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SYRIAC ORTHODOX SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND THE PROTESTANT CHALLENGE

A Study on the Internet Material of the Malankara Jacobite Archdiocese in North America

ABSTRACT

The study concentrates on the website of the North American Archdiocese of the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church. The method of the study is systematic analysis. In addition, results of historical and sociological research have been utilised.

The study is centred on the conceptions about Protestants presented in the web texts written by Curian Kaniyamparambil and Geevarghese Mar Osthathios. The study also inquires into the self-understanding of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, expressed on the website. Moreover, it is relevant to ask how the doctrinal texts reflect their context in North America as well as on the Internet.

From all the Protestant churches, Kaniyamparambil sees particularly Anglicans, and in some cases also Lutherans, as mediators between Orthodox churches and heretical movements. Both of the authors make a clear difference between traditional and modern Protestant communities. Kaniyamparambil seems to represent quite an exclusivist view, stressing the superiority of the Syriac Orthodox Church. From Mar Osthathios' viewpoint, the ecumenical dialogue between churches takes place on a more equal basis. Nevertheless, both of the authors promote ecumenism at the level of churches, not in the form of interdenominational worship.

Kaniyamparambil rejects the modern Protestant views quite categorically, while Mar Osthathios is ready to adopt quite liberal ideas from these Protestants. The most popular themes in the texts are those which give rise to disputes with Protestants. The authors, however, do not pay much attention to predestination, free will or synergism. One reason may be the fact that those Protestant groups that are attracting Syrian Orthodox Christians in India and in North America are usually modern evangelical and charismatic groups, which have largely adopted the doctrine of the free will.

Mar Osthathios also pays attention to the process of modernisation. He sees Protestants as allies who have faced the same challenge and who have developed noteworthy means to cope with the new situation. For Kaniyamparambil, on the other hand, Protestants are a part of those powers that have caused the negative consequences of modernisation.

The denominational strategy of adaptation is more clearly visible in the texts than the ethnic background. This seeming absence of ethnicity is not, however, by any means exceptional on the Internet. Studies have also shown that religious websites usually have an evangelistic element. This result is in accordance with the evangelistic emphasis of the texts.

PREFACE

My interest in Eastern Christianity dates back to early 1990's. I wanted to become acquainted with the Orthodox tradition, which, despite its long roots in Finland, was quite unfamiliar to a boy growing up in Southern Ostrobothnia, in the western part of the country. Although having preserved this interest, I have concentrated on the Finnish church history and especially on the history of the Lutheran Church in my studies. Thus this study is an excursion into systematic theology and Orthodox Christianity.

The eight months during which I was engrossed in this study extended my view on Eastern Christianity. Nevertheless, to become familiar with a culture totally foreign to oneself is not a quick task. The source texts are examined under the microscope, but sitting in Finland – far from both India and North America – I have had to use a telescope to look at the surrounding culture of the texts. I would not be surprised if someone with better knowledge of the history and culture of India and North America would arrive at some different conclusions. On the other hand, some things may be easier to see from a distance.

I want to thank all the partakers in the seminar of ecumenical studies, especially Professor Risto Saarinen and Ms. Minna Hietamäki, M.Th, who worked as an assistant in the seminar. Professor Martin Tamcke from the University of Göttingen made many illustrative and noteworthy comments based on his comprehensive expertise. I am also grateful to Ms. Maija Turunen, Th.D, from the Catherine Institute, University of Helsinki. The comments I have received from these people have been very helpful. Sadly the conciseness of this study made it unavoidable to leave the examination of many important and interesting aspects for further studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church in North America

What happens when an Asian-Indian church comes to North America, where the greater part of the population belongs to a Christian community, but where the surrounding culture is different from that of India? How does the new context affect one's theological self-understanding? How is this self-understanding communicated via the Internet? These matters are current, as old ethnic churches branch out into countries that are traditionally regarded as Christian. These questions are very large, but we can obtain some information if we look at the website of the North American Archdiocese of the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church.

The Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church (MSOC) is a part of the Syriac Orthodox Church, with the Patriarch of Antioch as its supreme head. The local head of the church is the Catholicos of India. There is also another large Syrian Orthodox faction in Kerala (Malabar), namely the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (MOSC, also known as the Indian Orthodox Church). It is an autocephalous church with the Catholicos of the East as its head. This study concentrates on the first one of these churches, the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church, and its Archdiocese of North America.

In 2000, the Holy Synod of the Syrian Orthodox Church decided that the English name of the church should be spelled "Syriac Orthodox Church." The hierarchs in North America particularly promoted this change in order to disassociate the church from the state of Syria.[1] The concept "Syrian Orthodox" is used in this study to refer to all Syrian

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[1] *Aydin* 2000, III.

Orthodox Christians, i.e. those who belong to the Syriac Orthodox Church as well as those who belong to the autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

Asian-Indian Syrian Orthodox Christians generally believe that their church was established by Apostle Thomas in 52 A.D. This belief is very constitutive for the identity of the MOSC, while the Jacobite branch takes a much more critical attitude to this tradition. By all accounts the church in India is of early origin. It is almost certain that there were well-established churches in parts of South India at the beginning of the sixth century. Many scholars share the view that Christians in India had connections at least with the Nestorian Catholicate in the Persian Empire at that time. Relations with the Orthodox Catholicate in Persia are also well supported. Furthermore, it is possible that St. Thomas Christians had interaction with the Church of Antioch, although there is no evidence for these relations.[2]

This period of Persian influence, however, started to draw to an end as the Portuguese reached India. During the 15th century, the Pope had signed several bulls giving the Portuguese the right of patronage (*Padroado*) in the East. The Portuguese settled in India at the beginning of the 16th century, and the Roman Catholic Church started to fight successfully against Nestorianism. It also tried to impose Latin customs on the St. Thomas Christians in India. Progressively some of these Christians became very restless under the papal authority and sent requests for an oriental bishop. Eventually, Bishop Mar Ahatalla, whose background has caused disputes among scholars, arrived in India. After his arrival, part of

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[2] *N. J. Thomas* 1967, 26-27; *Pothan* 1963, 40; *Daniel* 1972, 1, 37; *Verghese* 1974a, 29; *Neill* 1984, 26, 49, 111-112; *Bayly* 1992, 254; *Visvanathan* 1993, 34-35, 62; *Vadakkekara* 1995, 13-14; *Binns* 2003, 32; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 54, 77, 81-82.

the Malankara Church broke off its relations with the Roman Catholic Church.[3]

The Portuguese lost their power over India to the Dutch in 1660s. In this new situation the Patriarch of Antioch sent his representative to Malankara. This event was very important in establishing Malankara-Antiochene relations. At the end of the 18th century, however, the foreign domination of South India changed hands once again with the arrival of the British. The first two British Residents, Colonel Colin Macaulay and Colonel John Munro had strong Christian and Protestant convictions. They became also deeply interested in the affairs of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church[4]. Consequently, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which was under the patronage of the Church of England, started to educate Syrian Orthodox clergy. The missionaries had strict instructions from the CMS not to meddle with the doctrines or administration of the Malankara Church. Instead, they tried to improve the educational standard of the parishes and to provide biblical and other related books in Malayalam. Their work was generally respected among the Syrian Orthodox Christians. However, the final aim of these evangelical-oriented missionaries was to reform the church, to equip it for active mission work, and to liberate it from any superstitious or unbiblical beliefs.[5]

From this point of view, it was not a big surprise that the situation started to change. New missionaries were zealous Protestants who began to teach against the Orthodox faith and traditions. The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church rejected these teachings and affirmed the supremacy of

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[3] *Daniel* 1972, 42-43, 45, 53-54; *Koodapuzha* 1974, 34-35, 41-42; *Thekkedath* 1988, 91; *Robertson* 1999, 47; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 197-199.

[4] The concept "Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians" includes all the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India. As the concept is used in describing the present situation, it includes both the MSOC and the MOSC. The term "Malankara *Syriac* Orthodox Church", however, refers to the MSOC alone.

[5] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 84-85; *Daniel* 1972, 59-60, 77, 80-81; *Mathew* 1974, 88; *Murray* 1985, 32-33; *Stanley* 1990, 61; *Ward* 2000, 22; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 213-214, 222, 232.

the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. This event resulted in divisions in the church, and the final consequence was the separation of the Mar Thoma Church from the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in 1889.[6]

This was not, however, the only division that occurred among the St. Thomas Christians by the end of the 19th century. In fact, according to *Susan Bayly*, wildfire sects, breakaway churches and messianic Christian guru figures were the most conspicuous features among these Christians at that time. Most of the new groups based their teachings on some form of radical evangelical Christianity. This fragmentation expanded very rapidly, so that there were fierce internal battles going on in nearly every Syrian locality. The old division between Catholics and Jacobites had evolved into the presence of twelve or fourteen competing episcopal alliances and confessional attachments.[7]

Division between the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church has existed in various ways since 1912. The new Patriarch of Antioch, who had displaced the former patriarch, started to claim temporal authority over Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians. He gained support from some of the church members, but others thought that the patriarch was only the spiritual head of the Malankara Church. The leader of the church, Malankara Metropolitan Mar Dionysius VI belonged to this latter group and was thus excommunicated by the Patriarch in 1911. To support the metropolitan, the former patriarch consecrated Paulose Mar Ivanios as the first Catholicos of India and the East in 1912. Division between two groups, the Catholicos Party (*Metran Kakshi*) and the Patriarchal Party (*Bava Kakshi*, the subject of this study), was established.[8]

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[6] *N. J. Thomas* 1967, 44-46; *Daniel* 1972, 82, 84, 86, 88-93, 100; *Mathew* 1974, 95-96, 99; *Verghese* 1974b, 57-58.
[7] *Bayly* 1992, 286-287.
[8] *Daniel* 1972, 110-112, 115-116, 121; *Verghese* 1974b, 61; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 309.

A series of lawsuits and negotiations for reconciliation among Syrian Orthodox Christians has been going on since 1913. Reconciliation was already reached in 1958, but the unity was lost again in 1975.[9] Recent efforts to gain reconciliation have also failed, and there has sometimes even been open violence between the rival Syrian Orthodox factions. During the last decades both of these factions have had their own catholicate in India. The Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church had no catholicos during 1996-2002 because of the expectation that a peaceful settlement would be worked out for the reunification of the two factions. Nevertheless, the new Jacobite Catholicos of the East, Mar Baselios Thomas I, was consecrated in 2002.[10]

The church quarrel does not necessarily have much influence on the everyday life of the Syrian Orthodox Christians. Nevertheless, one must take sides and support either the Catholicos or the Patriarchal Party. Disagreement on the ownership of cemeteries has sometimes broken into physical fights. At any rate, the whole quarrel has been very harmful to the public image of the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India.[11]

The presence of Syrian Orthodox Christians in North America has its roots in the late 19th century, when religious persecution forced many Christians to leave their traditional homelands in Ottoman Turkey. These immigrant Christians got their own Syrian Orthodox priest in 1907, and new parishes also started to come into being. Finally, the North American Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese was created in 1957. During their presence in North America, Syrian Orthodox immigrants have given financial aid to Christians in the Middle East. Since the 1970s, as the immigrant community started to grow rapidly, the Syrian Orthodox immigrants have

[9] *Daniel* 1972, 125, 127; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 68; *Chaillot* 1998, 70; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 374, 399-400.
[10] *Chaillot* 2001; SOR 2002a; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 403, 408-409, 433-434; KMPSTs.
[11] *Cherian* 1986, 104; *Visvanathan* 1993, 41, 55, 58; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 381.

also concentrated on creating cultural activities and preserving a common identity in North America. In spite of these efforts, the young generations have lost much of their linguistic and cultural heritage. Many have also become estranged from the Syrian Orthodox faith. This situation has caused the church to concentrate more on preserving the faith than preserving the original culture and language.[12]

The history of the Asian-Indian Christians in North America is far shorter. Since the United States Immigration and Nationality Act in the mid-1960s, the number of Oriental Orthodox Christians has increased dramatically in North America. Thousands of Coptic, Indian, and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians have arrived, and these are groups that haven't been represented earlier in the United States.[13] Reasons for this immigration are described in more detail in chapter 4.

In America, St. Thomas Christians[14] often worshipped as one before increase in numbers encouraged them to establish separate churches. The Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox immigrants were at first under the authority of the Syrian Archbishop of North America, and cooperation between Asian-Indian and other Syrian Orthodox Christians was intense. In 1976, the Indian community started to grow rapidly, and by 1984 eight churches were established in cities like New York, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, and Detroit. Immigrants moved from Syriac to Malayalam in their liturgy, but also English started to gain a bigger footing as the adaptation process went on. In 1993, Indian immigrants got their own ethnic archdiocese. They moved into an ethnic strategy of adaptation,

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[12] *Aydin* 2000, I-IV, VI.
[13] *Melton* 1996, 286; *Erickson* 1999, 124.
[14] When the concept "St. Thomas Christians" is used for describing the situation of the 20th century, it is comprised of Asian-Indian Syrian Orthodox Christians, Knanaya Orthodox Christians, and Mar Thoma Christians. These groups share in many ways a common identity. *Seppälä* 1999, 70.

trying to preserve both their religious and ethnic identities in one institution.[15]

At the beginning of the third millennium, there were around 12,000 people belonging to the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in the United States.[16] It may be estimated that the archdiocese of the sister church, the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church, consisted of 4,000-5,000 Christians at the same time. It is difficult, however, to estimate the precise size of the archdiocese. In 2005, the archdiocese had 33 churches in the U.S. and two churches in Canada. More than a decade earlier, in 1993, the diocese had had 23 churches serving about 650 families of approximately 3,000 people. At any rate, the growth of the diocese has been rapid.[17] Since the vast majority of these Christians in North America live in the United States, this study is accordingly focused on the situation in the U.S.

1.2. Doctrinal Web Documents and Their Authors

> Several months ago, I went to have lunch with my Christian friend. Since it was the lent season, I choose to have vegetarian food. In seeing this, my Christian friend remarked, "What kind of Christian are you? I have never heard of Lent. Thank Jesus, that I am not a Christian of your type!" I explained to him that I belong to one of the oldest church, established by our Lord and thereafter shepherded by St. Peter according to the apostolic faith. The church had neither added anything to it nor taken away anything from it. It has always held the faith defined by the Three Universal Synods of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus in the 4th and 5th Century. In hearing this, my friend was awestruck.[18]

Paul Philipose describes how this incident made him translate the Malayalam book *Rakshikkappeduvan Njan Enthu Cheyyanam[19]* into English. This book, originally written by Malankara Malpan, Rev. Dr. Curian

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[15] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 112-115, 118.
[16] *Walsh* 2003, 304; *Lindner* 2004, 131.
[17] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 117; *Krindatch* 2002, 539; *Krindatch* [2003], 5.
[18] WSID1, Introduction.
[19] RNEC.

The www.malankara.com starting page on the 12th of October 2005.

Corepiscopa Kaniyamparambil[20] in 1990, was then published on the Internet in 2002. The book, with the English title *What Shall I Do To Be Saved?*, is the larger one of the two doctrinal documents available on the website of the Malankara Archdiocese.[21] Although the English and the Malayalam versions are two different entities, the focus of this study is not to analyse systematically the differences between these versions. Consequently, Kaniyamparambil is usually mentioned as the author in those sections also where Paul Philipose has taken liberties with the text.

