself. The Government Agent thereafter turned obstructive and a regular war was going on between him and the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society in respect of the earlier land applications to which he had already agreed.

The Office Assistant to the Government Agent who was aware of the whole development and who naturally desired to avoid any religious conflict talked to me about this matter and arranged about July 1962 for a friendly discussion between myself and the Government Agent at which he was also present. The Government Agent agreed that lands to the West of the Mannar-Pooneryn Road would be dealt with for various temple as well as social and other welfare purposes and the lands to the East of that road particularly along the Adampan Road may be dealt with by him for purposes of the local residents, predominantly Catholic, except for a site for a petrol station which was to be at the Junction and which he would recommend for preferential lease to the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society. He went back on the whole of this arrangement, within a week or so, even as regards the petrol station site he argued before an inspecting Deputy land Commissioner that it was needless and in any case it should be put up for auction and not given on a preferential lease to the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, obviously thinking that at an auction somebody else might buy the site, as the infant Co-operative had no funds to embark on such a venture.

3. Revenge on Hindu Villages

The Government Agent annoyed that the people of the adjoining Hindu villages of Maligaithidal and Chetukulam had been brought back to see where their own interests lay, found ways and means of seeking vengeance on them. They were deprived of many benefits relating to their humble agricultural pursuits, like licences, cultivation permits, etc. He overstepped the mark when he gave a portion of about 10 acres of land from their village pullam to a merchant-family which provoked them to send a telegram of protest to the Minister and to break down the fence completely and burn the posts at the site. With that the Government Agent and the merchant capitalist subsided for the time being.

4. The Weapon of Petitions and Deputations

The so-called Welfare Association ably assisted by Catholic officers of the Kachcheri, indulged in scurrilous and exaggerated petitions and deputations to Colombo. Everything that the Temple authorities did was interpreted as "aggression". The Co-operative Society's office, paddy store and mill to hull the paddy were out of place. The Rice Mill should never have been permitted and had been obtained by misrepresentations, etc. The Land Commissioner was made to go outside his field of land administration and busy himself with investigating such allegations and put off coming to decisions on vital matters of Government interest.

About March/April 1963, when the fat was in the fire and the Central Government had been fully apprised of the rot that was overtaking Mannar District, there were two or three deputations that went to Colombo organised at conferences held in the Residency with the support of the M.P., who for practical reasons remained in the background at that time. On March 21, 1963 there was a five-column banner headline in the "Observer"- "New Party Seeks Interview with P.M., Anti-F.P. Party In The North." It was under the auspices of the Mannar Welfare Association, the members of which were as Federal-minded as anyone could be. The "Observer" of 6th April also carried a three-column banner headline. "Anti Federal Association Want Sinhala Officers", and which is reported to have stated that the present anti-Federal Mannar Welfare Association had told the Prime Minister that the

present officers are Federalists from Jaffna (The Government Agent who also hailed from Jaffna, I suppose, was excluded). On the same day the "Times" had an eight-column banner headline which stated that the Prime Minister gave certain assurances to 15 Village Committee Chairmen from the Mannar District who had interviewed the Prime Minister. What they said was not reported but they had obviously come to give a certificate of good administration by the then Government Agent, Mr. N. P. Jeganathan, C.C.S. In the first instance, there are no 15 Village Committee Chairmen in the District and it was latter known that not even a quarter of that number had gone to Colombo to meet the Prime Minister. Who the others were then who posed as Chairmen of Village Committees is worthy of investigation.

5. Rounding up anti-Thiruketheeswaram sentiment among the Hindus themselves by all possible means, fair and foul.

On 1st November, 1962, there was a mass petition by the Hindus all over the District, addressed to the Land Minister with copy to the Home Minister, against the Government Agent for discrimination against the Hindus in many administrative matters. They subsequently handed to the authorities no less than 25 instances of discrimination in land as well as other administrative matters. When this was referred to the Government Agent for report, he and some members of the Welfare Association adopted peculiar methods of getting recantations from some of the leading signatories who, under the influence of liquor, appeared to have signed documents they knew nothing about. A confession from a leading signatory is in file.

6. Government Paddy Store

At the time of Government Agent, Mr. Pathirana. (a Catholic) the question of the site for a Paddy Store for collection of paddy by the Department of Agrarian Services was settled near Thiruketheeswaram Road Railway Station. There was some protest during the time of his successor (also a Catholic) and he inquired into it and confirmed the earlier decision. The Welfare Association appears to have raised it again with Government Agent Mr. Jeganathan's help, a third Royal Inquiry was held and aspersions were cast against the President of Thiruketheeswaram Temple

Restoration Society and Hindu officers for undue influence. Nevertheless, even after that inquiry the Paddy Store still remains at Thiruketheeswaram Road Station.

7. Travellers' Rest

The full significance of an incident in 1961 which took place in connection with a Travellers' Rest at the Temple Junction did not dawn on me at that time. The predecessor of Mr. Jeganathan who was also a Catholic, had personally seen quite accidentally hundreds of pilgrims at the Junction waiting for a bus getting wet in a sudden shower of rain. He recommended a small grant towards the construction of a shelter. But the plan the Rural Development Society had was to offer shelter to a large number of pilgrims and the construction was to cost three times as much as the grant. The Government Agent, Mr. Jeganathan wrote to me on 18th July, 1961, "The land required by you was inspected by me today. It is liable to be flooded and, therefore, consider it unsuitable for the purpose for which you require it, I, therefore, request you to be good enough to select another site for the purpose of a Travellers' Rest". To this the reply was obvious, the Travellers' Rest must be at the Junction where buses stop and in any case if the Junction site was liable to be flooded, it only meant that the foundations must be strengthened. It is to be remembered that the Old Secretariat building at Galle Face was constructed in the Biera marsh and has stood the test of time. Nevertheless, he persisted in declining to let us continue the building operations even after we had spent considerable sums of money on the foundations. At one stage he sent a Police Inspector to "arrest" me and bring me to the Kachcheri for an inquiry. The building was completed despite the G.A.'s continued obstruction and is now a model for such buildings at junctions for all to copy. Subsequently, I learnt that the local priest had objected to the Travellers' Rest coming up at the junction on the ground that it was on the opposite side to the Grotto, though across the road. It is amusing to see this popular Rest used largely by the local Catholic people (some actually making a dormitory of it at nights.) except on the few festival days, when the Hindu pilgrims wait in it for a bus.

