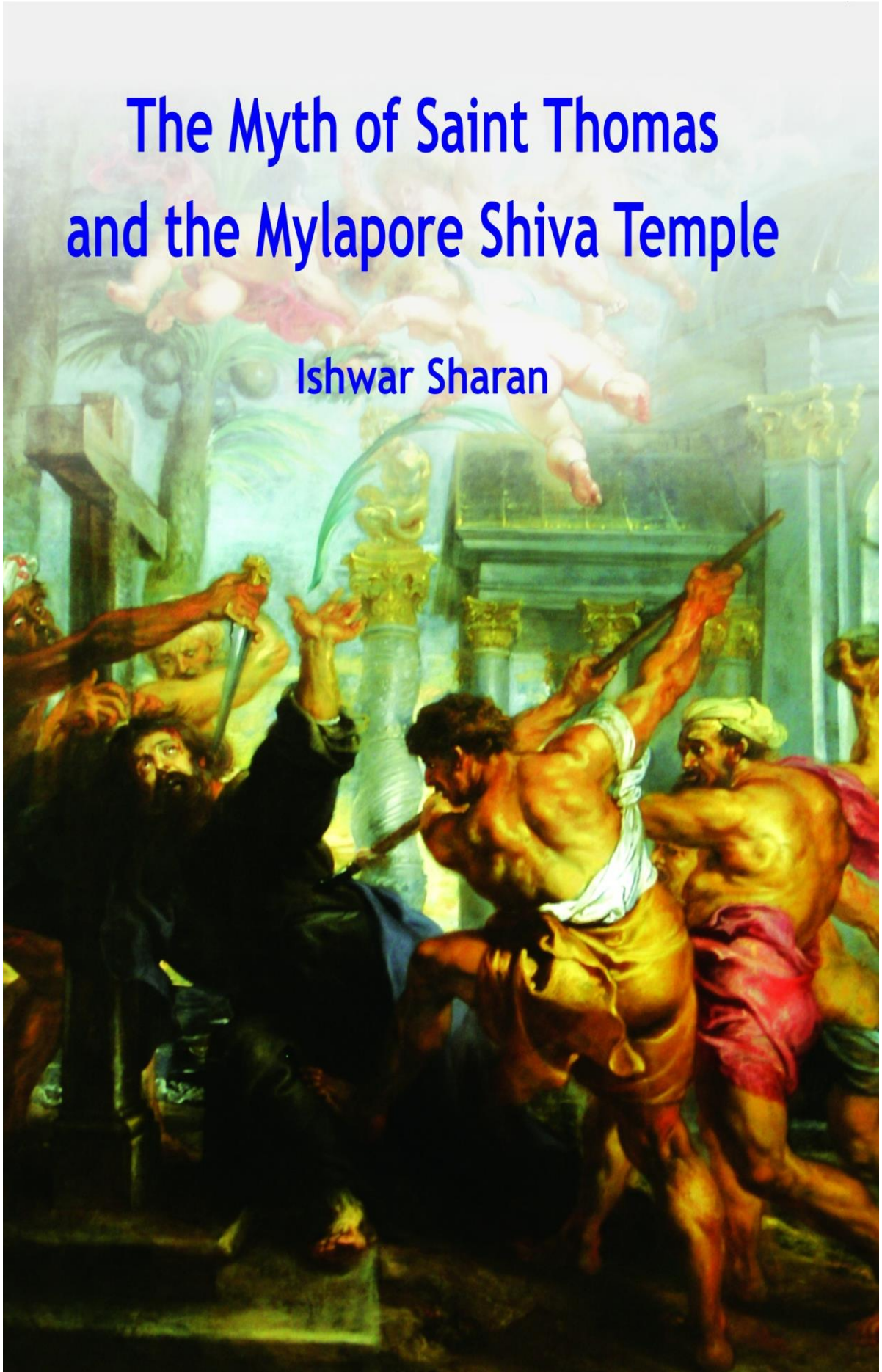


The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple

Ishwar Sharan



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Fourth Revised Edition

Ishwar Sharan

Voice of India

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This Book
Is Dedicated To
Sri Kapaleeswara Shiva
The Lord Of Mylapore
And His
Favoured Sons
Jnanasambandar
And
Arunagirinathar
Who Offer
The Best Evidence

This Edition
Is Dedicated To
Vasanti Amma
Of
Sri Vaishnavi Shrine
Tirumullaivoyal
And
Sita Ram Goel
Of
Voice of India
New Delhi

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Author's Note

This book is a revised and updated version of *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* that was published by Voice of India in 2010. It includes everything in the earlier edition plus a number of new and important references. The Tamil and religious scholar Veda Prakash, who in 1989 brought us the original data he had collected on the St. Thomas myth and destruction of the Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple in Mylapore, continues to share his research materials and Tamil translations. Sita Ram Goel, Koenraad Elst, K.P. Sunil and Ganesh Iyer, Leela Tampi, R.S. Narayanaswami, Rajiv Malhotra, C.A. Simon, Khushwant Singh, G. Ananthakrishnan, B.R. Haran, G.P. Srinivasan, V. Sundaram, S. Muthiah, A. Srivathsan, B.S. Harishankar, Sandhya Jain, Swami Tapasyananda of the Sri Ramakrishna Math in Mylapore, and a number of Indian and foreign media organisations who report news without a by-line, have all made invaluable contributions.

Two important events have taken place since the publication of this book in 2010. One, the eminent and learned archaeologist Dr. R. Nagaswamy has criticised the Pattanam archaeological dig¹ and categorically stated that there is no evidence for St. Thomas's visit to India, and two, a California production company, Dharlin Entertainment, is planning a major motion picture on St. Thomas's alleged stay in Kerala and murder in Mylapore.² They may succeed in cinematically perpetuating the blood libel of Thomas's murder by Hindus where the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese failed in 2008. Added to this is the vast work and expense the Archdiocese has lavished on rebuilding the fake St. Thomas tomb in San Thome Cathedral Basilica and on its garish development around the old Portuguese churches on Little Mount in Saidapet and St. Thomas Mount.

All this and more has happened in direct response to our books. So, we can say with some certainty that St. Thomas is here in India with us—if not in truth than in fiction and scholarly sectarian scandal.

In this book we have traced the legend of St. Thomas in some detail, from its origin in third century Mesopotamia to its religious, commercial and

communal manifestation in Chennai today. It is a complicated story with many details and side issues attached, and the reader will have to pay close attention. What was originally an introductory essay to the study of the St. Thomas in India myth and the related issue of the destruction of a great Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach, has taken the shape of a broader investigation into the negative Christian presence in South India today.

Whatever Christian believers in Malabar and their ecclesiastical counterparts in Chennai may say, there is only one original source for the St. Thomas in India legend, the *Acts of Thomas*. It is a moral fable written by the Gnostic poet Bardesanes (Bardaisan, Ibn Daisan) at Edessa about 210 CE, and it was brought to South India by Syrian Christian refugees in the fourth century CE. The allegedly ancient oral narratives produced today by the descendants of these Christian refugees in Kerala, however dear they may be to the faithful, are church and family traditions that have no historical credibility and no bearing on real historical research. The fact that the Indian government and encyclopaedias like *Britannica* and *Wikipedia* accept these family tales as Indian history does not make them any more truthful or valid as historical records. This has to be recognised by Indian government officials and scholars alike if Indian history writing is to be taken seriously.

The first three editions of this book were received by the Indian public with great interest even though they were reviewed in only one newspaper, *The Pioneer*. This is very gratifying, and the fact that the book is going into a fourth edition is even more welcome. The brown sahibs who control the mainstream Indian media will continue to do their distasteful St. Thomas propaganda and black out the opposing historical view because that is what they are paid to do, but we are sure of the interest and critical intelligence of the Indian reader and are satisfied that the work we set out to do in 1989 has borne fruit.

The irony—and the brown sahibs may take note—is that had the *Indian Express* published our response to C.A. Simon's malafide Catholic propaganda piece, *In Memory of a Slain Saint*, in 1989, we would never have bothered to follow up the St. Thomas in India tale with an investigation. But because we were rudely obstructed, first by the *Indian Express* editor,

then by *The Hindu* editor, and finally by Chennai's own self-styled historian S. Muthiah, we decided to look deeper into this matter of Indian Thomases—and believe me there is more than one Thomas involved in this history swindle even as there is more than one tomb for him. So, the moral of the story is this: don't tell lies for Jesus—or in this case for his twin brother Thomas—and if you must tell lies let the historian reply to the lies so that the matter may die a quiet and non-controversial death.

The brown sahibs and so-called secular scribes who make up the Indian media mafia³ have only themselves to blame for our continued interest in the ancient St. Thomas in India fable and its modern political and hatefully communal manifestation in Tamil Nadu today.

ISHWAR SHARAN

1. The Archaeological Survey of India has found no evidence for Muziris (Muchiri in Tamil) in Kodungallur. But the village of Pattanam seven km south of the city has produced some Roman beads and become the focus of Marxist and Christian excavators searching for St. Thomas proofs. Muziris was a known international trading entrepot from the sixth century BCE to the thirteenth century CE when it suddenly disappeared due to natural catastrophe. It may be the same place as the Murachipattanam found in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

2. Dharlin Entertainment, Inc., Bonsall, California. Website at www.dharlin.com/thomas.html.

3. This writer once had the misfortune of meeting *The Hindu* editor, N. Ram. He arrived one morning in 1992 on our ashram doorstep with a Muslim friend. He did not identify himself except to say that his name was Ram, and was eager to push forward his young companion who was too ill at ease to speak. After staring at us for a minute, his manner radiating hostility, he asked our opinion about the demolition of the disputed building called Babri Masjid in Ayodhya earlier in the year. We replied that we did not feel that Muslims had any vested interest or claim in Ayodhya. It was a Hindu pilgrimage town for many centuries and had no religious value to Muslims. The disputed building was a victory monument built by a foreign invader's governor who had wished to subdue and intimidate the local Hindu inhabitants. We wondered how Indian Muslims, the citizens of a free and independent India whose religious rights were protected, could place any value on such a structure? There was a dead silence for a minute after this reply, while Ram glared at us menacingly (his Muslim companion had closed his eyes and sunk down in his chair). "No use talking to you," he growled, and got up and stomped out of the room with his companion in tow.

“Who was that?” I asked the Mataji of the ashram later. “Oh, that was Ram of *The Hindu*,” she said, laughing. “You can be sure of a bad press from now on! You had better find another name to write under. The one Ram knows you by will be on every media black list by tomorrow morning.” And so it has come about. Jai Sri Ram!

Part One

“What India gives us about Christianity in its midst is indeed nothing but pure fables.” - Alphonse Mingana

“The oriental ubiquity of St. Thomas’s apostolate is explained by the fact that the geographical term ‘India’ included the lands washed by the Indian Ocean as far as the China Sea in the east and the Arabian Peninsula, Ethiopia, and the African coast in the west.” - Leonardo Olschki

“The Nestorians of India venerated St. Thomas as the patron of Asiatic Christianity—mark, not of Indian Christianity.” - Leonardo Olschki

Foreword

Koenraad Elst

A predictable component of platitudinous speeches by secularist politicians is that “Christianity was brought to India by the apostle Thomas in the first century AD, even before it was brought to Europe”. The intended thrust of this claim is that, unlike Hinduism which was imposed by the “Aryan invaders”, Christianity is somehow an Indian religion, even though it is expressly stated that it “was brought to India” from outside. As a matter of detail, St. Paul reported on Christian communities living in Greece, Rome and Spain in the 40s AD, while St. Thomas even according to his followers only came to India in 52 AD, so by all accounts, Christianity still reached Europe before India.¹ At any rate, its origins lay in West Asia, outside India. But this geographical primacy is not the main issue here. More importantly, there is nothing factual, nor secular, about the claim that Thomas ever came to India.

That claim is a stark instance of what secularists would denounce in other cases as a “myth”. By this, I don’t mean that it was concocted in a backroom conspiracy, then propagated by obliging mercenary scribes—the way many Hindus imagine the colonial origins of the “Aryan invasion myth” came into being. It came about in a fairly innocent manner, through a misunderstanding, a misreading of an apocryphal text, the miracle-laden hagiography *Acts of Thomas*. This is not the place to discuss the unflattering picture painted of Thomas in his own hagiography, which credits him with many anti-social acts. The point for now is that the text never mentions nor describes the subcontinent but merely has the apostle go from Palestine eastwards to a desert-like country where people are “Mazdei” [Zoroastrian] and have Persian names. This is definitely not lush and green Kerala. Not only is there no independent record of Thomas ever coming near South India, but the only source claimed for this story, doesn’t even make this claim either.²

However, we know of a Thomas of Cana who led a group of Christian refugees from West Asia in the fourth century, when the Christianisation

of the Roman Empire caused the Iranians to see their Syriac-speaking Christian minority as a Roman fifth column. The name “Thomas Christians” may originally have referred to this fourth century leader. Then again, those refugees may also have been “Thomas Christians” before their migration to India in the sense that their Christian community had been founded in Iran by the apostle Thomas [viz. Church of Fars]. That he lived and worked in some Iranian region is attested and likely, but in no case did he ever settle in India.

The Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Eusebius confirm explicitly that he settled in “Parthia”, a part of the Iranian world. From the third century, we do note an increasing tendency among Christian authors to locate him in a place labelled “India”, as does the *Acts of Thomas*. But it must be borne in mind that this term was very vague, designating the whole region extending from Iran eastwards. Remember that when Columbus had landed in America, which he thought was East Asia, he labelled the indigenous people “Indians”, meaning “Asians”. Afghanistan is one area that was Iranian-speaking and predominantly Mazdean [Zoroastrian] but often considered part of “India”. Moreover, in some periods of history it was even politically united with parts of “India” in the narrow sense. So, Afghanistan may well be the “Western India” where Pope Benedict placed St. Thomas in his controversial speech in September 2006, to the dismay of the South Indian bishops.

While the belief that Thomas settled in South India came about as a mistake, the claim that he was martyred by Brahmins was always a deliberate lie, playing upon a possible confusion between the consonants of the expression “*be ruhme*”, meaning “with a spear”, and those of “*brahma*” (Semitic alphabets usually don’t specify vowels). That was the gratitude Hindus received in return for extending their hospitality to the Christian refugees: being blackened as the murderers of the refugees’ own hero. If the Indian bishops have any honour, they will themselves remove this false allegation from their discourse and their monuments, including the cathedral in Chennai built at the site of Thomas’s purported burial (actually the site of a Shiva temple). Indeed, they will issue a historic declaration

expressing their indebtedness to Hindu hospitality and pluralism, and pledge to renounce their anti-Hindu animus.

Secularists keep on reminding us that there is no archaeological evidence for Rama's travels, and from this they deduce the *non sequitur* that Rama never existed, indeed that "Rama's story is only a myth". But in Rama's case, we at least do have a literary testimony, the *Ramayana*, which in the absence of material evidence may or may not be truthful, while in the case of Thomas's alleged arrival in India, we don't even have a literary account. The text cited in the story's favour doesn't even have him come to a region identifiable as India. That is why Christian scholars outside India have no problem abandoning the myth of Thomas's landing in Kerala and of his martyrdom in Tamil Nadu. I studied at the Catholic University of Louvain, and our Jesuit professor of religious history taught us that there is no data that could dignify the Thomas legend with the status of history.

This eliminates the last excuse the secularists might offer for repeating the Thomas legend, viz. that the historical truth would hurt the feelings of the Christian minority. It is clear enough that many Christians including the Pope have long given up the belief in Thomas's Indian exploits, or—like the Church Fathers mentioned above—never believed in them in the first place. In contrast with European Christians today, Indian Christians live in a seventeenth century bubble, as if they are too puerile to stand in the daylight of solid historical fact. They remain in a twilight of legend and lies, at the command of ambitious "medieval" bishops who mislead them with the St. Thomas in India fable for purely selfish reasons.³

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru provides an excellent example of how some innocents abroad lap up lies sold by powerful organizations. "You may be surprised to learn," he wrote his daughter, Indira, on April 12, 1932, "that Christianity came to India long before it went to England or Western Europe, and when even in Rome it was a despised and proscribed sect. Within a hundred years or so of the death of Jesus, Christian missionaries came to South India by sea. ... They converted a large number of people." (*Glimpses of World History*, 1987, quoted by Sita Ram Goel in *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters: AD 304 to 1996*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1996.)

2. The *Acts of Thomas* says that Judas Thomas and Abbanes landed at Andropolis after a short sea journey, a royal city somewhere to the east of Jerusalem.

Andropolis has been identified as one of the so-called Alexandrias, Sandaruck, in western Baluchistan. The geographical term “India” has been used twice in the whole text of the *Acts of Thomas*, and it is used as a synonym for Asia.

3. The Roman Catholic Church in India owes Hindus an abject apology for the blood libel she has perpetuated for centuries, falsely charging Hindus with the murder of Thomas even as she falsely charges Jews with the murder of Jesus.

Introduction

Ishwar Sharan

The legend of St. Thomas in India has its origin in the third century Gnostic religious text known as the *Acts of Thomas*. Judas Thomas called Didymus, identified in the *Acts* as the look-alike twin brother of Jesus, had travelled in Syria and Persia and had established a church in the Persian province of Fars. Because of this, he was known as the Apostle of the East in all of West Asia and India. His cult was brought to India by Syrian Christian refugees from Edessa and Babylon in the fourth century. Between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries, the Syrian Christians reinvented the tale many times over until at last they had St. Thomas coming to India himself to evangelize the heathen. St. Thomas then becomes the founder of Christianity in India and their very own “Indian” apostle. The legend was later embellished by Marco Polo in the thirteenth century, who made the extraordinary claim that the apostle’s tomb was on the southern tip of India, on the gulf facing Ceylon. It was then taken over by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, who, misreading Marco Polo, decided Mylapore with its great temple of Shiva was the place where St. Thomas was buried. They added their own redactions of the *Acts of Thomas* to the legend, their favourite being St. Gregory’s *De Miraculis Beati Thomae Apostoli* (also called *De Miraculis Thomae*), and in 1523 having established themselves in the thriving Mylapore seaport, began destroying temples and building their St. Thomas churches on the ruins, pretending the sites were those of St. Thomas’s martyrdom and burial.

The Thomas-in-India legend is the prototype story for the newer Jesus-in-India story that was invented in Paris in 1894 by the Russian forger Nicolas Notovitch. He wrote a book in French called *La vie inconnue de Jesus Christ* (The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ) that claimed Jesus had studied with Buddhists in India. It was translated into English, German, Spanish and Italian, and became immediately popular with theosophists and other western spiritualists. It is an attractive tale with lots of facts and figures added, but if looked at closely it falls apart. When Max Muller asked

Notovitch to provide proofs for his claim, he could not do so. But he was a very clever storyteller and his Jesus-died-in-Kashmir tale is still popular today among New Agers. The keeper of the Sufi Roza Bal Dargah in Srinagar, which contains the alleged tomb of Jesus, has had to lock it up and drive the foreign backpackers and tourists away.¹

Both of these historical fictions are attractive to foreign spiritual seekers and secularised, convent-educated Hindus because they fancy the idea that an apostle of Jesus, or Jesus himself, may have visited India. These Hindus do not notice that in these stories neither Jesus nor Thomas are presented as seekers of India's spiritual truth or admirers of its tolerant culture. They are presented instead as teachers of a “superior” truth or as enlightened social reformers who are persecuted by the jealous priests of a degenerate heathen religion.

Whether the legends are set in Palayur or Mylapore as is the case with Thomas, or in Puri and Benares as is the case with Jesus, the theme of persecution and martyrdom is the same. The “superior” teachings of both prophets is rejected and their lives threatened by “reactionary” caste Hindus. Thomas is murdered on a hilltop near Madras by a jealous Brahmin priest and Jesus is stoned and driven from the country by a mob—only to return and marry a princess of Kashmir after surviving the Crucifixion.²

The first objective of these stories is to vilify Brahmins and malign the Hindu religion and community. The second objective—and here we part company with the Jesus story—is to present Christianity as an indigenous Indian religion, not a foreign import and product of Western imperialism. If it can be shown that St. Thomas came to India and established the first Christian church in Malabar, then Christianity can claim religious hegemony in India and even claim to be the “original” religion of the Tamil people.

The Syro-Malabar Church, a *sui juris* Persian-rite Catholic church, is openly pressing the political issue of full independence from Rome, on the specious ground that it is an apostolic, Thomas-founded Indian church. It may be a Thomas-founded church, but the founding was in Fars, Persia, not India. It will be interesting to see if the pope is willing to give up his premier

power to create and appoint bishops to a wealthy and wayward Indian patriarch (the projected candidate is involved in a land scam). It remains that the Roman Church does not officially claim that St. Thomas founded a church in India—never mind the Vatican’s various statements to the contrary made under pressure from Kochi—and Pope Benedict XVI has categorically stated that St. Thomas never visited South India.

The third reason for the legend to exist is to help the community-conscious Syrian Christians maintain their caste identity. They claim to be Jews or Brahmins, the latter descendants of Namboodiris converted by St. Thomas in the first century CE—though there were no Namboodiris in Malabar in the first century and no Christians in India before the fourth century. When they did arrive under the leadership of Thomas of Cana and settled in the vicinity of Tiruvanchikulam, they would obtain a social position similar to that of Nairs.

The first Indian St. Thomas story was invented by these Syrian immigrants to give themselves Indian ancestry and the patronage of a local martyr-saint—Christianity is a religion of martyrs³—and it was resurrected and embellished in the sixteenth century by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries who needed a pious story of persecution to cover up their own persecution of the Hindus of Mylapore. This is another reason for the Church to promote the story in Madras, for during that period she and her imperial Portuguese “secular arm” destroyed many temples in Mylapore and its environs.

The Archaeological Survey of India has never investigated the origins of early Christian churches in India in the same way that it has studied old mosques and other Muslim monuments, but this work has been done by German scholars and awaits translation and publication in English. It shows that most sixteenth and seventeenth century churches in India contain temple rubble and are built on temple sites. The destruction of one of these temples, the ancient Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple on the Mylapore beach, is reviewed here because of its inexorable link with the legend of St. Thomas in Madras.

The famous English historian Arnold Toynbee observed that the mission and death of St. Thomas in India was legendary but that his reported burial-place in Mylapore was a centre of pilgrimage for Indian Christians. We observe that this pretended burial-place of St. Thomas—an empty tomb that has been refurbished at immense cost since the publication of this book in 1991—must now become a centre of pilgrimage for archaeologists and historians who do not have a theological axe to grind like the pilgrims of old and the priests of today, but who would know the plain truth about old Mylapore and record it for our children.⁴

1. Another famous book of this kind is Levi's psychic and sententious "transcription from the Akashic Records", of 1908, called *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.

2. A. Faber-Kaiser, in *Jesus Died in Kashmir*, claims that Moses is buried on Mt. Niltoop near Bandipur, Kashmir, Jesus in the Roza Bal Dargah in Srinagar, Mary in Murree, Pakistan, and that Thomas was cremated in Mylapore. There are half a dozen books on this fictitious Indian sojourn of Jesus published today by different authors.

3. Gore Vidal, in *Julian*, describes the vicious attacks made on Emperor Julian "the Apostate" by Christian bishops because he refused to give them martyrs. He had rejected Christianity as a false religion and returned to classical Paganism, but he continued to treat Christians with tolerance and engage in dialogue with them. He argued and debated and made them pay reparations for the temples they had destroyed in the provinces of the Roman Empire. He was assassinated in Ctesiphon by a trusted Christian officer while on campaign against the Persians. The story that his last words were "Thou hast conquered, Nazarene!" is a Christian invention. Emperor Julian is still revered by those Europeans who realise that Christianity destroyed a superior Greek and Roman civilization and took Europe into the Dark Ages.

4. A similar introduction to this one was published in the first, second, and third editions of this book. We have kept the original last line intact as it has been so much "appreciated" by the editors of *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express*. They have published articles promoting the St. Thomas fable in tourist features and on their children's pages after reading it. We suggest that they now approach Dr. R. Nagaswamy, eminent San Thome archaeologist, for more articles on the same subject for adults. He had promised to write an introduction for the 1995 edition of this book but was not able to do it. His attitude to the St. Thomas legend and San Thome Cathedral remains an enigma. He has all the facts and figures of the building of the Portuguese church in his possession as he was the leading archaeologist who worked on the site, but he has remained reticent

during all these years of controversy except for short public statements quoted in the media.

1

“All ages can testifie enough howe profitable that fable of Christe hath ben to us and our companie.” - Pope Leo X to Cardinal Bembo as told by Bishop John Bale

In the beginning of *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, Roman Catholic hagiographer Donald Attwater writes, “Research into the lives of the earlier saints is beset with special difficulties. There are those which face other historians and biographers: fewness of records, their unreliability, uncertainties and contradictions, conflicting interpretations, and so on. But there are added to these, in particular, the ‘selectiveness’ of the material available and, not infrequently, what by later standards seems the unscrupulosity and absurd credulousness of many writers of the past. Most hagiographers were interested in nothing but the directly religious aspects of their subjects’ lives: at the worst, a ‘biography’ became no more than a list of miracles, often puerile, or of voluntary physical austerities, or, in the case of a martyr, of repeated torments a single one of which no human body could survive. Or again, when material was lacking, the earlier hagiographer sometimes did not disdain to manufacture it himself or to borrow it: so that we may even come upon two saints whose written lives are almost word for word the same, with only names and places different. A high degree of authenticity and historical interest is a rather rare element in the huge whole of earlier hagiographical literature; instead we find myth, folklore, legend, and romantic and ‘edifying’ fiction.”

A prime example of this kind of myth making—besides the Jesus story itself—was the identification and validation of St. Peter’s tomb in Rome, said to be situated under the high altar of Christendom’s most famous church. In fact, the tomb is not there, or to put it more politely, unverified by expert and disinterested parties as belonging to St. Peter or any other early Christian saint. Attwater says that the excavations are “impressive and of profound interest, but not wholly conclusive on this point.” But the world’s leading authority on Roman Catholic affairs, Avro Manhattan, in *The Vatican Billions*, writes, “The most fabulous [story] was undoubtedly that promoted by the cult of the Blessed Peter, the Turnkey of Heaven. The cult demanded a journey to Rome where Peter’s tomb lay.

“Peter had been crucified there, it was asserted with no more plausible data than a pious tradition, for the bishops of Rome had no more evidence then than the pontiffs of the twentieth century. The latter have tried to substantiate it with doubtful archaeological finds. The process begun by Pope Pius XII [in 1939] was completed by Pope Paul VI. In 1968 Paul declared officially that ‘a few fragments of human bones found under the Basilica of St. Peter are the authentic mortal remains of the Apostle’.

“How the ‘identification’ had been carried out, on a site where hundreds of thousands of bodies have been buried during many centuries,¹ was never plausibly explained, in view also of the fact that there has never been any definite historical evidence to prove that Peter was ever in Rome. The Roman bishops, however, cultivated the myth with undiminished eagerness. This they did not as mere upholders of a devout legend, but as the skilful promoters of a growing cult which had concrete and far-reaching objectives, since its magnification brought them immense authority and with it, money.”

The revelation that the tomb of St. Peter is a fake will not come as a surprise to Europeans. They know better than anyone else the deceitful nature of the Roman Catholic Church. But the same revelation about the tomb of St. Thomas in Madras will come as a surprise to Indians. They know the story of St. Thomas in India because it has been repeated by interested persons of eminence and enterprise, and sometimes even of scholarship, since the sixteenth century. They accept it “on authority” and seem not to have found reason to doubt it—be they informed secular intellectuals or Dalit Christian converts. They have been put to sleep by its seemingly pious nature and so do not realise its implications. And they have been confounded by the fact that the legend is old and very complicated and keeps changing shape with each new rendition. It does not have any relevance to modern life, but it is still part of Indian Christian mythology and its unreformed mediaeval mind-set.

In this book we are going to try to unravel the St. Thomas legend as it is known in India, but before beginning at the beginning, with the *Acts of Thomas* itself, we must take a brief look at what Christian apologists say for the story they are so eager to sell to the professors and politicians—Indian

Christians, Marxists, and mainstream secular media editors have already bought it; it is a good stick to beat Hindus with, as will soon enough be seen.

For example, the Protestant missionary Claudius Buchanan, writing in the last century, in *Christian Researches in India*, says, “The nation in general are called St. Thomas Christians in all parts of India, and it imparts an antiquity that reaches far beyond the Eutychians and Nestorians² or any other sect. ... I am satisfied that we have as good authority for believing that the Apostle Thomas died in India as that the Apostle Peter died in Rome.”

This “good authority” is of course no authority at all. There is no historical evidence that St. Peter died in Rome or that St. Thomas died in India. The assertion that the appellation “St. Thomas Christians” is used in all parts of India and imparts an antiquity, is simply not true. Syrian Christians were not called “St. Thomas Christians” until after the fourteenth century and that too by Roman Catholic missionaries in Malabar. Claudius Buchanan could as easily argue that Syrian Christians come from Syria because they are called “Syrian Christians”. He would be closer to the truth.

Next, the Roman Catholic historian Fr. A. Mathias Mundadan, writing in the early 1980s, in *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, says, “Our effort should be to concentrate on the common, basic content of the tradition upheld by the various versions and couched in many unnecessary flourishes. The investigations made ... into the western tradition and different aspects of the Indian tradition give me the impression that the central content stands out in clear relief, namely St. Thomas the Apostle preached, died and was buried in South India.”

Fr. Mundadan is saying that he supports the Portuguese tradition introduced into India in the sixteenth century and imposed on Mylapore by fraud and force of arms, even though it is known to be a fabricated tradition. This suggests that his position is political rather than academic. He has done his research with a foregone conclusion in mind and has reached the inevitable result. It is typical Roman Catholic scholarship and until the story of St. Thomas is taken out of such hands and looked at in its

totality, which includes the traditions of the Hindu society in which it survives, we will never know the full truth of St. Thomas and India.

Fr. Mundadan's work is important to note, but for different reasons than he and his sponsors would like us to note it. He has had access to the best research facilities and materials that money can buy, and to professional assistance and encouragement that other scholars in India cannot hope to obtain, yet he has not been able to produce any proof or concrete historical evidence that St. Thomas came to India.

Fr. Mundadan has expressed his considered opinion that the Indian Christian tradition is true. Will he dare to consider the Hindu tradition too? Will he look at the material and literary evidence, and the most ancient living Hindu tradition, that a great Shiva temple once stood on the very site that he would have St. Thomas buried?

There is yet more reasoning for St. Thomas in India, which is often presented to laymen by motivated clerics. It is a psychological device to put the unwary St. Thomas doubter on the defensive. It is called the "Why not?" argument. Duncan Forbes uses it in his book *The Heart of India*, more in an attempt to convince himself than his reader. He writes, "And why not believe? ... There is really no reason why St. Thomas should not have come here. The route between the Roman world and India, which was Rome's source for large quantities of fine muslins, pearls and spices, was well established."

The route between Rome and India was indeed old and established and the travellers went the other way too, to Alexandria and Rome from India. But the possibility that St. Thomas could come to India from Palestine does not prove that he did so. The possibility does not even make for a probability. We are looking for historical proof—travellers' tales just don't constitute proof; they only excite the imagination.

William Dalrymple, the popular author of Indian historical fiction, is said to employ the same "Why not?" argument for St. Thomas in India. He will have to persuade himself about Judas Thomas and his alleged travels in India before he can persuade others in his story books.

The “Why not?” question does not have an answer of course. It is only a proposition—and it is for the St. Thomas protagonists to prove the proposition and not pretend that it stands proved until somebody comes along and disproves it.³ Duncan Forbes, like most western Christians, does not believe the St. Thomas legend himself. He is a travel writer and repeats the story in his book because it is entertaining. He gives himself away with the chapter headings. The chapter on St. Thomas is called “Doubting Thomas” and the chapter on St. Francis Xavier is called “The Apostle of the Indies”.

Duncan Forbes has almost got it right. St. Francis Xavier was known as the “Apostle of India” up to 1953. In 1953 he was replaced by St. Thomas when Cardinal Tisserant brought a piece of Thomas’s arm bone to Kodungallur from its resting place in Ortona, Italy. Prior to this date St. Thomas had always been known as the “Apostle of the East”.

Lastly, we look at a diverting mantological novel that passes itself off as serious historical research, the *Acta Indica* by P.V. Mathew. It has everything in it to make a good night’s read—exploding meteors over Malabar and Prophet Mani of Persia camping at Kanchipuram—but it doesn’t have St. Thomas buried in Mylapore. P.V. Mathew believes that St. Thomas came to Malabar but not to Mylapore and asserts that the Mylapore story is a Portuguese invention. Not willing to leave well enough alone, he then asserts that Prophet Mani’s disciple Mar Ammon is buried in Mylapore instead. This Mar Ammon, according to P.V. Mathew, is now worshipped in Tamil villages as goddess Mariamman, that Prophet Mani is worshipped in the same villages as god, and that the Pallavas were really Persians.

All of this will interest those who like to play etymological games with ancient names, secretly wish they were born in foreign, and still subscribe to the discredited Aryan invasion theory. P.V. Mathew belongs to the school that says there is nothing Hindu in Hindustan or Indian in India—nothing good anyway. It is an old missionary school and its thinking still dominates some of our most prestigious institutions.

But the real problem with *Acta Indica* for the student of history is its supernatural origins. P.V. Mathew writes, “I am indebted to St. Thomas the glorious Apostle of India, who sanctified me with revealed knowledge; and Moran Sabarisho, the Saint of St. Thomas Christians (pre-Portuguese period) for granting me the wisdom to understand the revealed knowledge and record it as such in this book.”

P.V. Mathew’s admission of having suffered a divine revelation is detrimental to the Roman Catholic cause, though it is in keeping with its prophetic and weird traditions. It undermines whatever authority Christian scholars have been able to garner for their mundane St. Thomas dissertations. It also confirms Dr. A. Mingana’s view, in *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*, that, “What India gives us about Christianity in its midst is indeed nothing but pure fables.”

At the same time, we, too, must make a confession. We have meditated on St. Thomas for years in a sincere attempt to discover the truth about his alleged sojourn in India. He has not responded to our prayers. We have had to do all the work ourselves, with the help of human friends, and we have had to start at the very beginning with the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*.⁴ This lugubrious religious romance by Bardesanes of Edessa is not included in Christian bibles⁵—not even Syrian or “St. Thomas Christian” bibles—although it is the only early ancient text to identify St. Thomas with India.

1. St. Peter’s Basilica, begun in 326 CE by Emperor Constantine over a small Pagan shrine, was built outside the walls of Rome on Vatican Hill, on an extensive and elaborate necropolis or city of the dead. This consisted of a number of pre-Christian cemeteries used at different times over a long period. Rupert Furneau, in *The Other Side of the Story*, says that this complex was also the site of a cave-shrine for Mithras, the Persian-inspired deity whose popular Roman cult was the chief rival of early Christianity.

2. Two fifth century Christian sects that were centred in Syria and Persia. The Eutychians believed that the human nature of Jesus was subsumed by his divine nature, and the Nestorians believed that the

divine nature of Jesus was independent of his human nature but joined to it in a kind of moral union.

3. India Christians argue that we have given no proof that St. Thomas did not come to India. Of course, we have given no proof. We cannot prove a negative; we cannot prove something that did not happen. But we will give strong evidence *against* the possibility that St. Thomas did come to India—India being the subcontinent that we know by that name today.

4. The Apocrypha (Greek for “hidden things”) are Jewish and Christian religious writings that have been excluded from the canon of the Bible because their content is considered counterfeit, fictitious, spurious, false, imitative, or contrary to Christian teaching.

5. The traditional dates and authors of all the New Testament books, whether they are accepted in the canon or not, are pure conjecture as there are no extent early manuscript versions predating the fourth century CE. Emperor Diocletian destroyed all Christian writings in 303 CE, and in 326 CE, a year after the Council of Nicaea raised Jesus from the position of a mortal Jewish prophet to that of an immortal God by an ecclesiastical vote of 218 for, 2 against—the bishops who said nay were from Libya; they were assassinated that night in their beds—Emperor Constantine sanctioned the confiscation and destruction of all works that challenged “orthodox” Christian teaching. Five years later Constantine commissioned and financed new copies of the Bible, and as there were no longer any original documents to work from, the bishops, intent on promoting the Pauline salvation cult in their own interest, were free to revise, edit and rewrite the Bible in accordance with their own tenets. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, show that the Bible, and accepted Christian tradition, is an arbitrary collection of borrowed and often fabulous tales, the historical truth of which has never been established by the best biblical scholars.

2

Bardesanēs, the traditional author of the *Acts of Thomas*, was born at Edessa in Syria (now Urfa in south-eastern Turkey) in 154 CE. His parents were wealthy Persian aristocrats and he was brought up with a prince, Bar-Manu, who later succeeded to the throne of the Abgars. He married and had a son, Harmonius, who was a skilled musician and poet. He wrote in Greek and Syriac, the latter tongue a widely spoken Aramaic dialect that was the Christian literary and liturgical language of Edessa up to the seventh century, when it was supplanted by Arabic.

Bardesanēs was converted to Gnosticism, or Christian theosophy, in 179 CE, and he persuaded his friend the prince to convert with him. He thus had a hand in creating the first Christian state, though it is said that St. Thomas had already visited the kingdom and a church had been established in it by his disciple Addai as early as 29 CE. Whatever the truth of the early stories—such as the one about the Abgar writing a letter to Jesus asking for a cure—Edessa had become a chief centre of Christianity in West Asia by the end of the second century. This attracted the attention of Rome, as the state stood between Rome and her enemy Parthia, and Emperor Caracalla invaded Edessa and defeated the Abgar in 216 CE. Bardesanēs made a strong defence of Christianity before the Roman court, but subsequently left Edessa for a time and went to Armenia where he wrote a history based on the temple records of Ani. He wrote the *Acts of Thomas* at Edessa about 210 CE, before the Roman invasion, and is remembered by Christian theosophists as an ardent missionary and popular, charismatic religious leader. He died in the year 233 CE.

G.R.S. Mead, in *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, writes, “Bardesanēs was also a great student of Indian religion, and wrote a book on the subject, from which the Platonist Porphyry subsequently quoted. But it is as a poet and writer on Christian theology and theosophy that Bardesanēs gained so wide a reputation; he wrote many books in Syriac and also Greek ... [and] he was the first to adapt the Syriac tongue to metrical forms and set the words to music; these hymns became immensely popular, not only in the Edessene kingdom but wherever the Syriac tongue was spoken.”

Bardanes's faith was true after his master Valentinus, the founder of Gnostic schools in Alexandria and Rome, and orthodox Christians have cursed him bitterly for it. Ephraim of Edessa, a sainted doctor of the Church, writing 120 years after his death, says that he died "with the Lord in his mouth and demons in his heart". He accused Bardanes of being a heretic and sophist, a greedy sheep dog in league with the wolves, and a cunning dissembler practicing deceit with his songs. If this is what a Christian saint has to say about his theology, it is something of an irony that Roman Catholic scholars are so eager to accept his geography.

It may have been reasonable for Bardanes to set the protagonist of his Gnostic romance, Judas Thomas, in India, as he was a student of Indian philosophy. But it is really not known what he meant by this geographical designation, as we will see, and except for the Persian names—or their Greek equivalent if it is a Greek version of the *Acts*—the idiom and atmosphere of the book are West Asian with distinct Roman cultural overtones.

It is also not known whether Bardanes wrote the story in Greek or Syriac. Hans Jones, in *The Gnostic Religion*, argues that the *Acts* is a "Gnostic composition with orthodox reworkings" originally written in Syriac. But Montague Rhodes James, the translator of the Oxford edition of *The Apocryphal New Testament*, believed that it was first written in Greek and soon afterward translated into Syriac. He says, "This is the only one of the five primary romances which we possess in its entirety. It is of great length and considerable interest."

Indeed, the text runs to 74 printed pages, and we begin a summary of it here with Mead, who writes, "The Apostle Judas Thomas, or the Twin of Jesus,⁶ is fabled to have received India by lot for his apostolic sphere of work. Thomas at first does not wish to go, but is sold by Jesus his master, to a trader from the East as a slave skilled in carpentry."

James continues, and we quote his translation of the *Acts* from the Greek at length. It begins abruptly, without saying exactly where Thomas is or how he got there, except for the ambiguous geographical designation "India".

Judas Thomas and the merchant trader Abbanes (called Habban in Syrian tradition) arrive by ship at a royal city called Andropolis.⁷ They disembark, “and lo, there were noises of flutes and water-organs ... for the king hath an only daughter, and now he giveth her in marriage unto a husband ... and Abbanes hearing that, said to the apostle: Let us go [to the marriage feast] lest we offend the king, especially seeing we are strangers. And he said: Let us go....

“And after they had put up in the inn and rested a little space they went to the marriage; and the apostle seeing them all reclining, laid himself, he also, in the midst ... but Abbanes the merchant, being the master, laid himself in another place.

“And as they dined and drank, the apostle tasted nothing; so that they that were about him said unto him: Wherefore art thou come here, neither eating nor drinking? But he answered them, saying: I am come here for somewhat greater than the food or the drink, and that I may fulfill the king’s will, and whoso hearkeneth not to the heralds shall be subject to the king’s judgment.

“So when they had dined and drunken, and garlands and unguents were brought to them, every man took of the unguent, and one anointed his face and another his beard and another other parts of his body; but the apostle anointed the top of his head and smeared a little upon his nostrils, and dropped it into his ears and touched his teeth with it, and carefully anointed the parts about his heart: and the wreath that was brought to him, woven of myrtle and other flowers, he took, and set it on his head, and took a branch of calamus and held it in his hand.

“Now the flute-girl ... went about to them all and played, but when she came to the place where the apostle was, she stood over him and played at his head for a long space: now this flute-girl was by race a Hebrew.

“And as the apostle continued looking at the ground, one of the cup-bearers stretched forth his hand and gave him a buffet; and the apostle lifted up his eyes and looked upon him that smote him and said: My God will forgive thee in the life to come this iniquity, but in this world thou shalt show forth

his wonders, and even now shall I behold this hand that hath smitten me dragged by dogs. And having said so, he began to sing....”

Later that night, the apostle’s curse takes effect, and “the cup-bearer that had buffeted him went down to the well to draw water; and there chanced to be a lion there, and it slew him and left him lying in that place, having torn his limbs in pieces, and forthwith dogs seized his members, and among them one black dog holding his right hand in his mouth bare it into the place of the banquet.”

This is how the *Acts of Thomas* begins.

The story continues when the king, hearing of the apostle’s powers, comes and asks him to pray for his daughter and her new husband. Judas Thomas agrees, and laying hands on the newly wedded couple, he prays to Jesus, and then leaves them and that place and departs.

Now the king asks for the room to be cleared, so that the couple may be left alone, “and when all were gone out and the doors were shut, the bridegroom lifted up the curtain of the bride-chamber to fetch the bride unto him. And he saw the Lord Jesus bearing the likeness of Judas Thomas and speaking with the bride—even of him that but now had blessed them and gone out from them, the apostle; and he saith unto him: Wentest thou not out in the sight of all? How then art thou found here? But the Lord said to him: I am not Judas which is also called Thomas, but I am his brother. And the Lord sat down upon the bed and bade them also sit upon chairs, and began to say unto them:

“Remember, my children, what my brother spake unto you and what he delivered before you: and know this, that if ye abstain from this foul intercourse....”

The royal couple are persuaded to abstain, and are converted by Jesus, and are chaste and do not consummate their marriage, and “when the king heard these things from the bridegroom and the bride, he rent his clothes and said unto them that stood by him: Go forth quickly ... and take and bring me that man that is a sorcerer who by ill fortune came unto this city; for with mine own hands I brought him into this house, and I told him to

pray over this mine ill-starred daughter; and whoso findeth and bringeth him to me, I will give him whatever he asketh of me.”

But Judas Thomas was not to be found, for he had fled that place, and was come into the cities of India.

“Now when the apostle was come into the cities of India with Abbanes the merchant, Abbanes went to salute the king Gundaphorus,⁸ and reported to him of the carpenter whom he had brought with him. And the king was glad ... and the king said: Canst thou build me a palace? And he answered: Yea, I can both build and furnish it; for to this end am I come, to build and to do the work of a carpenter.”

Gundaphorus then takes Judas Thomas outside the city, to a wet, woody place where he desires the palace to be built. The apostle draws him an elaborate plan on the ground with a reed, and the king, being pleased says: “Verily thou art a craftsman, and it befitteth thee to be a servant of kings. And he left much money with him and departed from him.”

Sometime later, the king sends more money and provisions to the apostle, whom he trusts as a good servant; but he, deceiving him, and not doing any work, goes about the countryside distributing the gold and silver as alms to the poor.

“After these things the king sent an ambassador unto the apostle, and wrote thus: Signify unto me what thou hast done, or what I shall send thee, or of what thou hast need. And the apostle sent unto him, saying: The palace is builded and only the roof remaineth. And the king hearing it sent him again gold and silver, and wrote unto him: Let it be roofed, if it is done.”

Now Gundaphorus comes on a tour to the city and inquires of his friends about the palace that Judas Thomas is building for him, and they say to him: “Neither hath he built a palace nor done aught else of that he promised to perform, but he goeth about the cities and countries, and whatsoever he hath he giveth unto the poor, and teacheth of a new God, and healeth the sick, and driveth out devils, and doeth many other wonderful things; and we think him to be a sorcerer. ... And when the king heard that, he rubbed his face with his hands, and shook his head for a long space.”

The king then sends for the merchant Abbanes and Judas Thomas, and says to the apostle: "Hast thou built me the palace? And he said: Yea and the king said: When, then, shall we go and see it? But he answered him and said: Thou canst not see it now, but when thou departest this life, then thou shalt see it. And the king was exceedingly wroth, and commanded both the merchant and Judas which is called Thomas to be put in bonds and cast into prison until he should inquire and learn unto whom the king's money had been given, and so destroy both him and the merchant."

Judas Thomas and the trader Abbanes are taken away to prison, and that night the king's brother Gad falls ill, and sends for the king and says: "O king my brother, I commit unto thee mine house and my children; for I am vexed by reason of the provocation that hath befallen thee, and lo, I die ... and as they talked together, the soul of his brother Gad departed."

And angels take the soul of the king's brother up into heaven, and they ask him: "In which place wouldst thou dwell? And when they drew near unto the building of Thomas the apostle which he had built for the king, Gad saw it and said unto the angels: I beseech you, my lords, suffer me to dwell in one of the lowest rooms of these. And they said to him: Thou canst not dwell in this building. ... This is that palace which that Christian builded for thy brother. And he said: I beseech you, my lords, suffer me to go to my brother that I may buy this palace of him; for my brother knoweth not of what sort it is, and he will sell it unto me."

And Gad returns to life, and the king is informed. He comes and stands by his brother's bed, amazed, and unable to speak, and Gad says to him: "Sell me that palace which thou hast in the heavens? And the king said: Whence should I have a palace in the heavens? And he said: Even that which the Christian built for thee which is now in the prison, whom the merchant brought unto thee, having purchased him of one Jesus: I mean that Hebrew slave whom thou desireth to punish as having suffered deceit at his hand: whereas I was grieved and died, and am now revived."

But the king having learned of the palace in heaven from his brother Gad, wants to keep it, and refuses to sell it; he says they must go to the apostle and ask his forgiveness, and ask him to build another palace in heaven. The

brothers go to the prison, and Judas Thomas agrees to build another palace in heaven for Gad; and the king and his brother are converted, and baptised in the public baths, and chrismed, and the apostle prays:

Come, thou power of the Most High, and the compassion that is perfect.

Come, gift of the Most High.

Come, compassionate mother.

Come, she that revealeth the hidden mysteries.

Come, communion of the male.

Come, she that revealeth the hidden mysteries.

Come, mother of the seven houses, that thy rest may be in the eighth house.

Come, elder of the five members, mind, thought, reflection, consideration, reason; communicate with these young men.

Come, holy spirit, and cleanse their reins and their heart, and give them the added seal, in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost.⁹

Then Judas Thomas, having accomplished the conversion of Gundaphorus and Gad, is directed by Jesus in a dream to leave the city. He goes out, having given up the pretence of being a carpenter, and soon after comes upon a beautiful youth lying dead by the wayside. He prays over the boy, and is immediately challenged by the dragon who has slain him. The dragon calls himself Satan—and says too that he is the Great Satan. But in the contest that follows he is defeated by the apostle and compelled to suck out the poison that has killed the youth. This causes him to burst and die, but not before he gives a long speech on fornication, of which the youth is accused. The youth revives, confesses his sins before the multitude, and Judas Thomas continues on his way. He heals the sick, raises the dead, and preaches an uncompromising doctrine of sexual continence. His sole theme is that a Christian must be chaste, even within the sacrament of marriage.

This teaching is not welcomed in the cities and towns that he visits, but the people are attracted by his bizarre and violent miracles. Some are converted, anointed with oil, and put into the care of a priest. He then moves to new cities and districts, heals the sick, raises the dead, and drives devils out of women. He hears the confession of a talking donkey who admits that he was a priest of Balaam before he turned to Jesus.

But the apostle's special field of work are women and virgins. He entices them away from their families, converts them, puts them into sackcloth and

ashes, and locks them up behind doors. This causes great discord in the cities, and earns him the bitter enmity of the husbands and brothers of those he has bewitched with his words.

He is finally brought before the king, Misdaeus,¹⁰ and asked about his activities. The king says: "Wherefore teachest thou this new doctrine, which both Gods and men hate, and which has nought of profit? And Judas said: What evil do I teach? And Misdaeus said: Thou teachest, saying that men cannot live well except that they live chastely with the God whom thou preachest. Judas saith: Thou sayest true, O king: thus do I teach."

Now the time of the apostle's death draws near. The narrative is given in full here so that the reader will have a reference with which to compare the tales that are told in Malabar and Mylapore. This is the original story, from which all other versions derive. It tells of the legitimate execution of a criminal for wicked deeds, by the king Misdaeus who has been severely provoked by his sorcery—though it has a posthumous royal conversion and is couched in much unctuous language.

Judas Thomas ignores the king's warning. He converts the prince of the house, Iuzanes, and his mother the queen. The other women of the court have already left to follow the new creed. The city is in turmoil, and the deserted king is appalled by the events around him. He has the apostle arrested, and confronts him. He asks: "Art thou bond or free? Thomas said: I am the bondsman of one only, over whom thou hast no authority. And Misdaeus saith to him: How didst thou run away and come into this country? And Thomas said: I was sold hither by my master, that I may save many, and by thy hand depart out of this world. ... And Misdaeus saith unto him: I have not made haste to destroy thee, but have had long patience with thee: but thou has added unto thine evil deeds, and thy sorceries are dispersed abroad and heard of throughout all this country: but this I do that thy sorceries may depart with thee, and our land be cleansed from them."

But the apostle again rejects the king's plea to reform, and so "Misdaeus considered how he should put him to death; for he was afraid because of the many people who were subject unto him, for many also of the nobles

and of them that were in authority believed on him. He took him therefore and went out of the city; and armed soldiers went with him. And the people supposed that the king desired to learn somewhat of him, and they stood still and gave heed. And when they had walked one mile, he delivered him unto four soldiers and an officer, and commanded them to take him into the mountain and there pierce him with spears and put an end to him, and return again to the city. And saying thus unto the soldiers, he himself also returned unto the city.

“But the men ran after Thomas, desiring to deliver him from death. And two soldiers went on the right hand of the apostle and two on his left, holding spears, and the officer held his hand and supported him. ... And being come up into the mountain unto the place where he was to be slain, he said unto them that held him, and to the rest: Brethren, hearken unto me now at the last; for I am come to my departure out of the body. Let not then the eyes of your heart be blinded, nor your ears be made deaf. Believe on the God whom I preach, and be not guides unto yourselves in the hardness of your heart, but walk in all your liberty, and in the glory that is toward men, and the life that is toward God.

“And he said unto Iuzanes: Thou son of the earthly king Misdaeus and minister to the minister of our Lord Jesus Christ: give unto the servants of Misdaeus their price that they may suffer me to go and pray. And Iuzanes persuaded the soldiers to let him pray. And the blessed Thomas went to pray, and kneeled down and rose up and stretched forth his hands unto heaven ... and when he had thus prayed, he said unto the soldiers: Come hither and accomplish the commandments of him that sent you. And the four came and pierced him with their spears, and he fell down dead.

“And all the brethren wept; and they brought beautiful robes and much and fair linen, and buried him in a royal sepulchre wherein the former first kings were laid.”

But Siphor the priest and Iuzanes the king's son refuse to leave the apostle and continue to sit on the mountain. Thomas suddenly appears and orders them to go back to the city, as he is not there but has gone up to heaven.

He promises that they will join him soon. So Siphor and Iuzanes go down from the mountain that held the sepulchre of ancient kings.

“Now it came to pass after a long time that one of the children of Misadeus the king was smitten by a devil, and no man could cure him, for the devil was exceedingly fierce. And Misdaeus the king took thought and said: I will go and open the sepulchre, and take a bone of the apostle of God and hang it upon my son, and he shall be healed ... and he went and opened the sepulchre, but found not the apostle there, for one of the brethren had stolen him away and taken him unto Mesopotamia; but from that place where the bones of the apostle had lain Misdaeus took dust and put it about his son’s neck, saying: I believe on thee, Jesus Christ, now that he hath left me which troubleth men and opposeth them lest they should see thee. And when he had hung it upon his son, the lad became whole.

“Misdaeus the king therefore was also gathered among the brethren, and bowed his head under the hands of Siphor the priest; and Siphor said unto the brethren: Pray ye for Misdaeus the king, that he may obtain mercy of Jesus Christ, and that he may no longer remember evil against him. They all therefore, with one accord rejoicing, made prayer for him ... and he was gathered with the multitude of them that had believed in Christ, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; whose is power and adoration, now and forever and world without end. Amen.”

6. The sobriquets “Didymus” and “Thomas”, the first Greek and the second Aramaic, indicate that Judas was the natural-born twin brother of Jesus. Rupert Furneau, in *The Other Side of the Story*, writes, “The legend of the strong resemblance which existed between Jesus and Thomas would not have been invented by the Christians as it could have been used in explanation of the resurrection story. ... It is seldom realized that Jesus had a number of brothers and sisters. Paul states that he was the first-born of many brethren. By *Mark* and *Luke* four brothers are named, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. There were probably two other brothers and at least two sisters. Christian tradition, in order to confirm the dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary, has tried to turn them into cousins, or alternatively to make them into half-brothers, sons of Joseph by a previous wife.”

7. Andropolis has been identified as one of the many Alexandrias, Sandaruck, in western Baluchistan. It is probably ancient Tis known from Alexander’s

conquests, now the modern port of Chabahar. Alberni noted that the Indian coast commenced eastward from Tis.

8. This king is the only character in the *Acts* (besides Judas Thomas) who can perchance be identified with a historical person. Some say he is the same as Gondophernes or Guduphara, the Indo-Parthian king who ruled over Arachosia, Kabul, and Gandhara (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) from about 19 to 45 CE (the dates are disputed). The *Acts* gives no vital information about him, his reign, his city, or his country except to say that it is in "India". He can be identified as Parthian from his name, the original Persian form of it being Vindapharna.

9. This prayer is a Manichaeian invocation of a feminine Holy Spirit, according to Prof F.C. Burkitt in a note in the Oxford edition of the *Acts of Thomas* that we are following, though it has been bowdlerized by the translator in favour of conventional Christian phraseology (e.g. no capitals for the names of the female deity). The story itself is Syro-Persian, set in some corner of the Parthian Empire, as indicated by the style of living and cultural ambience. It is not Indian, not even North-West Indian, and the suggestion by Tamil Christian apologists that it is South Indian is absurd.

10. This king is better known by his Persian name, Mazdai or Masdai, which is found in the Syriac version of the *Acts* (Misdaeus or Misdeus is Latin, Misdeos is Greek). It specifically denotes a Zoroastrian ruler. He has no known historical counterpart and the *Acts* gives no vital information about him except to say that he rules in "a desert country". Some Catholic writers try to make him into a first century king called Mahadev or Mahadevan, or a Brahmin priest called Mahan of Mylapore, but the *Acts* does not support so far-fetched a proposition.

3

This is the essential *Acts of Thomas*, with the opening and closing parts quoted at length for reference. Fr. A. Mathias Mundadan, Professor of Church History and Theology at the Dharmaram Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, in *History of Christianity in India*, says, “The description of the place of St. Thomas’s martyrdom [in the *Acts*] would easily suggest Mylapore as the town of king Mazdai [Misdaeus].”

This statement is patently absurd in the face of the evidence of the *Acts* itself. Mylapore has never been “a desert country” as Mazdai’s land is described in the *Acts*—his city is not described at all—and has never had a Zoroastrian king or a mountain with an ancient royal sepulchre in it. Mylapore has always been known as a Hindu pilgrimage town and busy port, with jasmine gardens, jungles, peacocks and lush coconut groves. Mundadan can get away with his motivated assertions because most students of the St. Thomas legend do not know the *Acts of Thomas* or the topography of Mylapore and its larger environs. They also do not know West Asia and Persia and the history of Christianity in these places and the Roman Empire. They have no means by which to judge the declared conceits of Mundadan and the tribe of scholars that he represents. They must accept these conceits in good faith—and unfortunately their good faith is exploited to the limit.

There is simply nothing Indian, much less South Indian, in the setting and ambiance of the *Acts of Thomas*. All internal evidence suggests Syria, Iraq and Persia—or Parthia as it was called in the first century CE—as the place where the drama of the *Acts* was played out to its preordained end, or to a kingdom on the edge of the Roman Empire—like Edessa itself—as there are strong Greco-Roman influences in the text. India as a specific place and Gundaphorus and Misdaeus-Mazdai as Indian kings appear to be literary devices used by Bardesanes to give credibility to the unconventional religious theme of the book.

C.B. Firth, in *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, writes, “It is no uncommon thing to find [ancient writers] using [the name India] of

countries such as Ethiopia, Arabia or Afghanistan. Indeed, except for those who had reason to be acquainted with our India, 'India' was a vague term which might stand for almost any region beyond the Empire's south-eastern frontiers. ... To the fourth century fathers India is the place of St. Thomas's labours; but others, of earlier date, say Parthia, that is the Persian Empire stretching from North-West India to Mesopotamia; and of these the most notable is Eusebius the historian, who wrote in the fourth century. He says, 'When the holy apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered over all the world, Thomas, so the tradition has it, obtained as his portion Parthia....' Eusebius quotes as his authority for this statement the famous Alexandrian Father, Origen (ca. 185-254), thus carrying back the tradition to the first half of the third century. According to Origen and Eusebius, then, it was Parthia to which St. Thomas went. Moreover, in another place Eusebius says that it was St. Bartholomew who went to India. ... In what he says of St. Bartholomew, Eusebius may well have in mind one of the countries bordering on the Red Sea."

C.B. Firth could have included the testimony of Origen's teacher, the Greek missionary theologian Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-235), who had travelled from Greece to Italy, Syria and Palestine before settling in Egypt. Clement is known as an apologist rather than a father of the Church, as he tried to reconcile Platonic philosophy with Christian doctrine. He is the first orthodox Christian scholar to say that St. Thomas went to Parthia.

But before we continue with the fathers of the Church and their testimony for or against St. Thomas in India, reference must be made to another apocryphal Syrian text called the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. It was written at Edessa by an unknown Arian author about 250 CE and deals with Christian ethics, the duties of priests, the Eucharistic liturgy, rituals, and various other church problems. It says, "India and all its own countries, and those bordering on it, even to the farthest sea, received the Apostle's Hand of the Priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was Guide and Ruler in the church which he built and ministered there."

Further on the *Didache* names the land that had priests ordained by Aggaeus the disciple of Addaeus (Addai) the disciple of Judas Thomas, as "the whole of Persia of the Assyrians and Medes, and the countries round

about Babylon ... even to the borders of the Indians and even to the country of Gog and Magog”.

In hoary British tradition, Gog and Magog are two giants of Cornwall who were slain by Brutus the Trojan, the legendary founder of London, but the author of the *Didache* is probably referring to the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel and the land of Magog from whence Gog would come, which lay somewhere to the north of Israel.

The *Didache* is following the earlier *Acts of Thomas* when it says that St. Thomas evangelized “even to the borders of the Indians”—by which it means Parthia from the evidence in the text itself—as it was written at Edessa too where the *Acts* was written by a heterodox author who could have been a disciple of Bardesanes. He is a typical hagiographer, magnifying the works of St. Thomas and his disciples throughout the world—for this must be the significance of the reference to the mythical land of Gog and Magog.

These two third century Syrian texts are the literary foundation on which the tradition of St. Thomas in India is built. Without them, and especially without the *Acts*, there is no St. Thomas east of Khorasan which was the centre of the Parthian Empire and is the “India” of the *Acts*, even as “the farthest sea” of the *Didache* is the Red and Arabian Seas that bordered the Parthian Empire.

Now to return to the fathers and doctors of the Church who testify to the coming of St. Thomas to India, the fourth century Ephraim of Edessa (the same who attacked Bardesanes), Gregory of Nazianzus,¹¹ Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, the fifth century Gaudentius of Brescia, Paulinus of Nola, the sixth century Gregory of Tours, the seventh century Isidore of Seville, and the eighth century Bede of Jarrow, are all quoting the *Acts*, or works and verbal traditions based on the *Acts*, or the authority of each other. Their testimony is worthless as history even if it is made in good faith.

The same could be said of the testimony of the second and third century Clement and Origen, and fourth century Eusebius, but the difference is that their earlier date and closeness to the alleged events and its first traditions—which are not recorded in a stylized religious fiction like the

Acts—give them more credibility. They, too, had knowledge of the *Acts* and *Didache* but chose to ignore them and declare that St. Thomas went to Parthia. Eusebius, who had done research at Edessa for his *Ecclesiastical History* but lived at Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, the port from which St. Thomas would have had to embark for India (unless he sailed from Gaza, or the Gulf of Aqaba port of Eilat, or the Egyptian ports of Elim or Berenice), certainly knew both traditions thoroughly and is a principal witness. Moreover, he held unorthodox religious views and would have been sympathetic to the Christian theosophy expounded in the *Acts*. Yet he states that St. Thomas went from Jerusalem by land to proselytise the Parthians. This supports the tradition that St. Thomas went to Edessa to meet his disciple Addai, whom he had sent earlier to meet the Abgar—the same Edessa that would later honour him with a book, a mummy, a tomb, and a cult.

But Clement, Origen and Eusebius are not the only early Christian scholars to say that St. Thomas went to Parthia. There is also the fourth century priest, Rufinus of Aquileia, who translated Greek theological texts into Latin, and the fifth century Byzantine church historian and legal consultant, Socrates of Constantinople, who also wrote an *Ecclesiastical History* after Eusebius, the second edition which is still completely extant and considered an indispensable documentary source of early church history.

Both Rufinus and Socrates would have known the Greek version of the *Acts* which was made immediately after the Syriac text was written (if it wasn't the other way round as some scholars believe). They would also have known the testimony of Ephraim, Gregory, Ambrose and Jerome for St. Thomas in India. Yet Rufinus and Socrates both declare that St. Thomas went to Parthia.

The reason that the testimony of the *Acts of Thomas* is rejected by Clement, Origen, Eusebius, Rufinus and Socrates is the same as that of modern scholars who reject it. The *Acts* is a purely fictional work without any historical authority, written specifically to promote the doctrine that a Christian must be chaste even within the relationship of marriage. This opinion, held by some Gnostics and apparently by St. Thomas too, was presented to the Edessene public by Bardesanes in the form of an engaging

miracle romance.¹² The story was deliberately set in India, a vast land to the east of Edessa from which all sort of peculiar religious theories emanated. Bardesanes was a theologian not a geographer, and the latter discipline was made to serve the former—just as it is made to do today by interested Catholic scholars.

The reasonable view held by many scholars, that nobody in third century Asia was interested in St. Thomas except Edessa, where his cult was centred and from where it radiated, was anticipated by Rev. Dr. G. Milne Rae at the end of the last century.

Milne Rae was a Presbyterian missionary and reader at Madras Christian College and wrote a book, *The Syrian Church in India*, which provoked severe criticism from the Syrian Christian community. In it he denies the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, and in a second research paper asks, “In what literature is the name of St. Thomas first associated with India? It will appear I think the home of that literature, the original hotbed in which it was reared, was no other than the Church of Edessa. For there is no place within the area occupied, by the language in which those books were written, that had any such interest in the fortunes and destiny of the Apostle. The story of Thomas preaching and his martyrdom in India is first found in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* and it is curious to note that throughout the work the Apostle is generally called Judas Thomas, a name which he also received in that group of documents which Eusebius found among the archives at Edessa. It is palpably a Gnostic work and students of Gnosticism, judging from the stages of development at which they find the heresy in the *Acts*, assign it to the end of the second century. It may have been written by Bardesanes. But whoever the real author was, I think the details of this work are not only consistent with the belief that they were put together by a member of the Edessene Church, but also defy explanation on any other hypothesis.”

Donald Attwater, in *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, with reference to L.W. Brown in *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, writes, “There is endless discussion about St. Thomas’s subsequent life. In particular, did he take the gospel to India, where for many centuries the Christians of Kerala have called themselves ‘St. Thomas Christians’? That he did so, and was martyred

there, is the theme of a long document of the third or fourth century, called the *Acts of Thomas*. This is one of the most readable and intrinsically interesting of early Christian apocryphal writings; but it is no more than a popular romance, written in the interest of false Gnostic teachings (e.g. the virtual necessity of celibacy for Christians). It is not impossible that St. Thomas should have reached southern India, but the historical reality of his mission there cannot be considered proved. It is also said that he evangelized Parthia, and in the fourth century his relics were claimed to be at Edessa in Mesopotamia.”

As for the testimony of the early fathers Ephraim, Gregory, Ambrose and Jerome, M. Augustus Neander, in *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, writes, “The writings of the so-called apostolic fathers have unhappily for the most part come down to us in a condition very little worthy of confidence. At a very early date spurious writings were planned in the names of these men so highly venerated in the church for the purpose of giving authority to particular opinions or principles.”

Augustus Neander is being generous to the fathers of the Church. Herbert Cutner, in *Jesus: God, Man or Myth?*, accuses them directly of being credulous. He writes, “If the crass superstition of that parcel of fools, the Apostolic Fathers, and the idiotic ‘details’ put in the various apocryphal Gospels do not in themselves put these ‘authorities’ out of court, then I’m afraid no argument ever discovered could do so.”

In a sense this is the last word, for the *Acts of Thomas* does by its own internal “details” destroy the history that it is said to record, and the testimony of the fathers, with few exceptions, is disproved by their mindless pronouncements on what they wish to confirm. Their “evidence” is never anything more than a pious testimony based on personal faith and opinion that was highly coloured by the political and theological pressures of the day. Their “authority” has been exploited down the ages and is a precursor of the modern Catholic superstition of papal infallibility.¹³

Judge C.B. Waite, in *History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred*, carefully reviewed all the available early documents of the Church. His impartial criticism of them caused many scholars to conclude that

Church history of the first two centuries is based on myth and invention. S.J. Case, in *The Historicity of Jesus*, while defending the historicity of Jesus, admits that the apocryphal books are not true in their details. L. de la Vallee-Poussin, A. Harnack and Richard Garbe do not give the *Acts of Thomas* any credibility at all.

Jacques Basnage, the French Protestant minister and historiographer of the seventeenth century, rejected the tradition that St. Thomas came to India. So did the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical historian of the same period, Louis-Sebastien Le Nain de Tillemont, who provided a rigorous appraisal of early historical writing in his *Memoirs useful for the Ecclesiastical History of the First Six Centuries*. The French Protestant La Croze in the eighteenth century and the English Protestants James Hough and Sir John Kaye in the nineteenth century, all historians of repute, also rejected the tradition.

The Jesuit Bollandist Peeters and Maurice Winternitz, Professor of Indian Philology and Ethnology at the German University of Prague, categorically deny that St. Thomas came to India. And the Indian “St. Thomas Christian” K.E. Job, a cautious voice among three archbishops, eleven bishops, and fifty-three priests who contributed to the *Mar Thoma Centenary Commemoration Volume 1952*, writes, “But there are few records enabling one to be positive about the scene of the activities of each of these Apostles [Peter and Paul] and how each of them carried out the commands of their Master ... [and] certain knowledge about the other Apostles [Thomas and Bartholomew]¹⁴ is absolutely inadequate.”

Dr. J.N. Farquhar, author of *The Apostle Thomas in North India* and *The Apostle Thomas in South India*, admits, “We cannot prove that the story [of St. Thomas] is history.”

Dr. A. Mingana, in *The Early Spread of Christianity in Asia and the Far East* and *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*, adopts a non-committal attitude towards St. Thomas. We have quoted him as saying, “What India gives us about Christianity in its midst is indeed nothing but pure fables.”

Professor Arnold Toynbee, in *A Study of History*, observes, “Though the Saint’s mission and death in India are probably legendary, his reputed burial-place was a centre of pilgrimage for Indian Christians.”

Bishop Stephen Neill studied the St. Thomas legend carefully during his years in India and lamented its spread among Indian Christians. He regarded the story as spurious history, and in *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to 1707 A.D.*, writes, “A number of scholars, among whom are to be mentioned with respect Bishop A.E. Medleycott, J.N. Farquhar and the Jesuit J. Dahlman, have built on slender foundations what can only be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.”

11. About this Gregory, R.C. Majumdar, in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, quoted by Sita Ram Goel in *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, writes, “According to the Syrian writer Zenob there was an Indian colony in the canton of Taron on the upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century BC. The Indians had built there two temples containing images of Gods about 18 and 22 feet high. When, about AD 304, St. Gregory came to destroy these images, he was strongly opposed by the Hindus. But he defeated them and smashed the images, thus anticipating the iconoclastic zeal of Mahmud of Ghazni.”

12. Robert M. Grant, Professor of Humanities and Early Christian History at the University of Chicago and author of *Historical Introduction to the New Testament* and *Early Christianity and Society*, writes, “The various acts, close in form and content to the contemporary Hellenistic romances, turned the apostolic drama into melodrama and satisfied the popular taste for stories of travel and adventure, as well as for a kind of asceticism generally rejected by Christian leaders.”

13. This dogma of self-aggrandizement was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1870. It is in keeping with the Semitic tradition of making extravagant claims to establish personal authority. Jehovah claimed to be the only God and Jesus claimed to be the only Son of God. Next came the martyrs, confessors, fathers and saints with their “only” claims of authority. The Roman bishops claimed to be the vicars of God on earth and became popes. Pope Hadrian I claimed in a famous forgery, the *Donation of Constantine*, ca. 774, to be above kings and nations and the “legal” heir to the Roman emperors. Pope Alexander VI claimed in 1493 to have dominion over the whole earth including those parts of it that he did not know about. Pope Pius IX’s claim is a logical progression of this manic scheme to take over the world (which originated with Moses and was perfected by Mohammad). It is an attempt by modern popes to establish their “only” moral and spiritual authority in a world that has so far denied them absolute powers.

14. The New Testament says almost nothing about St. Bartholomew, but an apocryphal story alleges that he founded a church at Kalyan, near modern Mumbai, and left a Hebrew version of the *Gospel of Mathew* there. This book was later found by Pantaenus of Alexandria, who is said to have visited India in 190

CE. All historians since Tillemont agree that Pantaenus went to Arabia Felix, which, like Ethiopia, was often referred to as “India” by ancient writers. C.B. Firth says that St. Bartholomew went to a country bordering on the Red Sea, and Donald Attwater says that there is no proof that he visited India, Lycaonia (Turkey), or even Armenia where he was supposed to have been flayed alive.

4

*“During times of universal deceit, telling the truth
becomes a revolutionary act.” - George Orwell*

Bishop Neill is being charitable to Bishop Medleycott when he calls his *India and the Apostle Thomas* an imaginative romance built on slender foundations. Henry Love, in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, is even more forgiving when he writes, “Bishop Medleycott, who has sifted every shred of evidence on the subject, concludes that St. Thomas the Apostle preached and suffered on the Mount, but his arguments do not appear to be altogether convincing.”