The text is addressed "To All wishing to learn about the 1st century faith And wanting to Be a part of it."[22] According to Paul Philipose, Dr. Kaniyamparambil's aim is to help the reader to find the truth in the middle of the chaos. In Philipose's thought the chaos is that there are "millions of Christians all over the globe who have never heard of our

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[20] The name is usually written "Kurien Kaniamparambil".

[21] The website of the Malankara Archdiocese is *http://www.malankara.com*. Both of these texts are placed on the server of the St. Ignatious Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in Dallas, Texas.

[22] WSID1, Introduction.

true apostolic faith."[23] These words of the preface imply that there is a strong missionary aspect present in the text.

Dr. Curian Kaniyamparambil, the author, was born on February 27, 1913. He completed his college studies in CMS College, Kottayam. Having published a book on Syriac grammar, he was ordained *Kassisso* (full priest) in 1932, and started to serve as a vicar in Thiruvalla. Kaniyamparambil, who has been described as a colourful personality, has also held many positions of trust, and he has worked actively in his church, for example in founding the Syrian Church Revival Movement. He served from 1977 to 1994 as Priest Trustee of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, and after a couple of years' break, he was elected again in 1997. His greatest achievement is considered to be the translation of the Bible from the *Peshitta* Syriac text into Malayalam in 1995. He has also published several other books.[24]

In 1950, Kaniyamparambil was raised on the rank of *Corepiscopus*, the highest order the church bestows on a married *Kassisso*.[25] Moran Mar Ignatius Yakoob III, the Patriarch of Antioch, granted him the title of *Malankara Malpan* (Doctor of the Malankara Church) in 1978. In 1982, Patriarch Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas conferred on Kaniyamparambil a unique title of *Korooso Dasroro* (Proclaimer of the Faith). He has also received the title of *Nathaniel* (Israelite without guile), and the Swedish St. Ephrem Institute conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity (h.c.).[26] These titles can be seen as an indication of the fact that Curien Kaniyamparambil is highly respected among the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Christians. For that reason, his writings are likely to have weight.

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[23] WSID1, Introduction.
[24] *Visvanathan* 1993, 63; *Chaillot* 1998, 81; *Kottapparambil* 2004.
[25] *Selb* 1989, 248; *Kottapparambil* 2004.
[26] *Kottapparambil* 2004.

The other text, *40 Questions Answered*, was first published in 1977. Students in the annual summer school at St. Paul's Gospel Hall, Mavelikara, used to present their doubts and questions to their teachers. The book saw daylight as one of the teachers, Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, decided to publish answers to the most frequently asked questions. His aim was to make the book available especially for those Malankara Orthodox Christians outside Kerala "whose faith ought to be strengthened in the faith of our fathers."[27]

In the introduction of the second edition in 1991, Mar Osthathios specified more accurately his goals. The book was meant to help "the faithful, especially the youths, who can't read malayalam to clear their doubts about the bible and tradition, church-doctrines and history, hermeneutical and ethical questions." The book was also meant for those who had a desire to know the Orthodox Church and its teachings.[28] Hence there are two target groups presented: those Malankara Orthodox Christians outside Kerala, who have doubts about their faith, and those people of other faiths, who want to come to know the Syrian Orthodox faith.

Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios has become known as the Diocesan Metropolitan of Niranam in the MOSC. Thus he represents the other faction of the Malankara Orthodox Christians. As *40 Questions Answered* was published in 1977, two years had elapsed from his consecration as metropolitan. Having studied at Drew University and at Union Theological Seminary in New York, he is familiar with life in the United States. He has also visited the churches in America several times. Nevertheless, he has had a negative attitude to emigration to the West because of the effects the "brain-drain" has on Kerala. Another reason

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[27] 40Q, iii-iv.
[28] 40Q, v-vi.

has been the attraction of the western materialism. Mar Osthathios has referred to the compulsion to emigrate as "the American disease" infecting Kerala. Despite these views, Mar Osthathios has been optimistic about the St. Thomas Christians and their mission in America.[29]

On the whole, Mar Osthathios has stressed the importance of missionary work. He has worked actively to transform the MOSC into a missionary church. He is, for example, the founder of the Mission Training Centre in Mavelikara. Furthermore, he has been active in the field of ecumenism. He has participated in many meetings of the World Council of Churches and has also presided over many conferences at the international level.[30]

The erotematic method, i.e. asking questions and answering them, is used in both texts. There are 135 questions in Kaniaymparambil's writing, and each of these questions constitutes a separate chapter. In the same way, there are 40 chapters in Mar Osthathios' text. Since Kaniyamparambil's work is the larger and more detailed one, it will usually receive more attention than Mar Osthathios' text.

It is worth noting that both texts were written in the Indian context. They were not originally meant to be published on the Internet or in North America. During the history of the Church, it has been common that Western Christian writings have been brought to new contexts. In fact, the Western missionaries have done just this during the last centuries in India. This study, however, deals with a situation in which the process has turned upside down. Two Asian-Indian texts have been brought to North American context. As these texts speak, for example, about the Lutheran Church, they are likely to refer to the Asian-Indian Lutheranism. But as these statements are read in the new context, they start to refer to

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[29] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 131; *Punchakonam*.
[30] *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 381-382; *Punchakonam*.

North American Lutheranism or Lutheranism in general in the reader's mind. Hence, it is important to ask, what kind of picture these documents draw from other churches and denominations in this new context. In addition, one has to ask if these texts have been in some way contextualised as they have been transferred into North America.

1.3. The Aim and Methods of the Study

This study is divided into three main chapters. Chapter 2 is centred on the conceptions about Protestants presented in these writings by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios. Which churches are considered Protestant? What kind of doctrines do the authors regard as Protestant? On which areas of the Protestant faith do they concentrate? The final question is, how Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios see the Protestant churches in relation to the Orthodox churches.

Chapter 3 inquires into the self-understanding of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, expressed on the website. How do Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios answer the questions asked by hypothetical or real Protestant opponents? What areas of the Syrian Orthodox faith do they stress? What areas do they avoid? What kind of implicit presumptions do the writings contain, and what kind of Protestant groups are these documents responding to? It is also relevant to ask, how the texts respond to the challenge created by other religions and modernisation.

Chapter 4 is centred on the question of how the doctrinal texts on the website reflect their context. How do they reflect the American milieu in which the Asian-Indian immigrants live and struggle for their identity? What kind of adaptation strategies do they support? It is also relevant to pay attention to the role of the Internet as a communication tool. How can the texts be interpreted in the light of recent Internet studies written by sociologists of religion? How are these writings related to other

material on the website? What is the purpose of these writings on the Internet? Why have the webmasters put just these texts on the website – one of them being written by a theologian of a rival church? It is also important to ask, why Paul Philipose has translated this Curian Kaniyamparambil's writing to express the Syriac Orthodox faith in the American context.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to describe accurately enough the context in which the documents were originally written. Nevertheless, the main goal of this study is to deal with the texts in their new context. What kind of ecumenical challenges do these texts reflect, and what kind of adaptation strategies do they support? The final question is, whether these texts are likely to be helpful in resolving ecumenical challenges in the North American context or whether they are likely to deepen these challenges by feeding prejudice.

The method of this study is systematic analysis. It involves analysing concepts and patterns of argumentation used in the web documents. In addition, results of historical and sociological research have been utilised. There are several historical studies concerning Christianity in India, although many of them lack objectivity and must be treated critically. One of the most frequently used historical study is *Susan Bayly*'s study *Saints, Goddesses and Kings. Muslims and Christians in South Indian society 1700–1900* (1992).

Susan Visvanathan has written about the present situation of the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India.[31] *Philip Kuruvilla* has studied young people living in diaspora in India, and *Raymond Brady Williams*, *Alexei D. Krindatch*, and *Edip Aydin* have dealt with Asian-Indian and Syrian Orthodox immigrants in North America.[32] The religious use of the Internet and the

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[31] *Visvanathan* 1993.
[32] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1986 & 1988 & 1996 & 2000; *Aydin* 2000; *Kuruvilla* 2000; *Krindatch* 2002 & [2003] & 2005.

role of the web in the process of migration are areas which have been studied more and more in recent years. *Lisa Nakamura*, *Linda Leung*, *Harry Hiller*, and *Tara M. Franz* have dealt with the latter one of these two issues.[33] The religious use of the Internet is the topic of many recent studies, including those written within the Pew Internet and American Life Project.[34] Several articles have been published in other contexts too. Nevertheless, we start by asking, what kind of conceptions about Protestants Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts include.

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[33] *Nakamura* 2002; *Hiller & Franz* 2004; *Leung* 2005.
[34] *Larsen* 2000 & 2001; *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004.

2. PROTESTANTS AND THEIR FAITH

2.1. Two Meanings of "Protestant"

What does Curian Kaniyamparambil mean by "Protestant"? To answer this question, we have to look at chapter 19: "How different are the views of various Protestant groups who argue that the 'Bible is the only basis of Faith?'" The reason for various Bible interpretations is said to be clear:[35]

> These individuals forget or purposefully ignore the fact *that the church owns the Bible and that the Church only has the power to interpret the Bible.* Some relied on personal or individual interpretation of the Bible. This is why so many new 'churches' were formed. Let's look at the list of a few modern fellowships.
>
> | CHURCH | ESTABLISHED BY | YEAR |
> |---|---|---|
> | Protestant | Martin Luther | 1524 |
> | Presbyterian | John Knox | 1560 |
> | Baptist | John Smith | 1600 |
> | Congregational | Robert Brown | 1600 |
> | Quackers [Quakers] | George Fox | 1647 |
> | Methodist | John Wesley | 1739 |
> | Brethren | | 1800 |
> | Disciples of Christ | | 1827 |
> | Salvation Army | William Booth | 1865 |
> | Sabbath | William Miller | 1844 |
> | Pentecostal | G. Spirling | 1884 |
> | Christian Science | Mary Eddy | 1879 |
> | Jehovah's witness | C.T Russell | 1870 |
> | God's Church | Daniel Vernan | 1884 |
>
> (From the Pears dictionary)[36]

According to the list, the Protestant Church is the church founded by Martin Luther. Presbyterian and Congregational churches, for example, are not identified with it. Consequently, speaking about the Protestant Church, Kaniyamparambil seems to refer to the Lutheran Church. It is noticeable that the Anglican or Episcopal Church is absent from the list.

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[35] WSID1, 19. The number after the name of the source text refers to the chapter concerned.
[36] WSID1, 19.

The Anglo-Saxon viewpoint is also evident on the list, which has been taken most likely from the Pears Cyclopaedia, published in the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, a larger meaning of "Protestant" is given in the title itself. There are "various Protestant groups," and the Protestant Church is one of them. The list above is said to include some modern fellowships. The name "Protestant" is not mentioned, but the title of the chapter implies that the groups mentioned on the list are regarded as Protestant. This interpretation receives further confirmation from Kaniyamparambil's words in chapter 18: "From the 15th century (see the list below) onward, different protestant groups began to make their own Bibles through distorted translations to suit their arguments."[37] In other words, there are said to be Protestant groups on the list. This view is interesting, since the list contains also groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, which are generally considered non-Christian.

The title of chapter 19 further indicates that the Protestant groups interpret the Bible in a way that can be criticised. For that reason, we have to take into consideration what the texts say about the Protestant way of treating the Bible.

2.2. Protestants and the Bible

According to Kaniyamparambil, it is not enough just to believe in Jesus Christ. One's faith should be based on the undistorted Bible, the apostolic traditions and the Nicene Creed. Protestants, however, argue that the Bible should be the only basis. Kaniyamparambil considers this outlook confusing because there are so many different Bibles available. During the first centuries of its history, the Church had stood as a mighty pillar of true faith. Kaniyamparambil describes how the situation changed as the

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[37] WSID1, 18.

"reformist groups began to make changes to the Holy Bible," and continues, "Thus people like Luther, Calvin, Single [Zwingli?], Matthew[38] etc. brought different versions and different interpretations of the Bible into the English and other languages." Since the 16th century, new translations and interpretations of this kind have caused heresy. Kaniyamparambil states that of all the Protestant English translations, King James Version has the least errors.[39] It is noteworthy that saying this, Kaniyamparambil seems to regard the Anglican Church as Protestant. While preferring the *Peshitta* Syriac text, he also seems to recognise the value of the *Textus Receptus* used in the King James Version.

To show the incoherence of the Protestant churches, Kaniyamparambil makes comparisons between different Protestant groups and their teachings. He presents many important differences, such as those concerning child baptism and the status of sacraments. On the other hand, he pays attention to many differences which seem somewhat trivial or at least rare problems. He states that some groups deny offering incense, burning candles, or using gold, written prayers, or Psalm 51. He also pays attention to the fact that in some groups, the episcopate has special and uniform garments, while in other groups the practice is different.[40]

Kaniyamparambil presents a clear reason for these differences: The Protestant interpreters forget or purposefully ignore the fact that the church owns the Bible and that the Church only has the power to interpret it. According to Kaniyamparambil, this is why so many new "churches" have been formed. Anyone can edit a version of the Bible in any manner. To describe the situation, Kaniyamparambil refers to the

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[38] Kaniyamparambil obviously refers to Thomas Matthew. This name was a pseudonym assumed by John Rogers.
[39] WSID1, 13, 16-17.
[40] WSID1, 19.

Second Epistle of Peter, according to which untaught and unstable people twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. Kaniyamparambil also quotes the request which was submitted to King James by those responsible for the Authorized Version. These men complained about the selfish aims of some other translators. He further describes how even Luther became uneasy about the various new interpretations of the Bible.[41]

Kaniyamparambil sets side by side some verses from two translations, King James Version and Good News Bible (1927)[42]. He analyses the differences between these versions assuming that the King James Version is the original one and that the "alterations" in the Good News Bible are made to support some heretical doctrines. His conclusion about the Good News Bible is clear: "Yes, it is shocking for any independent scholar to see all these changes in the different translations. All these changes were made for ones own selfish gains."[43]

Mar Osthathios seems to have a slightly different attitude to Protestant translations. He advises to look at the Revised Standard Version (RSV) to have a correct translation of one passage in which there is a mistake in the Malayalam version.[44] Kaniyamparambil, however, has a very critical attitude to the Revised Version (1881, 1885), the American version of which was the basis for the RSV.[45] Though the RSV is in many ways different from its predecessor, Mar Osthathios seems to have a more positive stand on the modern English translations.

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[41] WSID1, 17, 19, 26. Kaniyamparambil quotes Luther: "Now there are so many sections as there are heads. Some do not need Baptism, some reject Sacraments, some others teach that there is a third world life for a person between this world and the end of the world. Some says Christ is not God. One person says it in one way and another person another way. It has come to this situation that if one sees a dream or one feels so, he decides that it was a revelation to him by the Holy Spirit and declares himself as a prophet." WSID1, 17.

[42] The Good News Bible was actually published in 1976. It is not sure, which version Kaniyamparambil is referring to.

[43] WSID1, 16-17.

[44] 40Q2, 29.

[45] WSID1, 17.

