

A Brief History of the **Catholic Church in Sri Lanka**

With special reference to the
Diocese of Jaffna

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For Tertiary Education

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The cover designed by the author, Fr. Gerard Saverimuttu and Mr. A. Judeson, symbolically depicts the growth of Catholicism in Sri Lanka.

Dedicated to the memory of
Mrs. Margaret Saverimuttu
in honour of her devoted commitment
to the education of students,
and especially
to the formation of seminarians

Preface

From 1992 onwards I have had the privilege of delivering a course of lectures on Sri Lankan Catholic Church History annually to the theology students of St. Francis Xavier's Major Seminary, Columbuturai, Jaffna. (This Seminary is affiliated to the Pontifical Urban University of Rome and lectures are conducted in the English medium.) In the meantime, teaching Sri Lankan Church history to the students of the Department of Christian and Islamic civilizations of the University of Jaffna, provided me with an opportunity to read more on this topic and prepare more teaching materials. Having lectured for the last fifteen years, I realize the need and importance of preparing a handbook on Sri Lankan Church history to cater to the needs and benefit of those who wish to study this subject.

While the key events of the Sri Lankan Church during the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British rule are highlighted here, emphasis has been laid on the important events regarding the growth and development of the Northern Church. The contributions made by the Vicars Apostolic and the successive Bishops, both foreign and local, are stated in this book.

While a General Bibliography is given to facilitate the study of Sri Lankan Church history, a list of books consulted for this work is also given at the end of the final chapter. The present work is a compilation of the teaching materials used for my lectures and materials collected from the list of books consulted. Your comments and suggestions are welcome to improve the quality of my teaching and writing. I take this opportunity to thank Rev. Fr. P. Jesunesan, O.M.I, for reading the script, Mr. A. Thavam Santhiapilli for making necessary changes, Rev. Fr. Gerard Saverimuttu for preparing the bibliography, Miss. Morin Edward for type-setting and my past students of St. Francis Xavier's Major Seminary, Columbuturai and students of the Department of Christian Civilization, Jaffna University who inspired to publish this book.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Asian Background

In order to understand the various problems encountered during the introduction and expansion of Christianity and its impact on the indigenous society and culture, one has to understand first the ethnic, religious and cultural background that prevailed there then..

1.1 Religious background

The major world religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam had their origin in Asia. While Hinduism and Buddhism were born in India, Christianity and Islam had their beginnings in West Asia. Confucianism has laid the basic structure for the life pattern and culture of China and Vietnam. While Confucian culture was restricted to China and Vietnam, other cultures like Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic cultures became migrant. In some areas all the four cultures have existed simultaneously, making Asia a mosaic of religious cultures. Concerning languages it has been observed that there are two main families of languages, namely, the Aryan in the North and the Dravidian in the South. Culturally and ethnically Sri Lanka has been closely associated with India.

1.2 Topography

The region of South Asia and Southeast Asia being centrally located in the Indian Ocean, has become important in terms of trade, shipping and navigation. As such, people belonging to a variety of ethnic groups and speaking different languages, inhabited these regions from time immemorial. South Asia comprises India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives Islands (SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation). The Southeast Asian countries include Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Burma and Cambodia (ASEAN - Association of South East Asian Nations).

The topography of South and Southeast Asia overlooked by the Himalayas serves as the source of the many rivers of this entire region. Early settlers lived along the fertile plains of rivers and rivulets. This region has been one of the early centres of many civilizations. As a large part of this area is covered by mountains and forests. Thus a large part of it is not suitable for agriculture and habitation. Though the soil in certain parts of this region is fertile, scarcity of water hinders the cultivation of considerable areas. Rice is the main crop and the staple food for many Asian countries. While the majority of the people in Asian countries live in villages and are poor, those who live in cities are prosperous.

1.3 Asia under colonial powers.

From the 16th to the 20th centuries many Asian nations had been under the colonial power of five different European nations. Each colonial power introduced its own language, educational systems, currency and trade. By this the natives experienced a sense of being alienated from their cultural traits. The formation of ASEAN and SAARC is the outcome of the need felt among them to work together for the common good and redevelopment after centuries of subjugation and exploitation.

1.4 Indian Culture

Indian culture came under the heavy influence of two cultural invasions. Firstly the Muslims of West Asia and Central Asia ruled India for over seven hundred years. During the rule of the Mughals from 1525 to 1707, Islamic culture gradually permeated into the Indian society. Islamic culture had made a considerable influence in the areas of art, architecture, food, dress, literature and other spheres of life of the Indian society.

Secondly, the British who succeeded the Mughals ruled India for over 150 years exerting their Western cultural influence on the indigenous culture. While the aggressive cultural domination disturbed the well-established indigenous cultural structures, it also transformed India from a medieval society into a modern one. Much before the arrival of the Mughals, Indian cultural influence had spread in many Asian countries in the form of religious tradition, art, literature, architecture, government, way of life, food, dress etc. The extent of the influence of the Indian culture could be estimated from the many archaeological remains and other cultural traits presently existing in these regions. Though the Western form of Christianity was introduced to India and Sri Lanka with the advent of the Portuguese, it was during the 150 years of the British rule that it spread rapidly there.

1.5 Asia and cultural influence

Due to the aggressive cultural invasion of the colonial powers the indigenous cultures of the peoples of Asia were considerably disturbed. The colonial expansion to the Asian countries was one of confrontation rather than of integration. Though most of the countries continued to maintain their cultural identity, certainly they could not fully resist the influence of the Western culture.

However, before the advent of the Westerners to Asian countries, the South Asian nations had developed a well-structured agricultural civilization. The already well-established socio-cultural and institutional infrastructure that prevailed in South Asian countries facilitated the Indian and Chinese cultures to get transplanted in these regions. This cultural integration enriched the indigenous cultures.

1.6 Islamic influence

Generally Islam is considered to be an aggressive religion. But on the contrary the spread of Islam in the Southeast Asian nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines (in the Mindanao region) and other countries had taken place in a peaceful manner. This mass conversion to Islamic religion in the countries of Southeast

Asia occurred quietly and quickly. The word *Jihad* was not heard during the entry and spread of Islam in this region.

Trade had played a major role in the spread and establishment of Islam in Gujarat of West India and other Southeast Asian maritime regions. It is interesting to note that it was Sufism or the mystical form of Islam that attracted people of South and Southeast Asian countries. Certain specific characteristics found in this religion enhanced its expansion swiftly. The simple teachings of this religion, easy procedure of joining it, the egalitarian status of all believers in seeking salvation in contrast to the hierarchical caste system of Hinduism accelerated its expansion and growth in these countries. The mystical Islam of this region has been more tolerant in contrast to the usual aggressive and fundamentalistic approach its adherents maintain in other places.

1.7 Western colonialism

The Portuguese were the first European power to land in the South and Southeast Asian shores in the 16th Century. But, long before their arrival the basic fabric of socio-religious and cultural patterns of life of the people of these regions had been soundly and firmly laid. Hence, in spite of the fact that the European powers had conquered and ruled some of these countries for four hundred and fifty years, the basic structure of their culture has not been changed. However, during the last two centuries these regions were under the rule of one or more of five different European nations. India, Burma, Malaya and Sri Lanka were under the British; Indonesia was under the Dutch; Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were under the French; and the Philippines was first under Spain and then under the United States of America. Though Thailand was the only state that remained independent, it too came under the influence of Western culture.

At the same time, European imperialism paved the way for the Asian countries to come under the influence of the modern industrial and materialistic trend that effected changes all over the world. Besides, such Western contact with Asian countries has effected positive influences in the fields of education, government, technology, transport, dress, eating, etc. Though the Western

influence has prevailed on certain Asian countries for over 450 years, the basic structure and style of agricultural, economic, socio-religious and cultural life pattern has not undergone any substantial change. As a result of Western contact, many cities have emerged in various parts of the Asian countries, which became the centres that induced patriotic consciousness. Such consciousness among the natives helped them to topple the European imperialists and obtain independence.

The Second World War and the involvement of Japan as a liberating force of the East and Southeast Asian nations was a remarkable event. It was at this period the natives became conscious of their situation and staged their protest calling for national liberty and freedom from the clutches of the colonial power. The colonial powers, realizing that they were completely exhausted after the World War II, yielded to the demands of the natives that they should manage their own affairs. Among these countries, India was the first country to obtain her independence from the British. However, this happened with the division of Pakistan and India. Similarly Sri Lanka, Malaya, Indonesia, Singapore the Philippines and Korea became independent after World War II.

1.8 Chinese influence

Compared to the Indian culture, Chinese culture failed to be prominent or to exert its influence in the Southeast Asian regions. The Chinese civilization, based on Confucian ideas, had no religion like Hinduism to spread to other countries. Only Korea and Vietnam came directly under the influence of the Chinese culture. One of the main reasons for this may be that the Chinese language being very difficult to learn, remained a barrier to establish easy communication with the people of other countries. The Chinese merchants and traders too failed to venture out in early times. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the European imperialists took Chinese to their colonies to work as labourers. Though they went to these countries penniless, they have become a prosperous minority in most of the Southeast Asian nations due to their hard work and determination ,

1.9 Sri Lanka and its cultural influence

Sri Lanka is culturally and ethnically closely linked to India. The island is separated from the mainland of India by a narrow twenty-mile stretch of sea. As such, close contact existed between these two lands from pre-historic times. Hence, the Sri Lankan cultural traits like languages, religion and ethnic composition are very much influenced by the Indian cultural family.

The Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion, which are the main constituent elements of Sinhala ethnicity, trace their origin to the Indian sub-continent. The same could be said of the Tamil language and the Hindu religion with regard to the Tamil ethnicity. The social institution of caste system that prevails among the Sinhala and Tamil communities of Sri Lanka had their beginnings in the Indian culture.

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society. While vast majority of the Buddhists are Sinhala-speaking, the same percentage of the Hindus are Tamil-speaking. As for the Muslim people, though the majority of them speak Tamil, they claim that they are a different ethnic community, and do not like to be identified with the Tamils. Among the Christians of Sri Lanka, Sinhalese and Tamils are proportionately represented. The Christians are divided into two groups. While the Roman Catholics form the majority, the non-Roman Catholics or the Protestants belong to various denominations and splinter groups (M. D. David, 1985, pp.vii-xiii).

Chapter 2

Some Preliminary Observations on Sri Lankan Church History

History is a research study of important events of the past related to human affairs and other events that had taken place in a particular country or elsewhere. In this study while events are analyzed in their particular context, they are also interpreted for the benefit of the present and future humanity. Thus, to understand the past events as accurately as possible, facts have to be collected from the primary and reliable sources available. Concerning the study of the Sri Lankan Church history, one has to keep in mind that as in other third world countries, the primary sources regarding the Sri Lankan Church were the records of the foreign missionaries themselves. The indigenous inhabitants comparatively have not left any writings pertaining to the subject. This makes the study more difficult in arriving at objective analysis, interpretation and conclusions. Over and above, there are other factors, which make this study more complicated and difficult.

In almost all Third world countries, Christianity was introduced along with colonial imperialism. Some historians have observed that during the Portuguese rule Spiritual and Temporal powers enhanced and complemented each other. This state of affairs certainly makes the study of the Sri Lankan Church history more difficult, especially in discovering the motives behind conversions. One has also to keep in mind that the arrival of imperial powers to Sri Lanka, was motivated primarily by economic as well as political reasons. There were occasions when the military engaged themselves in missionary activities to obtain favours of the king of Portugal for promotion. At the same time there were instances when the

missionaries functioned as military chaplains. Such events and forces at work would make the study and interpretation more difficult.

History has to be understood and interpreted in the backdrop of the socio-economic and cultural life pattern of the people. Thus, firstly correct information pertaining to events and incidents has to be collected, arranged coherently, understood objectively in the proper context and secondly, interpreted for the benefit of the present and future Society.

One could observe that the major portion of the primary sources and considerable amount of secondary sources for the history of the Sri Lankan Church have been written by missionaries themselves who were European and primary agents of evangelization of their period. The religious, linguistic and ethnic affiliation of an author or a student to a certain extent determines the interpretation of history. Such affiliation may consciously or unconsciously influence the selection of material and interpretation of events. This could be enunciated by an example of what had happened regarding the persecution of the Catholics during Dutch rule by the Dutch East Indian Company and its agents. Most of the documents of the Dutch period written by Catholics, vividly describe such persecution, whereas the harsh, oppressive and brutal treatment and the pains inflicted on the Buddhist or Hindus by the Portuguese has not been sufficiently highlighted in the documents of the period.

As the documents concerning the Church history were written by religious agents themselves, they paid special emphasis on the factors that either facilitated or prevented the spread of Christianity. So they have viewed everything from the religious point of view. Other spheres of life such as political, sociological and cultural impact and the negative influence of Christianity have not been adequately highlighted.

Writings left by the local inhabitants themselves, both Christians and non-Christians, expressing their views, attitudes, reactions etc., are very few. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, there are hardly any worthwhile and reliable records left by the people of the country in

their own languages, or even in any foreign languages, especially for the Portuguese and Dutch Periods.

At this juncture the contributions made by Fr. V. Perniola, S.J., to researchers and students of Sri Lankan Church history, mainly Catholic Church history, are commendable. He has collected documents from various archives in Sri Lanka and abroad and translated them from many foreign languages into English. Already, he has published three volumes on the Portuguese period, three on the Dutch period and ten on the British period. Some more are to follow on the British period.

The formidable task launched by the University of Ceylon in 1956 to write a comprehensive history of Sri Lanka is noteworthy. They have published in 1960 Volume I consisting of two parts covering the pre-colonial period and Volume III covering the British period. But Volume II covering the Portuguese period is yet to be published. Most of the documents being in the Portuguese and Dutch languages, besides the fact that they are being preserved in foreign archives, may be the causes for the delay in implementing this project. But the documents published by Fr. Perniola could facilitate the writing of the history of the Portuguese and Dutch periods (W.L.A. Don Peter, in M.D. David, 1985, pp.154-56).

Chapter 3

Periodization of Sri Lankan Church History

- A) Pre-Colonial Period: Prior to 1505
- B) Colonial Period { Portuguese Period: 1505 to 1658
 { Dutch Period: 1658 to 1796
 { British Period: 1796 to 1948
- C) Independence Period: After 1948

3.1 The Pre-Colonial Period: Prior to 1505

There is some literary evidence, though scanty, which indicates the presence of Christians in the country as early as the beginning of the 6th century. The accounts of Cosmas Indicopleustes, the granite slab with incised small cross discovered at Anuradhapura and other similar evidence point to the same.

3.2 The Colonial period

3.2.1 The Portuguese Period (1505 to 1658)

Kotte Kingdom:

First Phase (1505-1565): The Franciscan missionaries came to Ceylon on the invitation of King Bhuvaneka Bahu VII (1521-1551) in 1543. However, on their arrival they found that the king was opposed to the conversion of his subjects. As a result, conversion work made very little progress at the initial stage in the Kotte kingdom. With the death of Bhuvaneka Bahu in 1551, Dharmapala became the ruler with his father Vidiya Bandara as

regent. As Dharmapala granted freedom to the Franciscans, they converted several thousands in 1556 on the Western seaboard among the *Karaiyars* with their chiefs and subsequently in 1557 Dharmapala too became a Christian. In 1565 the capital city of the Kingdom of Kotte was abandoned and Dharmapala was virtually forced to remain in the fort of Colombo under the protection of the Portuguese.

Second Phase (1565-1592): During this period, the kings of Sitawake, Mayadunne (1521-1581) and his son Rajasinghe (1581-1592) were actively involved in attacking Kotte and the fort of Colombo. They also tried to dislodge the Portuguese from their fort, which the Portuguese had built for their own safety. Since the Portuguese were confined to the fort and their churches were destroyed, the missionary activities in Kotte and Sitawake were hindered very much. But, with the death of King Rajasingha, the Portuguese succeeded in bringing the whole kingdom of Kotte under their control and accelerated their missionary activities. However, except for the conversion of the *Karaiyars* and their chiefs, no noteworthy progress was made in the kingdom of Kotte during this period.