Bishop Medleycott is the godfather of Thomas-in-India scholarship in India, and even in his day he was accused of working under racial, religious, regional, linguistic, and political influences. He was the Vicar Apostolic of Trichur from 1887 to 1896, the diocese in which the alleged landing-place of St. Thomas, Cranganore, is located, and was the first European missionary bishop to be appointed by Rome to rule over the local Syrian Christian community. This community existed in a forgotten Kerala backwater that was overshadowed by San Thome at Mylapore, and Bishop Medleycott had a mandate—or believed he had a mandate—to raise Cranganore’s status and prepare the ideological ground for the apostle’s “return”.

Medleycott soon discovered that this was not very hard to do. The old tradition of St. Thomas was still alive in Malabar, in medieval Syrian wedding songs and “evidence” left behind by those pious forgers and pirates the Portuguese, and he had local Syrian priests to advise him. There was also the *Acts of Thomas*, which nobody knew in the original and which no Christian priest would dare to teach to his congregation. All that was needed was inventive Catholic scholarship to turn a local Kerala Christian tradition into world history.

Bishop Medleycott won the day with his work, though he didn’t live to see it. St. Thomas was “returned” to Cranganore—now Kodungallur—in 1953, in the form of a piece of bone from the elbow of his right arm. The relic was

a gift from the clergy of the Basilica of St. Thomas the Apostle in Ortona, Italy, where the apostle's Church-authenticated remains had lain since 1258. They had been brought to Ortona from Edessa by way of Chios in Greece, and, according to one tradition that is repeated today as factual if unverified, had arrived in Edessa from "India" between 222 and 235 CE. In the *Acts of Thomas* the bones were transferred to Mesopotamia from "India"—the "desert country" of King Mazdai—in the lifetime of the Persian king.

Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, the other imaginative writer of oriental church history, led the "second coming" to Cranganore, and he later proceeded to Mylapore with another bit of Ortona bone for the cathedral there. For the first time in history both sites in India associated with St. Thomas in legend and story could truly say that they possessed his relics.

This event and the alleged first century coming of the apostle were commemorated by the Government of India with postage stamps that were issued in 1964 and 1973. The first stamp depicts the silver bust of St. Thomas that is in the cathedral at Ortona, which contains his complete skull, and the second shows the eighth century Persian "St. Thomas" cross on St. Thomas Mount near Madras. That neither these artefacts nor the relics, or, for that matter, the legendary event that they celebrate, are Indian, is one of the ironies that is part of the history of the story of St. Thomas in India.

But Bishop Medleycott's victory went further. He got himself named as the St. Thomas authority in the prestigious *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Fifteenth Edition, 1984, along with Chevalier F.A. D'Cruz, editor of the old *Mylapore Catholic Register* and author of *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*.

The unsigned main entry for St. Thomas in the *Encyclopaedia* is muddled and dissembling and simply wrong in some places. After giving the New Testament references, it says, "Thomas' subsequent history is uncertain. According to the 4th century *Ecclesiastical History* of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he evangelised Parthia (modern Khorasan). Later Christian tradition says Thomas extended his apostolate into India, where he is recognised as the founder of the church of the Syrian Malabar Christians, or Christians of St. Thomas. In the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, originally

composed in Syriac, his martyrdom is cited under the king of Mylapore at Madras....”

The *Acts* does not “cite” this at all of course, as we have shown by direct quotation; it does not even remotely suggest it. There is no known record of a king in Mylapore in the first century, and if the town did have a raja, he was not a Zoroastrian with the name of Mazdai. The story in the *Acts* and the Mylapore legend have nothing in common, though the latter can be said to exist only because of the former. Further on the article says, “He allegedly visited the court of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophernes ... though some of the *Acts of Thomas* is probable, evidence remains inconclusive.”

Now even if some of the *Acts* is accepted as probable, the composer of this entry still hasn’t got the story right. He uses the word “allegedly” for the visit of St. Thomas to the court of Gondophernes—assuming that Gondophernes is the same as Gundaphorus—when he could correctly cite the *Acts* for the reference.

These errors are deliberate and motivated, given their context and arrangement, and this St. Thomas entry in the *Encyclopaedia* has been written by a Catholic scholar who not only subscribes to the apostle’s alleged South Indian adventure, but wishes to place the Mylapore tale over that of the Malabar tradition. He does this by mixing the North Indian legend, represented by the *Acts*, with the South Indian fable that the Portuguese left in Mylapore, to promote his particular South Indian *masala* view. He gets away with the deception because nobody has read the *Acts of Thomas* and studied its references to the kings Gundaphorus and Mazdai (in Persian, Mideus in Latin, Mideos in Greek), and the execution of Judas Thomas on a mountain that contained an ancient royal sepulchre.

On 19 September 1996 we decided to call the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s bluff and sent a letter, with a copy of this book (second revised edition), to the *Encyclopaedia*’s editor-in-chief in Chicago pointing out the errors in their St. Thomas entry. The editorial division representative Anthony G. Craine replied to us on 18 October 1996. He wrote, “We have received your book, and we have subsequently reviewed our coverage of Saint Thomas.

While the Saint Thomas article that appears in the current printing of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* differs slightly from the 1984 article to which you refer in your book, the current article does convey the same basic information. *We have concluded that the portion of the article that refers to Thomas' later life places too much emphasis on the unlikely scenario of his travelling to, and being martyred in India* (emphasis added). We have referred this information to the appropriate editor so that the article can be revised in future printings of *Britannica*. We appreciate your bringing this matter to our attention."

We did not pay any more attention to the matter until February 2010 when we began updating this book and had a look at the St. Thomas entry on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* website. It says very little about St. Thomas and we could not access the complete article, but it begins like this, "... born, probably Galilee, died AD 53, Madras, India ..." The entry for Kottayam, the centre of Syrian Christianity in India, says in part, "The town is a centre of the Syrian Christian community, which traces its origin to the apostle St. Thomas, who is believed to have visited Kerala in 53 AD and to have established seven churches on the Malabar Coast." The entry for Christians of Saint Thomas reads, "The origins of the Christians of St. Thomas are uncertain, though they seem to have been in existence before the 6th century and probably derive from the missionary activity of the East Syrian (Nestorian) Church—which held that, in effect, the two natures of Christ were two persons, somehow joined in a moral union—centred at Ctesiphon."

None of these entries are correct but the reference to Kottayam and Madras, giving the specific date of 53 CE for St. Thomas, is just a reworking of the *Encyclopaedia's* 1984 entry. The various dates for St. Thomas's arrival in India and death in Madras are inventions that were added to the legend in the nineteenth century. The editor has not kept his promise and has maintained the same information about St. Thomas and India in different wording. The charge that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is a Catholic encyclopaedia intent on promoting a traditional Christian point of view remains. It has always been that way with the *Encyclopaedia*: Joseph

McCabe the great linguist and historian of early Christianity, could not get it to correct and change its wrong entries for early Christian history either.

Bishop Medleycott with his papal mandate and imperial urges, totally discredited as a historian of Christianity in India, remains the last word on St. Thomas in India in all Catholic encyclopaedias and, believe it or not, the internet's modern, up-to-date *Wikipedia* as well.

Sometime in May 2008 we looked at the Thomas the Apostle page on *Wikipedia*. It did not have very much to say about St. Thomas in India except for the usual fabricated dates of arrival in Kerala and death by assassin's hand in Madras. On the talk page we noted a demand by the rabid Hindu-hating Chennai-based missionary and co-conspirator of Catholic "free-thinker" Deivanayagam, Alexander Harris, that our then website link be removed from reference. But the main article page included Pope Benedict's categorical statement made at the Vatican on 26 September 2006, that St. Thomas did not come to South India,¹⁵ and this encouraged us to try our hand at *Wikipedia* editing. We felt assured that *Wikipedia* was interested in verifiable facts and not just Indian Christian traditions—Indian Christians are not able to distinguish between their beliefs and historical facts; they think beliefs and facts are the same thing—and decided to contribute to the Thomas the Apostle article. We adopted the user name Vena Varcas and introduced ourself on the Thomas the Apostle talk page with the following statement:

Historicity of St. Thomas controversial and disputed

The editors of this article will have to consider the fact that all references to Thomas in Indian Christian tradition and folklore have been rejected as unhistorical by responsible Christian scholars and ecclesiastics (barring a few like Medleycott and Arulappa) for the past two centuries. The elaborate and confusing mythology of Thomas is not factual or verifiable and cannot ethically be represented as true history in an encyclopedia. These pious legends may have a role to play in religion but they do not have a place in Indian history writing unless they are identified and qualified for the general reader.

The reputed Christian historian A. Mingana has written in *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* that, "What India gives us about Christianity in its midst is indeed nothing but pure fables". This is true about the Thomas tradition in India

and in the numerous other places it exists in Asia except perhaps Edessa where it originated. Any serious article about Thomas in India, or the various controversial and disputed places of pilgrimage associated with him, should be unambiguously declared as faith-based and historically unverified. To do otherwise in an encyclopedia article is intellectually dishonest and misleading and amounts to little more than religious propaganda created in the interests of a certain theological point of view.

The Trichur bishop Medleycott wrote his Thomas history with ulterior motive and is the favourite scholar of Thomas protagonists who quote him at length (including the EB which is a known RC-biased encyclopedia). He has been discredited by the renowned Christian historian Bishop Stephen Neill. Neill spent many years in India researching Indian Christian Thomas traditions and the Thomas legend and wrote in 1985, in *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to 1707 A.D.*, that “A number of scholars, among whom are to be mentioned with respect Bishop A.E. Medleycott, J.N. Farquhar and the Jesuit J. Dahlman, have built on slender foundations what can only be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.”

Bishop Neill goes on to say, “Millions of Christians in India are certain that the founder of their church is none other than the apostle Thomas himself. The historian cannot prove to them that they are mistaken in their belief. He may feel it right to warn them that historical research cannot pronounce on the matter with a confidence equal to that which they entertain by faith.”

The point is that this article Thomas the Apostle is a matter of Indian Christian faith, not Indian history, and it should not be presented in an encyclopedia as Indian history. Some parts of the article are neutral and other parts are just fiction propped up with facts and figures, names and dates, or some doubtful reference. In some cases, the article assumes too much, and in others it shows extreme bias. In fact, the whole project shows bias in its declared intention, when it treats as proven a legend that most respected world historians declare is fiction and unprovable. What the article needs is review and revision by a neutral historical critic who has no Indian Christian axe to grind. Is this possible in the *Wikipedia* scenario? Would the article’s administrator and watchdog with his declared special interests ever permit it? - *Vena Varcas (talk) 15:55, 15 May 2008 (UTC)*.

We then set to work on the *Wikipedia* Thomas the Apostle article adding verifiable references and short sections with citations. Every statement we made was supported with an authoritative reference from a recognized

historian of Christianity. We were very careful not to delete any material already posted on the page or refer to the demolition of the Kapaleeswara Temple in Mylapore by the Portuguese. However, as our contribution progressed, Mylapore did come into the picture and we introduced it with a reference to Swami Tapasyananda of the Ramakrishna Math in Mylapore and the article he had written in *Vedanta Kesari* called “The Legend of a Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism.”

This single attributed reference to a Hindu scholar was too much for the Kerala Christian *Wikipedia* page administrator Tinucherian (Cherian Tinu Abraham). Within an hour of the post, he deleted our reference to Swami Tapsyananda and rolled back the other postings we had made that day. It was a real surprise to us. Where we had made an effort not to interfere with earlier postings, we discovered that the same courtesy was not extended to us and that we would not be informed when we had “offended” Tinucherian’s Christian enterprise. We abandoned *Wikipedia* as a waste of time and effort and our contributions were soon perverted or deleted altogether.

The concocted absurdities found in the *Wikipedia* Thomas the Apostle article today, which has neither citations or credible references, can be exposed with a single example: the statement in the Thomas and India subsection of the main article that the king who executed Judas Thomas for sorcery and crimes against women, Mazdai (Masdai), was “the local king at Mylapore”. This is a preposterous statement. The name Mazdai is Persian and specifically identifies a person who is Zoroastrian by religion. Mazdaism identifies a worshiper of Ahura Mazda and is a synonym for Zoroastrianism. Associating the *Acts of Thomas* and its Persian king Mazdai with Mylapore is motivated Christian scholarship—something “Dr.” Deivanayagam of the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese would produce—and the fact that the *Wikipedia* administrator Tinucherian allows such unsupported statements to stand unchallenged shows that he is deeply involved in the crime of writing a deliberately false and perverted history of Christianity in Mylapore.

Wikipedia by its free-for-all constitution and arbitrary, secretive contribution and editorial oversight system lacks all credibility. Every fact

checked with this internet reference has to be checked someplace else if it is to be accepted as authoritative. Many of its articles on Christianity in India are propaganda projects set up to project a particular Christian world view. This is to be expected: the wiki editing system invites India's cultural enemies, Christian missionaries and other western neo-colonialists, to propound their hostile, anti-Indian theories. Its administrators are not authorities on the subjects they oversee (Tinucherian is a Bangalore software engineer who knows nothing about St. Thomas and the history of Christianity in India) and their personal prejudices soon become evident and interfere with factual and cited contributions. *Wikipedia* is the perfect platform for Christian propaganda in India and is being used for that purpose with great effect in its Christianity in India project. This *Wikipedia* series even employs the symbol of a gold cross superimposed on a light blue map of India, a symbol that is highly offensive to the majority Hindu population who identify India as their mother and civilisational homeland.

The fabulous and false "facts" about St. Thomas and India found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and its internet sister *Wikipedia* make the ancient Greek historian and geographer Strabo into a prophet (he was a contemporary of Jesus and Thomas). He said, "Generally speaking the men who have written on India were a set of liars." And so it is with the contributors to the mainstream encyclopaedias and dictionaries that reference Indian history today.¹⁶

But it is not only international English-language reference works that repeat the falsehood that St. Thomas came to South India and was murdered in Madras by hostile Hindus. Indian reference books repeat the St. Thomas tale because they are too lazy to do any original research of their own and simply copy existing sources which are usually Christian or western sources. For example, the internet reference *Indianetzone* in its long self-persuading entry for St. Thomas treats him as Kerala's first Christian missionary. They wax eloquent about the old St. Thomas traditions in Kerala and how everybody believes them so they must be true. Fine for the Christian faithful, but this is story telling not India history writing. A lie does not become truth with old age and much repetition by Christian priests! We have twice contacted the editors and given them the

known historical data on St. Thomas, but to no effect. They block our comments, delete our registration from their site, and refuse to acknowledge our mail. Like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Wikipedia*, *Indianetzone* is deeply attached to its fictitious and fabulous St. Thomas entry and will not let it go for a more prosaic and truthful account of Christianity's origins in India.

If St. Thomas lived at all—and we have no positive evidence for this either—it was in Palestine and Syria, and it was in Syria and Persia, or Parthia, that he proselytised the inhabitants and established churches.¹⁷ This is what the most ancient Alexandrian tradition maintains and what the seventh and eighth century Metropolitans of Fars, Mar Isho Yahb and Mar Thiomothy, testify to when they refuse to submit to the Patriarch of the East at Seleucia-Ctesiphon because their Persian church had been established by Thomas while his had not. The later Edessene tradition is a case of Edessa glorifying an apostle they considered their own—Thomas had visited their city and they possessed his bones—at the expense of India—if of course the “India” of the *Acts* doesn't simply mean Parthia or Persia.

15. G. Ananthakrishnan in *The Times of India*, Mumbai, 26 Dec. 2006, reports: “Pope Benedict XVI made the statement [about St. Thomas] at the Vatican on September 27, [2006]. Addressing the faithful during the Wednesday catechises, he recalled that St. Thomas first evangelised Syria and Persia, and went on to western India from where Christianity reached Southern India. The import of the statement was that St. Thomas never travelled to south India, but rather evangelised the western front, mostly comprising today's Pakistan.” Though the Pope is a declared enemy of Hindu India, he is a scholar and had reported the known facts about St. Thomas and his missionary journey to Syria and Parthia. He had said, “Thomas first evangelised Syria and Persia and then penetrated as far as western India, from where Christianity reached also South India.” It is another matter that his editors on the Vatican website changed this sentence the next day to read that *Thomas himself* had reached South India.

16. A friend of this writer had in 2011 created an “Ishwar Sharan” page in *Wikipedia* with the help and encouragement of a *Wikipedia* editor called Chiswick Chap. Some months later the page was attacked and vandalised by another *Wikipedia* editor called Arun. Arun obviously worked with the Kerala Christian mafia who watch over and closely control *Wikipedia's* “Christianity in India” pages. The page made for this writer was deleted at its creator's request, as the content of the

page had been grossly perverted and politicised. *Wikipedia* operates like a Stalinist re-education camp and though it pretends anybody can create and edit a page, in fact the pages are controlled by anonymous administrators who are both ignorant of the subjects they administer and very abusive of their absolute editorial powers.

17. The churches that are traditionally said to have been established by apostles were known by the names of the cities or countries that they were established in. The famous four were the Churches of Alexandria by Mark, Jerusalem by James, Antioch by Peter and Paul, and Rome by Peter. The Church of Edessa was said to have been established by Addai the disciple of Thomas and the Church of Fars by Thomas himself. Lastly, the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, properly called the Church of the East, was said to have been established by Aggaeus the disciple of Addai of Edessa in the second century CE. But there was no Church of Muziris (as Cranganore-Kodungallur was known to the Greeks and Romans) or Shingly (as it was known to the Jews) or Malabar or India in the first centuries CE.

5

The first Christians to emigrate to India came in 345 CE. They landed at Cranganore in Malabar, then the ancient port of Muziris on the mouth of the Periyar River where it joined the Arabian Sea. They were four hundred refugees from Babylon and Nineveh, then part of the Parthian (Persian) Empire, belonging to seven tribes and seventy-two families. They were fleeing religious persecution under the Persian king Shapur II. He had driven them out of Syria and Mesopotamia because he considered them a state liability. Rome, Persia's arch enemy, had begun to Christianise under Constantine,¹⁸ and Shapur had come to suspect the allegiances of his Christian subjects.

The Syrian refugees were led by a semi-legendary figure who is known to history variously as Thomas of Cana, Thomas the Merchant, Thomas the Canaanite, Thomas of Jerusalem, Thomas Cananeus or Cannaneo, and Knai Thoma. Nothing is known about him and his companion Bishop Joseph of Edessa except their names, and this migration of Christians also cannot be treated as verified historical fact. "No deeds of copper plates in the name of Thomas of Cana are now extant," writes, C.B. Firth in *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, "... [and] it would be rash to insist upon all the details of the story of Thomas the Merchant as history. Nevertheless, the main point—the settlement in Malabar of a considerable colony of Syrians—may well be true."

K.S. Latourette, the American church historian, in *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, supports this view. He does not allow for the possibility of Christians coming to India by any route before the third century. T. Edmunds, the Lutheran church historian of T.B.M. Lutheran College, Porayar, Tamil Nadu, confirms the traditional date of 345 CE for the first migration.

Dr. Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East of Trichur, Kerala, in *The Chaldean Syrian Church of the East*, writes, "Most church historians, who doubt the tradition of the doubting Thomas in India, will admit that there was a church in India in the middle of the sixth century

when Cosmas Indicopleustes visited India. ... According to Cosmas, Christians existed in Male and at [Quilon] where a bishop, ordained in Persia, lived.”

Cosmas the Alexandrian was a theologian, geographer and merchant who traded with Ethiopia and Ceylon. He visited Malabar in 520-525 CE, and in *Christian Topography* gives the first acceptable evidence for Christian communities in India.

C.B. Firth continues, “The second migration [of Syrian Christians] is dated in the year 823, when a number of Christians from Persia, including two bishops, came to Quilon in Travancore and settled there, having obtained from the local ruler grants of land and various other privileges ... and this time contemporary evidence is available in the form of five copper plates recording various grants to the Christians.”

What these plates actually say is uncertain as they are inscribed in Tamil-Malayalam, Pahlavi and Arabic, and some of the signatures appear to be in Hebrew. The only date on the plates, that of the fifth year of Raja Stanu Ravi Gupta who ruled from 844 to 885, is debatable.

There is also the controversial evidence of the Persian “St. Thomas” crosses made of black granite, that have been provisionally dated to the seventh or eighth century.

Rev. C.E. Abraham, in an article in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, writes, “The Persian crosses—or so-called ‘Thomas’ crosses—with inscriptions in Pahlavi, one found in St. Thomas Mount, Madras, and two in a church in Kottayam in Travancore, are evidence of the connection of the Malabar Church with the Church of Persia.”

According to C.P.T. Winckworth, whose translation of the Pahlavi inscriptions has been accepted, they—except for one, which is partly in Syriac—read: “My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukht the Syrian, who cut this.”

These crosses may be evidence of the connection of the Christian church in India with Persia, but they may also be evidence of temple destruction and

the planting of Christian relics in temple foundations—at least the one on St. Thomas Mount may be so considered.

The motif on this black granite slab is cut in relief, and on each side of the cross, which is surmounted by a descending dove, are pillars crowned with supernatural composite animals, or *yalis*, from whose mouths issue an arch that joins together above the dove.

These *yalis* are Hindu symbols, not Christian, and Veda Prakash, Director of the Institute for the Study of Western Religions, Madras, asserts that the cross on St. Thomas Mount is an over-cut temple stone. He claims support for this view from the most unexpected quarter. Dr. R. Arulappa, the former Roman Catholic archbishop of Madras, in *Punitha Thomaiyar*, says that *yantra* stones in temple foundations were dug up by the Portuguese on three of the four sites in Madras that they associated with St. Thomas and where they built churches—Mylapore, Little Mount at Saidapet, and Big Mount at St. Thomas Mount.

The dove-and-cross motif of this stone has been described by one writer as Manichaeian and by another as Nestorian. Fr. Herman D'Souza, in *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, quoting Francis Gouvea on the sixteenth century Portuguese “excavation” at St. Thomas Mount, identifies the motif with that used by the Knights of Aviz in Portugal.

The solution to this problem of the origin and identification of the Persian crosses and all other relics associated with St. Thomas is to have them examined by independent forensic experts. If the Bishop of Turin could surrender the famous Shroud of Turin, alleged burial cloth of Jesus, to scientists and accept their verdict that it is a mediaeval fake, then the Archbishop of Madras should be willing to do the same with the various St. Thomas relics in his possession.

But to return to the immediate problem of the origins of Christianity in India.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in its article on the Christians of Saint Thomas, says, “The origins of the so-called Malabar Christians is uncertain, though they seem to have been in existence before the 6th century AD and

probably derive from the missionary activity of the East Syrian (Nestorian) Church—which held that, in effect, the two natures of Christ were two persons, somehow joined in a moral union—centred at Ctesiphon. Despite their geographical isolation, they retained the Chaldean liturgy and Syriac language and maintained fraternal ties with the Babylonian (Baghdad) patriarchate.”¹⁹

Edward Gibbon, writing about the Syrian Christians of Malabar, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, says, “The difference of their character and colour attest the mixture of a foreign race. ... Their conformity with the faith and practice of the fifth century world equally disappoint the prejudices of a Papist or Protestant.”

And Leonardo Olschki, in *Marco Polo’s Asia*, declares, “The Nestorians in India ... venerated St. Thomas as the patron of Asiatic Christianity—mark, not of Indian Christianity.”

St. Thomas, then, was not the Apostle of India—as he was so designated by Rome in 1953—but the Apostle of the East, and the Church of the East was historically the first Christian church in India.

18. Nobody knows whether Emperor Constantine formally converted to Christianity or not. Some say that he declared himself Christian in Gaul, and others that he was forcefully baptised on his deathbed. What is certain is that he patronized the new cult for political reasons and became its saviour when he called the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, where Christianity was officially recognised in the Empire. He retained the title and position of *pontifex maximus* during his lifetime and therefore can be called Christianity’s first pope, as the bishop of Rome, whom he elevated, would assume this office and title after him. Joseph McCabe, telling the horrific story of how Christianity was imposed on the Empire, in *The Testament of Christian Civilization*, writes, “Constantine, natural son of a rural tavern-girl and a Roman officer, waded through rivers of blood to the throne, and he was driven from Rome to Constantinople by the scorn of the Romans because he ‘put to death, first his excellent ... son, and then the son of his sister, a boy of promising character, then his wife and a number of friends.’ This summary statement of a terrible crime, which Eutropius makes ... is confirmed by St. Jerome ... and not now disputed.” Mgr. Duchesne, describing the character of the second Christian emperor, Constantine’s son Constantius, in *History of the Arians*, writes, “He slew his uncles and his cousins. He had no mercy on the father-in-law whose daughter he had married, or on his relatives in their affliction. He treated his brother infamously ... and he delivered his wife to

the barbarians.” McCabe continues, “Thus the rule was made safe for the three Christian princes and the bishops. Then the eldest son fell into civil war with the youngest and was slain; Constans, the youngest, proved a monster of vice and tyranny and was assassinated; Constantius, now sole ruler, adopted what some still call the vile heresy of the Arians ... and he turned the Era of Religious Peace which his father was supposed to have inaugurated into an era of such red-hot passion, murder, and torture on religious grounds as the world had never seen before. ... It is ironic that the repulsive struggle that fills the first half of the fourth century should have turned upon the question whether Jesus was God or was merely so beautiful a character that he was ‘like’ God. Still more ironic that the first emperor upon whom the bishops prevailed to adopt the policy of coercion should have adopted also the Arian heresy and applied in its favour the principles of violence, which was, they assured him, consecrated by the interest of religious truth. However that may be, Constantius, surrounded by the vile and unscrupulous eunuchs with whom Constantine had filled his court, made ten times as many Christian martyrs in twenty years as the Pagan emperors had made in two hundred and fifty, and introduced methods of savagery which even the Goths and Vandals would not emulate.”

19. The correct name of this church is Church of the East (because it was geographically in the Persian Empire, east of Jerusalem and Rome), but it is known by a variety of names, some of which are Church of Assyria, of Mesopotamia, of Tigris, of Babylon and of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. According to tradition it had been established in the second century by Aggaeus the disciple of Addai of Edessa. It was not recognised as a senior church by the Church of Fars in Persia, which had been founded by an apostle, St. Thomas.

6

Thomas of Cana, or Knai Thoma as he is known to Syrian Christians, the Canaanite merchant from Jerusalem who had led the fourth century migration of Syrian Christians to Malabar, was probably a Manichee Christian. This may be inferred from the name of the Christian quarter that he built, Mahadevarapatnam, at Cranganore, on land that had been given to him and Bishop Joseph of Edessa by the reigning Cheraman Perumal (a title used by various Chera rulers). Cranganore had a great Shiva temple in its vicinity, at Tiruvanchikulam, and it was not possible that Christians who followed and fed on the intolerant salvation cult of the Roman Empire would call their quarter after the name of a Hindu deity. Manichaeism, on the other hand, was a benign, eclectic religion that mixed the teachings of Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses and Jesus in a cosmic system devised by Mani, a third century Parthian aristocrat who had studied in a Judeo-Christian community of Mandaeanists in southern Babylonia. He called himself the Apostle of Light and said that he was the last prophet after a long line that had begun with Adam.

Mani's religion was evangelical and ascetic, and tended to take on the form of the religious culture of the place it was in. As it flourished in a Mesopotamia and Persia that had been Christianised by St. Thomas and his disciples, it was a form of Gnostic Christianity not very different from that of Bardesanes and the *Acts of Thomas*. Mani had studied the teachings of Bardesanes and apocryphal Christian texts like the *Acts* formed part of the Manichaean canon. Indeed, there were very striking similarities between the story of Mani and that of Judas Thomas. They preached in the same places in the Persian Empire, performed the same miracles, used the same ritual chrism or baptism with oil, and laid the same emphasis on sexual continence. Mani is also said to have converted a king of India, probably in Baluchistan which is the furthest east he travelled, and he was martyred even as Judas Thomas, by a Zoroastrian king at Gondeshapur in southwestern Persia.

Henry Love, writing about the establishment of the first Syrian church in Malabar, in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, says, "Whether the founder of this

church was the apostle, or Thomas the Manichaeon who lived in the third century, or whether the Christians named themselves after Thomas the Armenian ... is a debatable matter which need not be discussed.”

Thomas of Cana—or his bishop from Edessa, Joseph—can be said to be the founder of the church in Malabar, but within a hundred years of his death it would join itself to the Nestorian Church of the East at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, which in turn was closely linked to the Church of Edessa. Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, in *Eastern Christianity in India*, gives the date of this event as about 450 CE, and it is because of this union that the Church of the East can be said to be the first Christian church in India—Manichaeism being a religion in its own right.

The attachment of the Syrian Christians of Malabar to the Nestorian Church was necessitated by their geographical isolation. They required bishops with a valid ordination and these could only be obtained from Mesopotamia and Persia. But there was a sentimental attraction too. The Nestorians also revered St. Thomas—Edessa had become their theological stronghold—and Nestorian bishops wholeheartedly promoted his cult in India.

This cult amounted to a kind of St. Thomas religion, and this is attested to by Bishop Jordan, the French Dominican friar who was sent to Quilon by Pope John XXII, in 1330, to convert the Syrians to the Roman creed. Friar Jordan soon had to abandon his Indian flock as incorrigible, and in *Marvels Described*, writes, “In this India there is a scattered people, one here, another there, who call themselves Christian, but are not so, nor have they baptism, nor do they know anything about the faith: nay, they believe St. Thomas the Great to be Christ.”

There was a good reason for this identification of Thomas with Jesus—aside from their physical resemblance²⁰—and the Syrian Christians seem to have retained a memory of it from their Judeo-Gnostic origins. These origins were indicated by the appellation “Nazarene” or “Nazarani”—being the same as the biblical “Nazarite”—which they carried into the seventeenth century, along with uncut hair that was worn tied up with a cross in a top-knot.

The Nazarenes were an ancient Jewish sect whose most famous member before Jesus was Samson,²¹ known from the Old Testament story. They gave special importance to uncut hair, which they believed to contain divine power, and were later associated with the Essenes, the nationalistic religious community on the Dead Sea with which Jesus and Thomas were also related.²²

The Nazarenes did not originally regard Jesus as divine or a universal saviour of mankind, though they did believe him to be their promised messiah. His twin brother Thomas was revered as co-messiah with him, and together they constituted the hereditary king and high priest of Israel, in the royal line of David. Their nationalistic cult spread northwards among the Jews, to supplant the similar and ancient Greek cult of the Divine Twins, Castor and Pollux, at Edessa. Judas Thomas had visited Edessa after sending his disciple Addai there, to instruct the king in his Nazarene doctrine. The creed demanded strict adherence to orthodox Jewish law and recognition of Jesus as messiah and earthly king of Israel. It repudiated the Virgin Birth and Resurrection, and maintained a militant hostility towards Paul and the whole edifice of Pauline thought. This meant that Jesus was not Christ—an idea that Paul had borrowed from Greek philosophy—but resurgent Israel's national saviour.

The Nazarene hierarchy of Jerusalem had fled to Edessa prior to the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 CE, and it is only after the Nazarenes had lost the national cause that Jesus and Judas Thomas took on divine roles. Paul's Greek—some say Gnostic—ideas were accepted over those of orthodox Judaism, and for the first time in history the appellation “Christian” came into use in Syria, even as the first Christian church was built at Edessa on the ruins of the demolished Greek temple. Jesus and Thomas had ousted Castor and Pollux. Later, near the end of the second century, the Abgar, Edessa's prince and Bardesanes's friend, was baptised a Christian and Edessa became a Christian state.

But from the beginning of the Christian era to the Arab invasions of the seventh century, Judas Thomas was and remained the central object of worship at Edessa. He had lived and taught in the city and if he did not die there, his body was returned soon afterwards from Persia. His cult was

brought to India by Thomas of Cana and the four hundred Syrian refugees he led, in 345 CE, and even as Thomas was identified with Jesus, so Thomas of Cana came to be identified with Thomas the Apostle within a few generations of his death in Malabar.

This is an old idea. Henry Love had suggested it in the last century, in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, and before him England's greatest historian, Edward Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, had asked if the Indian Thomas was an apostle, an Armenian merchant, or a Manichaeon. Major T.R. Vedantham had again questioned the identity of St. Thomas in 1987, in the "St. Thomas Legend", serialized in the *South Madras News*. He had carefully reviewed the material available and come to the inescapable conclusion that Thomas of Cana was the man whom Syrian Christians had made into their Indian apostle St. Thomas.

20. Rupert Furneau, in *The Other Side of the Story*, says that Jesus and Thomas were look-alike twins, and that Thomas capitalized on the resemblance wherever he went. Furneau quotes the famous Austrian historian and archaeologist Robert Isaac Eisler, who reconstructs the description of Jesus and thus of Thomas found in the *Antiquities* of Josephus, after removing the fanciful interpolations that Christian editors had made in the text. Eisler writes, "His nature and form were human; a man of simple appearance, mature age, dark skin, small stature, three cubits [four feet six inches] high, hunch-backed, with a long face, long nose, and meeting eyebrows, so that they who see him might be affrighted, with scanty hair with a parting in the middle of the head, after the manner of the Nazarites, and with an undeveloped beard." The hunched back of Jesus and Thomas is attributed to their profession of carpenter.

21. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, in *The Messianic Legacy*, write, "Jesus almost certainly was not of Nazareth. An overwhelming body of evidence indicates that Nazareth did not exist in biblical times. The town is unlikely to have appeared before the third century. 'Jesus of Nazareth', as most biblical scholars would now readily concur, is a mistranslation of the original Greek phrase 'Jesus the Nazarene'."

22. Studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls done by Barbara Theiring over a twenty-year period, some of the results of which are contained in her book *Jesus the Man: A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, reveal that John the Baptist, Jesus, Mary and the disciples including Paul, were members of the Essene community at Qumran on the Dead Sea. Theiring says that Jesus married twice, fathered children, married one of his daughters to Paul, survived the crucifixion, and died of old age at Rome.

7

“It is in this province, which is styled the Greater India, at the gulf between Ceylon and the mainland, that the body of Messer St. Thomas lies, at a certain town having no great population.” - Marco Polo

Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveller, is said to have visited South India twice, in 1288 and 1292, where he saw a tomb of St. Thomas “at a certain town” which he does not name. Many historians accept these dates and visits without question, and identify the little town that he speaks of with Mylapore. Yet it would appear that they are mistaken about the visits, as, indeed, was Marco Polo about the tomb of St. Thomas.²³

Marco Polo left Acre, in Palestine, about 1272, carrying an introduction to the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan, from his friend Pope Gregory X. He travelled with his father and uncle, by land, following the Silk Road north and east to China, which he reached about three years later. He remained in China for the next seventeen years, and was said to be at Yang-chou, in Kansu, around 1287. It is thus not possible for him to have been in South India in 1288 and this date can be rejected.

Macro Polo left China about 1292 with a fleet of fourteen ships, six hundred courtiers and sailors, and a princess whom he was to deliver to a khan in Persia. He sailed to Sumatra where he passed the monsoon, passed by the Nicobar Islands, passed through the Palk Strait into the Gulf of Mannar, stopped in Ceylon where he first heard the story of St. Thomas, then proceeded up the west coast of India and along the south coast of Persia until he reached Hormuz. From there he travelled by land to Khorasan with the princess, and then returned back down the Silk Road to Constantinople and Europe.

Macro Polo thus did not visit the Coromandel Coast in 1292 either, though this date still attracts many historians. Fosco Maraini, the Macro Polo authority at the University of Florence, in his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article, is very positive about Marco Polo’s route and it did not include Mylapore.

We would like to leave Marco Polo here but unfortunately, he wrote a book, or, rather, in 1298 and 1299 dictated it to a fellow prisoner in Genoa—Venice and Genoa were always quarrelling and Marco had been captured by Genoa—one Rustichello, a writer of chivalrous romances and popular fiction. The book is called by different names in different languages. Originally, in the Old French in which it was written, it is called *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* (Book of the Marvels of the World), and in the Italian in which it was widely read, it is called *Il Milione* (The Million), a name which has the implied meaning of a tall tale. Dante Alighieri, author of *The Divine Comedy* and Marco Polo's contemporary, seems to have regarded the book as a dangerous and impious invention. But it was an instant success in Venice and within a year was being read throughout southern Europe.

In the book Marco says the following about St. Thomas's tomb: "It is in this province, which is styled the Greater India, at the gulf between Ceylon and the mainland, that the body of Messer St. Thomas lies, at a certain town having no great population."

So, the "certain town" of St. Thomas fame in *Il Milione* is on the Gulf of Mannar coast facing Ceylon, not the Mylapore seashore!

Macro Polo is the first writer in history to locate the tomb of St. Thomas on the sea and by doing so he revolutionizes the legend. All documents in the world prior to his locate the tomb on a mountain following the *Acts of Thomas*. Macro Polo is also the first writer in history to locate the tomb in South India, though some Christian scholars argue that Metropolitan Mar Solomon of Basra, in his *Book of the Bee*, ca. 1222, did this before him. They identify Mar Solomon's Mahluph with Mylapore, but do this after the fact of the Portuguese identification of Mylapore with St. Thomas. There is no existing original manuscript of the *Book of the Bee*—as there is none of *Il Milione*—and various copies of it give various places of burial. One says "Mahluph" which has never been identified, a second "India" but not which India or where in which India, a third "Edessa", and a fourth "Calamina". Mar Solomon's contemporary neighbour Bishop Bar-Hebraeus of Tigris, in his *Matthaeus* and Syriac-language *Chronicle*, ca. 1250, is more consistent. Like Mar Solomon, he says that St. Thomas preached to the Parthians,

Medes and Indians (some add Hyrcanians and Bactrians), but in his books he asserts that the apostle was killed and buried at Calamina.²⁴

Macro Polo collected his stories of St. Thomas from the Muslims and Syrian Christians—who were known to Europeans as Nestorians—in the ports of Ceylon and Malabar. However, Leonardo Olschki, in *Marco Polo's Asia*, accepts Marco Polo's claim that he had visited a Christian shrine on the Coromandel Coast, and also the opinion that the identity of the town that contained the shrine was Mylapore, but he does not accept that the shrine was the tomb of St. Thomas. In his commentary on *Il Milione*, he writes, "The shrine [of St. Thomas] is portrayed as isolated in a small village remote from everything, but the goal of continual pilgrimages consecrated by ancient and recent miracles. From Marco's references we understand that it was then one of the characteristic Asiatic sanctuaries which, like the supposed tomb of the Magi in Persia, the Manichaeian temple at Foochow, Adam's sepulchre in Ceylon, and others not mentioned in *Il Milione*, had from time immemorial served the purposes of the various successive cults there, which rose and fell in a fangled mass of traditions, legends, and reciprocal influences now well-nigh impossible to unravel or specify. They are reflected in Marco's data and observations with regard to this dispersed Indo-African Christianity, of which almost nothing is known from other sources but which is still worthy of study.

"The authenticity of St. Thomas's tomb at Mailapur is almost as doubtful as that of Adam's in Ceylon. However, while the latter arouses Marco's suspicions because, as he asserts, the Holy Scriptures place it elsewhere, his critical faculties are lulled by the evidence of the miracles that the apostle continued to work in favour of the Christians of that region. He therefore accepted the opinion of the Nestorians of India, who venerated St. Thomas as the patron of Asiatic Christianity, and was unmindful of those numerous fellow believers who, with more legitimate reasons, had set up a whole mythology about his legendary tomb at Edessa.

"The first to describe this celebrated Indo-Christian sanctuary and to spread its fame abroad with his book, Marco transformed a place of pilgrimage not very widely important into a centre of Christian piety and propaganda, almost a far eastern peer of Santiago de Compostela [in Spain]

at the western limits of the European world, with the difference that the tomb of St. Thomas was guarded by Christians opposed to the Church of Rome. The monks who dwelt nearby, according to Marco's account, lived on coconut 'which the land there freely produces'. These religious must have been fairly numerous if, thirty years later, [in 1322,] when the cult was already in its decline, Friar Odoric of Pordenone counted some fifteen buildings about the sanctuary. This had in the meantime become a Hindu temple filled with idols, lacking any visible trace of its ancient Christian cult.²⁵ Friar John of Monte Corvino, on the other hand, after having passed some thirteen months in that region almost contemporaneously with Marco's visit, says nothing of the apostle's tomb, and mentions the church only in passing."²⁶

"The story of the apostle's martyrdom told to Marco by the people of the country is far from original, and is probably of local origin. ... We read in *Il Milione* that St. Thomas ended his days as the victim of a hunting accident when the arrow of a native pagan, aimed at a peacock, pierced the apostle's right side while he was absorbed in prayer."²⁷

"No less worthy is the reference to Thomas's apostolate in Nubia, which, according to information gathered by Marco at this sanctuary, was supposed to have preceded the saint's sojourn in Coromandel; this would make Thomas the apostle of India and Africa, contrary to the legend that represents him as the evangelist of China."²⁸

Among the other stories told to Marco Polo by the Syrian Christians, is one that is very revealing. "We also learn from him," writes Olschki, "of the first attempt known to us to suppress this cult, which was carried out ... by the sovereign of that kingdom. Indeed, when a pagan ruler of the region filled with rice the church and monasteries of Mailapur, in order to put an end to the Christian practices of the Nestorian rites, the apostle threateningly appeared to him in a dream and made him so far change his ways as to exempt the faithful from all tribute and to safeguard the church from violation."

Olschki calls this a conventional piece of hagiography, but there is more in it than the pious account of a saint exercising his occult power over a persecuting ruler.

The Hindu king did not of course violate a church—in all of Indian history there is no evidence of such acts; Hindu kings gave generous donations for the building of churches and had already done so in Malabar—nor would he have objected to the rites that were being performed in a Christian church. The king would have objected to Christian rites being performed in a Hindu temple, and would have certainly put a stop to them. He would have had the temple filled with raw rice as part of a *suddhi* (purification) or *pratistha* (consecration) ritual; or, again, he would have been doing *anna abhisheka* (food offering) to the Lord by filling the sanctum with huge quantities of cooked rice—even as it is done today in the great Shiva temples of South India.

What emerges from this story is that the Syrian Christians were worshipping in a Hindu temple, which they called a church, at least up to 1322 when Friar Oderic visited Mylapore. Henry Yule, in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, referring to Friar Oderic's description of the church, declares, "This is clearly a Hindu temple."²⁹

Marco Polo did not visit Mylapore; indeed, Mylapore is not identified in *Il Milione* though it may be inferred to be the destination of Christian pilgrims from later Portuguese tales. Marco Polo is only repeating the pious stories of Christians and Muslims—the latter also claimed St. Thomas; he was, they told Marco, not only an apostle from Nubia, but a Muslim apostle³⁰—who apparently worshipped in a Hindu temple, each justifying his presence there by identifying the shrine with his own Thomas.³¹

23. Some historians theorise that Marco Polo never left Constantinople to travel to China, but collected all his adventure stories from Muslim and Syrian Christian merchants who came to the great city to trade. They argue that he compiled these travel tales into a book and claimed them as his own experiences. Certainly, in his own time he was not believed and Dante Alighieri called him a liar. In this book we assume the traditional story of his travels to be partly true.

24. Hippolytus, the third century Roman theologian and antipope, is the earliest writer to say that St. Thomas was martyred and buried at Calamina, which he claims is in India. He is followed at the end of the third century by Dorotheus of Tyre, and in the seventh century by Sophronius of Jerusalem and Isidore of Seville. Thomas Herbert identifies Calamina with Gouvea in Brazil, T.K. Joseph with Kalawan near Taxila, P.V. Mathew with Bahrain, and Veda Prakash with Kalamai in Greece. Calamina has never been identified and ancient Thebes northwest of Athens may be added to the list of conjectures. It was originally known as Cadmeia and often called that up to the end of the second century CE. Cadmeia when Latinized becomes Calamina. The earth from the single grave of its twin heroes, Amphion and Zethus, was believed to contain great power and was protected, even as the earth of St. Thomas's sepulchre was believed to heal. Cadmean or Thebean earth, called calamine, is pink in colour and used in medicine and metallurgy.

25. The earliest records of the Madras area, including money-lenders' accounts, go back to the fourth century CE. They identify Mylapore, Triplicane and Tiruvottiyur as temple towns. The *Nandikkalambakkam* describes Mylapore as a prosperous port under the Pallavas, the early-fourth-to-late-ninth century emperors of Kanchipuram, who patronized various schools of Hinduism including Jainism and Buddhism, built temples and generously supported the arts. There is no record of a Christian church or saint's tomb at Mylapore before the Portuguese period, and Olschki is basing his comments on the wrong assumption that Marco Polo did visit Mylapore and that he found a church there. Friar Oderic is describing the original Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple on the Mylapore seashore, which the Tamil saint Jnanasambandar has positively identified as being there at least before the sixth century CE.

26. Friar John, in his letters from China (presumably sent to Rome), does not identify the St. Thomas church that he visited or say where it was located. Most scholars believe that he travelled in Malabar and the Konkan only.

27. Olschki's note: "Thus, St. Thomas was supposed to have been a victim but not a martyr—which would add further complications to the already tangled mass of fables concerning his apostolate and his end."

28. Olschki's note: "The oriental ubiquity of St. Thomas's apostolate is explained by the fact that the geographical term 'India' included, apart from the subcontinent of this name, the lands washed by the Indian Ocean as far as the China Sea in the east and the Arabian Peninsula, Ethiopia, and the African coast in the west."

29. Friar Oderic is not the only mediaeval European traveller to mistake a temple for a church. Vasco da Gama did the same in 1498. He believed the temples he visited in Calicut were churches and the images he prayed before were those of Christian saints. His error was corrected on his second visit, when the Syrian Christians identified themselves and invited him to overthrow the Zamorin and take over the kingdom.

30. See T.K. Joseph's *Six St. Thomases of South India: A Muslim Non-Martyr (Thawwama) made Martyrs after 1517 AD*.

31. The Syriac "Thoma" and "Thama" and Arabic "Thuma" and "Thawwama" are variations of the name Thomas. They all have the same meaning—"born twin"—and were common names in the Christian and Muslim communities of India and West Asia.

8

Bishop Giovanni dei Marignolli, a Franciscan friar from Florence, visited Mylapore in 1349 on his return journey to Italy from China. His notes are full of St. Thomas exotica. He had baptised some Syrian Christians and lower caste Hindus the year before, in Quilon, and built a Roman Catholic church there. Historically, he is the first person on record to use the appellation “St. Thomas Christians”. He did this to distinguish the Syrian Christians in his congregation from the Hindu converts. Niccolo dei Conti, from Venice, visited in ca. 1425, and records that there were about a thousand Nestorians, i.e., Syrian Christians, in Mylapore. Lodovico de Varthema, from Bologna, visited between 1503 and 1508, and Durate Barbosa, the first Portuguese visitor, came in 1509, and describes a “St. Thomas tomb” in a dilapidated building that was occupied by a Muslim fakir. Diogo Fernandez, also Portuguese, came in 1517 with some Armenian merchants who were returning to Malabar from Malacca. He is an ambiguous figure who will play a key role in the evolution of the St. Thomas myth after Mylapore was occupied by the Portuguese.

Lodovico de Varthema and Duarte Barbosa were soldiers of fortune who spent their time at Vijayanagar. There is no reason to believe that they actually visited Mylapore. Their stories, like Marco Polo’s, were collected in the bazaar from Muslim and Christian pilgrims and retold in their adventure books, to please the European audience of the day. Conti’s account, called *India in the Fifteenth Century*, is more serious and considered authentic. But whether or not these travellers actually came to Mylapore is not important; they are all repeating the same St. Thomas tale told up and down the South Indian coasts by the Syrian Christians.

9

Vasco da Gama arrived at Calicut in 1498 with the help of an Arab pilot. He was a clever navigator and one of history's most brutal men,³² but he was not very bright when it came to religion. He thought Calicut was a Christian city and returned to Portugal with the impression that the temples he had prayed in were churches. Catholic historians still argue that he saw two hundred thousand Christians on his first visit to Malabar, when in fact he had seen only Hindus whose piety he had unwittingly praised and whose wealth he coveted for his own.

Vasco da Gama's mistake was corrected when he returned to Malabar in 1502 and was met by a deputation of Syrian Christians. They identified themselves, surrendered their ancient honours and documents, and invited him to make war on their Hindu king.

George Menachery, a Catholic apologist and former adviser to the Kerala State Department of Archaeology, in *Kodungallur: City of St. Thomas*, writes, "They presented him a 'Rod of Justice' and swore allegiance to the Portuguese king and implored Portuguese protection. The Admiral received them very kindly and promised all help and protection. The significance of this event is variously interpreted by historians."

Indeed it is—but only Catholic historians prevaricate on why this high-ranking community of merchants and soldiers had turned on their king in this perfidious way.

K.M. Panikkar, in *Malabar and the Portuguese*, writes, "More than this, they suggested to [Vasco da Gama] that with their help he should conquer the Hindu kingdoms and invited him to build a fortress for this purpose in Cranganore. This was the recompense which the Hindu rajas received for treating with liberality and kindness the Christians in their midst."

The Syrians had of course acted on the exigencies of their Christian religion, which harbours in its heart a demon that divides mankind into friend and foe on ideological grounds. King Shapur II of Persia had not been mistaken about the allegiances of his Christian subjects in the fourth century.

The Syrian Christians would soon come to grief for their treachery. The Portuguese regarded them as heretics and schismatics who were no better in “true religion” than their Hindu neighbours. They had come with cannon and a papal mandate to instruct the inhabitants of the land in the Catholic faith and this included non-Roman Christians. Their arrival and that of the first Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier, in 1542, turned Christianity in India into a violent and destructive political force that continues to operate in the country till today.

After 1502, the Syrian Christians and Roman Catholic Church embarked on a confrontation. It went on for decades and was aggravated by the activities of the Jesuits. In 1653 a Syrian bishop was burned at the stake at Goa by the Inquisition—it had been invited into the country by Francis Xavier himself though he did not live long enough to savour the horror it unleashed in Goa. The confrontation only began to subside with the decline of Portuguese power, as the Pope and the Jesuits were both dependant on Portuguese arms to enforce their will. A compromise was eventually reached between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Christians, and various oriental rite churches came into being. But whatever the arrangements or relationship with Rome, the Jesuits, true to their evil genius, had succeeded in destroying the Syrian Christian community in India. There is some justice in this fate, for had the Syrian Christians remained true to their adopted country and Hindu king, they would have remained a happy, respected and united community.

The Portuguese had come to India to spread their religion and to trade—in that order, too, which is why Portugal is a poor country today even after ruling rich colonies. In the process they acquired the raw materials for a new cult, the St. Thomas legend, which would prove to be their most enduring “gift” to Mylapore—along with a large number of churches that have been built on temple sites around the southern coasts. The cult would also give imported Christianity the veneer of being an indigenous Indian religion, a political gift to the Roman Catholic Church in India more valuable than all the pearls and pepper that went to Lisbon.

32. Sita Ram Goel, in *Papacy: Its Doctrine and History*, writes, "Vasco da Gama had bombarded Calicut when the Zamorin ruler of that place refused to be dictated by him. He had plundered the ships bringing rice to the city and cut off the ears, noses and hands of the crews. The Zamorin had sent to him a Brahmin envoy after securing Portuguese safe-conduct. Vasco da Gama had cut off the nose, ears and hands of the Brahmin and strung them around his neck together with a palm-leaf on which a message was conveyed to the Indian king that he could cook and eat a curry made from his envoy's limbs."

10

The Portuguese were familiar with the St. Thomas legend long before they arrived in India. They knew Marco Polo's *Il Milione*, made popular in Europe in the fourteenth century, and the earlier sixth century Latin romances *De Miraculis Thomae* and *Passio Thomae*. The *Passio Thomae* was a redaction of the *Acts of Thomas*, but both Latin books contained a major diversion from the original story that would, like the seashore tomb in *Il Milione*, permanently alter the course of the St. Thomas legend after the Portuguese had established themselves in Mylapore. The *Passio Thomae* had St. Thomas killed by a Pagan priest with a sword, and *De Miraculis Thomae* had him killed by a Pagan priest with a lance. These stories were at odds with the one found in the *Acts of Thomas*, which had the apostle executed on the orders of a Persian king, by four royal soldiers with spears.

The Portuguese preferred the Pagan-priest-with-a-lance story found in *De Miraculis Thomae*. They added Marco Polo's seaside tomb to it, and elements from Syrian Christian traditions that they had gathered in Malabar, and concocted a legend, largely European in character, that they identified with various Hindu sites in Malabar and Mylapore.

The Portuguese story has not changed very much till today, though it has many variations. Victor J.F. Kulanday, in *The Paganization of the Church in India*, writes, "According to tradition, hallowed by time and strongly held by the Christians of Kerala, St. Thomas after visiting Socotra, an island in the Arabian Sea, landed near Cranganore on the Periyar estuary, north of Cochin in 52 AD.³³ He preached the Gospel and converted a number of people to Christianity. Later, he travelled further south and converted many more. Among those who embraced Christianity were several Namboodiri Brahmin families considered among Hindus as the highest class. He ordained priests from four of these families—Pakalomatton, Shankarapuri, Kalli and Kaliankal. He founded churches in seven places—Maliankara, Palayur, Parur, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Chayal and Quilon.^{34,35}

“From the west coast he proceeded to the east and further to Malacca and China. He is believed to have returned after some time to Madras. There his preaching aroused hostility among Brahmins and he was speared to death on July 3, 72 AD. He met his end on a hill now bearing the name St. Thomas Mount.³⁶ He was buried at a place called Mylapore in Madras. Over his tomb now stands the Cathedral Basilica of San Thome.”³⁷

One version of the fable asserts that he converted 6,850 Brahmins, 2,800 Kshatriyas, 3,750 Vaishyas and 4,250 Shudras. Another version maintains it was 17,490 Brahmins, 350 Vaishyas and 4,280 Shudras—Kshatriyas are not included except for the Raja of Tiruvanchikulam. In a third version 40 Jews are among the converts, and in a fourth the converts are the Raja’s son and son-in-law, some Brahmins, and a lone barber to keep them all shaved (he also would have had to circumcise the male converts, as Judas Thomas was an orthodox Jew and not part of St. Paul’s innovations in favour of foreskinned Gentiles).

There are also the miracles, all carefully catalogued by the Portuguese: 19 raised from the dead, 260 exorcised of their demons, 330 cured of leprosy, 250 of blindness, 120 of paralysis and 20 of dumbness.

And there is the famous curse of Cochin, that its inhabitants might suffer from elephantiasis which is now called St. Thomas Foot in that city.

This is the South Indian version of the St. Thomas fable which now passes for Indian history. It was compiled by the Portuguese, but T.K. Joseph, a “St. Thomas Christian” scholar (the first to put the appellation between quotation marks), in *Six St. Thomases of South India*, points out that the legend is now said to be based on the alleged but non-existent *St. Thomas Biography* composed by a St. Thomas disciple in 73 CE. The *Biography*, which nobody has ever seen, is said to be summarised in the *St. Thomas Song* “of 1601”, which, again, is the same as the *Rabban Pattu* that was composed by Varghese Palayur in 1892 and first published in 1916 by Fr. Bernard of Travancore.

Now the fact that the South Indian St. Thomas story was not written down until 1892, as T.K. Joseph testifies, is an extraordinary circumstance for so famous a piece of Indian “history”. It also brings Bishop Medleycott of

Trichur back into the picture. He was the great St. Thomas advocate in South India from 1887 to 1896, and had the motive and means to assist Varghese Palayur in writing his “ancient” composition.

The Vatican had declared the apostolate of St. Thomas in South India as unverified after studying the *Rabban Pattu*, but the Roman Catholic Church then and now is still the only entity that reaps any benefit from the propagation of the myth among Indians.

Whatever the truth of the matter and whoever are the real authors of the current South Indian legend—aside from the Portuguese—Vincent A. Smith, in *The Oxford History of India*, writes “Both stories [—the one in the *Acts* and the one in South India—] obviously cannot be true; even an apostle can die but once. My personal impression, formed after much examination of the evidence, is that the story of the martyrdom in southern India is the better supported of the two versions of the saint’s death. But it is by no means certain that St. Thomas was martyred at all. An early writer, Heracleon the Gnostic, asserts that he ended his days in peace.”

Heracleon was from Italy or Sicily and lived around ca. 180 CE. He led a westernising Italian school of Gnosticism, probably at Rome, which diverged from the better-known oriental school of Valentinus that Bardesanes followed. His testimony regarding the natural death of St. Thomas carries more weight than that of Bardesanes who mythicised the apostle thirty years later in the *Acts*, to promote his own theological views.

A.D. Burnell, in an article in the *Indian Antiquary* of May 1875, writes, “The attribution of the origin of South Indian Christianity to the apostle Thomas seems very attractive to those who hold certain theological opinion. But the real question is, on what evidence does it rest? Without real or sufficient evidence so improbable a circumstance is to be at once rejected. Pious fictions have no place in historical research.”

Prof. Jarl Charpentier, in *St. Thomas the Apostle and India*, writes, “There is absolutely not the shadow of a proof that an Apostle of our Lord—be his name Thomas or something else—ever visited South India or Ceylon and founded Christian communities there.”

And Rev. J. Hough, in *Christianity in India*, writes, “It is not probable that any of the Apostles of our Lord embarked on a voyage ... to India.”

33. The various dates given for St. Thomas’s arrival in Malabar and death near Madras are nineteenth century additions to the legend. Some of the dates given for his arrival are 50, 51, 53, 58, 65, 67 and 68 AD, and for his death are 73, 75, 78, 82, 90 and 93 AD.

34. The archaeological evidence indicates that these churches were built after the ninth century by Nestorian immigrants from Persia. The famous church at Palayur north of Cranganore was built by the Portuguese and is dedicated to the fourth century martyr St. Cyriac (Mar Kuriakkos Sahada). Fr. Herman D’Souza, in *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, writes, “The [Palayur] temple deserted by the Brahmins as a result of St. Thomas’s efforts, was turned into a church. Pieces of broken idols and remnants of the old temple were lying around the church till a short time ago. Two large tanks, one on the eastern side of the church and the other near the western gate, are tell-tale relics of the ancient glory of the Hindu temple.” D’Souza was writing in 1983 and includes pictures of the old temple walls, well and tank in his book. He is blaming St. Thomas for the temple-breaking activities of the Portuguese and Syrian Christians.

35. According to the Namboodiri Brahmins themselves, they are the original Vedic Brahmins of Kerala. However, there is no historical record to support this claim. Marxist historians assert that Namboodiris arrived in Kerala only in the sixth or seventh century, though there is a record for Mezhatol Agnihothri (b. 342 CE), the Namboodiri who revived the Vedic *shruta* traditions in Kerala in the fourth century CE. Therefore, we may infer that the Namboodiri community may have included Syrian Christian immigrants who had converted to Vedic Hinduism. The claim that St. Thomas converted four Namboodiri families to Christianity was invented by Syrian Christians to give themselves caste status. It is doubtful if Judas Thomas would have called himself a Christian; he was a practising Jew who would neither build churches nor carve crosses—the latter being abhorrent to his cultural sensibilities and not used as a Christian identity symbol until after the third century. The designation “Christian” was first used for St. Paul’s converts in Antioch after 45 CE.

36. This hill is crowned with a Portuguese church dedicated to the Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Expectation, and was built around 1547 on the foundations of a demolished Hindu temple. It contains a wooden icon of the Virgin said to be painted by St. Luke and given to St. Thomas at Jerusalem, an eighth century Persian “bleeding” cross said to have been carved by St. Thomas—which stopped bleeding as soon as the schismatic British moved into the area—and two paintings of St. Thomas and his spear-bearing Hindu assassin. The older painting fixed behind the altar suggests an Iyengar Brahmin wearing *namam* on his forehead, about to stab the praying apostle from behind, and the other painting,

one of a series of the martyred apostles, shows an unidentified Hindu as the assassin.

37. This nineteenth century Gothic cathedral is built on a high point of the Mylapore beach and replaces the sixteenth century Portuguese church that was built on the same site. Both the church and bishop's house beside it are built over the area of the original Kapaleeswara Temple demolished by the Portuguese. The church, now designated a minor basilica, is dedicated to St. Thomas and contains two of his tombs, two sets of his relics including the bit of arm bone from Ortona, Italy, and the metal spearhead that is said to have killed him. Other churches in Madras that are associated with St. Thomas and are identified as having been built on temple sites are Luz Church in Mylapore, Our Lady of Health Church on Little Mount at Saidapet, and Our Lady of Expectation Church on Big Mount at St. Thomas Mount.

11

The Vatican officially stated in 1952 that the landing of St. Thomas at Cranganore in 52 CE was “unverified”.³⁸ Before this, in 1729, the Bishop of Mylapore had written to the Sacred Congregation of Rites and asked for verification as to “whether this place be the true sepulchre of St. Thomas.” The Vatican’s reply has never been published, and we may safely assume that it was a negative reply.

However, the total lack of evidence for the apostolate of St. Thomas in India, did not stop Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, in letters dated 1886 and 1923, from repeating the refrain found in the heretical *Acts of Thomas*, that India fell to the lot of Thomas, though they were careful not to include Malabar and Mylapore in their references.

Sir Henry Yule, writing in his *Marco Polo* about the Church’s position on St. Thomas in Mylapore, in 1903, says, “The question [of St. Thomas] appears to have become a party one among the Romanists in India in connection with other differences, and I see that the authorities now ruling the Catholics at Madras are strong in disparagement of the localities³⁹ and the whole story connecting St. Thomas with Mailapur.”

After this disparagement by the Mylapore prelates, came the learned disparagement of T.K. Joseph in a number of books on St. Thomas. He had done years of research on the South Indian tradition, and had presented his findings to a number of famous scholars who had then replied to him by post. In 1926, Prof. E.J. Rapson, who had written on St. Thomas in the *Cambridge History of India*, wrote, “I have read [your letter] carefully, and my impression is that you have given good reasons for doubting the historical truth of the story of St. Thomas in South India.” In 1927, Sylvain Levi, the renowned Parisian Indologist and research scholar, wrote. “You are right in denying any historical value to local legends which have nothing to bring to their support. What is known from early books points only to North-West India, and no other place, for St. Thomas’s apostolic activity and martyrdom. This is, of course, mere tradition, not real history.” In 1952, Prof. K.S. Latourette, the Yale University church historian who had

written *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, wrote to T.K. Joseph that the evidence against St. Thomas in South India “is very convincing”. And in 1953, Fr. H. Heras, S.J., Director of the Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier’s College, Bombay, wrote, “I am fully convinced that [the tomb of St. Thomas] has never been in Mylapore. I have said that many times.” Earlier, in 1944, in *The Two Apostles of India*, he had argued on the basis of Malabar’s inauthentic *St. Thomas Song* that St. Thomas was buried at Mylapore.

But when T.K. Joseph wrote to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editor at Chicago in 1950, pointing out the errors in the *Encyclopaedia’s* 1947 Fourteenth Edition St. Thomas article, he was not successful in getting them corrected. We have shown in this book that the St. Thomas article in the *Encyclopaedia’s* 1984 Fifteenth Edition and 2018 internet edition are also grossly mistaken. In 1996 the *Encyclopaedia’s* editor had stated in a letter to us that “we have concluded that the portion of the article that refers to Thomas’ later life places too much emphasis on the unlikely scenario of his travelling to, and being martyred in India”⁴⁰ and promised to correct the St. Thomas entry. He has not done so and we can only conclude that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica’s* editors like their cooked-up St. Thomas story and plan to keep it for more editions to come.

38. This statement was contained in a message dated 13 November 1952 that was sent to India’s Christians who were preparing to celebrate the 19th centenary (“21-11-52” to 21-11-1952) of St. Thomas. It is not clear who sent the message, but presumably it was from the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints at Rome.

39. Viz. San Thome and Luz at Mylapore, Little Mount at Saidapet and Big Mount at St. Thomas Mount.

40. See Chapter 4 for details.

12

Whatever the scholars may say against the myth of St. Thomas in Malabar and Mylapore—and some of them are high-ranking ecclesiastics of faith and integrity—India’s political leaders, in keeping with their own tradition of ignorance and arrogance, have declared differently. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in one of his travel books, “Few people realise that Christianity came to India as early as the first century after Christ, long before Europe turned to it, and established a firm hold in South India. Although these Christians have their religious head in Antioch or elsewhere in Syria, their Christianity is practically indigenous and has few outside contacts. ... To my surprise, we also came across a colony of Nestorians in the South. I had laboured under the impression that the Nestorians had long been absorbed in other sects, and I did not know that they had ever flourished in India.”

Nehru’s ignorance about the Nestorians in Malabar is indeed surprising, considering that their church was the only Christian church in India from the fifth to the fifteenth century.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was more circumspect in his statement. He said, “Christianity has flourished in India from the beginning of the Christian era. The Syrian Christians of Malabar believe that their form of Christianity is apostolic, derived directly from the Apostle Thomas. What is obvious is that there have been Christians in the West Coast of India from very early times.”

But Dr. Rajendra Prasad’s St. Thomas Day speech at New Delhi, in 1955, where he parroted Nehru, was simply rash. He said, “Remember St. Thomas came to India when many countries in Europe had not yet become Christian and so these Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries. And it is a matter of pride for us that it happened....”

It is a matter of pride for Shashi Tharoor too, who, in 2012, in his book *Pax Indica*, asserts, “Christianity arrived on Indian soil with St. Thomas the

Apostle ('Doubting Thomas'), who came to the Malabar Coast sometime before 52 CE and was welcomed on shore, or so oral legend has it, by a flute playing Jewish girl. He made many converts, so there are Indians today whose ancestors were Christians well before any Europeans discovered Christianity."

Tharoor is India's favourite public intellectual and a Congress politician who sits in the Lok Sabha from Thiruvananthapuram. He is making an assertion about Thomas's arrival in India and then qualifying it as "oral legend". He is talking out of both sides of his mouth, indulging his Kerala Christian constituency. He is not very successful at telling the truth but he is entertaining.

More recently, Pranab Mukherjee, on a presidential visit to Finland in 2014 to meet Santa Claus, went overboard when he declared, "We, in India, also celebrate Christmas in quite a big way. Christianity was brought to India by Saint Thomas, the Apostle himself, in the year 52 AD. Thus, the faith was embraced by the people of India well before many European nations. Today, the number of Christians in India is about 24 million."⁴¹

Statements like these would not be of any consequence in most countries of the world, made as they are by self-seeking politicians for their Christian constituents. But in India the politician has usurped the authority of the professional including the scholar, and their statements, thoughtless or motivated, are treated as God's own truth by the people.

The myth of St. Thomas has also found sponsors in Chennai's English-language press. Both *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* have published sanitised versions of the story on the children's page of their newspapers after receiving copies of the first edition of this book. Their decision to do this was clearly made with malice aforethought and it has effectively put an end to any serious public discussion of St. Thomas in India.

Today *The New Indian Express* and *The Hindu* in Chennai remain the main sponsors of the tale, though they were displaced at one point by Tamil Nadu's leading "secular" daily, *Deccan Chronicle*. These newspapers and *The Times of India* occasionally produce feature articles on the three churches in Chennai associated with the St. Thomas legend. This is not

surprising as South Indian newspapers are deeply influenced by Christian interests and the nexus between their editors and the Church often runs wide and deep. Lots of money and votes are at stake, and even as we were writing in 2010, *The New Indian Express* published yet another St. Thomas article by a college girl, Shilpa Krishnan.

Shilpa Krishnan tells us, in her article “Under the bleeding cross”, that she is a Tamil Brahmin by birth and an agnostic by choice, not aware of the paradox that she is promoting an anti-Brahmin communal tale in her article, invented by religious fanatics who may well have killed one of her grandfathers when he was defending the Kapaleeswara Temple on the beach from the Portuguese. But in today’s secular socialist India, some Brahmin girls will do anything for money—and *The New Indian Express* and Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese have a lot of money. Indian newspapers operate like Taliban terrorists, hiding their evil acts behind a young women’s skirts and using children to get their communal, anti-Hindu message across to a gullible public.

TT Maps and Publications Ltd., the TTK guidebook producer set up by S. Muthiah, the Chennai pseudo-historian and St. Thomas advocate, has been as exploitative of the public trust and unprincipled in their conduct as the newspapers. They, too, after receiving a copy of the first edition of this book, have expanded on the fable of St. Thomas as history, bowdlerised the real story of San Thome Cathedral and the Kapaleeswara Temple, and published it all in their Chennai guide books.

Yet whatever effort Indian publishers have put into promoting the St. Thomas myth in Madras, it still belongs very much to the Roman Catholic Church and is subject to her various conceits. When she wants to present herself as being socially conscious—which she is not and has never been—then St. Thomas too must be presented as having a social conscience. In an *Indian Express* article called “In Memory of a Slain Saint”, in 1989, C.A. Simon writes, “The oppressed and the downtrodden followed [St. Thomas] and claimed equal status in society as it was denied them by the prevailing social norms. He condemned untouchability and attempted to restore equal status for women.”

C.A. Simon's assertion is pure invention of course. St. Thomas was executed for crimes against society—whether in India or Parthia it does not matter here—and these crimes included the subversion of family life, enslavement of free-born women in the name of Jesus, and sorcery. Untouchability is still rampant among “St. Thomas Christians” today and has the sanction of the Church in the form of a bull issued by Pope Gregory XV (r. 1621-1623) authorising caste divisions within Catholic society. Indeed, the repressive social and religious theories contained in the *Acts of Thomas* and earlier *Gospel of Thomas*⁴²—which confines St. Thomas to Palestine—and in the *New Testament* itself, show these preposterous claims for St. Thomas to be motivated additions to a fable that is already overburdened with moralistic wonders.

41. Pranab Mukherjee is wrong on all counts. St. Thomas did not come to India nor did Christianity reach India before it reached Europe—it had already reached Greece, Italy, and Spain in the 40s CE. Nor is it true that “the faith was embraced by the people of India” at any time. Mukherjee is only repeating the popular tale that has been repeated by Indian politicians before him to catch Christian votes. This is to be expected of a Congress party man who idolises Deng Xiaoping and spends public money on a state tour to meet Santa Claus in a Finnish amusement park. Will his next official foray abroad be to Disneyland to meet Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck? Are Indians aware that it is just this kind of false and foolish statement by an Indian political leader that makes India a laughing-stock in Europe?

42. A second century Coptic copy of this Gnostic gospel, probably written in Syria, was discovered in Egypt in 1946. It contains the secret sayings of Jesus as recorded by St. Thomas. Some of the sayings in the *Gospel* are:

(16) Jesus said: Perhaps men think that I came to cast peace on the world; and they do not know that I came to cast division upon the earth, fire, sword, war. For five will be in a house; there will be three against two and two against three, the father against the son and the son against the father. And they will stand because they are single ones.

(42) Jesus said: He who has (something) in his hand, to him it will be given; and he who has nothing, from him even the little he has will be taken away.

(56) Jesus said: He who will not hate his father and his mother cannot be my disciple. And he who will not hate his brothers and his sisters, and carry his cross as I have, will not become worthy of me.

(112) Simon Peter said to them: Let Mariham go away from us. For women are not worthy of life. Jesus said: Lo, I will draw her so that I will make her a man so that she too may become a living spirit which is like you men; for every woman who makes herself a man will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Sita Ram Goel, one of the few Indian historians with a clear understanding of Christian theory and practice, in *Papacy: Its Doctrine and History*, writes, “The manufacturers of this myth about St. Thomas may be asked a simple question: What difference does it make whether Christianity came to India in the first or the fourth century? Why raise such a squabble when no one denies that the Syrian Christians of Malabar are old immigrants to this country?”

“The matter, however, is not so simple as it sounds at first. Nor can the scholarly exercise be understood easily by those who have not been initiated in the intricacies of Catholic theology.

“Firstly, it is one thing for some Christian refugees to come to a country and build some churches, and quite another for an apostle of Jesus Christ to appear in flesh and blood for spreading the Good News. If it can be established that Christianity is as ancient in India as the prevailing forms of Hinduism, no one can nail it down as an imported creed brought in by Western imperialism.

“Secondly, the Catholic Church in India stands badly in need of a spectacular martyr of its own. Unfortunately for it, St. Francis Xavier died a natural death and that, too, in a distant place. Hindus, too, have persistently refused to oblige the Church in this respect, in spite of all provocations. The Church has to use its own resources and churn out something. St. Thomas, about whom nobody knows anything, offers a ready-made martyr.