Kaniyamparambil gives one more example of wrong interpretations of the Bible. According to him, "Decenters"[46] have put forth the argument that if one is anointed, nobody needs to teach him or her anything. He describes how these "Decenters" themselves have started Bible society and Bible colleges and thus taught anointed people. They have also excommunicated anointed community members who have interpreted the Bible against the teaching of their community. Furthermore, Kaniyamparambil reminds that the idea of Holy Spirit teaching different communities in different ways is a sin against the Holy Spirit. The final reminder is clear: "What is most horrifying is the fact that sins against the Holy Spirit will not be pardoned."[47]

Mar Osthathios, too, speaks about anointment and Protestant interpretations. He states the question, if one should speak in tongues to become sure of his or her anointment. In his answer he refers to the mutual disagreement of different charismatic groups: "When certain Pentecostal sects quote isolated texts and teach that Tongues is the one sure sign of the anointment of the Spirit, there are sects among them who deny their claim and refute their teachings." He further reminds that there were many saints who were full of the Spirit but who did not speak in tongues. Having said that, Mar Osthathios promises that there is no need to be carried away by sectarian movements in this question.[48]

Another Protestant misinterpretation Mar Osthathios brings forward concerns Seventh Day Adventists. He states that they are under the illusion that Christ made no difference to the Old Testament Sabbath. Mar Osthathios considers this literalism "a dead weight", which the Adventist should throw away. He points out that the "Islamic view of the

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[46] Speaking about Protestant Dissenters, Kaniyamparambil uses the word "Decenter". He doesn't name any particular church as he uses this collective concept.
[47] WSID1, 21.
[48] 40Q1, 10.

Quran is not the Christian view of the Bible." Mar Osthathios regards the Seventh Day Adventists as a new sectarian movement which does not recognise the tradition or ancient practice of the Church. He states that "they will not be liberated to the joy of Christianity till they recognize the Lordship of Christ over the Sabbath and everything else."[49]

According to Kaniyamparambil, the Bible could be seen as the sole basis of faith on condition that it was complete and true. To be complete, the Bible should contain all that Jesus Christ and the apostles taught and all the faith-related reference. As this is not the case, the Protestant outlook is not justified. It is disobedience to Jesus to follow only those of his commandments which are written in the Bible. Furthermore, Kaniyamparambil points out that from the 15th century onwards, the Bible was altered for the translators' own gains. It is dangerous to reject the tradition[50] and to accept altered books of this kind as the sole reference. Moreover, Kaniyamparambil finds it childish to reject old traditions and to accept the teachings and interpretations of the 18th and 19th centuries. At one point he also refers to the "dreadful" situation, that the faith of many groups is based on the views of some modern scholars rather than on the Bible. One example is that in the Interpreter's Bible, the New Testament is said to have been written by some other persons than the apostles.[51]

Having expressed how self-interpretations have given rise to various Protestant communities, Kaniyamparambil brings forward another consequence of the Protestant way of treating the Bible. Self-

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[49] 40Q2, 26.
[50] The word "tradition" is nearly always spelled without capital T in Kaniyamparambil's text. This concept is used to refer to the entirety of the Holy Tradition as well as to other forms of tradition. However, a couple of times the word "Tradition" is used in both of these meanings. Thus there is no inner logic in spelling the word. As it is sometimes difficult to say, which of these two meanings the concept "tradition" is referring to, it will always be spelled without capital T in this study.
[51] WSID1, 15, 19, 25; WSID2, 31.

interpretations have made many people turn away from Jesus Christ. He refers to a survey that shows how many Protestant pastors and lay people deny Christian doctrines regarded as fundamental. Results among Episcopalians, Baptists, United Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans are taken into consideration.[52] Here, the Episcopal Church, which was absent from the list above, is considered to be Protestant.

Mar Osthathios also speaks about "the obsolete theory called sola scriptura":[53]

> A proof text can be found in the Bible for heretical sects like 'Sabbath Mission' who teach that Saturday is to be observed as Sabbath and not Sunday or Jehovah's witnesse's who deny the doctrine of Trinity, or the Pentecostal groups who war between themselves on minor issues like speaking in tongues or millennium as post or pre and so on.[54]

Mar Osthathios stresses that the Bible must be read in the context of the Church and not individually. The correctives that come through individualistic interpretations will be absorbed into the Church by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If these interpretations are incorrect, they will be rejected by the Church under the Holy Spirit.[55]

Kaniyamparambil admits that the "traditional churches" discourage their members from going to Protestant churches. This is justified, as the apostles always urged not to follow false teachings and heretics. Moreover, Kaniyamparambil points out that the Protestant churches do the same thing in the case of Orthodox churches. He further describes how present-day heretics create doubts and confusion among people. As

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[52] WSID1, 22. Following results are given: "Those who didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Episcopians 30%, Baptist 30%, United Presbyterians 35%, and Methodist 51%. Those who didn't believe our Lord's Virgin birth. Episcopians 44 %, Baptist 44%, United Presbyterians 49%, and Methodist 60%. Those who didn't believe that the Bible is inspired? Episcopalians 80%, United Presbyterians 81%, Methodist 82 %, Lutherans 57 %." WSID1, 22. Especially the last question is quite vague, as there are many ways to understand the inspiration.
[53] 40Q1, 1.
[54] 40Q1, 1.
[55] 40Q1, 2.

believers can easily be misguided, the apostles barred people from going to listen to false teachings. Kaniyamparambil reminds that many of today's preachers and ministers can be false apostles and deceitful workers who bombard people with "Christian message" through radio, television and other media. He states that false teachers and teachings have risen especially from the 18th century onward. Kaniyamparambil compares these teachers to those people who crucified Jesus. Furthermore, he reminds that during the apostolic times, there were people who taught against the apostles. According to Kaniyamparambil, this continues even today, but on a larger scale. The situation gives him a reason to give a serious warning: "We can see that this period is almost towards the end. There are false teachers and teachings everywhere, deceiving people in the name of Jesus Christ. Be very cautious."[56]

Kaniyamparambil also gives a concluding summary of the state of the modern Christian communities:

> But the modern Christian Communities differ in beliefs among themselves:
> - Their faith is based on the Bible (New Testament) alone. (But there are so many different versions of the Bible and they them self cannot say which version of the Bible is the true one).
> - Anyone can edit a version in any manner that he thinks is appropriate.
> - Since one is anointed, anyone can interpret as he or she pleases.
> - Some argue that the gospels and epistles were not written by those mentioned; but they don't know by whom!
> - Some don't accept the miracles Jesus did, as miracles.
> - They are split into many sects based on interpretations.
> - Some of them believe in ceremonial celebration, but others reject it.[57]

He draws a picture about individualistic groups who have very different interpretations of the Bible and who have drawn away from many fundamental doctrines.

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[56] WSID1, 23-24; WSID5, Conclusion.
[57] WSID1, 26.

While speaking about the Bible, both Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios give a very important role to the Church. It is the sole true interpreter of the Bible. Protestants have forgotten the importance of the Church, and that's why they have various altered Bibles. Their self-interpretations have also given rise to many modern communities and turned people away from Christ. Kaniyamparambil draws a parallel between Protestant churches and heretics, about whom Apostle Paul warned. Nevertheless, Mar Osthathios also sees a positive side in individualistic interpretations of the Bible. They can have a corrective role, but only when the Church gives this role to them.

2.3. Church and Ministry

Kaniyamparambil states that after the Reformation, since the days of Calvin, some people have claimed that the Church is not visible. He presents two groups of misbelievers: Some people think that the Church is just a communion of people who love Jesus Christ. Others regard the Church as a body of people chosen by God. They think that God only knows these persons' names. Kaniyamparambil rejects both of these views.[58]

   According to Kaniyamparambil, there are two groups of Christian communities. The first one is a set of people who create an organisation or a fellowship for prayer and other social activities. The community is based on contractual agreement between the members, and the members choose the administrators. The second one is an organic society, and the Church is a group of this kind. If a Christian community or fellowship cannot show its lineage from Jesus Christ and the apostles, it has no right to call itself a church.[59]

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[58] WSID3, 61.
[59] WSID3, 62.

To be a part of the real Church, a Christian community must have apostolic succession, and it must believe and obey all of the apostolic traditions. Kaniyamparambil reminds that some claim that the Bible should be the sole basis of doctrines. This is because of the fact that they cannot show lineage from the apostles and Jesus Christ. He finds it equal to "sneaking a copy of a family's deed by a non-family member and after a long time the descendents of the duplicate deed holder abuses, insults, and teases the real deed holder's descendants!" Kaniyamparambil proceeds to ask, why some people deny the history of the Church. His answer is clear: Some people deny it because they have no relation to the Church. "By denying early Church history, they hope to blur the practices of the early church." Kaniyamparambil arrives at a result that there are more "churches" and "church members" without apostolic succession than churches with it. He gives again the list of modern Christian communities presented earlier.[60]

Kaniyamparambil also indicates that some Protestant groups argue that there is no difference between believers and apostles. He states clearly that this outlook is wrong and asks:

> If this was the case [that every believer could forgive sins], whose sins should they forgive? Their own sins (in that case, any one who sins can declare themselves as forgiven!) Is this what Christ meant? If each one performs the Eucharist (breaking of the bread) to whom should he give it to? To himself?[61]

Not anyone is entitled to forgiving sins or performing the Eucharist. The right to absolve sins was given only to the apostles, which calls into question the very existence of many churches. Kaniyamparambil mentions that from the apostolic times to the 15th century, no one except those authorised dared to celebrate the breaking of Eucharist. "But after the

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[60] WSID3, 62-63, 67.
[61] WSID3, 64.

15th century, people started to do anything and everything (Like celebration of the Holy Eucharist, or interpreting and altering the Holy Scriptures etc.)." Kaniyamparambil asks by what authority Protestant pastors baptise people: "Does one receive the authority (to baptize) if he reads the Bible many times or by studying in a theological college?" According to Kaniyamparambil, both the Old and the New Testament show that the authority was passed on from one generation to the next. So one has to get the authority from the Church and thereafter teach the true apostolic faith.[62]

Speaking by the mouth of a hypothetical Protestant opponent, Kaniyamparambil asks where in the Bible it is said that the apostles ordained priests. According to him, the argument is that the word "appointed" is used instead of the word "ordained". Kaniyamparambil advises to refer to standard versions such as "the KJV or Scofied." In these versions the word used is "ordained". He states that in some new translations this word has been replaced with the word "appointed". For Kaniyamparambil this is just one example of the Protestant way of creating Bible translations to support one's own views: "Purposely altering a word will not change the truth. Furthermore, altering His words is a grave sin."[63]

Another question stated by the assumed Protestant opponents concerns the external marks of the ministry: "Why are priests required to wear robes?" Kaniyamparambil mentions that the apostolic churches have certain robes for each rank of the priesthood while many "new fellowships" question this practice. In Exodus, however, God instructed what his priests should wear. Jesus did not criticise this practice, and if he did not criticise, "why should anyone criticize it now?" Kaniyamparambil

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[62] WSID3, 64, 73; WSID4, 86, 97.
[63] WSID4, 94.

further describes how the ministers of these new fellowships also use some kind of uniform to distinguish them from other people. He considers this practice contradictory.[64]

Kaniyamparambil does not see very strong ties between the real apostolic Church and the modern Protestant fellowships. These modern communities have abandoned the tradition and the history of the Church, and they do not have apostolic succession. One reason for this abandonment of the tradition is their willingness to blur the practices of the early Church.

It is worth noticing that Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians have in their own history situations where Protestant influence has led into confusion concerning ministry. The latter half of the 19th century was a time of constant succession battles, emerging cults, and millenarian salvation movements. The formal church leadership was in disarray, and the Syrian Christians were turning to individual Christian guru figures.[65] It is certainly not justified to accuse just the Protestant missionaries of these problems. Nevertheless, their work formed a starting-point for this development. Thus it is not surprising if a Syrian Orthodox priest has a negative image of the Protestant view on ministry.

2.4. Baptism, Eucharist, and Confession

Kaniyamparambil states that only "Decenters" regard baptism as futile. He charges himself with refuting the argument that salvation is through faith and not by the act of baptism. To reach his goal, Kaniyamparambil cites Anglican literature. He points out that the Anglican Church believes that by the act of baptism, one receives the remission of sins and is born

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[64] WSID4, 100.
[65] *Bayly* 1992, 306, 308.

again.[66] The text also contains a chapter titled "How does the Protestant - Anglican Church view baptism?" The answer is that Anglicans accept baptism as a sacrament. Through sacraments God works invisibly with the recipient and does not only quicken but also confirms and strengthens recipient's faith in him. Kaniyamparambil mentions that, according to the Anglican faith, sacraments are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but actual channels of grace. He quotes from the Anglican Order of baptism and states that the Orthodox churches use similar prayers during the sacrament.[67]

Having explained the Anglican view on baptism, Kaniyamparambil summarises the common practice and teaching of the "traditional churches and the Protestant Anglican church." A person, who is not a Christian, should believe in Jesus Christ and should be baptised. Confession of faith is an integral part of baptism – even in the case of infants. Kaniyamparambil defends infant baptism and points out that, for the first 1800 years of church history, no one wrote against it, "not even the Protestants!" He goes on, "Luther, who propagated 'believe what is only in the Bible' and thereafter started the Protestant church, did not say so!" Kaniyamparambil also reminds that churches like the Anglican Church perform infant baptism. Furthermore, he points out that only

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[66] WSID2, 40, 42. Kaniyamparambil gives the following quotations from Anglican texts: "'The internal effect of Baptism is the new birth or regeneration; the beginning of the life in grace (John 3:5). Every person who is baptized receives the new birth…Baptism also conveys the forgiveness of sins…. and provides the recipient with a remedy against the tendency to sin (original sins) with which all human beings are born.' ('The Christian faith' by Claude Beaufort Moss, London 1954)." WSID2, 40. "The external effect of Baptism is admission into the Church as member of Christ the child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of God. Since only members of the church receive the sacraments, no un-baptized person is capable of receiving any other sacrament." WSID2, 41.

[67] WSID2, 43. The prayer cited is the following one: "We call upon Thee for these persons, that they coming to Thy Holy Baptism, may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration. Doubt ye not therefore that He will grant them remission of sins, and bestow upon them the Holy Ghost, that he will give them the blessing of eternal life, and make them partakers of his everlasting Kingdom. Give Thy Holy Spirit to these persons that they may be born again and be made heirs of salvation... sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sins and grant these persons now to be baptized therein may receive the fullness of Thy Grace." WSID2, 43.

apostles and people authorised by the apostles have the right to baptise. Although Protestants claim that Ananias, who baptised Paul, was a common man, he was in fact the Bishop of Damascus.[68]

Kaniyamparambil criticises groups that regard baptism as an act of public witnessing. These groups reduce baptism to declaring in public. Kaniyamparambil asks: "If baptism is that trivial, why do such fellowships make it mandatory that its members should have the 'baptism of faith'?" He points out the contradiction in this argumentation. On the one hand, these fellowships propagate that there is no salvation without the "baptism of faith." On the other hand, they make this baptism of utmost importance in one's Christian life. Kaniyamparambil underlines that he has not seen any verses in the Bible that could give support to their view on baptism as public witnessing.[69]

Speaking about baptism, Kaniyamparambil uses the Anglican Church as an example. He regards it as Protestant but sees it standing in the common front with Orthodox churches. It is also worth noting that he presents the denial of infant baptism as a new phenomenon, ignoring the Anabaptists of the Reformation era as well as Tertullian's critical attitude to infant baptism.