Jaffna Kingdom (1505-1592):

In 1544 on hearing about the fame of Francis Xavier, the people of Mannar sent a delegation to the Fishery Coast to request him to come to Mannar to baptize them. Since he was unable to come, he sent another cleric by the same name and he baptized the people of Mannar. King Sangili I (1519-1561) fearing that the conversion of his subjects might eventually end up in losing his Kingdom to the Portuguese, sent his troops to Mannar and massacred about six hundred to seven hundred new converts. To prevent further events of such nature, Francis Xavier in Fishery Coast urged the Portuguese governor of India to organize a punitive expedition against King Sangili without delay. However, this was materialized only in 1560. Though in their attempt, the Portuguese

failed to take over Jaffna, they captured Mannar and fortified it. Subsequently, the Franciscans and the Jesuits engaged themselves in carrying out missionary activities in Mannar. In 1591 another expedition was undertaken by the Portuguese and in this expedition the ruling king Puviraja Pandaram was killed. Edirimannasingham became the ruler as a vassal of Portugal who granted freedom to the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries to engage in conversion work.

From 1560 due to the laborious task of the Jesuits, a flourishing Christian community was established in Mannar. The presence of their superior Fr. Anrique Annriques was an encouragement for the other missionaries to learn Tamil and carry out their missionary activities. They paid extra care to instruct the neophytes before and after baptism. According to the Visitor of the Jesuit Missions of the East, famous Fr. Alexander Valignano, the Catholics of the Fishery Coast and of Mannar were a well-instructed Christian community.

Kotte and Jaffna Kingdoms (1592-1658):

With the death of King Rajasingha in 1592 the Portuguese became the masters of the Kingdom of Kotte. However, Kotte became their legal possession only in 1597 with the death of King Dharmapala as he had no issue to succeed and he bequeathed his kingdom to the sovereign of Portugal. In 1620 the Jaffna kingdom also came under the rule of the Portuguese. In these two kingdoms the expansion and growth of Catholicism progressed well. Jesuits in 1602, Dominicans in 1605 and the Augustinians in 1606 came to share missionary activities. During this period many people were converted, Christian communities were established, churches were built and the missionaries opened number of schools and colleges in the area under their care.

Kandyan Kingdom:

The Portuguese exerted their influence in the Kandyan Kingdom to a certain extent and placed Jayavira (1511-1552), Karaliyadde (Dom Joao 1552-1582) and Yamasingha (Don Philip

1590-1591) as puppet rulers. With the ascent of Wimaladharmasuria as the ruler of Kandy in 1592, his championing Buddhism and national independence and with the constant warfare that prevailed in the kingdom, the Franciscans had lost all hopes for the future in this kingdom.

The number of religious institutions, ministers and the Catholics would give us a clear picture of the state of the church in the Sri Lankan mission towards the end of the Portuguese period. This has been clearly described in the following chapter under the work of individual religious congregations.

3.2.2 The Dutch Period (1658-1796)

First Phase (1658-1711):

The Portuguese constantly invaded the Kandyan Kingdom and threatened the kings. The King of Kandy therefore, managed to bargain with the Dutch East India Company to attack the Portuguese from the sea while his forces threatened them from the land. With the capitulation of Jaffna to the Dutch in 1658 the Portuguese rule in Sri Lanka came to an end and they were expelled completely from the island. Due to the strong bond of affinity that had existed between the Catholics and the Portuguese and fearing that the presence of Catholicism may endanger their political stability, all possible steps were taken by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to wipe out Catholicism along with the Portuguese rule. The VOC proscribed Catholicism and other allied activities by the issue of plakkats. The church of Ceylon was unprepared to face such a situation.

The Catholics were secretly practicing their religion without the presence of any priests for 30 years as all Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country. At this crucial period in the history of Catholicism, providence prepared Father Joseph Vaz for the urgently needed task of revitalizing and reorganizing the Church in Ceylon. Fr. Joseph Vaz an Indian Oratorian, entered Sri Lankan shores in the disguise of a begger, and ministered to the Catholics

for ten years. Up to his death in 1711, he ministered to the Catholics of Sri Lanka. Even today he is honored as the Apostle of Sri Lanka.

Second Phase (1711-1742):

During the second phase of the Dutch period Fr. Jacome Gonsalvez, an ardent missionary and a prolific writer became a leading figure who served the Sri Lankan Church as the superior of the Oratorians. He mastered both Sinhala and Tamil languages and composed several books in the native languages. He is known as the Father of Sinhala Catholic Literature. He died in 1742 after serving in Sri Lanka for thirty seven years. Four years after his death the Oratorians were ousted from Kandy where they not only found refuge but enjoyed the respect and honour of the Sinhala Buddhist kings like Wimaladharmasurya II (1687-1706) and Sri Narendrasinha (1739-1747). The new ruler Sri Vijaya Rajasinha (1739-1747) expelled the Oratorians from Kandy.

Third Phase (1746-1797):

The Indian Oratorians continued to serve the Catholics of Sri Lanka making Mantote (Parappankandal) their centre. The political situation turned favourably to the Catholics and the Dutch also became tolerant towards them. In the meantime, the Catholics agitated for more rights and obtained better positions in the society.

3.2.3 The British Period (1796-1834)

First Phase (1658-1711):

The British captured the maritime provinces from the Dutch in 1796 and ceded the Kandyan kingdom to them in 1815. Since the British granted religious freedom to the Catholics in 1806, the Oratorians accelerated their missionary activities. However, the British governance paved way for the arrival of the other missionary groups too. Sri Lanka which had been a part of the diocese of Cochin from the time of the Portuguese was established as an independent Vicariate in 1834. It was an important landmark in the

history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. An Indian Oratorian Mgr. Viscente de Rosayro became its first bishop.

Second Phase (1834-1948):

During this phase the Sri Lankan mission became more reorganized and was divided into two Vicariates - the Northern and the Southern. In 1887 hierarchy was established with Colombo as the archdiocese while Jaffna and Kandy became suffragan dioceses. All of them had European bishops. During this phase many religious congregations sent their missionaries to Sri Lanka. Another noteworthy event was the religious orders accepting the administration of the diocese: Oblates of Mary Immaculate for Colombo and Jaffna, the Sylvestro-Benedictines for Kandy; and the Jesuits for Galle and Trincomalee. Subsequently, the Europeans trained the natives and gradually handed over the administrative responsibility to native bishops and priests.

3.3 Post-Independence Period (1948-)

Sri Lanka became independent in 1948. With independence, nationalistic movements emerged and this led to the revival in Buddhism and Hinduism. The Catholics too became conscious of the need to discover their indigenous character. Vatican Council II accelerated the process of indigenization. From the British period onwards education and social emancipation became the source of strength for the Church. The take-over of schools in 1960 and the removal of Christian sisters working in hospitals in 1964 were a blow for the Church (M .D. David, pp, 156-160).

Chapter 4

Pre-Colonial Period

The advent of Christianity to Sri Lanka had close links with the implanting and progress of Christianity in South India. Though historians accept the long-standing tradition regarding the apostolate and martyrdom of the Apostle Saint Thomas at Mylapore, they reject the tradition pertaining to his arrival to Sri Lanka. Though there is no evidence to state that St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles came to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), the early Christian contacts with Sri Lanka cannot be rejected, as the Romans and the Greeks had trading links with Ceylon from the early centuries. Documentary evidence and archeological findings go to establish the fact that a Christian community existed in Ceylon in the 6th Century A.D.:

- a) Cosmas Indicopleustes in his chronicles *Christianike Topographia* meaning Christian Topography, written in Greek in 535 AD, mentioned the presence of a Persian Christian community in Ceylon during the 6th Century, with a presbyter ordained in Persia. This presbyter served the Christian community that flourished at that time in the island. It was composed of Persian Christian expatriate merchants who settled in the harbor of Mantai, close to Mannar or in the then capital, Anuradhapura. According to Cosmas the natives and the king followed another form of religion. However, there is no indication to state that the Persian ecclesiastics converted any natives to Christianity.
- b) In 1912 in an archaeological excavation carried out in Anuradhapura, a small cross incised in a granite slab was discovered, similar in design to the larger ancient crosses one finds in South India, known as the cross of St. Thomas. The discovery of such a cross confirms the presence of

Christians in the ancient capital. However, from the details available regarding these, one cannot give a definite dating to this cross or assert that it was connected with the 6th century community which Cosmas describes in his chronicle. According to Fr. S. Gnana Pragasar O.M.I., these early Christians were of the Nestorian stock.

- c) In the book *The Story of Sigiri* by an eminent Sri Lankan epigraphist, late Professor Senanath Paranavitana, the author refers to the presence of a South Indian General, Migara, a Christian at the service of the Sinhala kings Kasiappa (437-491) and Muggallana (491-508) the sons of King Dhatusena. Later, Migara was linked to the Sinhalese royal family by marriage.
- d) According to the same document namely *The Story of Sigiri*, during the reign of king Muggallana, gold coins were minted with Christian symbols on one side.
- e) Reports on Sri Lanka speak of the existence of a Christian Church during the sixth century at the Sri Lankan port town of Mantai (Mantota).
- f) In an archeological excavation conducted in Jaffna at Kantharmadam by Professor S. Krishnarajah, a silver coin with Christian symbol was discovered in which Nestorian cross was engraved.

The Persians had a considerable share in the spread of Christianity in Sri Lanka during the early centuries. However, when the Persian Christians suffered a setback in their own country in the seventh century due to the spread of Islam, it was reflected in the countries of their trade centers as well. As such, it was possible that with the expansion and the arrival of the Muslims to Sri Lanka, the Persian Christian communities in Sri Lanka would have gradually disappeared.

Chapter 5

Colonial Period

5.1 Portuguese Period

5.1.1 Introduction

Spain and Portugal were the two Catholic countries of the Iberian Peninsula which assisted their missionaries to spread the Gospel to the people of Asia, Africa and the New World towards the end of the fifteenth century. Portugal was under Muslim rule for over seven hundred years prior to its independence. The Portuguese on the one hand liberated themselves from the domination of the Muslims and on the other they gradually ousted the Moors from their shores. In addition to this, the Portuguese captured the trade centres of the Moors, brought them under their rule and made fresh agreements with them in trade and commerce. The Portuguese conducted maritime voyages, exploration and conquest with the purpose of enriching their political power and extending their trade and commerce.

During such endeavours they not only discovered new lands, but also converted the inhabitants of the place to Christianity. The kings of Portugal and the Popes encouraged and supported the viceroys and the captains in their attempts.

Their conquering of new lands was justified by converting the natives to Christianity. Such conviction motivated their military to engage themselves in converting the natives. They made use of such opportunities to win the favour of the kings to obtain promotion and special rewards. In addition to this, the Portuguese captured the trade centers of the Muslims and made fresh treaties with the new countries that came under their control. It was during this period under the initiative of Prince Henry the Navigator, that the Portuguese carried out many courageous voyages.

In 1498 Vasco de Gama landed at Calicut, South India, successfully. The arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka was accidental. In 1505, Lourenco de Almeida, son of the viceroy of Portuguese India, sailed with a fleet of seven sails in search of Muslim merchant cargo ships. While trying to intercept Muslim merchant ships they were driven by a strong wind and reached Galle.

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, politically Ceylon was divided into three independent kingdoms i.e., Jaffna, Kotte and Kandy. The Portuguese negotiated a treaty with Vira Parakrama Bahu VIII, the king of Kotte, whereby the Portuguese in return for an annual tribute of four hundred bahars of cinnamon would protect his ports and shores. The Portuguese erected a small chapel, dedicated it to St. Laurence, the patron saint of the captain, and Fr. Vicente the chaplain of the crew celebrated the first Latin rite Mass in Sri Lanka. Historians consider this event as the beginning of the history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon. Portuguese Franciscans were the first Europeans to introduce Christianity to Ceylon. Though the lay officials and the chaplains of the military were involved in evangelization activities in a sporadic manner, regular missionary activities were initiated by the Portuguese Franciscan missionaries who arrived in Kotte in 1543 on the invitation of King Bhuvanekabahu VII (1521-1551).

5.1.2 Franciscans

During the Portuguese rule, four different religious congregations were involved in the evangelization ministry in the Ceylon mission. The Franciscan Friars played a major role in establishing Christian communities in many parts of the island. Describing the missionary labour of the Franciscans in Ceylon, Paulo da Trindade gives a list of fifty-four churches which existed in the territory of Kotte alone in 1628. In 1634, twenty four churches with 72,438 Catholics existed in the Jaffna Kingdom alone. In the areas of Mantote five churches were built by the Franciscans. To some of these churches, parish schools were attached. Twenty-five such schools were founded in the Jaffna peninsula alone.

The Missionaries had their problems and difficulties too. The constant warfare between the Portuguese and the native kings caused them much anxiety and insecurity. In this conflict some churches were destroyed and even missionaries were killed. Though it is difficult to estimate the exact number of missionaries involved in mission work, Queyroz gives the names of eighty missionaries. From 1624 to 1626, the Franciscan Friars had baptized 52,000 people including two queens, a princess and nearly the entire nobility of the Jaffna Kingdom. In the year 1556 the Franciscans had baptized more than 70,000 people who lived around the seaport of Chilaw.

5.1.3 Jesuits

As the Franciscans were unable to cope with the demands and needs of the mission fields, and wishing also to bring an end to the long-term monopoly of the Franciscans missionary activities in Ceylon, Rome requested that the Missionaries of the Society of Jesus take up mission work here. In accordance with this request, in April 1602 a group of Jesuit missionaries officially arrived in Ceylon to engage themselves in evangelization work. The Northern part of the country comprising of Jaffna, Mannar, Trinco, Batticaloa and Chilaw were given to the care of the Jesuits and the rest of the country was given to the Franciscans.

The missionary methods of the Jesuits placed greater emphasis on education and the Jesuits came with the definite purpose of educating the natives. Baldaeus, acknowledging the missionary methods of the Jesuits, commented that he himself had desired to follow their method. Besides, the Jesuits were even asked to open schools in the Southern part of the island. Many Jesuit missionaries were known for their intellectual apostolate. They learned the local languages and made several compositions in Tamil and Sinhala on Christian themes. Fr. Henrique Henriques (Anrique / Anriques) earned the credit of being the first European to master the Tamil Language and compose many books in Tamil.

The Jesuits entered the Jaffna Peninsula in 1623, and in 1629 there were sixteen centers with more than fifty thousand Catholics. In the island of Mannar five centres existed with 5,450 Catholics. There existed in Colombo, eleven centres belonging to the Jesuits comprising of 11,149 Catholics. In all, 128 Jesuits worked in Ceylon during the Portuguese period. Some of them died as "martyrs" witnessing to the faith they professed.

5.1.4 Augustinians and Dominicans

Augustinians and Dominicans were the other two religious orders, which exercised mission work in Ceylon during the time of the Portuguese. But, authentic historical documents that speak about their work were either lost or were destroyed by fire. The Augustinians officially came to Sri Lanka in 1606. At the time of the surrender of the island to the Dutch, the Augustinians had a main house in Colombo and 16 other small churches. The Dominicans arrived shortly after the Augustinians. They had eight churches under their care, in Galle, Jaffna and Mannar.

As a result of the 149 years of Portuguese rule in Ceylon, certain places came under the heavy influence of Catholicism. Even non-Catholics like Sir Emmerson Tennent and Sir Paul Peries are of this view regarding the Catholic influence in Colombo, Jaffna, Negombo and Chilaw.

5.1.5 *Padroado*

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Portuguese kings rendered invaluable services towards the expansion and spread of the Christian faith. During this period there was no financial agency or other effective administrative units in the Catholic Church for missionary expansion. In these circumstances, the Iberian Catholic kings volunteered to be at the service of the church and sponsored the missionary activities with enthusiasm. Already in the 11th and 12th centuries, special groups were founded in Western Christendom under the name of Military Orders of Christ or crusades to safeguard the important places of the Holy Land against the Muslims. The

Military Order of Christ was also entrusted with the responsibility of establishing Christian communities in new lands, which came under the jurisdiction of Portugal. In this backdrop, the king of Portugal was invested with the double authority as the king of Portugal as well as the Grand Master of the Order of Christ.