“Thirdly, the Catholic Church can malign the Brahmins more confidently. Brahmins have been the main target of its attack from the beginning. Now it can be shown that the Brahmins have always been a vicious brood, so much so that they would not stop from murdering a holy man who was only telling God’s own truth to a tormented people. At the same time, the religion of the Brahmins can be held responsible for their depravity.

“Fourthly, the Catholics in India need no more feel uncomfortable when faced with historical evidence about their Church’s close cooperation with the Portuguese pirates, in committing abominable crimes against the Indian people. The commencement of the Church can be disentangled from the advent of the Portuguese by dating the Church to some distant past. The Church was here long before the Portuguese arrived. It was a mere coincidence that the Portuguese also called themselves Catholics. Guilt by association is groundless.

“Lastly, it is quite within the ken of Catholic theology to claim that a land which has been honoured by the visit of an apostle has become a patrimony of the Catholic Church. India might have been a Hindu homeland from times immemorial, but since that auspicious moment when St. Thomas stepped on her soil, The Hindu claim stands cancelled. The country has belonged to the Catholic Church from the first century onwards, no matter how long the Church takes to conquer it completely for Christ.”

The conquering of India for Christ by the Popes and their Portuguese “secular arm” started in earnest with the arrival in India of Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500. His fleet, the first to reach Calicut after Vasco da Gama’s bloody landing, carried eight ordinary priests and eight Franciscan friars. C.B. Firth, in *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, explains, “Though it was the hope of gain that brought the Portuguese adventurers to India, it was also the purpose of their kings to promote the spread of Christianity among those who came under their rule. On this ground several of the fifteenth century Popes granted them rights of dominion and commercial monopoly in the newly acquired territories. A modern reader will wonder what right the Popes had to do this; but in mediaeval Europe theologians held that the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, had a direct domination over the kingdoms of the earth, and so such grants did not seem outrageous—not to the beneficiaries at any rate. In a famous bull of 1493 Pope Alexander VI,⁴³ to settle rivalry between Spain and Portugal, the two colonial powers of those days, drew a line down the map of the Atlantic Ocean south of the Azores Islands to form a boundary between their respective spheres of influence. All lands not already under Christian rule ‘discovered or yet to be discovered’ to the west of the line, he assigned to Spain; those to the east, to Portugal. Along with this fantastic enactment went a command to the Spanish and Portuguese kings ‘to send to the said lands and islands good men who fear God and are learned, skilled and expert, to instruct the inhabitants in the Catholic Faith and good morals’. Moreover, other foreigners were forbidden to enter those lands without license from these kings. Whatever may be thought nowadays of such orders, the Spaniards and Portuguese were prepared to act on them; and not only in claiming and exercising, as far as they were able, rights of dominion and trade; they were seriously prepared to propagate Christianity.”⁴⁴

K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, in *A History of South India*, tells the story of the propagation of Christianity in India. He writes, “[The Portuguese] acted throughout as if they had a divine right to the pillage, robbery, and

massacre of the natives of India. Not to mince matters, their whole record is one of a series of atrocities. They delighted particularly in plundering all rich temples within their reach, even Tirupati not escaping their predatory attentions. ... The Roman Catholic missionaries, headed by St. Francis Xavier,⁴⁵ were not only forcefully converting to their faith large numbers on the pearl-fishery coast ... but induced the fishermen to transfer their allegiance to the king of Portugal. ... The Franciscan friars and Jesuits were busy demolishing temples and building churches in the coastal cities, and the Portuguese governor of Goa was reported to be organising a plundering raid against the rich temples of Kanchipuram.⁴⁶ ... The Portuguese policy of [destroying temples and] turning religious propaganda to political use roused the resentment of even the tolerant rulers of Vijayanagar and their Feudatories.”

M. Arunachalam, in an article in *Christianity in India: A Critical Study*, writes, “It is well known that the Portuguese sacked the famous Tiruchendur Murugan Temple on the sea-coast and threw the idol into the sea. Sometime later, in 1654, the chieftain Vadamalaiyappa Pillai of Tirunelveli, salvaged the idol from the sea and installed it at the present Tiruchendur temple.”⁴⁷

He continues, “The Tirumalai Nayak Mahal [at Madurai] is another example. Jealous of its magnificence, the British began demolishing it, but public agitation checked it and what we have today is only a part of what was originally there.”

The British were generally less destructive than the Portuguese and the French, but they did not hesitate to attack temples that were in the way of construction works or to desecrate them as a means of intimidating the local populace. They fired on the temples of Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh for this last reason; and Victoria Terminus in Bombay—now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai—is built on the original site of that city’s famous Mumbai Devi Temple. In Madras they obliterated the small Hindu shrines that once stood inside Fort St. George. The fort now contains St. Mary’s Church, the first Protestant church built east of Suez.

But it is the French who vied with the Portuguese in their Christian zeal to destroy Pagan places of worship. Henry Love, in *Vestiges of Old Madras*, records that they used temples as barracks in their military operations against the British. Between 1672 and 1674, at Madras, they fortified the rebuilt Kapaleeswara Temple in Mylapore and the Parthasarathy Temple in Triplicane when they were besieged by Golconda and the Dutch.

Sita Ram Goel, in *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, quoting *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai* translated by J. Frederick Price and K. Rangachari, gives a graphic account of the destruction of the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple at Pondicherry by the French governor's wife, Madame Dupliex, and the Jesuits. He writes, "The Vedapuri Iswaran Temple was the principle place of worship for the Hindus of Pondicherry. The Jesuit missionaries built the Church of St. Paul adjacent to it and obtained an order from the King of France that the Hindu temple should be destroyed....

"The first incident at the Vedapuri Temple took place on March 17, 1746, 'On Wednesday night at 11,' writes Pillai, 'two unknown persons entered the Iswaran Temple carrying in a vessel of liquid filth, which they poured on the heads of the Gods around the altar, and into the temple, through the drain of the shrine of Iswaran; and having broken the pot of dirt on the image of the God Nandi, they went away through a part of the building which had been demolished'....

"As the report of this sacrilege spread, Hindus 'from the Brahmin to the pariah,' held a public meeting. The governor, Dupliex, when he heard of it, sent his chief peon to disperse the meeting. ... The people, however, defied the order and protested, 'you better kill us all'....

"The next incident recorded by Pillai took place on December 31, 1746. 'It was reported,' he writes, 'tonight at 7, that an earthen jar, filled with filth, was thrown from within the grounds of the Church of St. Paul, into the Temple of Vedapuri Iswaran. It very nearly fell on the head of Sankara Aiyan, who was at the shrine of the God Pillaiyar, on his way round the temple, in the performance of religious duties. When the jar struck the ground, and broke to pieces, the stench emitted was unbearable'....

“The temple was now doomed to destruction. ‘Yesterday,’ Pillai continued in his diary of September 8, ‘200 soldiers, 60 or 70 troopers and sepoy were stationed at St. Paul’s Church in view of the matter in hand. This morning, M. Gerbault (the engineer), the priests with diggers, masons, coolies and over 200 in all, with spades, pick-axes and whatever is needed to demolish walls, began to pull down the southern wall of the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple and the outhouses. At once the temple managers, Brahmins and mendicants came and told me. ... Just then ... news, was brought that Father Coeurdoux, the superior of St. Paul’s Church, had kicked the inner shrines with his foot, and had ordered the Coffrees to remove the doors, and the Christians to break the Vahanams’....

Pillai now went to Governor Dupliex, in an attempt to save the temple, as did the caste leaders who sought to save the temple’s movable articles, but it was all to no avail.

“Then Father Coeurdox of Karikal came with a great hammer, kicked the Lingam, broke it with his hammer, and ordered the Coffrees and the Europeans to break the images of Vishnu and the other Gods. Madame [Dupliex] went and told the priest that he might break the idols as he pleased. He answered that she had accomplished what had been impossible for fifty years, that she must be one of those Mahatmas who established [Christian] religion in old days, and that he would publish her fame throughout the world. ... Then [the native convert] Varlam also kicked the great Lingam nine or ten times with his sandals in the presence of Madame and the priest, and spat on it out of gladness, and hoping that the priest and Madame would regard him also as a Mahatma. Then he followed Madame. I can neither write nor describe what abominations were done in the temple. I know not what fruit they will reap. All the Tamils think the end of the world has come. The priests, the Tamil Christians, the Governor and his wife are more delighted than they have ever been before, but they have not yet considered what will befall them in the future.”⁴⁸

43. This Vicar of Christ was known as Alexander the Scabrous and ruled from 1492 to 1503. Joseph McCabe, in *A Testament of Christian Civilization*, writes, “He brought into Italy [from Spain] an unscrupulous brood of relatives, the Borgias,

who spread graft and depravity on all sides and opened the vilest page in history of the higher authorities of any known religion.” He played vicious power politics, practiced simony, held famous public orgies in the Apostolic Palace, committed incest with his daughter, went whoring with his son, poisoned his cardinals to get their wealth, and himself died of poisoning. The legend on his triumphal arch read “Chastity and Charity”.

44. This paragraph fully exposes the hollowness of the Catholic apologists’ claim that the Church’s association with Portuguese imperialism was unwilling and an unfortunate accident of history.

45. In a letter to the Society of Jesus, quoted by Sita Ram Goel in *St. Francis Xavier: The Man and His Mission*, Xavier wrote, “Following the baptisms, the new Christians return to their homes and come back with their wives and families to be in their turn also prepared for baptism. After all have been baptised, I order that everywhere the temples of the false gods be pulled down and idols broken. I know not how to describe in words the joy I feel before the spectacle of pulling down and destroying the idols by the very people who formerly worshipped them.” Xavier did this after the Hindu raja of Quilon had given him a large grant to build churches. In another letter he writes, “There are in these parts among the pagans a class of men called Brahmins. They are as perverse and wicked a set as can anywhere be found, and to whom applies the Psalm which says: ‘From an unholy race, and wicked and crafty men, deliver me, Lord.’ If it were not for the Brahmins, we should have all the heathens embracing our faith.”

46. On one of these voyages up the Coromandel Coast the Portuguese were blown ashore in a storm, at a fishing village 12 km south of Nagapattinam. They declared that the Virgin Mary had saved them and in thanksgiving took over the local Vel Ilankanni Amman Temple (which was the sister shrine of the Vel Thandakanni Amman Temple at Sikkil, closer to Nagapattinam). This village has now become the famous Christian pilgrimage centre of Velankanni. The original Devi temple was enclosed within the first Portuguese church, known as the Mada Koil, that is situated at a distance from the present Basilica of Our Lady of Health. The stone image of the Devi was on public display until some years ago, but has since been removed and an image of the Virgin Mary put in its place.

47. The hundreds of temples and thousands of idols destroyed by the Portuguese in Goa has been documented by A.K. Priolkar in *The Goa Inquisition*. And the historian T.R. de Souza, quoted by M.D. David in *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity*, writes, “At least from 1540 onwards and in the island of Goa before that year, all Hindu idols had been annihilated or had disappeared, all the temples had been destroyed and their sites and building material were in most cases utilised to erect new Christian churches and chapels.”

48. The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception is built on or beside this temple site, and the local tradition is that the broken *lingam* is hidden under an altar in the church. The Christian practice of covering a desecrated image or sacred stone with an altar is very old and churches in England, France, Italy and

Spain that have been built on Pagan sites are found to contain these images and other relics.

If it took the French fifty years to destroy the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple at Pondicherry, it took the Portuguese as long or longer to bring down the Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple on the Mylapore beach and build their St. Thomas Church in its place. They, too, would succeed because the Hindus, who had resisted them over the years, ultimately could not resist their superior European weapons and guile.

P.K. Nambiar, in *Census of India 1961*, Vol. IX, Part XI, writes, “Mylapore, which is a part of Madras city, is an ancient town. Sri Tiruvalluvar, the author of the famous *Kural* known as Tamil *Vedham*, who lived in the first century AD,⁴⁹ lived his entire life at Mylapore. Saints Sambandar and Appar have composed songs mentioning the God of Mylapore as Shri Kapaleeswara. It was a prosperous town when the English built the Fort St. George in 1593. But the present temple does not contain any feature of the Dravidian style of architecture. The carvings in the pillars are poor specimens compared with those in some of the ancient temples. When there was an erosion of the sea about the close of the last century, there was a landslip on the San Thome beach. It revealed carved stone pillars and broken stones of *mandapam* found only in Hindu temples. It is a historical fact that the Portuguese, who visited India in the 16th century, had one of their earliest settlements at San Thome, Mylapore. In those days they were very cruel and had iconoclastic tendencies. They razed some Hindu temples to the ground. It is probable that the other Mylapore temple referred to in the *Thevaram* hymns was built on the seashore and that it was destroyed by the Portuguese about the beginning of the 16th century.”

This is the understatement of a government historiographer writing in an official publication. M. Arunachalam, in an article in *Christianity in India: A Critical Study*, is more direct when he writes, “The Kapaleeswara Temple at Mylapore, Madras, is a standing example of Christian desecration. The great temple of Shiva at Mylapore was situated not in its present site, but at the site of the present San Thome Church even up to the end of the 16th century. It was demolished by the Portuguese vandals and their

missionaries of that period, who erected their church on the site where the Hindu temple originally stood.

“Rama Raya, the Vijayanagar ruler, to save the Hindu temples, waged a war on the Portuguese in Mylapore and Goa simultaneously. The Portuguese were defeated and he took a tribute from them for their vandalism. But, when the Vijayanagar rule fell at the Battle of Talikota (1565) before the Mohammedans, the Portuguese continued their demolition work.”

Rama Raya came to Mylapore in 1559, and R.S. Whiteway, in *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, observes that “when San Thome was held to ransom for the intolerant acts of some Jesuits and Franciscans, the Raja of Vijayanagar kept such faith with the Portuguese that, as one of them says, such humanity and justice are not to be found among Christians.”

N. Murugesu Mudaliar, in *Arulmigu Kapaleeswarar Temple Mylapore*, writes, “Mylapore fell into the hands of the Portuguese in 1566, when the temple suffered demolition. The present temple was rebuilt around three hundred years ago. There are some fragmentary inscriptions from the old temple still found in the St. Thomas Cathedral.” M. Arunachalam also says, “Later, devout Hindus built the present temple of Mylapore at a different site, a few furlongs west, out of whatever they could salvage from the ruins of the old temple. A number of carved temple stones can still be seen on the compound wall of the church.”

V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, quoted in *Tiru Mayil Kapaleecharam Kumbhabisheka Malar 1982*, believed that the great Shiva temple covered the area now occupied by the palace of the Roman Catholic bishop of Madras. This estate, on the south side of San Thome Cathedral, still contains scattered temple ruins and includes a museum.⁵⁰

V. Balambal, in *Journal of Indian History 1986*, Vol. LXIV, Parts 1-3, writes, “According to certain Dutch sources quoted by A. Gelletti, the old town of Mylapore was demolished in 1674 by the order of the King of Golconda and was in ruins. This hypothesis is questioned as some epigraphs⁵¹ specify that the old shore Temple of Kapaleeswara was demolished in the 16th century by the Portuguese and some of the ruins including a broken Vinayaka image are still seen scattered within the demesne of the Mylapore bishop’s

palace. It is also said that the remnants of the temple, its pillars, etc., were found immersed in the sea sixty years ago.”⁵²

Dr. R. Nagaswamy, former Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu Government, and present Director of the Indian Institute of Culture, Madras, in “Testimony of Religious Ethos”, published in *The Hindu*, Madras, on 30 April 1990, writes, “A careful study of the monuments and the lithic records in Madras reveal a great destruction caused by the Portuguese to the Hindu temples in the 16th century A.D. The most important Temple of Kapaleeswara lost all its ancient building during the Portuguese devastation and was originally located near the San Thome Cathedral. A few Chola records found in the San Thome Cathedral and Bishop’s House refer to Kapaleeswara Temple and Poompavai.⁵³ A Chola record in fragment found on the east wall of the San Thome Cathedral refer to the image of Lord Nataraja of the Kapaleeswara Temple. The temple was moved to the present location in the 16th century and was probably built by one Mallappa [or Mayil Nattu Muthiyappa Mudaliar].” Later on he states, “A fragmentary inscription, 12th century Chola record in the San Thome Church region, refers to a Jain temple dedicated to Neminathaswami.”

A. Ekambaranath and C.K. Sivaprakasham, in *Jain Inscriptions in Tamil Nadu*, following the Jesuit Fr. H. Hosten, describe a stone in the eastern side of the church which records in twelfth century Tamil characters a gift made to Neminathaswami by Palantipara(yan). They remark, “The existence of a Jain temple dedicated to Neminatha at Mylapore (of which San Thome is a part) is not only known from this record, but also from the Mackenzie Manuscripts, recording the transfer of a Neminatha image from Mylapore to Chittamur, probably to protect it from destruction. Some Jain images are said to have been buried by the side of the nunnery at San Thome.”

Fr. H. Hosten’s testimony, in *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore*, is interesting and worthy of review. He writes, “Fragmentary Tamil inscription of eight lines on a stone found at the cathedral, north-west end of the verandah, on the top line of the granite foundations of walls projecting from the verandah into the garden.

“When I visited Mylapore last February, 1924, the stone was still lying near the place of the find. It ought to go to the Bishop’s Museum and receive an appropriate number.

“According to the Assistant Archaeological Superintendent of Epigraphs, Madras, this inscription is a fragment in Tamil and it seems to register a tax-free gift for burning at night a lamp before the image of Kuttaduvar (Nataraja) in the temple of Suramudaiyar. Palaeographically this inscription may be assigned to the 11th century A.D.

“A later communication from the Government Epigraphist for India, Fernhill, Nilgiris, says that Mr. Venkoba Rao, the Assistant Archaeological Superintendent for Epigraphy, Madras, pronounces the inscription belongs to Vikrama Chola’s time (12th century) and that the gift was to the Hindu god Nataraja, whose shrine is always to be seen in a Siva temple.

“The stone was not found at its original site, as is shown by its fragmentary condition, the parts above and below, as well as right and left, being wanting. All we can gather is that the foundations in which the stone was inserted are of a date later than the inscription. To argue, as was done at the time of discovery in *The Madras Mail*, that, if the stone was dug up from any depth, it would indicate an original Saiva temple, on the ruins of which the Portuguese church of modern St. Thomas was erected, is to show a lamentable ignorance of what Marco Polo and even earlier writers have written about St. Thomas.”

The lamentable ignorance was with Fr. Hosten of course, for accepting unquestioned Marco Polo’s “tall tale”. He did not know that without Marco Polo there is no St. Thomas in a South Indian seashore tomb; he also did not know that all earlier accounts of the legend have St. Thomas buried on a mountain to the west of sub-continental India—in “India”-Parthia, or Edessa, or mysterious Calamina.

The writer in *The Madras Mail* was mistaken for believing that a stone dug up from a depth must be in its original position, but Fr. Hosten was mistaken for thinking that a stone is not at its original site because it is near the surface of the ground, in a newer foundation and in a fragmentary condition. The plain truth is that the stone should not have been in the

church at all. Temple-breakers invariably use the rubble they have created in the new building that they put up at a site, if only because it is available and must be utilised, and it is quite reasonable to assert that if temple stones are found in the walls and foundation of San Thome Cathedral, it is because they have originated there or very nearby.

Again, Fr. Hosten writes, “During the excavations made near the tomb this year (1923), when an Indian inscription was found which no one could read, one writer wrote to *The Madras Mail* to insist that the church was on the site of a Hindu fane. This writer would have been greatly puzzled if we had asked him at which time the place became Christian.”

Indeed, Marco Polo would have been greatly puzzled too, had he been able to investigate the story he had heard from the Syrian Christians. But Fr. Hosten could not do better than follow Marco Polo blindly, and ignore the consistent and continuous claims that Hindus have made to the site since the Portuguese occupied it in the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, he is yet another Catholic scholar working within his own self-defined “sacred space”, oblivious to the established traditions and evidence around him because they are not part of his exclusive mythology and do not fit into his peculiar world view.

San Thome Cathedral and Bishop’s House have been renovated and rebuilt many times over in the last hundred and fifty years, and there is a concerted effort being made by Church authorities today to hide the evidence of destroyed Hindu, Jain and Buddhist⁵⁴ religious buildings that once occupied this sacred stretch of Mylapore seafront. The clean-up coincides with the work of resurrecting the communal Brahmin-killed-Thomas fable that was first propagated by the Portuguese—Marco Polo cannot be blamed for this story; his Thomas was accidentally killed by a pariah hunting peacocks.

Indeed, since this book was first published the clean-up and rebuilding of San Thome Cathedral’s compound, the second “St. Thomas” tomb, and the whole area surrounding the church on St. Thomas Mount has been total. All evidence of Hindu temples has been clandestinely removed and the ancient rubble disposed of in an unknown place. We have an eye-witness

account of this nefarious work done by the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese later in this book.

The Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits who destroyed the temples of Goa, Kerala, Pondicherry and along the Tamil coast-line, were generally more circumspect than their Muslim counterparts. They did not leave much evidence behind in the churches they built on or near temple sites. But it is also true that Indian archaeologists have not studied Christian churches as closely and in the same probing manner that they have studied mosques and other Muslim monuments.⁵⁵

And there is the written record, some of it couched in strange language or found in a stranger context, but easy enough to interpret once it is established that the account has not been deliberately falsified. For example, Fr. Hosten writes, “The first Portuguese historians say ... that St. Thomas built his ‘house’, meaning his church, on the site where a Jogi had his temple.”

This is an open admission by the Portuguese that a church had been built on a temple site at Mylapore—only they have backdated the event to the first century and attributed the crime to St. Thomas. How extraordinary—or is it? The Portuguese, and Syrian Christians before them, had given the “honour” of temple-breaking to St. Thomas at Palayur, north of Cranganore, where an early seventeenth century Portuguese church built by the Jesuit Fr. James Fenicio rises amidst temple ruins today. Fr. A. Mathias Mundadan, in *History of Christianity in India*, writes, “The remains of old temples found at Palayur and near the other traditional churches⁵⁶ are proof of this.” Proof of what? Proof, it would seem, that St. Thomas destroyed temples at all the places where he is said to have built churches.

St. Thomas can be accused of many things, including crimes against women (as recorded in the *Acts of Thomas*), but he cannot be accused of destroying temples in India. This was done by his followers from about the ninth century onwards, and later by the Portuguese, and Christian historians who take the position that he did the deeds himself, citing them as “positive” proof that he came to India, cannot be taken seriously.

Dr. R. Arulappa, the former Archbishop of Madras, is one such facile scholar—and yet he has made some unusual contributions to the study of Tamil history. In his book *Punitha Thomayar*—where he tries to show that Tiruvalluvar’s *Kural* is a Christian work—he mentions the finding of *yantra* stones in ancient foundations on all the sites in Madras associated with St. Thomas. He does not expand on these momentous discoveries or say where the stones are today, and it is not clear why he refers to them, but it is certainly true that the *Agama Shastra* requires the placing of such stones beneath the foundations of new temples before their construction begins.

The Portuguese historian Gaspar Correa, probably the most credulous annalist in history, describes extensive ruins in Mylapore and its environs including Big Mount. He attributes this devastation to the wind and rain and angry sea rather than his bigoted and iconoclastic countrymen. But at the same time, he gives backhanded testimony for a Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach. In *Lendas da India*, quoted by George Mark Moraes in *A History of Christianity in India*, he writes, “On their festival days the Hindus would bring their images accompanied by large crowds and great rejoicing and would, as they approached the door of the church, lower them three times to the ground as a mark of reverence to it, a practice which had been followed from time immemorial.”

The practice had indeed been followed from time immemorial, in the first Shiva temple where it originated, whose place on the beach was now usurped by the Portuguese church. The practice was to take the festival images around the temple and lower them three times to the ground, at the sanctum door before the *muladeva*. The Hindus were continuing the ritual in the second temple, and by taking the festival images to the church on the beach were reverencing the ancient *mulasthana*—even if Christians and Gaspar Correa vainly thought otherwise.

R.S. Whiteway, in *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, writes, “[The Portuguese historians] all ... dilate on the discovery of the tomb of the Apostle Thomas at a spot near where Madras now stands; the narrative of Correa is singularly naïve, and as he was an eyewitness to some of the earlier transactions, singularly valuable. It leaves a feeling of wonder that in such

an entire absence of evidence the identification of an event historical or otherwise should be thought complete.”

49. Today Tamil scholars say that Tiruvalluvar lived before the Christian era, usually placing him ca. 100 BCE, but some date him as early as ca. 200 BCE. The Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese claims he lived in the first century CE and that he was a disciple of St. Thomas. It is probable that his *samadhi* shrine was in or near the precincts of the ancient Kapaleeswara Temple on the beach and was destroyed when the Portuguese destroyed the temple.

50. This is a small building on the north-east end of the estate and is called the San Thome Cathedral Museum. It contains—or used to contain—ancient carved stones and other temple artefacts. In 1990 a friend of this writer was refused entry on three occasions, though it was then ostensibly open to the public. Since the publication of this book in 1991, it was closed and kept in an inaccessible condition, but was opened again in 1995. We don’t know its condition or position today. Its original contents and the carved stones that were lying in the bishop’s estate and San Thome churchyard—which the Church authorities have no moral right to possess—should have been removed to the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology or Madras Museum long ago. It is too late now: the Archdiocese has cleaned up the area and disposed of all Hindu temple remnants in an unknown place.

51. See *Annual Report on Epigraphy 1923*, Nos. 215 to 223, ASI, New Delhi.

52. See A.M. Paramasivanandam, *Ancient Temples of Tamilnadu*, Madras, 1981.

53. Poompavai was the daughter of a wealthy sixth century Mylapore merchant called Siva Nesan Chettiar. He wanted to give her in marriage to the saint Jnanasambandar, but she died from snakebite before meeting him, when picking flowers for the Lord in the garden. Her father cremated her and kept the bones and ashes in a pot. When Jnanasambandar visited Mylapore, the Chettiar kept Poompavai’s ashes in front of him and narrated the story of her death. Jnanasambandar responded by singing eleven songs in praise of Lord Kapaleeswara, lamenting the death of the girl at the end of each song. When he had finished, the pot of ashes burst and a twelve-year-old girl stepped forth. Jnanasambandar then declined to marry her, saying that she was his “daughter”. Poompavai has her own shrine within the precincts of the Kapaleeswara Temple.

54. Dr. Nagaswamy, in *The Hindu* article “Testimony of Religious Ethos”, mentions the findings of Buddhist relics and a mutilated Buddha image in Mylapore. The Chola period image is now in the Madras Museum.

55. Many of the famous churches of Europe are built on Pagan temple sites. They include St. Peter’s, Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Maria Rotunda (The Pantheon) in Rome, Notre Dame in Paris, and St. Paul’s in London. St. Benedict built his monastery on an Apollo temple that he had destroyed himself, at Monte

Cassino, Italy. The much-revered Black Virgins found in churches and monasteries in Spain and Italy are ancient images of the Egyptian Goddess Isis and Her son Horus. The list is very long.

56. These are at Malinkara, Parur, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Chayal and Kurakonikollam in Kerala, and Tiruvithancodu in Tamil Nadu (this being the “half church” which is a converted Hindu temple).

The best evidence for a Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach is offered by the Tamil saints. Iyadigal Kadavarkon, the sixth century Shaivite prince of Kanchipuram, Jnanasambandar and Arunagirinathar, the sixth and fifteenth century Shaivite poets, consistently mention in their hymns that the Kapaleeswara Temple was on the seashore.

Jnanasambandar writes, “The Lord of Kapaleeswaram sat watching the people of Mylapore—a place full of flowering coconut palms—taking ceremonial bath in the sea on the full moon day of the month of Masai.”

திருஞான சம்பந்தரின் பூம்பாளையப் பதிகத்தில்
மடலார்ந்த தெங்கின் மயிலையார் மாசிக்
கடலாட்டுக் கண்டான் கபாலீச்சரம் அமாந்தான்

Nine centuries later, and one century before the arrival of the Portuguese, Arunagirinathar writes, “O Lord of Mylapore temple, situated on the shores of the sea with raging waves....”

கயிலைப் பதியரன் முருகோனே
கடலக்கரைதிரை அருகே - சூழ்
மயிலைப் பதிதனில் உறைவோனே
மகிமைக் கடியவர் பெருமானே!

Both saints show in these verses that the Lord was on the seashore, and Jnanasambandar marks that He was watching His devotees in the sea—that He must have been facing east. This is not the case today. The seventeenth century Vijayanagar temple is built inland and the Lord faces west, with the all-important flag pole and image of Nandi in the western courtyard before Him. This arrangement indicates that the present temple is a second temple, as the *Agama Shastra* does not permit a temple that has been moved from its original site and rebuilt to face in the same direction as its predecessor.

Neither Jnanasambandar nor Arunagirinathar had reason to sing of the Lord by the sea if He was not there. Their testimony is impeccable and by itself destroys the argument for a seashore tomb of St. Thomas.

If St. Thomas was a carpenter slave, then Diogo Fernandez is the gentleman architect who laid the foundation stone for his church on the Mylapore beach. He was Albuquerque's attendant at Goa and is described by N. Figuerdo, in *St. Thomas the Apostle in Mylapore*, as "a virtuous old man of good conduct". Very probably he was—so long as the virtue did not interfere with the demands of his Roman Catholic faith. He arrived at Mylapore in 1517 in the company of some wealthy Armenian merchants who were coming from Malacca. They knew Marco Polo's story and knew, too, that the "Thomas" revered by Syrian Christians at Mylapore was not a martyr. This was not a very satisfactory circumstance for them or the Portuguese. Their passionate nature and martyrolatrous religion required a sacrifice.⁵⁷ All the apostles had suffered martyrdom except St. John,⁵⁸ and St. Thomas was not going to get away with an accidental death in Portuguese territory. Moreover, if the Portuguese knew Marco Polo's story, they knew better the Latin fables *Passio Thomae* and *De Miraculis Thomae*, which had been circulating in Europe for a thousand years. Both legends deviated from the *Acts of Thomas*, in which St. Thomas had been executed by king's men with spears, and described his death as being at the hands of a Pagan priest of the Sun—or Zoroastrian—who, in one, had stabbed him with a lance, and in the other, with a sword. The Portuguese preferred *De Miraculis Thomae*, in which the priest used a lance, and had the romance published in Portugal in 1531 and 1552 to substantiate the "discovery" they had made at Mylapore in 1523. It did not matter to them that this European story, too, had St. Thomas buried on a mountain, while they had in their possession only a seashore tomb.

Earlier, in 1521-22, the Portuguese had opened two tombs in the Shiva temple's northern precincts. One tomb contained a "black" skeleton, which, according to its inscription, belonged to a Chola king. The Portuguese nevertheless "identified" him as being a disciple of St. Thomas. The second tomb revealed a "white" skeleton, which, naturally, "belonged" to the white

Jew Thomas. This second skeleton was sent to Goa for verification—where it languishes till today, unsung and unrecognised.

As these diggings did not produce the required result, Diogo Fernandez was asked, in 1523, to excavate a third tomb which lay partly under the foundation of a dilapidated building that had been occupied by the Portuguese. He refused at first but was persuaded by the attending priest, Fr. Antonio Gil, who heard his confession and that of the two men, Braz Fernandez and Diogo Lourenco, who would assist him in the pious enterprise. They then began the excavation of a deep and elaborate, and very much empty, tomb. It was Saturday afternoon, and they continued the work into the late evening, when, on the suggestion of Diogo Fernandez, they abandoned their unproductive labours and retired for the night. The excavation was left open and unattended until the next morning, a Sunday, when the men returned and began digging again. It was not long now before the grave disgorged bones that were “much worn out”, portions of skull and spine, and a clay pot of earth “bedewed with blood”, with a thigh bone in it, and hidden in the red earth an iron spearhead shaped like an olive leaf, which, after fifteen Christian centuries, still had a piece of wooden shaft miraculously preserved in its socket.⁵⁹

The bones of “St. Thomas” were collected—there was no doubt this time in the Portuguese mind that they were his—and later, with due ceremony, placed in a Chinese coffer with silver locks, along with the bones of the Chola king, another “disciple” whose remains had been found nearby, and those of two children. The key to the coffer was then sent to the Viceroy at Goa, but two years later Fr. Penteado broke the locks as he felt that the bones were in a poor condition and needed attention. He transferred them to a wooden chest and hid this in a place known only to himself and Rodrigo Alvares. The chest was then presumed to be lost, and, in 1530, a new search was mounted for the relics. Diogo Fernandez was again called in and through his intercession with Rodrigo Alvares, the chest was found in a decayed condition under the main altar of the church—for a small church, the first Christian church to rise on the Mylapore beach, had been built, in 1523, by Augustinian friars beside the newly found “St. Thomas” tomb.

Fr. Hosten, in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1923, writes, “If what the Portuguese found at Mylapore in 152[3] in a tomb ... was not part of St. Thomas’s body, then the whole connection with St. Thomas seems to be lost.”

Fr. Hosten would come to accept the story that St. Thomas had come to South India, but not on the evidence of the excavations made by himself or the Portuguese. He was persuaded, like other Catholic scholars, by the spurious St. Thomas song called *Rabban Pattu* that had been composed by Varghese Palayur in 1892 and published in 1916 by Fr. Bernard of Travancore.

Fr. Heras, former Director of the Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier’s College, Bombay, who had said in 1953 that he was convinced that the tomb of St. Thomas was not in Mylapore, had said earlier and emphatically, in *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagar*, that the Portuguese account of their discovery of some relics was “a most barefaced imposture [with] all elements of a forgery.”

This is certainly true and it is one of the wonders of modern Catholic scholarship that the depositions of Diogo Fernandez made in 1533 and 1543 are accepted as authentic—especially as they include a most fanciful Christianised history of Mylapore from before the time of the Portuguese.

St. Francis Xavier visited Mylapore in 1545 and had nothing to say about Diogo Fernandez’s report, which he read, or the relics and tomb which he prayed before. Yet his Jesuit biographer, Fr. Georg Schurhammer, strictly adhering to the Jesuit discipline of specious reasoning—and criticizing Fr. Heras for not doing so—treats both the relics and reports as authentic in his *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*.

But if for the sake of argument it is agreed that the depositions of Diogo Fernandez are not fabricated—he could have been an uninformed witness to the “discovery”—then it must be said that the relics themselves most certainly are, in keeping with the ancient tradition of fraud so dear to the Church,⁶⁰ Veda Prakash, in *Indiavil Saint Thomas Kattukkadaï*, shows that the relics were produced out of materials brought from Goa and then planted in the empty tomb. He also shows that the Portuguese reworked the existing Syrian Christian version of the myth, changing the Syriac *be*

ruhme, meaning “by spear”, to read Brahmins in order to implicate Brahmins in the apostle’s murder. The Malabar tradition was thus brought into line with the European romance, *De Miraculis Thomae*, where St. Thomas is killed by a Pagan priest with a lance—though the contradiction of lance in the story and spear-head in the reliquary remains today.

The question of whether the Portuguese relics are genuine or not—and whether the South Indian legend is history or not—will be conclusively answered as soon as the Archbishop of Madras gives them to independent forensic experts for testing. But he may be also aware that such a gesture would be redundant, as all of the bones of St. Thomas were resting in the cathedral at Ortona, Italy, while Diogo Fernandez was digging for them in Mylapore. They had been there since 1258, and before that at Chios, Greece, and Edessa, and in 1566 the Bishop of Ortona had issued a Deed of Verification for these bones, which, in itself, proves that the bones produced by the Portuguese out of the Mylapore tomb cannot possibly be those of St. Thomas.⁶¹

The Portuguese themselves appear to have treated this “momentous discovery” in a cavalier fashion, which is why the relics got lost in 1525. When they were located again, in 1530, the bones and spearhead—shaped like an olive leaf, though there were no olive trees in India—were transferred to a small box, locked up in a chapel in the church, and the key kept by the pastor.

This church, originally built in 1523 and called San Thome or San Thome de Meliapore, was subsequently enlarged and extended, and the encroachment on the Kapaleeswara Temple began in earnest. The Christians had done this before, building a church against a temple wall and then taking over the temple, and that the Shiva temple survived as long as it did, up to 1566 according to some authorities, is grand testimony to the patient and courageous resistance the Hindus of Mylapore had put up against this ruthless Catholic power.

In 1606 the Pope, at the request of the King of Portugal, made San Thome de Meliapore into a diocese independent of Goa. The church was extended again and became the seat of a bishop, but, in 1893, this building was

demolished by the bishop and the present Gothic cathedral put up in its place. It was completed and consecrated in 1896. In 1952 the Archdiocese of Madras and Mylapore was constituted, and in 1956, after much lobbying by the Indian hierarchy, Pope Pius XII raised the status of San Thome Cathedral to that of a minor basilica. This church dignity is of no consequence but it affords the archbishop some minor liturgical privileges.

Diogo Fernandez's "St. Thomas" relics still remain in the church today. The iron spearhead and piece of skull are kept in a monstrance, along with the relics of St. Francis Xavier, St. Isabella, St. Vincentio and the Martyrs of Morocco. The first "St. Thomas" tomb, which contained the "white" skeleton that was sent to Goa, is empty and ignored, but the second "St. Thomas" tomb is pointed out to pilgrims and tourists. It contains the remainder of Diogo Fernandez's "findings", the pieces of spine and thigh bone, and, presumably, the pot of "blood-bedewed" earth.

Yet this is not the end of the bones at San Thome. The cathedral also has in its possession a piece of Church-certified Ortona bone which it obtained from Cardinal Tisserant in 1953, after he had deposited the apostle's right arm at Kodungallur (and demoted him from being the great Apostle of the East to simply being the Apostle of India). The pastor of San Thome can now say with some pride that he is the keeper of a real St. Thomas bone—keeping in mind that the acceptance of the Ortona gift is also an admission that the Portuguese relics in his care are not those of St. Thomas.

57. The central rite of Christian worship is the Eucharist (from the Greek for "thanksgiving"). It is considered to be a real sacrifice in which the body and blood of Jesus, under the appearances of bread and wine, are offered to God. The "real" flesh and blood are then consumed by the congregation as an act of communion with Jesus. In the Middle Ages the ceremony was called "eating the Baby". Christianity is the only world religion that practices ritual cannibalism.

58. There is a story that St. John was boiled in oil at Rome but survived the ordeal. Another story tells of how he was poisoned, and a painting in the Portuguese church on St. Thomas Mount shows him with a poisoned chalice. He probably spent his last years at Ephesus and died there of old age. Edward Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, writes, "The total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of the primitive martyrdoms was occasioned by a very natural mistake. The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth and fifth centuries

ascribe to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics and idolaters of their own times. ... The learned Origen, who, from his experience as well as readings, was intimately acquainted with the history of the Christians, declares, in the most express terms, that the number of martyrs was very inconsiderable. His authority would alone be sufficient to annihilate that formidable army of martyrs, whose relics, drawn for the most part from the catacombs of Rome, have replenished so many churches, and whose achievements have been the subject of so many volumes of holy romances.”

59. The relics “discovered” by Diogo Fernandez were located at a depth of 15’2” and though the tomb was on high ground—the only high ground on this stretch of sea beach, which is why temples were built on it—the possibility of it being damp or seeping water during the monsoon must be considered along with many other geological and topographical factors.

60. Fabricating religious relics is as old a tradition in the Roman Catholic Church as forging documents. The most famous faked relic is the Shroud of Turin, alleged burial cloth of Jesus, but the most lucrative faked relic is the chain that allegedly bound St. Peter in prison, the iron filings of which the popes used to sell to kings and wealthy believers for a large fee. (Perhaps more curious than the chain itself is that a photograph of it appeared in the Jayanti 1992 issue of *The Mountain Path*, the official organ of Sri Ramanasramam at Tiruvannamalai, after its pious editor had returned from a pilgrimage to Rome.)

61. It is said that the bones were transferred from “India” to Edessa between 222 CE. and 235 CE. (according to the *Acts*, all of the bones were transferred to Mesopotamia within the lifetime of King Mazdai), from Edessa to Chios in 1144, and from Chios to Ortona in 1258. The bones probably originated at Edessa; but in any case, all of the skull was at San Tommaso Cathedral Basilica in Ortona in 1566 when the bishop issued his deed, so there could not have been any skull bone at Mylapore for the Portuguese to find in 1523. The same is true of the other bones, though they, unlike the skull, are not specifically mentioned in the deed.

There are four places in Madras and its environs, other than San Thome, that the Portuguese associated with St. Thomas. The first is a rocky hillock called Little Mount, four miles south-west of Mylapore, on the south bank of the Adyar River at Saidapet. Fr. Herman D'Souza, in *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, writes, "Hoary tradition among Catholics and non-Catholics ... proudly holds that this part of [Madras] extended shelter to the Apostle, when the ministers of the local king, Mahadevan, were out to murder him. ... The favourite of the king, Thomas was ever in danger of losing his precious life—thanks to the scheming ministers whipped up by Hindu priests. ... There is a version that the Apostle was actually handled brutally more than once in his apartment, in the absence of the king. In order to save his life for yet a little while for the greater glory of God, Thomas is reported to have sought refuge in the jungle of Little Mount."

This sly communal tale, invented by Jesuits and improved on by Fr. D'Souza, is peculiar to Madras. D'Souza tries to establish Hindu support for the story by quoting Hindu publications that repeat it. But Hindu traditions about Little Mount and the other "St. Thomas" sites are quite different and much older than those of the Portuguese.⁶² They believe that the hillock, with its cave and spring and imprint of peacock's feet in the rock, was sacred to Murugan, and Hindu women used to visit the site even after the Portuguese had cleared it of shrines. In 1551, a church was built by the cave, called Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and the Jesuits built a second church by the spring of which nothing remains today. The archaeological evidence on the site was destroyed years ago when it was blasted to make way for the modern circular church, called Our Lady of Health, that now stands there.

St. Thomas had to leave Little Mount when the king's men found him in the cave. He fled to Big Mount, two miles further south, by a secret underground passage. But Big Mount did not offer refuge either. Fr. D'Souza writes, "His murderers sought him there and were on the point of seizing him. How long St. Thomas made his abode on the top of the hill, one cannot say. Unbroken tradition maintains that while the Apostle was

praying before the cross carved by him on a stone, an assassin suborned by King Mahadevan's priest and ministers, crept up stealthily and pierced him with a lance from behind. Thereupon the Apostle is reported to have fallen on the stone cross and embraced it; his blood crimsoned the stone cross and the space around. Thus did he seal his apostolate with his blood, even as the other Apostles, save St. John. ... His disciples took his body to [Mylapore] ... and interred it at his dear old place, about the year AD 68."

This rendition of the fable has no equivalent in Malabar and no relationship to the account in the *Acts of Thomas*, though it does have in it the priest and lance found in the Portuguese *De Miraculis Thomae*. There is no record that Mylapore had a temporal king of any name in 68 CE—the date first appeared on a memorial plaque in San Thome Cathedral in the eighteenth century and was afterwards incorporated into the story. But as is the case with many historical fabrications, it contains an element of truth and this gives the fictional parts credibility. Mahadevan is a reference to Lord Shiva, who was of course the King of Mylapore in the first century CE, even as He is king today—though Catholic writers today try to turn the Persian king Mazdai (Misdæus) of the *Acts of Thomas* into a Mylapore king called Mahadevan.

Dr. R. Arulappa, in *Punitha Thomayar*, asserts that Big Mount was originally called Bhrigu Malai (Brungi in Tamil) and was the seat of the Hindu sage Bhrigu Rishi (Brungi Munivar) until St. Thomas came and chased him away. This story, like the one above, is another piece of fiction that has at its core a little truth. The hill was sacred to Shiva whom Bhrigu Rishi worshiped, and it is the Portuguese who chased the *rishi* away, not St. Thomas. The temple was destroyed around 1545, when they gained effective control of the hill, which was the highest point in the area and the southern limit of their territory. Portuguese historians describe it as being crowded with ruins then, and broken temple stones could still be found on its slopes, on the south and west side in 1995. The Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore has since cleaned up the evidence—with the connivance of the Archaeological Survey of India?—and completely rebuilt the hill-top.

The Portuguese had begun to settle around Big Mount as early as 1523—the same year they “discovered” the tomb of “St. Thomas”—and one of the first

to take up residence there was Diogo Fernandez. He would succeed in erecting a small chapel on the hill before 1545, but the construction of the church, called Our Lady of Expectation, did not commence until 1547. It was built on the east-west alignment of the temple foundation—the ancient granite base of the flag pole is on the eastern side of the church and this writer had observed it in 1991—but the Portuguese reversed this order in keeping with established Christian practice when building on a Pagan site, and the church entrance is on the western side. In 1707, the building was extended by an Armenian merchant who also constructed the stairs going up the hill to the church, and the royal arms of Portugal were added to the facade of the main porch.

It was when clearing the rubble for the church, in 1547, that the Portuguese “discovered” the famous Persian “St. Thomas” cross in the temple foundation. Diogo Fernandez is not implicated in this fraud, but the Vicar of San Thome, Fr. Gaspar Coelho, and the Captain of the Coromandel, Gabriel de Athaide, are, as the construction was under their direct supervision. St. Thomas could not have carved this cross;⁶³ it has been dated to the eighth century, and like its counterparts in Kerala was carved by a Syrian Christian named Afras who inscribed its border in Pahlavi (Persian) script. It was kept inside the church behind the altar, and used to “bleed” at irregular intervals up to 1704. This phenomenon stopped as soon as the sensible and schismatic British began to move into the area and build a cantonment.

The other “St. Thomas” relic in the church is a brightly coloured icon of Mary and the child Jesus. It is said to have been painted by St. Luke⁶⁴ and brought to India by St. Thomas, who wore it on his chest as a scapular or badge of mission. In fact, it does not appear in Portuguese records until 1559, and the diverse stories that go with it were invented after this date.

The church also has paintings of St. Thomas and his Hindu assassin. One of them, on the reredos of the altar, depicts an Iyengar Brahmin with *namam* about to stab the praying apostle from behind. It defeats its purpose inasmuch as Vaishnavas did not wear *namam*, the sectarian U-shaped forehead mark, until after Ramanuja introduced it in the eleventh century. The other painting, very large and part of a series of the apostles and their

various modes of death, shows St. Thomas with a book, a lance, and his sturdy Hindu assassin, who, this time, does not wear sectarian marks or orthodox dress.

The next place in Madras associated with St. Thomas is the Descanco Church in Mylapore, which was built by the Madeiros family to mark the place where story says St. Thomas rested on his daily march between the Mylapore beach and Little Mount. It is the last church the Portuguese raised in Madras and of a later date and lesser importance than the others.

And finally, there is Luz Church, the first church the Portuguese would build in Mylapore and possibly the oldest standing Portuguese church on the Tamil coastline. It, too, is built on temple ruins, according to Archaeological Survey of India records, and was raised in 1516 by the Franciscan missionary priest Pedro da Atongia. The Catholic fortnightly *Madras Musings* says, “But with the Portuguese only occasional visitors to this coast from 1509 and settlers only from 1522, the dates on the stone plaque and above the church’s entrance seem more likely the date of the establishment of a shrine in the ‘grove of Thomas’ than the date of the surviving building.”

Yes, indeed—but the “grove of Thomas” once contained a “pool of Vishnu”. What happened to it in 1516?

62. If independent scholars ever make an objective study of the St. Thomas tradition in Madras and the Portuguese sites associated with it, they will have to take into account the older and more weighty Hindu traditions associated with the same sites.

63. Christians did not adopt the cross as their religious symbol until the third century (or later according to some church historians). St. Thomas was a Jew following Jewish religious custom and the cross used as an instrument of torture and death by the Romans would have been abhorrent to him. Christian crosses were introduced into India by Syrian Christian immigrants in the fourth century.

64. There are seven of these icons by “St. Luke” scattered around the world. The most famous one hangs in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which was built by Pope Sixtus III in 432 CE after he had demolished the Temple of Cybele on the Esquiline Hill. He had hoped to wean the women of Rome away from their favourite Goddess and substitute Her worship with that of the Virgin Mary. Most psychologists think that he failed miserably, and not long-ago Pope

John Paul II published a diatribe against those American and European women who continue to worship the Great Mother Goddess.

Madras Musings is edited by the self-styled historian and accomplished St. Thomas apologist S. Muthiah. He is—or was—a director at TT Maps and Publications Ltd., the TTK company that produces and sells the St. Thomas fable to unwitting tourists, and more recently has got associated with Chennai’s anti-Hindu newspaper *The Hindu*. He admits that there is no historical evidence for the visit of St. Thomas to India, but will follow this statement up with another about India’s “1,800-year-old, and possibly older, Christian tradition.”

Muthiah’s allusion is to Pantaenus the Alexandrian, who is said to have visited “the land of the Indians” before 190 CE. The first reference is made by Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, which others follow, but Dr. A. Mingana, an authority on the spread of Christianity in India, quoted by C.B. Firth in *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, asserts, “the India they refer to is without doubt Arabia Felix. The fact has been recognised by all historians since Assemani and Tillemont, and has been considered as established even by such a conservative writer as Medleycott. It will be a matter of surprise if any responsible author will mention in the future Pantaenus in connection with India proper.”

But ancient history—whether tucked away in the Cairo Museum or Vatican Library—is not Muthiah’s first line of defence. He prefers to use emotional tactics when dealing with unbelievers, and declares through his amanuensis in a *Madras Musings* editorial that, “Christian tradition, as much an article of faith, has Thomas who Doubted, the Apostle of India, living and preaching in this part of the Coromandel from about 65 AD till his death in 72 AD.”⁶⁵

This “Apostle of India” tradition is not an “article of faith” for Christians of course.⁶⁶ Protestants reject it outright as a Catholic superstition, and Catholics themselves are not obliged to accept it. This point is clarified by Papal Chevalier F.A. D’Cruz, in *St. Thomas the Apostle in India*, when he discusses the belief in the “St. Thomas” relics and tomb in San Thome Cathedral. He writes, “Catholics who venerate the tomb are not compelled

to believe in its genuineness; and they know well that it is a question of evidence and that they may be mistaken as to the fact. They regard it, in any case, in the light of a memorial, whereby the saint is remembered and honoured. If miracles are said to have occurred in connection with the reputed tomb or relics, Catholics understand again here also it is a question of evidence and that, if genuine, they are the result of faith excited by the memorial of the saint whose intercession had been implored by clients for Divine interposition on their behalf.”

65. See the article “Madras Musings and Madras Muthiah” for the editorial and our reply to it in this book.

66. According to *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, an “article of faith” is by definition a “condition or stipulation of a religious creed”.

There are six tombs for St. Thomas in South India. Two are in San Thome Cathedral at Mylapore, a third on an island south-west of Cochin, a fourth in a Syrian church at Tiruvancode in Travancore, a fifth in a Shiva temple at Malayattur in Travancore, and a sixth at Kalayamuthur west of Madurai near the Palani Hills. There are also six tombs for St. Thomas abroad: one in Brazil, a second in Germany, a third in Japan, a fourth in Malacca, a fifth in Tibet, and a sixth in China.

But this is not the end of the matter of tombs. Bardesanes's *Acts of Thomas* has St. Thomas buried in a royal tomb on a mountain in King Mazdai's desert country and the Ethiopian version of the same *Acts* has the tomb located in Qantaria, which some say is ancient Gandhara in Afghanistan. The Alexandrian doctors say the tomb is in Parthia that is Persia, but antipope Hippolytus of Portus says it is in Calamina, a city much discussed and never found, and which, today, remains as elusive a place as the Elioforum of the *Passio Thomae*. Still others say the tomb is in Betumah, which the Syrians identify with Mylapore but the Arabs say is east of Cape Comorin and Colonel Gerini, in *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia*, says is east of Singapore. This is still not the end of the tombs for St. Thomas, but we will stop with the *Codex Fuldensis*, ca. 541-546 CE, of the Latin version of Tatian's Syriac *Diatessaron*, ca. 160-175 CE, which says, "Thomas—In India—Civitate Iothabis".

Now Iothabis is Iotha, which is a spelling mistake for Iorha, which is Latin for Urhai the Syriac name for Edessa, which, finally, is modern Urfa (Sanliurfa) in Turkey. Edessa as the burial place of St. Thomas can be considered seriously. It is here and in Persia that he proselytized the Syrians, and it is here that the Syrian Christians, known to Europeans as Nestorians, would flourish and spread eastwards after the sixth century even up to Kubli Khan's court in China. The Latin version of the *Diatessaron* places Edessa in India because "India" was the term that ancient geographers used to designate the lands east and south of the Roman Empire's frontiers.

Marco Polo is the first storyteller to place the tomb of St. Thomas in South India and a town on the southern Tamil coast. He does not name the town nor did he visit it, yet most of his interpreters will identify the town with Mylapore. T.K. Joseph, author of *Six St. Thomases of South India*, accepts Marco Polo's story but believes that the identification of the tomb in Mylapore as a Christian tomb is a case of wrong identification, of the Syrian Christians identifying the tomb of a Muslim Thomas with their Christian Thomas. In fact, the Mylapore tomb is a Portuguese fake, and the early Syrian Christians were probably worshipping in the great Shiva temple itself or at a yogi's *samadhi* connected with it.

Be this as it may, when asked to explain how the South Indian tradition of St. Thomas arose, T.K. Joseph replies, "There are many such problems to be solved. For instance, how was St. Thomas located in Brazil, Germany, Tibet, Malacca, Japan, China, etc.? How have his footprints, knee marks, finger marks, mummies, three skeletons, more than half-a-dozen tombs, etc., been found in Asia? ... How were the seven dates (AD 50, 51, etc.) for his landing first in South India, and the ten or eleven dates for his death (as non-martyr or martyr) fabricated in South India after 1500 AD? How was he made to land first in Malliankara, or Cranganore, or Mylapore, diversely? How was the *Rampan Song* about him composed 'in 1601 AD' as quite reliable, and then tampered with in 1952? How has elephantiasis in Cochin been connected with St. Thomas?

"How, again, has Jesus Christ been found sojourning in North India and the South of England? How has his sepulchre been found in Kashmir?

"Again, how did the Ceylon tradition arise that on 'Adam's Peak' there, 'is the sepulchre of Adam, our first parent', as Marco Polo recorded? How has another tomb of the same Adam been located in Arabia? ... How has Ceylon found in it the Buddha's, Adam's and St. Thomas's footprints? How were 'Indians' found in America by the first Europeans who reached it?"

This rhetoric is all very well insofar as it goes, but it does not go far enough and T.K. Joseph admits the lacuna when he uses phrases like "fabricated in South India after 1500 AD" and "tampered with in 1952" in his discourse. Unfortunately for history, and especially the study of Indian history, he is

unwilling to openly indict the Portuguese and the popes and the Roman Catholic Church of today, though he could do so with effect as he had access to information and documents that we cannot hope to obtain.

T.K. Joseph's weakness—like that of other honest Christian scholars—is inhibition and a limited perspective. He treats the problem of St. Thomas as an internal matter of the Christian community rather than a problem of Indian history. He refuses to consider the Hindu side of the story or to admit that temples were destroyed in Mylapore in the sixteenth century by Franciscan monks and Jesuit priests. He rejects the Malabar and Mylapore legends of St. Thomas as inventions, but seems to be unaware that Marco Polo's "tall tale" is just that—a tall tale of St. Thomas picked up in a Ceylonese port bazaar and retold with additions to an eager Italian public. His acceptance of the geographical designation "India" in the *Acts of Thomas*, as the field of the apostle's work, is unreasonable, as the internal cultural evidence of the *Acts* points to West Asia and not North-West India. He admits that he is forced to accept the testimony of the *Acts* as it is the only ancient document that says St. Thomas came to India—and he believes that St. Thomas did come to North-West India and may have been first buried near ancient Taxila.

T.K. Joseph—and other Christian scholars who depend on the *Acts of Thomas* to fulfil their St. Thomas desires—seem to be unaware of Thomas Paine's famous dictum concerning another collection of acts and gospels—the Bible. Paine said, "It has often been said that anything may be proved from the Bible; but before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of anything."

The Rev. Dr. G. Milne Rae, author of *The Syrian Church in India*, was even more unsparing than T.K. Joseph in his criticism of the St. Thomas fable. He did not allow that St. Thomas came further east than Afghanistan, and told the Syrian Christians that they reasoned fallaciously about their identity and "wove a fictitious story of their origin". The two "facts" that they worked from, he said, were (1) the ancient beliefs of their church that St. Thomas was the apostle of the Indians, and (2) that they were Christians

of St. Thomas. The ratiocination of these points went like this: St. Thomas was the apostle of the Indians; we are Indians; therefore he is our apostle. If this is not proof enough, there is his tomb in Mylapore, and we have been called “St. Thomas Christians” from the first century.⁶⁷

On the first point, the ancient beliefs of the Syrian Church, however dear to Syrian Christians, cannot be admitted as evidence until they are proved to be historically true. This has not yet happened, though men of genius and integrity have worked at the problem for centuries. The second point, which is simply repeated twice or thrice in the reasoning, also cannot be admitted as evidence because there is no record—indeed, no tradition—of any group calling themselves “St. Thomas Christians” prior to the fourteenth century.

Bishop Giovanni dei Marignolli, the Franciscan papal legate who built a Roman Catholic church in Quilon, in 1348, is the first person to use the appellation “St. Thomas Christians”. He did this to distinguish Syrian converts from low-caste Hindu converts in his congregation. This allowed the former Nestorians to retain their caste status as Roman Catholics. The appellation “St. Thomas Christian” is thus of Roman Catholic origin and indicates a social division within the Roman Catholic Church.

This observation does not exclude the probability that the Syrian Christians, within a few generations of their arrival in India from Persia in the fourth century, identified their community patriarch Thomas the Merchant with their spiritual patriarch Thomas the Apostle—especially as both were also known as Thomas of Jerusalem. Thomas had evangelised their forefathers in Syria and Persia and was their apostle, but this did not make him India’s apostle any more than Moses was India’s prophet, though he was the spiritual patriarch of another immigrant community in Malabar, the Jews.

Moreover, there is no evidence that there ever was a Church of India, as such an early Thomas-founded church would have been called, though there was admittedly a Church of Persia founded by St. Thomas. Nor is there any record that Malabar ever had its own ecclesiastical hierarchy; hierarchs were always brought into India from Persia or Mesopotamia or, as today, from Antioch and Rome.

This circumstance is very unusual, for if the Syrian Church was not an immigrant church as its name and the importation of bishops implies, and St. Thomas was as closely and indissolubly associated with India as legend says, then there should be a Church of India—or some concrete record of it—with an indigenous hierarchy and an apostolic succession of bishops from St. Thomas. Yet there is nothing, absolutely nothing to show that St. Thomas established a church in India—notwithstanding the reams of reasonings and professions of faith that “St. Thomas Christians” produce today.

We have only the many and various legends⁶⁸ and even they continue to change with the changing political needs of the Church. T.K. Joseph, the “St. Thomas Christian” who began his investigation into the St. Thomas legend when he suspected the authority of Malabar’s “authoritative” *St. Thomas Song*, writes, “St. Thomas Christians seem to be ready to welcome any number of additions to their [Marco Polo] recorded St. Thomas traditions of 1288 to the present day if the fundamental concept of St. Thomas’s preaching and death in their South India itself is left intact. They do not mind if he is a non-martyr or a martyr, and do not seem to care if they or their ancestors are accused of sins committed for his sake, or if the Saint himself is described in their records as having ... sinned. They will perhaps readily accept his Ceylon log of wood, his three skeletons, his two Mylapore tombs, his footprints on rocks, his dates 52, 68 AD, etc., his [non-existent] contemporary *Biography* of 72-73 AD, his waist cord presented to him by St. Mary on her ‘Assumption’ to heaven, his coming to South India along with King Gaspar of Jaffna, his settling the Goddess Kali in the Cranganore temple,⁶⁹ his withdrawing his dead hand from Chinese intruders to his tomb in Mylapore, and other such things of the kind.”

This short list of St. Thomas curiosities contains an error and an important omission. The error is that Catholics will not tolerate a non-martyred apostle in their pantheon of saints—they have even martyred St. John, who was never martyred—and the omission is that T.K. Joseph has neglected to mention that Catholics like to believe that St. Thomas was killed by a Hindu king and his attending Brahmin priest.

The “martyred” St. Thomas has existed since the *Acts of Thomas*, ca. 210 CE, in which he is executed by King Mazdai for social crimes and sorcery. The Portuguese added the Brahmin assassin after 1517 and he has remained the first choice of the Roman Catholic Church since, for without him the Hindu community cannot be successfully maligned and the continuing cover-up of the destruction of temples in Mylapore cannot be successfully maintained by the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese and its anti-Hindu secular sponsors in government.

67. Christians love reasonings of this nature because they cannot be disproved by the uninformed man in the street. They are usually based on a false premise and employ an intoxicating circular logic, where the last statement is made to prove the first statement and so on until the listener, usually a polite Hindu, is “convinced” or “defeated”.

68. There are at least six different root legends—from Alexandria, Edessa, Europe, Venice (Marco Polo), Malabar and Mylapore—that Catholic propagandists draw on to make up their own *masala* stories of St. Thomas.

69. This is another temple which St. Thomas is said to have demolished, though it continues to prosper today as the fierce and famous Bhagawati of Kodungallur.

Where, then, is the tomb of St. Thomas if the two in Mylapore are Portuguese fakes? Where did he experience his passion and seal his mission with blood if not in India? We do not know the answer to this question, but there is a verse in an ancient St. Thomas hymn which says:

Thou despisest error
 Thou destroyest unbelievers:
 For, in the city where thou truly liest,
 There never lives any of the heretics,
 Jews, or Pagans.⁷⁰

70. This hymn in Latin is earlier than the ninth century and is reproduced by Mgr. Zaleski in the Belgian Jesuit review *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol. 6, 1887. It suggests that the whereabouts of St. Thomas's grave was unknown in the ninth century and this is possible as Edessa was captured by Muslim Arabs in 639 CE and ceased being a Christian state. The traditional dates of transfer of his remains are from "India", i.e. from the royal mountain tomb in King Mazdai's unidentified desert country, to Edessa between 222 CE and 235 CE (according to the *Acts*, all of the bones were transferred to Mesopotamia (Edessa) within the lifetime of King Mazdai), from Edessa to Chios in 1144, and from Chios to Ortona in 1258. The bones may have always rested at Edessa where St. Thomas had a tomb and a flourishing cult from earliest times; but in any case all of the skull was at Ortona in 1566 when the Bishop of Ortona issued his Deed of Verification, so there could not have been any skull bone at Mylapore for the Portuguese to find in 1523. The same is true of the other bones, though they, unlike the skull, are not specifically mentioned in the Ortona deed.

Most ethnic and religious communities localise their myths of origin when they migrate to new lands and establish themselves there permanently. This is part of the psychological process of becoming a native. The tradition they bring from abroad is altered enough to identify its main themes and characters with local places. Time does the rest and the second and third generation soon forget the original story and its foreign locales. Inter-community relationships will mix in local legends with the imported myth. In the case of the Syrian Christians, the process was irresistible because the charismatic, semi-legendary Thomas of Cana who led the first Christian immigrants to Malabar from Persia and Mesopotamia in 345 CE, was not really any different a community hero than the charismatic, semi-legendary Thomas the Apostle. The fact that both leaders were also known as Thomas of Jerusalem would have made the identification of the fourth century merchant with the first century saint inevitable.

None of this would amount to anything more than an ethnological curiosity except that the Syrian Christian tradition of St. Thomas became the property of the Portuguese and the Roman Catholic Church. Both imperialist powers needed this emotionally-charged fable in their ideological arsenal to legitimize their presence and justify their violent, viciously bigoted conduct in India.

T.G. Percival Spear, author of *India: A Modern History* and co-author of the *Oxford History of India*, commenting on the Portuguese in India in an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article, writes, "The Portuguese early considered that no faith need be kept with an infidel, and to this policy of perfidy they added a tendency to cruelty beyond the normal limits of a very rough age; the result was to deprive them of Indian sympathy. In religion the Portuguese were distinguished by missionary fervour and intolerance. ... Of the latter, there was the Inquisition of Goa and the forcible subjection of the Syrian church to Rome at the Synod of Diamper in 1599."

The Synod of Diamper was followed by the burning of Syrian books by Archbishop Menezes of Goa, and the myth of St. Thomas, now firmly in the

hands of the Church, took on a marked anti-Hindu character. Roman Catholic bigotry is ancient and universal—and it continues till today. Percival Spear observes, “Then came Roman Catholicism, which today has perhaps 5,000,000 followers and an array of churches, convents, and colleges all over India. A by-product has been a tradition of intolerance, which still lingers.”

This last remark is a serious indictment of Indian Christianity, coming as it does from a reputed Cambridge historian, and it probably has not been made about any other modern religious community in the whole *Encyclopaedia*.

Christians have always capitalized on the established tradition that they have been persecuted, but the plain truth is that they have done most of the persecuting in recorded history and this started in earnest when they obtained political power in Rome in the fourth century (see note 18). If they attracted persecution before this time from the Pagan emperors, it was exactly because of their religious intolerance and a peculiarly Christian crime that originated in Rome and continues in India today: the forging of documents to create a fabricated social and religious history that Christians believe will give Christianity authority and prestige, and which disparages the ancient Hindu civilization that hosts it.

Arthur Frederick Ide, in *Unzipped: The Popes Bare All*, writes, “One primary reason Rome turned against the Christians was the Christians were violently intolerant. Christians would not accept altars to gods other than their own even though the Romans offered an altar to the Christian god. Christians spat upon those who would not convert. They hid documents. They alienated families. They prayed for the end of the empire and the enthronement of their god as the new king. These were actions which were socially disconcerting, disrupting, and dangerous.

“Contrary to the Christian apologist Justin, the Christians were not dispatched from this life because they were Christians. Christians were executed only after their actions (not their beliefs) were seen as riot-inducing, treasonous, and detrimental to the family unit, and especially dangerous to the children.”

Christian churches in India continue these same ancient anti-social activities today. The difference is that they have vast sums of money from Christians abroad with which to finance their culturally destructive missionary enterprises. They also have the sympathy of alienated anti-Hindu Leftist intellectuals and academics, the so-called secular mainstream media which is wholly or partly owned by Christian interests, and the support of state governments that are run by nominally Hindu criminal families as private fiefdoms.

Christians have never been persecuted in India by Hindus,⁷¹ and their deeply resented and disruptive socio-political activity, religious conversion, is accommodated by Indian politicians because the Christian community represents a dedicated vote bank. Yet this coddling and a long list of other official favours has not made Indian Christians any more tolerant today than their Mediterranean counterparts were in the fourth century.⁷²

Percival Spear's remark about a "tradition of intolerance" is unfortunately true of Christianity itself. Jesus was the first religious teacher in history to threaten those who did not agree with him with eternal damnation. This is the only original idea that he contributed to the world's vast body of religious thought, and in two millennia it has destroyed nations and whole civilizations and caused Thomas Jefferson to declare, "The Christian God is cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust."

71. The seventeenth century Jesuit missionary John de Britto was executed by the Raja of Ramnad for breaking the law. He had been repeatedly warned to stop his antisocial activities and stay out of the principality. Instead, he carefully planned his "martyrdom" and went to great lengths to provoke the Raja. He was canonised in 1947 by a Vatican decree.

72. On April 7, 1994, the *Indian Express* reported an assault on a prominent Madras social worker, S. Vidyakar, by a Christian family who lived next door to one of his houses for destitute women and children. Vidyakar states, "For some time now our social worker, Sundari, was being teased and taunted by some members of the family." Sundari adds, "They are Christians and start clapping and dancing whenever we sing [devotional songs] and taunt us about worshipping [stone]. When things went a little too far that evening and I was abused in filthy language, I called up Vidyakar and gave him details." Vidyakar went to talk to the family the next day, but they attacked him with a log and broke his arm. This is not an isolated incident. It goes on all the time with the

connivance of local police and politicians. This writer was also driven from his ashram in Tirumullaivoyal by Christian converts who were provoked by the fact that a white foreigner had become a Hindu sannyasi and lived like a Brahmin among Brahmins.

None of our brown sahibs and learned secular scribes are interested in this discourse. They are bored by it, or embarrassed, and if they have bothered to read it, they will have decided that we are a rabid communalist who hates Christians. They have been fed on the milksops of a sentimental Christology in their convent schools and Jesuit colleges and it has made them impotent. They are not able to measure Christian cult theory and practice against the rigorous standards set by their own Dharma. They are also on the defensive, having been persuaded by their Jesuit masters that criticising Christianity and exposing its untruths is the same as attacking Christians.⁷³ They have not converted to the One True Faith and never will without an inducement, but they are already convinced little popes who cannot help but admire the big pope. He has what they want or already share in just a little bit—absolute power.

Christianity, and especially Roman Catholic Christianity, has very little to do with religious faith. It is and has always been a system of imperialist politics and financial racketeering practised under the guise of religion.⁷⁴ Its first victims are poor Christians who lead lives of subsistence and misery under the grinding heel of an imperious and abusive priesthood.⁷⁵ Its second victims are social reformers and scientists, independent scholars, philosophers and seekers of truth who dare to venture beyond the narrow confines of Christian doctrine. We are going to give the last word in this essay of quotations to one such philosopher, the Rev. Dr. Lourenco C. Torcato, a Catholic priest from Goa who founded the Research Institute of Education and Philosophy and Religion at Bombay. Dr. Torcato died in 1993 under official Church interdict and in extreme poverty because the Archbishop of Bombay had stopped his pension when he, for reasons of conscience, had refused to convert a Hindu to Christianity. As a serious thinker he was too much enamoured of Marxist theory, but he was nonetheless a sincere and outspoken proponent of India's Vedic heritage who never got tired of saying, "Unfortunately, some of our Indian leaders and people wrongly value the so-called high standard of schools and

colleges run by sectarian organisations, not realising the disastrous effects of replacing true Indian culture with western ways.”

In 1970 Dr. Torcato published his *Education: Its History and Philosophy*, which caused an uproar in official Catholic circles and was immediately banned in Catholic colleges. In it he writes, “The religious organisations which control education in India openly discuss the motives and ideals of their religion-controlled educational institutions.⁷⁶ ... The Catholic leaders do not hesitate to say publicly the reasons which motivated the opening of their educational establishments. The reasons are based on their dogmatic religious beliefs which they openly teach in all their educational establishments, howsoever crude their religious instruction may be. Besides, the religion-based educational organisations are meant also to be the chief means of most important contact with the finest elements of Hindu society and other societies as well. The Catholic leaders maintain that the main object of their schools, colleges and other educational institutions is the education of Catholic youth, and for this purpose they try to bestow greater care on the spiritual training based on dogmatic teaching of Roman Catholicism.

“By means of Solidarities, Newman Clubs, Catholic University Students’ Federation and training camps and such other extracurricular activities, the heads of these institutions make every effort to strengthen their religious beliefs and to deepen their spiritual life. This means in other words, the salvation of their own souls and indirectly the conversion of non-Catholic souls, for they are excluded from Heaven. Every effort possible should be made not *ex officio* but when the opportunity arises to show to fellow students the great sacramental efficacy of the door to salvation which in the theological language is called the sacrament of Baptism....

“This what is said about the educational establishments administered by Roman Catholics holds good *mutatis mutandis* of all other Christian sects and also of Muslims and other proselytising religious organisations. They believe that they are commanded by their prophets and by the voice from above to save the souls of others whom they call infidels. This being the case, our main concern is to find out whether the right to impart education to Indians should be vested in the National Ministry of Education or in the

religious and communal organisations. We know that they are bold to spread the errors and superstitions taking full advantage of the articles of the Constitution which empowers them to establish educational institutions and thus go ahead with their religious fairy tales and communal viruses to the great detriment of the most vital interests of the Indian Nation as a whole.”