Kaniyamparambil proceeds to speak about the nature of the Holy Communion. He states that there are many modern fellowships which regard the words used by Jesus as a symbol. Instead of that, "the traditional churches including the Anglican Church" believe that "it is His blood and flesh."[70] Later he mentions that "the Episcopal churches" say

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[68] WSID2, 47, 50-52.
[69] WSID2, 49.
[70] WSID3, 70, 76. Kaniyamparambil quotes from the Anglican Church: "'To those who are prepared to take the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in commemoration of his glorious suffering (I will tell you) only through this, our sins are forgiven and we become eligible for heaven. So let us give thanks to Almighty God, our Father, sincerely with humility, for having given his Son and our Savior Jesus Christ to death for ourselves and for having given him to us as our spiritual food and protection' (Book of common prayer -articles 142 of the Anglican church)." WSID3, 70.

that the Holy Spirit descends and converts the bread and wine into body and blood of Christ. Having said that, he remarks that there are no specific "Episcopal churches." There is one Church established by Jesus Christ, and in it there is episcopacy. Kaniyamparambil cites St Ignatius: "There is no church without three grades of priesthood, i.e. bishop, priest and deacon."[71]

Question number 76 also deals with the nature of the Eucharist: "There is an argument that breaking of the Eucharist is just symbolic. This means that it is not blood and flesh in reality, but is blood and flesh only for those who believe in that manner?" Answering this question, Kaniyamparambil admits the existence of this view. He states that this outlook is called "virtualism, receptionism, symbolism etc." He rejects this view by referring to Christ: he is the Son of God, and this fact remains the same, though some people didn't believe it during his time on earth.[72] Kaniyamparambil does not give any thorough description of virtualism, receptionism, or symbolism in this short reply. Nevertheless, he treats them as one doctrine. According to him, the substance of this doctrine is the belief that only those who believe receive the Eucharist as the body and blood of Christ.

Speaking about the Eucharist, Mar Osthathios states that the Orthodox Christians believe in "the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements without the elimination of the mystery concept in any transubstantiation or consubstantiation theory of the eucharist."[73] Saying this, Mar Osthathios wants to stress the mysterious character of the Eucharist. From his point of view, the exact theories of the Roman Catholic transubstantiation and the Lutheran consubstantiation lend themselves to lose this mysterious aspect.

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[71] WSID3, 64, 74.
[72] WSID3, 76.
[73] 40Q1, 14.

Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios also deal with Protestant views on confession. To prove the early origin of confessing to the priests, Kaniyamparambil quotes from early Christian texts: "See below what many of our early church fathers have written." According to Kaniyamparambil, these texts are from Didache, St Clement, Tertullian, St Hippolytus of Rome, Origon [Origen], St Cyprian, Fermillian of Caesarea, Aphraates the Persian sage, St Basil the Great, St John Chrysostom, St Ambrose, St Jerome, and, what is surprising, Martin Luther. Luther's text indicates that there are two parts in private confession: first a personal confession to the pastor and then the absolution.[74] It is clear that the aim of this quotation is not to make Luther an early Church Father but to show that even this reformer supported confession to the priest. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Kaniyamparambil has taken Luther on the list of early Church Fathers.

Some other Protestant groups do not receive as good grades from Kaniyamparambil as Luther did. While the "traditional Churches" have prayers begging for forgiveness, "some sections of 'Christians' refuse to pray even the Lord's Prayer because of spiritual pride, for they think that they are not sinners." Kaniyamparambil rejects this opinion by saying that Christ wouldn't have asked his disciples to pray this way in vain. He goes on, "Therefore we have to confess to God in front of a person who has the authority to absolve ones sins."[75] This latter inference looks somewhat surprising. Kaniyamparambil has proved why it is necessary to use the Lord's Prayer. But according to him, this fact leads straight to the doctrine that confession should take place in front of a priest.

Nevertheless, Kaniyamparambil uses a lot of time to stress the importance of confessing to a priest. Christ gave the apostles the right to

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[74] WSID4, 89.
[75] WSID4, 82.

absolve sins. Some groups, however, claim that this right was given to every believer. Kaniyamparambil explains that people raise this argument "because it questions the very existence of many churches."[76] He goes on,

> By arguing in this manner, they try to get around the truth. In one version of the Bible (Oswald Smith), they have added a sentence. "Your sins are forgiven you, in the name of Jesus Christ if you receive him as Savior." How dare that one adds a sentence to our Lord's words, and twists what our Lord has commanded us.[77]

Kaniyamparambil further states that to refuse to approach the apostles for absolution is like refusing to approach Christ. If somebody does that, he is defying Christ.[78]

Kaniyamparambil has made clear that it is necessary to confess before a person who is authorised by the apostles. There is still one claim stated by a hypothetical Protestant opponent: "One should confess to Christ and -- it is futile to confess before a priest." The argumentation leading into this statement is that Peter turned to Christ, begged forgiveness, and he was forgiven of his sins. Judas, on the other hand, confessed his sin to the Jewish priests. The answer he received was "what is that to us?" Kaniyamparambil says that the Jewish priests did not have the authority to absolve sins, because they hadn't received this right from Christ.[79] Kaniyamparambil's answer to the argument is admittedly logical. However, it is not so clear how many of those who support confessing direct to Christ would use this particular argumentation to strengthen their opinion.

Mar Osthathios also speaks about private confession. He states that there are "many who think that in stopping the practice of private confession the Protestant brethren were throwing away the baby with the

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[76] WSID4, 83, 86.
[77] WSID4, 86.
[78] WSID4, 83.
[79] WSID4, 88.

bath-water." He admits that the medieval practice of confession and indulgences needed to be reformed. The confession as such, however, is useful and must be preserved.[80] In the case of private confession, Mar Osthathios seems to regard the Orthodox Church as a moderate alternative between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Kaniyamparambil uses the concept "fellowship" to describe those groups that have no right to call themselves churches. It is noticeable that the same concept is used as Kaniyamparambil presents the list of modern Christian communities. They are called fellowships, and the Protestant (Lutheran) Church is one of them. The Anglican Church, however, is absent from the list. Now we can understand this manner, as Kaniyamparambil considers Anglicans one of the traditional churches in the context of the Eucharist. Earlier he has spoken about "the traditional churches and the Protestant Anglican Church". Now he speaks about "the traditional churches including the Anglican Church". The Anglican Church is not a modern fellowship that has no right to call itself a church. It doesn't have the same position as other Protestant groups, including – at least in some cases – the Lutheran Church.

It is somewhat surprising that Kaniyamparambil identifies the Anglican Church with the Orthodox churches when he speaks about the nature of the Holy Communion. He states clearly that the components in the Eucharist become the blood and body of Christ. This statement, however, seems to be simplistic, perhaps even a bit misleading in the case of Anglican theology.

The vocabulary of the Articles of Faith concerning the Eucharistic presence has been regarded as Reformed, or more precisely Calvinist. Although some of the old texts are not so clearly Reformed as others, any clear expression of the doctrine of the real presence is hard to find. On

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[80] 40Q1, 13.

the contrary, the Anglican Church has been reluctant to engage itself into any specific form of real presence. The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation has been rejected, and the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation has not been adopted either. From the beginning, there were many different views on the Eucharistic presence in the Anglican Church, some of them even Zwinglian. Consequently, the Anglican formularies bear the marks of compromise and open up many possible interpretations, among them receptionism and virtualism. The Mar Thoma Church has adopted quite the same doctrine concerning the Eucharist, stressing the symbolic meaning of bread and wine and taking a reluctant attitude to any exact definition of the real presence.[81]

It is interesting that Kaniyamparambil clearly rejects these doctrines of symbolism and virtualism, while at the same time presenting the Anglican Church as the defender of the true doctrine of the Eucharistic presence. The Lutheran Church, for example, has a clearer comprehension of real presence than the Anglican Church. Thus, if Kaniyamparambil had wanted to stress the real presence, it would have been easier by using, for instance, the Lutheran church as an example. For all that, Kaniyamparambil wants to identify the Anglican Church with Orthodox churches in the doctrine of the Eucharistic presence.

This decision is reinforced by from Mar Osthathios' words on the Eucharist. He stresses that the mysterious character of the sacrament is an essential element of the Orthodox doctrine of the Eucharist.[82] From this point of view, the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation may be seen as a threat to the

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[81] Doctrine in the Church of England 1938, 168-169; *K. K. Kuruvilla* 1951, 30; *Härdelin* 1965, 124-125; *Pokki* 2005, 139-141.
[82] The Eastern tradition in general has been reluctant to specify the exact manner of the real presence. *Varghese* 2004, 88.

mystery. Consequently, the Anglican way of abstaining from any exact definition of the real presence seems to be justified.

Furthermore, it must be noted that Anglicans in South India are a part of the Church of South India (CSI). As the local Lutheran churches had negotiations with the CSI in the early 20th century, one issue that caused disagreement was the doctrine of the real presence. The representatives of the CSI gave, however, their assent to a statement that was based on the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence.[83] Thus Lutherans have drawn the Eucharistic doctrine of the CSI to a slightly more Lutheran direction, though they have not joined the church. This fact may be one reason for Kaniyamparambil's positive attitude to the Anglican doctrine of the Eucharist, although one is obliged to remain on the level of speculation at this point.

2.5. Virgin Mary, Saints, and Praying for the Dead

Kaniyamparambil refers to Luther once again as he speaks about praying for the departed. He shows that it is in accordance with the New Testament to pray for the dead, and he cites *People's Commentary* to show how Peter prayed for Tabitha who had died. Kaniyamparambil goes on, "This is not my opinion. I have quoted Luther, who initiated the Protestant faith."[84] Kaniyamparambil defends his argument again by citing a Lutheran text.

Kaniyamparambil also refers to the Second Book of Maccabees to prove that it is biblical to pray for the departed. Judas Maccabeus prayed and offered sacrifice for his dead soldiers. Kaniyamparambil states that when the Protestants printed the Bible in the 15th century and later, they omitted this book and ten other books found only in the Septuagint,

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[83] *Estborn* 1961, 84-85.
[84] WSID4, 109.

saying that they were apocryphal i.e. not inspired. He reminds that the universal Church still considers these books canonical. Kaniyamparambil also finds a reason why the Protestants omitted apocryphal books: "What is quoted from Mccabees does not agree with the belief of Protestants and therefore was excluded from the Bible." Kaniyamparambil cites Dr. Claude Beaufort Moss who states that praying for the dead has never been rejected by the Church of England. The objections to it are the result of the eschatological theory of Calvin.[85]

Kaniyamparambil further quotes from Anglican sources as he tells what kind of deceased people cannot benefit from prayers. The answer is those who lived in sin. Kaniyamparambil cites traditional Anglican instructions for the Burial Service to support this argument: "The office is not to be used for any that dies un-baptized, or excommunicated, or have laid violent hands upon themselves."[86] There seems to be, however, some kind of inconsistency in Kaniyamparambil's thought. He has pointed out earlier, that one should pray also for those people who have lived a sinful life openly. One does not know whether this person had time to repent before his death. Only God knows this.[87] Taken strictly and literally, the quotation from the Anglican sources does not entirely fit in with this thought.

The position of the Lutheran Church seems to be somewhat dual in the text. On the one hand, Kaniyamparambil presents how Luther accepted praying for the dead. On the other hand, his argumentation implies that also Luther, who did not regard the apocryphal books as important as other books, did so, because these books accepted praying

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[85] WSID5, 111.
[86] WSID5, 113. The Syrian Orthodox factions in India follow the same practice. *Visvanathan* 1993, 137.
[87] WSID3, 112.

for the departed. Now the "old ally", the Anglican Church, is seen as the supporter of the practice of praying for the departed.

Kaniyamparambil goes on quoting Dr. Moss and The Book of Common Prayer as he defends the intercessory prayers of the saints, a very important practice among the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians. The quotation from Moss's writings indicates that there is nothing theological against this practice. The whole Christendom resorted to these mediatory prayers till the 16th century. The quotations explain that the mediatory prayers to Virgin Mary, to the angels and to the saints were removed "during the period of Cramer [Cranmer]."[88]

Kaniyamparambil does not just describe the historical development of the practice of asking the saints for prayers. He brings forward a question, "How can they [the saints] mediate or pray for you? 'The dead do not praise the Lord' (Psalms 115:17)." Kaniyamparambil's answer is that the saints can certainly talk to God. He describes how Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus and asks, "If the dead cannot talk, how did this happen?"[89]

For those who still misbelieve, Kaniyamparambil quotes Oswald Smith "who established a modern church called the Peoples church based in Canada." Using different Bible verses, Smith comes to a conclusion that the dead are active, conscious, and not sleeping, and that Abraham is alive.[90] What is interesting here is that Kaniyamparambil is searching for support from Oswald Smith, the same person he has earlier accused of altering the Bible. Thus Kaniyamparambil does not categorically reject or ignore the views of modern Protestant churches. On the contrary, he is prepared to search them for support.

Having said that, Kaniyamparambil cites many Protestant leaders and researchers to show that it is justified to praise Virgin Mary and to call her

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[88] WSID5, 120; *Visvanathan* 1993, 233-234.
[89] WSID4, 106.
[90] WSID4, 106.

Mother of God. Kaniyamparambil states that a Protestant group claims that Virgin Mary is not blessed. To refute this argument, Kaniyamparambil cites "prominent Protestant leaders."[91] He refers also to a verse, which is in the KJV in the form "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4). He describes the misinterpretations of this verse set forth by Protestants. They have used this verse to lessen the dignity of Virgin Mary, or to lead people to despise their mothers. Kaniyamparambil quotes again some Protestant scholars to reject these interpretations.[92] As he deals with the Protestant misinterpretations of Virgin Mary, he does not specify which groups are behind them. It is worth noticing, however, that he once again quotes from Protestant sources to refute arguments stated by other Protestants.

It is also worth noticing that this Bible passage has an important role among the Syrian Orthodox Christians in Kerala. They see this seeming rejection as characteristic of the way in which sons may treat women in a patrilineal society. Verbal rejection of the mother does not mean the denial of the love a man has for his mother.[93] So if the Protestant interpretation leads to lessening the dignity of Virgin Mary, the Syrian Orthodox interpretation leads to the view that verbal rejections by men are allowed, because they are not real denials of love.

Kaniyamparambil goes on using certain Protestant sources against other Protestant arguments as he proves that Mary remained virgin. He asks, "Just by thinking logically, since she was chosen to bear God, is there a chance that she can bear anyone else's child?" Kaniyamparambil gets answer again from a Protestant source: "'Not possible if one thinks

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[91] WSID5, 123. "'Christ doesn't deny that his mother is blessed' (Dummalo, 753). 'Jesus, response indicates that in the struggle against evil the important thing is not to give lip service to himself and his mother, but to hear the word of God and keep it' (Interpretors-1, Vol. Com 690)." WSID5, 123.
[92] WSID5, 123.
[93] *Visvanathan* 1993, 165.

logically' says Protestant Bishop Bull."[94] Not all Protestants, however, are as deeply aware of the sanctity of Mary as Bishop Bull. Kaniyamparambil bewails the present situation: "All of the early church fathers who were persecuted and martyred and lived during the first and second century proclaims St. Mary as 'virgin mother of God', but people in the 20th century insults her and rejects her!"[95] Kaniyamparambil uses quite strong verbs to describe those who doubt Mary's eternal virginity. These people "insult" and "reject" her. The words reflect the importance Kaniyamparambil gives to Virgin Mary.