The Portuguese kings wanted the monopoly of spreading the Christian faith. This went under the name of *Padroado* and implied certain privileges and responsibilities entrusted to the kings of Portugal. The king of Portugal thus had the responsibility of supplying the newly discovered lands with missionaries, churches, monasteries and schools; the churches and schools had to be supplied with equipment and furniture. The king also had to see to the maintenance of the missionaries and to their overseas transport. At the beginning when the number of missionaries was small, the state was able to manage the expenses; but with the passing of years and the growth of missionary work, the expenses became a huge burden on the state.

The king of Portugal also enjoyed certain rights over the administration of the missions in the lands that came under his rule. He was granted special privileges, among others, to present candidates to bishopric and other important ecclesiastical offices; to decide over the fields of missionary work of various orders, etc. In brief, the *Padroado* rights granted the king of Portugal wide jurisdiction over the church in mission lands except the sacramental ministry, which could be administered only by ordained ministers.

5.1.6 Conversions

5.1.6.1 Conversion as a diplomatic game

Though Christianity had its origin in the East, when it was introduced to the Asian countries in the 16th century, its arrival was in Western forms and concepts and was associated with military conquest. The religious agents who propagated the Christian message, not knowing the language of the people, were forced to seek the assistance of interpreters. Thus, they could not present their message convincingly to the extent of motivating them for sincere

conversions. As a result, conversions to Christianity had taken place on various grounds. Diplomatic and political game seems to have played a dominant role. Some examples could be cited to illustrate the above point.

- a) Nuno Alvarez Pereira, a Portuguese who went from Negombo to Kandy in July 1542 and remained as adviser to the King of Kandy, persuaded King Vikrama Bahu to accept baptism to obtain Portuguese assistance. Finally the king received baptism and forced five of his chief captains as well to receive baptism along with him. But after baptism, they all remained as strong Buddhists as they were before.
- b) When Vidiye Bandara, the father of Dharmapala was arrested and confined to jail, he realized that the only way left for him to come out was to become a Christian. In 1552, the Franciscans baptized him when he was in prison. But on escaping from the prison, he wreaked his vengeance by attacking the missionaries and the Christians and destroying the Churches.
- c) King Jayavira (1511-1552) of Kandy, afraid of constant threats from Mayadunne (1521- 1581) of Sitawake, sought assistance of the Portuguese. Having realized that the only way to obtain their assistance was to become a Christian, he received baptism in secret. But when the desired help from the Portuguese was delayed he acted against the missionaries and the Christians.
- d) Tarmita Suriya Bandara, the chamberlain of Dharmapala, was taken to Goa under arrest and was baptized in Goa in 1552. He returned to Sri Lanka as a Christian and as a royal Chamberlain.
- e) The brother of King Sankili referred to as Brahmin in the Portuguese documents and as Para-nirupa-singam in Yalpana-Vaipava-Malai was willing to become a Christian if he was given the kingdom of Jaffna.
- f) The princes of Kotte were taken to Goa and were baptized there, taking the names Dom Luis (son by the Second queen)

and Dom Joao (Bhuvaneka Bahu's sister's son) Both received baptism under political motivation

In a letter to M. De Santa Cruz SJ sent by N. Lancillotto, the latter states thus as the words of Dom Joao, "I will embrace Christianity. Once I am a Christian, the king of Portugal will surely be favourable to me and will uphold me and make me the heir and successor to the throne when my father dies. Thus, I will be a Christian and a king in my father's kingdom."

But Bhuvaneka Bahu was the only person who withstood all pressures and openly said that he would never abandon Buddhism and was ready to abdicate his kingdom to remain a true Buddhist.

5.1.6.2 Political conversion

Many conversions that had taken place during the Portuguese period were motivated by political reasons. Generally, the people followed the religion of the rulers. In the Jaffna Kingdom, the kings were Hindus and the people followed Hinduism. In the Kotte and Kandyan Kingdoms, the rulers were followers of Buddha and the people were Buddhist. While Hinduism was the traditional religion in the North and East, Buddhism was the traditional religion in the rest of the country.

When the maritime provinces of Ceylon came under the rule of the Portuguese, people became Christians, because their rulers were Christians; whereas in the Kandyan kingdom, people continued to be Buddhists as the ruler was Buddhist. On account of this fact, many conversions of the Portuguese period are called politically motivated conversions. There were occasions where, whenever the Portuguese were defeated, the converts were the first to turn against them, destroying the churches and attacking the missionaries. When the Dutch were the rulers the same people became adherents of the Dutch Reformed Church. With the advent of the English, many passed over to the Church of England. With the emergence of nationalism and the Hindu - Buddhist revival, many went back to Buddhism and Hinduism.

5.1.6.3 Physical force and conversion

Commenting on conversion during the Portuguese period, some have unhesitatingly made remarks to the effect that conversions were made at the point of the sword. The image of the missionary going about with the Crucifix in one hand and the sword in the other is a mere myth. Thus, one could say with certainty that no physical force was employed to convert people to Christianity. But moral force was applied, chiefly in the Jaffna Kingdom.

5.1.6.4 Conversion for material advantages

During the Portuguese rule, many people embraced Christianity to obtain material benefits. On their arrival in Ceylon the Portuguese missionaries discovered an unusual custom prevalent in the country. According to which all natives were obliged to render free services to the king, known as *rajakaria*. Failing to do so, their lands and properties were confiscated unto the state. The missionaries realizing that it was an inhuman custom, obtained exemption for the Christians. But this privilege granted to the Christians led to some deathbed conversions.

Bhuvaneka Bahu in a letter to governor Joao de Castro on 12 November 1545 stated his disapproval in the following words: "They might tell you that I am not pleased when they become Christians. This is true because they become Christians out of fear when they have killed someone, or have robbed a person of his property, or have committed similar offences, which are punishable under my royal authority. Once they become Christians they are not ready to recognize my right over them and to pay what they owe according to our laws. I cannot approve that such people become Christians out of conviction and still recognize my rights over them, and pay what they owe me according to the laws of the country. For this reason I would request that when one of my subjects wishes to become Christian, they should make him wait nine days, and make him a Christian only after ascertaining that he is embracing Christianity, not to escape a punishment for an offence committed, but only for the love of God. With such conversions I will have no objection whatever, but will rather be pleased".

There were those who became Christians to obtain better jobs. Though many embraced Christianity for material and political benefits, certainly there was no 'rice – Christians' as some point out. However, even those who became Christians for material advantages did not always enjoy the benefits. Soon they were ostracized by their community and despised and exploited by the Portuguese officials and at times even by the missionaries.

5.1.6.5 Social Factors

Social factors also facilitated the conversion process among the natives. The social status of certain individuals exerted considerable influence on the life of others in the society. As such, in a village or class or family when an influential person is converted to Christianity, the other members in the Society also followed him. Besides, many Portuguese military and lay officials married native women and started Christian families. In addition to this, dignity and equality preached by the missionaries against the hierarchical caste system prevalent in Hinduism, induced many to embrace Christianity.

5.1.6.6 Negative factors and conversion

Certain negative factors indirectly helped the work of conversion. Before the arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka, large areas of land were under the custody of the temples, and the produce of the properties were used to meet the expenses incurred in day to day running of the temple. When such facilities provided to Buddhist Viharas were stopped, the state of Buddhism in the island gradually deteriorated. In the same manner when the Brahmins were forced to go back to India, many Hindu temples were left without the assistance of Hindu priests to perform rituals and ceremonies.

Many Viharas and temples were destroyed during the Portuguese rule. However, there were only a few cases of temples being destroyed by the missionaries themselves. In fact when the whole village became Christian, as no one was there to use it, the temple was destroyed. As it happens during war, one party destroyed indiscriminately what the other held sacred.

Again the Portuguese "*pagoda*" signifies a temple as well as a statue of a deity. On account of this, certain misunderstanding has crept in the interpretation connected to it. Thus, when a document reports that one man has destroyed many "*pagodas*", it could mean that he had destroyed many statues.

5.1.6.7 Sincere Conversion

Though many embraced Christianity for mixed motives, many cases of sincere conversions are recorded in the documents of the Portuguese period. These sincere conversions had taken place on account of the fact that the people were convinced of the teachings of Christianity or edified by the charitable works of the missionaries. The incidents of the Martyrs of Mannar and the Martyrs of Jaffna are some of the clear examples that go to prove this fact. If not for sincere conversions, how could one account for the survival of Catholicism for thirty years without the assistance of any Catholic priest? Furthermore, if not for sincere conversions, how to explain the persecution, confiscation of properties, banishments and other penalties imposed on the Catholics during the Dutch rule? Some of the Christians were ready to give shelter to the Oratorian missionaries in spite of the dangers and punishments involved. Some even went to the point of shedding their blood.

5.1.7 Factors which facilitated conversions

5.1.7.1 Certain specific missionary methods

The best and the most effective method employed by any missionary group would be that the agents of missionary activities learn the languages of the people and carry out their work such as teaching, preaching, instructing and conducting liturgical services in the languages of the people. During the Portuguese rule in Sri Lanka, this method of propagating Catholicism was followed only to a certain extent. Though their superiors exhorted them to learn the languages of the people, most of the missionaries received the assistance of translators to propagate the new religion. Certainly this was not the best method to propose a new religion. Thus, conversions through convictions were not many.

5.1.7.2 Education

The Franciscans and the Jesuits paid attention to establish schools and introduce the Western form of education to Sri Lanka. The Portuguese missionaries employed education as a medium for religious instruction and religious propaganda. In their school curriculum religious instruction was given greater importance. The Portuguese authorities not considering that imparting education was the responsibility of the state, delegated the responsibility to the Church. At the sametime due to *padroado* obligations, the king of Portugal provided support to the missionaries to establish schools and maintain them.

The Franciscan missionaries established two kinds of educational establishments: parish schools and colleges. By the side of each church there was a parish school. They had established colleges too - higher educational establishments - in Colombo, Jaffna and Navagama. The Jesuits too had two kinds of educational establishments, namely the secondary and the elementary educational institutions. They also provided middle school or secondary school education, which was not provided by the Franciscans.

5.1.7.3 Dramatic Materials

The Franciscans to a certain extent, and the Jesuits to a greater extent, made use of dramatic performances to educate and instruct the people on Catholicism. Practically every Jesuit church had an attached school as well as a hall and a stage for dramatic performances. These performances were attractive and interesting for the people to watch. Thus, the missionaries made use of such performances especially during important days of festivals to instruct the people about the mysteries connected with such events.

5.1.7.4 Composition of Catholic Literature

The Jesuit missionaries had shown greater interest in the study of the native languages of the people among whom they worked. Jesuit missionaries like Henrique Henriques and Robert

De Nohili mastered the Tamil language and composed literature in it. Friar Pedro de S.Basto composed a Sinhala grammar and a lexicon. Two more Sinhala grammar books were compiled by two other Jesuits: Fr. Emmanuel de Costa, a Ceylon born Portuguese who studied at the Jesuit College of Colombo, and Fr. Pierre Berguin, a French Jesuit missionary.

5.1.8 Maintenance of Priests and mission

The king of Portugal under *padroado* obligation undertook the responsibilities of sponsoring the missionary activities in Sri Lanka, India and other Asian countries. In Sri Lanka the Ecclesiastics were given a definite allowance or some villages that were yielding produce. Since the Dominicans and the Augustinians were few in number, they received a fixed allowance proportionate to the number of missionaries and the number of churches under their missionary care. The Franciscans and the Jesuits were given allowances and some villages. Thus, it was left to the missionary congregation to improve the cultivation or the yielding condition of the land under their administration. In this way the Jesuits improved the yielding capacity of the lands under their care, and subsequently it attracted the eyes of the Portuguese officials.

There were instances where the Portuguese officials oppressed the natives. On such occasions the Jesuits protested against the officials. Such activities and attitudes of the officials hindered the conversion work. The missionaries did not ask the people to contribute towards the maintenance of their pastors or to the building of schools or Churches. But people extended their help in the form of manual labour and supply of timber and other building materials. If the new Christians had been obliged to pay, they would have been at the disadvantage of paying a double tax, which would have positively discouraged conversions. (V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period*, Introductions of Vols.I, II, III)

5.2 The Dutch period

5.2.1 Fr. Joseph Vaz and the early Oratorian Missionaries

5.2.1.1 Early Life and Priesthood

Fr. Joseph Vaz was born in Goa, India on the 21st of April, 1651, in a Catholic family whose ancestors were Hindu Brahmins. After his University education in Goa, he was ordained priest in 1676. Having exercised his priestly ministry for five years in Goa, he went to Kanara. While in Kanara he heard about the miserable state of the Catholics of Ceylon and felt the call of God to serve the people of Ceylon. Then, he decided to devote his life to the service of the people of Ceylon. Providence prepared him for this task. On 25th September 1682, he joined a small community of Indian priests founded by Fr. Pascoal de Costa Jeramias. No sooner was Fr. Vaz chosen as the superior of the Community than he organized it as an oratory of St. Philip Neri. As this community was at the point of being dissolved, his choice as the superior gave a new impetus to the Oratory.

5.2.1.2 Missionary endeavours of Fr. Vaz

Fr. Joseph Vaz was called upon to evangelize and build the church of Ceylon, which was planted by the Portuguese. But, Fr. Vaz organized it in such a way that in most aspects of policy, institutions and traditions, it differed from the Portuguese methods. In brief, the Portuguese transplanted the church of Portugal in Ceylon, whereas Fr. Vaz tried his best to organize the Church adopting the methods, which were more suitable to the conditions of the natives. Fr. Vaz contextualized his missionary activities. He was the first Asian missionary who had the opportunity of organizing a mission according to his own ideas.

For nine years he worked alone in the island. During this time the only help he had was the layman John who was his companion from India. During the missionary journeys which he made on foot, he visited most parts of the country and met the Catholics in different areas. He stayed with them in their humble dwellings and listened to

their difficulties, anxieties and came to know their weaknesses and strengths.

Today, we speak of adaptation and inculturation. But, we are stunned to realize that as far back as 1687, Fr. Joseph Vaz had already initiated such a move with success. There is no doubt that the success of his missionary endeavors was due to his holy and saintly life lived in obedience to and trust in the providence of God. Such a spiritual attitude gave him the courage to introduce his Oratory into the island, in spite of great odds. Such a foresight made it possible for the Christians of Ceylon to have a regular supply of missionaries for many years after his death.

Fr. Vaz exhorted his companions not to accept any money for services rendered. Even free gifts received were distributed to the needy. Almost every year he made his missionary journey to different parts of the country. From the testimony given by his fellow missionaries, he rested very little, and most of the time, was engaged in praying, teaching local languages to fellow missionaries or instructing others in Christian doctrines and morals. The greatest desire of Fr. Vaz was to serve God in the poor, suffering and the neglected. He made many conversions amidst persecution, imprisonment and hostility. He went from village to village encouraging the faithful, instructing, exhorting, administering the sacraments and teaching all to be proud of their faith. In every village he appointed *Muppis* and *Annavis* to instruct children and others and also to gather them on Sundays and feast days in chapels to pray and fulfill their Sunday obligation.

5.2.1.3 Various types of Missionary work of Fr. Vaz

In 1697 a severe epidemic of small pox broke out in Kandy and lasted for one year. The horror and dread of the disease made the people abandon their houses and dear ones who were affected and run away in search of safety. The king left his palace and the wealthy moved into the country abandoning their sick. At this juncture Fr. Vaz and his nephew Fr. Joseph Carvalho attended to the needs of the sick day and night without any difference of caste or creed.