8. A School Matter

There is another serious matter regarding a School, one aspect of which, I understand, is now before the Courts. More of this later. A subject worthy of a separate publication.

At this stage, an impartial reader who is getting interested in the subject might ask the question, "If the rebuilding of the Temple and its administration as a place of worship, are the objectives of the Restoration Society, why does the Society or its principal officers concern themselves directly with Rural Development and Co-operative organisations. etc? It is a natural inquiry, but I feel that no educated and impartial Catholic would ask this question as similar activities are directly or indirectly associated with Catholic places like Madhu. When the Restoration Society came to Thiruketheeswaram, it found itself in a quandary as to even the minimum amenities for living and much less for work of some magnitude. A community of artisans and labourers grew in addition to a limited number of Temple Service workers who were all dependent on salaries provided by the Society. The Service Organisation of a first rate Siva Temple, even without any construction work of any kind, is totally different from that of similar high-grade places of worship of other religions. A Siva Temple is like a place of residence of a Sovereign Ruler. There are regular daily ceremonies with unerring punctuality and precision even without a single worshipper in the temple, for which perhaps a fully paid staff of 30 or 40 persons may do; there are other intermittent special ceremonies, several in a month, the additional staff of as many persons for which can only be regarded as part-time workers, who must have other occupations to complement their maintenance; there is still a third variety of festivals including large pilgrimages for which workers must always be ready on tap at short notice, who must find their sustenance almost entirely from outside activities. A village of moderate size must of necessity grow round a Siva Temple if it is to provide efficient service to the people of that Faith and it is, therefore, the business of the Temple authorities to see that growth properly directed. The main point to stress is that all requirements of land for Temple, Social work or Co-operative activities, etc., as well as Government Assistance, if any, in

respect of these activities, were obtained in the proper manner and in accordance with ordinary Government regulations. In that process there has been no spirit of antagonism on our part to legitimate "local" interests.

One more feature peculiar to a Siva Temple is that in addition to a Presiding Deity and an appropriate Temple Building, there must be a Water Tank or River in the neighbourhood which is also regarded as sacred, comparable with the other two, and which must be preserved pure. Violence, for instance, to the Palavi River at Thiruketheeswaram would be violence to the Temple. The local Catholics who decided on a dark night with the help of a willing Government Agent and Priest to form a slum colony on the Palavi bund did not realise perhaps (we are prepared to accept) what great violence they were doing to the faith of their neighbours and fellow men.

Chapter IV. The Slow Reaction and a "Caution."

The preliminary inquiry into a mass petition dated 1st November, 1962, addressed to the Minister of Lands (with copy to the Minister of Home Affairs) by the Hindus alleging various acts of discrimination against them by Government Agent in connection with which, at the request of the Land Commissioner, they latter submitted no less than 25 specific acts (not to mention more serious allegation of favouritism to friends and relations); the inspection of some of the lands and Kachcheri records by an Assistance Land Commisioner early in 1963; various other complaints which had by then reached headquarters in shoals—all these led the authorities to take a decision to transfer Mr. N. P. Jeganathan, C.C.S., from the post of Government Agent, Mannar. It has also been brought to the notice of the Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs that the appointment of a long line of Roman Catholic Civil Servants as Government Agents, Mannar, with only two or three brief exceptions throughout the last 20 years or so, could not have been altogether accidental. Thereafter (about March/April 1963) "all the King's men and all the King's horses" were conscripted and every imaginable devise was adopted to have the transfer from Mannar of the Catholic Government Agent cancelled. Some of these devises have already been mentioned in the earlier sections and need not be detailed here. The Civil Case relating to some wilful damage caused to some cultivators and a criminal action against Mr. N. P. Jeganathan, Government Agent, as 1st accused and six others in the Mannar Courts, might have also influenced the Government to effect the transfer and stick to it despite much agitation by the Catholic party.

The high-handed action of the Government Agent in entering upon the land lawfully given to a poor Hindu and demolishing the workshop which he had built on it and causing mischief, is a high light in the effort to make Ellupiddy a purely Catholic settlement. The statement of Mr. N. Vinasithamby, the Complainant in Magistrate's Court, Mannar—Case No. 134 is worthy of note at this stage:

Complainant's Evidence

" I am the complt in this case. I came to reside at Ellupiddy about 5 years ago and I occupied a piee of land which was a Crown land. In July 1959 I applied to the G.A., Mannar, for a permit in respect of the land in which I am occupying and I went on pressing him for the permit. On 10-4-62 I paid a sum of cts. 50 and I was issued an annual permit. Thereafter I wrote to the G.A. begging that the annual permit may be converted into a permit under the L.D. Ordinance. I was occupying an extent about 1/8 of an acre. On 19-10-62 I wrote to the G.A. to be good enough to convert this permit to one under the L.D. Ord. N.P. Jeganathan, the 1st aced in this case was the G.A. at that time. I met the 1st aced at the Kachcheri on 22/10/62. S.L.D.O. (Senior Land Development Officer) also was there. The 1st aced wrote something on my letter dated 19-10-62 and handed it over to the S.L.D.O. I was informed by the S.L.D.O. that he had been directed to survey the land and give it to me. Later the S.L.D.O. came to my place on the same day. The S.L.D.O. measured the land and showed me the boundaries. The land the S.L.D.O. measured and gave me was more than the land given to me under the Annual Permit. The land given to me by the S.L.D.O. was 174 ft. in length and 42 ft. in width and would be * little less than a quater of an acre. I was told by the S.L.D.O. that the permit would be sent to me in due coure. I was not issued an annual permit but I was issued the receipt for the payment. On 30-10-62 I started fencing the new boundaries as pointed out by the S.L.D.O. On 30-10-62 I erected fence posts and affixed barb wire to it. Prior to 22-10-62 I had erected two cadjan huts one for my residence and one for my place of work. Subsequent to 30-10-62 I shifted the hut that was used by me as a place of work to another portion of the land that had been given to me by the S.L.D.O. The land that I held on the annual permit is included in the land that was pointed out to me by the S.L.D.O. I continued to be in occupation of this land and I lived and worked there. I continued to live and work there till 28-2-63.