Kaniyamparambil further describes, how some Protestant have analysed the Greek word "adelphos" and claimed that the "brothers" of Jesus must have been from the same womb as Jesus himself. Kaniyamparambil charges himself with proving that this opinion is wrong. He explains that the word "adelphos" means a relative. Therefore, according him, the reference to the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus does not mean that Mary had other children. Kaniyamparambil states that some Protestants, however, had to prove that Mary had other children too. Hence they use the word "brothers" instead of "brethren" in their Bible translations. This critical notion is directed again towards the Good News Bible.[96]

Mar Osthathios deals with this issue too, and he refers to the Gospel narrative, according to which Jesus committed his mother to the care of John. If the so-called brothers of Jesus had been Mary's children, they would have taken her to their house. Perhaps these "brothers" were the children of Joseph from his previous marriage. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios approaches the topic also from another angle: "The Roman Catholic practice of praying ten 'Hail Mary...' for each Lord's prayer seems

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[94] WSID5, 124.
[95] WSID5, 124.
[96] WSID1, 17; WSID5, Appendix A.

to be too much and the Protestant refusal to pray that prayer is giving her too little a place." He reminds that the doctrine of Immaculate Conception is unscriptural and that the bodily assumption of Virgin Mary is not a dogma in the Orthodox churches.[97] He sees again the Orthodox Church as the middle course between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

Kaniyamparambil uses a lot of time to prove the eternal virginity of Mary. On the other hand, he does not speak much about Christology. This may seem somewhat surprising, as the best-known theological differences between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches have concerned Christology. Nevertheless, all the things that Kaniyamparambil says about Virgin Mary may have reflections on Christology. To point out the dignity and sanctity of Virgin Mary is largely to point out the divinity of Christ. This quality has been an important part of the Syriac Orthodox theology. So perhaps Kaniyamparambil deals with Christology through Mariology.

This theory receives confirmation from the fact that the Syriac Orthodox Christians in India turn to the stories about Mary as they try to understand the divinity and humanity of Christ. Mary serves to bring the people into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, who is, in fact, feared by these people.[98] Furthermore, it is worth noticing that Kaniyamparambil quotes "Protestant Bishop Bull" to defend the doctrine that Mary remained virgin. If Kaniyamparambil refers here to English Bishop George Bull (1634–1710), it is notable that Bull became known as a defender of the divinity of Christ.[99] These two aims, i.e. to defend the divinity of Christ and the virginity of Mary, went hand in hand in his

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[97] 40Q1, 17. The view that brothers of Jesus were the sons of Joseph from an earlier marriage is prevailing among the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India. *Visvanathan* 1993, 166.
[98] *Visvanathan* 1993, 162, 219.
[99] *Hutton* 1912 § 18.

thought, like had been since the earliest controversies concerning Christology.

As Kaniyamparambil speaks about Virgin Mary, saints, and praying for the dead, he gives many quotations from the Anglican sources to support his view. This strategy, however, may seem quite surprising if one looks at the history of the St. Thomas Christians. As the CMS missionaries began their cooperation with the Syrian Orthodox Christians in South India, their aim was to wipe out all the "popish superstitions" and "heathenist practices."[100] By the 1830s, the missionaries were producing long lists of the un-Christian rites and doctrines of the Syrian Orthodox Christians. Prayers for the dead and the worship of the Virgin as well as of the saints with processions were some of the most serious. Later the Mar Thoma Church embraced the same view on these matters as the CMS missionaries.[101]

The disagreement became even more evident as the CMS missionary Joseph Peet attacked the doctrine of Virgin Mary's perpetual virginity. He pointed out that Mary had brought forth children besides Jesus. Furthermore, these words were directed to the future Syrian Orthodox priests.[102] Peet and his supporters among the Syrian Orthodox clergy also held that the theology of the Virgin's intercession was a denial of the perfect mediatorship of Jesus Christ.[103]

Keeping these historical facts in mind, it may seem surprising that Kaniyamparambil presents the Anglican Church as the defender of the genuine Christian faith in these issues. On the other hand, the evangelical CMS missionaries of the early 19th century represented just one part of

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[100] *Bayly* 1992, 296.
[101] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 224, 290; *K. K. Kuruvilla* 1951, 28, 31; *Bayly* 1992, 298; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 243. Later the Mar Thoma Church has pointed out that this difference of opinion need not stand in the way of closer relationship between Marthomites and Syrian Orthodox Christians. *K. K. Kuruvilla* 1951, 38.
[102] *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 248.
[103] *Visvanathan* 1993, 21; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 251.

their church. There were always those who were closer to the Syrian Orthodox Christians in their opinions. Furthermore, what happened in history is perhaps not relevant anymore. Nowadays there are many other Protestant groups which hold the same goals as the past CMS missionaries. To refute their arguments, it may be useful to search the Anglican sources for support and not to recall the old quarrels with Anglican missionaries.

2.6. Churches in Relation to Each Other

Kaniyamparambil does not describe explicitly the position of his church among all the churches. Nevertheless, his "church map" could be depicted in the following way.

Figure 1. *Positions of the churches according to Curian Kaniyamparambil*
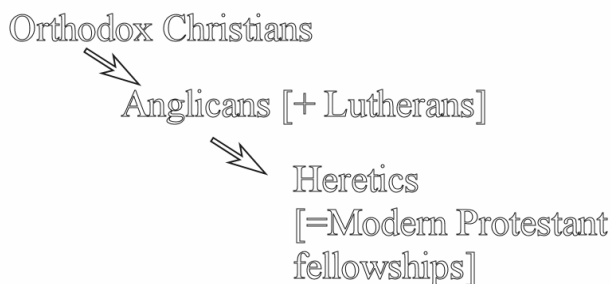
From the two meanings of "Protestant", Kaniyamparambil seems to use the wider one almost without exception. He speaks about Protestants as a group containing many different churches and movements. From all these churches, Kaniyamparambil sees especially Anglicans and, in some cases, also Lutherans as mediators between Orthodox churches and heretical movements. The Anglican Church is nearly on the same level with the Orthodox Church. In many cases Kaniyamparambil sees the Anglican Church standing side by side with the "traditional churches", or even as

one of these churches. Although he doesn't give any list of the "traditional churches", he expresses many qualities required of a church to be traditional and thus a part of the real Church.

Mar Osthathios describes clearly the position of the Orthodox Church among other churches. According to him, the uniqueness of Orthodoxy is that it includes what Paul Tillich calls the Catholic substance and the Protestant principle. The ecclesiology is both hierarchical and democratic. The Church has the word and the sacraments as well as the married priests with the celibate priests. The Church is the one that has the infallibility, neither the Pope nor the Bible. The continuing practice of long services and of strict fasts is also considered a part of the Orthodox ethos. Mar Osthathios comes to describing the ecumenical position of the Orthodox Church: "If orthodoxy regains its stress on mission which it once had but gradually lost due to various vicissitudes of history, orthodoxy will be used by the Holy Spirit to show to the rest of Christendom what the reunited church should be." The faith of the undivided Church is discernible more clearly in the Orthodox churches than in the Roman Catholic or the Protestant traditions. That's why the Orthodox churches have much to contribute to the reunion of Christendom.[104]

Mar Osthathios is also of the opinion that the Johannine tradition in the Orthodox ethics, the Petrine tradition in the Roman Catholic substance, and the Pauline stress in the Protestant principle are three interpretations of the one Church. It is these three traditions that will be integrated in the one ecumenical Church. According to Mar Osthathios, these churches have a stability which the sectarian groups want to shake by their "unwarranted interpretations of certain scriptural passages." He points out that different sectarian groups have only a corrective role in

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[104] 4OQ1, 14.

this process of reunification and that they should beware of rejecting the traditional interpretations of the Bible and thus the reality of the Holy Spirit.[105]

Kaniyamparambil does not speak anything about the Roman Catholic Church, but Mar Osthathios refers to it in many cases. He regards the Orthodox Church as a mediator between Roman Catholics and Protestants. These three churches bear the tradition of the one Church. Beyond these churches are the sectarian groups which do not have any prominent role in the one Church. Mar Osthathios' "church map" could be depicted as follows.

Figure 2. *Positions of the churches according to Geevarghese Mar Osthathios*
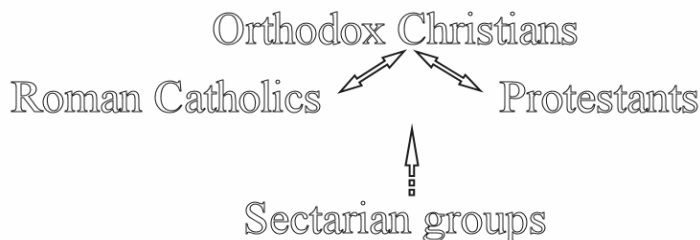
As Mar Osthathios compares the Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches, he regards the lack of missionary contribution as its primary weakness. Nevertheless, there has been an era of active mission work in the history of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians. In the late 19th century, the church launched a campaign of low-caste baptisms, but the aim of this campaign was predominantly tactical. The Syrian Orthodox Church wanted to show that it was more energetic than its competitors, especially the Mar Thoma Church. Nevertheless, the present-day situation is different, and Mar Osthathios' remarks are justified. The missionary efforts are carried out

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[105] 40Q1, 2.

mainly among new Christian communities.[106] Also the Roman Catholic Church has increased missionary activity in India after the Second Vatican Council.[107]

While Kaniyamparambil concentrates on the debate between Orthodox and Protestant churches, Mar Osthathios focuses his attention on the unification of the Church. In this outlook, the Orthodox Church is between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches and, although not perfect, it has preserved best the tradition of the undivided Church. Kaniyamparambil, on the other hand, does not express that Protestant churches could have anything to give to the Orthodox Church. They have diverged more or less from the "real Church."

It has to be taken into consideration that neither Kaniyamparambil nor Mar Osthathios treat Protestants as a uniform entity. They make a clear difference between traditional and modern Protestant communities. In fact, the gap between these two church groups seems to be quite wide. At the same time, these authors do not seem to make a clear difference between those communities which they regard as "modern." Both Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios may easily speak about Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses in the same sentence. From their viewpoint, all of these communities represent modern Protestant communities which have arisen since the 19th century. These communities differ so much from the traditional churches that they may be seen as members of a uniform group.

The fact that Kaniyamparambil does not mention the Roman Catholic Church may indicate that he takes for granted the position of this church among other traditional churches. The teaching of the Syriac Orthodox Church is usually regarded as being very near to that of the Roman

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[106] *Bayly* 1992, 315-316; *Joshua* 1996, 41.
[107] Background Paper 1997, 245; *Kanjamala* 1997, 214.

Catholic Church.[108] In fact, the Syriac Orthodox Church has an agreement with Roman Catholics that, where members are isolated, they can participate jointly in the sacraments. These churches have also come to an agreement on Christology and inter-church marriages.[109]

The relations between Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics have not always been as friendly as they are today. In fact, these relations were very good before the arrival of the CMS missionaries. The missionaries could notice that many Jacobite churches contained Roman Catholic -style images, and in many places also the Mass resembled that of the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the groups were far from being separate or rival communities. The acts of British missionaries, however, created tensions between these groups. Consequently, for the first time since the creation of these two jurisdictions in the 17th century, the Syrian Orthodox Christians started to see them as separate and exclusive affiliations. By the early 1830s, it was common for these two groups to stage pitched battles over the allocation of churches and church properties.[110]

It may be said that the Protestant missionaries created the identity of Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians as a separate community. This community started to distinguish between themselves and other groups, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. Thus it is not a new phenomenon among Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians to form their identity as a response to other churches. And almost from the beginning one of these groups, with which the Malankara Christians started to compare themselves, were the Protestant CMS missionaries.

As Kaniyamparambil speaks about the Anglican Church, it must be remembered that Anglicans are a part of the Church of South India.

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[108] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 299.
[109] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 117; SOR 2002b; *Brock* 2004, 468.
[110] *Bayly* 1992, 295-296, 461.

Other prominent member churches include Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Reformed.[111] From this point of view, the Anglican Church appears to be near to the Reformed Church, and it seems to have a character of some kind of "general Protestantism". That's why it may seem somewhat surprising that Kaniyamparambil gives the Anglicans a special status among Protestants. This practice, however, becomes understandable as one looks at the doctrine of the CSI.

This church adopted, for example, the historic episcopate, which made it possible for the Anglicans to join it. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists had to soften their Calvinist views also on a larger scale to make the union possible. Congregationalists, for example, left behind their negative attitude to the Established Church, which they had taken in Britain, and developed a deeper understanding of the values of tradition and churchmanship.[112] Thus, to put it simply, it is not so much about Anglicans being general Protestants, but Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists being Anglicans in South India.

The negotiations between Lutherans and the CSI were also near to ending up in an agreement, and a comprehensive unanimity about the doctrine was reached, but the union was not achieved. One reason for the refusal of the Lutherans was their unwillingness to accept some Anglican doctrines, such as the stress on historic episcopate.[113] Thus it seems, at least in this respect, that Lutherans more than Anglicans are "general Protestants" in South India. With this in mind, Kaniyamparambil's view is not strange anymore. He does not have to pay attention to Reformed churches because from the South Indian viewpoint they do not differ from the Anglican Church.

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[111] *Neill* 1990, 408.
[112] *Sundkler* 1954, 52, 56, 169; *Murray* 1985, 219; *David* 1986, 49.
[113] *Estborn* 1961, 36, 59 90-91; *Neill* 1990, 409.

On the other hand, the historic episcopate has not always been self-evident among Anglicans in South India. Lutheran missionaries, not episcopally ordained, served for a long time the British Anglican missionary societies in South India.[114] Since the 1820s, the problem began to die out as the Lutheran missionaries started to receive Anglican ordination.[115] Consequently, many Lutherans in South India have a tradition of historic episcopate. This may be one reason why Kaniyamparambil sees also Lutherans, along with Anglicans, as mediators between Orthodox Christians and heretical Protestant movements.[116]

One reason for Kaniyamparambil's positive attitude to the Anglican and Episcopal churches is evidently the close relationship which developed between the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century. In fact, representatives of these two churches even had discussions of a church union at that time. The positive effects of the English missionary work are still visible. The high literacy rate in Kerala dates back to the educational system created by CMS missionaries in the 19th century.[117] There has been also cooperation between Anglicans and Syrian Orthodox Christians after the early 19th century. After the clash between the Syrian Orthodox factions in 1912, Anglican bishops were willing to mediate between the parties.[118]

In the 20th century, the Syrian Orthodox Christians have also used Anglican churches for their services in those towns in India in which there is no Syrian Orthodox church. In 1967, N. J. Thomas described how relations between the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England had become warmer. He also stated that the Syrian Orthodox

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[114] *Sundkler* 1954, 22; *Murray* 1985, 9; *Ward* 2000, 24.
[115] *Murray* 1985, 61-62.
[116] There have been also Orthodox-Lutheran dialogues in India. *Chandran* 1988, 80.
[117] *M. M. Thomas* 1974, 148-149; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 223.
[118] *Tisserant* 1957, 155; *Murray* 1985, 61; *Yates* 1994, 122; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 352, 366-367.

had friendlier relations with Anglicans than with any other denomination, except for the Orthodox churches. Cooperation has taken place also on the local level. For example, at Christmas Syrian Orthodox families may go to the nearby CSI cathedral where carols are being sung.[119]

The Mar Thoma Church has worked in cooperation with the Anglican Church as well as the Jacobite Christians. In 1935, these churches founded the Kerala Council of Church Union. The aim of this organisation was to study the problems of inter-communion and of organic union, and to promote the cause of reunion. Another goal was to study each other's principles in order to respect and uphold the discipline of each church. One of the issues considered was also the comity of missions. The active years of this council were in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, the Mar Thoma Church considered the church union with Anglicans and later with the CSI. Nevertheless, it was found that their first aim must be reunion with the Syrian Orthodox Church, either the Catholicos Party or the Patriarchal Party.[120] In spite of this earlier decision, the Mar Thoma Church encouraged its members to join the Episcopal Church in the United States as the migration process started.[121]

It is worth noticing that the teaching of the Mar Thoma Church very nearly approaches that of the evangelical churches of the West.[122] Thus it may seem surprising that this church has had close cooperation with Syrian Orthodox Christians. On the other hand, as the Marthomites have close relations with both the Anglicans and the Syrian Orthodox Christians, it is evident that also the Anglicans and Syrian Orthodox are not so far from each other. From this point of view, it is not surprising

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[119] *Tisserant* 1957, 155; *N. J. Thomas* 1967, 46; *Visvanathan* 1993, 187.
[120] *K. K. Kuruvilla* 1951, 51; *Sundkler* 1954, 130.
[121] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 120.
[122] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 299.

that also Kaniyamparambil gives a special position to the Anglican Church among the Protestant churches.

Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians seem to have a positive attitude to American Episcopalians as well. The Syriac Orthodox Church has been engaged in joint theological conversations on Christology with the office of the Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. Finally, in November 2002, the whole Anglican Communion reached a consensus on Christology with the Oriental Orthodox Churches.[123] The Episcopal Church was not mentioned on the "blacklist" of the modern Protestant communities in Kaniyamparambil's text. The ecumenical conversations also indicate that Syriac Orthodox give the Anglican and Episcopal churches a special position among the Protestant churches.

Speaking about Episcopalians, it is noteworthy that Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians have had some connections with American Christians already before the era of emigration. The first chance for interaction took place in the early 19th century. The American missionary Pliny Fisk met a Jacobite metropolitan and three priests in Jerusalem in 1824. Fisk later reported on this church and its doctrines in Boston, but his words did not strike any responsive chords. Malankara Christians were soon forgotten in the United States.[124]

The British Evangelical movement, which was the basis of the CMS, encouraged people to strengthen their missionary efforts also in North America. Many American churches, such as the Presbyterian Church of the USA, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the American Baptists, the Lutheran churches in America, and American Friends (Quakers), sent

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[123] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 117; *Rowell* 2002. There have not been any prominent ecumenical dialogues between Lutherans and Oriental Orthodox in North America so far. For further information about Lutheran-Eastern Orthodox dialogues in America e.g. *Saarinen* 1997, 12, 166-175.

[124] *Kawerau* 1958, 549.

missionaries to India in the 19th century. These churches did not, however, work in Malabar, since each mission was recognised as occupying certain territories and Malabar was the area of the CMS. Nevertheless, American missions have produced prominent Protestant church leaders for South India. They have also contributed to the formation of the CSI.[125]

One interesting encounter between Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians and American Protestants occurred in 1892, as a French army deserter and failed seminarian Joseph René Vilatte was consecrated by the metran and two of his prelates. During his varied career, Vilatte had professed affiliation to the American Episcopalian hierarchy, the Russian Orthodox Episcopate of Alaska, the American Presbyterian church, and the Old Catholic breakaway sect based in Switzerland.[126] This consecration remained a single event in the history of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians, but it shows that American Protestantism was not entirely unknown to Syrian Orthodox clergy in the late 19th century.

On the other hand, the history of the American, as well as British, Anglican missions also contains phases which have not been beneficial to good relations between these churches and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians. The aim of the British CMS missionaries in the early 19th century was to help Syrian Orthodox Christians to abandon doctrines and practices associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Problems were unavoidable, as the Syrian Orthodox Christians were in many ways very "Romish". Some Jacobites had, in fact, said that the only difference between them and the Roman Catholics was that they admitted the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch, not that of the Bishop of Rome. Furthermore, the American Evangelical missionaries considered Roman

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[125] *Sundkler* 1954, 98; *David* 1986, 17, 21, 24-25, 49-50.
[126] *Bayly* 1992, 318.

Catholics no better than heathens and were eager to proselytise them.[127] These attitudes among protestant missionaries were harmful to their relations with Syrian Orthodox Christians as well. Some of the wounds have not healed until this day.[128]

Proselytism was one of the major problems which occurred in the 19th century. Officially, Anglicans disclaimed all desire to make proselytes among the Syrian Orthodox Christians, but they kept the door open to those who desired to enter in. This situation led to accusations of proselytism.[129] Writing the history of the CMS in India, *P. Cheriyan* had to create a separate chapter in which he answered the accusations concerning alleged proselytism.[130] This implies that the events of the 19th century were still current in the 1930s when the book was published. As we have seen, Anglicans, Marthomites, and Syrian Orthodox Christians have later discussed the comity of missions. Thus the problem of proselytism is perhaps not so current between these churches anymore. However, the situation may be different in the case of the modern Protestant communities.

We have seen that there are many reasons which can explain the special status of the Anglican Church in Curian Kaniyamparambil's text. On the other hand, there are also many historical events that have done harm to the relations between Anglicans and Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians. It is not, however, in accordance with Kaniyamparambil's intention to stress these negative experiences. On the contrary, he tries to say to the modern Protestant communities that they should learn from Anglicans.

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[127] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 120, 316; *David* 1986, 53.
[128] *Verghese* 1961, 283; *Cox* 2002, 61.
[129] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 257, 264, 307; *Murray* 1985, 138.
[130] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 305-335.

One further reason for which Kaniyamparambil defends Anglicans may be the fact that he studied in the C.M.S. College, Kottayam. The college was started by the Church Missionary Society in 1810s, and it was one of the first colleges in India. As Kaniyamparambil studied in the college, the funds of it were still administered by the missionaries of the CMS. At that time the college educated Syrian Orthodox as well as Anglican ministers.[131] Thus the representatives of these churches had daily communication with each other. Undoubtedly, Kaniyamparambil's undergraduate days in the C.M.S. College have contributed to his knowledge of the Anglican Church as well as his positive attitude to this church.

Although the Syrian Orthodox Christians have quite good relations with some Protestant churches, such as Anglicans and Marthomites, they have not been as active in ecumenical efforts in India as some other churches. Furthermore, it has been the individual theologians who have assumed the responsibility of these activities.[132] The reasons for this hesitation are primarily in the negative experiences described above. Missionaries and churches that came in touch with Syrian Orthodox Christians interfered in their social and culturally integrated living situation. From the Syrian Orthodox point of view, these groups also gained followers for themselves or caused a split among St. Thomas Christians. These Christians feel that the same practice has continued, as churches and sects have won converts from among them.[133]

On the other hand, the MOSC has been quite active in its ecumenical efforts, for example with Roman Catholics and Lutherans.[134] This fact is

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[131] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 278-279; *Verghese* 1974d, 159.
[132] *Thangasamy* 1973, 34, 52; *Tharakan* 1988, 47; *M. M. Thomas* 1988, 32. Also many other churches in India have taken a negative attitude to ecumenical thinking regarding it as modernist. *Thangasamy* 1973, 53.
[133] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 37.
[134] *Verghese* 1974d, 165; *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 41.

also in line with Mar Osthathios' positive attitude to Protestant churches. What Mar Osthathios says about the position of the Orthodox Church also seems to correspond with his statements in other contexts. He has pointed out that St. Thomas Christians in America are gifted by their heritage to make contributions to the West. They also have the experience to lead in the development of the global community of the twenty-first century, building a multi-linguistic, multi-religious community beyond nationalism. Mar Osthathios has viewed that as the call of God for the immigrants, and he has encouraged a vision of mission, which has been obscured by conflict.[135]

Mar Osthathios is of the opinion that Asian-Indian Orthodox immigrants are able to benefit and support the society and other Christian communities in many ways. His tolerant views in many matters are aimed at preventing conflicts and creating unity. As Kaniyamparambil's "church map" underlines the superiority of the Orthodox Church, Mar Osthathios' map calls for the Orthodox Christians as well as Roman Catholics and Protestants to participate in joint efforts towards union.

In this chapter we have seen that the two web documents contain a lot of information about the Protestant challenge the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians have to face. We have also noticed that it is not so much Anglicans or Lutherans, but the so-called modern Protestant fellowships which are regarded as a threat to the fundamental Orthodox doctrines. In fact, Kaniyamparambil's text was originally translated into English in response to the challenge created by these groups. The following chapter will show us what the response is.

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[135] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 131-132.

3. ORTHODOX SELF-UNDERSTANDING – RESPONDING TO THE PROTESTANT CHALLENGE?

3.1. Bible and Tradition

As Kaniyamparambil starts to speak about the Bible, he points out that it does not include all the apostolic teachings. He mentions that the Bible was written for specific sections of people at specific places. The amount of literate people, however, was very small, and the doctrines had to be taught mostly by word of mouth. The apostles preached to the gentiles about Christ and taught the Christian doctrines. Kaniyamparambil brings forward many Bible passages to show that there were doctrines during the apostolic time and that these doctrines were taught orally.[136]

This argumentation is not enough for Kaniyamparambil. He further picks up Bible verses to show that the apostles taught the first Christians by word of mouth and not through writings. He states that some of the disciples of the apostles wrote down what they had heard, but not everyone. "Thus our divine tradition is what we have received from the Gospels, and through the word of mouth."[137]

Kaniyamparambil also quotes from the Gospel of John to support his arguments: "And there are also many other things that Jesus said, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that would be written." (John 21:25). He also cites epistles of John to show that their author preferred to speak face to face to the Christians. Kaniyamparambil's conclusion is again that the apostles "obviously did not write everything Jesus taught (But we *should obey*

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[136] WSID1, 10.
[137] WSID1, 11.

everything Jesus taught written or oral). -- Besides, to say that John, who died in AD 99, did not teach or preach anything except these Epistles which he wrote in AD 90, is foolishness."[138]

Having written about the Bible from another angle, he returns again to this topic, i.e. stating arguments for the justification of the tradition. He refers to Luke who says that his writings are based on apostolic teachings and not on written documents. Luke accepted traditions and compared and wrote them. Kaniyamparambil states that certainly the tradition should be accepted because it came from the apostles. He goes on: "It is a poor argument to say that one should not believe in anything not written in the Bible. We believe in world history not because it is written in the Bible, but because the historians have recorded it." Kaniyamparambil states that if one believes what the Jewish historian Josephus has written, he or she should also believe the works of the prominent disciples of the 1st and 2nd centuries. He mentions St. Ignatius and Polycarp as examples of reliable Church Fathers who had learned from St John.[139] Finally, his concluding statement makes it clear to whom his abundant argumentation is directed:

> Isn't it childish to argue that those teachings (and practices) were irrelevant and to argue that teachings and interpretations by the people of the18th or 19th centuries are acceptable? (Remember that modern Christian communities do just that; for they reject traditions, and do not accept early teachings, but follow modern era teachings and interpretations!)[140]

Kaniyamparambil describes the tradition as a continuing stream of the mind of the Church. He further points out that one "must not fall a prey to those who want proof ie. texts for all of the teachings of the church. Theology is based on the Bible, but not limited by the Bible." At this

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[138] WSID1, 25.
[139] WSID2, 30-31.
[140] WSID2, 31.

point Kaniyamparambil quotes almost word for word Mar Osthathios' *40 Questions Answered.*[141]

Kaniyamparambil reminds that the Bible used by itself, without the knowledge of the tradition, can lead to heresy. All of the early heretics used the Bible in one form or another. On the other hand, the church, the priesthood, and the sacraments were important for the disciples of the apostles. Kaniyamparambil attaches great importance to this matter, because denying these facts and leaning only on the Bible can be a great error. "The truth is experienced and known only by membership in the church, which has a responsible and properly Apostolic ministry and a high tradition of the Christian Mysteries."[142]

He draws a clear conclusion: "Those who say that 'the Bible only and nothing else is the basis of Christianity', forget the fact that the Bible is a book written by the Holy Spirit's inspiration."[143] This is quite an interesting claim, since many Protestant groups stress both of these teachings. They see the Bible as the sole basis of faith, and at the same time they believe in the verbal inspiration. These two teachings go hand in hand in their thought: The Bible can be the sole basis because the Holy Spirit has inspired its authors. Kaniyamparambil, however, turns this model upside down. According to him, it is these Protestants who are belittling the importance of the Holy Spirit. They see the Bible as a human book.

Kaniyamparambil still lists four points to prove that it is correct to consider the writings of the Holy Fathers authoritative. Firstly, these men wrote with the help of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, their writings were based on the Holy Scripture. Thirdly, they learned from people who had learned directly from Christ or from his disciples. Finally, they taught

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[141] WSID2, 31; 40Q1, 1.
[142] WSID2, 31.
[143] WSID1, 19.

that Jesus was the Son of God. [144] This list includes arguments that can be evaluated as well as arguments that cannot. For example, it is impossible to prove scientifically that the Fathers of the Church received help from the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, it is possible to evaluate in what extent their teachings are in concordance with the Holy Scriptures.

In the next chapter Kaniyamparambil points out that there was no Bible at the time of the early Church Fathers.[145] This notion is undeniably true, but at the same time it brings some new aspects to Kaniyamparambil's argumentation. Earlier he has stated that all the early heretics used the Bible in some way or another. Now he speaks about Holy Fathers who did not have any codified Bible to use. Thus, using the Bible as a sole basis led to heresies, while the early Church Fathers did not need the codified Bible to teach the truth.

Kaniyamparambil seems to stress the late codification of the Bible as he fights against the Protestant claims that the Bible should be the only basis of faith. On the other hand, he seems to lay emphasis on the early origin of the Bible as he defends the authority of the early Church Fathers. In the latter case, he states that the writings of these fathers were based on the Holy Scripture. The early Church Fathers knew the Scriptures and used them as a basis. The apostolic tradition and the Scriptures form a continuous stream, and the official codification of the Bible has no special place in this stream.

Nevertheless, the codification of the Bible becomes much more important as Kaniyamparambil attacks Protestant claims that the Bible should be the sole basis. He makes it clear that the Bible is a rather late book, which contains only some of the knowledge the early Church Fathers had. As the Church Fathers were dependent on the Holy

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[144] WSID2, 32.
[145] WSID2, 33.

Scriptures in the previous type of argumentation, now they are early authorities who codified the Bible and upon whom the Bible is dependent. Thus the Bible may be seen as either codified or gradually born, either late or early. This all depends on the angle from which Kaniyamparambil looks at the early history of the Church.

The fourth argument on the list was that the early Church Fathers should be believed, because they taught that Jesus was the Son of God. This argument receives sidelight as Kaniyamparambil refers to Nestorius: "It was Nestor who declared that 'Jesus was only a human child, not an incarnation of the Word.' This move was also defeated by the church fathers in the synod of Ephesus in AD 431."[146]

Nestorius' teaching is described on a very general level in Kaniyamparambil's text. Furthermore, this short sentence is also a somewhat polemical claim stated by his opponents, such as Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril, in his influential rhetorical method, made Nestorius Arian by placing the Christological teachings of Nestorius within the context of the anti-Arian discourse of Athanasius. What is interesting is that it was Nestorius who had first accused Cyril of Arianism. Furthermore, Nestorius never accepted Arianism and wrote passionately against this doctrine. Eventually, he also consented to calling Virgin Mary *Theotokos* instead of merely *Christotokos*. His teachings, however, included some ideas that gave Cyril a chance to strike, and this same attack can be seen in Kaniyamparambil's text.[147] Of course, from the traditional Syriac Orthodox viewpoint, Nestorius was a great heretic.