Everyday these two priests had to prepare food and find shelter for the sick. Handling the sick without any disgust, with their own hands they washed the wounds, pressed out blisters, applied native medicines and rendered other services. As the pestilence was gaining ground they converted four houses close to their church into hospitals. In addition to these works of mercy, they also buried the dead, as many as ten people a day. The heroic deeds of Fr. Vaz and his companions won the favour of the king and the people, both Christians and others.

There are many other incidents narrated in the reports regarding Fr. Vaz's charitable acts towards the poor, and the sick. He cherished the company of the poor and begged from door to door to give alms to the poor. His favorite occupation was caring for the sick.

In 1696 in a letter sent by the Bishop of Cochin, Fr. Vaz was appointed Vicar General of Ceylon. In another letter sent by the Superior of the Oratorian Congregation he was made the Superior of the Oratorians in Ceylon. These two added responsibilities gave him the power to plan and carry out his mission work.

5.2.1.4 Difficulties encountered by Fr. Vaz

After the expulsion of the Portuguese, many anti-Catholic measures were taken and *plakkaats* were issued to wipe out Catholicism and all traces of it from the country. In that period Fr. Vaz (in 1687) had entered Ceylon, disguised as a beggar. Since the Catholics of Ceylon had been deprived of the services of a priest for more than thirty years, Fr. Vaz had the difficult task of distinguishing between the Hindus and the Catholics. To achieve this he went from house to house as a beggar hoping to identify the Catholics and also to reveal his own identity where it was opportune and necessary. In the meantime, some Catholics, due to persecution and material gains had lapsed into Hinduism or Buddhism.

In 1689 on Christmas day, the people of Sillalai arranged for him to offer masses in three places. Having known about the arrangement, the Dutch Major Hendrick Adrian van Rheedhe

ordered a priest hunt. But, with the help of the people Fr. Vaz managed to escape. The people who assembled for the services - men, women and children - were arrested and after severe punishment eight were detained and the rest were released with serious warning. The detainees were Don Pedro, Manuel de Silva and his companions. They were forced to do hard labour in the building of the Jaffna Fort. Due to severe scourging while in custody, they died as the first martyrs during the Dutch rule.

Realizing the danger involved in staying in Jaffna, Fr. Vaz and his companion John left for Puttalam, and from there proceeded to Kandy. But, while he was waiting for the permission of King Vimaladharma Suria II to enter the capital, he was suspected as a Portuguese spy, arrested and taken captive. But the king later, having known the true intention of the priest not only released him but also gave him permission to build chapels in his kingdom. For nine years he toiled alone in reorganizing the church in Ceylon. He made many missionary journeys covering hundreds of miles on foot. In spite of all these hazards of traveling on foot, Fr. Vaz was faithful to his decision to go bare footed to the very end. Fr. Vaz was the pioneer of the Oratorians in every sense. i.e. he first experienced the difficulties encountered by other Oratorian missionaries later.

5.2.1.5 Missionary Journeys of Fr. Vaz

In 1687, Fr. Joseph Vaz with his devoted and faithful servant John set out to Ceylon, which was his long contemplated missionary journey. On the advice of the Jesuit fathers in Travancore he disguised himself as a coolie and started his journey. The boat in which he traveled was caught in a violent storm, and after three weeks of hunger and thirst he managed to escape the danger involved and reached the island of Mannar. Following this strenuous journey, Fr. Vaz and his servant were seriously ill and were almost at the point of death. But, thanks to the charity of an old lady, they managed to survive. After recovering his strength he continued the journey to Jaffna and found a safe place at Sillalai.

In December 1689, realizing the danger involved in staying in Jaffna, Fr. Vaz and his companion John left for Puttlam, which was part of the territory of the king of Kandy. From there, after two years he went to Kandy. He made Kandy the centre or base from which he made his missionary journeys.

Fr. V. Perniola gives details of his ten missionary journeys during which Fr. Vaz visited different parts of the country. During these missionary journeys he visited Jaffna twice, Colombo and Negombo thrice, Batticaloa six times, Trinco five times, Puttlam eight times and Mantote four times. Besides these places, he also visited many places in the central province covering the Kandyan hills thrice. During his missionary journeys he did not fail to visit the communities on the way and the other places close to the main centers of evangelization in each area.

5.2.1.6 The Characteristics of Fr. Vaz

His outstanding characteristics and his untiring labours are known from written testimonies of his fellow missionaries. The main objective of his apostolate was the conversion of souls; for it, he worked and wore himself out in life; the greatest characteristic of his apostolate was the way in which he effected conversions. The defections of the Christians caused him much sadness and pain, which was a big cross for him to bear. After thirty years of absence of any Catholic priests in the country, with much hard labour and toil, he re-organized the church in Ceylon.

He was a man of deep faith and submitted himself to be guided by the providence of God. Regular supply of priests was assured from the Oratory, which he had re-organized, when he was the superior. Though Fr. Vaz entered Ceylon in disguise, the various ways and means adopted by him strengthened the faithful in quality and numbers, even to the extent of openly agitating and demonstrating against the Dutch, demanding their religious rights.

Fr. Joseph Vaz's reputation for sanctity was such that the cause of his beatification was soon introduced at Rome. He mentioned in a letter that it is better to die than commit even a venial sin. His life

of prayer, devotion to work, humble service, and simplicity of life was an edifying example not only to his fellow missionaries and Catholics, but even to the Dutch who described him, saying that, Fr. Vaz "lives like a saint".

5.2.1.7 Obstacles to Catholicism

The VOC and the Dutch Reform Church ministers suppressed Catholicism for political, religious and commercial reasons. The Dutch issued their first *plakkaat* on 19 September 1658, which prohibited harbouring Catholic priests under pain of death. Similar *plakkaats* were issued now and then against the Catholics and the practising of their faith. In 1699 major van Reedhe ordered all Roman Catholic Churches to be closed and prohibited worship by law, with severe penalties for any breach and all Catholic priests were expelled from the country. Catholics were forced to attend Dutch *kirks* for baptism, marriage and burial ceremonies according to Dutch rites. The Catholic parents were forced to send their children to proselytizing schools.

Some Catholics, due to persuasion and other material gains, adopted the Dutch Reform religion while others due to persecution lapsed into Hinduism or Buddhism. In the Dutch territories a Catholic priest could minister only at night, and had to disguise himself in various forms and was compelled to change his residence every night.

The missionaries had to cover a vast area on foot and had to visit the Christians who were scattered in villages far from one another. They had to cross jungles infested with wild animals, and rivers in which crocodiles lived. The country roads were covered with thorns while the leaches became an additional nuisance. During the day the sun was very hot and traveling caused them excessive fatigue and exhaustion. Due to their hard life style many missionaries became sickly early in life. This was mainly due to their inability to afford good food. They also could not have proper meals during their missionary journeys. In spite of their heavy load of mission work, they had to study the difficult languages of the people, to be able to teach and preach the Christian morals in Tamil or Sinhala.

The sense of security the Oratorians enjoyed in the Kandyan territory did not last long. The Dutch instigated the Buddhist monks and the officers in the palace of the King of Kandy to rise against the Oratorians. In this plot they succeeded in winning King Vijaya Rajasingha over to their side and achieved their aim. The Oratorians were expelled from Kandy from where they made their usual incursions into the Dutch territories. They were arrested and ill-treated, and their churches were destroyed.

At this juncture one must take note of the heroic risk taken by some Christians who gave shelter to those missionaries when they came to visit their areas that fell under the Dutch. These Christians risked their own lives, in this help given directly to the missionaries and indirectly to the growth of the church. The lack of freedom of movement for the missionaries in the Dutch territories was a serious problem. There were times when the missionaries found not a single family in some areas ready to give them shelter under the risk of losing their lives.

5.2.1.8 Conditions favourable to Catholic Mission

In spite of the fact that the Catholics and the Oratorian missionaries faced terrible persecutions and inconveniences, there were some conditions favourable to the spread of the Christian Faith. Though the first Oratorian, Fr. Vaz came after thirty years of the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ceylon, very many people remained faithful Catholics. The Catholics of Sillalai are a good example of this reality. Fr. Vaz found Sillalai to be a safe place for him to stay and carry out his mission work in secrecy.

From 1696, the Oratory of Goa, continued to supply missionaries to Ceylon. The bodily complexion and the cultural background of Fr. Vaz and other Oratorians helped in many ways to present the gospel of Christ, in dangerous situation that existed then in Ceylon. The Kingdom of Kandy was a place of refuge for the catholic priests, specially during the time of persecution.

The austere, celibate and fully committed life of the Oratorians and their outstanding sacrifices and charity were a great source of

encouragement for the persecuted Catholics. The witnessing life of these priests helped the people to withstand any challenge.

Fr. Jacome Gonсалves made a remarkable contribution by composing many and various forms of Christian literature both in Tamil and Sinhala. Historical facts go to prove that the Catholics were much more strongly rooted in their faith than the Protestants. After 1750 the Catholics came more into the open. Fr. De Miranda constantly exhorted and encouraged the people to fight for their basic religious freedom. Gradually open Catholic resistance was mounted against the Dutch. From 1762 gradually the Catholics won over their rights of religious freedom. It was more in the form of religious tolerance.

In some cases the rich, colourful and devotional worship of the Catholics and their processions made very striking impression on the people. This made them find a suitable substitute for what they missed by crossing over from Hinduism to Catholicism.

The firm and solid foundation laid by the Portuguese missionaries made the native Christians profess their faith with strong conviction and devotion in times of severe trials and difficulties. Though their conversions were interpreted as being superficial and oriented towards material gains, their remaining as faithful Catholics during the Dutch period, despising the material gains and undergoing persecutions was a solid proof of the genuineness of their conversion during the Portuguese period.

5.2.1.9 Chronology of the Life of Fr. Vaz

1651, April 21	birth of Fr Vaz
1676	priestly ordination
1676-1681	priestly ministry in Goa
1681-1684	priestly ministry in Kanara
1684	back in Goa
1685, September 25	joins the Oratory
1686, end of November	leaves Goa for Kanara
1687, January 3	leaves Mangalore

1687, end of March	reaches Tuticorin
1687, second half of April	leaves Tuticorin
1687, May	reaches Mannar
1687 end of May or beginning of June	reaches Jaffna
1687, June	illness – goes round for alms
1687 July to 1689 December	apostolate in Jaffna
1689 Christmas	persecution in Jaffna
1690, January	leaves Jaffna peninsula for Puttalam
1690, August	leaves Puttalam for an extensive tour of the island
1692, August	leaves Puttalam for Kandy
1692, September to December	rigorous imprisonment in Kandy
1692, Christmas	first Mass in Kandy in the garden of the prison
1693	Begins to receive people in the prison, allowed to leave the prison and to build chapel, still under supervision and not allowed to leave the town
1694-1695	builds a bigger chapel apostolate in Kandy begins to venture across the river with the tacit consent of the authorities
1696	miraculous rainfall greater freedom of movement
1697, April to June	mission tour; Colombo, Negombo, Gurubewila, Sitawaka, Malwana, Kandy.
1697, June	to Puttalam to stop Fr. Menezes from going to Colombo; back in Kandy
1697, June-July	mission tour: Mantota, Neduntivu, Jaffna. greater freedom of movement
1697, September to	Kandy, during smallpox

- 1698 March epidemic
- 1698, April to November mission tour: Puttalam, Negombo, Colombo, Gurubewila, Malwana, Wellawala, Maripo, Puliyankulam, Chenakudirippu, Mantota, Jaffna, Vanni, Puneryn, Trincomalee, Puliantivu, Batticaloa, Kandy.
- at Puttalam Fr. Vaz met the Catholic who had come from Kalpitiya.
- at Mantota and Vanni he met the Catholics of Mannar.
- 1698 December to March 1699 mission tour: Sabaragamuwa, Kendangamuwa, Sitawaka, Gurubewila, Malwana, Kandy.
- 1699, April back in Kandy after the destruction of the church
- 1699, April 25 leaves Kandy for a few days
- 1699, May to September rebuilds the church in Kandy and inaugurates it on September 8
- 1700 mission tour
- 1701 mission tour: Kandyan hills, Galle, Trincomalee, Kottiyar, Batticaloa, Sabaragamuwa, Kandy.
- Kandy to translate a book of Medicine for the king.
- 1702 ?
- 1703 two mission tours: Maritime Provinces, Sabaragamuwa, Puttalam, Vanni, Mantota, Trincomalee, Batticaloa.
- suffers from a cerebro vascular accident
- 1704, first months recovery and apostolate on the Kandyan hills
- 1704, May mission tour: 3 and 4 Korales, Puttalam, Mantota, Sabaragamuwa, Kandy.

- 1704, September mission tour: Puttalam, Mantota, Vanni, Neduntivu, Alambil, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, 3&4 Korales, Sabaragamua
- 1705 first mission tour
second mission tour: Puttalam, Mantota, Vanni, Alambil, Trincomalee, Kottiyar, Batticaloa, Tamankaduwa,
- 1706, end of January mission tour: Kandy, Narangoda, Puttalam, Vanni, Kottiyar, and Batticaloa.
- 1707-1709 Confined to the city of Kandy owing to ill health.
- 1710 Goes to Kottiyar and is carried back ill.
- 1711, January 16 Death.
- (Fr. V. Peroniola, Dutch Period, Vol, I, pp.527-29)

5.2.2 Life and ministry of Fr. Jacome Gonsalvez

5.2.2.1 Early Childhood

Jacome Gonsalvez was a Catholic Oratorian priest who exercised his priestly function in Ceylon during the Dutch rule from 1705 to 1742. He was a Konkoni Brahmin of Divary, Goa which was then, under the rule of the Portuguese. Konkoni Brahmins of Divary had been Catholics for generations, having been converted to the Catholic faith at the very beginning of the Portuguese occupation of Goa and baptized at one of the earliest and most solemn general baptisms on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1543.

Gonsalvez was born in June 1676, as the eldest son of Thomas Gonsalvez and Mariana de Abreu, Divary of Goa. Gifted with extra-ordinary intelligence and remarkable talents and aptitude for music he learned to play well the violin, the organ and other musical instruments. As a youngster, with some of his companions he ventured to leave home, to go to Rome to be trained for the Catholic priesthood without the knowledge of his parents, but he failed in this venture.

5.2.2.2 Education and Religious Formation

When he was seventeen, he entered St. Paul's University of Goa. After a brilliant academic carrier, he obtained a Degree of Bachelor of Arts. Following which he entered the Academy of Thomas Aquinas, where he successfully completed four years of Theological studies. Since he was endowed with remarkable musical talents, he enjoyed the rare privilege of living in the College itself, as the organist of the Academy. (It is here that one finds Gonsalvez' ceaseless taste for poetry, prose and other literary and musical compositions.) This benefited him in many ways, especially, the facility to use the library to the maximum benefit.

At this stage an important and a serious decision was taken by him which brought about tremendous change in his life, and consequently, in the history of the Church in Sri Lanka and its Catholic literature. Since he had already been ordained as a deacon, he resolved to enter the Oratory of the Holy Cross of Miracles of Goa, and was admitted to the novitiate on 2 November, 1700. This decision he had to take amidst much opposition from his parents due to their self-interest and their love for the child. It is said that this was the first conflict from which Gonsalvez came out victorious (over the world and over the flesh and blood.)

During the four and a half years of stay in the convent he observed very faithfully the rules and regulations of the community spending much time in prayers and solitude. He made use of his free time in reading theological books and other useful literature in the convent library. He was the first Oratorian to be honoured with the appointment to the chair of philosophy at the University of St. Paul's, Goa. But, that very year a heart rending appeal for help came from Fr. Vaz who was in Ceylon all alone doing mission work throughout the island. As an immediate response Fr. Gonsalvez left the post and volunteered for mission work in Ceylon.