Indeed, the bold spreading of errors and superstitions about St. Thomas and early Christianity in India is everywhere from tourist guide books and official gazettes to school text books and, of course, Christian publications and websites. The sad irony of this tsunami of historical falsehoods which was once limited to the popular pro-Christian secular media, is that this book has become the source book for the references Indian Christians and secular academics and journalists use to create their fictitious and communal St. Thomas stories. The result is that every Hindu boy and girl in India believes that a Mylapore king and his Brahmin priest murdered St. Thomas on Big Mount. They cannot help but believe it because that is what they are taught “on good authority” either by the teachers in their convent schools or by clever and deceitful articles in the morning’s newspapers. That Mylapore did not have a known king in 68 or 72 CE except for Lord Shiva himself, and that no reputed Christian historian of the last two hundred years including Pope Benedict XVI would support this charge of “deicide” in Madras, has no meaning to school children brought up on *Wikipedia’s* ever-changing fables and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica’s* carefully crafted lies.

73. H.G. Wells, in *Crux Ansata: An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church*, writes, “[The Jesuits’] work had to be propaganda; teaching and the insinuation by every possible means of the authority and policy of the Church. ... Unfortunately for the world the Jesuits have never been able to keep clear of politics. It was against their written professions, if these are to be taken seriously, but it was manifestly among their inevitable temptations. They had their share, direct and indirect, in embroiling states, concocting conspiracies and kindling wars. ... We need not expand this indictment further. Almost every country in Europe except England had at one time or another been provoked to expel the Jesuits, and ... their obdurate persistence in evil-doing continues to this day.”

74. For example, when the Portuguese were attempting to evangelise India, to “instruct the inhabitants in the Catholic Faith and good morals” as decreed by the Pope, the Pope himself was taxing lepers and prostitutes in Rome, ten percent of their incomes, and was doing this on the authority of Catholicism’s greatest theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas. For references see David Yallop’s *In God’s Name*, Nino Lo Bello’s *The Vatican Empire*, M. Murray O’Hair’s *Let’s Prey* and Avro Manhattan’s *The Vatican Billions*, *The Dollar and the Vatican*, *Vatican Imperialism in the Twentieth Century*, *The Vatican in World Politics*, *The Vatican in Asia*, and *Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom*. Avro Manhattan is a former BBC political commentator.

75. Mother Teresa used to tell her international donor audiences, from whom she collected millions of tax-free dollars for her missionary enterprise, that what India really needed was Jesus. We observe that the former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rwanda, Brazil, the Philippines—to name a few—all have Jesus, and have had him for some time, but he does not seem to have done them any moral, spiritual, or material good.

76. Malachi Martin, in *The Jesuits*, writes, “The subcontinent of India, in the eyes of Vatican planners, has a primordial importance as the one country in Asia where the Church can make huge headway. The Roman Catholic Church has poured vast resources into India. Religious orders run 115 colleges with 135,000 students, 1,200 high schools with over 500,000 pupils, 242 technical schools with over 400,000 students. It is estimated that 60 percent of all students in India attend Roman Catholic schools and colleges. In those seats of learning, 50 percent of the teachers are non-Christian. Jesuits are involved on the local, state, and national level.” Raymond James Paul, in *A Catholic’s Believe It or Not*, writes, “More than 7,000 educational institutions have been established by the Catholic Church in India.” The real figure is much higher as these books were published in 1987 and 1963 respectively. They do not include non-Catholic educational institutions which have proliferated in recent years with the rapid spread of evangelical Protestant churches in India. A truer picture of the Christian landscape in India can be got from the 1992 report of the World Council of Churches, which says, “Indian churches put together are the biggest single land owner in India.”

*“What has been Christianity’s fruits?
Superstition, bigotry and persecution.” - James Madison*

The myth of St. Thomas in Malabar and Mylapore, which we have reviewed in this essay, is an Indian Christian communal fable that was exposed decades ago by the “St. Thomas Christian” historian T.K. Joseph and Presbyterian missionary Rev. Dr. G. Milne Rae—the latter a reader at Madras Christian College. That it is advertised by the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese as Indian history is to be expected of this criminal branch of the Roman Catholic Church; that it is accepted without critical review by the Government of India, and promoted by a racist Tamil Nadu state administration on political platforms to disparage Hindus, is quite another.⁷⁷ Their conduct as secular administrators is *mala fide* to say the least. It is a new twist to the old tale of treachery in the *Acts of Thomas*, but it is in keeping with the spirit of the original Syrian legend. The *Acts* tells us that Jesus sold his brother Judas called Thomas the Twin as a carpenter slave to the trader Abbanes for a handful of silver. Are we so ready and willing to do the same? Is there no other way of telling our Christian neighbour that we accept him then by securing him in his error at the cost of our own blood?

77. In a shocking act of communal spite, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi attended, on 3 July 2008 at Chennai, the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocesan function inaugurating a mega-budget film on St. Thomas in India. Karunanidhi, known for his hatred of Brahmins, said, “History remembers those who were killed by conspirators. St. Thomas was also a victim of conspiracy.” Though Karunanidhi is a Tamil scholar and authority on Tiruvalluvar’s *Tirukkural*, he did not say a word as Archbishop Chinnappa expanded on the meeting of St. Thomas and Tiruvalluvar and the great cinematic scene this meeting would make. The bishops of Madras-Mylapore have for decades claimed that the Tamil cultural icon Tiruvalluvar was a Christian convert and that his famous ethical treatise *Tirukkural* was a Christian book, though a reading of the book, and Tiruvalluvar’s accepted date ca. 200-100 BCE, do not support this claim.

Part Two

Archbishop Arulappa's History Project Goes Terribly Wrong

K.P. Sunil

The case has been closed. And the *dramatis personae* prefer to maintain a studied silence. For fear that a post-mortem would reveal hidden cadavers in their cupboards. For even a superficial examination of the fraud that shook the foundations of the Catholic Church in Madras in the late seventies and early eighties indicates that a lot of embarrassing details have been swept under the mat.

Reverend Dr. R. Arulappa, former archbishop of the Madras diocese, who claims to have been duped by one Acharya Paul, also known as Ganesh Iyer, is ill. Incapacitated by serious cardiac problems. In fact, it is his ill-health that forced him to retire from his post as head of the diocese. So, the infamous scandal had to be pieced together from court records, police files and the ramblings of the main character—Ganesh Iyer.

It all began in the early seventies. Ganesh Iyer, who had adopted the Christian faith and was a self-styled Bible preacher known as John Ganesh, went to Tiruchi in the course of his evangelical journeys and met a Catholic priest, Father Michael, of the Tamil Illakiya Kazhagam (Tamil Literary Society). He is reported to have presented himself to the priest as Dr. John Ganesh, professor of philosophy and comparative religions at the Banaras University, and recently returned from Jammu and Kashmir where he was involved in research on Christianity in India. Michael put him on to another priest, Father Mariadas of Sriviliputhur.

John Ganesh impressed Mariadas with his mastery over Christian theology. He showed him copies of notices extolling him as a speaker. He reportedly produced letters written to him by various scholars in the fields of education and religion. He is also reported to have shown Mariadas photographs of palm leaf writings and copper plate inscriptions several centuries old.

These documents, he reportedly claimed, traced the origins and development of the Christian faith in India. Since further research on the subject required money which John Ganesh claimed not to have, Mariadas took upon himself the task of locating funds for the project the successful completion of which, he felt, would provide a shot in the arm for Christianity in India.

Mariadas gave John Ganesh something in the range of Rs 22,000 toward the research. And as his own funds were depleted, he introduced the researcher to the head of the Catholic Church in Madras, R. Arulappa.

Arulappa was a Tamil scholar who also had the reputation of being a researcher. He had translated the New Testament into Tamil and set to tune the *Book of Psalms*. He had also rendered in Tamil the life of Christ, *Ulagin Uyir* (The Life of the World). He had learned Sanskrit and translated several Christian tenets into that language. He had also done extensive research on *Tirukkural*, the creation of the Tamil bard, Tiruvalluvar.

Tiruvalluvar is known to modern generations through his immortal literature. The exact time of his existence is lost in the mists of the hoary past. Some historians believe Tiruvalluvar to be a product of the early Sangam period in Tamil literature, several centuries before Christ. The Tamil Nadu government bases its calendar on the year of his birth. For this purpose, it is assumed that Tiruvalluvar was born exactly 2018 years ago [this article was written in 1986], i.e. in the first century before Christ. Some literary experts place Tiruvalluvar in the first century after Christ, others date him 300 years after.

Just as little is known about Tiruvalluvar's origins, his religious beliefs are also shrouded in some mystery. Attempts have been made, going by the precepts contained in his verse, to speculate about his religion. While he is widely believed to have been a Hindu and the *Tirukkural* considered a revered Hindu scripture, other religions too have staked a claim on him. Since the *Tirukkural* enshrines the ideals of *ahimsa*, *dharma* and asceticism, many experts consider Tiruvalluvar to have been considerably influenced by Jain thought.

A recent paper presented by Dr. S. Padmanabhan makes Tiruvalluvar out to be a Hindu chieftain from the Kanyakumari district. Archbishop Arulappa felt that the *Tirukkural* was so profound and filled with compassionate sentiments that it must have been influenced by early Christian missionaries who came to South India in the first century after Christ, notably St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Christ.

The Christian Church of India, considered to be amongst the oldest in the world, is believed to have been founded by St. Thomas in 52 A.D. Arulappa held the view that St. Thomas, before his martyrdom on a hill near Madras, now called St. Thomas Mount, met Tiruvalluvar and influenced the bard to the extent of converting him to the nascent faith. The theory had been propounded. What remained to be obtained was proof of such an occurrence.

It was this that Ganesh Iyer, posing as John Ganesh, reportedly promised to unearth for the archbishop.

Since this suited the archbishop's scheme and since Arulappa was convinced that Ganesh was in a position to ferret out the evidence necessary to prove his pet theory, he engaged him to take up the research. The archbishop was apparently lulled into complacency by Ganesh's mastery of Christian theology and his apparent sincerity of purpose. As if establishing a nexus between St. Thomas and Tiruvalluvar were not enough, John Ganesh also informed the archbishop that he could bring evidence that the three wise men from the East who prophesied the birth of Christ were none other than the epic Hindu sages, Vasistha, Viswamithra and Agasthya.

In 1975-76, John Ganesh began his research. And the archbishop started funding the same.

Ganesh produced photographs of palm leaf writings and copper plate inscriptions at periodic intervals. When the archbishop asked to see the originals, he was informed that they were stashed away in the safe custody of the archaeological departments and museums all over the country. It would therefore, not be possible to persuade these agencies to part with the priceless documents. He, however, promised to get his photographs

authenticated by the respective agencies themselves. Thereafter, all photographs produced by Ganesh Iyer before the archbishop bore seals of the museums and departments from which he claimed to have obtained them.

Using the funds provided by the archbishop, Ganesh Iyer made a pretence of travelling extensively. It was a well-orchestrated programme. He would first inform the archbishop that he was going to Kashmir in connection with his research.

Next, the archbishop would receive letters from some Christian and Hindu religious heads in Kashmir informing him that they had come across Ganesh Iyer or, as he now called himself, Acharya Paul. The letters spoke in superlative terms about his sincerity of purpose and his noble research.

Whatever doubts the archbishop may have entertained about his researcher vanished in the face of these letters from eminent personages. More money changed hands. Though he was quite poor when he first met the archbishop, by the time he was through, Iyer had his own house in Srirangam. He owned two cars. He had purchased considerable gold jewellery for his wife and daughters. He had substantial deposits in banks in his name.

Most of the funds for the research had come from individuals and organisations abroad. If Iyer is to be believed, the archbishop even made out his personal car in Iyer's name for a nominal Rs 25,000. Iyer himself claims that he had not paid anything.

Questions were being asked around this time about the large sums of money being given to Acharya Paul for his research. The sceptics demanded proof that something tangible, that would benefit Christianity in the long run, had indeed been achieved. Only the archbishop's pre-eminence prevented a direct confrontation.

In 1976, Iyer obtained a passport in the name of Acharya Paul. In 1977, accompanied by the archbishop, he went abroad. To the Vatican, among other places, where he had a lengthy audience with Pope Paul VI. The duo then visited several religious congregations and spoke about comparative

religions. Everywhere he went, he spoke about the origins of Christianity in India and about his “monumental research” while the archbishop displayed the evidence. Money was collected for funding further research.

During their absence from India, individuals inimical to John Ganesh had organised themselves into a powerful force. Even as he was relaxing in his home in Srirangam after his return, the archbishop was pressurised to file a complaint with the police. That he had been duped by Ganesh Iyer who had claimed to be a bachelor but was in reality a married man. That he had defrauded the archbishop to the tune of around Rs 14 lakhs in the name of research into Christianity.

Investigations into the sordid episode began. The police, led initially by Inspector Seshadri and later by Inspector Chandrayaperumal, searched Iyer’s residence. They unearthed the “originals” of all the photographs produced by Iyer as proof of his research—writings on strips of brown paper cut to resemble medieval palm frond writings, pasted on sheets of white paper. The police learnt that the photographs had been taken at a studio in Tiruchi and this led to the seizure of all the relevant negatives.

The police discovered how the photographs had been authenticated by various institutions—seals and rubber stamps of all the concerned institutions were lying in Iyer’s home. Letterheads bearing the names of various Hindu and Christian scholars were recovered. The letters purported to have been received by Iyer from these personages, which he allegedly used to dupe Mariadas and later the archbishop, were declared to be clever forgeries by the state handwriting expert Srinivasan. The writing on these and the writing on the brown paper, though cleverly disguised, compared favourably with Iyer’s specimen. Account books showing details of amounts received from the archbishop and the amounts spent by him were recovered.

Iyer’s antecedents were thoroughly investigated and it was proved that he was a middle school drop-out, not having studied beyond standard seven. Further confirmation was obtained from the Banares University that they did not have Dr. John Ganesh on their staff either teaching or doing research into philosophy and comparative religions.

The police case was complete. On April 29, 1980, Iyer was arrested and placed under remand, while prosecution proceedings were instituted under sections 419 (cheating by impersonation), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 465 (forgery), 471 (using as genuine a forged document), 473 (making and possessing counterfeit seals with intent to commit forgery) of the Indian Penal Code and under section 12-B of the Indian Passports Act (obtaining a passport supplying false information).

Archbishop Arulappa testified against Iyer before the court. Iyer initially pleaded innocence, but later admitted to the fraud on all counts. He prayed that in view of his advancing age and critical family circumstances, he be shown leniency.

On February 6, 1986, P. Aruvudayappan, second metropolitan magistrate, Madras, delivered his judgment in case number 100087/82: "Taking advantage of the soft attitudes of public witnesses 2 and 3 (Father Mariadas and Father Arulappa)," he averred, "the defendant (Ganesh Iyer) had taken from them about Rs 13.5 lakhs between 1975 and 1980. This has been clearly established. Taking into consideration the nature of the offences, the defendant is being held guilty under various sections of the I.P.C. and has to undergo 10 months imprisonment and 5 months rigorous imprisonment under section 12-B of the Indian Passports Act. These sentences are to run concurrently. He had been arrested on April 29, 1980 and let off on bail on June 27, 1980. These 59 days of imprisonment are to be deducted from the total sentence as required under section 428 of the code of criminal procedure."

The magistrate's judgement notwithstanding, doubts still linger. Why were the archbishop's suspicions not aroused until he had handed over a whopping Rs 13,49,250 (according to records, though Iyer claims to have received far in excess of that sum) on a spurious research project? Why had the archbishop not bothered to verify the authenticity of the "documents" produced by Iyer with the museums and other institutions concerned, directly? Why did he not bother to accompany Iyer to the actual site of his "research" when he had found time to accompany him to Rome, the Vatican, Germany, France, Spain, the United States?

With the archbishop still indisposed, answers to these questions are not forthcoming.

What is even more curious is that even as criminal proceedings against Iyer were in progress in the magistrate's court, a civil suit for a compromise had been filed in the Madras High Court. The compromise decree was taken up immediately after the conclusion of the criminal case. Since Iyer had admitted the offence, his jail term was reduced to a mere two months imprisonment. And since he had already served 59 days of remand, this period was adjusted against the sentence.

In other words, Iyer, who had defrauded the archbishop to the tune of about Rs 14 lakhs, was let off without any further punishment. He was ordered to forfeit all claim on the money given to him by the archbishop. Accordingly, the ornaments and money seized from him by the police were returned to the archbishop. As part of the compromise, Iyer was allowed to retain the large bungalow he had purchased with the archbishop's money.

"I agreed to this compromise because there was nothing else I could do," says Iyer. His viewpoint is understandable. For, going by the lower court's verdict, he would have not only had to serve 5 months of rigorous imprisonment, but would have automatically had to forfeit all his properties including the house. Why the archbishop agreed to the compromise is not understandable.

Today Ganesh Iyer lives on the first floor of his house in Srirangam—the lower portion is let out on rent, enabling him to receive a monthly income. He is by no means affluent but is certainly a far cry from the penury to which his family and he would have been consigned, if it were not for the compromise. Father Arulappa is convalescing, recovering from a major surgery. He has handed over the mantle of archbishop to Reverend G. Casimir on "health grounds".

And the case, though officially closed, remains in many minds an unsolved mystery.¹

1. Originally published under the title “Hoax!” in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, April 26-May 2, 1987, Bombay.

Archbishop Arulappa's Document Forger Goes To Jail

Ganesh Iyer & K.P. Sunil

His frame is sparse. He looks older than his 67 years. His white attire is crumpled and dirty. It is torn in a few places, indicating obvious paucity of finances. His long, flowing white beard gives him an ascetic look.

He speaks in spurts. In fluent Tamil and faultless English, unexpected in one who did not even complete his schooling. He is a great accumulator of books on a variety of subjects. From philosophy to religion, law to communism, in addition to complete sets of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Americana*. He is capable of speaking at length on any subject. An ability that endeared him to several persons, notably the Archbishop of Madras.

Ganesh Iyer, Paul Ganesh, John Ganesh, Janakiram Ganesh, Paul Gouthaman, Acharya Paul ...

Iyer was initially hesitant to talk to *The Weekly* about how he allegedly defrauded the Catholic mission in India of Rs 14 lakhs. "The case has only now come to an end," he explains. "My opponents tried everything to crucify me before coming to a sort of compromise. I do not wish to tell you the truth of the whole affair. Because that will infuriate them further and they might renew their attacks on me. And I am financially in no position to defend myself, leave alone retaliate."

On his background

"I have not had much by way of formal education. Only up to standard seven. My father was very poor and could not afford to educate his children much. He moved from his native village of Kannadikaathan in Ramnad district to Ceylon. It was there that I came into intimate contact with a college professor, A.H. Williams. He taught me English. He also introduced

me to Christianity. I became so proficient in English that very soon, on my return to my native village, I was giving tuitions to some students.”

On his association with Christianity

“I read a lot of books on Christianity. I became convinced that Christ was the almighty God—the saviour of the world. I voluntarily converted myself to Christianity. Nobody forced me or compelled me. I changed my name to John Ganesh. I started addressing prayer meetings and preaching. I gained so much knowledge on the subject of Christianity that I was the main speaker at several conventions. The people so loved my talks that when it was advertised in newspapers, they just thronged to hear me.

“On one occasion, authorities even ran a special train to carry people coming to one of my meetings. My relatives did not object to my close links with Christianity because I was bringing in money. Though I was married, I was away most of the time and for the best part of 20 years, I had little contact with my family.”

On his introduction to the Archbishop of Madras, Father Arulappa

“I reached a stage when I knew Christian theology better than most priests. I knew the Bible word for word. During my travels, I met some Catholic fathers in Sriviliputhur. They were quite taken aback by my knowledge of Christian theology. One of them took a fancy to me. It was he who introduced me to Father Arulappa. This was around 1973-74.”

On how he became a religious pioneer

“For the first three months Archbishop Arulappa treated me very nicely. I never even dreamt that one day he would misguide me. He used to frequently say: ‘Despite being Christians we do not have knowledge equal to yours on the subject. We are in a situation in which we have to learn Christianity from you.’

“I was perpetually short of money those days. And he used to give me some cash off and on.

“One day, he told me: ‘You have tremendous knowledge. Now I want you to do something for me. I have a long-standing desire which you alone can

fulfil and, in the process, you will be able to do a tremendous service for the cause of Christianity as well.'

"I asked him what he wanted me to do.

"'Christianity,' he said, 'was in India right from the beginning. But the general impression is that it had been brought here by foreigners. I want to prove to the world,' he said, 'that lots of evidence exists in our country to prove that Christianity was here all along. I am not interested in spreading this finding among Indians. But I want it to be taken to the Westerners. It is they who are perpetuating the theory that they brought Christianity to India. I want you to do something in this connection.'

"He told me that he had written a book in Tamil, *Perinba Villakku*, in which he had propounded the theory that Tiruvalluvar was a Christian. I later found out that the book was not a popular one at all. That even today copies of it are gathering dust in bookstalls all over the country. He wanted me to do some work based on the contents of that book. Though Tiruvalluvar and St. Thomas, one of Jesus Christ's twelve disciples, had lived in different periods, he wanted me to unearth evidence to the effect that the two great personages had indeed met and that St. Thomas had converted Tiruvalluvar to Christianity and baptised him. He assured me: 'If you do this successfully, both of us will become internationally famous. We will also get a lot of money. It will be very useful to you.'

"I had misgivings about the whole project. Because I knew that in India there were no ancient documents or monuments on Christianity. Some documents are there, no doubt, to the effect that St. Thomas came to India. But doubts still persist whether the person mentioned in those documents is indeed apostle Thomas or his disciple.

"In fact, when some celebrations were held in Kerala over two decades ago, Jawaharlal Nehru, our then prime minister, who attended the functions, asked the learned priests who had gathered: 'Is it really true that St. Thomas came to India?' Nobody answered him. They merely smiled. They were unable to answer his query because they had no proof.

“When I told the archbishop all this, he said: ‘If that is so, then we will have to concoct evidence to prove our point. Evidence like palm frond writings, copper plate inscriptions and all that.’ I did not like the plan one bit. But I wanted money. And this he promised to arrange for me. So I went along with him.”

On his *modus operandi*

“The archbishop had planned minutely how this was to be done. It was simple but ingenious. Simply brilliant, if perverted. He made me cut brown paper into long strips—irregular and uneven like ancient palm frond scrolls. I then wrote whatever he asked me to on these strips. I adopted a scrawl that was similar to ancient writings—often indecipherable. And the style of language was also lifted from the past. Laborious and involved.

“These strips of brown paper were then pasted with glue on white cardboard and then photographed. The photo print looked exactly like a photograph of ancient palm frond scrolls. The archbishop intended to pass these off to unsuspecting people as the real stuff. I was still hesitant. But a friend, Santiago, who used to work in a bank, advised me to go ahead and comply with the archbishop’s request.

“I made several such photographs. Hundreds, thousands. Entire portions of *Tirukkural* were written this way and interspersed with Christian thought. He used to give me money for expenses. Five thousand. Four thousand. Ten thousand. Whatever was left, he told me, I could keep for myself. And make myself comfortable. The money, he told me, came from abroad. It was for the specific purpose of my research. And so there was no necessity to account the same to the Church.”

On his growing intimacy with the archbishop

“I had informed the archbishop that I was a married man. Because of financial problems, I am roaming around looking for some money, I said. I do not wish to get involved in something illegal. I do not want to get into trouble. And my family should not suffer on that account.

“Whenever I used to voice such misgivings, the archbishop used to reassure me: ‘Don’t worry. I’ll stand by you. No government or police will do

anything against you. I will see to that. And no one in this diocese will dare do anything against my will.’ He repeated this to me several times, holding my hands in his.

“He also used to consult me on several other matters. In the archbishop’s residential complex in Madras, there is an ashram called Shanti Ashram. This was actually constructed under direction from me. He used to tell me that I was to him what St. Paul was to Jesus Christ.

“To drive home the point, he even began calling me Paul. He began introducing me to others as Acharya Paul. He told me that he had informed everyone that the research on Tiruvalluvar and St. Thomas was being done by Acharya Paul, a bachelor—a *brahmachari*. He requested that I keep up this pretence before others. But he gave me enough money to keep my family happy.”

On the material benefits he derived out of this association

“This house in Srirangam in which I am still staying was bought with money given by the archbishop. I also purchased some jewellery for my wife and two daughters. I had an Ambassador car at that time. In addition, the archbishop gave me the car he was personally using. I did not pay him any money for this. But he showed in his books that he had sold it to me for Rs 25,000.

“His constant refrain was: ‘You have whatever you want. But fulfil my life’s mission. You will not have any problems.’ I must have benefited to the tune of over Rs 14 lakhs during my association with the archbishop.”

On the first rumble of trouble

“Many individuals in the Church resented my intimacy with the archbishop. I used to visit Madras frequently and, on these occasions, used to stay in some of the leading hotels there. The archbishop used to bear all these expenses.

“There were rumours at that time that some like Father D’Souza and Father Francis (the archbishop’s personal assistant) were likely to file a complaint against me before the police. But again, Father Arulappa assured me that

no one under him would dare to breach his authority and file a complaint. He has even sent me letters which were seized by the police, to this effect.”

On his trip to the Vatican

“In 1977, the archbishop and I went to Rome. We visited the Vatican. And there I was presented to the Pope. The archbishop introduced me to the Pope as Acharya Paul, a great researcher who had done a lot to get at the roots of Christianity in India. He showed the Pope copies of some of the ‘documentary evidence’ I had unearthed.

“Let me tell you one thing. The Pope, great man that he was, was not impressed. Though he was saying very good, very good all the while, he took the photographs in his hands, glanced at them and then just let them fall out of his hands.

“He did not care for them. Nor did he pay much heed to what the archbishop was saying. But he was very kind to me. Despite the fact that several dignitaries including heads of states were waiting for an audience, he spent about 20 minutes with me.”

On how he was finally exposed

“From the Vatican, we toured several places in Europe and finally returned to India. I straight away went to my home in Srirangam. Since I did not hear from the archbishop for a number of days, I went over to Madras to meet him. It was then that he told me that during his absence, things had taken a turn for the worse. Someone had filed a complaint before the police, he informed me. But there is no cause for worry. ‘When the matter comes to court, I only have to say a word and the case will be dropped.’ I worried a lot, nevertheless.

“Immediately after, the police came. They raided my house and searched all over. They seized all documents and letters pertaining to the case. And they arrested me and placed me under remand. They seized my bank accounts and interrogated my family members.

“I was made out to be a cheat, and a fraud. They even made out a case against me that I had taken a passport using a false name and a false address.

In the passport my name was Acharya Paul, the name given to me by Archbishop Arulappa. The application had been made out by him and he had given my address as care of the archbishop's residence in Madras.

"So what wrong have I done? But who would listen to me? Who was there to talk on my behalf? No one. Why? Because everyone had been heavily bribed. That is why. I understand that they gave away as much as Rs 15 lakhs by way of bribes.

"In the metropolitan magistrate's court, they convicted me to ten months imprisonment. Later, in the high court, acting on a compromise petition filed, the sentence was reduced to two months. As I had already been under remand for nearly that period, I was let off. As part of the compromise, I had to forfeit all that I had earned through the archbishop—my money, jewellery, everything except my house which I was permitted to retain. I have no complaints about all that.

"What I feel sad about is that I had done all this at the instance of the archbishop who had held all along that he would help me out at the time of trouble. But he himself came to court and testified that I had duped him and defrauded him of money. That was the last straw."¹

1. Originally published under the title "What Wrong Have I Done?" in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, April 26-May 2, 1987, Bombay.

Indian Historian Makes A Mockery Of Indian History

Veda Prakash

The following observations refer to the article “Early Tamil Oral, Literary and Archaeological Traditions and St. Thomas Christians” by Dr. K. Sadasivan, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, which appeared in the *Journal of Indian History and Culture*, March 2003, 10th issue. The JIHC is published by the prestigious C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer Institute of Indological Research, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer Foundation, 1, Eldams Road, Chennai 600018, Tamil Nadu, India. It is edited by Dr. G.J. Sudhakar, and the editorial board consists of Dr. K.V. Raman, Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Dr. T.K. Venkatasubramanian, and Dr. Nanditha Krishna.¹

In his article of some twenty pages in the JIHC, Dr. Sadasivan spewed forth the usual Christian missionary propaganda about St. Thomas in India. He appears to be guided by the unholy spirit of the late document forger Archbishop Arulappa. He writes:

It can be understood from the foregoing study that even in the absence of any documented history, the universal and local Christian traditions are unanimous in their views that St. Thomas arrived in India in 52 AD, reached Mylapore via the West Coast (Thirivithancode-Aralvaimozhi Pass), performed there his apostolic service in converting the natives to his religious fold and suffered martyrdom there at the hands of a native in AD, though there are differing versions about his killer(s) and the place of his martyrdom. Moreover, the presence of a strong St. Thomas community, the tomb, the chapel, and the cross, and the architectural remains, make us believe that St. Thomas was living among Tamils of first century AD. However, it is premature to postulate a theory of Christian influence in Tamil works, particularly, *Tirukkural*, though it seems to display the possibility of having been influenced by the Bible or Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount”. But, a spark of Christian influence on the *Tirukkural* is not impossible as this didactic work is believed to have been written in the second century AD, when St. Thomas Christians in the West Coast were still entrenched and began spreading the Gospel of Christ. - JIHC, March 2003, pp. 33-34.

In this extraordinary piece of duplicitous writing, Dr. Sadasivan states openly that there is no documented history of St. Thomas in India and that it is a matter of belief; yet, he has the conceit to present it as history. Obviously, he has not read what Dr. Nagaswamy has said about St. Thomas and the replacement of the Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore beach by San Thome Cathedral.

Furthermore, none of Dr. Sadasivan's "architectural remains" stand up to scrutiny. His claim that there is a universal and unanimous view among Christians that St. Thomas arrived in India in 52 AD is an outright lie. There is no universal and unanimous view among Christians about St. Thomas in India. In fact, Protestant Christians regard the whole St. Thomas legend as a Catholic superstition brought to India by the Portuguese.

Next, Christians did not use the cross to represent Christianity until after the fourth century (see Koenraad Elst, *The Return of the Swastika*, New Delhi, 2007). Early Christians were Jews who continued to practice Jewish religious law. They held the inauspicious Roman cross, an instrument of torture and death, in abhorrence, and used a fish symbol with or without the name of Jesus in Greek inscribed in its body as their symbol of religious identity. The adoption of the cross as a Christian symbol does not come about until the third century at the very earliest. So the "bleeding" cross on Big Mount cannot be attributed to St. Thomas. It has been correctly identified as Persian and dated to the eighth century, and the Syrian Christian artisan who carved the cross has identified himself in the Pahlavi inscription surrounding it as Afras son of Chaharbukht the Syrian.

As for the "architectural remains" referred to by Dr. Sadasivan, they consist of temple ruins on which early Nestorian Christian missionaries and the later Portuguese pirates built their St. Thomas churches. The irony is that Christian writers today attribute the destruction of the Hindu temples in question and the building of the churches on their ruins to St. Thomas himself. They absolve themselves of the crime by blaming it on their apostle and patron saint, Thomas!

There is also the problem of the Bible and the "Sermon on the Mount" found in the *Gospel of Mathew*, chapters five to seven. There was no Bible

as such until the fourth century, and indeed no official Bible until after 326 AD when Emperor Constantine has his revised and edited version published, so neither St. Thomas nor Tiruvalluvar—assuming that he had lived in the first century AD—could have possessed one, and the “Sermon on the Mount” is known by historians to be a late interpolation into the New Testament. It is believed to have had a Pagan author, very probably a Neo-Platonist author, which is why it expresses non-sectarian universal values that have an appeal to non-Christians. It could not have influenced the writing of the *Tirukkural* because it didn’t exist in Tiruvalluvar’s time. And this, of course, brings us to the prime deceit in Dr. Sadasivan’s thesis: he would like us to accept that the *Tirukkural* was written in the second century AD and not the second century BC. But it is widely accepted by historians that the *Tirukkural* was written between 100 and 200 BC. So what is Dr. Sadasivan’s agenda? And why has he tried the old trick of giving a late date to the *Tirukkural* in order to claim a Christian influence on it?

But, a spark of Christian influence on the *Tirukkural* is not impossible as this didactic work is believed to have been written in the second century AD, when St. Thomas Christians in the West Coast were still entrenched and began spreading the Gospel of Christ. - JIHC, pp. 33-34.

Had Archbishop Arulappa been alive, he would have generously funded Dr. Sadasivan’s “research” in Tirunelveli, as he did that of Acharya Paul in Srirangam. How is it that Dr. Sadasivan uses the same bogus research methodology as Archbishop Arulappa and his collaborator Dr. M. Deivanayagam, and the gang of St. Thomas propagandists and promoters at the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese? The latter can be excused for their advancement of the St. Thomas fable as they have an investment to protect for the gullible Christian faithful: an empty St. Thomas tomb which they have renovated and decorated with a plaster idol of the dead apostle, gold and silver accoutrements, and a fake assassin’s spear made in China and bought in Chennai’s Burma Bazaar for a hundred rupees.

Dr. Sadasivan is an intellectual criminal and a disgrace to Indian history writing, but his editor Dr. G.J. Sudhakar at the *Journal of Indian History and Culture* has not covered himself with glory either. He writes “Dr. K. Sadasivan, of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, has added scholarship

through his paper ‘Early Tamil Oral, Literary and Archaeological Traditions and St. Thomas Christians’. He has been a history professor at Loyola College, editor of several history journals, office bearer of IHC, SIHC, TNHC, etc.”

Dr. Sadasivan has not produced any scholarship in this paper and Dr. Sudhakar is sucking up to some very ordinary academic positions and titles with his praise of Dr. Sadasivan’s motivated contribution to the St. Thomas in India controversy. He shows a lack of discrimination and appears to be devoid of any academic ethics. He should be ashamed. Under his editorial guidance the *Journal of Indian History and Culture* has lost all credibility among research scholars and academics worldwide.

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1. Dr. Nanditha Krishna of the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer Foundation, Chennai, is a St. Thomas in India protagonist who publishes in *The Hindu* and other media. But a scholar like Dr. R. Nagaswamy who has exposed the St. Thomas fable and studied the replacement of the Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore beach by San Thome Cathedral, allowing Dr. Sadasivan’s article to be published in the *Journal of Indian History and Culture* is inexplicable.

The Pre-Thinking Debate

Sita Ram Goel & Khushwant Singh

The letters that follow were exchanged between the historian Sita Ram Goel and the journalist Khushwant Singh. They are self-explanatory. Sita Ram Goel wrote to Khushwant Singh on 3 December 1992:

I am writing to you with reference to your article, “The Divided House of Kerala,” in *The Sunday Observer* of December 1-7, 1991. Among other things, you say that “In AD 52 St. Thomas, one of the 12 apostles, arrived in northern Malabar and succeeded in converting some Namboodiri Brahmins and Nairs.”¹

I draw your attention to a hot controversy which is presently raging in the South regarding the role of the St. Thomas myth. A clipping from the *Organiser* dated 7.11.91 is enclosed.² It shows what use the Christian theologians are making of the myth, and how Hindu scholars have started reacting to it.

Leading Christian historians have doubted whether a man like St. Thomas ever existed in history. Even those who accept his existence are positive that he never came to India. The whole subject has been discussed in detail in our publication, *The Myth of St. Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, a copy of which I am forwarding to you by separate post.

I hope you will spend some time to study the story. We should be able to stand on firm ground so far as facts are concerned unless we want to vindicate Bernard Shaw who said that journalists have a vested interest in ignorance.

Khushwant Singh replied to this letter by postcard on December 6th:

Thanks for your letter and the clipping which I have read. And the booklet which I will read. You pronounce as facts what suits your pre-thinking. What are the “facts” about the Ayodhya dispute all only known to historians who don’t seem to agree on any of them.

Sita Ram Goel replied to Khushwant Singh’s “pre-thinking” on December 9th:

Thanks for your postcard of the 6th.

The sentence, “You pronounce as facts what suits your pre-thinking,” is not quite clear to me. Have we cited facts which are not facts? Or are there facts which we

have not taken into account? In both cases, we wait for the other side to come out with evidence. So far we have waited in vain.

I have studied the sources and can say with full responsibility that St. Thomas visiting India is as much true as Jesus spending his early years in a Tibetan monastery. People in highest places have repeated the story without caring to check the sources. But repetition does not make truth out of a lie.

About Ayodhya, I must say that our side has been completely ignored by the media. I am sending another publication, *History versus Casuistry*, which shows how the VHP scholars presented solid evidence, and how the AIBMAC ran away from the conference convened by the Chandra Shekhar Government. Kindly find out for yourself if the AIBMAC has published the “evidence” they presented.

1. The early history of the Namboodiri Brahmins is very obscure. Historians do not allow that they arrived in Kerala before the fourth century CE. Where they arrived from is also not clear. What is certain is that there were no Namboodiri Brahmins in Kerala in the middle of the first century when St. Thomas allegedly arrived in Muziris (Kodungallur). So the claim that some Syrian Christian families are descendants of Namboodiris converted by St. Thomas is a fabrication to give these old Christian families caste status. It is more probable that some members of the Namboodiri Brahmin community were originally Syrian Christians who converted to Vedic Hinduism after the fourth century arrival of Syrian Christian refugees from Persia and Mesopotamia. There is also no reason to believe members of the Nair community converted to Christianity at any time in the early Christian era. Syrian Christians were given the caste status of Nairs by the Malabar rulers; it does not follow that they were originally of the Nair caste. The original West Asian Christians who found their way to India's west coast after the fourth century were from Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia, and spoke the Semitic Middle Aramaic dialect of Syriac. Syriac remains the liturgical language of Syrian Christians today.

2. See “Christian Author Misrepresents Tiruvalluvar As A Disciple Of Thomas” by R.S. Narayanaswami in this book.

Part Three

Pope Doubts St. Thomas Evangelised South India

Ishwar Sharan

On 27 September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI made a speech in St. Peter's Square at Vatican City in which he recalled an ancient St. Thomas tradition. He said that "Thomas first evangelised Syria and Persia and then penetrated as far as western India, from where Christianity also reached South India."¹ This statement upset the Indian bishops in Kerala, and as it was perceived to be a direct violation of the beliefs of many Indian Christians, it was brought to the attention of the Pope's editors and amended the next day on the Vatican's website to read that St. Thomas himself had reached South India. G. Ananthakrishnan's article "Thomas's visit under doubt" in *The Times of India*, 26 December 2006, reads:

His reluctance to believe what fellow disciples said about Jesus Christ's resurrection earned him the name Doubting Thomas. Centuries later, St. Thomas—believed to be the man who brought Christianity to India—finds himself in the shadow of "doubt" with none other than the Pope contradicting his evangelical trek in the country, only to modify it a few days later. But far from dousing the fire, the Pope has rekindled a debate and given critics an issue on the platter.

Pope Benedict XVI made the statement at the Vatican on September 27, 2006. Addressing the faithful during the Wednesday catechises, he recalled that St. Thomas first evangelised Syria and Persia, and went on to western India from where Christianity reached southern India. The import of the statement was that St. Thomas never travelled to south India, but rather evangelised the western front, mostly comprising today's Pakistan.

Knowingly or unknowingly, he had in one stroke challenged the basis of Christianity in India and demolished long-held views of the Church here that St. Thomas landed in Kerala, where he spread the gospel among Hindus. The comments were especially a let-down for the Syrian Christians of Kerala, who proudly trace their ancestry to upper-caste Hindus said to have been evangelised by St. Thomas upon his arrival in 52 AD.

The comments went unnoticed until *Sathyadeepam*, the official mouthpiece of the Syro-Malabar Church, picked it up. Writing in it, George Nedungat, a member of the Oriental Pontifical Institute of Rome, conveyed the community's anguish and claimed that previous popes had recognised St. Thomas's work in south India.

The Pope's original statement given out at St. Peter's, before it was amended on the Vatican website, was factually correct and reflected the geography of the *Acts of Thomas*, i.e. Syria, Parthia (Persia/Iran) and Gandhara (Afghanistan/Pakistan). There is no historical evidence to support the tradition that St. Thomas came to South India, and on 13 November 1952 Vatican officials sent a message to Kerala Christians stating that the landing of St. Thomas at Muziris (Cranganore now Kodungallur) on 21 November 52 AD was "unverified". When this writer sought confirmation of the 1952 Vatican statement in 1996, the Vatican's reply was disingenuous and non-committal. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints said that he needed more information and that the life of St. Thomas was the object of historical research and not within his congregation's competence.²

Earlier, in 1729, the Bishop of Madras-Mylapore had doubted whether the tomb in San Thome Cathedral was that of St. Thomas and wrote to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome for clarification. Rome's reply was never published and we may assume it was a negative reply. Again, in 1871 the Roman Catholic authorities at Madras were "strong in disparagement of the special sanctity of the localities [viz. San Thome, Little Mount, and Big Mount identified by the Portuguese after 1517] and the whole story connecting St. Thomas with Mailapur."³ However, in 1886 Pope Leo XIII stated in an apostolic letter that St. Thomas "travelled to Ethiopia, Persia, Hyrcania and finally to the Peninsula beyond the Indus", and in 1923 Pope Pius XI quoted Pope Leo's letter and identified St. Thomas with "India". These papal statements make no reference to South India. In fact, the India they refer to is now Pakistan.

Pope John Paul II visited India twice in 1986 and 1999 and prayed at the alleged tomb of St. Thomas in San Thome Cathedral, but, like St. Francis Xavier before him, he had nothing to say about St. Thomas's visit to South

India or Mylapore in the first century. This is a curious omission on the Pope's part in that he was an ardent missionary who openly promoted the evangelising of India and Asia, and a statement from him confirming a visit by St. Thomas to South India would have certainly supported his agenda and that of his Indian bishops.

1. As quoted in *Deccan Chronicle*, Chennai, of 23 November 2006, under the title "Pope angers Christians in Kerala".

2. Our letter to the Prefect, Sacred Congregation of Rites, Vatican City, dated 26 August 1996, reads: "*I am doing research on St. Thomas in India and have learned that your office issued a letter on November 13, 1952 which stated that the landing of St. Thomas at Cranganore in 53 AD is unverified. I would like to know if in fact the said letter was issued and, if that is not the case, whether you can confirm that St. Thomas was martyred and buried in Madras. I would be most grateful if you could direct me to any authentic evidence supporting the story of St. Thomas in India.*" The reply from the Prefect, Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Rome, dated 11 September 1996, reads: "*This Congregation for the Causes of Saints has received your letter of 26th August last in which you have asked for information regarding Saint Thomas' presence in India. We have not found in our Archives the letter supposedly written by this Congregation on 13th November 1952, of which you speak, because of a lack of more precise data (diocese, destination, etc.). Nor do we have other data regarding Saint Thomas since this Archive was begun in 1588. His life is the object of the research of historians which is not the particular competence of this Congregation.*" This reply was a brush off. The Prefect knew what we were asking for and could have located the 1952 Vatican letter in a few minutes if he wished to.

3. Henry Yule, *Marco Polo*, London, 19??.

Bishop Doubts St. Thomas Evangelised South India

Times News Service

The following remarkable news item appeared in *The Times of India*, Kochi edition, on 13 April 2018:

After the land scam, another controversy has erupted in the Syro-Malabar Church. This time around, the ruckus is over the historical validity of the claim that St. Thomas the apostle had visited Kerala.

Three days ago, Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos of the Niranam diocese of the Jacobite Syrian Church said St. Thomas hadn't visited the state and did not convert upper caste Hindus to Christianity.

Syro-Malabar Church official spokesperson and senior priest belonging to Enakulam-Angamali diocese Fr. Paul Thelekatt too agreed with the Niranam bishop: "There is no valid evidence to prove the visit of St. Thomas to Kerala. It is believed that he visited Kerala in the first century and converted Brahmins to Christianity. But the migration of Brahmins to Kerala began only in the 7th century,¹ indicating that such claims were false. The fact is that a group of people followed Christianity for several centuries in Kerala."

Syrian Christians in Kerala believe that St. Thomas had visited Kerala and converted the upper caste Namboodiris to Christianity. They believe St. Thomas had also built eight churches (also known as 7.5 churches) in various parts of Kerala. The Syrian Christians are also known as St. Thomas Christians. "Even the Pope has made it clear that St. Thomas had not visited Kerala. But a certain section among Kerala Christians have been nursing a certain caste bias claiming to be descendants of upper caste Hindus who were converted to Christianity," said Fr. Thelakkat. In fact, Syrian Christians in Changanacherry, Pala and Kanjirappally claim that they belong to upper caste Hindu families converted by St. Thomas. Most of the families in these areas reportedly claim they hail from "Athi Puratana Katholika Kudumbam".

However, Kerala Catholic Bishops Council (KCBC) doesn't seem to be amused over the controversy.

"There is no need to discuss the issue now. Those who raised the issue should solve it," said KCBC official spokesperson Fr. Varghese Vallikkatt.

1. There is a record of Namboodiri Brahmins in Kerala in the middle of the fourth century CE, when the practice of the Vedic *shruta* traditions were revived by Mezhatol Agnihothri (b. 342 CE). The sixth or seventh century dates for their appearance is a politically-coloured Marxist conjecture. But it is true that there is no record of Namboodiris in Kerala in the first three and a half centuries CE (as there is none for Christians).

How Missionaries Invented 'Dravidian Christianity'

Rajiv Malhotra

Most liberal Americans are simply unaware of the international political machinations of evangelicals. Funded and supported by the American Christian right, they promote a literal and extreme version of Christianity abroad and attempt to further a fundamentalist Christian political agenda using unscrupulous methods. In India, picking up where the colonialists left off, they have gone so far as to revive discredited racial theories and fabricate scholarship in a dangerous game of divide and rule.

In South India, a new identity called Dravidian Christianity is being constructed. It is an opportunistic combination of two myths: the "Dravidian race" myth and another that purports that early Christianity shaped the major Hindu classics!

The discredited Aryan race theory [has been] discussed in my [books]. Its counterpoint is the "Dravidian" race theory. Both constructs are equally damaging and have been proven false. The "Dravidians", the theory goes, were the original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent and were driven to southern India by the invading, lighter skinned and racially different "Aryans".

While there is no mainstream "Aryan" political party in India, the Dravidianisation of mainstream identity in the southern state of Tamil Nadu keeps the pernicious pair alive. The Aryan/Dravidian constructs are mutually dependent, and have been very successfully used to generate conflict, including violence (as in Sri Lanka in recent years).

The Dravidian race theory originated in 19th century European scholarship when colonial and evangelical interests used linguistics and ethnic studies to formulate imaginary histories and races. While European scholars were busy appropriating the Sanskrit classics as the heritage of Europeans, British linguists Francis Ellis and Alexander Campbell worked in India to

theorize that the south Indian languages belong to a different family than the north Indian ones. Meanwhile, another colonial scholar, Brian Houghton Hodgson, was promoting the term “Tamulian” as a racial construct, describing the so-called aborigines of India as primitive and uncivilized compared to the “foreign Aryans”.

But it was a scholar-evangelist from the Anglican Church, Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-91), who pioneered what now flourishes as the “Dravidian” identity. In his *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Race*, he argued that the south Indian mind was structurally different from the Sanskrit mind. Linguistic speculations were turned into a race theory. He characterized the Dravidians as “ignorant and dense”, accusing the Brahmins—the cunning Aryan agents—for keeping them in shackles through the imposition of Sanskrit and its religion.

His successor, another prolific Anglican missionary scholar, Bishop G.U. Pope, started to glorify the Tamil classics era, insisting that its underpinnings were Christianity, not Hinduism. Though subsequently rejected by serious scholars of Tamil culture, the idea was successfully planted that Hinduism had corrupted the “originally pure” Tamil culture by adding Sanskrit and Pagan ideas.

Meanwhile, an increasing number of Tamil leaders began to embrace the Dravidian identity. This evolved into Tamil chauvinism that was initially secular and not religious. It was fed by the theory that in the Indian Ocean there once existed a lost continent called Lemuria (similar to the Atlantis myth), the original homeland of the Dravidians. Accounts glorifying Lemuria were taught as historical fact under British rule, because this exacerbated the regional fault lines. After India’s independence, Dravidian identity entered politics, and now dominates the state’s power structure.

The Dravidian identity is now being increasingly Christianised. A new religion called “Dravidian Christianity” has been invented through a sudden upsurge of writings designed to “discover” the existence of quasi-Christianity in Tamil history prior to the coming of the “Aryan” Brahmins. The project is to co-opt Tamil culture, language and literature and systematically cleanse them of Hinduism. Christian interpretations and

substitutes are being injected into the most cherished symbols, artefacts and literary works of Tamil Hindu culture.

The preposterous claim is that Tamil classical literature originated in early Christianity. The Tamil classical tradition consists of two great components: an ethical treatise called *Tirukkural* authored by the great sage Tiruvalluvar, and a sophisticated Vedanta philosophical system called Shaiva Siddhanta, which traces its origins to the Vedas and was nurtured by many Tamil savants over the centuries. Dravidian Christianity appropriates both these foundational works, attributing them to Christian influence. To make this credible, the pre-Christian date for the *Tirukkural* has been replaced by more recent dates.

The narrative used is that St. Thomas, the apostle, visited South India and taught Christianity to the great sage, Tiruvalluvar, who was inspired by Christianity, but did not capture St. Thomas's message accurately. This is often portrayed in recently published paintings showing the sage sitting at the feet of St. Thomas, taking notes. Sanskrit is downgraded as a language created by St. Thomas to spread the Christian message to the uncivilized north Indian races.

The Indian Church has periodically announced archaeological "discoveries" to back the visit of St. Thomas to South India, but none of them have been verified by professional archaeologists. Even the famous Jesuit archaeologist, Father Heras, dismissed the so-called discovery of Thomas's tomb in Chennai.

Western Churches send billions of dollars to Tamil Nadu, the epicentre of the project to harvest Indian souls. While the sheer scale of intellectual fraud and prejudice is breath-taking, the Church's political clout has enabled it to permeate university research, education, museums, politics and film. The state government is even supporting the production of an epic feature film on St. Thomas that will popularise this myth.

The Dravidian Christianity movement has organized an entire series of international conferences over the past decade, where its scholars make outlandish revisions to Indian religious history. They claim that the *Bhagavad Gita*, Tamil classics and even Sanskrit originated after Christ and

under the influence of Christianity. The crackpot Lemurian theory pops up as well. A 2005 conference in New York had the theme, “International Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India.” Senator Hillary Clinton greeted it with the message:

I am confident that the breadth of resources presented during the conference will shed light on the impact of Christianity on medieval and classical India and its effects on the cultural and political climate of India....

Dravidian Christianity has penetrated high places. For instance, Marvin Olasky, an advisor to President George W. Bush, declared that “the two major denominations of Hinduism—Vishnu-followers and Shiva-followers—arose not from early Hinduism but from early Christian churches probably planted by the apostle Thomas in India from AD 52 to 68”. He goes on to explain to his American readers how Christianity brought many key notions into Hinduism.

In *Breaking India*¹ I demonstrate how an influential nexus of Christian-funded institutions and scholars, often supported by western governments, are indulging in large-scale manipulations similar to those in colonial times. Meanwhile, in one of Chennai’s most prominent public places stands a magnificent statue of Bishop Robert Caldwell, the icon who gave the Tamil people their “true history”.²

1. Rajiv Malhotra & Aravindan Neelakandan, *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines*, Bhopal, 2011.

2. Originally published in *The Huffington Post*, 29 March 2011.

Questioning The St. Thomas Origin Of Indian Christianity

C.I. Issac

The fabrication of South Indian history is being carried out on an immense scale with the explicit goal of constructing a Dravidian identity that is distinct from that of the rest of India. It is factual that the term *dravida* is derived from the Greek tongue. They used *dhamir/dhamarike* respectively for Tamil and Tamizakaom. Similarly, they introduced our *arasi* and *inchi* in the West as rice and ginger.

But Bishop Caldwell, with his missionary zeal, misused the Greek derivative of Tamil and Tamizakaom and had given an anthropological representation. It was started in the 19th century with specific designs.

Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1890-1977), a renowned linguist, was of the opinion that Friedrich Max Muller, by the middle of 19th century, introduced Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy. Subsequently Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) followed the same foot-steps and in 1856 published the book *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*.

This book epitomized distinctive anthropological status to the South which was pictured as linguistically separate from the rest of India with an un-Indian culture. There is no definite philological and linguistic basis for asserting unilaterally the term *dravida*. His work was influenced with the defunct Aryan-Dravidian race theories proposed by Max Muller the German linguist. Thereupon the term *dravida* became the name of the family of a language.

During the early days of Common Era (CE) Greeks used *dhamir/damarike* for Tamil/Tamizakaom. Ancient Sri Lankans used *dhamizha* for Tamil. Sanskrit also used *dramida/dravida* for Tamil long before the birth of Common Era. Probably between 1500 to 1000 BCE.

Brahmins of India broadly divided themselves into two groups Pancha Gauda (Gaudam/Bengal, Saraswatam, Kanyakubjam, Utkalam, Kashmeeram) and Pancha Dravida (Gurjara, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra, Dravida (Kerala and Tamil Nadu)). Thus, it has no anthropological base (Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Dravidam*, Annamalai Nagar, 1965).

In the light of the said Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy, it is better to make an enquiry into the contemporary attempts to transform Tamil identity into the Dravidian Christianity. The advocates of this venture are striving to baptise St. Tiruvalluvar through re-writing history. For instance, Chennai Archbishop Arulappa once hired Ganesh Iyer alias Acharya Paul for re-writing the history with the said end. Such vicious endeavours targets to transform even St. Tiruvalluvar, the pride of Mother India, as the disciple of St. Thomas. Anyhow their rationality failed to depict St. Tiruvalluvar as the disciple of Jesus.

They are reducing St. Tiruvalluvar's greatness by making him as the disciple of Thomas who never visited India. Thomas's mission to India is rejected even by Vatican also. Thus, I think, it is genuine to peep into the futility of apostolic origin of the Indian Christianity.

First question to be discussed here is the question of the arrival of St. Thomas and subsequent conversion of Hindu aristocracy (particularly the Namboodiris/Brahmins) to Christianity.

Second one is the date of the question of the origin of Christianity in Kerala, the gateway of Christianity to India.

Third is the European interest behind popularization of generating aristocratic (*savarna*) feeling among the native Christians.

Before the arrival of Europeans in India, a nominal Christian presence was seen only in the Travancore and Cochin regions of Kerala. According to Ward and Conner, even after two centuries of the birth of Christianity, the number of Christians on the Malabar Coast shrank to eight families (Ward and Conner, *The Survey of Travancore and Cochin States*, Trivandrum, 1863).

The antagonism that was generated amongst the Christians and Muslims due to the Crusades of 11th, 12th and 13th centuries prevented Christians

from planting their roots in the Malabar region where Muslims got roots quite earlier.

The Christian population altogether in Travancore and Cochin during the early decades of the 19th century CE was 35,000 with 55 churches (Ward and Connor, *The Survey of Travancore and Cochin States, Trivandrum*, 1863).

C.M. Augur says that from the arrival of Portuguese till the early decades of the nineteenth century here in Kerala there were only less than 300 Christian churches for all of the denominations (C.M. Augur, *Church History of Travancore*, Kottayam, 1902).

G.T. Mackenzie observes, Christians prior to the arrival of Portuguese, did not form the part of Travancore aristocracy (G.T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, Govt. Press, Trivandrum, 1901).

Pope Nicolas IV sent John of Montecorvino, a missionary to convert India and China into Christianity and thus he wrote to Pope in 1306 that “there are very few Christians and Jews (in India) and they are of little weight”. (See G.T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, Govt. Press Trivandrum, 1901} Cosmos Indicopleustus comments that Christians are not masters but slaves (N.K. Jose, *Aadima Kerala Christavar*, Vechoor-Vaikom, 1972).

The centre of the present *savarna* feeling of Syrian Christians of Kerala is the upshot of the wealth, which they had acquired through enhanced spice trade of the European period and the Portuguese pre-eminence in the Church. Above all the Christian Muslim antagonism of West Asia was the real cause of the birth of Christianity of Kerala as seen today. To escape from the Muslim persecution in several Persian, Syrian regions, Christians secured refuge in India and thus it resulted in the birth of Christianity here. It is evident from the above mentioned pre-European period Christian Muslim settlement pattern of Kerala.

In 1816 CE there were, in the Travancore State (now the part of Kerala), 19,524 temples and 301 churches for all denominations. But in 1891, that is after 76 years, the number of temples had shrunk into 9,364 and the number of churches had burgeoned to 1,116. (C.M. Augur, *Church History of Travancore*, Kottayam, 1902).

Under the recommendation of Diwan Col. John Munro, a British subject and agent of the East India Company, in 1812, the Queen of Travancore nationalized 378 wealthy temples. The villain Diwan tactically awarded a natural death to the temple with insufficient resources. Considering the geographical area, the number of the temples set ablaze or knocked down or tactically buried down in Travancore was proportionately much higher than that of temples demolished by the Muslim rulers of Northern India or Mysore Sultans.

In the year 1952 CE, the native Catholic Church approached the Pope in Rome for pontifical approval to celebrate 1900th year of proselytism of Thomas. The Pope declined the request of the Kerala Catholics on the ground that the claim has no historicity. Pope Benedict XVI had also declined the Thomas's arrival and mission in the peninsular India. Only after, the Portuguese Christianity in the South became a notable religious sect.

St. Theresa Church Copper Plate Grant (Terisapalli Cheppadu) executed in 849 CE by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal of Venadu during the reign of Emperor Sthanu Ravi (844-855) is the available oldest historical document linking to Christianity of Kerala. That the grant holders were not native Christians is a notable fact.

Kottayam is the Rome of India. First church of Kottayam, Valiyapalli or Big Church, was built by a Hindu raja of the Thekkumkur dynasty in 1550 CE for the Persian Christian merchants, Knanaya Christians, who settled here (A. Sreedharamenon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970).

The quality of missionaries to India until early British period was also remarkably very low. Missionary urge for Christianisation of India was fermented in England long before the 1813 Charter Act. In 1793 William Carey reached in Bengal, at Serampore, with missionary spirit without proper permission from the Company. Originally, he was a cobbler by profession and turned out to be a Baptist missionary and became instrumental to the general missionary spirit that prevailed over England during this period. (R.C. Majumdar, et al., *An Advanced History of India*, Madras, 1970).

It is the fact that several of the much-applauded missionary families of the colonial period were failed business men or opportunity seekers.

Christian population became decisive power only after the European intervention in the socio-economic structure of Kerala. Robert de Nobili, an early 17th century Catholic missionary of India, who lived in the attire of a Hindu hermit, had established a monastery in Madurai to convert Brahmins. His attempt was to present Christianity in India as an aristocratic and Vedic offshoot. Thus, the Thomas origin of Christianity in the Dravidian South was the outcome of the missionary schema against Hindu religion and culture.

The construction of Dravidian identity and induction of St. Thomas myth is a calculated affair by the European church which is now facing the extinction syndrome. The fragility of Christian base in the West is a well attested factor. In this changing scenario the church cast its eyes in the third millennium over a highly spiritualistic society, the Hindu, for its survival. To a certain extent the missionaries of the South have succeeded to construct and politicize the Dravidian illusion. The need of the hour is to prepare the society to counter all such disguised and overt anti-Hindu accomplishments.¹

1. Speech by Prof. C.I. Issac, Former Head of Department of History, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, in Chennai on 3 February 2011.

Christian Author Misrepresents Tiruvalluvar As Disciple Of Thomas

R.S. Narayanaswami

A controversial book written by a Christian drew strong criticism and attack from eminent Hindu scholars at a function in Madras on October 24, 1991.

The book titled *Viviliyam, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddhantam Oppu Ayvu*, written by one Deivanayagam,¹ was published in 1985-86. It attempted to compare Bible, *Tirukkural* and Shaiva philosophy and concluded that Tiruvalluvar was a disciple of St. Thomas and that his sayings were only sayings from Bible. The writer had attempted to distort and misinterpret the Shaiva Siddhanta to suit his conclusions that all these works emanated from the preachings of St. Thomas who is said to have visited India in the first century AD.

It was given to the Dharmapuram Math to issue a refutation. In spite of refutations from scholars through personal letters, Deivanayagam was unrelenting. Hence the Dharmapuram Shaiva Math had a book of refutation called *Viviliyam, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddhantam Oppaayvin Maruppu Nool* prepared by its very able Tamil and Shaiva scholar, Arunai Vadivelu Mudaliar, and released it at a function.

The function organised by the Shaiva Siddhanta Sabha, was not very well publicised yet it had a gathering of over three hundred Tamil and Shaiva scholars.² The hall was packed to capacity. Justice N. Krishnaswami Reddiar, retired high court judge, presided.

Tamil and Shaiva scholar M.P. Somasundaram, who made the opening speech, deplored that in independent India freedom and rights were being misused to such an extent that books denigrating the ancient religion of the land were allowed to be written. He said the Christian book was a bundle of distortions, misconceptions and misinterpretations of *Tirukkural* verses and Shaivite philosophical works to suit the conclusions of the

author—namely that Christianity had influenced Tiruvalluvar and the Nayanmars. The book was mischievous in content and aim, he asserted. He commended Arunai Vadivelu Mudaliar and the Dharmapuram Math for bringing out a refutation.

Justice Krishnaswami Reddiar strongly criticised the modern tendency of publishing trash in the name of research. He said research must have an aim, a purpose, to get at the truth. Research was not meant to find evidence to denigrate an ancient faith. Research should not start with pre-conclusions or prejudices. Here the author's motive was to show the superiority of Christianity. Religion was based not only on facts but also on faith and beliefs. The book had hurt Hindu beliefs.

Justice Krishnaswami Reddiar quoted from the works of Sita Ram Goel and Ishwar Sharan and asserted that the visit of St. Thomas to India was a myth. He wondered how such a book could be published by [the International Institute of Tamil Studies] set up by the Government. It was a crime that such a book had been written and published and awarded a doctorate degree [by the University of Madras], he said.

If such books were not refuted our progeny would find fault with us; and such books would pass as source material for future researchers. If there was no refutation, then such books would be accepted as telling the truth and would be used for further religious propaganda. He praised the Dharmapuram Math for taking pains to release the book of refutation.

The book by Tamil and Shaiva scholar Vidwan Arunai Vadivelu Mudaliar is the refutation of Deivanayagam's spurious doctoral thesis *Viviliyam, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddhantam Oppu Ayvu*. Mudaliar's refutation is called *Viviliyam, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddhantam Oppaayvin Maruppu Nool* and was published in 1991 by the International Shaiva Siddhanta Research Centre, Dharmapuram, Tamil Nadu, India.

Sarojini Varadappan released the book of refutation. Swaminatha Thambiran of Dharmapuram Math said the *math* head had, by personal correspondence with Deivanayagam, tried to put the facts straight. But he was unrelenting. Then a conference of scholars was held at Dharmapuram to which Deivanayagam was invited. Though he was present, he stood his

ground. Then only, the head of the *math* decided to prepare this book of refutation and release it.

Dr. R. Nagaswami, eminent archaeologist, who had done some excavations at Santhome Church along with a Jesuit, quoted profusely from the writings of Jesuits and exploded the myth of the visit of St. Thomas to India. It was a Portuguese ruse to spread Christianity in India. He said Deivanayagam had taken the visit of St. Thomas to India as an established fact and, based on that, built his theory and conclusions. The fact was St. Thomas had not visited India at all. According to the evidence available, and books on St. Thomas, he had visited only Parthia, Dr. Nagaswami said. He said it was a sad reflection on the Institute of Tamil Studies which had published the book. It was shameful that Madras University had awarded a doctorate for the book without going into its merits.

Vidwan Ambai Sankaranar said that the award of doctorate to the author of the book must be withdrawn as the author had not adduced any evidence as to how Tiruvalluvar was a disciple of St. Thomas. Vidwan Sundara Murthi pointed out how the *Tirukkural* verses were misinterpreted by Deivanayagam.

T.N. Ramachandran said chronology had not at all been taken into consideration by Deivanayagam while comparing the works. Had he been a student of St. Thomas, Tiruvalluvar would have mentioned it, he said.

Vanniyar Adigal said such books were being published taking advantage of the tolerance of Hindus and the liberty and rights given in the Constitution. He said a book by a Muslim showing the superiority of Koran over *Tirukkural* had also been published some years back. It was time for the Hindus to take cognisance of attacks on their doctrines, beliefs and sacred books.

Eighty-five-year-old Arunai Vadivelu Mudaliar, the author of the book of refutation, who was honoured with a silk cloth and cash presentation, said that an attack on his faith was like an attack on his mother and that compelled him to refute the book of Deivanayagam.³

1. Dr. M. Deivanayagam (also spelled Deivanayakam or Theivanayagam) and Dr. R. Arulappa have worked together on the Christianisation of Tiruvalluvar and the *Tirukkural*. In 1975 they co-authored the book *Perinba Villakku* in which Tiruvalluvar is represented as being Christian.
2. That this important conference of Hindu scholars was not reported in the Madras editions of *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* is revealing of the biased editorial policies of these newspapers.
3. Originally published under the title “Tamil scholars assail Christian bid to misrepresent Tiruvalluvar as St. Thomas’s disciple” in *Organiser*, November 7, 1991, New Delhi.

Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese Plans Blockbuster Movie On St. Thomas

Ishwar Sharan

The silence of Pope John Paul II on St. Thomas during his visits to India in 1986 and 1999, and the categorical statement of his successor Pope Benedict XVI in 2006, that St. Thomas did not visit South India, put the cap on the St. Thomas fable for all time to come—except in India. In India the Church operates rather like the European Church operated in the Middle Ages: the Pope in Rome may *say* what he likes but his bishop in India will *do* what he likes so that he can deliver the Christian vote to the “right” politician. When Dr. Koenraad Elst, an agnostic “cultural Catholic” scholar from Belgium writes in the foreword of this book that “in contrast with European Christians today, Indian Christians live in a seventeenth century bubble, as if they are too puerile to stand in the daylight of solid historical fact”, he has understood the Indian Christian and the Indian Church exactly. Therefore, it is not surprising that *The Indian Catholic*, Kochi, reported on 12 June 2008 that:

The Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore is planning to produce a 300-million-rupee movie on St. Thomas, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ, revered as the Apostle of India.

Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa, who heads the archdiocese, presented the 30-crore project before a meeting of Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council seeking their support this week.

The project, scheduled to be inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, is expected to match Hollywood big-budget movies such as *Ben-Hur* and *The Ten Commandments* in budget and in quality.

Church officials plan to launch the project on July 3, the feast day of St. Thomas, in the San Thome Basilica campus in Chennai. The 70-mm, two-and-half-hour feature film would have the bigwigs of Indian film industry on the credit line.

Indian Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith, supports the project along with the bishops in Tamil Nadu, media said quoting Archbishop Chinnappa.

St. Thomas is believed to have arrived in Kerala in 52 AD and established seven churches on the western coast. Tradition also holds that he was martyred in 72 AD in Mylapore. Hence the churches in Kerala and Tamil Nadu have special importance for the movie, said the archbishop.

The archbishop also hoped that a film on the life of St. Thomas would have spiritual consolation for people of all walks of life as it evolved around the theme of human equality and dignity for all.

The film will be made in Tamil first, then in Malayalam and Hindi and later dubbed into various other languages, including English and French, according to Church officials.”

In response to this announcement, we wrote on the Ishwar Sharan website that Roman Catholic bishops in India, rather than making a movie on a fictitious first century Christian missionary, owe Hindus an abject apology and crores of rupees in reparations for the Church’s crimes in India over the centuries. But if they insist on the Rs 30 crore movie, are they going to tell the public the following facts about Judas Thomas as recorded in the *Acts of Thomas*, that:

- Thomas was the look-alike twin brother of Jesus;
- Jesus sold Thomas as a slave for thirty pieces of silver;
- Thomas deceived the kings of Parthia-“India” who gave him respect and hospitality;
- Thomas was a thief;
- Thomas abducted and locked-up women;
- Thomas engaged in various forms of black magic; and
- Thomas was executed by a Zoroastrian king who had initially shown him mercy and asked him to repent of his crimes and leave the country.

Are the bishops going to tell the public this ancient apocryphal story? Or are they going to twist the tale as their Portuguese predecessors did and make Brahmins the villains of the piece and a Hindu king the assassin of a Christian saint?

The St. Thomas in India legend was invented to vilify Hindu priests and malign the Hindu community. It adds insult to injury as Hindus were and

are today its real victims, not Christians and their apostle Thomas. It is a vicious communal tale created by a ruthlessly colonizing Roman Catholic Church, and it has no place on the modern Indian cinema screen. That Catholic bishops should even consider such a production tells us a lot about the Catholic Church in India today.

But what we and the historians of the last two hundred years may say and think about St. Thomas doesn't matter in today's racist Dravidian Tamil Nadu state. Peer Mohammed in the *Deccan Chronicle*, Chennai, reported on 24 June 2008:

Call it the *Dasavataram* impact. A Rs 50-crore-plus mega production in silver screen on Saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, who had spread Christian faith in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is underway.

A period film on St. Thomas spanning continents is to be made in Tamil first with the help of technicians from Hollywood, Bollywood and Kollywood. Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi is launching the ambitious project of the Catholic Archdiocese of Mylapore on July 3, 2008.

"We are not looking for a superhero like Kamal Hassan or Vijay to play the lead role of St. Thomas. When Mel Gibson made *Passion of the Christ*, he chose James Caviezel, a look-alike of Jesus to play the lead. We are searching for someone who resembles St. Thomas," said Dr. Paulraj Lourdusamy, the chief researcher and script-writer of the film.

Though the film is a tragedy, ending with the killing of St. Thomas in Chennai, it will have enough entertainment with nine songs.

The blueprint of the film says, "In the two songs that Saint Thomas sings in Kerala, 22 types of dances of Kerala with their distinct music will be included. In a song that St. Thomas sings in Tamil Nadu, we will present 12 types of dances of Tamil Nadu and their special music as the background to the songs."

The story begins with the journey of the apostle to Edessa, a town in Syria around 29 AD. Thomas's travel through Persia to Taxila in modern Afghanistan (sic) and return to Jerusalem is also covered. He reaches Kerala by around 52 AD and the next 20 years of preaching Christian faith in the continent is the major part of the film. St. Thomas's meeting with Tiruvalluvar is an interesting part of the story.

His encounter with the "reported animal and human sacrifice in the Chennai of first century" may create some controversy once the film is ready for release in 2010.

The *Deccan Chronicle*, it should be noted, is a popular Congress-oriented newspaper. It could not resist the last line about animal and human sacrifice in Mylapore, though in fact there are no records at all for first century Mylapore and the records that do exist for later centuries are moneylenders account books. Tamizchelvan wrote to the newspaper two days later on June 26th:

This is with reference to the report Rs 50 crore film on St. Thomas (DC, June 25). It has been proved beyond doubt by historians that the St. Thomas history propagated by Christians of South India is a myth. Even the Christian records talk about different Thomases at different periods and the Vatican has not upheld even one! The so-called encounter between Thomas and Tiruvalluvar is also a concocted one to give a Christian colour to *Tirukkural* and draw a parallel between Bible and *Tirukkural*. The South Indian Christian community has lost its foundation after the categorical statement of Pope Benedict, which demolished the myth of St. Thomas, and this attempt of making a film on Thomas is just to reinvent the myth and establish it again in the minds of the gullible masses, and it is unfortunate that the chief minister is helping such a dubious cause.

Tamil scholars agree that the Tamil saint and cultural icon Tiruvalluvar lived before the Christian era, dating him ca. 100 BC with some scholars dating him as early as ca. 200 BC. Whatever the exact date, he could not have been a contemporary of St. Thomas. He lived his whole life in Mylapore and the Tamil year is dated from his birthday in January. His *samadhi* shrine is believed to have been close by or in the courtyard of the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore sea front. Tiruvalluvar's shrine and the Shiva temple were destroyed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The *Deccan Chronicle* continuing its report on the mega-movie project, said on July 2nd:

Superstar Rajinikanth may play the role of ancient Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar in the Rs 50-crore-plus movie St. Thomas being produced by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chennai-Mylapore. The film will also have actors like Ajith, Vijay and Vikram in guest roles, according to the film crew.

"The film is to be launched by chief minister M. Karunanidhi on Thursday. We are in discussion with Hollywood actor James Caviezel who played Jesus in *Passion of the Christ*. He may act in our film as Jesus. Some other Hollywood

actor will play St. Thomas,” said Dr. Paulraj Lourdusamy, chief researcher and scriptwriter of the film.