Note : * It is actually about 20 perches only

"On 28-2-63 at about 8-30 a.m. the 1st accd came into my compound with S.L.D.O. The 1st accd was accompanied by the 2, 4 accd. There were about 80 people standing on the road. The 1st accd addressed me and told me "This extent cannot be given to you, a part or portion has to be given to others. I replied that this portion has been measured out by the S.L.D.O. and given to me and that I have no other place to go. 1st accd replied, "Don't talk too much, get out." Immediately after this the 1st accd went and uprooted one of the fence post and after this he asked 2, 4, to pull out the other fence posts. Then the 2nd accd who was inside the compound called the people who are on the road to come and uproot the posts. The 6th accd came inside and he had an alavangu and a hammer. The 5th accd also came into the compound and collected the barb wire that was on the ground. The 7th accd also came into the compound and collected the fence posts that had been uprooted. There were others in the compound who had similar implements but whose names I do not know. However, I can identify them if seen. My fences on the Southern, Northern and Western boundaries were completely damaged and removed. The 2 to 7th accd pulled down my hut and re-erected it in the place where it was prior to 22-10-62. The 3 accd climbed on to the roof of the hut to pull it down. The 1st accd was seated by the side of the boutique right opposite this land. Thereafter I went to the Police Station and made a complaint. My statement was recorded at about 12 noon. There was a little delay in my having this complaint recorded at Mannar. I assess the damages sustained by me at Rs. 400.00 I have not received the L.D.O. Permit upto date. On 21-1-63 I paid the usual fee of 50 cts. and got my annual permit renewed which expired on the 30.5.63.

"From the Police Station I returned to Ellupiddy at 4 p.m. There I found the 2 to 7 accd along with number of others laying a foundation where my hut stood. Later in the day at about 5-30 p.m. the 1st accd Mr. N. P. Jeganathan, Government Agent came there and watched the building that was being erected. The 1st accd was in my compound for about $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour and was remaining in the shop watching the operations."

Sgd: N. Vinasithamby

While the case was still pending, Mr. N. P. Jeganathan left Mannar on transfer in May 1963. The Complainant sent the Land Commissioner copies of the Complaint and his statement. Other petitions kept on reminding the Land Commissioner of the need for early investigation and settlement of all outstanding misdeeds of the Government Agent regarding land matters. The Land Commissioner felt that he should give some time to the new Government Agent to familiarise himself with the district and understand the problems round Thiruketheeswaram. Meanwhile, the unlawful occupants of Crown lands in the area went on feverishly building houses and taking all other steps to confirm their illegal gains. Catholic Action proceeded unabated throughout May in many directions, unmindful of the small set-back by the transfer of the Government Agent.

The persecution of the Buddhists in South Vietnam by a Catholic Government was boiling up in the outside world and in June 1963 I attended a public protest meeting of the Buddhists in Colombo in that connection. A Tamil Hindu appearing on the same platform with Sinhalese Buddhists was cause enough to the Catholic sections in the press, who had been posted up with current Mannar events, to launch a terrible personal attack on me in many ways. In my one and only public explanation under caption, "What is all this fuss about," I felt the need to continue to exercise patience in the interest of peace and harmony at Thiruketheeswaram and made only a passing reference "to my personal experience (of Catholic Action) of planned obstruction (of Hindus) throughout Mannar district and particularly in the Thiruketheeswaram area" and added:

"I think that I shall be able to find relief for this trouble, by and by, through the normal channels of Government action and Law Courts. I must, however, express my gratitude to the veteran and venerable leader of the Federal Party, the Secretary and a leading V.I.P. of the Party (a Hindu) who saw me separately at their initiative I hope), spent several hours trying to understand the trouble at Thiruketheeswaram and heard my solemn promise that if they thought that anything I was doing about it was obviously wrong, I would be only too glad to reverse it.

They all said that they would settle everything amicably and I hoped so too! I am prepared to show my file on the subject to anyone genuinely interested and not for publication."

and concluded:

"I am not, however, interested in a Commission of Inquiry on Catholic Action to solve my problems. I have no antipathy to Catholics. My recent experience of some misguided Mannar Catholics is no criterion for a sweeping generalisation against them."

The situation did not appear, or later prove to be, as simple as all that. But one need not be sorry for exercising patience with fellowmen of different religious persuasion than oneself.

In my reflections in retirement and experience of recent religious controversies and conflicts, one thought has been gaining ground in my mind, viz; that the Hindus as a community are being slowly isolated from the other religious, social and racial communities in the island. I should not be misunderstood to be entering into the field of politics, to which I have said a final and lasting goodbye. By training and inclination I am an administrator, but catapulted into politics for a time only—from which a kind fate has managed to extricate me. Though a man of religion, I must appreciate the force of political pressures which impinge on social and religious life. Whether the current political ideology and programmes are for eventual good or bad, it is not for me to judge. I record what I see around me. I see the Christian Community, both Catholic and Protestant, on either side of what may be called the Language frontier, getting even closer together in the situation of rising Buddhist influence, sensing some possible loss of prestige at least to themselves and their common religious life. Tamil Christians definitely feel that they have much in common with the Sinhalese Christians and mutual assistance is not lacking in other walks of life as well. Moreover, even among the Tamils the Christians of all sects, Catholic and Protestant, are ganging up.

This may be just an achieve "State of Awareness", So to speak, of a high order on their part being so well organised

Throughout Ceylon. We must sympathise with their attitude wherever it may be conducted in a spirit of self-defence. But the Hindus must themselves take stock of the situation and make an appreciation of it in true light and not be beguiled into thinking that, owing to other important objectives in their life, they can afford to be negligent of or be even feebly sentimental only about their own religious interests.

But the Hindu who has always been a house divided against itself within his own fold now finds himself little cared for even by his closest racial and linguistic kin, the Tamil Christians. Whether it is strategy, design or political expediency it is not for me to say, but the fact remains that the Hindus and Buddhists who have the strong bond of common heritage and a common culture with little to fight about in the broader aspects of their respective religious thought and practices tend to split asunder more or less permanently under political trends of today. So, the Hindu stands alone; and that, each individual Hindu in the absence of a background of strong religious organisation to sustain him, a measure foreign to the religion itself, stands alone by himself—an ideal situation for the final stage of Sannyasin (Bhikku) life. But is that good enough or satisfying to the Hindus as a Community in this Island of strong religious contrasts?