Kaniyamparambil defends the authority of the early Church Fathers by saying that their teachings were based on the Holy Scripture. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios uses a different kind of argumentation. He

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[146] WSID2, 33.
[147] *Pelikan* 1971, 228, 242; *Pelikan* 1977, 80; *Wessel* 2004, 110, 113, 129, 218-220.

mentions that some books, which are not regarded as canonical by Protestants, are authoritative because the Fathers of the Church have quoted from these books.[148] Together these argumentations become circular. The Holy Fathers are authoritative, because their teachings were based on the Scriptures. The entirety of the Scriptures, on the other hand, is authoritative because it was used by the Holy Fathers. From the Orthodox viewpoint, however, this kind of circularity is not necessarily a problem. Rather it underlines the close interdependence between the Holy Fathers and the Holy Scriptures.

Speaking about the Bible, Kaniyamparambil uses a lot of time and energy to refute the arguments of those who deny the importance of the tradition. He is clearly responding to the Protestant challenge. However, the justification of the tradition is not the only angle from which Kaniyamparambil looks at the Bible. He also speaks more generally about the significance of the Bible in the Orthodox Church.

Kaniyamparambil starts by mentioning that the Orthodox Church regards the Bible as the most authoritative source of doctrines. He stresses with italics that the Church has no doctrine that could not be proven by the Bible. However, in the same breath Kaniyamparambil reminds that while "the Syrian Orthodox Church and other ancient churches treat the Holy Bible with great reverence, using it in all their prayers, ministry and sacraments, they also hold the apostolic traditions equally important." In fact, the Orthodox Church respects the Bible so much that it does not let the Bible to be degraded by independent interpretations by anyone according to one's will and pleasure.[149]

There seems to be an inconsistency in Kaniyamparambil's argumentation. As we have seen, at another point he cites Mar

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[148] 40Q1, 3.
[149] WSID1, 13.

Osthathios saying that one must not fall prey to those who want proof-texts for all the teachings of the Church. Theology is not limited by the Bible. Nevertheless, now he points out that every doctrine can be proven by the Bible. In the first case, Kaniyamparambil tried to convince the hypothetical Protestant opponents that the Bible is not enough to be the sole basis of faith. The opponents could reply that the Syriac Orthodox Church did not see the utmost importance of the Bible. As Kaniyamparambil rejects this assumed argument, he declares that his church has no doctrine that could not be proven by the Bible. Now the Bible seems to be more or less the sole basis.

Kaniyamparambil goes on with the same topic and asks how the Syriac Orthodox Church and modern Christian communities treat the Bible. He mentions that the "traditional churches" have only one Bible. Besides, Kaniyamparambil reminds that there is only one Bible which is inspired while others are man-made. The "traditional churches" treat the Bible as holy and call it the Holy Bible. Kaniyamparambil points out that the Syriac Orthodox Church does not have any prayers or celebration of sacraments without reading from the Bible. All of the doctrines of this church are based on the teachings of the Bible, as well as each sentence of the creed. The Church owns the Bible, and it was the Church that decided which books were canonical. So the right to interpret the Bible belongs to the Church, not to any individual.[150]

Kaniyamparambil stresses the role of the Bible in Syriac Orthodox prayers and sacraments. He does not, however, mention the fact that this practice was largely started in India by the CMS missionaries. For example, the practice of reading lessons from the Bible in the course of the regular Sunday service became more common after the Book of

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[150] WSID1, 16, 26.

Common Prayer was translated into Malayalam.[151] In this case the Protestant influence seems to be so completely merged into the Syriac Orthodox practice that it can be used as an argument against Protestant opponents themselves.

By and by Kaniyamparambil proceeds to speak about the predominant role of the Church. He reminds that the Church owns the Bible because the Church codified it. Kaniyamparambil takes this argument from history, but he puts forward also purely practical grounds. One has to learn the Bible well to understand it properly. According to Kaniyamparambil, this is beyond the capability of ordinary human beings, but the Church can do it because the apostles interpreted the Bible for the Church.[152] Thus Kaniyamparambil comes back to his initial question about the role of the apostolic tradition.

As the text deals with the Bible, a lot of time is used to describe the Syriac Bible, *Peshitta*. It becomes clear that the earliest manuscripts of the Bible are in Aramaic. Moreover, all the *Peshitta* texts in Aramaic agree. This proves that the eastern churches copied their holy books "diligently, faithfully and meticulously." The versions translated from the Semitic languages into Greek and Latin, on the other hand, were subject to constant revisions.[153]

The Eastern process of copying manuscripts is described accurately. The biblical manuscripts were carefully handed down from one generation to another. When expert scribes copied these texts, the copies were carefully examined for accuracy before they were dedicated and permitted to be read in churches. "Easterners still adhere to God's commandment not to add or omit to a word from the Scripture."[154]

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[151] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 195.
[152] WSID1, 17; WSID5, 123.
[153] WSID1, 18.
[154] WSID1, 18.

The large presentation implies that the text is dealing with a matter with crucial significance for one's identity. It is also noteworthy that Paul Philipose, the translator, has contributed a lot to this section. The chapter is far larger than in Kaniyamparambil's original Malayalam version.[155] Thinking about the reasons for that, one cannot underestimate the importance of the context. In North America, there are plenty of different Bible translations. In this environment it is obviously essential to defend one's own Bible – especially if it has so great importance for one's identity as seems to be in the case of Syriac Orthodox Christians.

Kaniyamparambil makes one more conclusion about the relationship between the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Bible. He points out that to accept the tradition is not to belittle the importance of the Bible. He gives six reasons why the Syriac Orthodox Church and other "traditional churches" respect the Bible. The first one is that the Bible contains the words of salvation. The second one is that it is a book owned by the Church. Other reasons are that the Syriac Orthodox Church treats the Bible as true and genuine, its doctrines are based on the Bible, it does not let the Bible be altered, and the Bible is taught and read in the church.[156]

Perhaps the second point is particularly characteristic of Kaniyamparambil's writings. This point makes it clear that the Bible gets its value and prestige from the Church. The Bible deserves respect, because it is owned by the Church. This central argument can be seen as a response to the hypothetical Protestant opponents. In fact, almost the whole section about the Bible in Kaniyamparambil's text seems to be a part of this dialogue.

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[155] RNEC, 18.
[156] WSID2, 35.

As Kaniyamparambil speaks about the Bible at the general level, Mar Osthathios answers also to some detailed questions concerning the Bible. One of them is, "What is the unpardonable sin against the Holy spirit?" Mar Osthathios clearly answers that to call Jesus Beelzebub is such a sin. A person who makes himself guilty of this sin does not have any bad conscience and does not feel the need of repentance. On the other hand, any "penitential heart, which truly repents of one's sin is sure to get the pardon of Christ." Thus anyone who feels truly sorry for the sins committed and wants to live a new life of purity has not committed any sin against the Holy Spirit.[157]

Mar Osthathios seems to have a pastoral attitude to this question. His words are addressed to those who have anxiety for their sins. As Kaniyamparambil refers to the sin against the Holy Spirit, his purpose is to attack Protestants. According to him, those Protestants who think that the Holy Spirit could teach different communities in different ways have committed this sin. In fact, this question of the sin against the Holy Spirit can be an indicator of the authors' different intentions and emphases.

Mar Osthathios asks also another detailed question concerning Bible interpretations: "Whom did Cain marry?" Mar Osthathios mentions that this question is asked by those students who have not been taught that the first chapters in Genesis are pre-historical. There are two distinct stories of creation, and neither of them is to be taken literally as the answer to the question how the world came into being. Mar Osthathios states clearly that those who believe that the Bible gives the answer how the world was created will have to choose one or the other of these stories. Those, on the other hand, who have studied the Bible critically, would agree that the creation story is a saga to answer certain theological questions such as who

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[157] 40Q2, 27.

created the earth and not the biological questions about the age of the earth and the plants and life on earth.[158]

Mar Osthathios takes a clear stand on the relations between science and the Bible. According to him, one ought to let science answer the question how the world was created, by slow evolution or by sudden creation. "Let the Bible answer the fundamental questions about God, the salvation of man, the life after death etc., and let us allow science to answer all physiological questions that can be verified by objective tests in the laboratory or outside." Mar Osthathios points out that even if creation was evolutionary, there is no problem as far as the theology of the creation story is concerned. He further mentions that the fundamentalists are not doing full justice to the Bible. They are not open-minded to confess that the Bible is a divine-human book in which the unchanging truths of God are recorded in the changing and even fallible words of man. Mar Osthathios concludes his answer: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."[159]

As Kaniyamparambil responds to the Protestant challenge, he deals with the status of the Bible and the tradition. Interpreting the Bible, he gives the ultimate authority to the Church and its fathers. Mar Osthathios, however, approaches the same matter from another angle. He gives interpretations of particular Bible passages. His words seem to be addressed to his conservative pupils as well as to fundamentalist groups among Protestants. In fact, he seems to approach liberal Protestants in his views. As Kaniyamparambil stresses that altering a word from the Scripture is a grave sin, Mar Osthathios admits that these words are changing and even fallible. He points out that the truth of God is behind these words.

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[158] 40Q2, 19.
[159] 40Q2, 19.

Mar Osthathios pays attention to the same issues in chapter four in his original book. This chapter, however, is not present in the Internet version. In this section he states that although "many believed the inspiration as literal in the past, today to modern critical study of the Bible has made it impossible to hold on to such a theory of inspiration." He points out that the Holy Spirit will guide the Church into the truth and help it to interpret the Bible correctly. According to him, the scriptures are identified with revelation in other religions because these religions do not have a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.[160]

Mar Osthathios continues with the same theme also in the Internet version and asks how one can believe in miracles in the age of science. Answering this question, he refers to Rudolf Bultmann. According to Mar Osthathios, Bultmann's method of demythologisation is an aid to the interpretation of the Bible to an age of science:[161]

> There is something behind each of Christ's miracles which is more miraculous than the physical miracles. If a German mind sees the change of heart of the people to part with their hidden bread and fishes when the small boy gave all his bread, and also as a result of listening to the preaching of Christ, there is still a miracle Christ effected in the hearts of the people, which is deeper than the increase of bread and fishes by a supernatural action of Christ. I am not saying that all miracles must be demythologized, but that there are physical and psychological miracles.[162]

These words underline the difference between Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios. Kaniyamparambil complains repeatedly about Protestants who have abandoned the miracles of the Bible. Mar Osthathios, on the contrary, is ready to adopt some liberal Protestant ideas concerning miracles. Thus Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios seem to respond to the Protestant challenge in different ways. The former rejects the

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[160] 40Q, 4.
[161] 40Q2, 23.
[162] 40Q2, 23.

Protestant views quite categorically, while the latter is ready to adopt some modern and Western ideas from these Protestants. Kaniyamparambil's response is to draw a clear line between Protestants and Orthodox, while Mar Osthathios' response is to lower the threshold between these two church families. This interpretation receives confirmation, for example, from the authors' views on the sins against the Holy Spirit.

It is also worth noticing that stating the question about miracles in the age of science, Mar Osthathios seems to respond especially to the challenge of modernisation. Doing this, he sees Protestants as allies who have also faced the same challenge and who have developed noteworthy means to cope with the new situation. Kaniyamparambil can be seen responding to the same challenge. For him, however, Protestants are a part of those powers that have caused the negative consequences of modernisation.

The Western influence is also evident in some other parts of Mar Osthathios' text. As he speaks about the essence of God, he refers to four Western thinkers, namely Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, Emil Brunner, and Karl Barth.[163] Without any hesitation he uses texts written by one Roman Catholic, one Lutheran, and two Reformed thinkers.

3.2. Church, Apostolic Succession, and Ministry

In the first chapters, Kaniyamparambil asks what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. He points out that it is not enough to believe that Jesus was the Son of God and that he came to save the sinners. Consequently, he gives a list of things that are also required. One of these qualifications is that one should believe in what Christ has established. Saying this, Kaniyamparambil refers to the Church, and he also states that one should accept whatever Jesus has decided for the church administration.

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[163] 40Q1, 8.

Furthermore, one should believe that the power to teach, to baptise and to absolve sins was given only to the apostles. One is also obliged to participate in the Eucharist and to be a member of the Church, as well as to be committed deeply to the doctrines of the apostles. Kaniyamparambil summarises that the Church is not created and that it belongs to Christ. One has to belong to the Church and to submit to the doctrines and rules established by Jesus and the apostles. Only then he or she becomes a part of Jesus Christ.[164]

Kaniyamparambil proceeds to the question of the apostolic succession. He mentions that certain powers were given to the apostles alone. These powers were to preach and to baptise, to forgive sins, and to offer Eucharist. Furthermore, one of the apostles, Peter, was appointed the administrator. Having said that, Kaniyamparambil gives a short definition of the apostolic succession. The apostles were blessed at the time of the Ascension and received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. All powers were vested in them to be exercised until the end of the world. As the apostles cannot live so long, they have to appoint their successors to perform their duties. According to Kaniyamparambil, this process is called apostolic succession.[165] He goes on:

> Therefore *the true church of Christ* should have a *continuous chain of succession* from the apostles. It should have the *apostolic faith and observances, which* is in the book of Acts*, Epistles, and in the writings of the immediate successors of the Apostles like St. Clement, St. Ignatius, and others --. Merely making a building and calling it a 'church', fellowship, or an assembly and attending there will not make it a church that the Lord Jesus Christ had established.[166]

Thus Kaniyamparambil considers the apostolic succession to be a historical chain by laying hands, as well as observance of the apostolic

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[164] WSID1, 8; WSID3, 62.
[165] WSID3, 64.
[166] WSID3, 64.

faith and traditions. There are both historical and doctrinal aspects present in his definition.

In fact, doctrinal matters have a very important place in his text. To express the doctrinal requirements for the apostolic succession, he summarises the essential contents of the early Christian creeds into four points. The fourth point states that Jesus will come for the final judgement. Therefore one should "1) Be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and 2) Participate in Eucharist after confession of sins and eat with firm belief that it is the 'body and blood of Jesus Christ'."[167]

Along with referring to early Christian creeds, Kaniyamparambil mentions three sacraments: baptism, Eucharist, and confession. In the case of Eucharist, the doctrine of real presence is required. What is interesting is that nothing else is mentioned at this point as doctrinal requirements for the apostolic succession. Indeed, some Protestant groups, such as certain Lutheran churches with historic episcopate, could perhaps fulfil these conditions.

Kaniyamparambil also speaks about the role of the Holy Spirit. He mentions that the Spirit was given to the apostles alone and not to anyone else at that time. He points out that Christ promised that the Spirit would guide "*the apostles or their successors*." Kaniyamparambil also states that Christ did not say that the Holy Spirit would guide into truth anyone who reads the gospels. According to him, many "forget the fact that the apostles or their successors only would (or could) guide the church." Kaniyamparambil draws a conclusion that the Church needs apostolic succession as well as apostolic teachings.[168]

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[167] WSID3, 64.
[168] WSID3, 65.