“An important part of the film is St. Thomas’s meeting with sage poet Tiruvalluvar. We thought Rajinikanth would fit that role perfectly. We are trying to discuss the subject with him,” Paulraj added.

Dr. Paulraj who has three doctorates earned from various foreign universities, spent one year in libraries across the world to find the existing literature on St. Thomas. Well-versed in French, he did the script in French first and then in English.

“The script is currently being translated simultaneously into Tamil and Malayalam. The film will be made in Tamil and Malayalam first. The shoot will be conducted in Idukki and Munnar region in Kerala which still preserves the 2,000-year-old biodiversity intact,” said Mr. Sekar, production manager of the film.

The film is to be produced in the name of St. Thomas Apostle of India Trust which has Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa, Deputy Archbishop Lawrence Pius, Treasurer of the diocese Mr. Ernest Paul and Dr. Paulraj as office-bearers.

And finally, the day after the famous launch of the infamous film project by an archdiocese known for its criminal bishops, the *Deccan Chronicle* reported on July 4th:

Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi has asserted that the DMK-led alliance would sweep the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in the state.

“Mr Peter Alphonse wished me success in the ensuing Lok Sabha polls. His wishes will come true,” he said while speaking at the launch of the film St. Thomas here on Thursday.

“I am proud of being referred to as the head of a “minority” government as my government has always toiled for the welfare and well-being of the minorities,” said Mr. Karunanidhi.

Donning the believer’s mantle, the normally atheist chief minister said, “Whether I am accepted by God is more important than whether I accept God. I have to help humanity for being accepted by God. The audience applauded when he said this statement, which he had also made in the presence of Sai Baba last year.

The chief minister said the martyrdom of St. Thomas had inspired him in many ways. Drawing a parallel to King Pari of the Sangam age, who was also killed by

the conspiracy of several kings, he said, “History remembers those who were killed by conspirators. St. Thomas was also a victim of conspiracy.” Mr Karunanidhi launched the film by operating the movie camera.

State electricity minister Arcot N. Veerasamy, Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chennai-Mylapore, Dr. Paulraj Lourdusamy, chief researcher and scriptwriter of the film, were present at the function.

The New Indian Express, usually the first newspaper to report on St. Thomas and his Indian trials, did not have anything to say until the day after the function on July 5th:

The life of St. Thomas, one of Jesus’ 12 apostles, who lived in India, preached the Gospel and died a martyr at Mylapore, is soon to be made into a feature film. The project will be funded by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chennai, Mylapore and the script has been written by Dr. Paulraj Lourdusamy.

Launching the movie on Thursday at Santhome Church, where St. Thomas’ grave is located, chief minister M. Karunanidhi said history chose who to highlight, and St. Thomas was one such a noble soul. “We remember the man who was murdered, St. Thomas, but not the one who killed him. History shows us who is to be remembered,” he announced.

On a lighter vein, he added that it seemed fit that an atheist like him should be attending the launch of a movie by a “minority community”, because his government has been hailed a minority government in the recent past. “By asking me if I’ve accepted god, would only degrade your god who is so great. On the contrary, let’s strive to be good people for god to accept us,” the chief minister added. The movie, said Archbishop Dr. A.M. Chinnappa of Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, would be made in Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and English, and later, in all languages of the world “It is not an attempt to convert people to our faith but to convey the message of this great saint,” he added. Profits from the movie will be used to establish the Archbishop Chinnappa’s Educational Fund, that will provide higher education to a least 5,000 poor students.

The industry, meanwhile, is rife with rumour that leading stars like Ajith and Vikram have been approached for special appearances in the movie.

Lastly, in a strongly worded statement Dr. Subramanian Swamy, President of the Janata Party, said on July 8th:

The recent announcement that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Mr. Karunanidhi will patronise screening of the mega budget movie on Saint Thomas and his

fictitious missionary activities in the first century in Tamil Nadu, read with the Union Government's decision to cancel the allotment of forest land to the Amarnath Shrine Board intended for creating facilities for housing and parking Hindu pilgrims, are a part of the pernicious and sinister attempt to put the Hindus under siege, about which I have been warning the nation for the last three years.

Around the mid sixteenth century, two anti-Hindu brutalities were committed by foreigners. The first was the demolition of the Sri Rama Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya by an agent of the invading, plundering Babar and the second was the destruction of the hoary Shiva temple by the invading Portuguese barbarians. The Hindu society was not prepared for these uncivilised hordes, and hence remained mute witness to the destruction and sacrilege.

But no more. The Hindu has now stood up. Hence there is now a Ramjanmabhoomi movement in the country with a determination to re-build the temple. The Karunanidhi-Sonia duo attempt to demolish the Rama Setu by implementing the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was challenged, and despite the duo being in power in Chennai and Delhi, the duo was unable to marshal arguments in the Supreme Court. The Hindus carried the day and the project has gone back to the drawing board.

I therefore on behalf of Hindus and those others who proudly acknowledge that their ancestors are Hindus, warn this duo to desist from trying to patronise the falsification of history about the presence in Tamil Nadu of Saint Thomas, to legitimise the Portuguese destruction of the Shiva temple to build the Santhome Church. The church will have to go, and the Kapaleeshwara Temple re-built on that site. Hindus will do it with the help of sane and civilised Christians if possible, without them if necessary, and despite them if forced. When 83 percent Hindus unite, let those who are seeking to debase Hindu icons by bogus history realise that a religious tsunami will wash them away.

And this was the last we heard of the mega-movie project till today.¹ We are told that the project was shelved because of the negative response from Tamil scholars who were very unhappy with the idea that Tiruvalluvar, Tamil Nadu's famous sage and cultural icon, was to be baptised a follower of Jesus—in fact there was no Christian religion as such in the first century and Judas Thomas was himself a practising Jew. But there is no telling what cultural surprises the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese might spring on the Tamil people, and even tomorrow a movie with nuptial actors wrapped in wet see-through saris, jiggling their wide fertile hips, may be presented to

the public by the present archbishop, with a prayer to Jesus that he may forgive the historical deceits and save the soul of the Dravidian race from the machinations of the heathen Aryan race and its wicked Brahmin priests who are still camped in Mylapore even after two thousand years.

1. A California company, Dharlin Entertainment, has been commissioned to make a motion picture on St. Thomas's alleged stay in Kerala and murder in Mylapore by a Hindu priest. They may succeed in cinematically perpetuating this vicious blood libel on the Hindu community with the help of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Kerala and the Roman Catholic Church in Chennai.

Tiruvalluvar ‘Baptised’ To Betray Hindus

B.R. Haran

“History is written by the victors and whoever controls the writing of history books controls the past. Without doubt, the most consistently powerful force in the western world over the last two thousand years has been the Roman Catholic Church and consequently history has often been what it wanted it to be.” - George Orwell

As rightly expressed in the immortal words of George Orwell, the Indians have been fed with distorted history by the western Christian elite before independence and the same has been continued even after independence, thanks to the takeover of the nation’s history by the Marxists and Christian stooges who continued the dark and sinister legacy of Max Mueller and Macaulay. As an important part of the perverted history, which was planted by the western scholars, the so-called St. Thomas’s arrival, life, and death were thrust on South India. This thrust gave a solid foundation to the Church to claim as if Christianity was also an indigenous religion.

Many attempts have been made at regular intervals to impose the concocted history of Thomas on the people, thereby removing the facts from their minds about the persecution of Hindus and destroying of Hindu temples by the Christian invaders (Portuguese, French, and British) from the fifteenth century onwards.

One such attempt, in the line of Arulappa and Acharya Paul, was made by a writer by name Dr. M. Deivanayagam, who wrote a book titled, *Vivliyam, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddantham Oppu Ayvu* (Bible, Tirukkural, Shaiva Siddhanta Comparative Research), which was published in 1985-86 by none other than the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Adyar, Madras, either without any application of mind, or, as a deliberate act of connivance. Shockingly Deivanayagam was also awarded a doctorate by the University of Madras. Deivanayagam had predetermined to conclude his book with a finding that Tiruvalluvar was a Christian and a disciple of the so-called St. Thomas and most of the Shaiva Siddantha and the vivid knowledge found

in *Tirukkural* were nothing but the sayings of the Bible. In order to achieve this devious motive, he distorted and misinterpreted the verses of *Kural* and Shaivite philosophical works and completed the book. Later on, Tamil and Shaivite scholars protested against this and the Dharmapuram Adheenam, a famous Shaivite monastery, came out with a book of refutation written by Tamil Shaivite scholar Arunai Vadivelu Mudaliar and released it amongst a congregation of three hundred eminent scholars, who strongly criticised Deivanayagam for his perversion of history. This was done mainly to prevent the usage of such deceitful materials by the future generations for research activities.

The planting of the so-called St. Thomas story was not only to establish a foundation for Christianity in India, but also to spread it throughout the country. This fabrication succeeded slightly, over the years, in the areas of Madras, Nagapattinam and Pondicherry, mainly because of the fact that the Kapaleeshwara Temple, Mylapore, Vel Ilankanni Amman Temple near Nagapattinam and Vedapureeshwara Temple, Pondicherry were destroyed and Santhome Basilica, Velankanni Church (Our Lady of Health Basilica) and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Pondicherry were built on their remains respectively. Well known scholars of archaeology have established that, the details of the destruction of original Kapaleeshwara Temple could be found in Tamil inscriptions on the walls of the Marundeeswarar Temple in Thiruvannamiyur, Chennai, even today!

But, the glorious religious tradition and cultural heritage of Sanatana Dharma had been so hugely established that, despite the cooperation from the Dravidian racists, Marxists and the English language media, the Catholic Church couldn't expand beyond a certain limit. As a result, it started indulging in inculturation methods (dressing in Hindu ochre, *pada yatra*, calling Santhome Mary as "Thirumayilai Annai", giving sweet rice as *prasad*, etc.) to confuse and win over the gullible masses.

At this juncture, there fell on the Indian Catholic head like a bolt from the blue, the categorical statement from Pope Benedict that the so-called St. Thomas had never ever visited India! This resounding statement from the Papacy, which shocked the Catholic community, had shaken the very foundation of Christianity in South India. As the Papacy didn't bother to

listen to the Indian Catholic community and their protests, the Madras and Cochin bishops met in Cochin, Kerala during the second week of June 2008, to find out ways and means of re-establishing the history of the so-called St. Thomas.

As a step in that direction, the Archdiocese of San Thome, Madras, decided to produce a feature film on the so-called St. Thomas the Apostle of India, at a cost of Rs 50 crore under the banner of the St. Thomas Apostle of India Trust, which has Archbishop A.M. Chinnappa, Deputy Archbishop Lawrence Pius, Treasurer of the Diocese Mr. Ernest Paul and Script Writer Dr. Paulraj Lourdusamy as office bearers. The movie will be presenting the life and times of the so-called St. Thomas in South India in general and Madras in particular. The film will have certain supposedly important events like the alleged meeting between Thomas and Tamil sage Tiruvalluvar, the establishment of San Thome Cathedral and the alleged killing of Thomas by a Hindu Brahmin priest.

The story of *Tirukkural* containing biblical verses was first concocted by G.U. Pope, a Christian missionary who learnt Tamil and translated the Tamil literary works such as *Tiruvachagam*, *Naaladiyaar* and *Tirukkural* in English. Missionaries like G.U. Pope, Joseph Besky (who took the Tamil name Veeramaa Munivar) and Robert Caldwell have a *modus operandi* of learning the native language with a motive of distorting history to suit their missionary agendas. The Dravidian racist political party, which always thrived on the bogus Aryan invasion theory, took immense satisfaction in glorifying these missionaries by erecting statues for them along the Marina Beach in Madras when it ruled Tamil Nadu in the late sixties and early seventies, thereby exhibiting its unholy connection with Christian missionaries. No wonder, the chief minister Karunanidhi inaugurated this Rs 50 crore movie-magnum on the so-called St. Thomas!

G.U. Pope lived up to the true tradition of Christian missionaries, by telling that Tiruvalluvar lived in Madras between 800 and 1000 years after the birth of Christ! The Tamils never bought this story and laughed at it. As per the available records it is believed that Tiruvalluvar could have lived during the second century based on the evidence that *Tirukkural* was included in the literary group called *Pathinen Keezh Kanakku* (Eighteen Literary Works)

during the Kadai Sangam (Last Sangam) days. Those days, there was a literary-grammatical procedure by which the author would always make it a point to convey to the readers the identification of his guru and patron apart from his own personal details such as name, native place, worshipping deity, etc. But *Tirukkural* is without such details, and hence, the connection between Tiruvalluvar and Thomas is a mere figment of imagination.

Whereas, a look at many other literary works written after the second century, say for example *Kamba Ramayanam*, or *Periya Puranam*, could lead to the mentioning of *Tirukkural* or its philosophy in them and yet none of them would have any information about a religion called Christianity. The glorious rule of Raja Raja Chola was during the tenth century and there was no trace of Christianity then. Also, the San Thome Cathedral had the inscriptions of Rajendra Chola of the eleventh century on its corridor walls! Then what meeting is the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese talking about between Tiruvalluvar and the so-called St. Thomas?

Even chief minister Karunanidhi during his speech at the inauguration function, has not mentioned anything about the alleged meeting between Thomas and Tiruvalluvar. It is a well-known fact that Karunanidhi, himself being a Tamil scholar and well versed with Tamil literary works, had written his masterpiece *Kuraloviyam* on *Tirukkural*. As he had not talked anything about the connection between the Bible and *Tirukkural* or Thomas and Tiruvalluvar at the inaugural function of the movie, it becomes obvious that the Thomas story is an absolute falsehood! But he has waxed eloquent on the supposed killing of the so-called St. Thomas at the hands of a Hindu Brahmin priest and went on to say that the particular scene alone is enough for the success of the movie. But for this also, the Church doesn't have even an iota of evidence.

At this juncture, it can be recalled that Karunanidhi had recently questioned the truth of Bhagwan Rama, historicity of *Ramayana* and existence of Rama Sethu, despite the availability of so much of archaeological, literary, cultural, numismatic, geographical and historical evidences. But he has not exhibited the courage to question the historicity of the so-called St. Thomas, despite being aware of the fact that there is

absolutely no iota of evidence. The chief minister, who is a well-known expert in *Tirukkural*, has unfortunately not felt it important to ascertain the truth of the so-called meeting between Thomas and Tiruvalluvar, but conveniently left it untouched at the inauguration function. Though the people are aware of the chief minister's hostile stand against the majority community, it doesn't augur well for him to openly pander to the minority community accepting their devious machinations.

The Archdiocese talks of three vital places in Madras namely Santhome (Mylapore), Little Mount (Saidapet) and St. Thomas Mount (Brungi Malai). While San Thome Cathedral stands on the ruins of Kapali Temple, Little Mount was also built after demolishing a temple and the church on the Big Mount (St. Thomas Mount) was also built on the ruins of a temple. The Big Mount was called as Brungi Malai named after Brungi [Bhrigu] Maharishi, who sat in penance there invoking Bhagwan Shiva seeking his *darshan* and blessing. Ultimately Bhagwan Shiva appeared before Brungi Munivar as Nandeeshwara and as clear evidence the Avudai Nayagi Sametha Nandeeshwara Temple stands near the St. Thomas Railway Station, from where one could see the Brungi Malai clearly. This *stala purana* (temple record) can be found in the form of inscriptions on the walls of the Nandeeshwara Temple even today. Even while the Archdiocese has been attempting to establish the fallacy of St. Thomas over the years, it has not exhibited the courage so far to face a public debate despite invitations from learned Tamil Hindu scholars.

The Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese has the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion to propagate its faith, but it cannot be done at the cost of other religious faiths. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion cannot be used to distort history, or Christianise the icons of other religions, with a motive of belittling the other faith, which is native in all respects and which has a well-established glorious religious tradition and cultural heritage spanning thousands of years even before the birth of Christianity. Thrusting of falsehood on the gullible masses cannot be allowed. It is not too difficult to understand the aims and objectives of the Madras Archdiocese behind this movie project. So, it would be better for them to understand the sensitivity attached with this project, as they have a social

responsibility. The government must also ensure that history is not distorted and the people are not repeatedly fed with fabrications and fallacies.

It would be appropriate to conclude with the sensible and courageous words of Dr. Subramanian Swamy, “The church will have to go, and the Kapaleeshwara Temple re-built on that site. Hindus will do it with the help of sane and civilised Christians if possible, without them if necessary, and despite them if forced. When 83 percent Hindus unite, let those who are seeking to debase Hindu icons by bogus history realise that a religious tsunami will wash them away.”

Politics has always been interwoven with religion and history in our nation of diversity and in such a scenario, it would be better to leave this project untouched, for the sake of unity!¹

1. This article was originally called “‘Baptising’ Thiruvalluvar to ‘besiege’ Hindus!” and appeared on the News Today website on 7 July 2008.

The Madras Archbishop Is Obligated To Accept The Pope's Stand On St. Thomas

V. Sundaram

*“Every cleric must obey the Pope, even if he commands what is evil;
for no one may judge the Pope.” - Pope Innocent III*

A Rs 50-crore-plus mega production in silver screen on St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, who is believed to have spread the Christian faith in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is under way. This film is going to be launched as a major project by the Catholic Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore on 3 July 2008. This proposed film will deal with the story relating to the journey of St. Thomas to Edessa, a town in Syria in 29 AD. His travel through Persia to Taxila in modern Pakistan and return to Jerusalem will also be covered. It has been reported that the legend relating to his reaching Kerala in 52 AD and his subsequent 20 years of preaching the Christian faith in India will constitute the major part of the proposed film. St. Thomas's meeting with Tiruvalluvar is going to be yet another interesting part of the story.

The unlimited capacity of the Catholic Archdiocese in Madras to manufacture fraudulent fables was brought to full public view in open court on 6 February 1986 when P. Aruvudayappan, II Metropolitan Magistrate, Madras delivered his judgment in criminal case No. 100087/82. I am quoting below the operative portion of this judgment: “Taking advantage of the soft attitudes of public witnesses 2 and 3 (Father Mariadoss and Father Arulappa), the Defendant Ganesh Iyer had taken from them about Rs 13.5 lakhs between 1975 and 1980. This has been clearly established.”

How and why did Archbishop Arulappa hand over a whopping amount of Rs 13,49,250 to Ganesh Iyer for a spurious research project on St. Thomas? Why had the Archbishop not bothered to verify the authenticity of the criminally fake “documents” produced by Ganesh Iyer in support of his

research thesis—which was originally proposed to him by Archbishop Arulappa himself! Why did Archbishop Arulappa not deem it necessary to accompany Ganesh Iyer to the various sites of his “research” in India when he had found adequate time to accompany him to Rome, the Vatican, Germany, France, Spain and the United States.

The story of the intimate intellectual relationship between Archbishop Arulappa and Ganesh Iyer—given the title of Acharya Paul by Archbishop Arulappa himself!—indeed constitutes a glorious landmark in the intellectual history of Christianity in India! Archbishop Arulappa had directed Acharya Paul to establish a nexus between St. Thomas and Tiruvalluvar, regardless of the concerns for exact chronology or authentic history. “Scrupulous” Acharya Paul extended his full cooperation to the equally “scrupulous” Archbishop! The whole story relating to this gigantic hoax was exposed in an article in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* in its issue dated April 26-May 2, 1987. This article, titled “Hoax!” was authored by K.P. Sunil. This very article was incorporated by Ishwar Sharan in his book on St. Thomas under the title “Archbishop Arulappa Makes History” (in the present edition it is called “Archbishop Arulappa’s History Project Goes Terribly Wrong”).

The Catholic Archdiocese of Madras seems to be drawing its inspiration today from Archbishop Arulappa and Acharya Paul for establishing the spiritual relationship between St. Thomas and Tiruvalluvar in its proposed mega-film project on St. Thomas.

Pope Benedict has denied that St. Thomas brought Christianity to South India, a public statement that Archbishop Chinnappa apparently has ignored. In an attempt to understand the relationship between the Pope and his bishops, I have been reading in the internet a series of articles on Rome’s fraudulent history by Dave Hunt. I am quoting below some excerpts from his brilliant book titled *A Woman Rides the Beast: The Roman Catholic Church and the Last Days* by Dave Hunt:

The Roman Catholic Pope has often been the most powerful religious and political figure on earth. This is true today, even though the Pope no longer has at his disposal the armies and navies of past Roman pontiffs. ... The Vatican’s constituency of 980 million followers is at least three times the number of

citizens in any Western democracy and is exceeded only by the population of China. Even more important, these 980 million people are scattered throughout the world, many of them holding high political, military, and commercial positions in non-Catholic countries. Moreover, the Pope has thousands of secret agents worldwide. They include Jesuits, the Knights of Columbus, Knights of Malta, Opus Dei, and others. The Vatican's Intelligence Service and its field resources are second to none.... Remember, the Pope's 980 million subjects are bound to him by religious ties, which are far stronger than any political loyalties could ever be. No secular government can compete with the motivational power of religious belief....

The extraordinary position of the Pope in relation to members of the Church was expressed succinctly in Rome's *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which a papal journal described in the mid-nineteenth century as "the purest journalistic organ of true Church doctrine" (J.H. Ignaz von Dollinger, *The Pope and the Council*). "It is not enough for the people only to know that the Pope is the head of the Church ... they must also understand that their own faith and religious life flow from him; that in him is the bond which unites Catholics to one another, and the power which strengthens and the light which guides them; that he is the dispenser of spiritual graces, the giver of the benefits of religion, the upholder of justice, and the protector of the oppressed" (*La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1867).

The *Catholic World* in August 1871 declared as follows: "Each individual must receive the faith and law from the Church with unquestioning submission and obedience of the intellect and the will. ... We have no right to ask reasons of the Church, any more than of Almighty God. ... We are to take with unquestioning docility whatever instruction the Church gives us." The same requirement of unthinking submission is demanded in Vatican II. *The Code of Canon Law* likewise reasserts the same rule: "The Christian faithful, conscious of their own responsibility, are bound by Christian obedience to follow what the sacred pastors, as representatives of Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or determine as leaders of the Church" (James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Donald E. Heintschel, eds., *The Code of Canon Law*, Paulist Press, 1985).

In November 2006 Pope Benedict XVI had categorically stated that St. Thomas never visited South India. In the light of what has been stated

above, is it not the inviolable duty of the Catholic Archdiocese of Madras to implicitly accept with reverence and humility the public stand taken by Pope Benedict XVI on the issue of St. Thomas and his alleged visit to South India?¹

1. This article is excerpted from a four-part article called “Fraudulent Myth of the Tomb of St. Thomas” which appeared on the News Today website on 2nd to 5th July 2008.

Part Four

In Memory Of A Slain Saint

C.A. Simon

It is difficult to say whether Mylapore found its place in travel notes of many ancient foreign travellers because it had on its soil the tomb of St. Thomas or if the tomb itself was mentioned therein because of its location at Mylapore on the eastern coast. It is a historical fact that many foreign travellers used to visit this coast after sailing a long distance thanks to the Coromandel winds. Marco Polo, the great traveller, has referred to the tomb in his travel diary.

The present Gothic church was constructed over the tomb only in 1893; but it is going to be almost 20 centuries since the first church was constructed by St. Thomas, the father of Christianity in India, before his martyrdom in 73 AD.

The tomb of St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles (disciples) of Jesus Christ, attracts people from all over the world. It is a pilgrim centre for Christians, especially during Christmas and Easter seasons. Its history, battles fought over the mortal remains of the saint, burial, excavation, relocation of the tomb, etc., all form part of a high drama the church witnessed over the centuries.

Today Santhome has in its possession only a piece of bone and the metal spearhead with which the saint was assassinated in Madras. These are kept under the safe custody of the priests. It is exposed for public veneration during the annual solemn novena for the feast of St. Thomas on July 3rd every year.

The expression “doubting Thomas” originated after Thomas, disciple of Jesus Christ, who was not ready to believe the resurrection of the Christ when it was narrated to him by other disciples to whom Jesus appeared for the first time after the crucifixion and burial. Thomas declared: “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

According to the Bible, Jesus appeared again inside a closed room where all the disciples were planning their next course of action. Jesus called Thomas and asked him to put his finger on the mark of the wounds. Thomas was taken aback. Thomas felt divine reality encountering human weakness of doubt face to face. He was convinced. He knelt down and uttered: "Thou art my Lord and God".

Thomas landed at Maliankara (Cranganore in Kerala) in 52 AD with Habban, a foreign trader. He preached the Gospel, wrought miracles and went to Mailepuram (now Mylapore) and then on to China. He returned to Maliankara at the behest of the son-in-law of the Raja of Thiruvanchikulam.

Thomas spent the last part of his life in Madras preaching the Gospel. A large number of people listened and embraced the way of life preached by him. The oppressed and downtrodden followed him and claimed equal status in society as it was denied them by the prevailing social norms. He condemned untouchability and attempted to restore equal status for women.

Many stories are sung as folk songs and have descended to us through the generations. One of them about the origin of the church at Santhome is very interesting.

A huge timber log was washed ashore by the waves. In spite of the battery of strong men deployed by King Mahadeva, they could not succeed in bringing it to the shore. As suggested by some of his courtiers, the king summoned the saint. St. Thomas performed another miracle. Pleased by this, the king offered a place near the shore where the timber was first sighted. Thus the old church at Mylapore was built.

As he preached and performed miracles, enemies also grew in number and strength. They vowed to finish him. He had to spend some time in a cave at Little Mount hiding from his enemies. Finally he was killed at what is now known as St. Thomas Mount.

His body was brought to Mylapore, buried and the exact location was forgotten for a long time. Later, in 1523, while digging for laying foundation for a new church they came across signs of the tomb. Immediately the priest

in charge of the operation sought the help of higher authorities and then continued excavation.

They removed a lot of earth. After removing two concrete slabs placed between sand and earth they came upon pieces of bones and skull. At the foot there was an earthen vessel supposedly filled with earth taken from the spot where the saint's blood was shed. They further unearthed a metal spearhead having the shape of an olive leaf and also struck upon a wooden shaft.

The bones and other mortal remains were kept in a box and later buried at an undisclosed location near the church as the priest feared for the safety of the same since the news of possible attack by neighbouring kings were pouring in.

Rivalries among Dutch, French and British wrought devastation on Santhome. The Golconda Sultans attacked and occupied the place for years. In 1646, Mir Jumla, Nawab of Carnatic, also attacked.

Hyder Ali, Sultan of Mysore, besieged Santhome three times during 1769, 1780 and 1782.

Due to several attacks and siege, Santhome Church was damaged beyond recognition. In 1893 the new church was constructed. The tall bell-tower is an evidence of Gothic architectural excellence.

The church was made a minor basilica in 1956 by Pope Pius XII. The basilica title is conferred on churches based on its antiquity, magnificence and celebrity. The word basilica means a church with honorific privileges. There are only four major basilicas in the whole world. None of them is in India and the most prominent among them is the St. Peter's at Vatican.

The tomb of great historical importance is inside the church at Santhome near the sanctum sanctorum. It is open to visitors almost during the whole day. The Tourism Development Corporation on its conducted tours makes a stop at the tomb.

A lot of efforts are on to provide better facilities for the tourists visiting the church every day. Fr. Charles, assistant priest, further informed this writer

that there may be celebrations on the 3rd of every month, starting from January 1990 onwards, with the help of parishioners.¹



This story, with photographs of Santhome Cathedral Basilica, appeared on 30 December 1989 on the front page of the *Express Weekend*. It was placed below a feature of Madras city history. No indication was given to show that one article dealt with popular legend and the other with historical fact. They were presented together to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the founding of the British factory north of Mylapore and Triplicane at the fishing village of Madrasapattinam.

On reading the St. Thomas feature, we sent a letter of protest to the *Indian Express* editor exposing Simon's story. It was published on 13 January 1990 in the *Express Weekend*. The paragraphs that were excised by the editor are reproduced here in italics:

Apropos of the article "In Memory of a Slain Saint" (EW, Dec. 30), it is indeed astonishing that the Indian Express allows its respected columns to be used to promote this Catholic romance as historical fact in this age of excellent critical scholarship.²

In his book *Papacy: Its Doctrine and History* (Voice of India, New Delhi, 1986) the historian Sita Ram Goel writes *about the St. Thomas myth*:

"Some Catholic scholars have been busy for many years marshalling literary and archaeological evidence in an effort to prove that St. Thomas came to India in 52 AD, converted some Hindus in the South, and was killed by Brahmins at Mylapore in Madras while giving the Good News to the local people....

"It would be a waste of time to present the pros and cons of this controversy which tends to become more and more technical. Suffice it to say that some historians have seriously doubted the very existence of an apostle named Thomas. Distinguished scholars like R. Garbe, A. Harnack and L. de la Vallee-Poussin have denied credibility to the *Acts of Thomas*, an apocryphal work on which the whole story is based. Some others, who accept the fourth century Catholic tradition about the travels of St. Thomas, point to the lack of evidence that he ever went east beyond Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. The confusion, according to them, has arisen because the ancient geographers often mistook these two countries for India.

“The whole subject has been examined recently by Stephen Neill in his *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to 1707 A.D.* published by the Cambridge University Press, England, as late as 1984. He says, ‘A number of scholars, among whom are to be mentioned with respect Bishop A.E. Medlycott, J.N. Farquhar and the Jesuit J. Dahlman, have built on slender foundations what can only be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.’ Pained by the spread of this spurious history among large sections of Indian Christians, he observes, ‘Millions of Christians in India are certain that the founder of their church was none other than apostle Thomas himself. The historian cannot prove it to them that they are mistaken in their belief. He may feel it right to warn them that historical research cannot pronounce on the matter with a confidence equal to that which they entertain by faith.’ Stephen Neill ... was a bishop who had spent long years in India.”

There is also reason to believe that St. Thomas Church stands on the ruins of a Jain Neminathaswami temple and a Hindu Shiva temple which had a Nataraja shrine attached. The epigraphical data for the existence of the Jain temple on this site is recorded in Jain Inscriptions in Tamil Nadu by A. Ekambaranath and C.K. Sivaprakasham (Research Foundation for Jainology, Madras, 1987). The evidence for the existence of the Shiva temple, which may be the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore beach that got “eroded” by the “sea”, is compiled in an excellent Tamil-language book called Indiavil Saint Thomas Katukkadai (“The Saint Thomas Myth in India”) by Veda Prakash (RAFR, Madras, 1989). This book is recommended for its wealth of information and is available from RAFR, 57 Poonamallee High Road, Maduravayal, Madras 602102.”

When this letter appeared in the *Express Weekend* without the last paragraph, which referred to the destroyed temples, we sent a letter of protest on January 16th to the *Indian Express* resident editor:

Apropos of my letter on St. Thomas and the St. Thomas Church, I must observe that the truncated version published in the *Express Weekend* of Jan. 13th, which omits all reference to the building of the church, is not acceptable and does not do justice to history.

As a Catholic apologist was given prime space in the *Express Weekend* on Dec. 30th to tell his version of this controversial story, the *Indian Express* is obliged to give space to another writer or at least permit an open review of the subject.

The destruction of temples by Muslims has been discussed in the *Indian Express* by many persons including Arun Shourie, as has the destruction of Jain (and if I remember correctly, Buddhist) temples in Kanchi and Kashmir by certain Hindu

kings. The Christians have completely escaped this review though they were the worst perpetrators of these kinds of deeds. This is ironical, for Christian missionaries continue to try to force conversion and destroy village temples in Central India.

The editorial tactic of only permitting Christians to criticize Christians does not wash and indicates a double standard operating in the newspaper. The editors have never hesitated to permit Christians to lecture and criticize Hindus and Muslims when they choose to do so.

The *Express Weekend* refuses to review Veda Prakash's *Indiavil Saint Thomas Katukkadai* (The Saint Thomas Myth in India) or even list it as a book received, though in fact the newspaper has received four copies of it.

When the Pope in Rome can no longer enforce the Index,³ how is it that the *Indian Express* can censor our reading material, obstruct free access to information, and suppress discussion of a subject because it is controversial?

In honour of free speech, the very least you can do is give a fair review to this interesting little book on St. Thomas and the legends that surround him and the church at Mylapore.

Veda Prakash's book was never reviewed by the *Indian Express*, though the editor acknowledged receipt of a copy and promised to give it his attention.

But our protest did not go unnoticed, and as we had sent out copies of the January 13th letter to various interested people, the excised paragraph would appear in the *Indian Express* on February 10th in a letter from Swami Jyotirmayananda. His letter was cut too and those lines which offended the editor appear below in italics:

Sri Ishwar Sharan has rightly debunked the so-called historical feature "In Memory of a Slain Saint" (EW, Jan. 13) quoting distinguished historians *who have seriously doubted the very existence of an apostle named St. Thomas.*

In fact the feature that appeared in EW, December 30th is false and misleading and there is a large body of evidence saying that there never was a Thomas at all, never mind that he came to Madras.

There is reason to believe that St. Thomas Church stands on the ruins of a Jain Neminathaswami temple and a Shiva temple which had a Nataraja shrine attached. The epigraphical data for the existence of the Jain temple on this site is recorded in *Jain Inscriptions in Tamil Nadu* by A. Ekambaranath and C.K. Sivaprakasham (Research Foundation for Jainology, Madras, 1987). The evidence

for the existence of the Shiva temple, which may be the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore beach that got eroded by the sea,⁴ is found in “The Saint Thomas Myth in India” (in Tamil) by Veda Prakash (RAFR, Madras, 1989), who has provided a wealth of information on the subject.

This paragraph—for the non-publication of which we had taken the *Indian Express* editor to task—contained wrong information about the Kapaleeswara Temple and to make matters worse, the wrong information was attributed to a wrong source. The correct source for the wrong information about the original temple, was the 1985 edition of TTK's *A Map's Guide Book to Madras* which says, “A tradition has it that the first temple was by the sea but erosion caused it to be shifted inland.”

The real tradition of course was that the “erosion” of the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the seashore had been caused by Christians. This fact would finally be brought to light in the *Express Weekend* on March 3rd in a letter from Veda Prakash:

This refers to the letter of Swami Jyotirmayananda published under the caption “Santhome Church” (EW, Feb. 10). Certain details he has mentioned about my book *Indiavil Saint Thomas Kattukkadai* (The Saint Thomas Myth in India) are incorrect as pointed out below.

He writes, “The evidence for the existence of the Shiva temple, which may be the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the Mylapore beach that got eroded by the sea, is found in ‘The Saint Thomas Myth in India’ (in Tamil) by Veda Prakash (RAFR, Madras, 1989), who has provided a wealth of information on the subject.” But, nowhere in the book do I mention that the Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach was eroded by the sea. What is mentioned about the Shiva temple is as follows: “Many evidences available in Santhome Church show there was a Shiva temple and it was occupied, then step by step demolished and converted into a church. Many documents and books also prove this. A fragmentary Tamil inscription of 8 lines on a stone found at the cathedral registers a tax-free gift for burning at night a lamp before the image of Kuthadumdevar (Nataraja) in the temple of Suramudayar (Suramudayar Kuthadum Devarkku) was found in 1924. It belongs to Vikrama Chola's time, i.e., 12th century. Moreover, when the *urchava murthy* was taken for procession from the existing Kapaleeswara Temple, there was a practice of lowering it reverently three times before the Santhome Church at that time (16th-18th centuries). The temple was there up to the 16th century. Then, when the Christians started demolishing it completely, Hindus built the present

temple out of whatever they could salvage from the ruins of the old temple.” (P. 41-42, *Indiavil Saint Thomas Kattukkadaï*.)

The publisher is not RAFR. Either it should be MMAK (Menattu Mathangal Araychi Kazhagam) or ISWR (Institute for the Study of Western Religions), 57 Poonamallee High Road, Maduravayal, Madras 602102.

This was the third and last letter published in the *Express Weekend* in reply to C.A. Simon’s article. The letters were not a sufficient or comprehensive reply, but the *Indian Express* would not tolerate further criticism of the St. Thomas fable in its columns.

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1. This article, which appeared in the *Indian Express* on 30 December 1989, was the reason we began our research into the St. Thomas in India legend.
 2. This paragraph was converted by the editor into the prosaic introductory line: “This refers to ‘In Memory of a Slain Saint’ (EW, Dec. 30).”
 3. The Vatican’s official list of books Catholics are forbidden to read.
 4. The words “eroded” and “sea” should have been in quotation marks.

The Legend Of A Slain Saint To Stain Hinduism

Swami Tapasyananda

This article has been provoked by two write-ups in the Madras edition of the *Indian Express*. The first of these is “In Memory of a Slain Saint” by C.A. Simon in the *Express Weekend* of the *Indian Express* of 30 December 1989, and the second, a rejoinder to it by Ishwar Sharan in the “Weekend Post” of the *Express Weekend* of 13 January 1990.

The first write-up, C.A. Simon’s, whether based on facts or fiction, is highly derogatory of Hinduism, which is, even to this day, highly tolerant of other religions. The chief items of information contained in C.A. Simon’s writings are as follows: (1) St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ (a disputed fact), came to India in AD 52 with Habban, a foreign trader. (2) He landed at Maliankara (Cranganore) in Kerala, preached the Gospel, wrought miracles, and got many converts. (3) Then he came to Mailepuram (Mylapore), then went to China, after some time returned to Maliankara, and from there came again to Madras where he spent the rest of his life teaching, preaching and drawing a large number of the oppressed and the suppressed into his fold. (4) He performed miracles which made the local king Mahadeva offer him a place near the seashore where the old church of Mylapore now stands. (5) His conversion activities incensed the orthodox and enemies from their rank vowed to finish him. (6) He had therefore to hide himself in a cave at the Little Mount near the present St. Thomas Mount (about five km away from Mylapore). (7) Finally, he was murdered there, i.e., at St. Thomas Mount, by those fanatical enemies, and (8) his body was brought to Mylapore and buried in AD 73 at a spot which was forgotten for many centuries.

But the greatest miracle was to occur in 1523, nearly fifteen hundred years after the saint was supposed to have died. That was the rediscovery of the tomb and remains of the murdered saint by the priest in charge of the

Mylapore church for building a new church—pieces of bones, a skull, a vessel containing mud supposedly from the place where the saint's blood was shed, and a spearhead of the shape of an olive leaf fixed on a wooden shaft.

Wonder of wonders! Even after about fifteen centuries these remains, including the stick, had not become fossilised or crumbled into dust, but could be got intact and buried at an undisclosed place in the church. That church was damaged beyond recognition in the course of the battles waged round it during the rivalry between the Dutch, the French, and the British and Hyder Ali. (Strangely, the Portuguese are not said to be involved in it, perhaps because they were the heroic defenders!) At last in 1893 the present Santhome Church with Gothic architectural excellence was built. (It must be by the Portuguese and none else.) The papal seal over this whole story was stamped in 1956 when Pope Pius XII gave it recognition as a Minor Basilica, all the four major ones being outside India.

The above legend, that is dexterously built into a mighty balloon to boost Christian fanaticism, is neatly pricked in the rejoinder by Ishwar Sharan, published as a letter to the editor in the “Weekend Post” of the *Indian Express* of 13 January 1990. The points mentioned by him are as follows: In his book *Papacy: Its Doctrine and History*, Sita Ram Goel writes:

Some Catholic scholars have been busy for many years marshalling literary and archaeological evidence in an effort to prove that St. Thomas came to India in 52 AD, converted some Hindus in the South and was killed by the Brahmins in Mylapore in Madras. Suffice it to say that some historians have seriously doubted the very existence of an apostle named St. Thomas. Distinguished scholars like R. Garbe, A. Harnack and L. de la Vallee-Poussin have denied credibility to the *Acts of Thomas*, an apocryphal work on which the whole story is based. Some others who accept the fourth century Catholic tradition about the travels of St. Thomas, point to the lack of evidence that he ever went beyond Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. The confusion, according to them, has arisen because the ancient geographers often mistook these two countries for India.

He further refers to Stephen Neill's book *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to 1707 A.D.* published by the Cambridge University Press, England, in 1984, as follows:

A number of scholars, among whom are to be mentioned with respect Bishop A.E. Medlycott, J.N. Farquhar and the Jesuit J. Dahlman, have built on slender foundations what may be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.

Pained by the spread of this spurious history among large sections of Christians, he observes:

Millions of Christians in India are certain that the founder of their church was none other than apostle Thomas himself. The historian cannot prove it to them that they are mistaken in their belief. He may feel it right to warn them that historical research cannot pronounce on the matter with a confidence equal to that which they entertain by faith.

Stephen Neill was a bishop who had spent long years in India.

To these we want to make ensuing comments to disprove these assumptions of pious Christians. Further absurdities in Thomas legends are revealed in S. Muthiah's *Madras Discovered* published by Affiliated East-West Press. The following are the facts gleaned from it: Thomas shunted between St. Thomas Mount and Mylapore, separated by about five km, doing his preaching work and converting thousands. He lived in a cave at Little Mount in Saidapet, three km from St. Thomas Mount. There is, to the east of the cave, an opening which is said to have opened in those days into a tunnel from the Little Mount to St. Thomas Mount. The saint is supposed to have fled from his persecutors through this cave. He was however murdered by them at St. Thomas Mount. Mylapore has only the honour of being the place where his dead body was brought and buried. From there his remains were taken to Edessa in Syria where every July a great festival is held to commemorate his reburial. From Edessa they are said to have been moved to the Greek island of Chios, thence to Ortona on Italy's Adriatic coast where they remain to this day. But each resting place still has some relic of Thomas—Madras has a small hand bone and the head of a lance in the St. Thomas Basilica crypt.

More miracles in proof of this legend of murder are yet to come. In 1547 the Vicar of Mylapore during excavation at St. Thomas Mount discovered a "bleeding" cross with old Pahlavi inscriptions. It had spots that looked like blood stains which, it is claimed, reappeared after being rubbed away. This

cross is built into the wall behind the altar of the church on the Mount dedicated to Madonna of the Mount. The tradition about this cross is that it was chiselled from a rock by the apostle himself. It is said that it used to bleed periodically. The first publicly noticed bleeding was on 15 December 1558 and the last in 1704.

Apart from these fanciful anecdotes about St. Thomas in Madras, Christianity of a brand which had nothing to do with Western Christianity had come to the Malabar coast very early. Sometime about AD 450 one Canai Thomas with seventy-two Syrian families arrived in Kerala and whatever traces of early Christianity there were got mixed up with this Syrian brand of it. So these Christians, known till then as Nazaranis, got also the name Syrian Christians.¹ Their connection to this day is with the Orthodox Church of Syria. The grafting of this powerful group with the existing fragmentary Christian groups must have led to the identification of Kerala Christians with the Thomas tradition, to which they hold steadfastly to this day. The St. Thomas of their fancy must really be Canai Thomas of Syria. The members of this community were adventurous traders with business connections with many countries abroad, and through commerce they brought much wealth to the country. They therefore enjoyed the patronage of the local kings. Their numbers increased not only by the absorption of the existing fragment of the Christian community but the influx of many Hindus from highly aristocratic classes owing to the rigorous rules of excommunication that prevailed among them. Such excommunications were common among them for breach of caste rules, and these excommunicated individuals, men or women, had no other course than to join this new community. This cross-breed Christian community of Kerala is distinguished from the converts by later Catholic and Protestant missionaries both in appearance and talents. In modern India they are everywhere found to occupy high positions in the professional and business life of the country. Their names too are usually different from the European names by which most of the later converted Christians were known till very recent times.

Now to go back to the legend of St. Thomas in Madras. It is clearly the fabrication of the Portuguese to camouflage their destruction of the Hindu

Temple of Kapaleeswara which was situated on the seashore, probably at the very place where Santhome Church now stands. The great Saivite saint of sixth century AD, Tirujnanasambandar, sings in the sixth *Poompavai Padikam Thevaram*:

The Lord of Kapaleeswaram sat watching the people of Mylapore,
A place full of flowering coconut palms,
Taking ceremonial bath in the sea on the full moon day of the month of Masai.

In the same strain sings Arunagirinathar, who came to Mylapore in 1456, in his *Tirumayilai Tiruppugazh*:

O Lord of Mailai temple, situated on the shores of the sea with raging waves....

This clear and indisputable evidence gives the lie to the legend that the Portuguese invented to hide their nefarious work. The Portuguese domination of Mylapore was from 1522 to 1697, by which time the British had established themselves in the Fort St. George and adjoining territories, and the Portuguese had to withdraw to Goa where their empire lasted till 1962. In Goa their rule was noted for a spree of destruction of Hindu temples and persecution of the Goanese, so much so that large sections of them had to flee that territory and settle all along the west coast of India. They are the Gauda Saraswats. The fate of these Goanese would have overtaken the temples and the people of Madras also, a foretaste of which contingency they got in the destruction of the holy Kapaleeswara Temple. Thanks to the British domination of the region and the consequent elimination of the Portuguese, this tragic fate did not overtake them. The British had more political maturity and diplomatic perception, which helped them perceive that trade was more important for themselves than religious propaganda. And so they kept an attitude of indifference towards the religion and religious edifices of the people in whose midst they carried on their trading activities, which eventually led to the establishment of a political empire.

The destruction of the seashore Temple of Kapaleeswara is said to have taken place in 1561. The new temple at its present site, about one km to the west, was built by pious Hindu votaries about three hundred years ago, i.e., about two hundred and fifty years after its destruction. When the

Santhome Church was repaired in the beginning of the current century, many stones with edicts were found there. Among them one mentions Poompavai, the girl whom Tirujnanasambandar is said to have miraculously revived from her ashes kept in an urn.

These are all matters of the forgotten past. Both the Kapaleeswara Temple and the Santhome Church are now thriving and catering to the spiritual needs of the Hindus and the Christians. In such a situation it is better not to rake up the memories of these unpleasant facts. According to forward-looking people many things of the past are better forgotten than remembered and ruminated upon. The history of the Kapaleeswara Temple and Santhome Church belongs to this category.

But the priests of the Santhome Church will not allow this. They want to keep the flame of fanaticism bright. It is distressing to note the following passage in C.A. Simon's write-up in the *Indian Express* of 30 December 1989:

Today Santhome has in its possession only a piece of bone and the metal spearhead with which the saint was assassinated at Madras. These are under the safe custody of the priests. It is exposed for public veneration during the annual solemn novena for the feast of St. Thomas on July 3rd every year.

What is still more threatening is the concluding sentence:

Fr. Charles, assistant priest, further informed this writer that there may be celebrations on the 3rd of every month, starting from January 1990 onwards, with the help of the parishioners.

This attempt to keep up the fanaticism of the minority may inflame the fanaticism of the majority too, and lead to situations like the Babri Masjid controversy. All right-thinking men should foresee and avoid the occurrence of such a contingency.

□ □ □

This article appeared in the June 1990 issue of *The Vedanta Kesari*, published by the Sri Ramakrishna Math in Mylapore, Madras. It had been submitted three months earlier to the *Indian Express*, Madras, but had elicited no response from the fearless newspaper—though, as will be seen, the resident editor was fully aware of its existence in his office.

Ram Swarup of New Delhi, on reading the article, sent a letter to *The Vedanta Kesari* editor on June 27th:

Reference Swami Tapasyananda's piece, "The Legend of a Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism", in your journal of June 1990. I beg to point out respectfully that a most excellent article has been marred by a bad ending. Can't we in all veracity speak of Semitic iconoclasm without first accusing ourselves of fanaticism? And where is the much-feared Hindu fanaticism in the so-called Babri Masjid controversy? Does it consist in our remembering that fanatic forces destroyed our temples and that we must do something about it? But must we start indulging in self-condemnation even before we have started doing anything and the issues have joined? In the language of the *Gita*, this state of mind comes from *hridaya-daurbalyam* and *karpanya-dosha* and can achieve little.

The psychological disarmament of Hinduism has been going on for a long time and we have learnt to pull down our defences even before we have built them. Unfortunately, it has been often preached by some of the best minds of Hinduism.

This letter was not published in the magazine. *The Vedanta Kesari* does not publish letters to the editor.

We had also sent copies of Swami Tapasyananda's article to C.A. Simon, the Archbishop of Madras at Santhome, and the *Indian Express* editor. C.A. Simon was the only one to respond with a letter on August 9th. He had learned from the *Express Weekend* editor that we planned to include his article in the appendix of the first edition of this book, and though he had not yet been informed of the project, he wrote:

Thank you for sending me the xerox copies of the articles written by Swami Tapasyananda and published by *Vedanta Kesari*.

My interest in that article is purely academic as I am not championing anybody's cause. Also I was not aware of the version given in your letter or in the article.

Main sources for my article was two books:

1. *In the Steps of St. Thomas* by Rt. Rev. Herman D'Souza.
2. *St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia* edited by Sri George Menachery.

A few of the leaflets were also referred for the article. A facsimile of postal stamp released by Govt. of India during the occasion (said to be) of the 19th centenary in 1972 also was seen. The speech given by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, former president of India, "Remember St. Thomas came to India...." was also referred.

I am trying to say that the article was not written with any malafide intention, and I was not aware of the controversial version given by Sri Sita Ram Goel. Since I am aware of it now, I note to honour the other version also.

I learned that you are going to publish a book and intend to include my article as the Christian version. As I do not stand for any religious sect or group you may desist from doing so. Instead you may refer to more authoritative works of this subject if you feel so.

Being a scholar of great understanding about the subject, I hope, you may take this in proper spirit.

You may bring this to notice of Swami Tapasyananda in order to clear any misunderstanding.

Kindly acknowledge this letter. You may feel free to write to me.

We did indeed acknowledge this letter and replied to it on August 14th as follows:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 9th.

My essay on the myth of St. Thomas has been written in reply to your article which appeared in the *Indian Express* of 30 December 1989.

Considering this, and that you and the *Indian Express* initiated the controversy by publishing the sly communal tale as Madras city history, you can hardly ask me to desist from reprinting it.

Your article is the subject of public discussion and a necessary reference, and is being reproduced as an appendix to my reply.²

It is difficult to believe that your interest in St. Thomas is only academic. You have not named any unbiased scholar nor given any credible academic reference.

In fact, you have written an excellent piece of Roman Catholic propaganda—in the steps of Rt. Rev. Herman D'Souza who went to great lengths to manipulate Indian history and vilify Hindus in his work—and I must congratulate you on your success.

As you quote Marco Polo and Rajendra Prasad as proof that St. Thomas came to India, so Indians will now quote you and the *Indian Express* as further proof that St. Thomas came to India.

Your letter amounts to a disclaimer and should really be directed to the editor of the *Indian Express*, but if you wish to communicate further with me you are of course welcome to do so.

This was the end of the correspondence. C.A. Simon did not communicate further with us and as no disclaimer appeared in the *Express Weekend*, it may be assumed that neither he nor his editor regretted the publication of the “historical” communal tale in *Indian Express* columns.

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1. Thomas of Cana (Canai Thomas) and the seventy-two Syrian families arrived in 345 CE. They were the first Christians to arrive in India. Swami Tapasyananda has made an error here and identified the Jerusalem merchant with a later migration from West Asia. All early Christian groups in Malabar, whether called Nazaranis (Nazarenes) or Nestorians, were of Syrian or Persian origin. They were divided into two basic groups: those who married Indians and those who did not.
 2. In the first edition of this book, published in February, 1991, where Simon’s article appears in the appendix.

Part Five

St. Thomas And Caste

Ishwar Sharan

In his article “In Memory of a Slain Saint”, C.A. Simon wrote, “St. Thomas spent the last part of his life in Madras preaching the Gospel. A large number of people listened and embraced the way of life preached by him. The oppressed and downtrodden followed him and claimed equal status in society as it was denied them by prevailing social norms. He condemned untouchability and attempted to restore equal status to women.”

This stereotyped and oft-times-proven untrue description of ancient Hindu society has been promoted by Christians for centuries. By repeating it C.A. Simon shows that his interest in writing the article is not “purely academic”. He is championing a cause, and he has presented St. Thomas as the champion and pioneer of a cause—Liberation Theology.

This new role for St. Thomas is absurd, and whatever the merits of the new ideology—and they are doubtful—neither Jesus nor his brother Judas Thomas can be presented as champions of the oppressed and downtrodden if we are to believe the *Acts of Thomas*. Its first verses record that Thomas was sold into slavery by the very Jesus whose “message of liberation” he is supposed to have brought to India. The *Acts* then describe how he enslaves the aristocratic women he converts and destroys their families. Finally, we learn that this is the reason that King Mazdai of Parthia has him executed—and it is a good reason.

C.A. Simon seems not to have read the *Acts of Thomas* or heard the traditional Syrian Christian version of the apostle’s “good works” in India. In one of these tales St. Thomas only accepts Brahmins into his new creed—with the curious exception of one barber convert. This isolated soul is never given a place in the Christian community even during the apostle’s lifetime, and to present St. Thomas as a champion of the poor is ironical, even grotesque—but then Liberation Theology itself is proving to be just another means by which the Church can further exploit the faithful.

Indeed, the exploitation of the faithful has been going on from the very beginning. St. Paul returned the runaway slave Onesimus to his rightful owner Philemon—the *Epistle of Paul to Philemon* being the covering letter he sent with him—and St. Thomas is depicted in art with two slaves, two lions, and a cloak of peacock feathers—hardly an image of a servant of the poor!

Today the number of lower caste converts to Christianity is myriad and they are no more accepted by their upper caste brethren than was their mythical first century barber ancestor. The plain truth is that the churches of India are riddled with caste and to highlight this situation, Scheduled Caste Christians demonstrated against the untouchability practised in the Church when Pope John Paul II visited India in 1986. They probably did not know that Pope Gregory XV (1621-1623) had sanctioned caste within the Indian Church and that his edict has never been rescinded. Earlier in 1599 the Council of Diamper and again in 1606 the Council of Goa had sanctioned the same. These sanctions have governed Catholic practice ever since—though Christians piously maintain that caste is contrary to Christ’s teachings.

The grievances of Scheduled Caste Christians remain to this day and often surface in the national press—to the embarrassment of wealthy bishops who have interests to protect other than those of their flock. This happened in July and August of 1990 in the columns of the *Indian Express*. On August 2nd a letter appeared by Raju Thomas of Madras. He held M.A., B.Th., B.D. and M.Th. degrees, and wrote:

No self-respecting Scheduled Caste Christians will ask the Government to include them in the Scheduled Caste list. Is it not shameful for the Indian Church, even after centuries of Christian tradition, to say that it has a vast majority of untouchable Christians?

I myself come from a state where Christianity reached in the first century itself before it went to Europe, and that state, Kerala, the highly literate state in India, has more than 35 lakh untouchable Christians out of a total population of 51 lakh Christians. But these majority Scheduled Caste Christians do not have any voice in the Church administration and in the ecclesiastical structure.

The Christian population of India is just 3 per cent out of the 800 million total population of India, and 85 per cent of the Christians are from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Caste Christians, instead of asking for reservation on par with the Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist Scheduled Castes, should demand that the Indian Church implement reservation first in their home itself. Charity should begin at home!

The Indian Christian Church has the best educational, technical and medical institutions in the country and it is unfortunate that the presence of the untouchable Christians in these prestigious institutions is worse than anywhere else. Why is the Indian Church blind to this brutal injustice and discrimination committed to its own family members?

While the Indian Church enjoys the minority rights guaranteed in the Constitution it violates the legitimate human rights of Dalit Christians. Instead of begging the Government, the Church must render justice to her own “least brothers and sisters” by sharing power and wealth with Scheduled Caste Christians in proportion to their population.¹ The Church must respond to the cries of the Dalit Christians.

Once justice is established at home the Church can put pressure on the Government of India to get the Constitution amended to help Scheduled Caste Christians to get the constitutional rights enjoyed by their Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist counterparts.

This letter—in places self-contradictory—shows an insensitivity to the position of Hindus and ignores the financial privileges enjoyed by the Church. Christian religious and educational institutions are fully autonomous and collect large foreign donations, unlike their Hindu counterparts which must accept state-controlled administrations and finance. That these foreign moneys collected in the name of the Scheduled Castes almost never reach the Scheduled Castes, is the cause of on-going scandal in churches of every denomination.

We did not comment on these issues in our reply to Raju Thomas. We had observed over the years that the *Indian Express* while permitting Christians to lecture Hindus in its columns, did not permit Hindus to comment on what it deemed to be Christian matters.² But we did take issue with the assertion that Christianity had reached Kerala in the first century CE as this was a matter of Indian history. The *Indian Express* now had two copies of our reply to C.A. Simon’s feature which it had declined to publish even in

summary, as well as Swami Tapasyananda's article which it had simply ignored. There was no excuse for the *Indian Express* letters editor to allow Raju Thomas his claim unless he wished to provoke a response. We responded on August 3rd:

Mr. Raju Thomas may assert that he comes from an Indian state where Christianity was established in the first century CE (IE, Aug. 2), but he must know that his claim has never been substantiated in history. Even the generous K.S. Latourette, in *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, does not allow the possibility of Christians coming to India by any route before the third century CE.

The consensus among most historians who do not have a theological axe to grind, is that the first Christians to arrive in India, landing at Cranganore, Kerala, came in 345 CE. They were four hundred refugees belonging to seven tribes of West Asia, who were fleeing religious persecution by the Persian Shapor II. Their leader was a Syrian who is known to history as Knay Thomman, Thomas Cananeus, Thomas of Cana, Thomas the Merchant, or Thomas of Jerusalem. It is probably this man whom the Syrian Christians later converted into the first century apostle-martyr St. Thomas.

Though the myth of St. Thomas coming to Kerala in 52 CE was invented by Syrian Christians, it was resurrected and embellished in the sixteenth century by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries who needed a pious story of persecution to cover up their own persecution of the Hindus. During this period, they and their Portuguese masters destroyed the great Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach, the Murugan temple on Little Mount and the Hindu temple on Big Mount, and built Christian churches on the ruins.

The Roman Catholic Church continues to promote this vicious tale as part of her ancient effort to vilify Hindus and malign Hinduism—and, of course, to support her religious and political claims to India. Those interested in the ongoing campaign may refer to an excellent article by Swami Tapasyananda called "The Legend of a Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism" in the recent June issue of *The Vedanta Kesari* published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600004.

This letter was not published in the *Indian Express* but a copy of it had been sent to Raju Thomas. He replied on August 31st:

Thank you for the copy of your letter to the editor, *Indian Express*, Madras, dated 3 August 1990. I have been expecting that that letter would be published in the columns of the *Indian Express*. But so far it is not being published.

I have already posted a long letter on this issue as many people have come forward with the same question about the existing of Christianity in the first century in the Indian subcontinent.

Yes, Mr. Ishwar Sharan, I too agree with your views that Christianity did not exist in the first century in the Indian subcontinent. It is only a traditional belief that St. Thomas had come to India and converted the Brahmins to Christianity but this claim does not have any historical proof. However, this traditional belief of the Christians in Kerala is so deep-rooted that they relentlessly go on propagating it.

You may ask me if such is the case, why did I too assert that Christianity had come to India before it had reached Europe? My answer to this question is that I deliberately wanted an open debate and discussion on this subject. But except a few nobody has come with challenging theories or written in the *Indian Express*. But why? We will be able to challenge and question such falsified histories and traditional beliefs only when we take up such issues to the public and do not keep them as the top secrets. But the question is: How many of our “intellectuals” are ready to have open-minded debates and discussions? Our sole aim is to eat, drink, make money and enjoy. This is the Indian reality. How many of us take up discussion on issues? We are concerned about the pension, non-supply of water, not getting facilities in the buses and trains, etc. Is this what a healthy society is to think and debate? I do not know.

I also agree with your opinion about the historicity of the Thomas Christians in Kerala in ancient Cheranadu. I also have some if not full soft corner towards your argument: “... this man whom the Syrian Christians later converted into the first century apostle-martyr St. Thomas.” I am sure provided much light is shed on this argument the truth will certainly come out.

Do you know the real story of these Jerusalem Christians who had come to Kerala? Today their total number is 1,60,000 and 1 lakh within the Roman Catholic Church and 60 thousand in the Jacobite Church. It is also unfortunate that these Christians (?) do not maintain any kind of relationship with other Christians in India, no marital relationship, not giving baptism to non-Knaya Christians in their church, not allowing Dalit Christians in their houses, etc. They want to keep up the purity of their blood. In fact they are the worst enemies of the Dalits in Kerala.

Your other remarks on the Franciscans and the Jesuits, etc., have to be seriously studied. I am interested in this kind of research works. But do we have sufficient documents? I am very much enthusiastic to get that article, “The Legend of a

Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism” by Swami Tapasyananda, published in *The Vedanta Kesari*. Would you help me to get one copy of this?

Thank you for writing to me. I welcome more enlightenment in these matters. I do not know whether the *Indian Express* will publish my letter which is a lengthy one.

The *Indian Express* did not publish Raju Thomas’s letter even in an edited form, as it had not published ours. The *Indian Express* did not approve of “issues” in its precious columns—especially as they were not perceived by the experts to add prestige or profits to the newspaper’s already overflowing coffers. These were the “principles of publishing” followed by most big post-independence Hindu newspaper publishers. It was not that nobody has come with challenging theories or written to the *Indian Express* as Raju Thomas thought, but rather that they weren’t published after numerous submissions. We replied to Raju Thomas on September 5th:

Thank you for the letter dated August 31st.

You will have received by now Swami Tapasyananda’s article. He had originally submitted it to the *Indian Express*. They ignored it. After waiting three months he published the article in his own magazine.

I, too, submitted an essay debunking the myth of St. Thomas to the *Indian Express* in March. It was a reply to C.A. Simon’s article which appeared in the *Express Weekend* last December. My submission was also ignored for months. Finally, the IE resident editor rejected it in June with the lame excuse that he had no space and that I had already had my say in a letter published in the *Express Weekend*.

My latest letter replying to your statement on St. Thomas, is only one of many sent to the *Indian Express* over the last eight months. Many others have written also and I have copies of their letters. None of these letters have been published. I am sure that your letter will also not be published. My long experience is that the *Indian Express* only publishes material promoting the myth of St. Thomas as true Madras history (excepting for the three edited letters which appeared in the *Express Weekend* early this year).

The *Indian Express* consistently suppresses all material, no matter how well documented, that shows up this political tale for what it really is.

So you see, Mr. Thomas, the “fearless Jesuits” in that editorial office are no different from your priests and our politicians. They are full of grand rhetoric and promises of salvation which it does not cost them anything to make. But the moment they perceive that the truth threatens their bank accounts and official

positions, they are utterly ruthless in suppressing it and the persons who speak it. Gandhiji once said that it was cowardice that was the threat to our nation, not poverty. I believe he was right—again!

As it is, I am blacklisted at the *Indian Express* offices and none of my letters are published any longer. This will please many of their Christian readers, for I am a long-time student of Christian history and a critic of Church politics and ideology.

This should not be misunderstood to mean that I am hostile to Christians of faith. This is not the case at all. In fact, I see the Christian layman as the first victim of Church politics. This is why I firmly believe that Christians activists like yourself must go to the Church for redress of your grievances before you go to the Government. To go to the Government is to let the Church off the hook. Why do that? What has the Church done for you really? The whole edifice of the Church is built on the emotional, psychological and material exploitation of the poor and ignorant.

You know better than I do that the Church has vast quantities of foreign money meant for the poor which never reaches the poor. You also know that caste is fully sanctioned within the Church. So-called saints like Francis Xavier, John de Britto and Robert de Nobili all practiced untouchability—not to mention the fabled St. Thomas! There is one—perhaps two—papal bulls sanctioning caste divisions in churches and social relations. And there are the edicts of the Council of Diamper which sanction the same. To argue that caste is unchristian is really beside the point.

But to return to the original subject of this letter. My essay called *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* is in the press but its publication has got delayed. It will be out in a month or so and I will send you a copy.³ You will discover that I make no statement and draw no inference that I cannot document.

I am very happy that you have written to the *Indian Express* about this issue. And I am sorry that your letter will not get published. But because it will not be published I would very much like to have a copy of it, if you would kindly send me one. I continue my study of this myth and am always eager for new references and points of view.

Raju Thomas did eventually send us a copy of his lengthy letter. It is a bitter indictment of the Roman Catholic Church and Church of South India for the discriminatory treatment that they have meted out to their Scheduled Caste converts. We do not include it here because it repeats in detail what he had already written to us on August 31st. But the *Indian Express* should

have at least published edited portions of it including his retraction of the claim that St. Thomas had come to India. In the letter he quotes Jesus in the *Gospel of Mathew* 23:15 which applies as much to campaigning secular journalists as it does to Christian missionaries:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

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1. Pope John Paul II had reaffirmed during his tenure as pope that the Church is an autocracy and not a democracy. The pope appoints all bishops without consultation and for this reason he is personally responsible for the conduct of the bishops and the priests appointed by the bishops. This observation is made with reference to the ongoing Vatican sex scandals and the wish of some victims to have the pope prosecuted in a court like any other criminal.
 2. The observations made here about the editorial policy of the *Indian Express* then are also true today vis-a-vis the editorial policy of *The New Indian Express*. The Chennai (Madras) edition of this newspaper, on 28 February 2010, published another full-page article on the St. Thomas churches at Big Mount and Mylapore, repeating the same communal tale of persecution and murder of a Christian saint and apostle by a Hindu Brahmin priest. The editor did not allow anyone to reply to it. Their tactic is to publish a signed opinion piece which they can distance themselves from, with an email contact address added at the article's end. But it all appears to be a dissimulation set-up and the article author's name—in this instance Shilpa Krishnan—may be a pseudonym for the editor himself.
 3. The reference is to the first edition of this book which was published in February 1991.

St. Thomas And Anti-Brahminism

Koenraad Elst

“Apart from anti-Judaism, the anti-Brahmin campaign started by the missionaries is the biggest vilification campaign in world history.” - Koenraad Elst

The true prophets of the anti-Brahmin message were no doubt the Christian missionaries. In the sixteenth century, Francis Xavier wrote that Hindus were under the spell of the Brahmanas, who were in league with evil spirits, and that the elimination of Brahminism was the first priority in the large operation of bringing salvation to the wretched Pagans of India. In this endeavour, he strongly advocated and practiced the use of force. Unfortunately for him, the Portuguese government could not always spare the troops which he so passionately asked for. Still, the destruction wrought by Francis Xavier was impressive, and he has described the joy he felt on seeing idols being smashed and temples demolished.¹

Within the Portuguese territories, physical persecution of Paganism naturally hit the Brahmins hardest. Treaties with Hindu kings had to stipulate explicitly that the Portuguese must not kill Brahmins. But in the case of Christian anti-Brahminism, these physical persecutions were a small matter compared to the systematic ideological and propagandistic attack on Brahminism, which has conditioned the views of many non-missionaries and has by now been amplified enormously because Secularists, Akalis, Marxists and Muslims have joined the chorus. In fact, apart from anti-Judaism, the anti-Brahmin campaign started by the missionaries is the biggest vilification campaign in world history.

While the Portuguese mission establishment was unanimous in branding the Brahmins as the chief obstacle to the Salvation of India, there was some dissent concerning the tactics to be employed against them. Robert de Nobili believed in fraud rather than force. He dressed as a Brahmin, and taught the *Yesurveda*, a fifth Veda which had been lost in India, but which the emigrant community of Romaka [Roman] Brahmins had preserved. He seems to have had a few followers, but after his death, nothing remained of his infiltration movement. Recently he has been declared the patron saint

of the theology of inculturation,² and his method is being actualised and perfected in the Christian ashrams.³

De Nobili's approach was one possible application of the Jesuits larger strategy, which aimed at converting the elite in the hope that they would carry the masses with them. This approach had been tried in vain in China, in Japan, and even at the Moghul court (today, it is finally meeting with a measure of success in South Korea). A practical implication of this strategy was that Christianity had to be presented as a noble and elitist religion. This came naturally to the Jesuits, who (unlike, for instance, the Franciscans) styled themselves as an elite order.

Most importantly, that stage of missionary endeavour did not make use of any populist or democratic rhetoric of equality. At that time, political equality was not yet on the ideological agenda. On the contrary, even when in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, equality became a political hot item, the Church opposed it tooth and nail, and supported the aristocratic *ancien regime* and its restoration after the fall of Napoleon. Only in the late nineteenth century, when atheist socialism lured the urban masses away from Christianity, did the Church evolve what is known as the social teachings of the Church, formulated in encyclicals like *Rerum Novarum*. Before that time, any opposition of the Catholic Church (and of most Protestant Churches) against the caste system and the Brahmin caste had strictly nothing to do with a concern for social equality.

Recent claims that equality is an intrinsic and cardinal virtue of Christianity, and that the apostle Thomas came to India in AD 52 with a message of equality, abolition of caste, and women's rights, are so many lies. Thus, C.A. Simon writes: "The oppressed and downtrodden followed [St. Thomas] and claimed equal status in society as it was denied them by the prevailing social norms. He condemned untouchability and attempted to restore equal status for women." That St. Thomas ever came to India is already a myth, only kept alive in India with a lot of Christian-cum-secularist media effort; that he came with an Ambedkarist and feminist message is just ridiculous.

The source of the Thomas legend is an apocryphal text called the *Acts of Thomas*. If the [Jesuits and other Christian] missionaries want to continue to present it as history rather than legend, they should accept the consequences. In that case, they must tell the public about the way in which Thomas's journey to India started, according to the very same text: he left Palestine because his twin brother Jesus sold him as a slave (Thomas is also called Didymus, "the twin brother"). They must give details of the destructive sorcery which Thomas practised, as in his first miracle, when he made a lion devour a boy for being impolite. They must tell the public that Thomas was put to death not by the ugly Brahmins but by the king who, after having had a lot of patience with him, and after offering him a safe exit from the country, decided to put a stop to his practice of luring women away from their homes and putting them in sackcloth and ashes behind locked doors.

Briefly, if it is true that the apostle Thomas came to India, then the following is also true:

- Thomas was an antisocial character;
- Jesus was a slave trader;
- Thomas was Jesus's twin brother, implying that the four canonical Gospels are unreliable sources which have concealed a crucial fact, viz. that Jesus was not God's Only Begotten Son. In fact, Jesus and Thomas were God's twin-born sons. In other words, accepting the Thomas legend as history is equivalent to exploding the doctrinal foundation of Christianity.

The original Christian doctrine on equality has been expressed by St. Paul, who opposed attempts by slaves to free themselves because we have all been freed in Christ and that should be enough. St. Paul's *Letter to Philemon* [in the New Testament] is actually a covering note which he sent along with a runaway slave whom he returned to the legal owner, the Christian convert Philemon.⁴

A Christian Bible commentary, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* edited by David and Pat Alexander, admits: "Slavery was such an integral part of the social structure of the day that to preach freedom would have been tantamount to revolution. Paul's brief was not to engage in political campaigning but to preach a Gospel capable of transforming human life

from within.” This is a poor excuse: religious pluralism was also an integral part of the dominant culture, and yet Christianity confronted and destroyed it. Why should God make compromises with the world? The fact of the matter is that St. Paul wanted to convert people to his own belief system, and that he was not interested in other, non-salvationist pursuits such as social reform.

If the missionaries were sincerely unhappy with the institution of caste, it was not because of its intrinsic inequality. The problem with caste was that it offered a lot of communal togetherness, social security and a certain pride in one’s caste identity. Through the missionary propaganda, we have come to see caste as an exclusion-from, but in the first place it is a belonging-to. Even for the lowest castes, humiliation by higher placed people on account of caste did not outweigh the considerable benefits of belonging to at least some caste. This caste cohesion is an important reason why Hinduism could survive where the cultures of West Asia disappeared under the onslaught of Islam. The missionaries found that people were not willing to give up their caste by converting to Christianity, which implied breaking with a number of caste customs. The only way to convert people, was to convert entire caste groups and allow them to retain some of their caste identity.

Therefore, far from abolishing caste, the Church allowed caste distinctions to continue even within its own structure and functioning. Pope Gregory XV (r. 1621-1623) formally sanctioned caste divisions in the Indian Church. This papal bull confirmed earlier decisions of the local Church hierarchy in 1599 and 1606.