I have had the sad experience to state emphatically here that even the suggestion of any Hindu-Buddhist rapprochement purely on a religious and cultural basis, is sufficient cause for serious suspicion and even resistance by the Christian Confederacy throughout the Island. The isolated instances of sympathy for the Hindu causes are liable to change with any shift in extraneous power-distribution and often end merely as demonstrations of a gesture.

There is, however, a silver lining to this gathering cloud in that these trends adverse to Hindu interests are directed from political platforms and at some only of religious leadership levels, while the understanding people among the intelligentsia and the un-indoctrinated masses who are genuinely religious are still prepared to 'live and let live.'

Chapter V — The Course of Prosecution of the Government Agent and Negotiations for Settlement.

The new Government Agent took some time to unravel the devious methods of his predecessor in regard to many matters, including the land problems he created round about Thiruketheeswaram. The Land Commissioner who had been directed by the Minister of Lands to report on all the public complaints was not able to fix an inspection and inquiry at Mannar before 16th September, 1963. It was common knowledge that Government was framing some serious charges against the Government Agent, Mr. Jeganathan. Meanwhile, the need for some negotiated settlement of all the disputes between Catholics and Hindus was in the air.

The first attempt at negotiation came from the President (Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam) and the Secretary (Dr E. M. V. Naganathan) of the Federal Party, who saw me separately on two different occasions. For what reason they deemed it fit to intervene, I do not know, but I always welcomed any approach to a friendly settlement as I am firmly of the opinion that the Hindus in this area must have no quarrel with their Catholic neighbours, for the good of both. After the interviews the Secretary, Dr. Naganathan, wrote on 2nd July, 1963, to His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna as follows:-

"I met Sir Kanthiah and had a long conversation with him, He is perfectly willing and will be glad to meet you any time you go to Mannar if you will kindly fix an appointment with him earlier.

"As regards Sir Kanthiah's position, he seems to have a very strong case (documentary and sworn affidavits) on two matters which he discussed with me (a) the local school dispute. (b) the land occupied by a Hindu (workshop) from which he was "driven out illegally."

"I of course do not know the other side of the story or the "facts" which the local Catholics may have but it seems to me that with all his thoroughness and administrative experience Sir Kanthiah has built up a very strong case of

"discrimination and injustice to the Hindus in the vicinity of their ancient and historic temple due to undue Catholic pressures on the young Catholic G.A." From Sir Kanthiah's documents and sworn affidavits it would appear that the young G.A. may have done certain irregularities and even illegalities (technical).

"I regret, however, that Sir Kanthiah has yielded to of temptation and tried to obtain a short cut for his immediate victory in Mannar by obtaining the help and support of Sinhala chauvanistic and reactionary Buddhist forces.

"However that may be, if (as I believe) the Catholics and some of the Priests at Mannar have done wrong and I repeat again if the G.A. has been misled into wrong action, you as a Tamil and as a Christian Leader should make honourable restitution and settle the problem at Mannar justly and quickly. It must not be forgotten that whatever may be his faults or failings, Sir Kanthiah is doing a very great national service to all the members of the Tamil Nation in Ceylon in helping to restore the ancient Hindu Temple and cultural centre at Thirukettheeswaram.

"Whatever may be our religion, it is my humble belief that we the Tamil-speaking people must all give every support and encouragement to this rebuilding of a great era of our past.".....

On or about 20th July, 1963, the Rev. Father Balasundaram, Superior of Mannar District, opened negotiations through the then D.R.O. Vavuniya, for a settlement. At a later stage in their discussions His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna contacted me also direct. Their correspondence dragged on through 3 months of much talk and vituperous writing when on 27-9-63, Rev. Father Balasundaram wrote to the D.R.O., "I am sorry to tell you I am not able to find support for your proposals. Besides I heard another story from the Land Commissioner" (obviously some support to the Catholic elements was emerging from the Land officers both in the Commissioner's and in the Ministry—not difficult to guess for those in the know of the set-

up at that time)—even though on the eve of His Lordship's departure for Rome he wrote to me on 5-9-63, "One thing is certain that we can and we should smoothen out everything and create an atmosphere of brotherly love and peace as all desire."

While, according to the Bishop's wishes I was prevented from doing anything which might prejudice a settlement in either Court or outside, the local Priest and the people started occupying lands and buildings which they had irregularly secured and created a situation to embarrass the Land Commissioner and Government, which was aptly described by the D.R.O. as "Pearl Harbour diplomacy."

After His Lordship returned early in December, negotiations were started by him on a different footing—this time through Mr.K.C. Thangarajah of Colombo, Chairman, Eastern Paper Mills Co-operation. He said that he was now for removing the Grotto altogether away from the Junction, as he said "to put the Hindu sentiment at ease." Meanwhile, His Lordship was to arrange for the postponement of the case against the G.A. and others and he particularly asked me not to send Counsel from Colombo as he would see that the case is postponed on application by the Defence. What happened between the Bishop and the local Priest and people, we shall never know. But the fact is that on the date of trial on 14th December, 1963, the Defence was fully prepared with a Senior and Junior Counsel and the whole symphony of the Bar, which was Catholic; and the Magistrate, quite rightly, proceeded to discharge the accused for the reason that the prosecution had not come prepared for the case. At that stage the Senior Counsel for the accused supported by the whole bar pressed for an 'acquittal' and not 'discharge' and secured it! His Lordship who was interviewed by me the same evening at his palace in Jaffna was enigmatic about the whole matter. It seems, according to him, that the result was "providential!!"

The statement by Mr.K.C. Thangarajah, Chairman, Eastern Paper Mills Corporation, appendix, A, would explain the reasons for the procedure which I adopted in all good faith and my disappointment at the unexpected result. Thereafter, other steps with regard to the case were taken with the advice of several Counsel and everything was ready to take further legal action

to reopen the case. This was necessary not with any vindictive intentions but to satisfy the Complainant and his Hindu supporters who felt that I had let them down and sold the pass. The victim of the high-handed action of the Government Agent is a young happy-go-lucky carpenter, who generally worked three to four days to keep himself with food and drink for a week, became morose after he was driven out of his workshop and his building pulled down and has now disappeared from the village leaving his wife and child with her parents. I have brought this to the notice of His Lordship the Bishop and the present Government Agent several times and pressed for early restitution but nothing seems to happen.