5.2.2.3 Beginning of a New Mission

Fr. Gonsalvez with three of his companions left Goa, on 9 May, 1705 and reached Mannar, on 30 August, after much toil and

hardship experienced during the journey. We have already referred to the adverse conditions under which Catholic missionaries laboured in Ceylon. Hence, for a Catholic priest to take the risk of evading the vigilance of the Dutch and to enter the island in disguise was certainly a hazardous enterprise. During the three months of his journey he employed a tutor to learn Tamil, as a result of which he was able to read, write and speak the Tamil language.

On his arrival in Ceylon, Fr. Joseph Vaz immediately assigned him to the island of Mannar, Arippu, Musali and to other places of Mannar- Mantote area. Very soon Fr. Vaz realized that Fr. Gonsalvez was the most suitable person whom God has sent to achieve the long contemplated plan of writing books in Tamil and Sinhalese for instructions, and to deepen the knowledge of the Catholic religion of the people. Having mastered the Tamil language Fr. Gonsalvez was called to Kandy by Fr. Vaz and necessary facilities were provided to learn Sinhala.

Fr. Gonsalvez himself describes in his own words about this. "Fr. Superior gave me permission to consult Buddhist Monks and learn Sinhala language. After associating with them, I learned the meaning of many words, and gathered useful information about their books, commentaries and vocabularies. After reading them carefully, I composed the prayers, the litanies, the Catechism and the discussions about the four religions prevailing in the Island".

Besides his mother tongue, he could converse, read and write well in a number of other languages also. "In the course of his life, he learnt and spoke fluently the following languages: his own mother tongue Konkoni, Portuguese, Spanish, Latin, Tamil, Sinhalese and Dutch."

Fr. Gonsalvez did his mission work in all districts and regions of Ceylon, instructing new converts and baptizing them. He even visited the Catholics who lived in the areas under the dominion of the Dutch in spite of the severe penalties imposed by law. He also built many churches and chapels with the support of Christians. His mission work also included driving out demons and performing of miraculous cures on many sick. On many occasions he held debates

with the heretics and the people of other faiths. In these cases his intelligence and logical arguments won him the support of the audiences. Such public debates were held against heretics in the presence of the king and Fr. Gonsalvez won the latter's favour. The kind favour and refuge of the kings of Kandy were a great source of consolation for the missionaries who worked under so much risk and strain.

Twice he had to bear the burden of being the Superior and the Vicar General of the whole Community of the Oratorians in Sri Lanka. He was a man of action and was constantly at work either reading or writing or instructing or dictating something to his clerk. Amidst his onerous mission work and threats from the Dutch, the responsibility of governing and guiding his Congregation, he managed to write forty two booklets of which twenty two were in Sinhalese, fifteen were in Tamil and the rest were in Portuguese and Dutch. They cover a wide range of subjects as Theology, Scripture, devotional hymns, Lexicography on Blessed Virgin Mary and refutation against other religions. His remarkable contribution to the Ceylon Catholic vernacular literature is commended by Dr. K.M. de Silva in the following words: "By the end of the Eighteenth century the Roman Catholics had a substantial amount of literary work to their credit, largely, due to the effort of Fr. Jacome Gonsalvez, a Konkani Brahmin from Goa".

5.3 British Period: 15 Feb. 1796 – 4 Feb. 1948

5.3.1 The Decline of Dutch rule and seeking Oratorian help

In the war between the Dutch and the Kandyan King, the Oratorians rendered their help to the Dutch in various forms. Many Catholics assisted the Dutch either as fighters or as baggage carriers, bridge builders, and road cutters or as guides over the hills and through the forest of the Kandyan Kingdom. The Dutch in order to appreciate the loyalty of the Oratorians granted them full freedom to engage in missionary activities. The missionaries and the Catholics rightly made use of the advantageous opportunities provided them. In the meantime the Oratorians and the Catholics exerted pressure on the Dutch for greater freedom.

5.3.2 Religious Freedom to Catholics

With the advent of the English, the Catholics were gradually relieved of all the disabilities imposed on them by the VOC. In 1806 the British restored religious freedom to Catholics. Thus, the Catholics in Sri Lanka gained freedom of conscience, freedom to practice their religion both privately and publicly even before the Catholics in England were granted such freedoms. Under the Dutch the Catholics had kept their faith, and had safeguarded it against any erosion. Debarred from holding public offices, they had been satisfied with a simple life, generally a simple village life and they had been very devoted to their Christian duties and to their priests. Though the advent of the British granted them religious freedom, the new situation brought about new challenges to the Catholics and to their ministers.

- a) The total number of missionaries was not sufficient or proportionate to the total number of Catholics and churches they had to serve. There were only sixteen priests left to minister to 75,000 –80,000 Catholics belonging to 319 churches scattered all over the island.
- b) From the time of the Portuguese rule, Ceylon was placed under the Bishop of Cochin, who administered it for the Archbishop of Goa. Due to the lethargic attitude of the authorities of Cochin, from 1802 to 1834 not a single bishop had made any visit to this Christian community in Ceylon.
- c) With the arrival of the British, various Protestant missionary societies sent their missionaries to Ceylon. The Protestant missionaries were having enough money and men to spread their sphere of influence everywhere; whereas the Catholic Church lagged far behind.
- d) The king of Portugal dissolved all religious congregations in Portugal and in the colonies under his territory. Subsequently the Oratorian congregation that had been supplying priests to the Sri Lankan mission was also dissolved leaving the mission without the needed priests.

5.3.3 Demand for English Education

English language became the means of communication between the ruling British and the natives. The Colebrooke – Cameron commission (1829 – 1832) of inquiry, its recommendation and implementation paved the way for a new era in which the local population felt the urgent need for English education. Many vacancies were created by the English administration for white-collar jobs for the natives who were proficient in a working knowledge of English. But the Catholics were placed in a disadvantageous position with regard to English education. The Catholics requested the Oratorians to provide English education to their children. The Oratorians were neither able or willing to realize the importance of English education, and failed to fulfill the legitimate demand of the people. Thus, the Catholics of Colombo sent their appeal to Rome for European missionaries.

5.3.4 Complaints against the Oratorians

Nobody could point an accusing finger at the Oratorians regarding their moral life. But for the rest they had fallen far below the standard needed by a priest. They knew no English which was much in demand at that time; they seem to have had also little knowledge of Sinhala and Tamil, leaving all the instructions of the Catholics to Catechists who themselves were not properly instructed; they had adopted a far more comfortable life. They expected the people to adapt themselves instead of themselves adapting to the needs of their flock. Even the simple village Catholics who were not well informed and who had been very devoted to their priests began now to notice the human weaknesses of their shepherds.

The mediocrity of the Oratorians was the object of sharp criticism on the part of the Catholics of Colombo and the first European missionaries. On the other hand the simple village Catholics still respected their priests. The reports of these years are a sad testimony to this state of affairs, while the former reports had carried accounts of the work done by the Oratorians and their witnessing deeds of heroism. But, the reports of these years have nothing new or constructive to tell us, since the superior of the Oratory had sent

those annual reports to Portugal in order to obtain the allowance paid by the Portuguese government to each missionary. Thus he always harped on what had been done in the past.

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In 1837 Colombo Burghers presented a memorandum to the Oratorians and called for many reforms from them. The demands were for the following: religious instruction for the young, supervision of education in English by a priest, administration of the sacraments to all the sick especially to those affected by cholera, administration of Baptism on fixed days without distinction of persons and following the prescribed ritual, the celebration of the mass on feast days at fixed times, sermons to be preached in Portuguese, English and the vernacular and six laymen to be included in the committee of the Oratorians to help manage the finances of the mission.

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Almost all the European missionaries had a superiority attitude towards the Goan Oratorians and the Sri Lankan Catholics. Though some translators preferred to use the appellative 'local priests', the original expression used in Italian or French really meant 'Black priests'. There is a difference between local priests and black priests. It is hard to accept that the European priests could use very strong disparaging appellatives when speaking of the Oratorians or of the Sri Lankan Catholics. Fr. V. Perniola opines that the European missionaries could have been more charitable in their attitude towards the Oratorians, Surprisingly, this way of speaking was not confined to a few of them. It was common to all European missionaries, including Bettacchini, Bravi, Semeria, and also de Mazenod and women religious.

5.3.7 The anti-Catholic measures of the King of Portugal

In the past in keeping with the Portuguese *Padroado* agreement the king of Portugal as patron of the Church overseas, played a prominent role in the process of expansion of Catholicism. But now the king of Portugal not only refused to render his promised

help, but also positively took an anti-clerical stand. The internal turmoil that prevailed in Portugal in the first few decades of the 19th century affected the Church of India and Ceylon. Though Rome made sincere efforts to remedy the situation of the Church in India and in Ceylon, the indifferent attitude of the king of Portugal remained a major barrier to missionary endeavours. The political situation in Portugal also turned against the Church. The government of Don Pedro promulgated many anti Catholic and anti-clerical laws. On the 5th of August 1833 all religious orders were suppressed in Portugal and their properties were confiscated by the state. All religious orders in Portuguese colonies were also dissolved. Thus, the Oratory of St. Philip Neri's could not supply missionaries to Ceylon anymore.

5.3.8 European missionaries

Propaganda considered seriously the state of Catholicism in Ceylon. On the one hand there were the Oratorians whose performance was unimpressive and on the other hand the progressive elements among the Catholics were demanding for reforms and changes. In 1842 Propaganda received a petition signed by more than 3000 Catholics asking for European missionaries. The Congregation was now convinced that the situation could only be remedied by sending European priests. But it knew perfectly well, that the Oratorians would certainly resent such a move.

Though the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith tried to infuse new blood by sending some European missionaries, it often failed to find priests willing and capable of undertaking missionary work. Even the few who came were not adequate to the number and the needs of the Catholics. Fr. Orazio Bettacchini, of the Oratory of Citta di Castello in Italy, was the First to be invited. He arrived in Ceylon on the 28th of November 1842 and was followed by seven others in the course of the next four years.

5.3.9 Erection of Ceylon into an independent Apostolic Vicariate

On 24 November, 1834, the general situation and the various limitations existing in Ceylon mission were discussed at the

plenary meeting of the Congregation of Propaganda. Finally, on 3 December 1834 by the brief "*Ex-Munere Pastoralis*", Propaganda decided to erect Ceylon as an independent Vicariate separated from Cochin and Goa. This was the most important event in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during this period. When this took place, though initially the Oratorians were divided in their opinions, they preferred to remain in Sri Lanka and accepted as a result, the confiscation of their properties by the government of Goa and themselves being banished from their own country. Rome appreciated the work done by the Oratorians for a century and a half and chose an Oratorian as the first Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka. The then Vicar General and the superior of the Oratorians Fr. Francis Xavier was nominated as the first Vicar Apostolic of Ceylon. But he had died on January 11, 1834, i.e., ten months before his nomination. Thus, Fr. Vincente de Rosario was nominated as the Vicar Apostolic. Unable to find a European competent and willing to accept the office of Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka, again Rome nominated another Oratorian Fr. Caetano Antonio as the Second Vicar Apostolic.

5.3.10 Objection of the Oratorians for the erection of an independent Vicariate

The Oratorians were convinced that the erection of an independent Vicariate separated from Cochin and Goa was unjustified for the following reasons:

- 1) Ceylon mission was too poor to support a Bishop and a seminary.
- 2) Celibacy would remain a lasting stumbling block for Ceylon youth.
- 3) Prevalent caste system among the Ceylonese would cause a serious difficulty.

In addition to this, the nomination of Fr. Vincente de Rosario as the Vicar Apostolic of Ceylon caused division among the Oratorians.

with the heretics and the people of other faiths. In these cases his intelligence and logical arguments won him the support of the audiences. Such public debates were held against heretics in the presence of the king and Fr. Gonsalvez won the latter's favour. The kind favour and refuge of the kings of Kandy were a great source of consolation for the missionaries who worked under so much risk and strain.

Twice he had to bear the burden of being the Superior and the Vicar General of the whole Community of the Oratorians in Sri Lanka. He was a man of action and was constantly at work either reading or writing or instructing or dictating something to his clerk. Amidst his onerous mission work and threats from the Dutch, the responsibility of governing and guiding his Congregation, he managed to write forty two booklets of which twenty two were in Sinhalese, fifteen were in Tamil and the rest were in Portuguese and Dutch. They cover a wide range of subjects as Theology, Scripture, devotional hymns, Lexicography on Blessed Virgin Mary and refutation against other religions. His remarkable contribution to the Ceylon Catholic vernacular literature is commended by Dr. K.M. de Silva in the following words: "By the end of the Eighteenth century the Roman Catholics had a substantial amount of literary work to their credit, largely, due to the effort of Fr. Jacome Gonsalvez, a Konkani Brahmin from Goa".

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5.3.8 European missionaries

Propaganda considered seriously the state of Catholicism in Ceylon. On the one hand there were the Oratorians whose performance was unimpressive and on the other hand the progressive elements among the Catholics were demanding for reforms and changes. In 1842 Propaganda received a petition signed by more than 3000 Catholics asking for European missionaries. The Congregation was now convinced that the situation could only be remedied by sending European priests. But it knew perfectly well, that the Oratorians would certainly resent such a move.

Though the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith tried to infuse new blood by sending some European missionaries, it often failed to find priests willing and capable of undertaking missionary work. Even the few who came were not adequate to the number and the needs of the Catholics. Fr. Orazio Bettacchini, of the Oratory of Citta di Castello in Italy, was the First to be invited. He arrived in Ceylon on the 28th of November 1842 and was followed by seven others in the course of the next four years.

5.3.9 Erection of Ceylon into an independent Apostolic Vicariate

On 24 November, 1834, the general situation and the various limitations existing in Ceylon mission were discussed at the

plenary meeting of the Congregation of Propaganda. Finally, on 3 December 1834 by the brief "*Ex-Munere Pastoralis*", Propaganda decided to erect Ceylon as an independent Vicariate separated from Cochin and Goa. This was the most important event in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka during this period. When this took place, though initially the Oratorians were divided in their opinions, they preferred to remain in Sri Lanka and accepted as a result, the confiscation of their properties by the government of Goa and themselves being banished from their own country. Rome appreciated the work done by the Oratorians for a century and a half and chose an Oratorian as the first Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka. The then Vicar General and the superior of the Oratorians Fr. Francis Xavier was nominated as the first Vicar Apostolic of Ceylon. But he had died on January 11, 1834, i.e., ten months before his nomination. Thus, Fr. Vincente de Rosario was nominated as the Vicar Apostolic. Unable to find a European competent and willing to accept the office of Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka, again Rome nominated another Oratorian Fr. Caetano Antonio as the Second Vicar Apostolic.

5.3.10 Objection of the Oratorians for the erection of an independent Vicariate

The Oratorians were convinced that the erection of an independent Vicariate separated from Cochin and Goa was unjustified for the following reasons:

- 1) Ceylon mission was too poor to support a Bishop and a seminary.
- 2) Celibacy would remain a lasting stumbling block for Ceylon youth.
- 3) Prevalent caste system among the Ceylonese would cause a serious difficulty.

In addition to this, the nomination of Fr. Vincente de Rosario as the Vicar Apostolic of Ceylon caused division among the Oratorians.

5.3.11 Padroado Vs Propaganda

The brief '*Ex Munere Pastoralis*' expressly stated that the new Vicariate did not come under the jurisdiction of Goa or Cochin. In the meantime in the wider horizon of the Indian Missions, the erection of the Vicariate gave rise to a party whose aim was to defend the rights of the Crown of Portugal. The foremost leader of this movement was the Vicar Capitular of Goa, Antonio Carvallio, who had allies in all the old dioceses. This party was known as Padroadist, while the European missionaries led by the new Vicars Apostolic who defended the rights of the Holy See were called Propagandists. It caused much tension between the Oratorian and the European missionaries.

5.3.12 Bettacchini

Orazio Bettacchini, who had come to the island on 28 November 1842, was now raised to the Episcopal dignity and was made Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic Caetano Antonio. Fr. Joseph Maria Bravi brought the Bull of appointment in August 1845 during the festivities of the Assumption of B.V.M. But the Oratorians publicly declared that they would never accept the authority of Bettacchini and made the Vicar Apostolic to delay the announcement. Propaganda ordered the Vicar Apostolic Gaetano Antonio to consecrate Bettacchini. Only in October 1845 the nomination was publicly read in the cathedral and on 11 February 1846 Bettacchini was consecrated at St. Lucia's Cathedral.