It is therefore not true that the Church’s motivation in blackening the Brahmins had anything to do with a concern for equality. The Church was against equality in the first place, and even when equality became the irresistible fashion, the Church allowed caste inequality to continue wherever it considered it opportune to do so. As a missionary has admitted to me: in Goa, many churches still have separate doors for high-caste and low-caste people, and caste discrimination at many levels is still widespread. Commenting on the persistence of caste distinctions in the Church, a Dalit

convert told me: I feel like a frog who has jumped from one muddy pool into another pool just as muddy.

Whenever the Church feels it should accommodate existing caste feelings in settled Christian communities, it accepts them; and whenever it thinks it profitable to take a bold anti-caste stand before a Dalit public, it will do just that. It is true that contemporary missionaries, who have grown up with the idea of social equality, mostly have a sincere aversion for caste inequality, and are more dependable when it comes to conducting Church affairs in a caste-neutral way (as opposed to Indian Christians who insistently claim descent from high-caste converts). But when considering the missionary machine as a whole, we must say that the missionary commitment to equality and social justice is not sincere, but is an opportunistic policy motivated by a greed for conversions.

In the past century, the Churches one after another came around to the decision that the lower ranks of society should be made the prime target of conversion campaigns. Finding that the conversion of the high-caste people was not getting anywhere, they settled for the low-castes and tribals, and adapted their own image accordingly. One implication was that the Brahmins were no longer just the guardians of Paganism, but also the antipodes of the low-castes on the caste ladder. A totally new line of propaganda was launched: Brahmins were the oppressors of the low-caste people.

In the proliferating mission schools, the missionary version of Indian history, including its view on caste, was taught to Indian pupils, and many internalized the hostile and motivated story which they had been fed. One of them was Jotirao Phule of Maharashtra, the first modern leader to be called Mahatma. His position, while not yet all-out anti-Hindu, was strongly anti-Brahmin. He wrote: "The Brahmin's natural (instinctive) temperament is mischievous and cantankerous, and it is so inveterate that it can never be eradicated."

Then again, the Aryan Invasion Theory was the alpha and omega of the version of India history spread by anti-Brahminism.⁵ Phule's book *Slavery* starts out with this view of history: "Recent researches have shown beyond

a shadow of a doubt that the Brahmins were not the Aborigines of India. ... Aryans came to India not as simple emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonisation, but as conquerors. They appear to have been a race imbued with very high notions of self, extremely cunning, arrogant and bigoted.”

For Phule, there could be no progress for the low-caste people without taking harsh anti-Brahmin measures, e.g.: “Let there be schools for the Shudras in every village, but away with all Brahmin schoolmasters.” This is exactly what the missionary school-builders wanted him to say. Through Phule, the missionary indoctrination has influenced all twentieth century anti-Brahmin leaders.

Even among the champions of the Hindu cause, anti-Brahminism acquired a following. The Hindu reform movement Arya Samaj rejected Brahminism and its heretical brainchildren, idolatry and the caste system, as utterly non-Vedic. Brahmin temples were desecrated in the name of Hinduism. Orthodox Brahmins were attacked as the traitors of Hindu interests.

Thus, it was said in those circles that when in the 1880s the Maharaja of Kashmir wanted to reconvert the forcibly converted Muslims in his domains, the Brahmins rejected this timely proposal, arguing from their obscurantist *shastras* that one is only a Hindu by birth. This well-known allegation has been argued to be unhistorical (though of course nobody denies that mindlessly scripturalist Brahmins do exist, in dwindling numbers): it cannot be traced farther back than 1946, sixty years after the facts which it claims to describe. Admittedly, this *argumentum e silentio* is not strong in itself, but it is strengthened by the fact that Brahmins have reconverted ex-Hindus ever since the forcible conversions by Mohammed bin Qasim in AD 712. The ritual effecting conversion into the Arya fold has been available and in use since Vedic times.

There is ample Christian testimony from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century that the majority of converts were taken back into the Hindu fold, and that those who remained Christian were mostly the individuals who, driven out of their castes on account of their vices or scandalous transgressions of their usages, are shunned afterwards by everybody (quoted by Jeevan Kulkarni in *Historical Truths & Untruths Exposed*). The

people affected by this conversion and reconversion process were mostly, but not exclusively, from the lower castes.

Just as well, the missionaries knew whom to hold responsible for their failure: “The Brahmin is therefore well worth looking at! We have more to do with him than with the Czar of all the Russias. The battle we have to fight with him is not against guns or rifles, not against flesh and blood.” This assessment, written in a mood of vexation by Rev. Norman MacLeod in 1871, was comparatively mild next to what Abbe Dubois had written—and of which MacLeod approved—in 1820: “And there is no stronghold of evil so impregnable as Brahmins.”

The well-spring of anti-Brahminism is doubtlessly the Christian missionaries greedy design to rope in the souls of Hindus. From there onwards, it spread through the entire English-educated class and ultimately became an unquestionable dogma in India’s political parlance. Communist historians and sociologists have been fortifying it by rewriting Indian history as a perennial struggle between Brahmin oppressors and the rest. When defending the Mandal report in 1990, the then Prime Minister of India V.P. Singh could say that Brahmins have to do penance for the centuries of oppression which they inflicted on the Backwards, without anyone questioning his historical assumptions. Anti-Brahminism is now part of the official doctrine of the secular, socialist Republic of India.⁶

1. Francis Xavier’s greatest success was to have the Holy Inquisition brought to Goa, though he didn’t live to see it in action. The extraordinary perversions and cruelties practised by this Church tribunal against the native Goan population have been recorded in *The Goa Inquisition* by A.K. Priolkar.

2. Not only Robert de Nobili, but St. Thomas is being roped in as a mascot of inculturation. Ivan Fernandez, in “Hindu-Christian Dialogue Produces Results”, in the Jesuit magazine *Jivan*, May-June 1994, New Delhi, writes, “Hindu scholars have for the first time accepted Christian contribution to Indian philosophy and conceded that Indian philosophy does not necessarily mean Hindu philosophy. ... Some of the issues raised [in the symposium organised by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research and the Jesuit Philosophical Research Institute, Madras,] asked if there actually were Christian thinkers in the country. If so, what were their framework and concerns? ... It is important to raise these issues since

the Christian presence in India dates back to the beginning of the Christian era itself. Tradition says, St. Thomas the Apostle, who visited and preached in Kerala ... was martyred in Madras. This seminar is not just meant to prove Christian contribution but to demand one's membership in society as a grown up...." says Anand Amaladass. "Indian philosophy today cannot be considered the property of any one particular community in the country, even if its major contribution has come from, till now, the Hindu community."

3. See Sita Ram Goel, *Catholic Ashrams: Sannyasin or Swindlers*, New Delhi, 2010.

4. For St. Paul on slavery see *Ephesians* 6:5-9, *Colossians* 3:22-25 and 4:1, 1 *Timothy* 6:1-2, and *Philemon*. See also 1 *Peter* 2:18-25, which begins: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward."

5. It should be understood here that the theory has been proved to be false. See Shrikant G. Talageri's *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism* and K.D. Sethna's *Karpasa in Prehistoric India: A Chronological and Cultural Clue*.

6. Excerpted from Koenraad Elst's *Indigenous Indians: Agastya to Ambedkar*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1993.

Christian Churches Threaten Dalit Rights

Leela Tampi

The two-day convention of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe parliamentarians held in Delhi in June 1992 has taken the dismaying decision to give all support to the unremitting campaign of the Christian ecclesiastical leadership for the sharing of the special rights and benefits, mandated by the Constitution only for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, also by all Christians claiming Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe origin. This convention, with unseemly alacrity to serve this crusade of the powerful Christian religious leadership to usurp Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights, has insidiously asked the Government to “put an end to the discrimination against Scheduled Caste Christians by introducing a bill in parliament to include them also in the Scheduled Caste list”.

This blatantly indefensible decision of the convention of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Members of Parliament which, if put into effect, will blight and doom forever the still nascent advancement of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, deserves to be a matter of the gravest national concern. It also brings into tragic focus the lack of fealty of those Members of Parliament who supported the decision (mercifully there were many dissenters) to the sacrosanct cause of the welfare and progress of our Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, to protect which they were chiefly elected to Parliament.

What the Members of Parliament at this convention were advocating was the amending of the Constitution to suit the prelates who have been vociferously demanding for the last several years the lion's share of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights and benefits for Christians. The Constitution has to be amended for their demand to be conceded because of the famous judgement of the full five-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. In this final decision the Supreme Court had

ruled that a person belonging to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe lost his caste status—which pertains to the Hindu religion alone—upon his conversion to Christianity and therefore forfeited his entitlement to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe special rights and benefits. Because of this judgement the last census has listed only Christians and never “Scheduled Caste Christians”.

Therefore, the incontrovertible truth is that appellations that claim Scheduled Caste status for Christians such as “Harijan Christians”, “Dalit Christians” and “Scheduled Caste Christians” that are enunciated by the prelates and their cohorts at every opportunity, besides being illegal, are a fraud perpetrated on the Constitution.

These terms, so evocative of suffering due to caste oppression, have been concocted by Christian vested interests in a consummate conspiracy to generate sympathy in the uninformed public mind for their cruel scheme of bilking the defenceless Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the major part of their special rights and benefits; also to promote the idea that Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe special rights can be shared also by Christians claiming Scheduled Caste origin, these special Scheduled Caste rights being just an ordinary welfare measure for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

But these special rights and benefits of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are not a welfare scheme at all. They are quintessentially a restitution, which, as laid down by the Supreme Court, only the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and no one outside the Hindu fold, can claim. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people from ancient times were the innocent victims of the all-pervasive stigma of low-caste: hence of discrimination, exploitation and oppression. It was as a minimal restitution for this deprivation and harrowing suffering directly resulting from their low caste status, of which vestiges still remain, that the special rights and benefits were mandated for them in the Constitution. It was hoped that the special rights and benefits would engender in them a sense of self-worth enabling them to compete with others in spite of the continuing handicap of low caste status. And indeed, these special rights and benefits are acting

as a tremendous help in their present arduous and dedicated struggle to rise towards equality with the rest of society.

Therefore it is scandalous that the elected representatives who should have been in profound empathy with the burgeoning aspirations of our Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and should have extended to them every protection and support in their hard struggle to lift themselves up from utter poverty, hopelessness and backwardness, actually did the very opposite by joining up with the opulent Christian establishment to dispossess their own people of the major part of their vitally needed special rights and benefits.¹

It is a tragic indication of the political degeneration that has set in at every level of this unfortunate nation that these so-called peoples representatives, who have all along been exhorting us lesser mortals to uphold the sanctity of the Constitution and also drumming into our ears the vital need for every patriotic citizen to obey the law as clarified by the Court, had this sudden and convenient fit of amnesia on both these counts when it came to satisfying the demand of the prodigiously rich bishops—at the cost of the abysmally poor Dalits. What was done by these representatives without any compunction was to throw the interests of their trusting, helpless people into the jaws of destruction.

Central to the issue of protection of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights from false claimants such as the so-called “Harijan Christians”, “Scheduled Caste Christians” [and “Dalit” or “Bahujan Christians”] is the obvious fact that there is no caste system in Christianity. Bound as Christianity is by its strict theology and sacerdotal rules, caste is as permanently extrinsic to it as temple worship. Moreover, it was by ranting and railing against the oppression of caste and reviling the Hindu religion for permitting it; and also by holding aloft the wonderful prospect of equality and brotherhood in Christ that a number of Scheduled Caste persons were persuaded to convert by the agents of the bishops. Now to trump up a case for the usurping of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights, the bishops are claiming that there is not only caste but also untouchability (as the much-used term “Harijan Christian” implies) in Christ. This is nothing but the basest trickery.

It is well-known that worldly and concrete benefits such as money, free education and jobs among other things were routinely given as rewards for conversion for the last hundred and fifty years and more. The converts, with such generous help from the British-supported, powerful Churches, advanced tremendously and are now ensconced in high positions in every sphere of national life.

In stark and tragic contrast our own Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people were, till about forty years ago, sunk in the most abject poverty and backwardness arising from their low-caste disability with no help from anywhere for advancement. Theirs was a story of heart-rending and ceaseless misery. Continuing to suffer from the effects of centuries of abasement such as grinding poverty and backwardness, the help of the recently bestowed special rights and benefits has not been sufficient to lift the mass of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes towards dignity and equality. Therefore, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes need the full quantum of restitution allotted to them to achieve equality which is the only means for benignant national reconstruction.

Hence it will be an intolerable betrayal of the cause of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes now engaged in a battle to attain dignity and equality, to allow millions of adherents of an alien, super rich, casteless religion to come crashing in and gobble up the largest part of the rights and benefits of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. And the onslaught of the new claimants will be uncontrollable for the simple reason that there is absolutely no fool proof method to verify any Christian's claim to Scheduled Caste origin. Therefore, practically all the Christians in India will be able to claim Scheduled Caste status and pocket the benefits. As it is, numberless Christians, even from the advanced sections, are nonchalantly pilfering Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights by use of spurious or forged records, causing grievous loss and injury to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

To reduce opposition among the public to their inhumane campaign the bishops and their henchmen are duplicitously spreading the impression that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe benefits are something

infinite and will expand limitlessly to accommodate even millions of new claimants with no loss to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

This is a pernicious falsehood. The quota of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe benefits such as job reservation is in strict ratio to their present population and cannot be expanded at all. Taking Kerala as an example, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Kerala, on the basis of their population ratio, have eight percent job reservation and twelve Members of the Legislative Assembly. If this claim of the Christian vested interests is enacted as law, nearly all the Christians in Kerala, who outnumber the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes many times and are incomparably more advanced, will at once snatch away all the benefits, leaving the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes out in the freezing cold to perish. Also, the Christians, being immensely more powerful politically (being so well organised under the mighty Churches) will also bag all the twelve Member of the Legislative Assembly seats. Thus, every avenue for the cruelly double-crossed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to progress, or even to voice their protest, will be closed for ever. Soon they will face a fate worse than in olden times. As planned by Christian interests, this will lead to a situation where the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have to convert or perish: which will open the floodgate of their cultural genocide.

This convention of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe representatives repeated the utterly false statement of the bishops in declaring that the Government was discriminating against the “Scheduled Caste Christians”. Firstly, there is no such entity as “Scheduled Caste Christians”. Secondly, the discrimination in India is in favour of the Christians of every type. Wherever Christians have gained majority and ascendancy in India as in the North-East, non-Christian minorities are being discriminated against most cruelly. In the rest of India all Christians, including the so-called “Scheduled Caste Christians” are being coddled and pampered in the name of minority rights. The truth is that globally Christians are the most powerful majority with the minority Christians in India making determined use of their extra-territorial affiliations to secure maximum political and financial clout.

In addition to these enormously lucrative minority privileges which the Churches receive and enjoy—keeping all of it to themselves exclusively with no thought of sharing with the Scheduled Castes or anyone else—are the mammoth funds that are flowing from abroad into the coffers of the Churches and other Christian institutions. It is said that the Churches in Kerala alone are receiving nearly a thousand crore rupees every year in foreign funding.² It should be noted that the declared purpose for much of the remittances is to render assistance to the needy among the Christians.

As the prelates, in spite of this, are constantly pleading the poverty of the “Scheduled Caste Christians” (and by implication their inability to help them) as the excuse to gouge the rights of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, we are constrained to take a passing look, even if hopelessly perfunctory and incomplete, at the stupendous wealth of the Churches in order to demonstrate the deceit involved. The Roman Catholic Church, which spread all over the world under the aegis of the European colonial armies, is the most formidable accumulator of wealth the world has ever seen. And the Roman Catholic Church in India is an integral part of this Roman Catholic Imperium (for example, all the archbishops and bishops in India are appointed by the Vatican, and coded instructions are sent to them every day) whose stocks of gold ingots in the vaults of Fort Knox are second only to that of the Government of the United States of America. Experts on Vatican finances declare she has similar stocks in Europe also. And this is just the minutest part of the movable and immovable wealth of the Catholic Church which is stated to be so vast as to be beyond all rational assessment.

In India the Roman Catholic Church and other Churches taken together form the largest and richest landlord, second only to the Government. In British times with the patronage of the colonial rulers the churches amassed vast fortunes in the shape of religious and institutional property and huge areas of priceless urban land; all this in addition to vast tracts of agricultural land and other assets. After independence, because of the continuing phenomenal influence of the Church leadership over the Central and State Governments, the wealth of the Churches continued to

multiply. It will be scarcely an exaggeration to say that by now their wealth has increased more than a thousand thousand times.

The Churches again have deftly and astutely established a stranglehold on education, raking in thousands of crores every year from the Government as well as public. In addition to the massive cathedrals and churches all over India whose value is beyond assessment, the Churches—especially the Roman Catholic Church—own thousands of schools, colleges, nunneries and monasteries and other institutions too numerous to mention. They also have vast holdings in real estate such as shopping complexes, office buildings and other commercial property. The extent of their movable property such as bank deposits, industrial stocks and shares—to mention just a few—naturally has to be equally impressive. And let us not forget the rivers of gold flowing into their coffers every year from the wealthy West. Altogether it can only be said that no matter how it is told, the list of the riches of the Churches will still only be the tip of a huge iceberg—an iceberg carefully kept submerged and hidden from view.

When all Christians, including those falsely labelled as Scheduled Caste Christians, are having exclusive enjoyment of this limitless wealth, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes existing in numbing poverty are not getting the tiniest benefit out of it. Thus, those Christians who are bent on snatching away the meagre benefits of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes besides eating their rich cake and keeping it, are also trying to steal the gruel from the half empty bowls of their starving Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe neighbours. This is not loving one's neighbours. It is destroying them out of sheer greed.

As for the bishops and archbishops, who are enjoying incomes running into millions and reside in palaces in the utmost pomp and luxury, to organise this unscrupulous, pitiless campaign at the cost of crores for the purpose of grabbing hold of the paltry benefits of the impoverished Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who are eking out a miserable existence in leaking hovels, is, to say the least, diabolical. It is in fact the second Inquisition.³

At the same time, we have to note that the prelates have never brought up the matter of “Brahmin Christians” or “Kayastha Christians” and demanded

Brahmin and Kayastha rights for them. So, it is plain for all to see that there is a well-calculated scheme behind this campaign to legalise the systematic plunder of Dalit rights and thereby cripple them forever. At present the law (as stated earlier) is that a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe person will forfeit his special benefits on conversion as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe caste status—and not poverty or anything else—is the only criterion for the benefits. This is perceived by the ecclesiastical leadership bent on aggressive proselytization as an irritating hurdle to their well-laid plans for mass conversions.

But if the law is changed through Constitutional amendment, to entitle any Christian claiming Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe origin to receive the special Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe rights—which will of course be in addition to the munificent rewards paid out by the Churches for conversion—then conversion of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can take place all over India on a massive scale.

Then the vote banks under the command of the bishops will take a quantum jump. Vulnerable areas—assisted if need be by armed insurrections as in the North-East—can be turned into the fiefs of the prelates. And slowly but surely the ancient religion and culture of India—and our precious national identity—can be subverted, extirpated and supplanted by colonial Christianity, enabling the prelates to bask in even greater opulence, power and grandeur.

Here then the plain unvarnished truth is that it is the insatiable greed for dominion over ever larger territories in India through rapid evangelisation that is the far-reaching and sinister motive behind this perverse campaign of the Christian vested interests to usurp the rights and benefits of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is religious corruption and banditry unequalled even in colonial times.

For Christians in need of financial assistance, the right course to follow will be to insist on the fair sharing of the mammoth funds and properties of the Churches among all Christians. While they are attempting this, they can obtain assistance, like other non-Dalit Indians, from Government welfare schemes. But most certainly it is not the responsibility of the Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes—the poorest of the nation's poor—to undertake at the sacrifice of their welfare and also that of generations yet unborn—the task of making the followers of the churches—the richest of the rich—richer. Thus, it will be dishonourable and detestably wicked on the part of the Christians to snatch away the rights of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which they need for their very survival.

The time has come for all nationalistic citizens of India, especially the Hindus, to acknowledge the immeasurable and eternal debt of gratitude they owe to their brethren of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who, even when suffering untold privation and humiliation, did not succumb to the enticements offered by a foreign religion implacably inimical to the religion of India; and chose with confidence and faith to remain in the Hindu fold: which has indeed been for the greater good of this nation.

Thus it is the bounden duty of all those who are devoted to our holy motherland—and all she signifies—to come forward with resolve and determination to protect the interests of our brothers and sisters of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which interests are now in such mortal danger, from inside as well as outside.

Similarly it is the first duty of all Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assemblies profoundly committed to the hallowed cause of the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes—the weakest and most vulnerable sections of our society—to throw aside all blandishments, and with probity and fidelity to work for this great cause by battling against the Christian vested interests who are waging this war of attrition on the helpless, defenceless Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

When we watch, horror-struck, the stupendously rich prelates inflicting this new Inquisition on the abysmally poor Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, with the intention of snatching away their rights, we begin to understand that these prelates do not by any means subscribe to the exhortation of Christ to sell one's riches and give the proceeds to the poor.

It is the most binding responsibility of the nation to protect and also ensure the sacred rights and benefits of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for as long as they are needed: not only for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes but also for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

For the truth is that assured and continued welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is the very heartbeat of the nation.

1. The politicians and lawyers who support the Christian demand for caste identity are Ajit Jogi, former Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Ram Vilas Paswan, JD Secretary General, Prakash Karat, CPI-M Secretary General, Sitaram Kesari, now deceased former Congress Union Welfare Minister, and Soli Sorabjee, former Advocate General.

2. This was in 1995. The amount is vastly greater today in 2019.

3. Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, 14 January 2010: In a shocking case of caste discrimination, a Dalit has alleged that he was forced to eat human faeces by a group of “high caste Christians” for walking with shoes in their street in the district. The Dalit youth, in his complaint to the Batalagundu police inspector, said “a group of high caste Christians forced human faeces into my mouth after beating me for walking with *chappals* in their street”. Sadayandi, who is from Indhira Nagar in Meikovilpatti in Dindigul district, claimed the incident occurred on 7 January 2010 when a group of more than 10 “caste Christians” stopped him and asked if he was not aware of the “order” that Dalits should not walk with *chappals* in their street. Then they asked him to remove his *chappals* and slapped him with them, he said. - PTI

How Casteless Muslims And Christians Obtain Benefits Meant For Caste Hindus

Vigil Review

As of today, Christians and Muslims remain excluded from the benefits extended to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Indians, as their respective ideologies do not recognise caste. However, to get around this constitutional obstacle, the majority or near majority of Christians and Muslims have been classified by their religious and community leaders as Backward Class (BC) or Other Backward Class (OBC) and are enjoying the benefits extended by the State and Central Government to these classes to the detriment of the Hindus in these classes. See the following table compiled from the *Census of India 1961* and the *Sachar Committee Report 2006*, Table 10.3:

Muslims

- Around 40% of all Muslims are already enjoying the benefits of reservation under the OBC quota;
- The percentage of Muslims and Christians who are cornering the benefits of reservation in the BC and OBC quota vary from state to state;
- West Bengal - 2.4%;
- Uttar Pradesh - 62%;
- Kerala, where the Muslims constitute 25% of the total state population, 99% are classified as OBCs and are claiming reservation quota;
- In Tamil Nadu 93.3% Muslims have been notified as OBC by the state government in 2004-2005 whereas in 1999-2000 83% of Muslims were notified as OBC—a steep increase of 10% in just five years!

Christians

- All-India population as per 2001 Census - 2.3% or 24.2 million;
- The Christian population is 1/3 tribal. Of the remaining 2/3, around 70% claim backward status;
- North-East - 5.3 million tribal Christians which is 1/4 - 1/5 of the total Christian population. The North-east Christians are all tribal people;
- Orissa - 8 lakh tribal Christians;
- Bihar and Jharkhand - 1.1 million tribal Christians;
- Of the remaining 16 million Christians, 60-70% of all Christians in the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa are notified as OBCs with percentages varying from state to state as indicated earlier;
- Only 10% of all Christians in the country are not availing of any kind of reservation and these would be largely the Goan and the Syrian Christians.

Some hard facts about the politics and religion behind reservations

- All-India reservation - total 50%. ST 7.5%, SC 15%, OBC 27.5%;
- All-India tribal population stands at 8.2% while all-India SC population is 16.2%;
- Christians constitute only 10% of the total tribal population but they corner 90% of all ST reservation quotas in higher education and government employment;
- J&K has 11% tribal population but they probably get nothing;
- Around 70% of Christians and Muslims have been brought into the quota regime as backward communities or backward classes;
- There is no category called Scheduled Caste Christians or Muslims. When the Church demands reservation for so-called Dalit Christians and God forbid that it may ever happen, then the Church will de-notify large segments of the OBC Christian population and re-classify them as Scheduled Castes so that they can corner all the benefits of SC reservation just as they are cornering all the benefits of the ST reservation quota.

This cornering is made possible only because of the constitutional right provided to minorities to start and run educational institutions. There is a

move now afoot to equate degrees obtained from Muslim madrasas to the CBSE board so that the Muslims in the OBC spectrum may be enabled to corner another major chunk of the benefits of reservation just as the Christians are doing now.

Tamil Nadu total 69% reservation

- 50% BC + MBC - 30% BC, 20% MBC;
- 18% SC - 15% + 3% exclusively for Arundhatiyar community;
- 1% for ST;
- About 90% of all Muslims and Christians have been included for reservation under the 30% BC category;
- 70% of all Tamil Nadu population is considered BC, a very unusual and high percentage;
- 50% of the 70% BC population is qualified for reservation.

Now let us see how this works in real terms by taking admission to medical colleges as an example. There are altogether 3000 medical seats of which 30% or 900 seats are allotted to the BC, 600 seats or 20% of the total are allotted to the MBC.

Christians constitute 6.5% of the total Tamil Nadu population while Muslims constitute 5.5%. Of the total 6.5% of Christians, 6.1% or around 80% of the total Christian population have been classified as BC. This is 1/9 of the total population. BC Christians were cornering 300 seats out of the 900 medical seats every year; that is 1/9 of the population was claiming 1/3 of the share of seats. And that is why Christian politicians and the Christian clergy met the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to ask him to rescind the order granting 3.5% reservation for Christians. The Tamil Nadu government promptly rescinded the order and allowed the Christians to come back into the 30% BC quota segment which was getting them phenomenal returns. Christians must be removed from the 30% BC quota unless we want a situation someday in the near future when they may rampage across the entire BC spectrum. Giving this super-forward religion even 3.5% quota is bad enough but allowing them to occupy the elephant's space in the BC quota segment is willful betrayal of the cause of Hindu backward classes.

The same would be true of all professional colleges and in admissions to all under-graduate and post-graduate degrees too. We must not be beguiled into thinking that the remaining seats go to Hindu BCs and MBCs. If we consider the possibility that preference in reservation is given to anti-Hindu, irreligious Dravidian Tamils with marked political affiliations, then we begin to understand what is happening in the Madras High Court and in all other courts of Tamil Nadu. Reservation benefits are being hogged by the minorities and anti-Hindu Dravidian Tamils. Tamil Hindu SCs, BCs and MBCs are being increasingly marginalised and alienated from the mainstream.

The Tamil Nadu government had announced 3.5% exclusive reservation for Christians and Muslims. This 7% minority reservation quota was supposed to have been hived off the 30% BC reservation quota. In the beginning, the Church welcomed the move but soon beat the retreat when it realised that under the 3.5% exclusive quota, Christian BCs were eligible only for 105 seats as against the 300 seats it was snatching from the mouths of Hindu BCs.

Now let us look at the last government deception which is proving fatal to Hindu Backward Class and Castes. According to the 2001 Census report which for the first time was collecting such data on the basis of religion, if we consider urbanization and literacy as indicators or indices of forwardness, then in Tamil Nadu:

- Male literacy is Christians 90%, Muslims also 90%, Hindus 81.5%;
- Female literacy is Christians 82%, Muslims 76%, Hindus 62.5%;
- Urbanized percentage - Christians 56%, Muslims 73%, Hindus 41%.

Conclusion

What can be inferred from this analysis is that Christians and Muslims who do not ideologically recognise caste divisions, have “stolen” most of the benefits meant for Hindu Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and Hindu Backward Classes and Other Backward Classes. If it comes about that “Dalit Christians” and “Dalit Muslims” are recognised by the Government as caste entities, then Christians and Muslims will hog all of the benefits with nothing left for Dalit Hindus. Scheduled Caste and

Scheduled Tribe Hindus will then have to convert to Christianity (or Islam) in order to obtain these benefits. The Indian bishops are aware of this and it is a part of their game plan to decimate the Hindu society in this way.]

Part Six

Hideaway Communalism In The Indian Express

Ishwar Sharan

The letters that follow were exchanged between us and the Madras *Indian Express* resident editor K.V. Ramanathan in June 1990. Up to this time we had firmly believed that our essay on the myth of St. Thomas, written in reply to C.A. Simon's article, would receive due consideration at the *Indian Express* and would appear in some appropriate form in the newspaper. When this did not happen even three months after submission and when a query sent to the assistant editor C.P. Seshadri¹ was ignored, we sent a registered letter to K.V. Ramanathan on June 1st:

Enclosed is a copy of the article on the St. Thomas myth which I sent by registered post on March 9th to Mr. Seshadri. A query concerning its publication was sent later and never replied to.

This article has been accepted by a respected publisher and will appear in a few months' time as a book entitled *Saint Thomas: The Man, the Church and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*.²

I am currently expanding the material, and on page four of the revised script will add the footnote, "This article was written in reply to C.A. Simon's article 'In Memory of a Slain Saint' which appeared in the *Express Weekend* of 30 December 1989. It has not been published to date nor has the *Indian Express* resident editor at Madras replied to the author's queries."

It is not my wish to be unfair to you or the newspaper, and your comments or advice concerning the above note are welcome.

On the other hand, if you do intend to publish the article, or rather a summary of it as the full text cannot appear in a newspaper, then the same should be indicated to me within the next two weeks as I have a deadline to meet.

After months of silence, this letter elicited a response from the *Indian Express*. K.V. Ramanathan replied to it on June 11th:

Your letter dated the 1st of June.

I find that *Express Weekend* carried on 13th of January a letter from you commenting on Mr. C.A. Simon's "In Memory of a Slain Saint". We have also published letters from Swami Tapasyananda³ and Mr. Veda Prakash on the same subject. It is not as if, therefore, the *Indian Express* refused to give space to your point of view. The availability of space being a severe constraint, *Express Weekend* finds it very difficult indeed to publish long articles. You yourself concede in the last paragraph of your letter that the full text of your article cannot appear in a newspaper. We believe that having published your letter there is really no need for us to publish a summary of your article also.

Now it is a fact of newspaper publishing that the editor has the prerogative of rejecting material that he does not wish to publish, and this right is strictly exercised in India where the editor usually seeks to mold public opinion rather than inform it. But given the reputation of the *Indian Express* as a fair-minded newspaper, we decided to do some plain speaking to this editor who equated a letter to the editor with a grossly misleading front-page article and would thus absolve himself of further responsibility to the public. Opening our reply with the verses of Jnanasambandar and Arunagirinathar quoted by Swami Tapasyananda—who rightly maintained that the Christian ecclesiastics contention can be proved to be fraudulent with this single evidence—we wrote on June 25th:

As you have bothered to reply to me with your letter of June 11th, I have asked Voice of India to alter the footnote⁴ in my essay on St. Thomas and the Kapaleeswara Temple. But I do not know where the book is in the press and you may be too late with your sorry letter of rejection.

Your contention that I have had opportunity to have my say in a letter to the editor of the *Express Weekend* published on January 13th, is not acceptable. I need hardly tell you that a front-page article presented as true history in a trusted newspaper is not refuted simply because a reader writes to the editor. Moreover, the important last paragraph of my letter was cut out, which caused Swami Jyotirmayananda to write a letter which carried a serious mistake in meaning, which in turn caused Mr. Veda Prakash to write a correction. Those last two letters and the confusion caused by them would not have been made had the *Express Weekend* not deliberately tried to suppress the truth about the original Kapaleeswara Temple and the St. Thomas Church.

I am aware that you have a shortage of space in the *Indian Express*. That is exactly why my essay has been written as it is. Any sub-editor can pick out the material wanted and summarise it without distorting my point of view or conclusions.

You may not consider this point of view to be of any value, but it is supported by over forty references named in the article itself.

Aside from poor Marco Polo, where are Mr. C.A. Simon's references? And was his article only a point of view too? And why are you hiding this Mr. Simon so that nobody can write him an opinion?⁵

I note that you did not lack any space in the *Indian Express* when he decided to tell his lies about the Hindus. It may be the truth that the Roman Catholic Church can buy the space she needs from you. I of course cannot. I can only write letters to the editor.

Mr. Harry Miller stated in his column of January 29th that St. Thomas came to India. You did not lack space for this point of view but you also did not publish the letters refuting it. At least two letters were sent to you and him with supporting material. Again, on April 23rd you carried an item about a cross planted in Kerala by St. Thomas, and again at least one letter was sent to you pointing out that this was not possible. This letter, too, was not published.

So the truth of the matter is that you do indeed have space to promote this ancient lie about St. Thomas coming to India to get killed by the wicked Hindus and especially the very wicked Brahmins, but that you have no space at all in your newspaper when somebody tries to unmask the fable (except for the three letters already referred to).

Swami Tapasyananda did not get a letter published in the *Express Weekend* as you have stated, but he has written his own article in *The Vedanta Kesari*.⁶ What he says cannot be ignored. And what Dr. R. Nagaswamy said in *The Hindu* on April 30th cannot be ignored either. Both are respected authorities in their respective fields.

Your letter of the 11th is disappointing for me. I did believe that I would eventually get fair treatment at the *Indian Express*. But this aside, what is really distressing is that it appears that you not only connive at this vicious lie being published in your paper to malign the Hindus, but that you actively support it by suppressing the truth no matter how often or in what form it is presented to you.

The resident editor K.V. Ramanathan was not the only one at the *Indian Express* to hear from us. We had also sent letters to the Madras assistant editor C.P. Seshadri and to the editor-in-chief Arun Shourie at New Delhi. To C.P. Seshadri we wrote in part:

When Mr. Shourie can expose the sordid history of Muslim iconoclasm, why is the same Christian history always covered up in your newspaper? After all,

Muslims borrowed their violent ideology from the Christians and Jews. Aurangzeb is nobody in comparison to St. Francis Xavier when it comes to temple-breaking and bloodshed. Yet Muslims today must bear public criticism for their past while the Christians get off free. Why is that?

And to Arun Shourie we wrote in part:

It seems clear from a number of articles published and from the letters of protest or criticism sent to the Madras editor and suppressed (of which I have knowledge; obviously many more letters were received by the editor), that the editor responsible for the material published in the *Express Weekend* has consistently pursued a policy of promoting Roman Catholic doctrine at the expense of historical truth. ... The manipulation of history and the suppression of facts is a major issue in this country. ... Christians, Muslims and Communists know how to write history and then how to rewrite it to suit their current ideological needs. When the *Indian Express* covertly supports one of these parties—in this case the Roman Catholics—in rewriting Indian history, the affair becomes a matter of grave concern to everybody. ... The Roman Catholic Church is the richest, largest and most sophisticated private publisher in India and the world. But this is not enough for them. They need the name of a fair-minded and respected daily to give their lies ... credibility—and unfortunately for the people of Madras they have found this in the *Indian Express*.

Arun Shourie had written about historical evidence and those who conceal it in “Hideaway Communalism” in the *Indian Express* on 5 February 1989. In the context of the myth of St. Thomas, his questions could be directed at journalists and he could be defining the self-interest of Roman Catholic bishops. He asks, “Will we shed our evasions and concealments? Will we at last learn to speak and face the whole truth? ... To see that these leaders are not interested in facts, not in religion ... but in power, in their personal power, and in that alone? That for them religion is but an instrument, an instrument which is so attractive because the cost of wielding it falls on others, on their followers, and not on them?”

In an earlier paragraph he could be writing about the editors of our national English language dailies when he says, “That is the significant thing; they have known [the evidence] and their impulse has been to conceal and bury rather than ascertain the truth.”

■ ■ ■

Arun Shourie lost his job at the *Indian Express* because he told the truth.⁷ And, what he wrote in 1989 in “Hideaway Communalism” is as true today—March 2019—at *The New Indian Express* as when we quoted it in the first edition of this book in February 1991. C.P. Seshadri is now retired and S. Sapru has also disappeared off the map. But on 1 January 1994 they gave a prominent place to the following letter from S. Chandrasekaran of Cheyyar:

The Bible says, “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold, Wise Men from the East came to Jerusalem saying where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. They saw the young child ... and fell down and worshipped Him ... they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh.’ (St. Matthew 2:1-11.)

Western scholars argue that the Wise Men were Persian Magi, the members of a priestly class or the magicians. However, they cite no evidence, probably not knowing that the more appropriate country in the East from where they proceeded to Bethlehem should be India.

The Wise Men were definitely the brilliant astronomers of India.

Among the eastern countries only in India Wise Men were found with astronomical talents. Also, the availability of gifts presented by the Wise Men to infant Jesus is abundant in India and not Persia.

The last but not the least proof is that in corresponding to the onward march of Wise Men from India to Judea, within not less than half a century, St. Thomas a disciple of Jesus Christ, made a downward march from Judea, superseded Persia and reached India to sow the seed of Christianity.

The Wise Men who went to Bethlehem to see Jesus were in all probability Indians and not Persians or any others. Is there anything to counter this possibility?⁸

This letter was obviously a plant, i.e., the covert dissemination of an idea, usually placed in a newspaper with the connivance of the editor. It was written by a mischief-maker or clever Christian propagandist. S. Chandrasekaran would prove to be a shameless negationist as well—and we replied to it that same day, as did K.V. Ramakrishna Rao. As our letters are long and repetitious of arguments already presented in this book, only

the edited versions which appeared in the *Indian Express* on January 4th are reproduced here. We wrote:

Dr. Chandrasekaran may be right in his proposition that the three Wise Men who went to Palestine to offer gifts to the infant Jesus were Indians (IE, Jan. 1). But the onus lies on him to provide proofs for his thesis and not pretend that it stands proved until somebody comes along and refutes it.

Citing the legend of St. Thomas as a “last but not least proof” for the Wise Men’s journey west, is unacceptable because there is no proof that St. Thomas came to India.

Dr. Chandrasekaran’s letter, which is obviously a plant, is apparently part of the effort to establish this anti-Hindu fable as history.

And K.V. Ramakrishna Rao wrote:

One can’t divine Dr. Chandrasekaran’s purpose in writing the letter. It contains nothing but unhistorical legends and myths.

As the Christian era that we follow is itself unscientific, purely based on religious dogma, now historians have started using the notations BCE and CE (Before Common Era and Common Era). The alleged visit of St. Thomas to India is another myth floated by vested Christian missionaries. If Chandrasekaran’s purpose for writing the letter couldn’t be exactly divined, neither could the purpose of the *Indian Express* for publishing it.

As we had started work on the revision of this book and were interested in understanding *Indian Express* editorial policy, we sent a letter to the resident editor S. Sapru, with a copy to C.P. Seshadri, on January 3rd:

I am working on a new edition of my book *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, which is being reorganised and expanded. Letters and articles currently appearing in the *Indian Express* will be included in it under appropriate headings.

If you or Mr. Seshadri wish to explain to a concerned public your editorial policy regarding the selection and publication of Letters to the Editor, I would be happy to consider including your statement in the new edition.

I have been critical of your policies in the past and remain critical of them today (especially when you publish untruthful or provocative items and then refuse to publish rejoinders), nevertheless, I am taking this opportunity to say that I do

think the *Indian Express* is the best of the English-language papers being published in the country today.

This letter was a mistake. Though we were sincere and had sent it in good faith, it is as much the nature of newspaper editors to exploit the trust of their readers as it is the nature of missionaries to exploit the trust of the helpless and weak, and we had unwittingly invited these editors to exploit not only their readers but their readers' children. Sapru and Seshadri replied to our letter by publishing a four-colour three-column feature on St. Thomas and related Christian historical items on their children's page on February 18th. The material was attributed to the 1992 edition of the *Limca Book of Records* and read:

FIRST TO PREACH CHRISTIANITY: Apostle St. Thomas (Thomas Didaemus) arrived in India in 52 AD by the northwestern route and preached Christianity until his death. He was the first to preach Christianity in India.

OLDEST CHURCH IN EXISTENCE: St. Thomas is believed to have established a small church at Mylapore in Madras in 52 AD where he was killed. Today's Santhome Church reportedly stands near the earlier site.

FIRST CHRISTIAN COLONY: In 345 AD Thomas Cana, a Syrian merchant, came to Travancore and established a Christian colony.

FIRST JESUIT MISSIONARY: Saint Francis Xavier, a Spanish national who landed at Goa was the first Jesuit missionary. He established the first Christian colony in Goa in 1542.

FIRST JEWISH COLONY: In 68 AD. 10,000 Jewish refugees emigrated from Jerusalem to the Malabar coast after the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem....

The list continues with First Bishop and First Cardinal but we have reproduced the relevant items. Not one of them is historically true except for the reference to Thomas of Cana—which is also not proved. St. Thomas did not come to India and St. Francis Xavier did not establish the first Christian colony in Goa. When a history professor saw this article in the *Indian Express*, he remarked, "The Limca book of records is the Coca-Cola book of lies—Limca being a trademark of Coca-Cola."

We did not respond to this feature. By taking the St. Thomas controversy to the children's page, the *Indian Express* had effectively put an end to any further debate. They had done this for exactly the same reason that *The Hindu* had done so earlier (as will be seen in the next chapter). First, nobody can take issue with articles that appear on the children's page; and second, the editors were showing their contempt for our position and ridiculing the plea that we had made in the first edition of this book—that the true history of old Mylapore be studied by unbiased professionals and recorded for our children.

But if the *Indian Express* did not hear from us again on the subject of St. Thomas, they too did not refrain from further promoting the legend at a given opportunity. On April 25th another feature on St. Thomas appeared above a large photo of some Kerala-style tiled roofs with loud-speakers attached to the eaves. It was by Samson Aseervatham of Nagercoil who wrote:

For a church it is tiny. But it has a “halo” of its own as it is considered the oldest church in the East. The 45 ft. by 10 ft. church was erected by St. Thomas, one of the twelve followers of Christ, at Thiruvithancodu.

The Apostle is said to have landed in AD 52 at Kodungallur on the west coast of South India.

St. Thomas raised seven and a “half” churches on the west coast before his departure to Mylapore, Madras. The Thiruvithancodu church, which has the original base and structure intact, is considered as being “half” because of its size.

The other seven churches are in Kerala: Malayankara, Parur, Palayur, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Chayel and Kurakonikollam. Of this, only the Niranam church is extant.

All the churches that St. Thomas built were dedicated to St. Mary. The one in Thiruvithancodu was raised on twenty cents of land given as a gift by the King of Venad. Thiruvithancodu was the capital then. It later expanded its territory and came to be known as Travancore.

The church was built entirely with neatly dressed rocks, and resembles a village temple. The tiled roof is a much later addition.

On Sundays, Syrian Christians throng here for worship. Prayers are recited in Syriac and Malayalam. The ancient church is under the direct control of the Catholic Orthodox Syrian Church at Kottayam.

K.V. Ramakrishna Rao's comment on this piece was published in the *Indian Express* on May 2nd:

Except the structure, which is quite recent, all claims made about the so-called "half-church" of St. Thomas in the write-up "Small and beautiful" (IE, April 25), are totally unhistorical.

Samson Aseervatham has every right to believe that St. Thomas came to India. Some believe that Jesus Christ preached in Benares and died in Kashmir. But there is no historical evidence for such myths floated by the Portuguese.

About the St. Thomas myth in India and his "seven and a half churches", T.K. Joseph, in his book *Six St. Thomases of South India* has shown how missionaries were engaged in spreading the myth by planting relics, forging documents and writing "histories" in their own way.

The fact is that all the churches mentioned by the writer were previously Hindu temples which were converted into churches. In fact, even today they are either situated in or around the temple premises.

In 1990 the *Indian Express* allegedly had no space in which to publish a reply to C.A. Simon's St. Thomas article. In 1994 it had found a surplus of space in which to publish articles promoting the St. Thomas story. Editor Sapru has said (IE, Feb. 25) that "the ultimate lord and master of the newspapers is the market place. If this is so—and ethics no longer have any place in journalism and newspaper publishing—then who is paying for this space? Is it the Jesuits or the Church of Rome, or World Vision and the World Christian Council? And if nobody pays, is telling the same old lie over and over again really so profitable for an Indian newspaper?"⁹

1. This editor was at the Madras office of the *Indian Express* for many years.

2. The title was changed to *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*. The article submitted to the *Indian Express* was called *What the Historians Say About Saint Thomas*.

3. Ramnathan had confused Tapasyananda with Jyotirmayananda whose letter was published on February 10th. But the mistake reveals that he was aware of Swami Tapasyananda's article which had been sent to him three months earlier.
4. The footnote was deleted.
5. The *Express Weekend* editor S. Viswanathan eventually sent C.A. Simon's address by post.
6. We did not know at the time of writing this letter that Swami Tapasyananda's article had also been submitted to the *Indian Express*.
7. He is remembered in Madras with much affection and respect by *Indian Express* readers.
8. First, a possibility isn't a probability, and, second, if you follow a star you will only go around in circles!
9. This article was written in 1995. We did not know at that time that India's mainstream newspapers were coming under increased Christian control either through *benami* acquisitions or the employment of Christian or pro-Christian editors and journalists. Today we know that India's media, especially the English-language newspapers and electronic media, is controlled by Christian interests or "secular" anti-Hindu interests. Most "secular" Indians are non-discerning Christian sympathizers by default.

Hideaway Communalism In The Hindu

Ishwar Sharan

Whatever the faults of the *Indian Express* in the 1990s, it had an honourable beginning and still had some of the moral authority it had acquired in the Freedom Movement. This is not true of *The Hindu* which was established with the sole objective of making money from the British Raj. It was known as “The Sapper” prior to 1947—even the British-owned *Mail* was more nationalistic—and after the white sahib went away it was called “The Old Widow of Mount Road”.¹ Its formula for success is a studied, high-tech mediocrity—name and form and no content—and a faithful toeing of the Chinese government line. It is class-conscious, casteist and fashionably anti-Hindu. It’s moral response to any media-created national crisis—such as the demolition of an unauthorised Muslim building in Ayodhya—is to fill its columns with the lugubrious drivel of various popular Marxist professors. In short, *The Hindu* is self-righteous and boring unless one is looking for a suitable girl for an equally suitable boy with B.Com. and an American Green Card.

This is not only our view. A Christian missionary and social activist from Kerala who charges that Hindu civilisation is exhausted and decadent, points a finger at *The Hindu* as a living example of this alleged condition. He says that we don’t have to worry about Christian missionaries undermining Hindu culture when we have established opinion-setters like this at work in our midst.

All this by way of introduction to a hallowed Madras institution. We were quiet innocent of its ways when we sent a copy of *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* to *The Hindu* in 1991. At the same time, we sent a copy to Dr. T. Edmunds of T.B.M. Lutheran College at Porayar, Tamil Nadu. He replied and suggested that we ask *The Hindu* to let him do the review. We agreed, happy that a professional historian had taken an interest in the book, and wrote *The Hindu* book editor on April 3rd:

Some days ago I sent you a copy of *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* for review.

A copy of the book was also sent to Dr. T. Edmunds at the T.B.M. Lutheran College at Porayar 609307. He has just replied and suggests that I request you to allow him to review the book for *The Hindu*.

I do not know Dr. Edmunds but suspect that he may be the competent person to do the review, and therefore request that you consider contacting him for it.

This letter was replied to by “special correspondent” C.V. Gopalakrishnan on April 6th:

This is in reply to your letter of April 3rd, regarding review of *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*.

The decision to review books sent to *The Hindu* and the choice of the reviewer rest with the Editor.

This letter was unexpected and unnecessary. We had only made a suggestion which may or may not be followed up. It did indicate though that the editor did not want the review. We would learn soon enough that the book page editor was C.V. Gopalakrishnan himself.

But if his note was unexpected, what was to follow a week later was a real surprise. On April 13th *The Hindu* published a four-colour, seven-panel cartoon feature on its children’s page called “The Story of Madras”. It was illustrated by Lalitha and scripted by a director of the newspaper, Nanditha Krishna,² who wrote:

Mylapore had several famous foreign visitors. Let us see who they were.

One of the minor apostles of Jesus Christ, Thomas Didymus (or St. Thomas) preached the Gospel on the beaches of ancient Mylapore in the 1st century AD. It is believed that he was buried here in AD 72.

Marco Polo visited St. Thomas’ church and tomb in “ancient Meliapore” in 1293.

The Arabs visited Betumah (“the Town of Thomas”) in the 9th century and the Nestorian Christians in the 10th century. The latter built a church over St. Thomas’ tomb. In the 16th century, the Portuguese shifted the tomb and built a basilica—San Thome Cathedral—at the present site.

But St. Thomas did not live in Mylapore. It is believed that he lived in a cave at Little Mount, prayed and preached here, and took a daily walk to the beach at Mylapore....

And died on St. Thomas Mount, where the Nestorians built a church which the Portuguese re-built and to which the Armenians made additions.

The church contains a painting of the Virgin Mary, said to have been the work of St. Luke, who gave it to St. Thomas to bring to Madras.

In the 16th century, the competition between the Portuguese and the Dutch to secure a port in Chola Mandalam, a province of the Vijayanagar Kingdom, and today's Madras, sent the price of pepper up by 5 shillings. So 24 merchants in London started a trading company, the East India Company, to corner the Indian trade. The action was to change the course of Indian history.

Except for the last reference to the East India Company, none of these statements are true—or wholly true, for the feature is a most deceitful mixture of fact and fiction. And because it appeared on the children's page when we had made a specific and sincere appeal that our children be told the plain truth about Mylapore, we felt that the editors of *The Hindu*—be they Kasturi or Ravi or Ram in 1991—and Nanditha Krishna were simply being spiteful. We decided to let them know that we knew what they were about and sent a letter to the editor on April 20th:

Apropos of the colour feature about St. Thomas (*Young World*, April 13), I am reminded of Mark Twain's observation that "a lie can travel half-way around the world before truth can put its trousers on."

My book about the myth of St. Thomas was sent to you in good faith, with the hope that it would receive fair treatment at the hands of a competent reviewer of your choice, and I must confess that I did not expect from *The Hindu* the spiteful response that this feature by Nanditha Krishna represents.

Special correspondent C.V. Gopalakrishnan kept quiet this time and did not reply to us.

Nanditha Krishna was not only being spiteful of course. She was declaring the policy of her newspaper—which appears to be the wholesale revision of Indian history³ in order to extract yet more money out of a gullible middle class with the marketable commodity of "Hindu tolerance" (which is falsely presented as being Hinduism's essence).⁴ That she should publish in her paper at all raises a serious question of ethics. Directors and publishers

should not write in their own newspapers. This is an old publishing rule. But perhaps most unfortunate of all is that *The Hindu* editors have shown themselves to be opportunists,⁵ a charge levelled at journalists because they often take undue advantage of a given circumstance when looking for the good chance.⁶ Indeed, Jesus the twin brother of St. Thomas warns us against these pretentious, greedy scribes when he says in *Mark* 12:38-40:

Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

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1. The newspaper is called "The Chindu" because of its slavish pro-China editorial policy. *The Hindu* has been a quisling newspaper throughout its whole existence—though it still calls itself India's national newspaper.
 2. Dr. Nanditha Krishna is also the Honorary Director of the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Chennai, and administers its various constituents such as the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Institute of Indological Research among the foundation's other institutions in Chennai and Kanchipuram. She also writes for *The New Indian Express*.
 3. *The Hindu* is fully aware that the St. Thomas story is false and that the Kapaleeswara Temple was destroyed by the Portuguese in order to build San Thome Cathedral. We know this because some of the documents referred to when researching this book have come from *The Hindu* archives.
 4. Hinduism's essence is *Ishwara*, *Dharma* and *Satya*, not tolerance as is often declared by Gandhians, Marxists, and Secularists in order to disarm Hindus and put them on the defensive.
 5. *The Hindu* continues to pimp for St. Thomas till today. An article by the school teacher Geeta Padmanabhan called "St. Thomas and the City" appeared on 4 October 2016 in the newspaper. Padmanabhan even quoted Marco Polo in *Il Milione*, though his clear reference to a tomb on the Gulf of Mannar facing Ceylon contradicts the claim for a tomb on the Mylapore seashore. Another article by Sindhuri Nandhakumar called "An apostle returns: Bringing St. Thomas back to Chennai" on 27 December 2018, identified the parish priest Fr. Lawrence Raj as the agent behind the clean-up, rebuilding, and promotion abroad of the Chennai churches associated with the St. Thomas legend.
 6. It is because journalism is so exploitative of people and events that the only redeeming feature of the profession is the moral obligation to tell the truth.

Madras Musings And Madras Muthiah

Ishwar Sharan

Madras had two major English-language dailies in 1992, *The Hindu* and *Indian Express*, and a growing number of special interest community journals.¹ The best known of these small publications is *Madras Musings*, a Catholic-owned fortnightly published by Anu Varghese and edited by S. Muthiah. Muthiah is a Sri Lanka-returned journalist who is described in an *Indian Express* article as talented and multi-faceted. He is certainly these—and more as will be seen. He is also reportedly multi-religious, though only the Christian side of his faith shows. He is a committed and subtle promoter of the St. Thomas fable, which he repeats at length in his books *Madras Discovered*, *Madras Rediscovered* and *Madras that is Chennai*, and a zealous patron of Chennai's Portuguese churches.²

We did not know any of these wonderful things when we sent him a copy of the first edition of this book for review. *Madras Musings* reviewed books then—early 1992—and had the motto “We care for Madras” blazoned across its masthead, and we thought—rather naively we would soon learn—that knowing about Madras was also caring for it.

Sometime later, in the May 1-15 issue, a prominent, boxed, front page editorial appeared in the paper. It was obviously written by Muthiah himself though it appeared with the by-line “Staff Reporter”. It was called “Looking back—for action tomorrow” and read:

In all the excitement to draw up plans to make a heritage zone of Mylapore-San Thome, only one thing is certain. And that is that the area, ancient Mylapore, which was pushed far from shore by the Portuguese after 1522 to create San Thome, and the new Mylapore, that developed where it is today through the efforts of the Vijayanagar “governors” of this part of Tondaimandalam, has the strongest historical reasons for conservation efforts to be spent on it.

Tamil tradition has Mylapore as over 2500 years old. Thiruvalluvar, it is said, lived and sang here. Christian tradition, as much an article of faith, has Thomas who

Doubted, the Apostle of India, living and preaching in this part of the Coromandel from about 65 AD till his death in 72 AD. Today, there is much associated with that legend that survives between the Mylapore beach and the Mount of St. Thomas.

Ptolemy the Greek geographer wrote of the great port of Maillarpha about 140 AD. From the 6th to the 8th centuries, this was the chief port of the Pallavas of Kanchi and it was from here that the culture of India first spread to the lands of the east. It was to this great port that the Arabs and the Nestorians and Marco Polo came at different times, from the Pallava period to the 13th century. And it is Maila and Meilan and Mirapor they all also called Betumah, "The Town of Thomas".³

After the Pallavas, the prosperity of Mylapore declined and it was little more than a small town when the Portuguese established their settlement in its place and pushed it back from the shore.⁴ But of it Camoens, the author of the national epic of the Portuguese *The Lusiads* (1572), sang:

Here rose the potent city Meliapor
Named, in olden time rich, vast and grand....

A lineage as ancient as that, a town associated with Thiruvalluvar and Thomas, the Pallavas and the Portuguese, certainly deserves its heritage protected. But to find common consent of what that heritage is and all of what it should encompass will be the first hurdle to be crossed in any plan to "save" Mylapore.

Unfortunately, try as he might, Muthiah does not have a facet among his multi-facets that reflects any real feeling for a Mylapore other than the one the *paranghi* priests and pirates colonised and sang about in Lisbon. We replied to this editorial in *Madras Musings* on May 5th:

The legend of St. Thomas coming to Mylapore may be an article of faith for some Christian communities in India. It is not an article of faith for Rome and the unedifying fable is no longer taught in Catholic universities in Europe and America. Nor was it an article of faith for Bishop Stephen Neill, himself a man of faith, when he, in his authoritative *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to 1707 A.D.*, lamented the spread of this spurious history about St. Thomas among Indians.⁵

Equally important if not more so, the myth of St. Thomas is not an article of faith for the majority of citizens of Mylapore and Madras. It represents for them the destruction of the great Shiva temple on the Mylapore beach and the denigration of their religion by the Portuguese and the Roman Catholic Church. How can

these citizens be expected to sympathise with the sordid heritage that San Thome represents? How can they be asked to assist with the preservation of the monuments that represent the success of this vicious attack on their faith?

This letter was not published of course, and in retrospect it is not reasonable to insist that it should have been. *Madras Musings* is a Catholic newspaper—for all of its non-sectarian face—and if *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* will not allow the truth about Mylapore to be told, we can hardly expect S. Muthiah and his fortnightly to be more honest.

1. There are four major English-language newspapers in Chennai (Madras) in 2018: *The Hindu*, *The New Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, and *Deccan Chronicle*. All these papers are secular, pro-Christian broadsheets that hold the civilizational root dharma culture of India, called Hinduism, as “mythological” and “superstitious” and worthy only of their editorial contempt. Very occasionally these newspapers will give an inch in their letters column for an offended Hindu to protest or dissent.

2. See the reference to S. Muthiah in Chapter 19 of this book.

3. Only the Syrians identified Betumah with Mylapore. The Arabs said it was east of Cape Comorin, probably in Sumatra, and Gerini, in *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of East Asia*, says it is east of Singapore. There is also no agreement among scholars as to the meaning of the word Betumah. On this point as on others, S. Muthiah, like Nanditha Krishna in *The Hindu*, is simply trying to pass off one version or another of the St. Thomas fable as history.

4. All evidence points to Mylapore being a flourishing and wealthy Hindu pilgrimage city until the Portuguese destroyed it in the sixteenth century. S. Muthiah is following the Portuguese accounts here, which were specifically written to cover up the great destruction of the city after 1520.

5. The question of whether or not the St. Thomas legend is really an article of faith for Christians is discussed in Chapter 19 of this book.

St. Thomas As A Tourist Product

Ishwar Sharan

T.T. Krishnamachari was a Sunlight soap salesman who made a lot of money from the British Raj. After independence he joined the Congress Party and somehow managed to become Nehru's finance minister. He is a success story in Madras and has a road named after him in Teynampet—TTK Salai. His sons now preside over a business empire that includes pharmaceuticals, health care, travel, textiles, pressure cookers, condoms, road maps and Catholic propaganda. It is the Catholic propaganda that concerns us here but we cannot ignore the presence of the condoms. Catholics are not supposed to wear condoms—at least they are not supposed to be seen wearing them—and we cannot imagine what the Archbishop of Madras and his patron apostle St. Thomas—who was ideologically against intercourse in the first place—think of their well-wisher and his disparate business interests. But to start our story at the beginning.

In the first edition of this book we made a reference to the 1985 edition of TTK's *A Map's Guide Book to Madras*. We had quoted a line from it regarding the fate of the original Kapaleeswara Temple—that it had been eroded by the sea—which was a piece of wrong information that had been subsequently quoted by Swami Jyotirmayananda in the *Indian Express*. We had also noted that, "This popular guidebook, like others of its kind, treats the legend of St. Thomas in Madras as accepted historical fact."

Now because we had made this observation and because we believed that the TTK publisher was simply misinformed about the St. Thomas story—everybody was misinformed about it we had discovered—we had sent him a copy of our book on the St. Thomas myth when it was released in early 1991.

This was done as a courtesy and we had no reason to suspect that the TTK publisher had any interest in repeating the St. Thomas fable in his publications in an unqualified manner if he knew better. We were mistaken. Big business obviously had contingencies and a code of ethics that we could

not anticipate or appreciate. And we did not know then that the talented and multi-faceted S. Muthiah, the man who would become editor of *Madras Musings* and editorial adviser to other Madras newspapers, was a director, consultant and copywriter at TT Maps and Publications Ltd., the TTK company that published the Madras guidebooks.

Muthiah is an informed and articulate local historian¹ and—as we have already noted—a motivated promoter of the St. Thomas tale, and we, unwittingly and in good faith, had given him yet another opportunity to publish abroad—or advise his principal to publish abroad—the great Portuguese lie. The 1993 edition of the *TTK Road Guide to Madras* is a masterpiece of disinformation. It has a large photograph of the San Thome Cathedral steeple and cross on its cover and a disingenuous commentary inside that presents the St. Thomas story straight across as Indian history, objectively and in detail. Obviously, we had provoked this delinquent response from TT Maps and Publications Ltd. with our own St. Thomas book. The Kapaleeswara Temple entry, which had caught our attention in 1990, was now revised and gave the distinct impression that the temple had never been in any other place than it is today. This entry, like others, is a bundle of contradictions and appears to be a crude rewriting of S. Muthiah's own published Mylapore-San Thome histories.²

Now as interesting as what is said in the TTK guidebook, is what is not said. This trend of omission had started with Nanditha Krishna's St. Thomas article in *The Hindu* and was copied later in the *Indian Express*. The new purveyors of the St. Thomas myth, most of them Hindus, are always careful to leave out the Brahmin assassin who allegedly stabbed the saint in the back while he was at prayer. This attempt to accommodate a vicious communal tale directed against themselves and their forefathers by cutting out the offending parts, is sad indeed and it has given the Catholic believer the last laugh. He knows that there is no martyred saint without an assassin—and he could only be a Hindu priest in 72 AD.

We can only wonder at the ostrich-like posture of our Indian intellectuals, their heads stuck deep in the sand and feathered bottoms raised high in the air for everybody to see, and at their continued policy of self-abnegation and appeasement of an intolerant other side in order to keep the peace. We wonder indeed at their intellectual dishonesty. Big Church and big business

are not going to change their unprincipled ways until Indian intellectuals themselves find the courage to tell the truth and continue to tell it even when first efforts appear to be counter-productive and overwhelmed by Roman Catholic and secular commercial interests.

1. Muthiah's pro-Christian histories of Madras were recognised by the British in 2002 when he was made an honorary member of the Order of the British Empire, an award that was presented to him for "service by those who are not British citizens but who have pursued ideals which Britain values and shares".
2. Our book has been the cause of a massive propaganda effort by Indian Christian writers and Indian secularists of all ideological hues to establish the St. Thomas fable as Indian history. The result is that all India travel books today describe the martyrdom of St. Thomas as a real event in first century Mylapore, and there are hundreds of internet websites that do the same. The irony for this writer is that these Indian writers use his research and books to get their details of the ancient fable, which they then distort and put into false context or interpret mischievously to create their St. Thomas in India histories. But all is not lost: there is a great number of Indians and foreigners who have listened to our account of the historical crime being committed in the Indian media and have taken serious note of it.

Christians Threaten Kamakoti Magazine

Ishwar Sharan

In June of 1991, an article on the St. Thomas myth and the destruction of the original Kapaleeswara Temple on the beach by the Portuguese appeared in *Kamakoti*, a Hindu magazine published out of Mylapore. The historical features continued for some months with articles on St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis Xavier and the destruction of temples in Madras, Chingleput and Arcot districts by Muslims. The source materials for the articles were Voice of India publications. Suddenly, after three months the articles stopped and *Hindu Voice International* issued the following press release on 22 September 1991:

Christian fanatics have sent a letter to Kanchi Kamakoti Shankaracharya Math, Kanchipuram, threatening to bomb the office of *Kamakoti*, a journal edited by T.S.V. Hari and published by T.V.S. Giri from Madras, if it does not stop a serial on the Hindu temples destroyed by Christians and converted into churches in the yesteryears. The journal has been publishing the serial based on authoritative historical sources and evidences produced by renowned research scholars. Even *The Vedanta Kesari*, a monthly of Ramakrishna Math, published from Madras, had recently carried an article by no less a person than Swami Tapasyananda, Vice-President of the Math, pointing to evidence of the destruction of the ancient Kapaleeswara Temple which was converted into Santhome Church.¹ It is learnt that a copy of the threatening letter from fanatic Christians has been forwarded to the authorities for necessary action. The publisher of the journal, without commenting on the letter, told our correspondent that they do not intend to stop the serial succumbing to the threat.

In fact, the publisher did stop the series of articles and sent the editor, his son Hari, into exile in Mumbai. Years later, Hari apologised to this writer for his father's apparent cowardice and explained that he was under pressure from the authorities to discontinue the series.

1. See the article “The Legend of a Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism” reproduced in this book.

Part Seven

The Mount Of Thomas

S. Muthiah

Several years ago, there was an American (?) turned Hindu ascetic who was never happy whenever I wrote of Thomas Didymus, the Apostle of India. In fact, he wrote a book, I recall, devoting a considerable and angry part of it to my unhistorical approach to the legend of Thomas in particular. I don't know whether he's still around, but if he is, I wish he'd realise that articles of faith, like his own, are not disputable, calling, instead, for tolerance. And that a little unhistoric storytelling, like today's, does no one any harm.

Across the Adyar are the two Mounts of Thomas, to make access to which easy Coja Petrus Uschan built the first bridge across the river. Just across what the bridge has grown into today, to your left and barely peeping over congested construction is Little Mount or Chinna Malai. Legend has it that it was in the cave on this mount, over which the Portuguese built the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in 1551, that Thomas lived during the eight years (64-72 AD) that he spent in Madras. It was from here that he would daily walk to preach on the beach at Mylapore (San Thome beach), stopping to rest in the mango groves that predated St. Mary's (or Descanso) Church on the road named after it in Raja Annamalaipuram and Luz Church in Mylapore.

Living a life of penance and prayer in the cave, Thomas would come out only to preach to those who gathered on the hillock or to go to the beach. In the east wall of the cave is an opening now barred and by it a palm print. It was through this "window" that he fled to what the Portuguese called El Grande Monti, where he was martyred. The hand print is said to be the saint's, as is the footprint at the foot of the hill. The cave can be entered by squeezing through an opening by the side of the ornate altar of the ancient chapel. In the cave, with its aura of serenity almost palpably summoning the mediator, is an altar where the faithful light their candles.

Outside, to the rear of the cave is a cross, which, it is believed, Thomas cut into the rock. And it was before it that he prayed and said Mass. Also, to

the rear of the Portuguese church is a protected natural spring, said to be the result of Thomas striking the rock with his stick to bring forth water to quench the thirst of his parched congregation. Today, the water has curative powers, believers hold.

Next door to the chapel, where once there was a church built in 1711, a new circular church, to Our Lady of Health, was consecrated in 1971 to commemorate the 19th century of the martyrdom of Thomas who was in time to be elevated to sainthood. The new church, is as incongruous in styling as the cinematically styled Stations of the Cross that line the steps that lead up the Mount to the rear of the cave-chapel.

Three kilometres from Little Mount is the 300-feet-high mount that the road we have traversed these past few weeks leads to Parangi Malai, the hill of the foreigners (*feringhi*) is the St. Thomas's Mount Marco Polo wrote of in the 13th century as the site of Thomas's martyrdom. The Nestorian Monastery he had visited here had fallen into ruin when Mylapore's trade with West Asia died out. And in the first quarter of the 16th century, the Portuguese rebuilt the Nestorian chapel, creating the Church of Our Lady of Expectation which stands today. The 135 steps to the top that Usan gifted are one way up, and during the December festival is the scene of fervent fulfilment of vows. A road to the rear of the military cantonment is motorable. Whichever way you reach the summit, the simple little church offers a rare serenity and its surroundings a fine view of a city which seems truly green.

During Portuguese excavations on the Mount in the 1540s, a stone cross with Sassanian Pahlavi (a Persian variant) inscriptions on it was found and built into the wall. Called the Bleeding Cross, it owes its name to the legend that it "bled" from time to time, the first time being in 1558. Alongside are relics of St. Thomas and above the 18th century altar an oil-on-wood painting of the Madonna. Mentioned in Portuguese texts as early as 1559, this picture of the Holy Virgin and Child is believed to have been painted by Luke and brought to India by Thomas.

Within the church are Armenian tombstones, the oldest dating to 1707. The altar and pulpit ornamentation also reflect Armenian contribution. And the

14 paintings of Jesus's disciples lining the walls are inscribed in Armenian and are probably a contribution from an 18th century Armenian benefactor. In fact, by then the church was thought of as an Armenian, and not a Portuguese, one.

The Portuguese themselves are said to have used the flatness of the peak as a platform for a "lighthouse"—lighting bonfires every night to guide their ships into and around San Thome's waters. Prayers were said for completion or commencement of safe voyages and guns were fired in welcome or farewell salute as the ships arrived or left these waters. Today, the church tells no stories of the Nestorians, Portuguese or Armenians. Instead, on one side is a convent, on another a well-kept cemetery of the Franciscan nuns who died on the Mount, the first tombstone dating to 1918. Courting couples sits on the low wall surrounding the summit and the loudspeakers that mar the lines of a church of rather minimalistic design blare music that varies with the parish priest. But enter the usually empty church—and there's a peace and calm echoing that of the cave at Little Mount, a serenity that seems to shut out the city.¹

1. This article appeared in *The Hindu*, Chennai, on 7 January 2004. It is reproduced here to give context to Ishwar Sharan's rejoinder, called "Chennai's Own Holocaust Deniers", which follows and which *The Hindu* declined to publish.

Chennai's Own Holocaust Deniers

Ishwar Sharan

All eminent historians writing on colonial India describe the devastation of Mylapore and its environs by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The respected Mylapore archaeologist Dr. R. Nagaswamy, who has worked on San Thome Cathedral with the Jesuits, tells of the destruction of Jain and Buddhist temples along with all of the buildings of the Kapaleeswarar Temple on the Mylapore beach. Before him the Portuguese historian Gaspar Correa describes a holocaust that extended from Mylapore to Big Mount, south of the Adyar River. Even the St. Thomas protagonist Archbishop Arulappa admitted that Hindu temples once stood on the sites now occupied by St. Thomas-related churches in Madras, at Mylapore, Saidapet, and Big Mount now called St. Thomas Mount.

But the true story about the annihilation of Mylapore, the ancient Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage town established long before the Christian era, is not to be told by today's self-appointed guardians of Chennai heritage. The truth is not overtly denied, it is simply not admitted, and is covertly replaced by a fabulous Christian tale about St. Thomas coming to Mylapore in 64 CE and getting himself killed eight years later on Big Mount. The tale turns the victims of a holocaust into the slayers of an important Christian saint, the doubting apostle of the Gospels, and—yes!—the twin brother of Jesus, no less. With this story to cover up the true story of Mylapore, Hindus can be made into “Christ-killers” just like the Jews before them, and treated accordingly—damned and reviled by the Christian power then, the Portuguese, and damned and censored by the Christian power now, the Americans who, like the Portuguese, use Christianity to give themselves moral authority for their imperial expeditions, and as a means to gain influence and sympathy through converts in an India that they wish to dominate.

The main champion of St. Thomas in Madras today, besides the Catholic Church who owns the shrines and collects the money, is the Sri Lanka-returned journalist and producer of picture books, S. Muthiah, who got his

stripes sitting at the feet of the notorious *Indian Express* columnist Harry Miller. Muthiah's current patron is *The Hindu*, an obloquial communist rag that is known up and down Mount Road as "The Dinosaur" because it is big and old and dumb, and makes so much noise as it lumbers along through the capitalist swamps of secular socialist India. Its editor is an ideological Neanderthal called N. Ram. His forte is "secularism" which, in today's political parlance, means he is anti-national and anti-Hindu. He believes that China is the great leader and assiduously follows the Chinese two-systems system in his newspaper—economic freedom and political oppression for all. His opinion columns are filled with gloom and doom, and the rest of the paper is given over to the celebration of consumer goods for the urban rich. One of the special items for sale on January 7th, 2004, was the tale of St. Thomas in an article called "The Mount of Thomas" by S. Muthiah.