It must also be recorded here that the pressure on the two or three Hindu families in Ellupiddy settlement, which the Govt. Agent prefers to call "the Catholic Colony of Ellupiddy," has been so subtly intense, that the pioneer of the Thiruketheeswaram Restoration Society, a sincere devotee, has felt obliged to sell up his regular allotment and quit Ceylon! A citizen of Ceylon said to be wandering about in India! Two other families are deprived of their usual approach through Crown land to the Palavi Extension on Ellupiddy side, for water. They have petitioned the present Government Agent, but the barb-wires still bar their path-way!

To continue the story, His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna in his search, as he said, for "brotherly love and peace" reopened talks with me for an amicable settlement by calling at my hut at Thiruketheeswaram on Sunday 22nd December, 1963, to which proposal I again acceded. The D.R.O. of Vavuniya, now transferred to Jaffna, was wired for and brought into the picture again in January 1964. He is a most capable officer and negotiator, ever ready to labour in a public cause, anxious to find a via media doing no harm to either party, in which effort he can be firm with a Bishop or a Prince of State—why talk of a District Superior or Ex-Permanent Secretary. When a settlement seemed possible and to emerge in the shape of written notes, it was thought necessary to put the proposals to the Land Commissioner and secure his consent and co-operation and his opinion as to the feasibility of giving effect to them, as future disposal of Crown lands was in the main issue. His Lordship

made an appointment with the Land Commissioner for 23rd January, 1964, and I went along merely as a witness and listened to a very fair statement by His Lordship of the position as we had arrived at earlier. The Land Commissioner seemed to accept the settlement, with relief as he would not have to be called to decide many bristling issues in a tricky religious problem, but suggested that we should see the Government Agent, Mannar, and secure his consent too. We went on the long distance phone and made an appointment with the Government Agent, Mannar, for January 29th, 1964. This time the D.R.O. also accompanied us to the Government Agent with a draft memorandum of settlement which he had himself prepared. The Government Agent went into the draft very thoroughly and made a few suggestions for amendment which were accepted. His Lordship took the draft home to type and obviously, and quite rightly, to browse over it himself. In a couple of days he brought the memorandum back typed, dated 30-1-64 and signed (with some further amendments) and to which I had only to add my signature and deliver it to the Government Agent on 31-1-64 with a request that he send a copy of it officially to the Land Commissioner with his observations, if any.

I took the added precaution of addressing the Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Lands, forwarding a copy of the memorandum of settlement for information of the Hon. Minister of Lands with reference to my various communications to him on the situation at Thiruketheeswaram, in one of which he made a minute in November 1963 that he would personally inspect the area after the report by the Government Agent. By letter dated 25th February, 1964, the Permanent Secretary informed me that—

“The Land Commissioner has been requested to implement the settlement arrived at.”

And here is the Settlement :

MEMORANDUM

(TERMS OF SETTLEMENT)

dated 30-1-1964

The recent occupation of crown lands in the vicinity of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple and around the Manthai junction by various people has been the cause of much displeasure between the Catholics and Hindus. As we feel that this situation calls for immediate remedy, after examining the various points of view, with a view to solving the problem, we have agreed on the following steps, which will have to be implimented by the Government Authorities concerned :

(a) The land which was given to N. Vinasithamby by the Government Agent and handed over to him by the S.L.D.O., Mr. Thuraiarajasingham, on 22-10-1962 should be restored to him. We recommend that a permit for the full extent of land originally given to him, be issued to him, without any compensation on his part. His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna will obtain the necessary documents from the persons concerned to enable the Government Agent to give effect to the above recommendation,

(b) The four buildings in various stages of construction on the lot 3 in PPA 1805 and other constructions on this lot will be vacated and peaceful possession given to the Government Agent., without any compensation being asked for,

(c) The extent of the land around the Grotto that stands on the Mannar-Pooneryn road will have a plot of land fixed by the Government Agent with a frontage on this Mannar-Pooneryn road. The rest of the land will be vacated and possession given to the Government Agent. The permit given to the old lady, near the Grotto will be recalled and cancelled

(d) The other question that calls for early solution is the Crown land vested in the Telecommunication Dept. in the vicinity of Manthai junction. It is agreed that this land will be restored unconditionally to the Dept concerned.

Finally, in the interest of peace and good relationship between the Religionists, the Bishop of Jaffna recognizes the need to use his good offices, to see that land in the vicinity of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple, situated to the West of Mannar-Pooneryn road within a radius of about one mile from the Temple be not interfered with in any manner adverse to the Hindus of the area and that Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan would likewise recognize the need for promoting the lawful aspirations of the Catholics in the adjoining area.

+

Sgd: K. Vaithianathan
President,

Thiruketheeswaram Temple
Restoration Society

and

All-Ceylon Congress of
Hindu Associations

Sgd: Emilianus Pillai, O.M.I.
Bishop of Jaffna

30-1-1964

Chapter VI — The Present Position.

Finality must be reached.

The present position of the matter is, frankly, confusing and indeterminate. Having had all my education in Catholic institutions, I had come to believe that when a Roman Catholic Bishop puts his signature to a document as to what he proposes to do in relation to his fellow religionists, he could keep his engagement. I have been told so frequently in this connection too. I must however record that His Lordship asked for a few days' time, apparently, as I saw it, to make his people see the reasonableness of his decisions and the necessity to live in peace and harmony with their Hindu neighbours, so long as the latter do not interfere with them. Months have passed; and if it is only His Lordship I have to encounter, I would even now not have resorted to any fuss over the matter in a publication like this. But the politician has entered the field and I understand that during the last two months or so His Lordship himself, who was seen to be active previously, has lapsed into silence. The entry of our Member of Parliament makes me very apprehensive; like the familiar bulky but harmless agricultural animal, he is known to muddy the pool for his own pleasure, making it unfit for man or any other beast. It is on record that he has been talking of "blood-shed" in high official quarters and went up even to the Hon. Minister of Lands and has frightened everybody into inactivity. Whose blood he is proposing to shed I do not know, but he is welcome to shed mine, if that is his pleasure. But I have a fear that his strategy is "delaying-tactics" to see if the gains achieved through the iniquities related herein cannot be perpetuated and Thiruketheeswaram "undermined and damned." *

I have heard that orders had gone out for the fencing of Crown land which is part of the compound of P.W.D. Overseer's quarters and the freeing of the blockage to a public pathway and water channel which are through the same Crown land too.

* Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan in the Legislative Council, 1925, See p. 13

The materials had been collected and labour instructed which are there for all to see. This is a harmless part of the agreement with His Lordship, the Bishop of Jaffna. Three days before that, i.e., on or about 19th June, 1964, the Member of Parliament rushes to Colombo in the combined personalities of Rip-Van-Winkle and Don Quixote with a tale equally fantastic. A joke is a serious thing with this gentleman and one must guard against his bland over-simplicity. If the Hon. Minister decides to come to Thiruketheeswaram on official duty to verify if his tale is true, he would attempt to drive him out by show of black flags (strictly according to his Party Principles). He would thus make a convenience of the curtain of black flags (like the Iron or Bamboo Curtain) to hide the iniquities on this side. The Hon. Ministers of Her Majesty's Government apparently take them very seriously and listen to fairy poison-tales poured into their ears by them on bended knees. What fools politics makes of us all!

I know that our Member of Parliament has yet another arrow in his quiver. He could follow the example of his Partyman the late M.P. for Trincomalee who joined in the Press campaign against me in July 1963 accusing me most vigorously of being anti-Tamil and allying with Sinhalese Chauvinists—with this difference, that in this instance, the Sinhalese Chauvinists to whom I am appealing are the Hon. Minister of Lands, the Land Commissioner and the Government Agent, to whom he himself has been able to carry poison-tales in private, which I suppose is much against his Party policies and ideologies !!

In the name of my Lord of Thiruketheeswaram, I have a job of work to do. I cannot afford to let my blood be shed by our Member of Parliament just yet, nor sit back and enjoy his clownish but shrewd activities. I have to seek a finality in this slippery business! I have therefore addressed the following letter to the Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Lands, Irrigation and Power, which explains itself :-

July 2nd, 1964.

The Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Lands, Irrigation and Power,
Colombo.

Sir,

Crown Lands in Thiruketheeswaram Area

I feel I should confirm in writing my protest to you yesterday when I called at your office at the inordinate delay in dealing with the "settlement" in regard to the Crown lands in Thiruketheeswaram area.

For two long years the insignificantly small Hindu minority in Mannar District were in the throes of religious oppression and persecution which threatened to flare up. The Land Commissioner's files and yours will show the magnitude and seriousness of the problem, which I had patiently brought to the notice of the Government with ample proof.

His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna, realising the potential danger of the situation to all concerned and the difficulty to the Government Administration itself in unravelling the tangle at a later stage, intervened with a view to a "settlement". The Hindu side, including the Temple Authorities, were only too anxious to live at peace with the neighbourhood, and agreed to a settlement despite much provocation even in the process of reaching it. The proposed settlement was discussed with and explained to the Land Commissioner and the Government Agent at various interviews at which I was present and with their blessing I put my signature also to a document, prepared and signed by His Lordship. It is filed at the Kachcheri and Land Commissioner's office with a view to future guidance.

As the Hon. Minister of Lands, Irrigation and Power, and in fact other ministers also including the Prime Minister herself, had been drawn into this problem, I sent you a copy of this solemn settlement for purposes of record as well as for necessary instruction in the matter. You were good enough to acknowledge it by your letter No. CB. 1074/62 dated 25th February, 1964, and informed me that,

"The Land Commissioner has been requested to implement the settlement arrived at."

Since then, I could only see ostensibly some action taken with regard to item (c) in the settlement. His Lordship inspected the area once or twice so far as I know, with his Parish priests and local people; the Government Agent made some survey excluding about half an acre around the Grotto (and I believe as agreed to by His Lordship himself) and has made a start to fence the balance Crown land. I suppose the idea was to vest the area proposed to be left out in His Lordship, for purposes of the Grotto, as agreed to. It is unfortunate that the M. P. of the District who is a partisan on the religious side and who has at an early stage of these troubles called the harmless frightened Hindu minority "fanatics" in an official letter, has intervened presumably in the background of prospective elections. I wish to submit that to reopen the whole mess once again in this manner would make the "old sore" a more difficult problem to solve later.

I would also, in this connection, like to remind you of a remark made by the Hon. Minister of L.P. & I in the presence of the then Assistant Secretary and other officials that it was preposterous for two Cathlic priests to have been personally present and taken a hand in obstructing a public roadway and channel. The minister made an order that the obstruction should be removed forthwith which, I believe, is also on record. This aspect of the problem too is tied up in the same parcel of Crown land which the G. A. has too free from illicit occupation by the old woman and her partisans.

* * * * *

Finally, I wish to reiterate the Bishop's wish. "The less fuss made the better", since when I have only been a distant witness to proceedings and never been present at inspections both by His Lordship, the G.A., D.R.O., E.E., etc. If, on the other hand, the officials are not able to give effect to the settlement in regard particularly to clause (c) at this stage, I would rather be left free to make a "bigger fuss" in public rather than their tinkering with the problem in the Court which, as you will realise, may take years to reach a decision.

Yours faithfully,
Sgd. K. Vaithianathan.

What happens to an official letter like this I know only too well; it is under inquiry by the Land Commissioner. On 28th November, 1963, I wrote a long letter to the Land Commissioner reviewing the land problems at Thiruketheeswaram as at that time (excluding the matter about the prosecution of the Government Agent and 6 others which was then sub-judice). This letter is included herein as Appendix B, as it is yet of current interest. There are also the list of 25 acts of discrimination against the Hindus alleged to have been perpetrated by the previous Government Agent, the list as at 4th February 1963 (in which many serious acts after that date have found no place) which is in continuation of their petition of 1st November, 1962. All these papers have a way of accumulating in the Land Commissioner's office. Moreover, a senior field officer is even thinking in terms of Court cases to settle some of these problems which may take years to reach a finality. Meanwhile, is it no one's business to establish peace in this so-called backward district of Ceylon?

I have no doubt that a perusal of this pamphlet would convince any impartial person as to the need for early action. There is a duty cast on the Government, in the first instance, either,

- (i) to appoint a Commission of Inquiry with power to adjudicate on all matters at issue; or,
- (ii) to enforce the strict implementation, as a matter of urgency, of the Agreement dated 30-1-64 entered into by His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna, with the prior consent and approval of the Land Commissioner and the Government Agent, Mannar, of its terms.