By a decree issued on 9 September 1847, Propaganda confirmed the decision made in 1845 regarding the division of the island into two; the Jaffna Vicariate and the Colombo Vicariate. Bettacchini was made the Pro-Vicar of Jaffna while retaining at the same time the title of Coadjutor to Caetano Antonio. Though Bettacchini did so much to foster the growth of the Church, he also caused a good deal of trouble on account of his fiery temper and on account of the fact that often he first acted and then reflected. With Bettacchini we have also the arrival of the first Oblate missionaries whose successors would do so much work for Sri Lanka. Bettacchini

was made Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna on 17 December 1847 and Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna on 13 August 1849. Owing to his ill-health, Bettacchini retired to Bolawatte where he died on 26 July 1857 at the comparatively early age of 47. He was buried in the Bolawatte church.

Following his death, Mgr. Stephen Semeria who was already his coadjutor, took over the administration of the Jaffna Vicariate.

5.3.13 Schism in Jaffna

Bettacchini suspended the last Goan priest that had remained in Jaffna. This priest alone at first and then with the help of another priest that had come from Colombo created enough problems in the Vicariate. He took possession of churches, won over number of Catholic communities to his side and actually he started a real schism in the Vicariate. The journal of Semeria describes in so many pages about the troubles caused by those two priests and all the lawsuits that had to be faced to claim the ownership of churches.

At the same time Bettacchini was fully aware that he needed more missionaries to bring about the spiritual renewal in the North. Besides the three Oblates, one Indian Oratorian (Miguel Philip Mascarenhas) and six other Europeans he also invited four Jesuits from Madurai mission. Bishop De Mazenod continued to send more Oblates in small numbers. Bettacchini took the following measures to bring about spiritual renewal in the diocese:

- 1) He made a pastoral visitation of the entire diocese.
- 2) He wrote pastoral letters encouraging and instructing the people and the missionaries.
- 3) He actively involved himself in the pastoral care of the people, and this was evident when Jaffna was affected by the cholera epidemic.
- 4) In 1846 June he established Jaffna Catholic School Society and founded Jaffna Boys Seminary and Jaffna Female Seminary. He also founded many vernacular schools
- 5) He served the Vicariate with much dedication and commitment.
- 6) In spite of many oppositions he always stood for the welfare and the legitimate demands of the Vicariate.

- 7) In spite of many problems, Bettacchini served the Vicariate with dedication and achieved much.

5.3.14 Some major problems Bettacchini had to encounter

- 1) An opposition of the Oratorians
- 2) The spread of the Goan 'schism' in some parts of Jaffna
- 3) Rivalries and misunderstandings between Oblates and non-Oblates
- 4) The Boundary dispute with the Southern Vicariate
- 5) Vastness of the territory entrusted to his care
- 6) Inadequacy of the missionaries
- 7) Pressure from Bishop de Mazenod and Propaganda to accept an Oblate as his coadjutor, which he did not favour.

5.3.15 Bravi and the Southern Vicariate

Fr. Joseph Maria Bravi the first Sylvestine-Benedictine from Italy reached Colombo on 14 August 1845. It was the task of the Benedictines to gradually take over the work of the dwindling group of Oratorians. Bravi soon became Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of Colombo when Bettacchini became Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna.

While many problems were going on in Jaffna due to the schism and the Oratorians, the Vicariate of Colombo though comparatively peaceful, caused great suffering for Bravi. Bravi accepted to suffer in order to hand over to his successor a peaceful Vicariate. If two priests could have created so much trouble in Jaffna, how much trouble could have been caused by about 15 Oratorians? It is difficult to describe in a few words all that Bravi suffered. Bravi himself does not speak much about the humiliations or about his mental sufferings.

5.4 Jaffna Vicariate under the Oblate Missionaries

5.4.1 The Arrival of the Oblate missionaries

In the early part of 1847 Bettacchini went to Europe to recruit the required number of European missionaries. Having not succeeded in Italy and England, he went over to Marseilles and

explained to Bishop Eugene De Mazenod about the pathetic situation of his mission. Bishop De Mazenod responded enthusiastically to his request. Thus, the first band of four Oblates came to Ceylon along with Bettacchini on 28 November 1847 with Fr. Semeria as their superior. They were followed by other Oblates in the course of successive years. From 1847 to 1857 as many as nineteen Oblates were sent to the Island.

Of all the religious orders that have worked in Sri Lanka, the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate has made historically the greatest impact on the mission. At the initial stage the Oblates were to exercise their Apostolate only in the Jaffna Vicariate. But from 1883 they also took charge of the Colombo Vicariate leaving the newly erected Kandy Vicariate to the charge of the Sylvestro-Benedictines. This led to frictions, bitter experiences and the exchange of conflicting views between both congregations. When the hierarchy was established in 1887 the Oblate Vicar Apostolic Christopher Bonjean became the first Archbishop of Colombo Vicariate. From then on, till 1976 all the Archbishops of Colombo have been the Oblates, and from 1857 to 1972 all the bishops of Jaffna were Oblates.

Hence, we shall highlight some of the important contributions of the Oblate missionaries towards the growth of the Jaffna Vicariate.

- 1) Many Oblate missionaries served as Vicars Apostolic, Bishops and missionaries in difficult times and in hard missions.
- 2) Conducted mission preaching in the entire Vicariate.
- 3) Founded many schools both English and vernacular
- 4) Also founded other institutions like St. Martin's Seminary (The first seminary established in Sri Lanka), St. Joseph's Catholic Press, hostels, charitable institutions and also had started the Jaffna Catholic Guardian, etc.
- 5) Gradually developed the Madhu Shrine.
- 6) Special pastoral care during the cholera epidemic.
- 7) Established new missions – Frs. Antony, Soosainathan & Gnanapragasam.

- 8) Brought back the schismatic Catholics of Pallimunai in 1902 after a long period.
- 9) Various pious associations, institutions and convents were established in many parishes.
- 10) Congregations like "The Brotherhood of St. Joseph and the Rosarians" were founded during this period.
- 11) Special care was given to formation of the native religious and the diocesan clergy.

5.4.2 Mission Preaching

Mission preaching has been one of the most effective ways of evangelization followed by the oblates in the past and even today. The founder of the Congregation Mgr. de Mazenod himself was involved in mission preaching in France. The Vicar Apostolic Mgr. Semeria was fully aware of its beneficial influence and himself was involved in mission preaching carried out in many parishes of the Jaffna Vicariate. When he assumed duties as the Vicar Apostolic he realized that the Vicariate was in urgent need of renewal and reform. Fr. Bonjean as a mission preacher said the following in 1858; "The admirable efficacy of the sacred ministry is infinitely greater during the mission, than during other pastoral functions". During the mission, the missionaries visit the people in their dwellings and try to gain more knowledge about problems, difficulties and challenges the people encounter in their life. Individually the missionaries instructed and exhorted the people in Christian morals and principles. Besides, two or three missionaries stayed in a parish for one, two, or more months according to the need preaching, catechizing, rectifying scandalous unions and bringing back negligent Catholics to the practice of their religious duties. Thus during the administration of Mgr. Semeria, missions were conducted in Kayts, Valikamam, Trinicomalee, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Mantote, Chilaw, and Bolawathe. This practice is continued in many dioceses even today. Such missions bring about spiritual revival in the parish.

5.4.3 Cholera, Smallpox and Famine

During the administration of Mgr. Semeria and Mgr. Bonjean the missionaries had to bear the devastating horror of cholera and smallpox epidemics and famine. In 1875 in the Mannar, Mantote district severe drought and famine prevailed everywhere. In addition to this misery, cholera was brought from South India by the coolies on their way to Kandyan hills. Within a few months over 400 people died in Mannar Island itself. While the government advised the cholera-inflicted homes to be burnt, public prayers were discouraged for fear of rapid spread of the disease. So much so, Mannar church was transformed into a hospital to cater to the needs of the afflicted. In 1875 cholera spread in a big way in the Jaffna town and Gurunager. It continued to spread wildly in and about the town, in Passayoor, Kayts, Navaly, Allaipiddy, Delft and Sillalai. The statistics of Jaffna cholera commission states that there were 541 cases with 224 deaths in 1875, 1700 cases with 826 deaths in 1876, and 10,972 cases with 5481 deaths up to June 1877. Fr. Martin Quere states that the total number of deaths would have been 13,213. But, Henry Martin states that over 20,000 died due to cholera epidemic. In December, 1877 due to cholera and smallpox, the people of Delft suffered and several died of starvation. Bishop Bonjean had sent relief to Delft under the care of Fathers Sandrasegara and Lytton. Such a selfless dedication of the missionaries and of the lay helpers so impressed not only the Catholics but also the Hindus that it brought about many conversions.

As many non-Catholics were well disposed to embrace Catholicism, on 11 September 1877 a catechumenate was opened for the famine-stricken and was put under the charge of Frs. Courden and Sandrasegra. Though 857 received baptism, hardly one fourth of the number persevered. However, Fr. S. Gnanapragasar opines that though these converts were well instructed and excellently attended, due to dearth of missionaries continued care could not be provided. For those who remained faithful three new churches were set up; they were St. Francisca's, Siviateru, Our Lady of Rosary's, Uduvil, and Francis Xavier's, Delft.

5.4.4. Fr. Anthony's Pioneer work in conversions

In early 1894-1895 during the episcopate of Mgr. Joulain, Fr. Antony was in charge of Anuradapura-Madhu missions. On the request of the Bishop, Fr. Antony bought plots of lands in that area to establish churches and schools. Initially there were thirteen centers. However owing to incompetence of the teachers, this project was abandoned, though it did not go entirely unrewarded.

The same Fr. Antony initiated the Nallur mission probably in 1898. In 1918 over 2000 converts were distributed in 19 centers of which Kopay and Neervely reaped much harvest. Though Fr. Antony had opened a third station at Kaithady, it was abandoned due to his transfer .

According to Fr. S. Gnanapragasar, in every parish at least some adult baptisms were administered. Though most of these conversions were in connection with marriages, there were also conversions connected to hospitals. Thus, annually an average of at least three hundred baptisms were recorded in the entire diocese. In this regard names of several missionaries, who had actively involved themselves have been mentioned by Fr.S.Gnanapragasar. However, during the time of Mgr. Joulain an organised system of conversion work had been carried out in the diocese. From 1904 a missionary was set apart entirely for this purpose with the view of opening up new centers in promising places.

A regular system was followed in this regard. First a catechist was sent to a village that would likely accept to listen to the Good News. After his repeated and friendly visits the catechist made arrangements with a willing person in the village to obtain a plot of land on lease.

Here a shed was put up and the missionary gradually moved in with a portable altar and other articles of camp furniture. Having known about the presence of a Catholic priest in the village, people visited him to satisfy their curiosity. At the same time people also came to bargain their soul for material benefits such as financial assistance, English education, etc. Such unworthy motives were never entertained by the missionaries. However, during such visits

the missionary also discerns the cases of better-disposed individuals. Such people were entrusted to the catechist for instructions. The catechist in an unostentatious manner visited them for instruction, which lasted for a year or two. It may also take five to ten years of patient labour. When there was a well-founded prospect for a permanent centre, a plot of land was acquired, a shed to serve as a chapel, a presbytery and a school were erected.

At such a stage Hindu oppositions emerged in the most acute forms. In spite of oppositions new centers were opened and conversion work progressed. Generally, most of the neophytes were from the low castes who worked under the Hindus, as serfs and depended on them for their subsistence. Such opposition emerged mainly from the high caste Hindus. The new converts from Neervely, Kopay and Urumpirai encountered similar and severe oppositions. At the same time, dissemination of Catholic doctrine and knowledge effected considerable results with regard to conversion work. The target group of such activities was the non-Catholics. Two methods were adopted in diffusing the truths concerning Catholic doctrine, namely, 'Novenas' and the apostolate of the press.

The annual celebration of church feast introduced to the country by the Indian Oratorian missionaries was an excellent opportunity to address the large gathering of non-Catholics who were attracted to the church premises by the illuminations, decorations, singing and other events appealing to the Oriental taste. Thus, the missionaries made use of such opportunities to instruct the gathering on Christian morals and doctrines.

5.4.5 Education

The Oratorian missionaries of the Dutch period could not have contributed anything towards education of catholic children due to the prevalent situation. Even during the latter part of the Dutch rule when the situation had considerably changed in favour of the Catholics hardly anything was done. Only Bishop Bettacchini made serious attempts to impart even English education. In 1846 Bishop Bettacchini formed the 'The Jaffna Catholic School Society' through

which in 1848 -1850 he founded the Jaffna Boys seminary and Female seminary. But in Colombo the Catholic seminary was in existence from 1839. The catholic education in English as well as in the vernacular had to encounter many drawbacks and insurmountable obstacles. The lack of teachers and want of funds to build schools and maintain them were some of the difficulties the missionaries were faced with. Above all, the educational policy adopted by the Government and the undue importance given to Protestant denominations annoyed the missionaries and the Catholics. Until 1841 the Government authorities continued to ignore the Catholic interest in education. Fr. Bonjean through his pamphlet, "*A Few Words on Catholic Education*" opened the eyes of the people to the fact that in a country like Ceylon where religious pluralism existed, the Denominational Grant-in-aid system was the only justifiable and acceptable solution.

5.4.5.1 English Schools

At the inception, what was named as the "Jaffna Catholic English School" and later known as the "Jaffna Boys' Seminary" received its present name 'St. Patrick's College' in 1881. It was founded by Mgr. Bettacchini in 1850. Initially it was placed under the care of Mr. Patrick Foy an Irish layman. In 1859 Bishop Semeria got down from Ireland Brothers John Joseph Brown and Byrne who were the pioneer missionaries to serve at St. Patrick's. In 1862 the teaching staff was strengthened by the addition of Brothers Patrick Conway and Robert Rowland. Though slowly but steadily, the strength of the staff and of the students increased; physical facilities were also provided; by and by new courses and co-curricular activities were introduced; new classrooms and other buildings were put up.

The Jaffna Female seminary founded by Mgr. Bettacchini in 1850 was initially under the care of Mrs. Mary Anne O'Flanagan. Her daughter Miss. Catherine O'Flanagan, who, later became a Holy Family nun, assisted her. In 1862 when the first band of six nuns came to Jaffna the female seminary was placed under the care

of the newly arrived nuns. (They were the first women religious who came to Sri Lanka). Not only the Catholic parents but also the Protestant and the European parents sent their children to this school to be educated by the nuns. Speaking about the progress of the school, Fr. S. Gnanapragasar states: "the Government inspectors have often praised as 'very satisfactory all round' and as 'having an excellent tone' where 'the discipline is easy and smooth'".

5.4.5.2 Education

The Oblate missionaries, besides establishing two English schools also founded Anglo-Vernacular schools where the medium of instruction in lower classes was the vernacular and in higher classes was English. Many such schools were established in various parts of the Vicariate; they were St. Antony's school, Kayts, St. Xavier's school, Mannar, St. Joseph's school, Anuradapura, Girl's school, Anuradapura, St. Patrick's school, Mullaitivu, St. Joseph's school, Mathagal, St. Henry's school, Ilavalai and Sacred Heart School, Vathiry.

5.4.5.3 Vernacular Schools

The educational service of the Oblate missionaries was not limited to English and Anglo-vernacular schools. They had to toil hard to establish and maintain many vernacular schools all over the diocese. They considered education as the most effective means of imparting religious education and Catholic spiritual formation. Almost every parish priest had about half a dozen of such schools under his charge. The parish priest, along with his other duties, had to visit daily the schools under his charge to teach catechism and to administer the sacrament of reconciliation to school children. Besides, the resources of the diocese went in a big way to buy lands, put up schools and maintain the same. Though from 1869 the Catholics benefited from the denominational grant-in aid system, this facility was not available to all mission schools. Thus, it remained a heavy burden on the individual mission and on the diocese. According to the *Jaffna Ecclesiastical Directory* the statistics reads as follows. In 1873 out of 64 schools 30 were aided, in 1874 out of

87 schools 42 were aided and in 1877 out of 95 schools 61 were aided.