Muthiah opens his article on the glorification of the Portuguese churches at Little Mount and Big Mount with a disclaimer of sorts. He says he is going to do a little unhistorical storytelling, and pretends that he can only just recall our book, *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, when in fact he received copies of it when he was an editor of another communist rag, *The Indian Review of Books*. He did not review the book, of course, and to our knowledge has never done any research of his own on the St. Thomas legend except to consult Catholic religious pamphlets and visit the St. Thomas churches. Muthiah would like to dismiss us, deport us to one of Uncle Joe Stalin's gulags for truth-tellers. He and his editor at *The Hindu*, had they any conscience at all, would be deeply troubled by the reality that it is a foreign *sadhu* in India for religious reasons, without means or influence, who has had to find out the facts and expose the St. Thomas fraud in Madras. They have not had the intellectual integrity or courage to do the work themselves. Muthiah then has the presumption to advise us to be tolerant as he proceeds to mislead the public, as much as by what he does not say as by what he does, about the cave and two churches which were earlier Hindu shrines destroyed by the Portuguese. Muthiah is a very astute propagandist, a very persuasive man engaged in a cover-up. He would be better employed selling used cars. He writes:

Several years ago, there was an American (?) turned Hindu ascetic who was never happy whenever I wrote of Thomas Didymus, the Apostle of India. In fact, he wrote a book, I recall, devoting a considerable and angry part of it to my unhistorical approach to the legend of Thomas in particular. I don't know whether he's still around, but if he is, I wish he'd realize that articles of faith, like his own, are not disputable, calling, instead, for tolerance. And that a little unhistoric story-telling, like today's does no one any harm.

Muthiah's claim that the St. Thomas legend is an article of faith is a travesty of Christian doctrine. It is an emotional appeal, an attempt at moral blackmail. He is deeply committed to hiding the historical facts, and would like Madras citizens, Christians and Hindus alike, to accept the legend at face value—he would like them to accept it as Indian history. He would also like them to condemn us for intolerance when we expose the story, and the way it is manipulated by interested parties like himself and his editor, as a fraud. He has invested a lot of money and prestige in the legend. But our concern is Madras history and not Muthiah's social standing at the Madras Club. We wrote *The Hindu* editor on January 16th, with a copy of the letter to S. Muthiah. We said:

Mr. Muthiah's patronizing reference to me in the first paragraph of his Jan. 7th article, "The Mount of Thomas", so typical of the self-righteous Indian (?) scribe, is wrong on two counts and deserves a reply. First, as I have shown in my book, *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* (Chapter 19, and also the Vatican letter), the legend of St. Thomas in Madras is not an article of faith in the Catholic Church at all, though it can be said to be a dearly held sentiment among some Christian believers; and secondly, an article of faith or religious sentiment of a particular religious community can be tolerated in a pluralistic society so long as it does not intrude on or demean the beliefs and sentiments of another and different religious community. My quarrel with Mr. Muthiah and the English-language media that promote the St. Thomas legend, is that the legend does indeed intrude on and vilify the Hindu community. It falsely implicates a Hindu king and his priests in the persecution and murder of a Christian apostle and saint, and there is good reason to believe that this maligning of the Hindu community is exactly what is intended today when the legend is promoted and repeated *ad nauseam* by the Catholic Church and her agents in the press. In fact, the Hindu community is doubly wronged. It not only did not kill the fictional St. Thomas, but for the saint's cause it lost a number of important temples to the aggressive religious bigotry of the Portuguese. It took more than fifty years for the Portuguese to bring down the original Kapaleeswara

Temple and build a St. Thomas Church in its place. I wonder how many Indian lives were lost in defense of the Great God Shiva and His house on the Mylapore beach? And has Mr. Muthiah, the self-important Madras city reporter after Harry Miller, ever considered writing a panegyric to these forgotten martyrs—true martyrs!—of a universal and tolerant faith?

This letter was ignored, of course. The reader's right of reply is not recognised at *The Hindu*, though the media mafia who operate the paper make a lot of noise about press freedoms when they fancy their own freedoms are under attack. Other concerned readers sent protests to the editor, including the Tamil scholar Veda Prakash, himself an expert on Mylapore history and the St. Thomas legend. He had analysed the article and called for a full scientific investigation into the various alleged St. Thomas relics held in the churches, despite Muthiah's claim that articles of faith are not disputable. His letter caused great consternation in the newspaper's office. The editor cannot deny the validity of his request, nor, for that matter, can the Bishop of Mylapore and Madras.

And just to remind the famous Chennai pseudo-historian Muthiah and his superstitious Indian following of some cold historical facts: there was neither cross nor Virgin Mary to be worshiped in first century Christianity, so the Jew from Jerusalem, Judas Thomas, could not have carved crosses on rocks or praised Mary his mother—he was the twin brother of Jesus—near caves that the Portuguese would later steal from the Hindus. The cross was introduced into Christianity after the 3rd century, and the cult of the Virgin Mary may have arrived around that time or even later, a poor copy of the Isis cult in Egypt. Certainly, it did not exist in the first century CE, as indeed Thomas himself did not exist in the first century CE. It is a Portuguese legend after all—though Muthiah sometimes neglects to tell us.

But, notwithstanding the attempts of *The Hindu* to silence us, or Muthiah to mislead the citizens of Madras, his article attracted a large number of visitors to our website over the week after publication. We are satisfied that the facts of a controversy created by the press and suppressed by the press when they are caught in the lie and challenged, is now reaching an interested public worldwide.^{1,2}

1. This article is the rejoinder to Muthiah's article "The Mount of Thomas" published in *The Hindu* on 7 January 2004. The newspaper's editor declined to publish this article and put a copyright notice on Muthiah's article at one point, so that we couldn't copy it.
2. See Ishwar Sharan's website Acta Indica at www.ishwarsharan.com for an overview of the history of Christianity in India

San Thome Cathedral Cover-Up Uncovered

G.P. Srinivasan

Chennai's self-styled historian S. Muthiah has been propagating the fable of Thomas's visit to India promoted by the Portuguese over 500 years ago. The Catholic establishment has generously supported this fable. Elders used to mention to their children about the presence of an old Shiva temple on the sea coast. After publication of the book *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* in 1991, the public were aware of the dangers of the theory of the visit of Thomas to India. The Church was trying to make Hindus villains, like what they did to the Jews for 2000 years.

By 1990, eminent citizens of Madras installed a 15 feet by 4 feet high marble memorial plaque on the eastern *gopuram* of the Kapaleeswara Temple, Mylapore, Chennai, whereon they inscribed that the Portuguese destroyed the original temple on the beach side in the 16th century.¹ Though the mischief of S. Muthiah and his colleagues like Archbishop Arulappa, Deivanayagam and Ganesh Ayer were exposed in Ishwar Sharan's book, S. Muthiah was in no mood to give up. In an article in *The Hindu* of 7 January 2004, S. Muthiah had revised his theory. He modified his article, this time without the prefix "Saint" before Thomas, and the title "The Mount of Thomas" was given. But within the article he made a sarcastic remark about Ishwar Sharan. We brought it to the notice of Ishwar Sharan and also Veda Prakash who had done much of the research, and requested them to send a detailed rejoinder to S. Muthiah and *The Hindu*. Immediately they both sent their rejoinders to *The Hindu* and to S. Muthiah. And as usual, their replies were not published by *The Hindu*.

In his rejoinder, Ishwar Sharan wrote: "My quarrel with Mr. Muthiah and the English-language media that promote the St. Thomas legend, is that the legend does indeed intrude on and demean the Hindu community. It falsely implicates a Hindu king and his priests in the persecution and murder of a Christian apostle and saint, and there is good reason to believe

that this maligning of the Hindu community is exactly what is intended today when the legend is repeated and promoted *ad nauseam* by the Catholic Church and her agents in the press. In fact, the Hindu community is doubly wronged. It not only did not kill the fictional St. Thomas but for the saint's cause it lost a number of important temples to the aggressive religious bigotry of the Portuguese. It took more than fifty years for the Portuguese to bring down the original Kapaleeswara Temple and build a St. Thomas Church in its place. I wonder how many Indian lives were lost in defence of the Great God Shiva and His house on the Mylapore beach.”

His reply exposes how the Roman Catholic Church has written and is writing and trying to perpetuate pseudo history in South India.

Here, I would also like to share my experience with readers. I came across the book *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* by Ishwar Sharan and *Indiavil Saint Thomas Kattukkadaï* by Veda Prakash, in 2001, and decided to visit the spots mentioned in the books.

In July 2001 when I went to the Mylapore St. Thomas Church, the stone pillar from the remains of the old Hindu temple, which was mentioned by Ishwar Sharan, was exactly there near the compound wall, as mentioned in the book. I took a walk around the church. In an area between the main church and a chapel on the backside [viz. a lane from Santhome High Road to the beach, the church on the left and the Bishop's House compound on the right], there was a board in English announcing “Museum”. It was locked but I saw that there were some broken pillar lengths, and bottom portion of Shiva lingam, and a round stone kept atop the bottom *avudayar* of Shiva lingam. In the few feet gap between the church's backside and the chapel, there was a broken Tamil inscription on granite stone piece peculiar to Hindu temples. Subsequently I took some Hindu friends to show these temple remains, and we had to do it discretely. This was to create eyewitness evidence. We made a couple of visits, and found the remains intact.

Sometime later, I was driving along the Santhome High Road, and found some construction going on in the church. A new grotto with water fountain and a figure of Mary standing in the cave's entrance had come up.

I checked up for the original pillar from the temple measuring 12 to 14 feet. It was not there. I was perturbed. At least these remnants from the original temple should be preserved.

On a visit in December 2001, I found there was a big celebration going on in the church grounds. The pastor was speaking. Some parts of his talk drew my attention.

He said that he was worried whether the function would go at all. And so lorry loads of building waste material had to be removed. And one Kumar lorry operator or contractor, obviously close to the church, has done a fine job. He was appreciated and honoured by the pastor who spoke on the dais on 31 December 2001. He said that he was greatly relieved, for that building waste removal has not attracted any unwanted attention. I presumed that what he meant was that the new stage was constructed after the removal of the old *mandapam* from the compound, and the pastor was worried about the consequences of this illegal removal.

It is not known whether San Thome Church authorities took permission from the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) to remove the ancient Shiva temple rubble? Secondly, they should not have dumped the lorry loads of the old dilapidated mandapam, completely removed from the compound and clandestinely taken to some waste yard. Did they take permission to do it from the Archeological Survey of India?^{2,3,4,5}

1. In part the plaque reads: "Ptolomey the Greek geographer has referred to Mylapore in his books as 'Maillarpha', a well-known seaport town with a flourishing trade. Saint Thiruvalluvar, the celebrated author of *Thirukkural*, the world-famous ethical treatise, lived in Mylapore nearly 2000 years ago. The Shaivite saints of the 7th century, Saint Sambandar and Saint Appar, have sung about this shrine in their hymns. St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, is reported to have visited Mylapore in the 2nd (sic) century AD. Mylapore fell into the hands of the Portuguese in 1566, when the temple suffered demolition. The present temple was rebuilt about 300 years ago. There are some fragmentary inscriptions from the old temple, still found in the present shrine and in St. Thomas Cathedral."

It is the view of this writer that the reference to St. Thomas should be removed from the plaque. It is factually incorrect and does not add to the prestige of the

temple. Will the Tamil Nadu HR & CE Dept., who administer the temple, do the needful?

2. The Archaeological Survey of India appears to be deeply involved in the cover-up at San Thome Cathedral. It is a government department and therefore subject to the dictates of the politicians in power and their policy of minority appeasement. Even former directors of the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology like Dr. R. Nagaswamy, who have all the details of the destruction of the Kapaleeswara Temple by the Portuguese and the building of San Thome Cathedral at their disposal, are not willing to speak out.

3. The Church has no right to hold or dispose of any temple remains or relics found on its properties in Chennai. The temple ruins that lay for decades on St. Thomas Mount have been cleared and disposed of by the parish priest, Fr. Lawrence Raj, even as has the debris that lay around San Thome Cathedral and in the Bishop's House compound. There are still painted-over temple pillars and other temple artefacts extant in the church museum. As the ASI has not taken possession of these artefacts, the VHP should do so—though church administrators will no doubt remove them from public view upon reading this note.

4. Fr. Lawrence Raj organised the cover-up and rebuilding of Chennai's St. Thomas sites and is busy promoting them abroad as tourist destinations with the help of *The Hindu* newspaper (see Sindhuri Nandhakumar, *The Hindu*, 27 October 2018). He was inspired to do this "good work" after reading an earlier edition of this book.

5. Originally published in *Hindu Voice*, Mumbai, April 2004

The New Indian Express Makes A Tsunami

Ishwar Sharan

In an extraordinary example of superstitious and deceitful reporting, Susan Muthalaly wrote on 4 January 2005 in *The New Indian Express*, Chennai edition, an article called the “Santhome miracle”. It was a crass attempt by the lady scribe at Christian one-upmanship when the Tamil fisher coast was in crisis from the December 2004 tsunami.

It is not clear why the newspaper gave her space to blow bubbles, though soft-soaping the religious minorities is the accepted practice in India’s English-language press. Even so, *The New Indian Express*, better known for plain speaking and bad English prose, caused some consternation among its trusting readers with the preposterous miracle story that unwittingly showed up St. Thomas as a selfish man interested only in saving his own skin while the fishermen’s huts below his church were washed away. Susan Muthalaly wrote:

Father Lawrence Raj, the parish priest of the Santhome Cathedral Basilica has been inundated with inquiries about the story of St. Thomas’ miraculous post, supposed to have kept the sea away on December 26, 2005. The 450-year-old church, located a few metres from the water, remained unaffected by the tsunami even though buildings in line with it on either side were ravaged by the waves.

The belief, says Father Lawrence, is that when St. Thomas planted the post at the top of the steps leading to the cathedral, he said the sea would not pass that point.

“But that is the legend,” stresses the father, “nobody knows whether it is true.” The priest sounds wary of declaring it a miracle. Puzzling, considering his job and that he gives visitors what he jokingly calls “credit cards to heaven”—neat little plastic cards laminated with a pinch of soil from St. Thomas’ tomb that fit into your wallet. He offers logical explanations, like perhaps it is because the church is built on a higher level. “But then,” he reasons, “the lighthouse is on roughly the same plane, and the water reached it.”

Father Lawrence says that for the people who have faith, it would be a miracle. “I believe it is,” he adds. He takes you to the terrace from which he saw the sea

in action, as it surged across the road and flooded the huts in front of St. Thomas' post. It is an innocuous looking log of wood, mounted on a cement pedestal.

The story goes that a village in the Mylapore area was flooded when a huge tree trunk fell across the river. The local king brought a royal pachyderm to lug it away, but the task seemed impossible. Then St. Thomas came along, removed the girdle from his waist and handed it to a bystander and asked him to yank the log with it. He did so and the log moved easily. There is a mural illustrating the episode in the cathedral museum.

Father Lawrence says the post is believed to be from that same log of wood. Though there is another story that the post comes from the chapel that St. Thomas built in 74 AD.

"People have been asking about this story. It has always been around but it is difficult to confirm as fact something that occurred nearly 2,000 years ago. That is why I have been trying to verify the story with other people," says the priest.

Father Lawrence is certainly not alone in believing the story about the safety of his church.

"Till December 31 we had about 2,000 people taking shelter over here. Partly because it is a church, it is a centre point for distributing relief material. I suppose it is also because people feel safe here."

Father Lawrence and his reporting scribe Susan Muthalaly are speaking out of both sides of their mouth. According to them, the story of St. Thomas and his miraculous log of wood is true and not true at the same time. Of course, it is not true as they both very well know but are unwilling to say as faithful Christians.

We have to help them tell the truth. We have scholarship on our side and are not tied to an unforgiving and infructuous religious faith. We wrote *The New Indian Express* editor on January 5th, with a copy of the letter to Father Lawrence Raj. We wrote:

Apropos the article "The Santhome miracle" (TNIE, Jan. 4), Santhome Cathedral and Bishop House stand on the site of the original Kapaleeswara Temple which was destroyed in 1566 by the Portuguese. This site is the highest point on the Mylapore beach and is naturally protected from sea surges, Dr. R. Nagaswamy, former director of the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology, has written:

“The most important Kapaleeswara Temple lost all its ancient building during the Portuguese devastation and was originally located by the Santhome Cathedral. A few Chola records found in the Santhome Cathedral and Bishop’s House refer to Kapaleeswara Temple and Poompavai. A Chola record in fragment found on the east wall of the Santhome Cathedral refer to the image of Lord Nataraja of the Kapaleeswara Temple.” And, “A 12th century Chola record in the Santhome Cathedral region, refers to a Jain temple dedicated to Neminathaswami,”

Dr. Nagaswamy and the Jesuit he worked with also recorded the finding of Buddhist images in the same area. There is no literary or archaeological evidence that a Christian church ever stood at this site prior to the Portuguese occupation of Mylapore.

The story of the wooden log which St. Thomas miraculously lifted was borrowed from the Jagannath Puri *stala purana* (temple record) and introduced into the Mylapore St. Thomas legend by the Portuguese. The wooden log now standing at the bottom of the steps leading from the church to the beach (which miraculously has not yet been stolen) can be dated by radiocarbon testing, as can the bones in the two alleged St. Thomas tombs. When the dates of these relics have been established by forensic science (as is done with relics in European churches), their true nature and identity can be more easily ascertained.¹

This letter was not published in *The New Indian Express* and when we realised that the newspaper was not going to allow a rejoinder to its outrageous miracle story, we sent a personal appeal to the managing editor M.K. Sonthalia. He had on past occasions shown himself to be a responsible editor of courage and integrity when dealing with the St. Thomas controversy. But this time he was silent.

A second appeal was sent to him on January 19th, expressing our dismay at his silence and refusal to accommodate a reply to Susan Muthalaly’s article. We accused him of cowardice and of hiding behind the skirts of philosophy—Indian editors who have read a book or two take refuge in philosophy when they do not want to take responsible action. We also pointed out that San Thome Cathedral Basilica was a monument to religious bigotry not a house of miracles.

But the silence continued, and we learned it was the silence of recreance, not philosophy. The managing editor had allegedly come under pressure

from his Christian editors and shareholders not to publish our rejoinder, and he had succumbed to their demands even as he had earlier succumbed to their dictate that the popular French columnist Francois Gautier be dismissed from the paper for his pro-Hindu views.

This sad state of affairs at *The New Indian Express* leads to the larger question of journalistic ethics and integrity. The English-language press in India is politically correct and opportunistic. It is a commercial commodity without ideals. It has no credibility among the informed public because it is wedded to a secularist fundamentalism that is at odds with the spiritual ethos of the Indian people. At the same time it is able to shape public opinion to some extent, and it benefits politically from its morally corrupt position of untruth. But one day this will change, and one day the people of Mylapore will learn the true history of the holocaust that took place on their beaches in the 16th century in the name of a malevolent foreign god whose intolerant nature and imperial ambitions were first recorded in the Old Testament Bible.

1. The article "The Santhome miracle" by Susan Muthalaly appeared on 4 January 2005 in the Chennai edition of *The New Indian Express*. When our response to it was not published, we informed the managing editor of our intention to reproduce the article in full on our website and asked him to inform us if he had any objection. We have not received any objection from him to date.

Did A Hindu King Kill St. Thomas?

Ishwar Sharan

Sixty years after Independence, a great newspaper, *The New Indian Express*, lies dying in Mount Road (this was written before the paper moved to Ambattur), brought low by unprincipled editors and an indifferent owner. The editors believe that cultivating religious superstition and caste prejudice will raise readership and save their power positions. They are unscrupulous, no different from the criminal and communal politicians who sit in our Indian legislatures. But Aditya Sinha and Manoj Kumar Sonthalia, try as they might, have lost the race for subscriptions.

Informed readers of *The New Indian Express* have left the drab broadsheet for the more entertaining *Deccan Chronicle*. Still, Sinha and Sonthalia clutch at straws to maintain a presence in Madras, publishing Catholic propaganda to appease a minority readership and keep missionary travel writers employed. The result is that at least one incensed reader, B.R. Haran, has dubbed the paper the “Evangelical Express”. Ramnath Goenka, founder of the *Indian Express* and fierce fighter for India’s independence, must be turning somersaults in heaven!

The tourist feature at issue here is a top-of-the-page, in-your-face piece of “historical” travel writing by Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew called “Where faith resides / The story of faith and courage / The story of a slain apostle / The story of St. Thomas Mount”. It appeared on 20 August 2007, in the Chennai edition of *The New Indian Express*. It was the usual sentimental story about St. Thomas in Chennai and focused on a description of the 16th century Portuguese church at the top of Big Mount, called St. Thomas Mount.¹

The church is built on the foundations of a Shiva temple on a hill associated with Brungi Rishi, though Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew neglected to mention this fact in her misleading article. The church contains on its altar reredos a famous “bleeding” stone cross said to have been carved by St. Thomas. That St. Thomas has never been described anywhere as a stone cutter seems to have escaped the writer’s notice, as did the old Pahlavi (Persian)

inscription on the carving's border which identifies the cross carver as Afras, son of Chaharbukht the Syrian. It has been dated to the 7th or 8th century by experts, as have other "St. Thomas" crosses found in Kerala churches. Crosses, which were borrowed from pre-Christian Pagan cults, were not used by Christians to identify their religion until after the Council of Nicaea in the 4th century CE.

Another item of interest the article brought to the reader's attention is the icon of the Virgin Mary, allegedly painted by St. Luke and brought to India by St. Thomas. There are seven of these icons by "St. Luke" distributed around the world, the most famous one being in Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica at Rome. All of them are medieval productions, and the idea that they could be associated with either St. Luke or St. Thomas is absurd. Both first century apostles were practising Jews and fierce iconoclasts. The cult of the Virgin Mary, like the cult of the cross, is a late development in the evolution of Christian religion. The protagonists of the St. Thomas tale always forget to put all the accoutrements and accretions of the apostle's Portuguese legend into a first century context.

All these pious items of fable and romance would be of no account except that the legend carries at its heart a vicious communal tale of harassment and murder. St. Thomas, according to Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew, "... lived in hiding before he was slain by Raja Mahadevan, the leader in Mylapore." Other versions of the Portuguese fable target Brahmins as the assassins of the apostle. The charge is false and deeply offensive to Hindus, and this had been brought to the attention of *The New Indian Express* editors years ago, when they were challenged about other stories of St. Thomas they had published and presented to readers as Indian history. Earlier on 29 June 2004, we had written to the editor as follows:

The allegation that St. Thomas converted a Mylapore king to Christianity and was then murdered is deeply offensive to Hindus as it implicates Hindus in the assassination of an important Christian saint. The true martyrs of the whole affair were the Hindus who lost their ancient Kapaleeswara Temple on the beach when the Portuguese destroyed Mylapore. The Vatican has stated in a letter to me that the question of whether or not St. Thomas came to India is one for historians to decide.

This letter was published in *The New Indian Express* on 16 July 2004, after a reminder had been sent to the managing editor. He and his chief, blind and stubborn as they are about the implications of spreading the St. Thomas tale, did not want to know any more about it.

Ironically, the “historian” who has spoken out on the travels of St. Thomas is Pope Benedict. He has stated that the apostle got as far as western India, now western Pakistan, called Parthia or Gandhara in the first century. He is following the Persian cultural ambiance and desert geography described in the *Acts of Thomas*, which is logical for a Catholic scholar to do. Another Christian historian, better equipped than the Pope to decide on St. Thomas in India, is Anglican Bishop Stephen Neill. In *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to 1707 A.D.*, he wrote:

A number of scholars ... have built on slender foundations what may be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.

Bishop Neill was greatly pained by the spread of a spurious St. Thomas history among Indians, such as Ponnu Elisabeth Mathew and her editors at *The New Indian Express* promote, and observes:

Millions of Christians in India are certain that the founder of their church was none other than apostle Thomas himself. The historian cannot prove it to them that they are mistaken in their belief. He may feel it right to warn them that historical research cannot pronounce on the matter with a confidence equal to that which they entertain by faith.

More recently, Dr. Koenraad Elst, in an article near the end of this book called “Why Indians should reject St. Thomas and Christianity”, writes:

In South India, the myth of St. Thomas provided the background for a few instances of temple destruction at places falsely associated with his life and alleged martyrdom, especially the St. Thomas Church replacing the Mylapore Shiva Temple in Madras. In this case, the campaign of fraud is still continuing: till today, Christian writers continue to claim historical validity for the long-refuted story of the apostle Thomas coming to India and getting killed by jealous Brahmins. The story is parallel to that of Jesus getting killed by the Jews, and it indeed served as an argument in an elaborate Christian doctrine of anti-Brahminism which resembles Christian anti-Semitism to the detail. At any rate, it is a fraud.

Indeed, it is a fraud, and a wicked fraud at that, filled with communal venom and religious bigotry. It is expected that Indian Christian writers like Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew would subscribe to it, but that editors Aditya Sinha and Manoj Kumar Sonthlia should assist in spreading the poison in Indian society is shocking and inexcusable, especially as they have been seized of the issue many times over over many years.

The bottom line is this, and the Archbishop in Madras, whose palace sits upon the ruins of the original Kapaleeswara Temple, may take note. The Church in India owes Hindus a full and unconditional apology for the vicious canard it has spread and repeated over the centuries accusing Hindus—a Hindu king and his Hindu priests—of the hateful murder of St. Thomas. It must apologise.

It must also apologise for the destruction of Hindu temples that started with the criminal Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century and goes on till today in remote tribal areas, for the Inquisition in Goa that killed tens of thousands of innocents, for conversions made by force or inducement, and for the continued maligning of Hindu society and religion that takes place in churches outside of India by Indian Christian priests on tour.

An eminent Hindu scholar no less than Arun Shourie has called for such an apology in his book *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*. He writes:

By an accounting [of the calumnies heaped upon India and Hinduism] I do not mean some declaration saying, “Sorry”. By an accounting I mean that the calumnies would be listed, and the Church would declare whether, in the light of what is known now, the grounds were justified or not, and the motives which impelled those calumnies would be exhumed.

Can the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy in India make such a public confession and ask forgiveness of Hindu society? Probably not. It would be suicidal from their point of view. The Church has money power and political power. It controls much of Indian education and has psychological power. It has the sympathy of India’s secular intellectuals and through them has propaganda power, as seen in the fact of the publication of the newspaper article under review. But the Church does not have moral power.

Hindus will never hear from Christian leaders a sincere confession of wrong doing. What Hindus will see is more spurious histories of St. Thomas and charges of “deicide” by motivated faith writers and unscrupulous newspaper editors. It is a crying shame and a sad testimony to what India has not gained after sixty years of independence—that is, independence from an imperialist Roman Church and its soothsayers in the English-language media.

1. Publishing the St. Thomas tale as a tourist feature has become the favourite means for the Indian media to spread the communal St. Thomas legend. *The New Indian Express* recently did it on 28 February 2010 with a full-page article called “Under the bleeding cross”. The author, Shilpa Krishnan, is a “Tam-Brahm” agnostic blogger of 23 years and something. The article openly repeats the charge that St. Thomas was killed by a Brahmin priest on Big Mount. Presenting the story in this “entertaining” way absolves the newspaper from publishing replies or getting involved in historical authenticity arguments. But the fact remains that this newspaper—and other English-language media like it—has never had the courage or fair-mindedness to give a historian equal space to discuss the St. Thomas controversy in its pages.

The Deccan Chronicle Deceits

Ishwar Sharan

“Journalists have a vested interest in ignorance.” - George Bernard Shaw

The *Deccan Chronicle* is South India’s largest circulation “secular” newspaper and the newest proponent in Chennai of the St. Thomas in India fable (following *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express*). It is a popular newspaper that depends entirely on Hindu subscriptions for its existence, and therefore must hide its anti-Brahmin, pro-Christian agenda. This is done by promoting anti-Hindu views covertly from behind a correspondent’s or columnist’s by-line or by publishing provocative statements of the local San Thome Cathedral priest. The priest, who cannot distinguish between his beliefs and Indian history, declares: “The existence of the San Thome Church is a proof by itself that Christianity in India is more than 2000 years old” (*Deccan Chronicle*, Chennai, 8 April 2007).

The San Thome Cathedral pastor is alluding to the St. Thomas in India legend and the claim that the apostle St. Thomas established Christianity in South India in 52 CE. The story is accepted tradition among Christians in Kerala. It is also a classic Christian persecution and martyrdom myth that was invented to malign and demoralise Christianity’s religious opponents. Christians have vilified Jews for two millennia by blaming them for the murder of Jesus, and Christians have vilified Hindus for centuries by blaming them, in the persons of a Hindu king and his Brahmin priest, for the murder of Thomas. Both ancient communities, Jews and Brahmins—the latter being the custodians of Hindu civilisation—can thereafter be charged with deicide and subjected to the most wicked abuse and overt attempts to exterminate their religion and culture.¹ The mainstream media in India subscribes to this vicious communal agenda and promotes the fable in its columns at regular intervals though it has been aware of the legend’s falsehood and malefic intent for decades. This is inexcusable by any standard but gives a revealing insight into the nature of secular democracy and freedom of speech as it is practised in India today. Hindus have no voice in the English-language print media and have

become second class citizens in their own land. In states like Tamil Nadu they are virtually a disenfranchised people and under constant attack by an atheistic, racist government that overtly supports the foreign-financed Christian missions and NGOs that work in the state to alienate the Tamil people from their ancient civilisation.

The *Deccan Chronicle's* editors in Chennai have been self-righteous secularists of the Nehruvian school who assiduously follow the Christian practice of treating Hindu history as mythology and Christian mythology as history. In true Indian secularist fashion, they do not tolerate dissent and letters sent to the editor concerning the lies and distortions that appear in *Deccan Chronicle* articles are neither acknowledged or published. Every effort is made by these editors and their correspondents to provoke and insult Hindu readers and undermine their Hindu identity. This culturally subversive activity is called “freedom of the press” in our secular socialist India that is Bharat.

Chairman Reddy and his resident house boys in Chennai regard criticism of themselves and their “eminent” contributors—many of them foreigners based in London and New York—as a manifestation of Hindu communalism and ignorance. Indeed, dissent can attract a very spiteful response from some editors (as this writer knows from experience). Yet these clever media men, whose decisions influence the opinions of half a million readers and more every day, will ignore facts and figures as extraneous irritants except where the facts and figures can be employed in subtle Hindu-bashing exercises² or otherwise to whitewash the bigoted, violent and licentious history of Islam and Christianity in India.

What follows is a collection of short items that are related to the St. Thomas legend, that appeared in the *Deccan Chronicle* in 2008. The items, called “name-stake” items with photos were published to establish the Christian ownership of the places they describe. The truth that all the places described once had Hindu temples on them until the Portuguese arrived, is thus negated and erased in the public mind.

Little Mount

Deccan Chronicle: *It is also called Chinna Malai, and is a little before St. Thomas Mount. There are two churches here, which are associated with the legends of the Apostle of India—Our Lady of Health Church and Blessed Sacrament Chapel. The annual festival at Our Lady of Health is a noteworthy event in the Madras calendar. - Chennai, 16 July 2008*

Ishwar Sharan: The appellation “Apostle of India” for St. Thomas is a recent Roman Catholic invention conceived in 1953 when Cardinal Eugene Tisserant brought a piece of St. Thomas arm bone from Ortona to Kodungallur for a shrine. Prior to this date St. Francis Xavier held the title Apostle of India. Prof. Leonardo Olschki, a world authority on Christianity, writes, “The Nestorians of India ... venerated St. Thomas as the patron of Asiatic Christianity—mark, not of Indian Christianity”.

There are four places in Madras and its environs, other than San Thome, that the Portuguese associated with St. Thomas. The first is a rocky hillock called Little Mount, four miles southwest of Mylapore, on the south bank of the Adyar at Saidapet. Fr. Herman D’Souza, in *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, writes, “Hoary tradition among Catholics and non-Catholics ... proudly holds that this part of [Madras] extended shelter to the Apostle, when the ministers of the local king, Mahadevan, were out to murder him. ... The favorite of the king, Thomas was ever in danger of losing his precious life—thanks to the scheming ministers whipped up by Hindu priests. ... There is a version that the Apostle was actually handled brutally more than once in his apartment, in the absence of the king. In order to save his life for yet a little while for the greater glory of God, Thomas is reported to have sought refuge in the jungle of Little Mount.”

This sly communal tale, invented by Jesuits and improved on by Fr. D’Souza, is peculiar to Madras and published by the San Thome Diocesan Press in Chennai. He tries to establish Hindu support for the story, by quoting Hindu publications that repeat it. But Hindu traditions about Little Mount and other “St. Thomas” sites are quite different and much older than those of the Portuguese. They believe that the hillock, with its cave and spring and imprint of peacock’s feet in the rock, was sacred to Murugan, and Hindu women used to visit the site even after the Portuguese had cleared it of Hindu shrines. In 1551, a church was built by the cave, called Blessed

Sacrament Chapel, and the Jesuits built a second church by the spring. Nothing remains of the Jesuit church today, and the archaeological evidence on the site was destroyed years ago when it was blasted to make way for the modern Our Lady of Health Church that now stands there.

St. Thomas had to leave Little Mount when the king's men found him in the cave. He fled to Big Mount (St. Thomas Mount) two miles further south, by a secret underground passage. But Big Mount did not offer refuge either. Fr. D'Souza writes, "His murderers sought him there and were on the point of seizing him. How long St. Thomas made his abode on top of the hill, one cannot say. Unbroken tradition maintains that while the Apostle was praying before a cross carved by him on a stone, an assassin suborned by King Mahadevan's priest and ministers, crept up stealthily and pierced him with a lance from behind. Thereupon the Apostle is reported to have fallen on the stone cross and embraced it; his blood crimsoned the stone cross and the space around. Thus did he seal his Apostolate with his blood, even as the other Apostles, save St. John. ... His disciples took his body to [Mylapore] ... and interred it at his dear old place, about the year AD 68."

This rendition of the fable has no equivalent in Malabar and no relationship to the account in the *Acts of Thomas*, though it does have in it the priest and the lance found in the Portuguese *De Miraculous Thomae*. There is no record that Mylapore had a temporal king of any name in 68 CE—the date first appeared on a memorial plaque in San Thome Cathedral in the eighteenth century and was afterwards incorporated into the story. But as is the case with many historical fabrications, it contains an element of truth and this gives the fictional parts credibility. Mahadevan is a reference to Lord Shiva, who was of course the King of Mylapore in the first century CE, even as He is the King of Mylapore today.

Town of Thomas

Deccan Chronicle: At the south end of Marina is San Thome, today a part of Mylapore. With its inspiring Basilica on a site where for 19 continuous centuries has stood some church or other. Just before the Basilica on this road is the former palace of the Maharaja of Mysore, now hidden behind

formidable gates. Here live the representatives of Russia. - Chennai, 1 September 2008

Ishwar Sharan: The article above is a continuation of the *Deccan Chronicle's* policy of prostituting Indian history to further its pro-Catholic agenda. Telling lies for Jesus—or in this case for his brother Thomas—has never been a problem of ethics for newspaper chairmen or editors who are born with Hindu names but who willingly sell their Hindu mothers down the river for a few rupees.

Historically, the first Christian church to appear on the Mylapore beach was built in 1523 by Augustinian friars beside the new tomb of “St. Thomas” that had been dug and seeded with bones and other material brought from Goa by Albuquerque’s attendant Diogo Fernandez.

Earlier, in 1521–22, the Portuguese had opened two tombs in the Shiva temple’s northern precincts. One tomb contained a “black” skeleton, which, according to its inscription, belonged to a Chola king. The Portuguese nevertheless “identified” him as being a disciple of St. Thomas (as today Catholic historians “identify” Tiruvalluvar as being a disciple of Thomas). The second tomb revealed a “white” skeleton, which, naturally, “belonged” to the white Jew Thomas. This second skeleton was sent to Goa for verification—where it languishes till today, unsung and unrecognised.

As these diggings did not produce the required result, Diogo Fernandez was asked, in 1523, to excavate a third tomb which lay partly under the foundation of a dilapidated temple building that had been occupied by the Portuguese. He refused at first but was persuaded by the attending priest, Fr. Antonio Gil, who heard his confession and that of the two men, Braz Fernandez and Diogo Lourenco, who would assist him in the pious enterprise. They then began the excavation of a deep and elaborate, and very much empty, tomb. It was Saturday afternoon, and they continued the work into the late evening, when, on the suggestion of Diogo Fernandez, they abandoned their unproductive labours and retired for the night. The excavation was left open and unattended until the next morning, a Sunday, when the men began digging again. It was not long now before the grave disgorged bones that were “much worn out”, portions of skull and spine,

and a clay pot of earth “bedewed with blood”, with a thigh bone in it, and hidden in the red earth an iron spearhead shaped like an olive leaf, which, after fifteen Christian centuries, still had a piece of wooden shaft miraculously preserved in its socket.

This church, originally built in 1523 and called San Thome or San Thome de Meliapore, was subsequently enlarged and extended, and the encroachment on the Kapaleeswara Temple began in earnest. The Christians had done this before, building a church against a temple wall and then slowly taking over the temple, and that the Shiva temple survived as long as it did, up to 1566 according to some authorities, is grand testimony to the patient and courageous resistance the Hindus of Mylapore had put up against this ruthless Catholic power.

In 1606 the Pope, at the request of the King of Portugal, made San Thome de Meliapore into a diocese independent of Goa. The church was extended again and became the seat of a bishop, but, in 1893, this building was demolished by the bishop and the present Gothic cathedral put up in its place. It was completed and consecrated in 1896. In 1952 the archdiocese of Madras and Mylapore was constituted, and in 1956, after much lobbying by the Indian hierarchy, Pope Pius XII raised the status of San Thome to that of a minor basilica. There are some 1,750 minor basilicas in the world today and this church dignity is of no consequence except to afford the archbishop a few liturgical privileges (such as a private altar to say Mass, which he does not have to share with another priest).

Diogo Fernandez’s “St. Thomas” relics still remain in the church today. The iron spearhead and piece of skull are kept in a monstrance, along with the relics of St. Francis Xavier, St. Isabella, St. Vincentio and the Martyrs of Morocco. The first “St. Thomas” tomb, which contained the “white” skeleton that was sent to Goa, is empty and ignored, but the second “St. Thomas” tomb has recently been renovated and refurbished at great expense and a new life-size plaster idol of a “sleeping” Thomas still clutching the spear that killed him lies on top of it and is pointed out to pilgrims and tourists. It contains the remainder of Diogo Fernandez’s “findings”, the pieces of spine and thigh bone, and, presumably, the pot of “blood-bedewed” earth.

Yet this is not the end of the bones at San Thome. The cathedral also has in its possession a piece of Church-certified Ortona bone, which it obtained from Cardinal Tisserant in 1953, after he had deposited the apostle's right arm at Kodungallur. The pastor of San Thome can now say with some pride that he is the keeper of a real St. Thomas bone—keeping in mind that the acceptance of the Ortona gift is also an admission that the Portuguese relics in his care are not those of St. Thomas.

Serene Mount Beckons - George Adimathra

Deccan Chronicle: Chennai and its suburbs are replete with heritage sites such as the Tiruneermalai Vishnu temple (6th century), Tiruvottriyur Adipureeswarar temple (8th century), Kovalam Thameemun Ansari Dargha (7th century) and the St. Thomas Mount near the Chennai airport.

It is believed that St. Thomas, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ, died on the mount in AD 72 (first century), which makes it one of the oldest heritage sites in Chennai and also one of the oldest Christian sites in the world.

Believed to be one of the first Christians to reach India and preach Christianity in a country dominated by Hindus, St. Thomas was assassinated and the site where he was martyred came to be known as St. Thomas Mount.

People of various religions visit the holy shrine, negotiating the 160 steps built by Armenian merchant Chojá Bedros Woskan leading to the top with 14 “stations of the cross” erected along the way. At the summit stands the church built by the Portuguese with its altar located at the very spot where St. Thomas breathed his last.

There are relics too, among which is the “Bleeding Cross” chiselled by the Apostle himself. The cross, which is said to “bleed” periodically, is believed to have been in the hands of the Apostle while he lay dying.

The oil painting of the Madonna, believed to be one of the seven painted by St. Luke, the evangelist, and brought to India by St. Thomas is placed above the altar.

This is considered to be the oldest Christian painting in India.

The place is also ideal for picnics.

The metropolis, spread all around the hillock, seems a distant dream land.

However the calm is shattered by the scream of the aircraft taking off or landing at the airport nearby. - Chennai, 24 November 2008

Ishwar Sharan: The *Deccan Chronicle* in this article continues its St. Thomas deceptions, this time with a by-line to absolve the editor of the crime of knowingly misleading the reading public with communal propaganda. Some bits and pieces of Hindu archaeology are thrown in with the express purpose of making the alleged Christian site—St. Thomas Mount—the oldest place of pilgrimage in Chennai. This is in accord with the current Catholic “inculturational” programme of making the great Tamil Shaivite saint Tiruvalluvar a disciple of St. Thomas. According to the Mylapore archbishop and his spin doctor Deivanayagam, Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta and the Tamil *bhakti* movement is a by-product of the Christianity that St. Thomas brought to India and taught to Tiruvalluvar—Christianity being the “original” religion of the Tamils. It is all humbug of course, a wicked plan set in motion by wicked priests with the express purpose of undermining the cultural and religious integrity of Hindu society. If the Indian bishops succeed in destroying the Tamil Hindu identity and then appropriating the Tamil ethnic identity for Christianity, they will be well on the way of conquering India for Christ and of gaining recognition in Rome. Recognition by the Pope and Roman Curia is what the Indian bishops crave even more than the power and pelf they already enjoy in India with government support. The late Mylapore archbishop Arulappa admitted as much when his little scam to forge historical documents relating to St. Thomas in India was uncovered.³ Forging religious artifacts and historical documents is a very old Christian pastime, and it is therefore not surprising to find Indian bishops and their “secular” minions at the *Deccan Chronicle* continuing the “pious” practice in 2008, by attempting to rewrite the religious history of the Tamil people.

The late archbishop of Mylapore, Dr. R. Arulappa, in *Punitha Thomayar*, asserts that Big Mount (St. Thomas Mount) was originally called Brungi (Bhrigu) Malai and was the seat of the Hindu sage Brungi Rishi until St. Thomas came and chased him away. This story, like the one above, is another piece of fiction that has at its core a little truth. The hill was sacred

to Brungi Rishi, as the Tamils call Bhrigu Rishi, and it is the Portuguese who chased the *rishi* away, not St. Thomas. The Shiva temple associated with the *rishi* was destroyed around 1545, when they gained effective control of the hill, which was the highest in the area and the southern limit of their territory. Portuguese historians describe it as being crowded with ruins then, and broken temple stones could still be found on its slopes in 1995, on the south and west side.

The Portuguese had begun to settle around Big Mount as early as 1523—the same year they “discovered” the tomb of “St. Thomas”—and one of the first to take up residence there was Diogo Fernandez. He would succeed in erecting a small chapel on the hill before 1545, but the construction of the church, called Our Lady of Expectation, did not commence until 1547. It was built on the east-west alignment of the temple foundation—the ancient granite base of the flag pole is on the eastern side of the church (now covered over with asphalt since the publication of our book)—but the Portuguese reversed this order in keeping with established Christian practice when building on a Pagan site, and the church entrance is on the western side. In 1707, the building was extended by an Armenian merchant and the royal arms of Portugal were added to the façade of the main porch.

It was when clearing the rubble for the church, in 1547, that the Portuguese “discovered” the famous Persian “St. Thomas” cross in the temple foundation. Diogo Fernandez is not implicated in this fraud, but the Vicar of San Thome, Fr. Gaspar Coelho, and the Captain of the Coromandel, Gabriel de Athaide, are, as the construction was under their direct supervision. What is known for certain is that St. Thomas did not carve this cross—it is dated to the eighth century, like its counterparts in Kerala—and as a cross it did not originate on Big Mount. The inscription around it is in Pahlavi (Persian) and the sculptor has signed his name as Afras the Syrian. It was kept inside the church behind the altar, and used to “bleed” at irregular intervals up to 1704. This phenomenon stopped as soon as the sensible and schismatic British began to move into the area and build a cantonment.⁴

The other “St. Thomas” relic in the church is a brightly coloured icon of Mary and the child Jesus. It is said to have been painted by St. Luke and

brought to India by St. Thomas, who wore it on his breast as a scapular or badge of mission. In fact, it does not appear in Portuguese records until 1559, and the diverse stories that go with it were invented after this date.⁵

The church also has paintings of all the apostles and of St. Thomas and his Hindu assassin. One of them, on the reredos of the altar, depicts an Iyengar Brahmin with *namam*, about to stab the praying apostle from behind. It defeats its purpose inasmuch as Vaishnavas did not wear *namam*, the U-shaped forehead mark, until after Ramanuja introduced it in the eleventh century. The other painting, very large and part of a series of the apostles and their various modes of death, shows St. Thomas with a book, a lance, and his sturdy Hindu assassin, who, this time, does not wear sectarian marks or orthodox dress.

The paintings and altar decorations were contributed to the church by the Armenian merchant community in Madras in the eighteenth century.

Legendary bleeding cross at St. Thomas's church - Meera Iyer

Deccan Chronicle: The narrow road wound its way uphill, past houses bearing names like Rose Cottage, many camouflaged by the exuberant greenery in their gardens. The ambiance was straight out of a hill station. We were in the city to explore the story of St. Thomas, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus, who is said to have come to Kerala in 52 AD and then moved to Chennai where he eventually died in 72 AD.

Our exploration of the apostle's Chennai connection began where he died, at St. Thomas Mount. The peripatetic Italian, Marco Polo, who visited Chennai in the 1290s, recounts the story. Church brethren told him of how the saint was killed when a hunter aiming at some peacocks accidentally hit the apostle. At the summit is the Church of the Expectation of the Blessed Virgin, a simple church that is devoid of ostentation, but rich in myth and legend.

It was first built by Armenians and rebuilt by the Portuguese in 1521 and again in 1547. The Armenian influence is evident in the 14 beautiful paintings (dating to the 1700s) of Jesus and the apostles that line the walls. You can also see many Armenian inscriptions in and around church.

The altar here is believed to mark the spot where St. Thomas fell. The cross embedded in the wall behind the altar has an interesting story. It was unearthed by the Portuguese during excavations here.

The large granite slab bears a cross and an inscription on top, and once had red stains on it. This is the famous bleeding cross, which has been reported to sweat blood several times between 1556 and 1704. Tradition has it that it was fashioned by St. Thomas himself and that he died holding it. But controversy and doubts seem essential ingredients of all stories associated with Doubting Thomas. The strange lettering inscribed on the cross definitely added to its aura of mystery.

Although it was first assumed to relate to St. Thomas, in the late 1800s historians realised the inscription was actually in Pahlavi and, somewhat anti-climatically, had nothing to do with St. Thomas, but recorded only the name of the person who fashioned the cross. The inscription and hence the cross were dated to 650 AD, making it the oldest of only about half a dozen such Nestorian crosses in India.

Next to the bleeding cross is a beautiful oil painting on wood of the Madonna with baby Jesus, which according to legend was brought to India by the apostle himself and was painted by Luke the evangelist. Our next stop was the stately Santhome Cathedral Basilica, near Marina beach, built over the spot where St. Thomas was buried.

The church's fortunes seem to have waxed and waned through the centuries for, although a magnificent church stood here in the 1200s, by the 1500s it was languishing. The Portuguese rebuilt it in the 1600s. In 1893, this building was demolished and the church in its present form came up and was consecrated in 1896.

Today's cathedral is a grand Gothic edifice, complete with soaring towers and spires. Light streams in through exquisite stained glass windows in the clerestory.

One set of three large stained glass windows depicting the episode where Jesus appears to Doubting Thomas, was made in Germany in the 1870s.

At the very heart of the church, in the basement, is the apostle's crypt and a tomb chapel. I learned that the soil around the grave has always been renowned for its miraculous powers. - Chennai, 25 April 2010

Ishwar Sharan: The *Deccan Chronicle* appears to have become aware that it cannot maintain its St. Thomas deceptions forever. It has changed tactic, conceding that the bleeding cross on Big Mount is a Nestorian creation of the seventh century but introducing Marco Polo's story of having visited the Coromandel Coast and seen the apostle's tomb for himself in 1292.

Marco Polo did not visit the Tamil coast at any time in his career, nor did he name the little town on the Tamil coast that allegedly played host to St. Thomas's tomb. However, in one part of his famous travelogue, *Il Milione*, he stated that the town and tomb were on the Gulf of Mannar facing Ceylon.

Marco was a story-teller and one of the world's great liars. Dante Alighieri, author of the *Divine Comedy*, said as much even during Marco's lifetime. Today there are scholars who doubt that he ever left Constantinople or visited China. They say there is evidence that he collected his travel tales from Muslim and Syrian Christian merchants who came to Constantinople to trade. His fabulous travel book was dictated to a cell mate when he was in prison in Genoa. We may assume that Marco Polo never went to China. But even if he did, he never visited the Coromandel Coast as he was "in China" in 1288 and in 1292 which are the dates given for his Coromandel visit. But this is not the main thrust of the *Deccan Chronicle's* St. Thomas articles that appear regularly at intervals to mislead the Chennai reading public.

The *Deccan Chronicle* is trying to establish in the public mind that there were always Christian churches of one sort or another on the sites now claimed for St. Thomas. They have now introduced the Nestorians—and Armenians who were late comers—whom even Chennai's pseudo-historian Muthiah does not depend on to authenticate the St. Thomas churches.

If the *Deccan Chronicle* and Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese can establish that there were churches in Mylapore and Saidapet and on Brungi Malai—St. Thomas Mount—before the arrival of the Portuguese in the early 1500s, then the Hindu claim to these sites stands cancelled.

But there is no authentic record of churches in Mylapore and its surrounds prior to the arrival of the Portuguese. None at all. And on the three sites in Madras associated with St. Thomas, there is—or was until we published our observations in 1991—temple rubble and other Hindu artefacts. This writer has seen them himself on St. Thomas Mount and in 1985 was able to identify the granite foundation stone for the flag pole of a Hindu temple that existed on the hill prior to 1545. There is also the testimony of the late Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, Dr. R. Arulappa, in his book *Punitha Thomayar* that *yantra* stones from the foundations of Hindu temples were found in all St. Thomas sites. And there is the eye-witness account of G.P. Srinivasan in his article “Santhome Cathedral Cover-up Uncovered”, of temple rubble being removed from the San Thome Cathedral compound surreptitiously in 2001. And lastly there is the authoritative testimony of Dr. R. Nagaswamy, former Director of the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology, that inscriptions on stone found only in Shiva temples were found in the walls of San Thome Cathedral.⁶

But none of this evidence exists today in the public sphere (though records will be there in government archives). It has all been removed by the San Thome diocesan authorities and the three Madras churches associated with St. Thomas have been cleaned up and renovated at the cost of crores of rupees. They are major tourist destinations, attract money and prestige for their Christian owners, and the Catholic Church has never been known to give up land it has acquired for any reason. That said, this writer has never at any time demanded that the three sites be returned to their legitimate Hindu owners. What he has asked for is a forensic investigation of the so-called relics in the St. Thomas tomb and a full accounting by Church authorities of the crimes committed by the Church and its agents in India over the centuries.

The Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore owes the people of Madras an abject apology for the destruction of the Kapaleeswara Temple that once occupied the high point of the Marina beach that is now occupied by San Thome Cathedral. And to establish the sincerity of the abject apology, the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese may donate a piece of land from the vast Bishop’s House estate to the existing Kapaleeswara Temple Trust for the building of

a memorial to the Hindu martyrs who died resisting the Portuguese invaders who destroyed the ancient Shiva temple. But such an apology will not be forthcoming, for the Indian Church like the Indian media is ruled by brown sahibs who have sold their souls to white sahibs, and who are in fact traitors to their ancient native Hindu civilization and culture. The leaders of India's Brown Church do not have the moral character to make such a confession—though a detailed confession of wrongdoing is one of the important Roman Catholic sacraments.

1. Anti-Brahminism and anti-Semitism are the same ethno-religious prejudice directed at an accomplished minority group who are perceived, wrongly, to be the cause of a nation's social and economic ills, or, otherwise, to be controlling a nation's cultural, political, or economic destiny from behind the scenes in their own interest. Dr. Koenraad Elst, in *Indigenous Indians: Agastya to Ambedkar*, writes, "In fact, apart from anti-Judaism, the anti-Brahmin campaign started by [Christian] missionaries is the biggest vilification campaign in world history."
2. An example of an anti-Hindu exercise is the use of the term "idol" for Hindu images. Technically correct, the word is loaded with negative connotations and is part of the abusive rhetoric of Christian missionaries in India. The same newspaper on another page uses the neutral term "statues" for Christian images. Clearly, there is editorial bias at work here. In the fifty some years that this writer has lived in India, he has never met a Hindu who worships idols. Hindus worship God, and even a simple village woman knows that God is a spirit, not the stone image in which he or she may reside.
3. See the article "Archbishop Arulappa's History Project Goes Terribly Wrong" in this book.
4. Rev. C.E. Abraham, in an article in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, writes, "The Persian crosses—or so-called Thomas crosses—with inscriptions in Pahlavi, one found in St. Thomas Mount, Madras, and two in a church in Kottayam in Travancore, are evidence of the connection of the Malabar Church with the Church of Persia." The Pahlavi (Persian) inscription on the three stone crosses, two in Kerala and one on St. Thomas Mount, read (according to C.P.T. Winckworth whose translation is generally accepted): "My lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukht the Syrian, who cut this."
5. There are seven of these icons by "St. Luke" scattered around the world. The most famous one hangs in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which was built by Pope Sixtus III in 432 CE after he had demolished the Temple of Cybele on the Esquiline Hill.

6. Dr. R. Nagaswamy's silence on the destruction of the original Kapaleeswara Temple and the building of San Thome Cathedral are an enigma we have never been able to explain. He has all the facts and figures of this controversy at his disposal, yet he remains for the most part silent on the subject till today.

The Secrets Of The Twelve Disciples Revealed

Ishwar Sharan

On 23 March 2008 the *Deccan Chronicle*, Chennai's leading "Christian" newspaper—Paul Johnson, Paulo Coelho, the Jesuit Fr. Francis Gonsalves, and the professional Christian Hindu-baiter Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd are its religion columnists—published the following item "St. Peter not the first Pope" on its last page. Definitely, it was a "bottom line" article. It said:

The Apostle Peter, also known as St. Peter, was not the first Pope and he never went to Rome, a new documentary has claimed.

In the documentary, *The Secrets of the Twelve Disciples* on Channel 4 [in the UK], prominent academics have accused the Vatican City of misleading the world over the fate of St. Peter whose journey to Rome, the Church claims, led to the spread of Christianity in the West.

According to its presenter Dr. Robert Beckford of Oxford Brookes University [in the UK], "We found there is no scientific evidence to support the idea that St. Peter was buried in Rome, but the rival theory has not got out because it challenges the Church.

"If you undermine its basis for power you undermine the Church. It is tragic that the faith gets reduced to manipulating the facts and to one Church trying to make itself superior to others."

Indeed, it is tragic that Christian believers have been manipulating history from the very inception of Christianity, and we wonder if Dr. Beckford isn't up to the same tricks himself. He is a Christian theologian and Christian theologians have been revising history to fit their theological needs ever since "prophecies" of the birth of Jesus were interpolated into various Old Testament books. There is also the great scandal of Josephus, where early Christians rewrote parts of his history of the Jews to make it look like Jesus was a real historical person. In fact, there is no evidence for a historical Jesus outside of the New Testament stories. This is an extraordinary circumstance considering the public drama he is supposed to have played

out in Palestine and all the Jewish, Greek and Roman scholars who were alive and writing books at the time.

As for the first pope, it can only be Sylvester I, the fourth century Bishop of Rome whose successors would inherit Constantine's title *Pontifex Maximus*—Latin for “greatest priest”—upon the emperor's death. Constantine had already given Sylvester his red slippers—which only Roman emperors could wear—and built the first cathedral church, known as St. John Lateran Archbasilica, for the Bishop of Rome.

It could be argued that Emperor Constantine himself was the first pope as he carried the title Pontifex Maximus his whole life. But the problem is nobody knows if he ever formally converted to Christianity. The more credible story has him forcefully baptised on his deathbed by his mother Helena, who was a fanatic convert to the new Jesus cult.

But to return to Dr. Beckford and his documentary of the Christian apostles which includes a section on St. Thomas in India—a section the *Deccan Chronicle* was careful to leave out of its news item. The Channel 4 web page for *The Secrets of the Twelve Disciples* says:

Robert Beckford also tries to find out if there is any truth in the story of Thomas, who, according to one tradition, founded Christianity in India in 52 AD. Most western scholars dismiss this but archaeological digs in India shows a trade with Rome and ancient Jewish settlements, indicating that the story could be true. In 1599, Portuguese colonists tried to destroy the traditions and practices of the Thomas Christians. Do the western Churches still have an interest in trying to marginalise them?

When we contacted Channel 4 and asked what were Dr. Beckford's conclusions about St. Thomas in India, they replied that “Channel 4 is not responsible for third-party websites” and directed us to the program maker Carbon Media Limited. The Carbon Media web page for *The Secrets of the Twelve Disciples* has this blurb:

In this revealing two-hour C4 special, theologian Robert Beckford travels across the globe—to Jerusalem, India, Greece, Spain, Italy and Turkey—to reassess the fate of the 12 disciples.

Queries sent to Carbon Media Ltd. about the film's content on St. Thomas in India were not replied to, so we wrote to Dr. Robert Beckford himself and asked him to give us his opinion of the St. Thomas in India legend. We promised to reproduce his statement without editing or alteration. Still, he, too, did not reply.

We then went to YouTube and found the documentary *The Secrets of the Twelve Disciples* on the video-sharing website.

Dr. Beckford does not believe the legend that St. Peter went to Rome but he does believe the legend that St. Thomas came to India.

The legend that St. Peter went to Rome is not true, as Dr. Beckford maintains. There is no historical evidence for St. Peter in Rome. Vatican City is built on an ancient pre-Christian necropolis and St. Peter's Basilica, also built by Constantine, is constructed over a cave temple of Mithra that existed in this vast graveyard which once stood outside the walls of Rome.

But the legend that St. Thomas came to India is not true either. There is no historical evidence for St. Thomas in India except Bardesanes' pious romance called the *Acts of Thomas*. The ancient churches attributed to St. Thomas in Kerala—there are seven and a half of them—were built by a second migration of Syrian Christians who arrived from West Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries. They are all built on Hindu temple foundations, the remains of which have been attested to by Christian writers themselves.

The Syrian Christian traditions of St. Thomas are not history. They are only pious legends and folklore. To argue, as Dr. Beckford does, that because there was an ancient sea trade between West Asia and India, St. Thomas must have come to India, is amateurish and motivated scholarship. It is communal propaganda, not history. And herein lies the secret to Dr. Beckford's "documentary" film on the secrets of the apostles.

Dr. Beckford is a reader in Black Theology and Culture at Brookes University in Oxford. He is also a leader of the black Caribbean Pentecostal Church in England. He holds great animosity for the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholic traditions are not true as they are the traditions of an elitist white man's church, while the traditions of the Syrian

Christians are true because Dr. Beckford sees them as a marginalised community and a victim of Roman Catholic imperialism.

Dr. Beckford is wrong on all counts. The Syrian Christians are one of India's best educated and wealthiest communities. They are also India's most caste-conscious "white" community. No brown Dalit Christian has ever set foot in their houses or churches. When the Portuguese arrived in India in the sixteenth century, the community aligned itself with the invaders against the Hindu community who had originally given them refuge and social status. That the Syrian Christians later suffered at the hands of the Jesuits because they wouldn't give allegiance to the Roman pope, is a different matter. You can say it served them right for their ingratitude and treachery.

Again, to return to Dr. Beckford the black theologian and innovative historian and his belief that St. Thomas came to India in the first century—an idea that is only found in the third century *Acts of Thomas*—we draw his attention to Dr. Koenraad Elst's article "St. Thomas and Anti-Brahminism" in this book. Dr. Elst writes:

Briefly, if it is true that the apostle Thomas came to India, then the following information furnished by the *Acts of Thomas* is also true:

- Thomas was an antisocial character;
- Jesus was a slave trader;
- Thomas was Jesus's twin brother, implying that the four canonical Gospels are unreliable sources which have concealed a crucial fact, viz. that Jesus was not God's Only Begotten Son. In fact, Jesus and Thomas were God's Twin-born Sons. In other words, accepting the Thomas legend as history is equivalent to exploding the doctrinal foundation of Christianity.

The original Christian doctrine on equality has been expressed by St. Paul, who opposed attempts by slaves to free themselves because "we have all been freed in Christ" and that should be enough. St. Paul's *Letter to Philemon* is actually a covering note which he sent along with a runaway slave whom he returned to the legal owner, the Christian convert Philemon.

For St. Paul on slavery see *Ephesians* 6:5-9, *Colossians* 3:22-25 and 4:1, *1 Timothy* 6:1-2, and *Philemon*. See also *1 Peter* 2:18-25, which begins: "Servants, be subject

to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward.

What does Dr. Beckford the theologian have to say about this?

Dr. Beckford's African ancestors were slaves brought from Ghana to Jamaica by European Christian traders who had a well-developed "theology of slavery" to justify their inhuman trade. Considering this and the "divinely inspired" pro-slavery quotations above, why does Dr. Beckford still run after the white man's god?

The documentary *The Secrets of the Twelve Apostles* seems to have disappeared off of the internet. Oh well, we will try to keep its memory alive here so that Dr. Beckford can tell his grandchildren about how he was duped by the Syrian "St. Thomas" Christians of India, in India.

A Feast For St. Thomas

Ishwar Sharan

The *Deccan Chronicle* in Chennai carried on 2 July 2012 a “mystic mantra” column called “Feast of Thomas” by Fr. Francis Gonsalves, the former president of the Jesuit-run Vidyajyoti Theological College, New Delhi, and currently a teacher of systematic theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. The feast for St. Thomas is celebrated on July 3rd every year in India. Fr. Francis knows better than this writer that the story of St. Thomas in India is untrue. He also knows that prestigious Jesuit schools in Europe would never refer to the Thomas in India story without first qualifying it as an unverified Gnostic moral fable. But Fr. Francis whose ancestors were Christian converts in Goa—by force or fraud we do not know—is an Indian Jesuit under a communal compulsion to deceive his congregation and support their fanciful apostolic aspirations for India. And there is also the politics of which his religious order is more than famous—or should we say infamous. Fr. Francis even named a candidate for the Indian presidency in the person of a deracinated tribal convert called Purno Sangma. Therefore Fr. Francis must continue to perpetrate the St. Thomas in India lie as he believes that Thomas has already claimed India for Christ and that claim could have been actualized in the person of Purno Sangma. So Fr. Francis wrote:

I’m often asked by the people here in India and abroad, “When did Christianity come to India?” “Indian Christianity is about 2,000 years old,” I reply, adding, “Ever since St. Thomas, one of Jesus’ beloved disciples, came to India.”¹ Thus, we have the so-called “St. Thomas Christians”²—mainly from Kerala—whose ancestors received Jesus’ “Gospel” soon after his resurrection. On July 3, Christians will celebrate the feast of Saint Thomas.

The *Gospel of John* records three utterances of St. Thomas that give glimpses of his character. First, when Jesus desires to go to Bethany, bordering Jerusalem, the disciples try to prevent him from going since he was almost stoned there for claiming kinship with God. Thomas, however, sticks by Jesus, and says, “Let’s also go that we may die with him” (*John* 11:16). This shows Thomas’ courage and his commitment to Jesus.

Second, when Jesus announces his imminent death and assures his disciples that he'll prepare a place for them, he adds, "You know the way to the place where I'm going." Thomas answers candidly, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (*John* 14:5). This prompts Jesus to reply, "I am the way."

Thomas' third utterance gives not only him, but also gifts us the appellation "doubting Thomas". Being no pushover, Thomas asks for "proof" before he believes the unprecedented news of Jesus rising from the dead. But, on meeting the Risen Christ, he exclaims: "My Lord and my God!" (*John* 20:28). These words are etched in gold over the tomb of St. Thomas at the San Thome Cathedral, Chennai: a magnificent 16th-century Gothic church visited by innumerable pilgrims.

Having lived in Chennai, I cherish unforgettable moments at monuments built in memory of Apostle Thomas. I remember that morning of Sunday, December 26, 2004, when I was presiding over morning worship at San Thome Cathedral and the mighty ocean came crashing down upon Marina beach, leaving us distraught at the destruction wrought by the tsunami.

Two other churches in Chennai commemorate the Apostle: one built in 1523 atop "Saint Thomas Mount" near the airport, and, another big, circular one constructed in 1972 on "Little Mount". The former contains the "Bleeding Cross", believed to have been sculpted on stone by St. Thomas, while the latter rests beside the cave where the Apostle prayed.

Saints are not the exclusive property of one religion. St. Thomas teaches us all three things: (a) to be courageous and committed to a cause; (b) to be candid and to clarify things when in doubt; and (c) to be critical of things outside human experience; yet, also to believe in God who forever remains "The Beyond" while inspiring us to exclaim, "My Lord, my God!" in the everyday ordinariness of life.

There is no historical evidence to support the legend that St. Thomas, called Judas Thomas in the *Acts of Thomas*, ever came to India. And when we say there is no historical evidence in Western literature, we say emphatically that there is no evidence for St. Thomas or Indian Christianity in ancient Tamil literature either. Even up to the tenth century and Raja Raja Chola's time, Tamil literature has no record of Christians or Christianity being present in the land.

The story of Thomas's Indian sojourn exists only in the *Acts of Thomas*. This long religious romance was probably written by the Syrian Gnostic

poet Bardesanes about 210 CE at Edessa, Syria. Bardesanes was familiar with India and had met and discussed Indian philosophy with Buddhist monks travelling west to Alexandria. It was therefore quite natural for him to place his moral fable in India, a land from which all kinds of religious ideas emanated.³

Bardesanes story is centred on the moral imperative that all Christians must lead a chaste and celibate life. In the story he has Judas Thomas, who is presented as a look-alike twin brother of Jesus, persuade a newly married royal couple not to consummate their marriage. This angers the Parthian king of the desert land where Thomas is present and he has to flee for his life to another part of the country. Here he comes into contact with another Parthian king called Gundaphorus—possibly a first century king of Gandhara i.e. North-West Pakistan—and promises to build him a palace. Thomas cheats the king of his money but succeeds in converting him to Christianity. He then leaves Gundaphorus and concerns himself with a talking donkey and a dragon who claims to be Satan. Thomas slays the dragon, but because of his interest in converting the women and girls of the area to Christianity and alienating them from family life, is called before a third Parthian king called Mazdai—Mazdai being a Zoroastrian name after the Zoroastrian deity Ahura Mazda—and ordered to leave the country. When Thomas ignores the king's warning and converts the queen and her son, the king in exasperation at the apostle's evil deeds orders him executed. He is then speared to death by soldiers on a royal acropolis and the body shortly afterward taken away to Edessa.

In all records Thomas is executed on the Parthian royal acropolis and soon after buried at Edessa where a cult grows up around his tomb—until Marco Polo in his famous travel book, *Il Milione*, puts his tomb on the seashore in an unnamed little town in South India. Marco, who never came to India, was repeating the stories told to him by Muslim and Syrian Christian merchants he met in Constantinople.

This is how St. Thomas got to South India. The Portuguese who knew Marco's popular book decided quite arbitrarily that Mylapore was the unnamed little town Marco was referring to⁴—and Mylapore also had a good harbour and a great heathen temple that could be turned into a

Christian apostle's tomb. As they say, the rest is history—and a falsified history at that!

Though Bardesanes represents Judas Thomas as a second Christ, he does not represent him as a good man. What we gather from the story in the *Acts*, and what Fr. Francis and his Church neglect to tell the faithful, is that

- Jesus was a slave trader who sold Thomas to Abbanes for thirty pieces of silver;
- Thomas was an antisocial character who lied to his royal employer and stole money from him;
- Thomas ill-treated women and enslaved them;
- Thomas practised black magic and was executed for disobeying the king's order to stop and leave the country;
- Thomas was Jesus's twin brother, implying that the four canonical Gospels are unreliable sources which have concealed a crucial fact, viz. that Jesus was not God's Only Begotten Son. In fact, Jesus and Thomas were God's twin-born sons. In other words, accepting the Thomas legend as history is equivalent to exploding the doctrinal foundation of Christianity.

Enough said about "doubting" Judas Thomas.

About San Thome Cathedral which houses his fake tomb—the real tomb for St. Thomas is at Ortona, Italy—it has been established by reputed Jesuit and Indian archaeologists that the church stands on the ruins of the original Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple destroyed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. So do the churches at Little Mount and Big Mount stand on ruined Murugan and Shiva temples respectively. The "Bleeding Cross" Fr. Francis refers to and which is kept in the Portuguese church on Big Mount, has these words carved around the edge of it in Pahlavi script: *"My lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukht the Syrian, who cut this."* The cross is dated by experts to the seventh or eighth century.

Apostle Thomas was a Jew and the Roman cross would have been a most abhorrent symbol to him. Certainly, he did not bring a cross—or a Bible for that matter; there was no Bible in the first century—to India. Christians did not use the Roman cross as a religious symbol until the third century or later. They used a fish sign with the Greek word IXΘYC (*ichthys* meaning "fish")—an acronym for Jesus—inscribed in its body to identify themselves and their cult. Curiously Indian Christianity has never referenced or

employed a fish symbol in its religious culture. This is because there were no Christians in India before the fourth century. The cross and Bible were brought by Syrian Christian refugees later, after the fourth century.

We wish to assure Fr. Francis and the Christian congregations that he has deceived, that Hindus are not going to demand the return of temple property the Church has forcefully taken from them over the centuries. But we do feel an apology for past crimes is in order and that some restraint is observed when perpetuating the communally-charged St. Thomas tale among the faithful—especially as Thomas’s persecution and death are falsely attributed to a Hindu king and his Brahmin priests. Arun Shourie has stated that the apology should include the following items:

- An honest accounting of the calumnies which the Church has heaped on India and Hinduism; informing Indian Christians and non-Christians about the findings of Bible scholarship [including the St. Thomas legend];
- Informing them about the impact of scientific progress on Church doctrine;
- Acceptance that reality is multi-layered and that there are many ways of perceiving it;
- Bringing the zeal for conversion in line with the recent declarations that salvation is possible through other religions as well.

Besides this apology, we feel the Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore may donate a piece of the vast estate Bishop’s House stands on for a memorial to the courageous Hindus who resisted the Portuguese when they with the help of Franciscan, Dominican and Jesuit priests were destroying the Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple by the sea.

The Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, who may be an honest man unlike his predecessors, also must stop perpetuating the claim that Tiruvalluvar was a disciple of Thomas and a Christian convert. Tiruvalluvar lived a hundred years before Christ and anybody who has read the *Tirukkural* can see that this claim is a malicious falsehood.

The St. Thomas legend has been made a part of Indian history but Indian history must be told according to the known facts, not according to the fabricated anti-national theories of Indian Jesuits and Marxist historians. Even Pope Benedict has denied that St. Thomas came to South India—never mind that his editors changed his statement the next day to

include South India because Kerala's bishops had threatened secession or worse if the Church did not support their dearly held tale of origins.

Dr. Koenraad Elst, educated in Europe's most prestigious Catholic university in Leuven, Belgium, writes in his foreword to this book: "It is clear enough that many Christians including the Pope have long given up the belief in Thomas's Indian exploits, or—like the Church Fathers—never believed in them in the first place. In contrast with European Christians today, Indian Christians live in a 17th century bubble, as if they are too puerile to stand in the daylight of solid historical fact. They remain in a twilight of legend and lies, at the command of ambitious "medieval" bishops who mislead them with the St. Thomas in India fable for purely selfish reasons."

What a sad observation on Indian Christians who have access to the best education and health care in the country. And what a shrewd observation on Indian bishops who are probably the most wealthy, corrupt, and politically astute "caste" living in the country today.

1. India's political leaders are fond of telling their constituents and the nation that Christianity arrived in India before it arrived in Europe. This historical conceit is not true. Apostle Paul says in *Romans* 15:24 and 15:28 that he plans to visit Spain (which already had a Christian community). In *Acts* 19:21 he travels from Ephesus to Greece—Macedonia and Achaia—en route to Jerusalem, and then on to Rome. This took place in the 40s CE—some historians say he was writing after 44 CE. So even if it was true that Apostle Thomas landed in Kerala in 52 CE—the spurious date is of 19th century origin—Christianity would still have arrived in Europe a decade earlier.