The history of these events, which have come to be called "Catholic Action" by popular acceptance, is a long series of evasions, back-slidings or even, perhaps, some mishaps. They may be briefly enumerated, as a matter of interest, and to show the reason why it is necessary that early decisions should be reached and enforced :-

1. The non-observance of the gentlemanly agreement of 1950 as regards the Grotto and the Crown land on which it stood.

2. The unauthorised contravention of the Government decision of 1953 as regards the lands surveyed as P.P.A. 1805.
3. The failure of the Government Agent to keep the agreement of 1961 by his predecessor as regards the land for a Pilgrims Rest at Manthai Junction; and even granting a part of it to a Catholic for a barber saloon.
4. The total abrogation of the arrangements with the Government Agent, Mr. Jeganathan, about July 1962, as regards the disposal of lands to the west of the Mannar-pooneryn Road and consequent highly irregular dealings in regard to lands in the whole area.
5. The failure of the understanding with the Superior Priest of the District (during the Bishop's absence in Rome) and "Pearl Harbour diplomacy."
6. The failure of the agreement to see, as solemnly promised, that the case of prosecution of the Government Agent and six others is postponed; but action actually pressed to a contrary and 'safe' result.
7. Procrastination in the execution of the Agreement of 30-1-64 and the entry of the acknowledged partisan, the M.P. for the District, with other proposals.

What all this adds up to, I hesitate to pass judgment. I leave it all to the Government and the public, both Hindu and Catholic, to Judge. I still pray for peace and goodwill among men in that area and shall give my life for it, if necessary.

Appendix A

Statement By Mr. K. C. Thangarajah

Early in September 1963 I met the Bishop of Jaffna when we discussed the problems affecting the Hindus and Catholics at Thiruketheeswaram. He explained to me that Mr. Murugesapillai was handling certain negotiations to bring about a settlement. It transpired that it would be a good idea if a meeting can be arranged for His Lordship to meet Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan direct. On my return to Colombo. I contacted Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan on the telephone and he expressed readiness to meet the Bishop in Colombo. On or about September 3rd in the afternoon His Lordship came to my house at 142 New Bullers Road and I telephoned Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan and he came home. The discussions were very cordial and His Lordship mentioned the points which Murugesapillai had put forward as a full settlement of all disputes between the two parties in that neighbourhood and in consequence Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan was to persuade the complainant in the case against Jeganathan (G.A.) and others to be withdrawn in order to bring about a peaceful atmosphere for the two religionists to live amicably in the area side by side. His Lordship said that he was expecting the Parish Priest of Mannar and the Administrator-General of the Diocese during the following day and that he would put the matters to them and see that they are implemented during his absence.

His Lordship telephoned me the following day and said that he would like to meet Sir Kanthiah as he was leaving for Europe in a day or two. Incidentally he mentioned that one or two local people had to be talked to about the settlement before an agreement can be fully reached prior to his departure. I arranged for His Lordship to meet Sir Kanthiah at his house that afternoon and I believe they met again and had a cordial discussion. Few days later Sir Kanthiah mentioned to me that His Lordship had written (see bishop's letter dated 5-9-63 hereto appended) to him a nice letter and he relied on the Administrator-General and the Priest to contact him and bring about a settlement finally on the terms previously arranged.

His Lordship went away early in September and returned to Colombo early December. On Saturday the 7th December Sir Kanthiah telephoned me and inquired whether His Lordship had come and wished that he should be informed that during his absence not only no settlement was reached but the other party had been provocative. I made inquiries in Colombo and learnt that His Lordship had returned and left Colombo for Jaffna. I telephoned the Bishop's House in Jaffna and left a message that I would like him to contact me on the telephone. His Lordship had phoned me in Colombo and missed me. I phoned him on Tuesday 10th December night when he informed me that he would be in Colombo on Wednesday early afternoon and that he would meet Sir Kanthiah soon after and settle all matters. He wished me to inform Sir Kanthiah to await His Lordship's arrival.

Immediately on His Lordship's arrival he telephoned me and we arranged to meet at Sir Kanthiah's house at 4 p.m.

His Lordship arrived first and I followed him soon after and joined at Tea. Sir Kanthiah told us that His Lordship had fresh proposals which included the removal of the Grotto from its present site to the east of Mannar - Pooneryn Road so that, according to him, the Hindus proceeding to the temple will not feel any kind of irritation by the Grotto being on their way. His Lordship interposed and said that he did not want this proposal to be talked about in the locality before he had an opportunity of meeting the local people and putting it to them in his own way. There were one or two points mentioned about the disposal of other lands in the locality about which I took no interest. His Lordship wanted the private case against Mr. Jeganathan and others, which was due for trial on Saturday 14th December, postponed for a date towards the end of January as he would like to see all arrangements completed before he left. At this stage Sir Kanthiah said that he would consult the Senior Counsel in the case and find out what the complainant can do in the matter of obtaining a postponement. In any case His Lordship did not wish the complainant to secure the presence of Counsel from Colombo on Saturday and incur unnecessary expenditure. His Lordship was going to see me the following day on some other business when I was to tell him what advice the Senior Counsel had given.

Early morning on the following day Sir Kanthiah telephoned to my house to say that the Senior Counsel had advised that the plaintiff had no status to ask for a date; it was his business to be ready for the trial; it was for the defendants to put in an application for the postponement; it was for the plaintiff's representative to state that he had no objection to a postponement. Sir Kanthiah said that if His Lordship wanted a letter from the Counsel that he would not object to the postponement, he was prepared to obtain such a letter from Counsel. I told Sir Kanthiah that I would put the matter to His Lordship that way and let him know that he says.

His Lordship came to my office about noon and I gave him the message I had received from Sir Kanthiah and his Lordship said he was confident that he would get the case postponed for the date agreed upon, namely, January 24th, and that he would cause the necessary steps to be taken in the matter and that he did not require a letter of consent.

I conveyed this information to Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan immediately thereafter. Sir Kanthiah inquired whether he was to see his Lordship and get confirmation. I told him that it was safe to leave everything in His Lordship's hands.

Sgd. : K. C. Thangarajah.