5.4.5.4 Female education

Another remarkable phenomenon is the increase in the number of girls taking up to education. In 1893 there were 69 vernacular schools with 3950 students of whom 1295 were girls. In 1918 the number of schools had risen to one hundred and eleven with 4379 boys and 3934 girls. The vast majority of schools, which were open sheds, were built of stone and mortar by 1918.

5.4.5.5 Religious Education (*through Tarkappirasankam*)

Annually an average of about one hundred addresses was given to non-Catholics in the eighteen or nineteen centers of the mission parishes. One of the popular forms of preaching, much appreciated and well received by the people, known as *Tarkappirasankam* (Dialog sermon) was a very effective form of imparting Christian doctrine and morals to Catholics and non-Catholics. Mostly such sermons were held at night, from two platforms in the open air specially prepared with lights, and adorned with a rich canopy. One of the speakers represented a docile non-Catholic asking questions while the other took the role of a Catholic guru who explained Christian doctrines and morals with many similes, quotations and examples. They usually lasted for two hours with short intervals. There were accompaniment of the Veenai and tom-tom with meaningful singing by popular singers. Fr S. Marcellin and Fr S. Gnanapragasar were very popular preachers of such sermons.

At a time when controversies over conversions and lively debates on philosophical and theological issues between Hinduism and Catholicism took place, Fr. Gnanapragasar published his tracts on comparative study of both religions. Though most of these tracts were in Tamil, there were a few in English too. According to the Nallur Swami, these tracts were well received in Ceylon and in South India. They were also meant to disseminate the truth concerning

Christianity to our Non- Catholic brothers. For this, Nallur Swami equipped himself with the knowledge of Sanskrit, Tamil and Hinduism. The diocesan press, from time to time depending on the need, issued these tracts.

5.4.6 Non-Catholics at Madhu

The Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu has been a place of pilgrimage where for the annual festival Catholics and Non- Catholics meet in large numbers. Frs. Maingot and Delpech soon realized that the stay of the people at camp for eight to ten days was a unique opportunity for sowing 'the good seed' in the hearts of many non-Catholics. They visited the non – Catholics in their booths and found that such meetings were very fruitful. Fr. Gnanapragasar succeeded these two priests and during the festival days he organized daily address in the form of dialogue sermons for non-Catholics. He established also a Catechumenate to instruct those willing to receive baptism.

As we have already stated, the dialogue sermon has been one of the effective, attractive, instructing and interesting means of imparting knowledge of Catholicism to Catholics and Non-Catholics. While for the former it was a means of getting firmly rooted in their faith, for the latter it created a conducive disposition to receive the Good news. Two Catechists were usually engaged in preparing the candidates for baptism. At the same time voluntary Catechists rendered their assistance as well. The missionaries were careful in choosing people for baptism, considering their disposition, knowledge of the religion and adequate preparations.

5.5 Mgr. Bonjean – A Second Apostle of Ceylon

Special emphasis was laid on improving the spiritual life of the missionaries.

- The financial situation of the diocese was gradually put in firm footing.
- More attention was given to the formation of the native religious men and women.

- Problems concerning elementary and higher education were tackled in a masterly manner.
- Wrote a number of letters and circulars directing, encouraging and fortifying the missionaries and faithful.
- Organised series of missions and conducted pastoral visitation on such occasions.
- Many churches built of clay and cadjans were converted into buildings of stones and mortar.
- While construction of several edifices was completed, new construction works were also started.
- The cholera epidemic and famine were occasions which brought out Bishop's marvelous resources of sympathy for the suffering and the poor.
- His sustained fight for the legitimate rights of the people on matters related to denominational education, the marriage laws of the land, and the passage of the carriers of epidemic diseases ended with the victory for the people.
- The establishment of the first ecclesiastical seminary in 1869 in Ceylon – (St. Martin's) was the fruit of his vision.
- The installment of the printing press in 1871 and the publication of the Jaffna Catholic Guardian started in 1876 as an Anglo-Tamil fontmightily were other note-worthy contributions.
- The Oblate missionaries had from the beginning cultivated among the people a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Vicariate and later in the diocese. In 1872 Bishop Bonjean laid the corner stone for the splendid and spacious beautiful church of Madhu.

5.6 Jaffna Diocese

5.6.1 Formation and development of the Diocese

From the time the Ceylon mission was established, the island formed part of the diocese of Goa, which extended from the Cape of Good Hope to China. In 1557 when Goa was made Archdiocese with Cochin as its Suffragan See, Sri Lankan mission was placed

under the jurisdiction of Cochin. Sri Lanka had formed part of the diocese of Cochin for nearly 300 years, till it was erected as an independent Vicariate directly depending on Propaganda Fide by Pope Gregory XVI by the Apostolic Brief "*Ex Munere Pastoralis*" dated 3 December 1834, implemented by the re-issue of the same Brief on 23 December 1836.

By the brief "*Pro Apostolic Muneris*" of 17 September 1847 Sri Lanka was divided into Colombo and Jaffna Vicariates and on 17 September 1847 by the brief "*Iam inde*" Bettacchini was appointed by Pope Pius IX as the Pro – Vicar Apostolic of the Northern mission. On 20 April 1883 the Holy See made a fresh division of Sri Lankan mission into three Vicariates, carving out Kandy from the already existing Colombo and Jaffna vicariates. On 1 September 1886 the hierarchy was established in Sri Lanka with Dr. C. Bonjean as the first Metropolitan, Dr. Melizan as the first bishop of Jaffna and Dr. Pagnani as first bishop of Kandy.

5.6.2 Bishop Henry Joulain

- Bishop Joulain organised several "Missions" in which he personally involved himself in preaching, hearing confessions and administering the sacraments.
- He initiated the preaching of Paschal time retreat and from 1901 a fixed (limited) time for the fulfillment of the Easter duties was introduced.
- The Goan Schism after having caused prolonged serious damages to the church in Mannar and Mantote, was patiently and firmly handled and over 2000 people from Pallimunai and other places were received back.
- The Oblate missionaries and the Oblate Bishops cultivated tender devotion (and piety) to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Bishop Joulain started the month of May Marian devotion in the diocese.
- The Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu became a place of pilgrimage and a centre of evangelization.

- Other shrines of Our Lady and of other saints became centers of pilgrimage where people used to gather for spiritual renewal and liturgical celebrations.
- Immense progress was achieved in the clerical, religious and charitable institutions of the diocese.
- St. Martin's Ecclesiastical Seminary trained many committed priests for the diocese.
- St. Patrick's maintained a high standard with regard to secular education, discipline and character formation.
- The apostolate of the Holy Family sisters with their well-organized English boarding school, day school and orphanage produced creditable results.
- The brothers of St. Joseph gradually increased their number of members. With the introduction of English into their curriculum their standard was raised. They opened six new houses in the diocese and their contribution to vernacular schools was a great asset to the diocese.
- The Colombogam Orphanage for boys continued to train its inmates for the vernacular schools and popular handicrafts.
- Lay Brother E. Groussault picked up the street boys wandering about aimlessly after work-hours, especially the "cigar-rollers" and guided them with games and religious instructions. He also formed the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society.
- Lay Brother S. Manuel – formed an association for seafaring young men of the town.
- The Bishop started as many as six new English schools. Education at St. Patrick's reached high standard of excellence. New classrooms were added and other development works were undertaken.
- With the introduction of many pious associations, annual spiritual retreats, Sunday school catechism and other similar activities, St. Patrick's became a well-adapted nursery for successful upbringing of Catholic youth.

- The Jaffna Catholic Guardian, which was issued partly in English and partly in Tamil, became a double edition in 1894. While the English edition was enlarged in 1905 and again in 1914, the Tamil one which had been a fortnightly issue, became weekly in 1912. Many schoolbooks, official documents of the diocese and other related Catholic literature chiefly in the vernacular were printed at the Colombogam Industrial School Press.
- Another important feature of Bishop Joulain's administration was the opening of as many as 20 new mission centers. Between 1898 and 1918 over 200 neophytes were baptized.

5.6.3 Bishop J.A. Brault

- Bishop Brault, though he occupied the See of Jaffna only for a brief period of three years, proved his administrative abilities beyond all expectations.
- He made far-reaching improvements in the financial condition and the temporal administration of the diocese.
- He introduced the system of conducting statistical analysis. He himself analyzed data and prepared valuable reports for the growth of the diocese.
- He paid special attention to the apostolate of the Ecclesiastical seminary, the college, native religious congregation, the press and the publication of catholic literature.
- Though he made preparations to crown solemnly the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Madhu, the event was cancelled due to the unfortunate incidents of the breaching of the Madhu tank and the falling of the church facade.

5.6.4 Bishop J.A. Guyomar

Bishop Guyomar had to administer the diocese during a turbulent period. After the economic depression of 1930 came the boom and then Second World War. With the emergence of religious

revival and national consciousness, power politics emerged to the front. However, Bishop Guyomar had the privilege of commencing his episcopate with the crowning of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Madhu by Archbishop Anthony Coudert on 2 July 1924.

- Madhu shrine was expanded and organized in such a way to provide better facilities and conveniences to the pilgrims. The damaged façade of the church was rebuilt and a large portico was added later on to facilitate the participation of a huge crowd in the liturgical celebrations. A new marble altar was installed and the church was consecrated on 25 June 1944. Fr. Alfred Huctin planned and organized the camp providing roads, shrines, cottages, water supply, post office, hospital, law-court, canteens, depots, bus-stand and other facilities for the convenience of the pilgrims.
- Bishop Guyomar himself was an educationist and before ascending to the Episcopal chair he was the Rector of St. Patrick's and director of St. Martin's. Thus, he took special care to increase the number of vocations and to get his priests academically qualified.
- Gradually the number of teachers and students increased and new buildings were added to St. Patrick's and to the convents in Jaffna and Ilavalai.
- St. Patrick's farm initiated by Fr. Timothy Long was a failure, though it was a creditable pioneering venture.
- The Industrial and Agricultural exhibition held for the first time in Jaffna brought the Jaffna society into close contact with modern development and technology.
- In the 1930s government sponsored colonization started. Thus schools and churches had to be erected in those areas.
- The vernacular teachers trained at Colombogam were of great help to fulfill the demand prevailing in the schools of the diocese.
- To mark the 75th anniversary of the Colombogam institute, a Eucharistic Congress was organized in September 1939 with intensive intellectual and spiritual instruction. The final

celebrations concluded with a grand procession from Colombogam to the Reclamation grounds where Eucharistic blessing was imparted.

- Internal jealousies and rivalries created many difficulties for the Bishop and he had to maintain much patience. The departure of the Brothers of St. Joseph from the diocese was one of the saddest events in this tangle and in the administration of Bishop Guyomar.
- At Kilinochchi and Murungan, schools and orphanages were opened.
- In 1939 the foundation stone was laid for the new Cathedral. Since the world war broke out, work had to be stopped. when walls and arches were taking shape.
- Since the workload of the missionaries and the religious had increased, other congregations namely, the Apostolic Carmel Sisters came in 1947 to teach at Atchuvely, the Holy cross sisters came in 1930 to do nursing first at Kayts hospital and later at Jaffna hospital; in the same period the Franciscan Nuns came to work in Mannar hospital.
- A new block was built at the Bishops House for the priests.
- To mark the centenary of the arrival of the first band of Oblate missionaries to Jaffna, the statue of Our Lady of Madhu was taken in 1948 on a Mission tour in which over 80 main churches were visited and more than 50,000 paid their homage to the miraculous statue.
- Again to mark the Holy Year 1950, the statue of Our Lady of Fatima was taken on a global devotional tour to obtain peace. The arrival of the sacred statue in Jaffna in June provided an occasion for deep spiritual renewal.
- The foundation of the contemplative Congregation of the Rosarians under the guidance of Fr.B.A. Thomas was one of the greatest achievements in the episcopate of Bishop Guyomar.
- At the request of Bishop Guyomar in February 1928 Fr. B.A. Thomas started a monastery of monks whose life

style - silence, self-immolation and self sacrifice - was a powerful witness to the whole country. The women's branch was opened in October 1928. Though initially it encountered many failures, the situation completely changed for the better after Sr. Jeanne Marie, H.F., assumed duties as the directress in September 1948.. When these two congregations received the appreciation of Roman authorities, they also opened their other houses in Ceylon and India.

Chapter 6

Independence of Sri Lanka and Turn of Events

6. 1 Nationalism

As a consequence of 450 Years of Western and Christian influence on Sri Lankan society, the reaction of the Buddhists became professedly hostile. This in turn put the ethnic and religious minorities into serious problems. Conscious of real grievances, the Buddhists looked upon the Christian clergy, Christians and Europeans with resentment which they expressed in words and deeds at various levels. Under such influence the intended Buddhist religious revival was directed more towards nationalism than the religious renewal. Though such a situation made the Buddhist people to take pride in their religion, language, customs, dress and history, it also aroused the dormant feelings of other faiths as well. The grievances and hostilities finally took a political turn and strengthened the hands of the politicians, which produced many negative reactions and adverse consequences against the minorities. As a result in 1960 the state took over most schools including those under the Church administration. Over 600 Catholic schools of them were taken over by the state with their lands, buildings, furniture, etc. without any compensation. The same happened to the Catholic Training colleges as well. It was the greatest blow for the Christians after the independence.

In 1964 all Christian nuns serving in state hospitals were removed. Right from the Portuguese period, charitable activities were part of the pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary came during the episcopate of Bonjean to Colombo and in 1886 on the request of the Government undertook nursing in the Colombo General Hospital and later in Mannar

hospital. The Holy Cross nuns took up nursing in Jaffna and Kayts hospitals.

The Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna Mgr. C. Bonjean established the first seminary in Jaffna in 1869 (in 1874 this was placed under the patronage of St. Martin of Tours) and in 1883 the same prelate opened a seminary in Colombo. These two seminaries produced a large number of Sri Lankan Priests, both Oblates and diocesan. As such the Church was ready to face the imposition of restrictions by the government of Sri Lanka on foreign missionaries. Besides, while the indigenization process accelerated, the administrative and pastoral leadership were gradually taken over by the native clergy.

6.2 Bishop J. Emilianuspillai, o.m.i.

Bishop Emilianuspillai was an indigenous Oblate called to administer the Jaffna diocese during a very turbulent period. Tremendous changes have taken place in the political, social, religious and other spheres of Sri Lankan society. He was appointed Co-adjutor to Bishop Guyomour on 11 March 1949 and succeed him on his retirement on 25 August. Before he was called to serve as the chief Pastor he discharged his duties in various capacities, as parish priest, principal of schools, Principal of teacher's training college, General Manager of Catholic schools and Vicar General. During the 22 years of the episcopate of Bishop Emilianuspillai, Jaffna diocese witnessed immense progress.

- For him education of children, which was the basis for moral, intellectual and spiritual formation, received the highest priority.
- After independence new colonies were started and churches and schools were established to cater to the needs of the Catholics there.
- Emergence of false nationalism, religious rivalry and jealousy led to the gradual attack on the Christian denominational schools which finally ended with the schools take over in 1960. Due to this move, out of 186 schools 181 were taken over by the government. Bishop Emil opted to retain five

schools as entirely private, namely St. Patrick's College, Jaffna, Holy Family Convent, Jaffna, St. Henry's College Illavalai, St. Antony's College, Kayts, and St. Joseph's College, Annuradapura.