2. Thomas of Cana, also known as Knai Thoma, led the first group of 72 Syrian Christian families to India in 345 CE. There is no record of Christian communities in India prior to this date. Thomas of Cana and his companion Bishop Joseph of Edessa also brought with them the tradition of St. Thomas the Apostle of the East. Later, Christian communities in Kerala would identify Knai Thoma with Mar Thoma—Thomas of Cana with Thomas the Apostle—and claim St. Thomas had arrived in Kerala in AD 52 and established the first Christian church at Muziris—the ancient port near present day Kodungallur—the main trading centre of the day.

The Rev. Dr. G. Milne Rae of the Madras Christian College, in *The Syrian Church in India*, did not allow that St. Thomas came further east than Afghanistan

(Gandhara). He told the Syrian Christians that they reasoned fallaciously about their identity and wove a fictitious story of their origin. Their claim that they were called “St. Thomas Christians” from the first century was also false.

Syrian Christians were called Nasranis (from Nazarean) or Nestorians (by Europeans) up to the 14th century. Bishop Giovanni dei Marignolli the Franciscan papal legate in Quilon invented the appellation “St. Thomas Christians” in 1348 to distinguish his Syrian Christian converts from the low-caste Hindu converts in his congregation.

3. The oriental ubiquity of St. Thomas’s apostolate is explained by the fact that the geographical term “India” included, apart from the subcontinent of this name, the lands washed by the Indian Ocean as far as the China Sea in the east and the Arabian peninsula, Ethiopia, and the African coast in the west.

Ancient writers used the designation “India” for all countries south and east of the Roman Empire’s frontiers. India included Ethiopia, Arabia Felix, Edessa in Syria (in the Latin version of the Syriac *Diatessaron*), Arachosia and Gandhara (Afghanistan and Pakistan), and many countries up to the China Sea.

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the original key text to identify St. Thomas with India (which all other India references follow), historians agree that the term India refers to Parthia (Persia) and Gandhara (Pakistan). The city of Andrapolis named in the *Acts*, where Judas Thomas and Abbanes landed in India, has been identified as Sandaruck, one of the many Alexandrias (possibly ancient Tis, today’s modern port of Chabahar) in western Baluchistan.

4. Marco Polo had written, “It is in this province, which is styled the Greater India, at the gulf between Ceylon and the mainland, that the body of Messer St. Thomas lies, at a certain town having no great population.”

So Marco’s reference is to a town on the Gulf of Mannar facing Ceylon and not to Mylapore at all!

Part Eight

The Dalrymple Massage Of The St. Thomas Myth

Koenraad Elst

The article “The Incredible Journey” by William Dalrymple in *The Guardian*, London, on 15 April 2000, is a wonderful exercise in pushing the beliefs of the “minorities”—in fact local enthusiasts of a global movement, helped by the foreign headquarters with resources and strategy—to the utmost. There is no document supporting the fond belief of the Christians [that St. Thomas arrived in Kerala in 52 AD], ritually incanted by all politicians and journalists whenever they mention Christianity. And there still is none after Dalrymple’s article, a fact that all his innuendo about new insights is meant to obscure. Not even the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* could prove this, either before or after Dalrymple’s intervention. These only mention Thomas going east to a desert country where people speak Iranian. This is clearly not lush tropical Malayali-speaking Kerala. With all his rhetoric slamming open doors, such as that there was a lot of trade between Malabar and the Roman empire—which we already knew—he has only one piece of hard evidence to claim, viz. the coins by king Gondophares confirming the *Acts*’ mention of such a king, and that already by 19th-century British archaeologists. Now, if there had been such a find, it would have been plastered all over the front pages, and every Christian dignitary would quote it on every suitable occasion. I may have missed something, but I haven’t heard that. Such a discovery would, among other things, have to transfer Gondophares from Afghanistan to Kerala and turn his name from standard Iranian to Malayalam. Note that Dalrymple, ever careful to specify North versus South India, here leaves that crucial specification in the dark. When the very erudite Pope Benedict XVI said in 2006 that Thomas came to “Western India”, and that it was not he but “Christianity” that then went on to Southern India, he was speaking in full consciousness of the relevant evidence, of all that Dalrymple here suggests as proof in favour of the Christian belief.

He commits all the errors that our first-year course of Historical Method warned us against. If someone spreads a story—say, the Christians arriving in Kerala from Persia in the 4th century, whose leader Thomas Cananeus was confused with Saint Thomas—and then a hundred consumers of the story reproduce the story, these are not “a hundred sources in unison”, this is just one source. So all his talk about how many believers there are—including gullible Hindus—can over-awe a layman, but mean nothing to a historian.

Of course, ultimately it is not important whether Thomas came to Kerala or not. Even if it were found to be true, Christianity remains an erroneous belief system and a foreign religion whether imported in the 1st or the 4th century. But because Hindus have set great store in refuting the Thomas legend, the secularists invest a lot in supporting it, here be this article, more usually in pro-belief pronouncements, and the media will censor any serious scepticism about it. Except that they will greatly highlight any anti article on condition that it also covers itself in ridicule by espousing some P.N. Oak type of history rewriting.

And note the irony: one always speaks of “doubting Thomas”, also the title of Dalrymple’s film, but the finality of this article is to provide intellectual respectability to the all-out secular effort of suppressing doubt about the Thomas myth.

The Confabulated Leftist Murder Of St. Thomas

Koenraad Elst

The following article by David B. Green appeared in the Left-leaning Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* on 21 December 2015:

72 CE: Thomas the Apostle is Murdered in India

December 21 in the year 72 CE, is the day of the martyrdom of Thomas the Apostle, according to the tradition of a number of Christian churches.

Like all of the 12 apostles, or disciples, of Jesus, Thomas was a practicing Jew, and was given the mission by his mentor to spread his teachings, both among the Jews and the Gentiles.

In both the *Book of John*, one of the Gospels of the New Testament, and in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, Thomas is described as Thomas who is called Didymus, a redundancy, since Thomas comes from the Aramaic word *teoma*, meaning twin (in Hebrew, it's *teom*), for which the word in Greek is *didymus*.

It is not clear either from the Gospels, written at the end of the 1st century, or from the *Acts of Thomas*, from the 2nd century (sic), just whose twin Thomas was meant to be, but there are several references in classical sources that suggest that he was the brother either of the Apostle Jude (son of James) or of Jesus himself.¹

None of the sources tell us about Thomas origins, but like the other apostles, he is presumed to come from the Galilee, like Jesus, and to have returned there to teach after Jesus death.

Have you believed?

Thomas was the first doubting Thomas, because he refused to believe the reports of sightings of a resurrected Jesus until, according to *John* 20:25, “I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the print of the nails, and place my hand in his side” (Revised Standard Version).

A short time later, Jesus appears to Thomas, and the latter calls him my Lord and my God, and Jesus seems to mock him gently when he responds, “Have you

believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (*John* 20:29).

Earlier, when told by his teacher that he will be departing soon to prepare a home in heaven for his followers, who will be joining him there one day, the practical-minded Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" (*John* 14:5).

The assignment of December 21 as the date of Thomas death is derived from a tradition that anyone who fits the description of a doubting Thomas might have some difficulty giving credence to.

Priests of Kali

A late tradition sees Thomas as having carried the gospel of Jesus to the Indian subcontinent, first to the north-western kingdom of Gondoporus. Then, according to the third century *Acts of Thomas*, in the year 52, the apostle sailed, in the company of a Jewish traveller named Abbanes, to the southern tip of India, to the port of Muziris, present-day Pattanam, in Kerala state.

Kerala was home, even at that time, to a Jewish community. A 17th-century work called *Thomma Parvam* (Songs of Thomas) says that he converted 40 Jews upon his arrival, along with 3,000 Hindus of Brahmin origin.

Modern historians believe that Christianity actually arrived in India several centuries after the era of the historical Thomas, with the arrival of Christians from Syria and from Persia.

The martyrdom of Thomas, however, took place not on the western coast of India, but on the other side of the subcontinent, in the south-eastern city of Mylapore, near latter-day Chennai. There, Thomas came into conflict with the Hindu priests of Kali, who killed him for insulting their deity—or simply for converting many of their followers. (Marco Polo, in the 13th century, heard that Thomas had died, more than a millennium earlier, when an archer out hunting peacocks had accidentally shot him.)

His bones were then brought into the city of Mylapore and buried inside a church he had already built there, where in the 16th century, Portuguese explorers built the San Thome Basilica, which was rebuilt by the British in 1893.

Today, December 21 is still observed as the feast day of St. Thomas in some Protestant churches, and among traditionalist Catholics. In the Roman Catholic Church, however, the feast day was moved, in 1960, to July 3, so as not to interfere with the days leading up to Christmas, on December 25.

A rejoinder to this article, by Dr. Koenraad Elst, was sent to *Haaretz* in Tel Aviv. But in keeping with the tradition of close-minded Leftist newspapers, it was not published. We reproduce it here.

The Confabulated Murder of Saint Thomas

So, your source is “common Christian tradition”? Fortunately, we are past the stage where we believe a story just because “tradition” says so. Therefore, we don’t believe the blood libel against the Jewish people anymore, even though for centuries it has been supported by “common Christian tradition”. Likewise, we don’t believe the blood libel against the “priests of Kali” either.

Nothing of this legend is proven. The only written source for it is already some 150 years older than this Thomas’s supposed martyrdom: the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. There, he is presented as coming to “India”, then a very large term—when Columbus landed in what he thought was Zipangu/Japan, he called the natives “Indians”, meaning Asians—in a part that was desert-like and where the people had Persian names. This describes Afghanistan or western Pakistan well, but not the lush and rich tropical landscape of South India. When he has committed several crimes against society, the king asks him to leave, and only when he refuses this diplomatic solution does the king have him executed.

I first learned about the hollow mythical nature of the Saint Thomas story while studying in Leuven Catholic University, from a Jesuit Professor of Comparative Religion, Frank de Graeve. Not exactly a “fanatical Hindu” source. More recently, Pope Benedict XIV publicly declared that St. Thomas had come to Western India, and that from there, after an unspecified amount of time, Christianity—not Thomas—reached South India. I am aware that Indian Christians have raised hell against this scholarly assessment, and have pressured the Vatican into removing this statement from its website. But that is not going to alter the verdict of scholarly historiography: there is no evidence at all to support this story.

And when Christians did reach the coastal area of South India, probably as 4th-century refugees from the Persian empire that had turned hostile after the Christianization of its Roman rival, they were welcomed rather more cordially than any treatment given by Christians to Pagans. Far from being “murdered by the priests of Kali”, they were given hospitality and integrated into Hindu society, without any questions asked about the contents of their religion. Hindus have extended their hospitality more recently to Parsis, Armenians and Tibetan Buddhists; and more anciently to the Jews. That glorious record is the target of gross injustice in the fictional story of Saint Thomas.

1. The *Acts of Thomas* was written in the 3rd century, not the 2nd. And it states very clearly in the *Acts* that Thomas was the look-alike twin brother of Jesus.

Part Nine

Searching For Muziris At Pattanam

A. Srivathsan

“The flourishing town of Muciri where the large beautiful ships of the Yavanas which bring gold and take pepper, come disturbing the white foam of the little fair Periyar of the Cheras.” - From the Akananuru

Pattanam

Pattanam, a small village 25 km north of Kochi is lush and quiet like many other villages in Kerala. It is unhurried and looks deceptively unimportant. In one of the narrow mud paved lanes lives Athira, a 10-year-old enthusiastic girl, fragile looking with bright big eyes. Her house is small and sparsely furnished. One of her prized possessions is a necklace made of many assorted beads.

The shapes of the beads are inconsistent and the colours are uneven. The necklace looks ordinary till P.J. Cherian, an archaeologist accompanying me, informs me that the beads could be 2,000 years old. Alongside the necklace, Athira has carefully placed a cameo blank, a semi-precious stone used to make craved jewellery for the Romans.

Annual bounty

Athira is no treasure hunter; she picked some of these ancient beads from her backyard, some from the streets and a few others from the neighbourhood. “After every rain, when the water rises from beneath, the beads surface with them. You have to just pick,” confirms Dr. Krishnakumar who lives in a larger house near Athira’s. He too has a collection including a fragmented bright metal piece.

Pattanam is no ordinary village. Beneath the red earth is the ancient port town extensively described as Muciri by the Tamil Sangam poets and frequented by the Romans and recorded by them as Muziris.

This thriving trade centre was completely lost without trace (at least on the ground). What puzzled the archaeologists even more was their informed guesses about its location turned wrong many times till they hit the first

reliable trail three years ago. How they reached Pattanam to reach Muziris is a story to be told.

Trade between India and western emporia dates back to 6th century BCE. Goods and people moved across land and sea, including the famous Silk Route that connected Central Asia and China. It was probably when the Romans started to dominate the trade from the 1st century BCE that the Kerala coast got busier.

While the journey from Muziris was easier with the north-eastern winds, the journey from Rome that used the rough south-west winds was tough. The whole journey was relatively quick but risky. Lionell Casson, a well-known archaeologist working on Roman trade, thinks that the Romans had the right kind of ships that were “designed for safety than speed” The vessels usually arrived in Muziris in September and were anchored till December or early January.

Gold coins, topaz, coral, copper, glass, wine and wheat were imported from Rome, while pearl, diamonds, sapphire, ivory, silk, pepper and precious stones were exported from the west coast. Casson estimates that a 500-ton ship could have carried goods equivalent to the price of 2,400 acres of fertile farmlands in Egypt. While another archaeologist, Federico Romanis, estimates that one ship carried nothing less than 68,000 gold coins worth of goods.

The trade, it appears, was seductively profitable and worth the risk. As the Vienna Papyrus, a rare document discovered about two decades back reveals, the trade between Muziris and Alexandria was well worked out and traders from both sides went to great lengths to secure it.

Muziris should have been a busy and large settlement to host this kind of trade. But it suddenly vanished. Before the question as to why it disappeared could be answered, archaeologists had to first find where it existed.

For long, many thought Kodungallur, a town seven km north of Pattanam, was Muziris. Probably, William Logan’s *Malabar Manual*, written in 1887, influenced the thinking and search. Logan thought Kodungallur, with

many medieval monuments and located on the north bank of river Periyar was Muziris. However, this conclusion needed material evidence.

In 1945, for the first time, excavations were taken up in Kodungallur. It did not produce any evidence related to ancient commercial links. Another excavation was carried out in 1969 by the Archaeological Survey of India in Cheraman Parambu, two km north of Kodungallur. Only antiquities of the 13th and 16th century were recovered. Muziris remained elusive.

Unexpected help

Help came from an unconnected development.

In the 1990s, ecologists and archaeologists were studying the evolution of Kerala's coast line. Shajan Paul, a research scholar then, was surveying the Central Kerala region between 1993 and 1997 as a part of his doctoral research. It appeared to him that the River Periyar could have shifted its course. He had reasons to think so. The coast line near Kodungallur, studies show, could have moved inward, flooding the coastal areas and later receded to expose land and creating new water channels sometime during 5,000 to 3,000 BP (Before Present: Radiocarbon years before 1950).

This understanding turned out to be crucial.

Earlier searches were looking for Muziris on the north banks of River Periyar and near to its mouth since the texts mention so. If the River Periyar had shifted its course, then a whole set of new locations emerge.

It was at this time, in 1998, that Shajan heard from his friend Vinod, a local resident of Pattanam and an engineer, about the appearance of a seemingly ancient brick wall in his compound while digging for coconut planting.

Though he and his friend V. Selvakumar, along with Prof. Vimala Begley, the renowned expert on Indo-Roman trade had surveyed Kodungallur region before, they had never looked at Pattanam. However, this time, given its proximity to Kodungallur and the fact that the place name Pattanam means a port town, Shajan thought it was worth the try. He also conjectured that if the River Periyar had shifted north-west, its earlier course would have been closer to Pattanam.

Tell-tale signs

When he arrived at Pattanam to look at the brick wall, to his surprise, he found lots of pottery shreds, evenly burnt and of superior quality in comparison to the megalithic pottery of South India. It was clear to him that they were not locally made. Pattanam, it appeared, could be connected to Muziris.

Shajan and Selvakumar had to wait for another six more years to do a trial excavation. “During this period we had formed a good core team which included P.J. Cherian and Roberta Tomber, an authority on Roman pottery. We were actively looking for more surface evidence and wanted our future search to be systematic, institutionally backed and sustained,” Shajan explained.

“We walked around the village and experienced the topography and landscape. The north-eastern part was a raised mound indicating a potential spot. After negotiations with the plot owner we dug two pits to a depth of three meters each. Much to our excitement, we found artefacts that one would find in a Roman site such as Arikamedu. We were convinced that we were closer to Muziris,” recalls Selvakumar, now an archaeologist from the Tamil University, Thanjavur.

The research team subsequently grew and a larger team was formed under the aegis of Kerala Council for Historical Research. The year 2007 turned out to be important.

“A wharf complex with a dugout canoe made from a single log of wood and several wooden posts/bollards were found during excavations in 2007. Carbon dating fixed the date of the canoe to 1st century BCE. A large quantity of botanical remains such as pepper, rice, cardamom, frankincense and grape seeds belonging to the same period were also discovered. It clearly emerged that Pattanam was once a thriving link in the Indian Ocean trade. Evidences pointed out that it was a site of continuous habitation pre-dating the Roman phase. The earliest strata so far unearthed dates back to the Iron Age—10th to 5th century BCE.

Prof. P.J. Cherian, Director, Pattanam excavations, is however cautious. “We would still like to retain some humility on the identity of Pattanam as Muziris. Evidences indicate that the site is closely associated with Muziris, but we are not sure which part of the “first emporium of the orient” is Pattanam. Where could be its satellite sites? Nelkynda, Bycare and Tyndis, the other ports mentioned in the texts—yet to be identified—are of equal importance and we need to know about them as well,” he adds.

Work continues at Pattanam with more institutions such as ASI and Pondicherry University joining the team. Excavating amidst habitation has not been easy. “Pattanam is a living village and we have to work with the people,” says Cherian. He is busy convincing the villagers that they will not be displaced because of excavations and there is nothing to fear. “The challenge is to find an alternative, a people-friendly approach to heritage management,” he explains.¹

1. Originally published in *The Hindu*, Chennai, 2 May 2010.

Nagaswamy Nails False Propaganda On St. Thomas And Pattanam

Express Buzz

The effort made by some interested quarters to link the Muziris excavations with the visit of St. Thomas Apostle has been criticised by eminent archaeologist and former director of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Survey of India, Dr. R. Nagaswamy.

“When looking at the literature on the life of St. Thomas, it is not mentioned anywhere that he came to India. It is only a myth, which has now been connected with the excavations at Pattanam, near Kodungallur,” the former visiting professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University told *Express*.

In fact, the ancient Muziris port must have been located in Kodungallur and not in Pattanam because all major ports in ancient times were situated at river mouths. And so it is safe to assume that Muziris was at Kodungallur, where the river joins the sea.

He felt there was a hidden agenda by certain sections to propagate the idea that Muziris was connected to Pattanam, where St. Thomas is believed to have landed, and not with Kodungallur.

“Myth cannot be called history. Connecting myth with history could only create confusion and distort history,” he said. “There is no substantial evidence to say that Pattanam is connected with Muziris. How was this conclusion reached? Those who claim to have found materials to connect Pattanam with Muziris have forgotten that these materials were also found in the eastern and the western coasts of the country,” said Dr. Nagaswamy.¹

1. Originally published in *Express Buzz*, Thiruvananthapuram, 7 August 2011.

Digging For The Bones Of St. Thomas

B.S. Harishankar

What took place in November 2011 was neither a debate nor a discord. The venue was Thiruvananthapuram, at the joint Annual Conference of Indian Archaeological Society (ACIAS), Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies (ISPQS), and Indian History and Culture Society (IHCS). Strongly criticising the archaeological excavations at Pattanam site in Kerala and the rambling hotchpotch of cultural remains without periodisation, especially pottery, veteran archaeologist and former Director of Archaeology and Museums, Karnataka, A. Sundara's strong criticism came after the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) director presented his paper on Pattanam excavations. Professor Sundara is one of the most reputed archaeologists in India known for his objective outlook and unbiased conclusions for which he was honoured at the meet. Earlier, Professor Sundara was also one of the well-wishers of Pattanam excavations in the Pattanam Archaeological Research (PAR) brochure published by the KCHR in March-April 2008. His censuring of Pattanam excavations although a surprise, was not an isolated incident. Much more censorious on Pattanam was Professor M.G.S. Narayanan, eminent historian and former Director of ICHR. In an earlier seminar held at Kochi in August 2011, Dr. R. Nagaswamy, former Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu criticised the KCHR for its biased approach and hasty conclusions to establish some hidden agenda at Pattanam. Dr. T. Satyamurthy, former Director, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was equally critical of the excavations and cautioned KCHR authorities against any hasty conclusions. Pattanam excavations form part of the Muziris Heritage Project (MHP) launched by the KCHR and headed by chairman Dr. K.N. Panikkar, former professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and director Dr. P.J. Cherian, a modern historian who heads archaeological excavations. In a write-up for Malayalam journal *Mathrubhumi* in 2014, Professor P.M. Rajan Gurukkal, historian and one of the members of the MHP arguing for Pattanam also

admitted that the site was unfit for any archaeological excavation as the soil has been virtually tampered for various construction purposes and digging of wells leaving no space for stratigraphical analysis of the cultural remains which have agglomerated. Surprisingly until now, no historian or archaeologist or any professional body such as the ASI has come forward in defence of the KCHR or Pattanam. Even Professor Romila Thapar, one of the patrons of the MHP is virtually silent.

The site of Pattanam is located near Parur in Ernakulam district of Kerala. It was declared by the KCHR Muziris Heritage Project that the aim of the MHP was to excavate and discover the lost settlement of Muziris, the ancient Chera capital on the Periyar River basin and hence named Muziris Heritage Project. The geomorphology of Kodungallur, considered ancient Muziris, was examined by geologists K.K. Nair and C.S. Subrahmanyam in 1993 in the archaeological context, which revealed that the area has been completely disturbed and the habitation material deeply buried due to tectonic changes. The Malabar Coast has both submergent and emergent characteristics. The Periyar River which drains the region has a long history of frequent floods due to heavy monsoons.

In the beginning, the excavations at Pattanam sailed smoothly. But controversies started after the excavators claimed that an ancient township at the cusp of first century BC and first century AD was unearthed at Pattanam archaeological site. Claims on the discovery of urban architectural remains at Pattanam were made by the excavator in various published papers and reports such as “The Living Dead” and “Lost Knowledge”, 2007 and 2008, published by Department of Culture, Government of Kerala, *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology*, 2009-2010, and in the paper presented at ACIAS on November, 2011, at Thiruvananthapuram. It was declared by the KCHR director who is also the excavator that Pattanam revealed interesting “early historic urban architectural features”.

The excavator claimed that the “urban, multicultural and maritime features are principal attributes” of Pattanam site. It was further asserted by the KCHR that the brick house comparable to a warehouse exposed near the wharf in trench PTO7 III included a platform (006) with post holes (67 in

number) and brick walls belonging to at least three different phases. It was stated that the post holes do not show any particular pattern and were dug at various periods indicating repeated use for a long duration.

In the *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology*, 2009-2010, the excavator claimed the presence of ancient civilisations at Pattanam. He also claimed Pattanam as an advanced metal working and stone cutting site with metal objects and lapidaries. Recently, the botanical remains claimed to have been unearthed from Pattanam were handed over to the Spices Board in Kerala, a marketing and research institute for spices for palaeobotanical studies. Carbon 14 dating of remains from Pattanam are conducted by Georgia University. The ASI has been kept away and excavations are coordinated by foreign universities. Later, the director of KCHR Dr. P.J. Cherian admitted in *The Hindu* dated June 12 in 2011, Thiruvananthapuram edition, that, “curiously, while large collections of artefacts were found, no remnants of major structures were discovered at the site”. In the KCHR *Annual Report*, 2009-2010, there is neither reference to such urban architectural remains or photographs of trenches. Those who visited the site were unable to see any urban architectural remains.

In the KCHR brochure published in February 2008 on MHP and Pattanam excavations, chairman of KCHR, Professor K.N. Panikkar stated in his editorial note that archaeological and historical research are not solely meant for experts and professionals in the field. Everyone with thinking power should handle it. Later elaborating further, in an interview given to *Frontline* dated April 2010, Panikkar made his stand much clearer. He suggested public participation in archaeological excavations at Pattanam—which he termed “Democratic Archaeology”—in which the local people would be part of the excavation. In other words, archaeologists and ASI need not interfere in excavations since guidelines and diggings shall be by “People’s Democracy”. Keeping archaeologists at bay was a necessity for KCHR since expert observations and remarks can lead to serious implications for Pattanam. Beyond all such serious lapses and incredible turnovers at Pattanam, what has raised eyebrows is the interference of JNU historians who were hastily propagating for Pattanam excavations to obtain for it credibility in the academic world. Professor

Kumkum Roy of JNU, in her *Historical Dictionary of Ancient India* published in 2009 has highlighted Pattanam stating that it has now been identified with ancient Muziris. Similarly, Professor Ranabir Chakravarti of the JNU in his work, *Exploring Early India* published in 2010, brings Pattanam into focus. Roman amphorae from Pattanam are exhibited as evidence of Mediterranean trade. It is not a new discovery. There are a number of other sites in India which have provided remains of Roman amphorae. But here the intention raised suspicions due to later events.

What has now snowballed into a major controversy is the open declaration by KCHR director, Dr. Cherian in the official bulletin of the Assyrian Church of the East on March 2011, that Pattanam has been identified as ancient Muziris, where Apostle Thomas landed in India 2000 years back for propagating Christianity, which he claims has been vindicated by the excavations. In 2011 July, he presented a paper on Pattanam archaeology at a seminar organised by the Syro-Malabar Church in Mumbai. A major paper on St. Thomas tradition in south-west coastal region in India was presented by Dr. Pius Malekkandathil, who is a reader at JNU. Earlier at Kakkanad near Kochi in 2005, Dr. Pius Malekkandathil presented his paper organised by the Liturgical Research Centre of the Syro-Malabar Church on the tradition of Apostle Thomas. Romila Thapar has put forward the arrival of Apostle Thomas as an outcome of Mediterranean trade links of India in her work, *The Penguin History of Early India*, published in 2002. In 2006, Professor Kumkum Roy was advisor to NCERT Textbook Development Committee along with chief advisor, Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya, both from JNU.

In the history textbook on Social Science for Class VI, they have included Muziris in the map of important trade routes without mentioning Pattanam and linking it with the arrival of the first Christian preachers in India.

Ranabir Chakravarti of JNU is one of the members of the NCERT Textbook Development Committee. Assertive claims by KCHR authorities in establishing historicity of Apostle Thomas has been supported by the stand of Utio Rai Chaudhary and Furley Richmond, academic directors of Georgia University in 2011 December. They stated that researches are being

conducted by the Georgia University on links between St. Thomas tradition and Pattanam. Interestingly this university has undertaken Carbon 14 dating of the Pattanam site. Historian Istvan Perczel from Central European University, Hungary was invited in February 2008, for delivering a lecture by KCHR chairman Professor K.N. Panikkar former JNU luminary and the KCHR director on the topic *History of Kerala Christianity*.

The February 2004 issue of *Economic and Political Weekly* has published an article on KCHR Family Archives Project by K. George Verghese. He has alleged that the KCHR Family Archives Project is virtually filled with histories of Syrian Christian families all highlighting arrival of Apostle Thomas at Muziris. The family history archives project was implemented prior to Pattanam excavations to provide a link.

With the Pattanam excavations thus taking a serious turn, Delhi based Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) which had earlier attacked former ICHR chairman, Professor M.G.S. Narayanan in 2001 for raising serious allegations against the KCHR has virtually gone underground. Organisations which have currently come out against the KCHR and its Muziris Project have alleged that “these same historians who had earlier rebuffed *Ramayana* and Sri Ram as fictitious and fabricated are now digging for the bones of Apostle Thomas”.¹

1. Originally published in the *Organiser*, New Delhi, 10 January 2015.

ASI Doubting Thomases Suspend Dubious KCHR St. Thomas Dig

G. Ananthakrishnan

The history battle has gone all the way back to St. Thomas, the apostle of Jesus Christ, who is believed to have brought Christianity to India and whose scepticism gifted the world the idiom “doubting Thomas”.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has decided not to extend the permission granted to an excavation project in Kerala to “reinstate the cultural and historical significance of the legendary Muziris port”.

The Muziris port was said to be where St. Thomas arrived in AD 52. But the exact location of the port, which was destroyed in a flood, is a mystery although the general consensus appears to be that it was located somewhere near Kodungallur in Thrissur, a northern district and cultural capital of Kerala.

Many Christians believe that St. Thomas—who accepted Jesus had risen from the dead only after he appeared and invited the apostle to touch him—baptised several Brahmins in Kerala and set up one of the oldest Christian communities in the world.

The *Gospel According to John* mentions that once a convinced Thomas said “My Lord, My God”, Jesus told him: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed (are) they that have not seen, and (yet) have believed.”

It was those who insist on seeing before believing that some advocates of the project were hoping to convince by coming up with evidence that St. Thomas had indeed set foot on what is now a village called Pattanam—which means town—in Kodungallur.

“Rules demand that extension beyond five years can be given only after those carrying out the excavation submit reports. In the case of the Muziris project, the digging has been going on for over seven years now, but no

report was filed. So no fresh permission can be granted,” ASI joint director R.S. Fonia told *The Telegraph* over the phone from New Delhi.

Fonia, however, added that the matter could be revisited as and when the reports were filed and reviewed.

The executors of the project, the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR), could not be contacted despite repeated attempts to confirm whether they had not filed any report till now.

The denial of an extension would have been treated as a routine bureaucratic decision but for the fact that the Sangh Parivar had long been opposing the project on the ground that its intention was to “legitimise the yet unproven story” of the arrival of St. Thomas in Kodungallur in AD 52.

That the Kerala historical council was an autonomous body floated by an erstwhile government of the CPM-led Left Front has ensured that the matter has the essential ingredients for a controversy in the highly politicised state.

The council is headed by historian K.N. Panikkar, a regular target of the Sangh Parivar for his Left-leaning views and vocal stand against the so-called “nationalist” history. Some members of the council are viewed by the Sangh outfits as “pro-Church”.

“What has snowballed into a controversy is the open declaration by KCHR director, P.J. Cherian in the official bulletin of the Assyrian Church of the East on March 2011, that Pattanam has been identified as ancient Muziris, where Apostle Thomas landed in India 2000 years back for propagating Christianity, which he claims has been vindicated by the excavations,” said B.S. Harishankar, a research fellow with the Delhi-based India Policy Foundation.

Cherian could not be contacted for comment.

While the Bharateeya Vichara Kendram, a Sangh affiliate, smelt in the excavation project a “conspiracy to manufacture history”, a “Marxian historian” had felt that the site was unfit for archaeological excavation because of construction and digging of wells.

But CPM politburo member M.A. Baby, who was the culture minister when the council took up the project, said: “Although there is no conclusive evidence, it is widely believed that apostle St. Thomas came to Kodungallur and through him Christianity reached Kerala even before it reached Europe.

“On the one hand, the BJP government is trying to establish fairy tales as history while on the other, it is trying to shut down genuine research in history. The agenda is very clear. Now, if the ASI says it can’t be continued, it is unscientific and against the science of history.”

That the CPM, traditionally considered an adversary of the Church, is supporting such a project speaks volumes about the politics of Kerala.

Now in the Opposition, the CPM is fearing an erosion of its Hindu support base towards the BJP, considered a rising force in a state where it has not made much headway till now. Against such a backdrop, it does not make sense for the CPM to antagonise Christians.

Such tilts and counter-tilts are common in Kerala. In 2001, the historical council that was later entrusted with the Muziris excavation was dissolved by a government headed by the Congress.

The chief minister then was A.K. Antony named after a Catholic saint, and the Congress was then supposed to have been courting Hindus. But a court reinstated the council.¹

1. Originally published in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, 1 October 2015.

Marxists And Christians Continue The Search For St. Thomas

Sandhya Jain

“Kerala’s attempt to create spurious evidence of the arrival of Apostle Thomas in India merits wider dissemination. It must be seen as part of a concerted attempt to entrench the Cross in India.” - Sandhya Jain

Rescuing the antiquity of Indian civilisation from the biblical mythology of Max Mueller, rubbishing the well-orchestrated history-as-dogma of the Aryan invasion and proving the existence of river Saraswati, excavating and resurrecting the still unknown past, and restoring the once handsome architectural marvels that have fallen victim to time or iconoclasts, Indian archaeologists have their task cut out for them. Their work is critical in correcting the lacunas, misinterpretations and falsifications of history in various parts of the country, especially at the hands of scholars with a pronounced bias against our native traditions.

Unless repudiated, invented history enters the popular mind as “fact”. The Aryan fable still persists because Marxists have been able to prevent all historical and scientific findings, disproving the movement of people into India at the time of the alleged “invasion”, from entering school textbooks where the foundations of knowledge are laid. This is why noted archaeologist B.S. Harishankar’s debunking of the Kerala Council for Historical Research’s (KCHR) attempts to create spurious evidence of the arrival of Apostle Thomas in India, unequivocally denied by Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006, merits wider dissemination.

The excavations to identify Pattanam, in Ernakulum district, with ancient Muziris of the Cheras, began soon after the Syro-Malabar Church scrambled to rescue the legend that claimed India as the first mission of the church, long before it went to Europe. As a result, in November 2006, the Vatican Secretariat accepted the story as history, to project Christianity as an indigenous faith of great longevity. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)

embraced the project with alacrity; the brochure, *Muziris Heritage Project: Pattanam Excavations 2008*, lists Prof. Romila Thapar as one of the patrons.

In *Pattanam: Constructs, Contexts and Interventions* (2017), Harishankar denounces the presence of European and American scholars in the dig, while excluding the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Indian universities. Eminent historians Prof. Dilip K. Chakrabarti and Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan, and archaeologists Prof. R. Nagaswamy, Prof. A. Sundara, and Prof. T. Sathyamurthy, denounced the attempts to link Pattanam with Muziris, when Kodungallur where the river meets the sea, is far more logical. Neither archaeological evidences nor historical records support that Apostle Thomas arrived in India; he possibly visited Fars (Persia) and the Afghanistan region.

Harishankar has referenced the Pattanam excavations with all researched and published material available. The KCHR, headed by Prof. K.N. Panikkar of JNU, is alleged to have manipulated archaeological evidence and manufactured new evidence to “prove” that Pattanam had historical ties with Jerusalem and other regions in West Asia from 1000 BC. He discusses the evidence that debunks the theory that there was ever a port city at Pattanam along the west coast, which the KCHR historians claim was an international trade route dating back to 800 BC.

Interestingly, the claim that Apostle Thomas established the first settlement at Pattanam was independently debunked by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Trombay, and the National Institute of Oceanography, Kochi. The BARC scientists, who successfully traced the course of the Saraswati through radio isotope studies, examined Kerala’s mud banks during the monsoons and concluded that marine and palaeo-hydrological studies rule out the possibilities of a port city, wharf or township at Pattanam. In fact, the area excavated by the KCHR does not qualify for excavations as the cultural stratigraphy has been badly damaged by monsoons, floods, erosion, and construction activities. Moreover, as Harishankar maintains, the ASI is the only body competent to authorise excavations.

Pattanam is not an archaeological mound, as claimed by KCHR. Western India, Harishankar argues, has several archaeological sites with ramparts or mud embankments to prevent floods. No such evidence has been found at Pattanam. On the contrary, the site at Pattanam in lower Periyar has coastal alluvium with sand and clay, and lacks laterite formation or thick soil. Hence, it was not chosen as an Iron Age settlement.

Moreover, urbanism in early historic India involves certain precursors such as immense size, internal planning, public architecture, settlement hierarchies, enclosing walls, script, craft specialisation, long-distance trade, subsistence strategies and population growth. None of these exist at Pattanam, yet KCHR's chosen scholars claimed it as an urban site and port city. When the absence of these parameters were pointed out, the KCHR historians toned down their claims and alleged that the structural remains unearthed were carried away by locals, which is simply ridiculous.

Curiously, KCHR forwarded the plant remains found at Pattanam to the Spices Board, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, though it has no competence to examine them. And despite premier institutions available in India, the carbon dating was done abroad. But what is more pertinent, KCHR's modern historians with no experience in field archaeology should not have excavated Pattanam with foreign funds and a crew of Biblical scholars.

KCHR appointed Dr. P.J. Cherian, with no academic background in archaeology, as director of the Pattanam excavations. Cherian's PhD dissertation is on "The Communist Movement in Travancore: From the Origins to the Uprisings in 1946" (University of Calicut, 1993). However, The University of Rome Tor Vergata granted a three-year research fellowship to P.J. Cherian, Director, KCHR, and Pattanam excavations.

To assist Cherian, some distinguished Biblical historians and Latin scholars were attached to the project. They include Istvan Perczel (Hungarian scholar of Byzantine history and early Christianity); Roberta Tomber (specialist in Roman and Indian Ocean pottery); Frederico de Romanis (expert on Roman and Portuguese pepper trade); and Irving R. Finkel (British philologist and Assyriologist, expert in the script, languages and

cultures of the Middle East). None is equipped to handle excavations; it's a Max Mueller style of biblical mumbo jumbo.

In an exhibition at the National Museum in 2014, KCHR claimed Pattanam is the third Indian site to unearth terra sigillata pottery after Arikamedu and Alagankulam in Tamil Nadu, though it has been found at Uraiyur, Kanchipuram, Vasavasamudram, Kodumanal, Karur and Sultur in Tamil Nadu and several sites in Gujarat and western India. It claimed that rouletted pottery from Pattanam was reported for the first time on the west coast, when it was found in 124 sites across the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

Cherian is the executive president of the Association for the Preservation of the Saint Thomas Christian Heritage. His claim that his excavation unearthed evidence of a 2,000-year-old port city at a place where Saint Thomas allegedly landed rests more on faith than on history or archaeology. It must be seen as part of a concerted attempt to entrench the Cross in Asia, particularly India.¹

1. Originally published in *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, 3 April 2018.

Part Ten

Why Indians Should Reject St. Thomas And Christianity

Koenraad Elst

“Christians must acknowledge the historical fact that from Bethlehem to Madras, most of their sacred sites are booty won in campaigns of fraud and destruction.” - Koenraad Elst

In the West we don't hear much about it, and even in India it doesn't make many headlines, but Hindu society is faced with a Christian problem besides the better known Muslim problem.¹ One focus of this conflict is the history of Christian iconoclasm, which is not entirely finished, and which past history has crystallised into some hundreds of churches standing on the ruins of purposely demolished Hindu temples. This history of iconoclasm is not an accident: it is the logical outcome of Christian theology, particularly of its deep hostility towards non-Christian forms of worship.

Christian sacred places in Palestine

A book well worth reading for those engaged in controversies over sacred sites, in particular concerning Christian churches in South India, is *Christians and the Holy Places* by Joan Taylor, a historian from New Zealand.² It shows that the places where Christians commemorate the birth and death of Jesus have nothing to do with Jesus, historically.

The Nativity Church in Bethlehem was built in the fourth century AD in forcible replacement of a Pagan place of worship, dedicated to the god Tammuz-Adonis. Until then, it had had no special significance for Christians, who considered pilgrimages to sacred places a Pagan practice anyway: you cannot concentrate in one place—hence, go on pilgrimage to—the Omnipresent. The concept of “sacred place” was introduced into Christianity by converts, especially at the time of Emperor Constantine's switch to a pro-Christian state policy.

The Christian claim to Bethlehem as Jesus's birthplace was a fraud from the beginning, as Cambridge historian Michael Arnheim has shown: through numerous contradictions and factual inaccuracies, the Gospel writers betray their intention to locate Jesus's birth in Bethlehem at any cost, against all information available to them.³ The reason is that they had to make Jesus live up to an Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah was to be born there.

The Holy Cross Church in Jerusalem was built in forcible replacement of a temple of the fertility goddess Venus, at the personal initiative of Emperor Constantine. His mother had seen in a dream that Jesus had died at that particular place, though close scrutiny of the original Christian texts shows that they point to a place 200 metres to the south. Constantine had the Venus temple demolished and the ground searched, and yes, his experts duly found the cross on which Jesus had died. They somehow assumed that their forebears of 33 AD had a habit of leaving or even burying crucifixion crosses at the places where they had been used, *quod non*. The Christian claim to the site of the Holy Cross is based on the dream of a gullible but fanatical woman, and fortified with a faked excavation.⁴

Remember the Ayodhya debate, where Hindu scholars were challenged to produce ever more solid proof of the traditions underlying the sacredness of the controversial site? Whatever proof they came up with was automatically, without any inspection, dismissed by the high priests of secularism as “myth” and “faked evidence”. It was alleged that there was a “lack of proof” for the assumption that Rama ever lived there. But in the case of the Christian sacred places, we do not just have lack of proof that the religion's claim is true, but we have positive proof that its claim is untrue, and that it was historically part of a campaign of fraud and destruction.

The stories of the Nativity and Holy Cross sites were trend setters in a huge campaign of Christianisation of Pagan sacred sites. Joan Taylor also mentions how the Aphrodite temple in Ein Karim near Jerusalem was demolished and replaced with the Nativity Church of John the Baptist. In the same period, all over the Roman Empire, Pagan places of worship were demolished, sacred groves chopped down and idols smashed by Christian

preachers who replaced them with Christian relics which they themselves posted or “discovered” there, like the twenty-odd “only real” instances of Jesus’s venerable foreskin.

Pagan symbols and characters were superficially Christianised. For example, Saint George and the archangel Michael, both depicted as slaying a dragon, are nothing but Christian names for the Indo-European myth of the dragon-slayer—in the Vedic version Indra slaying Vritra. The Pagan festivals of the winter solstice and the spring equinox were deformed into the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter.⁵ The Egyptian icon of the mother goddess Isis with her son Horus in her lap, very popular throughout the Roman Empire, was turned into the Madonna with the Babe Jesus. At the same time, devotees of the genuine mother goddess and enthusiasts of the genuine winter solstice festival were persecuted, their temples demolished or turned into churches.

This massive campaign of fraud and destruction was subsequently extended to the Germanic, Slavic and Baltic countries. Numerous ancient churches across Europe are so many Babri Masjids, containing or standing on the left-overs of so many Rama Janmabhoomi temples. Just after the Christianisation of Europe was completed with the forced conversion of Lithuania in the fifteenth century, the iconoclastic zeal was taken to America, and finally to Africa and Asia.

Christian impositions on India

India too has had its share of Christian iconoclasm. After the Portuguese settlement, hundreds of temples in and around the Portuguese-held territories were demolished, often to be replaced with Catholic churches. “Saint” Francis Xavier described with glee the joy he felt when he saw the Hindu idols smashed and temples demolished.⁶ Most sixteenth and seventeenth century churches in India contain the rubble of demolished Hindu temples. The French-held pockets witnessed some instances of Catholic fanaticism as well. Under British rule, Hindu places of worship in the population centres were generally left alone—some exceptions notwithstanding—but the tribal areas became the scene of culture murder by Catholic and Protestant missionaries. There are recent instances of

desecration of tribal village shrines and sacred groves by Christians, assaults on Hindu processions both in the tribal belts and in the south, and attempts to turn the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari into a Virgin Mary shrine.⁷

In South India, the myth of St. Thomas provided the background for a few instances of temple destruction at places falsely associated with his life and alleged martyrdom, especially the St. Thomas Church replacing the Kapaleeswara Shiva Temple in Madras. In this case, the campaign of fraud is still continuing: till today, Christian writers continue to claim historical validity for the long-refuted story of the apostle Thomas coming to India and getting killed by jealous Brahmins.⁸ The story is parallel to that of Jesus getting killed by the Jews, and it has indeed served as an argument in an elaborate Christian doctrine of anti-Brahminism which resembles Christian anti-Semitism to the detail. At any rate, it is a fraud.

From those Christian polemicists insisting on the St. Thomas narrative's historicity, we may at least expect that they tell their prospective converts the whole of the story. They should not omit that it describes Thomas as Jesus's twin brother—implying that Jesus was not God's Only Begotten Son—and as an anti-social character who exhausted his royal protector's patience by luring many women away from their families; and that it relates how Jesus was a slave-trader who was not even above selling his own brother.

Towards a full accounting and apology

For a proper way of digesting this dark episode of Christian iconoclasm, we suggest the following two steps. First of all, a full stop has to be put to the surreptitious forms of Christian iconoclasm which are continuing to this very day. It is nonsense to talk of dialogue and communal harmony as long as attempts are still being made to disrupt existing modes of worship.

Secondly, Hindus and Christians should take inspiration from the contemporary American attitude towards the horrible story of America's Christianisation through culture murder and genocide. After all, the Christian conquests in India and in America are two sides of the same coin. In the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, the Pope awarded one half of the

world—ultimately comprising areas from Brazil to Macao, including Africa and India—to Portugal, and the other half—including most of America and the Philippines—to Spain, on condition that they use their power to Christianise the population. The Spanish campaign in America had juridically and theologically exactly the same status as its Portuguese counterpart in India. If the result was not as absolutely devastating in India as it was in America, this was merely due to different power equations: the Portuguese were less numerous than the Spanish, and the Indians were technologically and militarily more equal to the Europeans than the Native Americans were. The Church’s intentions behind Columbus’s discovery of America and Vasco da Gama’s landing in India were exactly the same.

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s first meeting with the Pagans of the New World, in 1992, many Christian dignitaries have expressed their shame and regret at what has been done to the Native Americans by—or, as they prefer to put it, “in the name of”—Christianity. Even the Pope has publicly acknowledged at least a part of his Church’s guilt.⁹ Now that the 500th anniversary of Vasco da Gama’s landing in India has passed, Hindus should make sure that the Christians including the Pope do not forget to do some similar soul-searching and to offer similar apologies.

Like the Native Americans, Hindu society will not be satisfied with a few cheap words. As Hindu spokesman Arun Shourie writes:

By an accounting [of the calumnies heaped upon India and Hinduism], I do not of course mean some declaration saying, “Sorry”. By an accounting I mean that the calumnies would be listed; the grounds on which they were based would be listed, and the Church would declare whether, in the light of what is known now, the grounds were justified or not; and the motives which impelled those calumnies would be exhumed.¹⁰

This is actually an application of the rules of confession, one of the Catholic sacraments: it is not enough to ask for absolution from your sins, you first have to confess what sins you have actually committed.

The Church now claims that it is no longer the aggressive Church Militant of the old days, that its whole outlook has profoundly changed. Shourie lists five criteria by which we will know whether these changes are genuine:

1. An honest accounting of the calumnies which the Church has heaped on India and Hinduism;
2. Informing Indian Christians and non-Christians about the findings of Bible scholarship;
3. Informing them about the impact of scientific progress on Church doctrine;
4. Acceptance that reality is multi-layered and that there are many ways of perceiving it;
5. Bringing the zeal for conversion in line with the recent declarations that salvation is possible through other religions as well.¹¹

I expect Church leaders to reply: “You cannot ask of the Indian Church to commit suicide like that!”

But let us give them a chance.

Christian hostilities today

After the Church’s public self-criticism before the Native Americans, there is every reason [for Hindus] to take stock of what Christianity has done to India. But in this case, the Christians may need some insistent reminding: unlike in America, where they have had to face the facts of history, and where they have had to switch to a pro-Native stand under the aegis of Liberation Theology, the Christian churches in India are still continuing on a course of self-righteous aggression against the native society and culture.

Seldom have I seen such viper-like mischievousness as in the most recent strategies of the Christian mission in India. It is a viper with two teeth. On the one side, there is the gentle penetration through social and educational services, now compounded with a rhetoric of “inculturation”: glib talk of “dialogue”, “sharing”, “common ground”, fraudulent donning of Hindu robes by Christian monks, all calculated to fool Hindus about the continuity of the Christian striving to destroy Hinduism and replace it with the cult of Jesus. This is not to deny that there are some Indian Christians who sincerely believe that the denomination game is outdated, that we should go “beyond the religions” and mix freely with non-Christians

without trying to change their religious loyalties; but they do not represent official Church policy.

On the other side, there is a vicious attempt to delegitimise Hinduism as India's native religion, and to mobilise the weaker sections of Hindu society against it with "blood and soil" slogans. Seeing how the nativist movement in the Americas is partly directed against Christianity because of its historical aggression against native society—in spite of Liberation Theology's attempts to recuperate the movement—the Indian Church tries to take over this nativist tendency and forge it into a weapon against Hinduism. Christian involvement in the so-called Dalit (oppressed) and Adivasi (aboriginal) movements is an attempt to channel the nativist revival and perversely direct it against native society itself. It advertises its services as the guardian of the interests of the "true natives"—meaning the Scheduled Castes and Tribes—against native society, while labelling the upper castes as "Aryan invaders", on the basis of an outdated theory postulating an immigration in 1500 BC.

To declare people "invaders" because of a supposed immigration of some of their ancestors 3500 years ago is an unusual feat of political hate rhetoric in itself, but the point is that it follows a pattern of earlier rounds of Christian aggression. It is Cortes all over again: Cortes, the conqueror of Mexico, could defeat the Aztecs, the ruling nation which had immigrated from Utah three centuries earlier, by enlisting the support of nations subdued by the Aztecs, with himself posing as their liberator—of course, they were to regret their "liberation". The attempt to divide the people of a country on an ethnic basis—whether it is a real ethnic distinction as in the case of Cortes's Mexico, or a wilfully invented one as in the case of India—is an obvious act of hostility, unmistakably an element of warfare.

While in the post-colonial decades, Church rhetoric has markedly softened, its action on the ground has only become more aggressive. Shourie quotes intelligence reports on the role of missionaries in armed separatist movements in the North-East, and on their violations of the legal restrictions in Arunachal Pradesh on conversion by force or allurements.¹² The World Council of Churches officially supports separatism in the tribal areas—and even among the Scheduled Castes, another "indigenous

nation”—in pursuit of the long cherished project of carving out Christian-dominated independent states. In its 1989 Darwin Declaration, the WCC announces:

Indigenous peoples strive for and demand the full spectrum of autonomy available in the principle of self-determination, including the right to re-establish our own nation-states. The Churches and governments have an obligation to see [this] come to reality by providing the necessary means, without any restriction attached.¹³

What sounds fair enough in the case of the Tibetans or the East Timorese, is used in India as a step on the way to unrestricted exercise of clerical power, a formalization of the already existing trends in the Christian-dominated states of the Indian republic.

Therefore, “without any restriction”, Christians are teaching some sections of Hindu society hatred against other sections. You don’t normally try to create hostility between your friends, so the Church’s policy to pit sections of Hindu society against one another should be seen for what it is: an act of aggression, which warrants an active policy of self-defence and counter-attack. This counter-attack should take a proper form, adapted to the genius of Hinduism.

Why Christianity should be rejected

The Hindu response to Christian aggression should concentrate on consciousness-raising. Information should be widely disseminated on the two fundamental reasons why Christianity is totally unacceptable as an alternative to Hinduism.

The first is its historical record, with its destructive fanaticism as well as its opportunistic collaboration with whichever social force seemed most helpful to the Church’s expansion. Contrary to current propaganda, Christianity has historically supported feudalism, absolute kingship, slavery and apartheid, all properly justified with passages from the Bible. St. Peter and St. Paul gave a clear message to the oppressed of the world:

Slaves, accept with due submission the authority of your masters, not only if they are good and friendly, but even if they are harsh (1 *Peter* 2:18).

And:

Slaves, be obedient to your earthly masters with devotion and simplicity, as if your obedience were directed to Christ Himself (*Ephesians* 6:5).¹⁴

Liberation Theology, far from constituting a break with the Church's long-standing collaboration with the dominant powers, is merely the application of the same strategy to new circumstances: now that the masses constitute a decisive political force, now that social activism is a theme which ensures political and financial support from different quarters, the Church has decided to tap into this new source of power as well.

The other—and in my opinion the most important—fact about Christianity which ought to be the topic of an all-out education campaign, is the scientific certainty that its fundamental teachings are historically fraudulent, intellectually garbled, and psychologically morbid. Jesus was neither the son of a virgin mother nor the Only Begotten Son of God. Jesus's perception of himself as the Messiah and the Son of God was a psychopathological condition, supported by hallucinations—especially the voice he heard during his baptism, the visions of the devil during his fast, the vision of Elijah and Moses on Mount Tabor—and partly caused by his most ordinary but traumatic shame of having been conceived out of wedlock. Numerous manipulations—interpolation, omission, antedating, deliberate mistakes of translation and interpretation—of the textual basis of Christian doctrine by the evangelists and other Church fathers have been discovered, analysed and explained in their historical context by competent Bible scholars, most of them working at Christian institutes.¹⁵

Now some Hindus will object that there must also be a bright side. I am well aware that Christian history has produced some important contributions to human progress in culture, art, and philosophy. I have a rather positive opinion of some of the Christian classics, such as Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, or the Church's social teachings—which are rather different from Liberation Theology—and I stand by my earlier suggestion that Hindu political ideologues would gain a lot from studying the works which inspired their natural European counterpart, the Christian

Democrats.¹⁶ However, a closer analysis shows that the truly important elements in these contributions are ultimately of non-Christian origin.

The intellectually most attractive elements in Christian doctrine are bits of Hellenistic philosophy co-opted by the Early Church Fathers, without any prophetic or revelatory origins, apart from elements of Judaic tradition which pre-dated Jesus and were in no way augmented or surpassed by his supposed teachings. The way Christianity incorporated them is often a superficial cover-up of the contradictions between mutually exclusive teachings. Thus, the Platonic notion of an immortal soul, which is part of Church doctrine, makes the central Christian message of the “resurrection of the body”—which originated in a Jewish tradition ignoring the notion of an afterlife—superfluous. If death does not really exist, if it is merely a step from this type of life to another type, why bother about bodily resurrection? And if we partake of the Divine nature by sharing God’s immortality, where is the need for a Saviour?

On the other hand, those contributions which set Christianity apart from the prevailing religious and intellectual atmosphere in the Greco-Roman world, are not always the most desirable. Thus, Christianity’s emphasis on the individual’s dependence on scriptural or Church authority has suffocated millions of people in their spiritual development and directly caused the persecution and killing of numerous freethinkers. Its contorted and repressive attitude towards human sexuality is notoriously responsible for untold amounts of psychological suffering. Add the negative attitude towards worldly pursuits including science; the sentimental fixation on a single historical person with his idiosyncratic behaviour, extolled moreover to a divine status—Jews and Muslims have a point when they consider this the ultimate in “idolatry”—the concomitant depreciation of all other types of human character—artist, warrior, householder, humourist, renouncer—in favour of the pathetic antisocial type which Jesus represented; and the morbid love of martyrdom. Our list of Christianity’s failures is not complete, but is sufficient to justify the evaluation on which millions of Christian-born people have come to agree: Christianity is not true.

Jesus was not God's Only Begotten Son, and he was not the Saviour of mankind from its Original Sin. Historically, he was just one of the numerous antisocial preachers going around in troubled Palestine in the period of Roman rule. He believed the End was near—definitely a failed prophecy, unless we redefine “near”—and had a rather high opinion of himself and of his role in the impending catastrophe. We can feel compassion for this thoroughly unhappy man with his miserably unsuccessful life, but we should not compensate him for his failure by elevating him to a super-human status; let alone worshipping him as Saviour and Son of God. Whatever the worth of values which Christians claim as theirs, nothing at all is gained by making people believe in a falsehood like the faith in Jesus Christ.

Life after Christianity

Hindus with their conservative and pluralistic concern for the continuity of people in their respective faiths may wonder whether, for Christians, there is life after Christianity. Let me speak from my own experience. I have grown up in a Catholic family, gone to Catholic schools, and am a member of Catholic social organisations, so in a sociological sense I belong to the Catholic community. Moreover, I publish articles defending the Christians against the Islamic onslaught in foreign countries as well as against cultural aggression by Leftist secularists in my own country. I also like to point to the worthwhile contributions of the Church tradition and of Christian thinkers and artists against the sweeping anti-Christian positions of some of my atheist and Hindu friends. Yet, like most of my friends from the same background, I have gradually discovered that Christianity is an illusory belief system, and without any outside intellectual or other pressures, my attachment to it has dissolved.

This step from belief in an irrational “revealed” doctrine towards truthfulness and the spirit of independent inquiry has not been a loss to me, nor to most people in the same situation that I know of. On the contrary, I have found that St. Paul's dictum is fully valid: “Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

For many thoughtful Westerners, the end of Christianity has not turned out to be the end of religion and morality, contrary to the predictions of our teachers. To be sure, there has been a profound change in public morality, which is partly a liberation from repressive prejudice, but partly also a real decline in moral sensitivity and responsibility, as demonstrated by the rising crime rate and the increasing number of broken families. Christianity claims to be the solution to this problem—hence the call for a “second evangelisation”—but to quite an extent it should accept the blame for this development. By identifying religiosity and morality with its own irrational belief system, Christianity has made many people who outgrew this belief system throw out the annexes of moral responsibility and spiritual striving as well. Now, people are needing some time to discover for themselves that religion and morality still make sense after the demise of Christianity.

Back to pre-Christian roots

Though the decline of Christianity in the West brings a few problems with it, that is no reason to reverse the process. Instead, we are reconstructing religion and morality for ourselves. One of the sources of the post-Christian religious revival, numerically still marginal but of great symbolic significance, is the rediscovery of ancestral Paganism. Intellectually, this movement still lacks solidity and consistency, and finds itself associated with a variety of social and political concerns stretching across the ideological spectrum: ethnic revivalism, nationalism, ecologism, feminism, communitarianism, anarchism. Part of the reason is that in European Paganism, unlike in Hinduism, there is no historical continuity, so that—except for the well-documented Greek traditions—there is ample room for guessing and fantasising about the historical contents of ancient Paganism: an open invitation to romantics and theosophists to project their own pet ideas onto the mute screen of the ancient religion. Perhaps that is why the most consistent neo-Pagan movement arose in Iceland, where the memory of ancient Paganism was best preserved.

When Pope John-Paul II visited Iceland, he was received by Christian dignitaries, but the first one to address him was the country’s senior most religious leader, Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson (1924-93). Originally a farmer,

Beinteinsson gained fame across northern Europe as a traditional singer and songwriter—what the English call, with a term from the Celtic part of their cultural ancestry, a bard—and in 1972 he founded the Asatruarflagid, the “society for the Ase religion”, which was officially registered as a religion on 3 May 1973.¹⁷ As “the whole people’s invocator” (*allsherjargodi*)¹⁸ of the reconstituted ancestral religion, he spoke with mild irony to the Pope, about these “new fashions in religion”—meaning Christianity—which his tradition had seen arriving in Iceland.

The Icelandic example is being followed in other Germanic countries including North America. Celtic-based revivals are flourishing in Celtic countries or countries with a Celtic past—France, where some 40 different neo-Druid societies of divergent quality co-exist, England and Belgium. Slavic and Baltic countries have their own variety, with Russia and Lithuania being particularly fertile grounds for neo-Paganism.¹⁹ In the former Soviet provinces of Tajikistan and Ossetia, there is a revival of Zoroastrianism, while forms of Shamanism are resurfacing from Kyrgyzstan to Hungary. In North America, these movements are partly absorbing those circles which were flirting earlier with Native American spirituality. They now accept that the Native Americans themselves don’t appreciate this type of imitation and prefer European-descended people to rediscover their own Pagan heritage. While evangelists are working hard to Christianise tribals in the interiors of Latin America, many Christianised Native Americans are returning to their ancestral traditions. In Brazil, supposedly the world’s largest Catholic country, the black and mulatto populations are taking to the elaborately polytheistic Candomble cult, with the sympathy of growing sections of the European-descended people, who view this cult of African origin as the emerging national religion.

Most of these neo-Pagan groups are still too obviously immature, groping in the dark created by the Christian destruction of their historical roots; it is interesting to watch some of them adapt their own rituals and doctrines to new scholarly findings about their chosen religious ancestry.²⁰ We shall have to see how this line of response to the post-Christian vacuum develops; but already, its very existence poses a powerful symbolic challenge to Christianity.

Meanwhile, the biggest actual challenge to Christianity in the West is the appeal of oriental religions. Now long past the stage of beatnik experimentation with Zen Buddhism and hippie affectations of Indian lore, the Western daughter-schools of Asian schools of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism are gaining in authenticity and respectability as well as in attendance numbers. Some people formally convert and declare themselves followers of these religions; many more just practise the techniques they've learned and try to live according to the teachings, all while insisting on their individual non-attachment to any organised religion. Thus, in Germany—at least among natives, as opposed to the prolific Muslim immigrants—Buddhism is the fastest growing religion with some 300,000 practitioners. Even more far-reaching is the gradual penetration of small bits and pieces of oriental heritage: most sportsmen as well as pregnant women preparing for birth now learn some elementary yogic breath control (*prānāyāma*) techniques, while even among Christian monks and nuns there is a substantial percentage who defy the Pope's warnings and practise non-Christian forms of meditation.

Part of Christianity's appeal among Indian tribals and fishermen is the—waning, but still palpable—prestige of the West. They should realise that the West is gradually opening up to the traditions of India and China, even while the elites of these countries are still spitting on their own heritage and pursuing westernisation. Indians living in the middle of these traditions should have no problem finding a worthwhile alternative to Christianity. Even Dalits with a grudge against Hinduism should have no problem in rejecting the eager invitations of Christianity and Islam, and in following their leader Dr. Ambedkar onto the path of the Buddha. In time, closer study of the Buddha's teachings may well reveal to them that, just as Jesus was a Jew, the Buddha was a Hindu.

Christianity against Paganism

It is interesting to see how the mild and harmless people who run the leftovers of the once powerful Churches in Europe suddenly show a streak of fanaticism when confronted with signs of life in the long-buried corpse of Paganism. In Iceland, the established Lutheran Church has intervened to stop the ongoing construction of a Pagan temple halfway; the

government complied with the pressure and temporarily halted the construction work.²¹ In contemporary polemical publications from the Christian side, we see a boom in attacks on what is loosely called the New Age movement, meaning the mixed bag of feminist neo-witchcraft, ecologist philosophy—“deep ecology”—astrology, Pagan revivalism, Taoist health techniques and Hindu-Buddhist meditation. The Pope himself has condemned yoga, and in January 1995, his derogatory utterances on Buddhism provoked an anti-Pope agitation during his visit to Sri Lanka.²²

By contrast, the Church leadership strongly opposes any serious criticism of Islam.²³ In India’s Hindu-Muslim conflict, the Christian media with their world-wide impact have thrown their weight completely behind the Islamic aggressor. The reason for this uneven treatment of Paganism—in the broadest sense—and Islam is not merely the relative closeness of Islam as a fellow monotheist religion, nor just the fear which Islam inspires. Churchmen have the correct impression that the Pagan alternative, though softer and weaker than Islam in a confrontational sense, ultimately has a stronger appeal to the educated Western mind. They calculate that the better-educated mankind of the next century will typically go the way of today’s European intellectuals, rather than the way of today’s Black Muslims or Christian Dalits.

Islam’s money and muscle power may look impressive, certainly capable of doing some real damage to targeted countries and societies, but Islam has no chance of becoming the religion of a science-based, space-conquering world society. Exclusivist revelations have no appeal among educated people, especially after they have acquainted themselves with the Vedantic or Buddhist philosophies. That is why the Churches are investing huge resources in the battle for Asia’s mind, where they face their most formidable enemy. That is why they are so active in India: not only is India’s atmosphere of religious freedom more hospitable to them than the conditions of Islamic countries, or even of non-Islamic countries where proselytisation is prohibited—countries as divergent as China, Myanmar, Israel, and, at least formally, Nepal—but they also know and fear the intrinsic superiority of the Indian religion.

The role of disputed places of worship

In the present struggle to death which Christianity is waging against Hinduism, is it any use for Hindus to rake up disputes over usurped places of worship? Or, as Christians who have the preservation of their churches in mind, are wont to ask: isn't one Babri Masjid problem enough?

The Hindu response should be in proportion to the seriousness of the matter. Within the hierarchy of Hindu sacred places, I don't think that any of the most important ones has been usurped by Christianity, the Mylapore Shiva temple being—with due respect—of secondary rank; though I admit that this is all relative. Of course, the Church itself is welcome to make a move and offer the stolen places of worship back. In fact, until the Church voluntarily offers to give some of its illegitimate property back, there is every reason to be sceptical about its protestations of a “new spirit of dialogue”. However, in my opinion, it may be wasteful and strategically counter-productive to start clamouring for the return of stolen places of worship.

Hindu society should be more ambitious. A place of worship may be an important focus for mobilisation and consciousness-raising—*vide* Ayodhya—but it is hardly important in itself.²⁴ Better to go for the big one: attract the worshippers, and they will bring the places of worship along with them. Not the places but the offerers of worship are to be liberated from Christianity.

The fate of Hindu sacred sites at the hands of Christian missionaries, as a piece of significant historical information, may have a certain auxiliary role to play in this process of consciousness-raising. Their ruins are witnesses to the anti-religious and destructive edge of a Church which now advertises itself in India as the bringer of progress and social justice. A formal “liberation of sacred sites” need not be put on the agenda, but the Hindus have every right to insist on a mental and verbal breakthrough: Christians must acknowledge the historical fact that, from Bethlehem to Madras, most of their sacred sites are booty won in campaigns of fraud and destruction. Since their theology urges a sense of sinfulness and guilt anyway, they should not find it too difficult to make such a confession.

1. We do not hear about the Christian problem because the mainstream “secular” Indian media is either Christian-controlled or Christian-sympathetic.
2. Joan Taylor: *Christians and the Holy Places*, Oxford, 1993.
3. Michael Arnhem: *Is Christianity True?*, London, 1984.
4. The church is known today as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was built to enclose the alleged sites of the cross and the tomb which were believed to be close to each other. Its first building was dedicated ca. 336 AD.
5. In their own version of the winter solstice, the Romans celebrated December 25th as the birthday of Mithras, the Sun of Righteousness, at the close of their most popular festival, the week-long Saturnalia. January 1st was then celebrated as the beginning of the New Year. The contention of Protestant fundamentalists that Christmas, the New Year and Easter are Pagan festivals is correct. The names of the days of the week and months of the year in the western “Christian” calendar are also of Pagan origin, as is the choice of Sunday as the designated holy day.
6. The *Indian Express*, true to its negationist editorial policy, continues to publish sentimentalised and misleading articles about this missionary and his Lutheran counterpart Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg, and about Portuguese churches built on temple sites, in its features pages. These missionaries and others are presented as lovers of and contributors to Tamil learning and culture, when in fact they came to India with the sole intention of destroying both. Prof. Maria Lazar, the author of a Ziegenbalg piece, has also done an article on Hindu craftsmen who manufacture images of Christian saints, and sententiously comments that this is a much-needed example of religious tolerance today. Hindu craftsmen doing this kind of work are not unusual in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and real religious tolerance will be seen in South India when Christian craftsmen start making images of Hindu deities with the same dedication and respect.
7. The phenomenon of Christian violence against Hindus in South India, generally ignored by western India-watchers, is briefly mentioned by Susan Bayly in her (otherwise anti-Hindu) article: “History and the Fundamentalists: India after the Ayodhya Crisis”, in *Bulletin of the Academy of Arts and Sciences*, April 1993. The problem has hardly been documented by Hindu organizations, with their usual slothfulness in gathering and providing information. One of the few exceptions is Thanulinga Nadar: *Unrest at Kanyakumari*, Hindu Munnani, Kanyakumari, 1982.
8. In Roman days and long afterwards, “India” was practically synonymous with “Asia”, from Ethiopia to Japan. Columbus expected to reach Zipangu—Chinese Ribenguo, “land of the sun’s origin”, i.e. Japan—and when he thought he got there, he called the inhabitants “Indians”.
9. Pope John-Paul II had even announced a comprehensive statement of the Church’s guilt by the year 2000. This provoked a lot of protest from other Church dignitaries.

10. Arun Shourie: *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, ASA Publications, New Delhi 1994, p. 229. The book is an expanded version of his lectures before a conference called by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. Its publication provoked a new round of debate (rather less friendly this time) of which the proceedings have been published by Voice of India: *Arun Shourie and His Christian Critic*.

11. Ibid.

12. Op. cit., p. 234-235. A study yet to be written might usefully add some research into the complicity of Indian politicians. Thus, I know a Jesuit missionary working in Chhotanagpur, expelled from India by the Rajiv Gandhi administration because of political agitation. Back in Belgium, already preparing to move to another country, he received news that the new (Janata Dal) government would extend help to whomever the Hindus disliked; he applied for a visa and is now back among his flock practising Liberation Theology. I won't doubt the man's honesty—"I was only agitating against the redeployment of tigers in the jungle by urban ecologists who value wildlife more than tribal people!"—but the point is that any Christian agitation and intrigue will be supported by other factions of India's colourful anti-Hindu coalition.

13. Published as "Programme to Combat Racism" in *Link*, the bimonthly newsletter of the World Council of Churches, 1989.

14. This is not to deny the merits of some Christians at some stages in the struggle against slavery, e.g. the Jesuits in Brazil and Paraguay in the 17th and 18th century, and the Quakers in the USA in the 19th century. But remark that the Jesuit efforts were stopped by the Church itself, and that in the 18th century, the Quakers had been quite well-represented among slave-owners themselves. Christianity as a doctrine cannot claim the honour of freeing the oppressed.

15. For a synthesis of the findings of critical Bible scholarship with the proper logical conclusions, however, we have to refer to studies by non-Christian or ex-Christian scholars, because Christians tend to avoid the consequences of their findings (e.g. by claiming that "the Jesus of history" is unknowable and unimportant). See e.g. Michael Arnheim: op. cit.; Robin Lane-Fox: *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible*, London, 1991; and Herman Somers: *Jezus de Messias: Was het Christendom een Vergissing?* (Jesus the Messiah: Was Christianity a Mistake?), Antwerp, 1986.

16. For example Jacques Maritain's seminal book *Humanisme Integral* (1936); the title should ring a bell among Hindu nationalist ideologues professing "integral humanism".

17. *Ase* is the ancient Germanic word for "God", cognate to Sanskrit *Asura* (which simply meant "Lord" before the wars between the Vedic people and the Asura-worshipping Iranians gave it a negative meaning).

18. *Godi*, like its Sanskrit cognate *hotr*, means "worshipping priest"; hence the related Germanic word *God*, "the worshipped one". In 1993, he was succeeded by

Thorstein Gudjonsson. The Asatr Society publishes a periodical, *Huginn ok Muhinn*, PO Box 1159, IS-121 Reykjavik, Iceland.

19. Lithuania, even more than Iceland, has a fair claim to some threads of continuity with historical Paganism because of its late Christianization.

20. Historians are gradually bringing more reliable information to light, a prime example being Ronald Hutton: *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Blackwell, Oxford 1993. Often, this research highlights both the limitations of our knowledge of ancient Paganism, and the distance between the original and the imagined Paganism (esp. Druidry) of Theosophy or the Wicca movement. It certainly makes neo-Pagans envy the comfortable situation of Hindus with their uninterrupted age-old tradition.

21. *Iceland News*, April 1994.

22. See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, and Pope John Paul's *Mission of the Redeemer: John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*. Hindu and Buddhist intellectuals who fancy that they are in dialogue with the Jesuits, and liberal Catholics who still believe that the declarations of the Second Vatican Council regarding non-Christian religions are valid, should study these documents carefully. Copies are available from St. Paul Publications, Bandra, Bombay.

23. For example, in May 1993, a lecture series on Islam, organised by a Catholic foundation, and in which I (K. Elst) was one of the speakers, was prohibited at the last minute by the authorities of the Jesuit University in Antwerp.

24. This is not true for the Hindu, who may believe a particular site to be sacred for a variety of reasons and continue to visit it even after a mosque or church has encroached on the consecrated area (as in the case of Ayodhya and Velankanni). However, the point being made here is well-taken. - IS

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