Appendix A

Continued :

Bishop's House

P. O. Box 2,

Jaffna.

5th September, 1963

My dear Vaithy,

As I explained to you and Mr. Thangarajah, it has not been possible to complete all the spade work connected with Manthai on account of my early departure for Europe. There are yet some persons to be contacted. One thing is certain that we can and we should smoothen out everything and create the atmosphere of brotherly love and peace as all desire.

Father Mathuranayagam and Father Balasunderam will continue to persue the matter and with a little partience and God's help we will succeed.

With very kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

Sgd : C. Emilianus Pillai

Bishop of Jaffna

Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan

1 Pedris Road,

Colombo - 3.

Appendix B

28th November, 1963

Land Commissioner,
Colombo,

Dear Sir,

Crown Lands in Thiruketheeswaram Area,

Please refer to your case No. 3/3/3427 in connection with which you made an inspection of several land problems in Thiruketheeswaram area and elsewhere in the Mannar District on September 16th and 17th, 1963. Interviews and relevant inquiries, after the inspections were over, did not take long to complete and all parties were expecting you to communicate your decisions within reasonable time.

Weeks and months passed in silence and in the last week or so, the local officers are drawing a red herring across the trail, which I understand, is on your instructions or a misunderstanding of them, by delving deep into the history, progress, area of operation, siting of Stores and Offices, etc., of the Thiruketheeswaram M.P.C.S. and its relationship to the Adampan M.P.C.S. This is possibly due to some misrepresentations from the "Catholic Party" which interviewed you on September 16th and 17th last at Mannar, perhaps supplemented by further representations later. But it seems difficult to follow how all this is relevant. Anyway, a simple inquiry addressed to the President, Thiruketheeswaram, M.P.C.S. would have cleared all the misrepresentations!

I might state for your information, even at this late date, that there is no Adampan M.P.C.S. now. There was an Adampan Co-op Society many years ago the executive of which, owing to maladministration and worse, was dissolved and the administration was placed in the hands of two successive D.R.OO under the Government Agent's supervision. The third D.R.O., who is still in office, threw up the sponge as the

surviving members proved obstructive. Co-operation was becoming nearly extinct in about 20 or 30 villages of Mantai north around Adampan, when the Department of Co-op development stepped in and organized 4 compact M.P.C.SS out of the ashes of the Adampan Society of which Thiruketheeswaram, formed in September 1961, is one. The nearest to Thiruketheeswaram is Nedunkandal M.P.C.S. (not Adampan); its store and office are in a small rented house on the furthest side of Adampan and close to Nedunkandal. You seem to have been misinformed about another matter, viz: as if paddy purchase for Government is the only or main activity of an M.P.C.S.; also that it should appear strange to some persons that people of different villages having some common interests should want to combine into one single M.P.C.S. without damaging other peoples' interests; or that the Co-op Department should encourage an M.P.C.S. with efficient and reliable leadership!! The area served by Thiruketheeswaram M.P.C.S. is a sort of arc of which Thiruketheeswaram junction is nearest to the centre. While the office and store of two adjoining M.P.C.SS—viz: Nedunkandal and Periyanaavatkulam are on the edge of their respective area of operation and, actually, one outside it. May I also point out that of the group of Catholics in large numbers marshalled from all over the Mannar District who interviewed you, there was not one single person who was a member of Thiruketheeswaram M.P.C.S. Whose inconvenience did they complain of? Their own?

Why waste time over silly complaints—which, at any rate, are irrelevant to the many more pressing problems and more specially pertaining directly to land administration which cry for immediate attention.

With your permission, may I recall the matters which require your early decision before the forcible or irregular occupations of Crown Land and the lop-sided land administration of the previous Government Agent become confirmed in the minds of the people and the reputation of the Government for fair dealing suffers further. No wonder that the sufferers under that system are driven to extremist camps!

1. On November 1st, 1962, the Hindu people of Thiruketheeswaram sent a largely representative petition to the Hon Minister which was referred to you for report (your case No 3/3/4027) you asked for particulars and a big list was sent to you as at that time; but that list could easily be doubled or trebled as at the time of last G.A's removal.
2. In relation to Lots 1 and 2 in P.P.A. 1805 dated 4-3-53, I complained (inter alia) by letter dated 12-10-62 that two Catholic priests with over 100 Catholics were illegally fencing parts of Crown lands agreed in 1950 between Church and Temple to be left alone and later in 1953 actually mapped out and "Reserved for Government Purposes". S/L.I. & P's reference is CO. 946/62 dated 16-10-62, which was also sent to you

In this connection, I have repeatedly complained to you about the obstruction to a public roadway and water-course which is doing great harm to the people there. Regarding this, there is also a P.W.D. complaint about forcible fencing out of a part of the Crown land in their occupation and obstruction to P.W.D. quarters there. One portion of it appears to have been allotted to a private party!

In fairness to you, I might record that you stated at the inspection and after, that you were going to remove all these obstructions. But When?

3. Crown Land across the Junction given to the Telegraph Department and in their possession given over to a private party. This requires clearing up.
4. Lot 3 in P. P. A. 1805, which was mapped out and "reserved for Government Purposes" in 1953 divided up without a proper Land Kachcheri among 5 comparatively rich persons who were not entitled to such grants.

5. My letter to the Minister dated 14. 3. 63. regarding the Barber Saloon on land given to the R. D. Society of Thiruketheeswaram, also referred to you.
6. In addition to the illegal but very effective control of the lands at the junction, there was encircling movement of the ancient Hindu Temple on the right and left of the Temple by Catholic settlers. On the right without regard to the sanctity attached to a Tank bund. This was inspected and investigated by the Assistant Land Commissioner on 21st February, 1963. We are not yet aware of this result.
7. There are many Hindu landless persons of long-standing residence in the area and adjoining Hindu Villages, who have been discriminated against in the past and who await anxiously for justice at your hands in the disposal of a few acres yet remaining Crown and disposable in the neighbourhood of the Temple.

These are some of the immediate problems. You know the urgency of many others of similar nature. There are dozens of other less pressing questions perhaps, which also depend on how these matters are dealt with.
with apology for the length of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Sgd : K. Vaithianathan.

President

Thiruketheeswarm Temple Restoration Society
and

All-Ceylon Hindu Congress.

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