- To maintain these five schools the Bishop had to drain the assets of the diocese.
- Agricultural and industrial establishments were opened at Kilinochchi on a 25-acre property and the Brothers of St. Gabriel were invited to manage it.
- An agricultural school was planned on 100 acre of jungle land in Uruthirapuram where a minor tank was available for irrigation.
- St. Xavier's College, Mannar was entrusted to the management of the Christian brothers.
- He opened up new missions in Kilinochchi, Cheddikulam and other areas of Vanni. To provide better facilities for education for the children of these areas he upgraded these schools with the approval of the government and also provided transport facilities to receive better education in other schools.
- Bishop Emil took a keen and personal interest in the recruitment and formation of the diocesan clergy. St. Martin's seminary was made a minor seminary only for the aspirants of diocesan clergy. Diocesan major seminarians were sent to different places such as Rome, Canada, Pune, Mangalore, Madras, and Trichy for priestly formation. Bishop Emil's greatest achievement was providing the diocese with a good set of committed and well disciplined diocesan clergy.
- The many changes and developments introduced by him at the Madhu Shrine created a conducive atmosphere for the pilgrims to have a better participation in the liturgical services and spiritual renewal. To provide better facilities for the pilgrims water and electricity supply was improved, daily bus service for the camp was organized, two colonies were established with permanent residents and a new loud-speaker system was introduced to enable the pilgrims to

actively participate in prayers and devotions. In brief, Madhu became a hive of spiritual activities.

- Bishop Emil had the painful experience of putting some order in the Rosarian Brothers' Congregation, as Fr. B. A. Thomas whom Bishop Gayomar appointed to found and direct the contemplative order was advancing in age and unable to maintain order and discipline in the congregation. Many complaints reached the higher authorities and the Apostolic Delegate, both Mgr. Lucas and Mgr. Knox requested the Bishop to intervene. Though painful the Bishop had to take a series of actions to bring reform for the good of the congregation and finally successfully brought order in the congregation.
- Bishop Emil had the privilege of attending the four sessions of Second Vatican council. The second Vatican council (1962 – 1965) is a landmark in the history of the Church, as it was entirely pastoral and was not involved in doctrinal controversies as the previous councils. Bishop Emil made arrangements to explain to the people of his diocese the council teachings embodied in the 16 documents and introduced some of the reforms envisaged in the Council. He made use of this opportunity to eradicate some of the superstitious and meaningless practices that prevailed in the diocese in connection with church festivals.

6.3 Bishop B. Deogupillai

Bishop B. Deogupillai a diocesan priest from Jaffna was consecrated Auxiliary to Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa, by Mgr. Ignatius Glenney, S.J., on 11 May 1967 and was appointed Bishop of Jaffna on 18 December 1972.

- When he was serving as the Auxiliary in Trinco-Batti, he founded a monthly magazine called "*Thondan*" which is being published even today as the Diocesan Magazine.
- Bishop Deogu was endowed with multi-faceted personality traits. He was a great leader and a gentleman who lived

an exemplary and simple life. He was committed and devoted to his call as a priest and later as a Bishop. He was a man with deep courage, conviction and never compromised his values for any favours or privileges

- He established a Catechetical centre to organize formal Catechetical apostolate in the diocese. Under his directions three months Catechist training course was introduced and has been successfully conducted annually up to this day.
- He played a prominent role in establishing the Department of Christian and Islamic civilizations in the Jaffna University. Besides, he founded the Catholic chaplaincy to cater to the spiritual needs of all Catholic students of the University.
- The founding of St. Francis Xavier's Major Seminary and providing the necessary facilities for it to become a full-fledged degree awarding institution has been one of the greatest achievements of Bishop Deogupillai.
- Bishop Deogu took a keen interest in developing the Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, and to provide better facilities for the pilgrims. Many new shelters were built to accommodate the huge crowds that gather during the final days of the fests.
- For better pastoral care, the entire area of North Central Province was separated from Jaffna and made Prefecture Apostolic of Anuradapurain in 1975 December .
- He also made necessary arrangements to establish the Mannar diocese in 1981. Fr. Thomas Saundaranayagam of Jaffna diocese, was nominated as the first Bishop of the newly carved out Mannar diocese.
- Having fully realized the importance and the necessity of educated priests for the diocese, Bishop Deogupillai provided facilities and encouraged his priests to pursue higher secular and religious education at home and abroad. Thus, he was able to establish a diocesan major seminary as he was sure of needed staff to teach there.

- While he cultivated a preferential taste for arts, culture and Tamil Catholic literature, he encouraged and supported the activities of Thiru Marai Kalamantram in promoting the growth of fine arts and culture.
- He authored several catechism books for school children and published several learned articles on Christian Tamil literature i.e., *Gnanapallu*, *Yagappan Ammanai*, *Thiruchelvar Kaviyam*, *Thiruchelvar Ammanai*, etc regarding the date of composition and authorship.
- Under his guidance the various diocesan Commissions were either founded or re – founded and new centers like Catechetical centre, Liturgical centre, Family welfare centre and Human Development centre were opened to cater to the needs of the people and the welfare of the diocese.

When he took over the administration of the diocese the five private schools maintained by the diocese were a big strain and they drained the finances of the diocese. Thus, in consultation with the priests, except St. Patrick's College the other four schools were handed over to the Government. (S. Gnanaprasad & M. Pavilupillai, 1986, pp. 26 -59)

His Contributions to the struggles of the Tamils

As Bishop Deogupillai was called to administer the diocese in a turbulent period in the political history of the country, he had to speak out on issues pertaining to human rights, justice and equality. On many occasions he stated in public and wrote to the government authorities that Tamil also should be made an official language, i.e. a language of administration throughout the whole country.

In a letter dated 22 June 1983 to Prime Minister Premadasa he stated that what the Tamils are asking for is justice and equality before the law and the use of Tamil language for all purposes. In the same letter he reiterated in strong terms that before the advent of the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Tamils had an independent Tamil kingdom and thus, they have the right of political self-determination.

Therefore the Sinhalese have no right to rule over them. Once this right is recognized, the Tamils of North and East would be willing to live with the Sinhalese and co-operate with them on terms of equality and justice. They would be willing to accept Federal type of Government with a central Government at the top.

Furthermore to facilitate discussions to solve the problems of national issues he recommended the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and removal of the army from the North and East, for the Tamils are neither a subject race nor a conquered race. When the President gave additional powers to the armed forces in the North and East the Bishop said that "It was tantamount to a Declaration of war against the Tamils.... This is political genocide". At a time when the tamil people were left without there represent atives in the parliment and as the situation gadually deteriorated it was at St. Patrick's College prize giving on 18th June 1986 the Bishop said "The time has come, I feel, for us to raise our voice and make an appeal to the United Nations Organization to take effective steps to halt the annihilation of the peaceful defenceless Tamil civilians of the Northern and Eastern Provinces."

At the same time he appreciated the government when the 16th amendment of 1988 to the constitution in which Tamil also was made an official language or language of Administration and English was made a link language. He continued to make his contribution as a member of the Citizen committee and shared his frank views at opportune times.

Conclusion

During the colonial period all missionary activities of the church were directed towards conversion and implanting of the church in Sri Lankan soil. The *Padroado* agreement made between the Iberian kings and the Popes provided ample opportunities to carry out the missionary enterprise effectively. Though during the Dutch rule Catholicism suffered a serious setback, the firm foundation laid by the Portuguese and the timely arrival of Blessed Joseph Vaz and other Oratorians of Goa safeguarded Catholicism from extinction. With the advent of the British, the situation in the Sri Lankan mission changed dramatically in favour of Catholicism. The first half of the 19th century was a period of transition and reorganization of the mission; as such, in 1834 the Sri Lankan Vicariate was established and in 1847 the Sri Lankan mission was divided into two Vicariates. The establishment of the hierarchy in 1887 with Colombo as the Archdiocese and Jaffna and Kandy as suffragan dioceses was another milestone for the Sri Lankan Church. Subsequently, the European missionaries trained the indigenous clergy and handed over the responsibility of administration of the church to the natives. This led to the gradual indigenization of the Sri Lankan Church.

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Appendix- I

Interpreting Sri Lankan Church History

History is a critical study in which the events of the past are analyzed in their particular context and interpreted in the backdrop of the socio-economic and cultural life pattern of the people in the given situation. Thus, to understand the past events as accurately as possible, facts have to be collected from reliable primary sources, arranged coherently, understood objectively in their proper context and thereafter, interpreted for the benefit of the present and future Society.

In this process, concerning the study of the Sri Lankan Church history, one has to encounter many serious obstacles:

1) Major portion of the primary sources and considerable amount of secondary sources, on Sri Lankan Church has been written by the missionaries themselves who were either Goanese very much dependent on the Portuguese or Europeans and primary agents of evangelization. From their documents it appears that they were partial and very much pro-Christian and pro-Western.

2) Comparatively, the native inhabitants have not left any writings as primary sources on this subject. Thus, one is not able to know the views, attitudes, reactions of the natives regarding the activities of the missionaries and the imperial rulers on proselytisation.

3) As in almost all Third world countries, in Sri Lanka too, Christianity was introduced with the support of colonial imperialism. The arrivals of imperial powers to Sri Lanka were motivated primarily by economic as well as political reasons. Missionary enterprises were actively supported by the imperial powers for political and economic reasons. Besides, military personnel also actively engaged themselves in missionary activities to obtain favours and promotions from their senior officials. In addition, there were instances where the missionaries themselves functioned as agents of imperial powers and military. As such, people did not always look at the missionaries as messengers of religious faith.

4) As the documents concerning the Church history were written by religious agents themselves, they paid special emphasis on the factors that either facilitated or prevented the spread of Christianity. Thus, they have viewed everything from religious point of view. As a result, the other spheres of life such as political, together with the socio-cultural impact and the negative influence of Christianity have not been adequately highlighted.

5) At this juncture one could raise a very pertinent question as to whether a person could be impartial, when one has to interpret a delicate and sensitive issue like conversion. Besides, the historian himself is bound to make choices while composing his documents. As such, though he may take extra effort to be more vigilant or objective in his selection of materials and interpretation, his affiliation to his caste, creed or race would certainly consciously or unconsciously, colour his vision of history. For example, the Catholic historians who wrote and spoke much regarding the persecution of the Catholics by the Calvinist Dutch, have failed to see the oppressive and brutal treatment of the Portuguese towards the Hindus and the Buddhist, in the name of Catholicism.

The religious, linguistic and ethnic affiliation of an author or a student consciously or unconsciously, determines and influences to a certain extent the selection of events and the interpretation of history. (W. L. A. Don Peter 1995, 154-56) The above stated factors certainly make the study of the Sri Lankan Church history more complex and difficult, especially in discovering the motives behind conversion in the correct historical perspective.

At this juncture, the contributions made by Fr. Vito Perniola, S.J., to researches and students of Sri Lankan Church history, mainly Catholic Church history, is commendable. He has rendered valuable service to researchers on this subject by collecting documents from various archives in Sri Lanka and abroad and translating them from many foreign languages into English. Already he has published three volumes on the Portuguese period, three on the Dutch period and eleven on the British period. His work on the British period is still in progress. Documents concerning the second quarter of the 19th

century were collected by Fr. Perniola in Rome Archives of the Congregation of Propagation of Faith, of the Society of Jesus, of the Congregation of the Sylvestrines and of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate Generalate, and in the Colonial Office of London, Historical Archives of Goa, the National Archives of Sri Lanka, Archives of the Archdiocese of Colombo, of the diocese of Kandy, and of the diocese of Jaffna. These documents were reports, correspondences, and minutes of meetings, petitions, requests, explanations, and exhortations. Bishops, Vicars Apostolic, priests, viceroys, governors, captains, soldiers and ordinary people wrote these documents. Originals of these documents were written in French, Latin, English, Portuguese and Dutch.

As far as the Sri Lankan Catholic Church history is concerned though certain individuals such as Fr. S. Gnana Pragasar, Fr. S. G. Perera, Bishop Edmund Peiris, Fr. V. Perniola, Fr. W. L. A. Don Peter and Fr. Bede Barcatta have taken keen interest on their own initiative and contributed much, a more collective and organized attempt to write the history is more desirable.

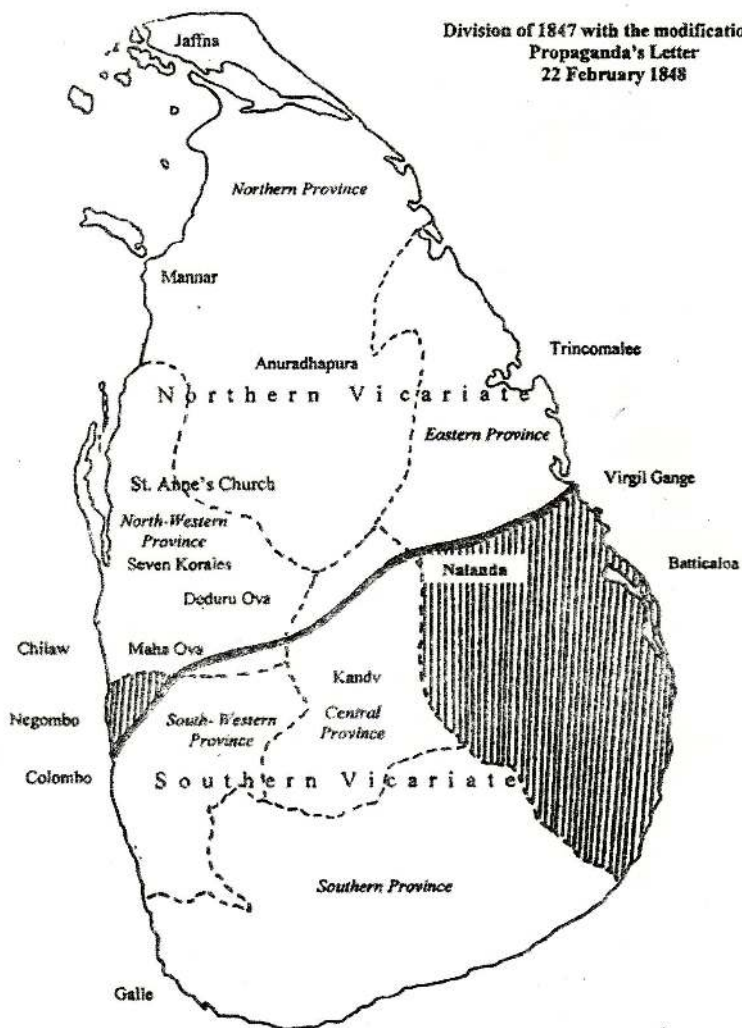
To conclude, from all what has been stated, one could say without hesitation that interpreting the Sri Lankan Church history is rather a difficult task due to the complex issues involved. As such, in interpreting one has to keep in mind that though the missionaries were primarily concerned with propagating Catholic faith in Sri Lanka, they mixed up missionary enterprises with the European imperialism which subsequently resulted with political subjugation, commercial exploitation, wars and bloodshed and disruption of the traditional culture of the people.

Appendix - II

Map - I



(Bede Barcatta, 1991, p.383)



(Bede Barcatta, 1991, p.383)

Appendix - II

Map - III



(Bede Barcatta, 1991,p.399)

A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka
by Rev. Dr. G. Pilendran will serve
not only as an ideal textbook
for students of Sri Lankan Church history,
but also as a ready reference for lovers of history.
Special emphasis is laid in this work
on the pastoral activities
of the Northern Church.

Beginning from
the presence of Christianity in Sri Lanka
during the Pre-Colonial period,
the author traces the growth of the Catholic Church
during the rule of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British,
and brings the reader up to date
with the Second Vatican Council
and the subsequent thrust towards
indigenization of the Church.

Rev. Dr. G. Pilendran is Head of the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilizations at the University of Jaffna, as well as Visiting Lecturer at St. Francis Xavier's Major Seminary, Columbuturai, Jaffna. Publications of the author include:

- விழுமியக் கல்வி* (1996)
Tamil Catholic Literary Tradition (1998)
Letters of Holy Family Missionaries from Jaffna (edited) (1998)
தமிழில் விவிலியம்: நேற்றும் இன்றும் (1999)
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