Saying this, Kaniyamparambil seems to limit the definition of the apostolic succession to containing only the historic episcopate. Apostolic teachings are also required, but the concept "apostolic succession" does not contain them. Earlier, however, Kaniyamparambil included also the apostolic doctrines into this concept. At all events, this difference in using concepts seems to have no particular significance. What matters is that both the historic episcopate and the apostolic doctrines are always required.

Kaniyamparambil gives a short summary of the apostolic succession. He puts forward three things which are needed in order to be saved. Firstly, one should be baptised. Secondly, the baptism should be followed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, one should be a member of the real Church, which has apostolic succession. This succession is not obtained directly from heaven but only by laying hands. Furthermore, without succession there is no position in the Church. Those without apostolic succession hold no authority and therefore are misguiding believers.[169]

The whole section about apostolic succession in Kaniyamparambil's text may be seen as a response to the Protestant challenge. Earlier we have seen how Kaniyamparambil criticises modern Protestant groups who have established communities and started to call them churches. Now, as he defines the apostolic succession, he continuously seems to use these churches as a warning example of groups that do not have this succession.

As Kaniyamparambil concentrates on the apostolic succession, Mar Osthathios speaks of the relation between general and special priesthood in addition. According to him, the "general priesthood of the faithful will be lost if there is no special priesthood in the church as it has happened to the fundamental groups and sects." He points out that there is no priesthood without sacrifice, and thus the Holy Eucharist as a continuing

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[169] WSID3, 66; WSID4, 97, 99.

sacrifice gives meaning to the priesthood. In fact, Christ is manifesting his own priesthood through the apostles "just as the brain is functioning through the Central Nervous System."[170]

Although the universal priesthood of every believer has been one starting-point in, for example, many Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues, this idea has been very rare and invisible among the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India.[171] With this in mind, it is really noteworthy that Mar Osthathios mentions the general priesthood as a part of the true and genuine Christian doctrine. He considers it unfortunate that those groups who lay stress on the general priesthood have in fact lost it. We have seen earlier that Mar Osthathios has been willing to adopt theological views, which have been stressed by Protestants. In this case he has laid emphasis on the idea of the general priesthood, but at the same time he uses it as a weapon against some Protestant groups.

Mar Osthathios' words are current, as there are prominent groups in India that deny the special priesthood. As the anti-clerical Plymouth Brethren rapidly started to gain converts in Kerala, they encouraged the St. Thomas Christians to repudiate all priests, bishops, and missionaries.[172] It is also worth noting that there have been problems concerning the clergy among Syrian Orthodox Christians in India. There have been complaints among lay people that the clergy is unconcerned and uninvolved with parish life. According to these people, the priests have not participated in the life of the laity other than by holding the *Qurbana* (Mass). People complain of the lack of sermons and compare their ecclesiastical situation to that of the Mar Thoma Church, which they generally regard as a prosperous and sedate church. They even visit Mar Thoma churches to listen to sermons if a reputed speaker visits such a

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[170] 40Q1, 12.
[171] *Saarinen* 1997, 122, 159; *Visvanathan* 1993, 260.
[172] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 82.

church.[173] Thus the Protestant challenge is real in this respect, too, in South India. From this point of view, it also seems understandable that Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios use so much time to defend the Syrian Orthodox teaching and practices concerning the priesthood.

The exact doctrines of the Church, apostolic succession, and priesthood cover only partly the ecclesiastical self-understanding expressed in the web documents. Kaniyamparambil uses time to describe the Syriac Orthodox Church as the preserver of the original Christian faith. This emphasis also seems to fit in with the Orthodox view on the apostolic succession, which has been traditionally interpreted as the succession of the unbroken unity and continuity of the totality of life in the believing community rather than the continuity of the hierarchical succession.[174]

Already in the Introduction, Kaniyamparambil mentions that there is a tendency among western Christian scholars to propagate that Christianity originated in the West.[175] His response, however, is clear:

> It is far from the truth. Christianity reached the west after it reached all of the Middle East, Africa and even India. Christians there were persecuted more than anywhere else, but persecution made them stronger and faithful which preserved the word of God as it is.[176]

He further states that in the Syriac Orthodox and Coptic Churches "every ministry is, as taught and done by the apostles." Moreover, the former still uses Aramaic, the language used by Jesus and the apostles, as its official language.[177] Kaniyamparambil and Paul Philipose conclude:

> Christ said, "I will build my church" (Acts 16:18) back in AD 26 or 27. Now it is the year 2002. So the church (Syrian Orthodox Church) taught

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[173] *Visvanathan* 1993, 258.
[174] *Chandran* 1988, 79.
[175] WSID1, Introduction.
[176] WSID1, Introduction.
[177] WSID1, 13.

believers through out these years the same faith without any changes. It is painful to see that after all these years, people are coming forward to question its teachings, by picking up verses from altered translations![178]

Kaniyamparambil seems to identify the Syriac Orthodox Church with the universal Church. His church has preserved the original faith and practices unchanged, and therefore this church has a divine mission among those churches which have departed from the truth.

3.3. Baptism and Anointing

As Kaniyamparambil speaks about baptism, he pays a lot of attention to things that are received through baptism. Thus he underlines the utmost importance of the sacrament, through which one receives salvation.[179] He also stresses the importance of the person who performs the act. He stresses that the power to baptise was given only to the apostles. Referring to the New Testament (Acts 8:14-17), he reminds that the people of Samaria believed in Jesus and were baptised but that their baptism was incomplete. Therefore baptism "has to be officiated by the apostles or by an authority appointed by the apostles." Only then the baptised person will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.[180]

Kaniyamparambil also uses a lot of time to speak about performing the act of baptism. According to him, the Bible shows that a person can receive benefits if another person does godly acts to him. Naturally, the person who does this act must have the authority. Kaniyamparambil goes on quoting early Church Fathers. His aim is to show that people of the 2nd century believed that the water in baptism means water itself, not Word or

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[178] WSID4, 97.
[179] WSID2, 36, 49; WSID4, 90.
[180] WSID2, 44, 50.

Spirit. The Holy Spirit will descend and sanctify this water, so that the external washing has spiritual effect.[181]

These words can be seen as a response to those Christian groups who think that the baptism is performed by the Holy Spirit without any visible act. Kaniyamparambil makes it clear that receiving the Holy Spirit is a benefit that derives from the visible act of baptism performed by an authorised person. Furthermore, water is essential for the act.

Having shown that the act of baptism by water is necessary, Kaniyamparambil proceeds to the details of the act. Firstly, he shows with the help of the Book of Acts that when the apostles baptised they did not immerse people in water. According to him, with "all these examples in the Bible, it is astonishing that some people argue for a different procedure like 'immersing' etc…" Kaniyamparambil mentions that at the same time these people argue that baptism will not result in the remission of one's sins. Thereby a baptised person will not be eligible for the kingdom of God.[182] Kaniyamparambil lets the hypothetical opponent state yet another question:

> Is it true that Gregory Bar Ebroyo (*alias* Gregorius AbulFaraj Bar Ebroyo) who wrote the Canon (church laws) has stated in Chapter 2 that 1) Preference should be given to river, 2) people should be immersed 3) One should be baptized only after the study of faith 4) deacon should receive the person when he comes out of water and 5) ornaments should be removed before baptism? [183]

Kaniyamparambil answers that these claims are not fully true. He begins with correcting the historical information. The canon was compiled by Gregorius, not written by him. Having praised him as a great scholar, Kaniyamparambil describes the work Gregorius did in collecting the apostolic laws and synodical regulations. As he has described the

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[181] WSID2, 40, 43.
[182] WSID2, 45.
[183] WSID2, 46.

significance of Gregorius, he corrects the errors concerning the act of baptism: There is no mention of river, immersing, or reception by deacon in the Nomocanon. Moreover, removal of ornaments does not mean removal forever. Kaniyamparambil further cites the canon to show that baptism is incomplete without chrism.[184]

The early Pentecostal missionaries in Malabar conducted their baptisms in ponds or rivers in contrast to the infant baptism of the Syrian Christians, which always took place inside the church. From the start there was a dispute concerning the form of baptism.[185] Thus Kaniyamparambil's verses can be seen as a clear response to certain Protestant groups. Kaniyamparambil tries to prove that immersing is not required. The words are also addressed to those who teach that it is unsuitable for a Christian to wear ornaments. What finally makes the Protestant act of baptism incomplete is the lack of the act of chrismation.

It is worth noticing, however, that these very critical words about immersion also have significance to Eastern Orthodox, whose canons require baptism by immersion. Canon 50 of *The 85 Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles* states that those bishops and presbyters, who do not perform baptism with three immersions, deserve deposition. This collection of canons was approved by the Eastern Orthodox in the Council of Trullo more than 200 years after the split of Chalcedon in 451. Thus when it comes to immersion, the Syriac Orthodox act of baptism differs from the Eastern Orthodox teaching. Instead of that, it resembles the Roman Catholic practice as well as the practice of the traditional Protestant churches.

Kaniyamparambil also states arguments for infant baptism. He cites early Church Fathers to prove that this practice was in use during the

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[184] WSID2, 46.
[185] *A. C. George* 2001, 226.

apostolic times. On the other hand, he admits that there were people who objected infant baptism even during the early period of the Church. He mentions that these views were based on the argument that infants couldn't believe in Jesus Christ.[186] Earlier Kaniyamparambil has stated that "for the first 1800 years [of the church history], no one wrote against infant baptism, not even the Protestants!" Now he admits that this teaching is of much earlier origin.

Kaniyamparambil takes examples from the Bible to refute the argument against infant baptism. He shows that as God works with a person, God initiates this work. Peter, Andrew, Jacob, John, Matthew, and Saul were all called to God before they believed in Jesus Christ. The important factor is that they obeyed the call. Furthermore, there are many examples in the Bible of the fact that infants can receive blessings from God before birth. This is because they belong to God, both before and after birth, and because God can act without one's knowledge. Kaniyamparambil further reminds that a person, whether an infant or not, can receive blessings by virtue of another person's belief. To prove his view in practice, he quotes from Mark a list of miracles which those who believe are able to perform. He points out that not all those who have been baptised after believing are able to perform these acts. On the other hand, many of those baptised as a child have done these miracles.[187]

Mar Osthathios, too, defends infant baptism. He summarises his arguments:

> -- arguments in favor of infant baptism include inherent holiness of the children of Christian parents (I Cor. 7: 14), justification by grace as a gift which does not regard age-bar for salvation (Rom 3: 24), the presence of little children in the early church (I. Jn. 2: 1, 12, 13, 18), the tradition of

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[186] WSID2, 54-55.
[187] WSID2, 55.

church's practice, the example of Polycarp and others who were baptized as infants.[188]

Both authors pay a lot of attention to the question of infant baptism. This fact indicates that some modern Protestant groups, which oppose infant baptism, are at least to a certain degree influential in their environment. Furthermore, also in the case of infant baptism, Mar Osthathios seems to be ready to adopt certain Protestant concepts, such as "justification by faith", and to use them in support of his own view.

The question of baptism is closely related to that of anointing. Kaniyamparambil turns to this latter issue by citing hypothetical opponents who claim that "St. John has permitted one to interpret by themselves and that 'no one needs to teach anything' (1 John 2:27)." Kaniyamparambil, however, answers clearly that this argument is incorrect: Anointed people need also be taught and advised. The apostles wrote epistles to people who were anointed but who were wrong in their interpretations. Furthermore, there were heretics among the anointed ones as well.[189] Kaniyamparambil dedicates a considerably large chapter to this matter. This fact indicates that the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church has come into contact with Protestant groups, according to which anointed people do not need teaching.

Kaniyamparambil points out that the anointing of the Holy Spirit can take place in many forms. One of them is chrism, and Kaniyamparambil gives quotations from the Bible to show that it was used already during the apostolic times. He also proves that anointing is not a mental phenomenon. Instead of that, it is received through a visible, physical act performed by a person of authority. The Holy Spirit abided upon Jesus Christ in the form of a dove and on the apostles in the form of fire.

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[188] 40Q1, 5.
[189] WSID1, 21.

Furthermore, Jesus gave the Spirit to the apostles by breathing on them, and the apostles gave the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on the recipient. "Therefore the recipient receives the Holy Spirit by a visible act by an authorized person and is not a mere psychological feeling."[190]

Also Mar Osthathios pays attention to the same matter. He states that the "surety that we are anointed with the Holy Spirit is not a psychological emotional experience as ecstatic utterances with tongues, but an objective anointment of the Holy Muron (oil) by the valid ministry of the Church."[191] Thus Mar Osthathios addresses his response clearly to Pentecostals and other charismatic groups. Furthermore, Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' teaching about anointing seems to be for the most part a response to the Protestant, or rather charismatic challenge.

Kaniyamparambil summarises that the Holy Chrism was used for anointing from the time of St. John, and "all ancient churches especially the Syrian Orthodox, the Coptic's, etc…continue this till this date." In fact, as Kaniyamparambil has spoken initially about "baptism", he later proceeds to speak about "baptism with water and Holy Spirit." [192] Perhaps this more accurate form is used for underlining the anointment of the Holy Spirit, which remains incomplete if the chrismation is not performed. It is also worth noticing that Kaniyamparambil mentions again particularly the Coptic Church, along with his own church, as an example of a church which has preserved early Christian traditions.

3.4. Eucharist and Salvation

"Just by believing or being admitted to the church, or by baptism alone, one does not have everlasting life. He has to receive Christ's body and

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[190] WSID3, 57-59.
[191] 40Q1, 11.
[192] WSID3, 56, 59.

blood."[193] Speaking about baptism, Kaniyamparambil pointed out that one receives salvation through baptism. However, now he states that baptism is not enough. It has to be accompanied by Eucharist. One reason for this stress may be the practice in the Syrian Orthodox Church in South India that the child is not only baptised and anointed, but bread and wine are also given to him or her.[194] Having made his argument clear, Kaniyamparambil begins to answer questions concerning this sacrament.

One of the first questions by hypothetical opponents is: "Celebration of the Holy Communion – is it just an act to collect money?" Kaniyamparambil points out that the Holy Communion is for the remission of sins and not for money. During the early days of the church, the members themselves offered the wheat and wine. Later, for convenience, they offered money instead. Kaniyamparambil also mentions that some of the fellowships who state this argument collect money through many channels. Furthermore, their pastors are paid workers. "Does this mean that they preach for money?"[195]

Kaniyamparambil still continues with the same topic. He answers the questions: "What is an offering? Isn't it a way of collecting money for the church? Does it have any significance?" Now Kaniyamparambil refers to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who has written about offerings. He presents Cyril as a father "who fought against the heresy that when Jesus was born he was not the Son of God and therefore, Jesus is not equal to the Father. He helped to establish the truth." Kaniyamparambil goes on saying that almost all fellowships believe in his teaching that Christ is the Son of God. Kaniyamparambil's argument is that since St Cyril has written about

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[193] WSID3, 68. The first three words are bolded in the original text.
[194] *Visvanathan* 1993, 123.
[195] WSID3, 72.

church procedures, one should believe those writings also. "Why should one only believe in parts of what he has taught?"[196]

Also in other parts of the text, where Kaniyamparambil speaks about salvation, he stresses the divinity of Christ.[197] He does not analyse any Christological details, but he clearly points out the godhood of Christ. This emphasis is evidently in line with the Syriac Orthodox teaching, which has traditionally stressed the divinity of Christ through the doctrine of hypostatic union. Besides, for an Orthodox author it is perhaps not so important to go into details at this point. As *Sergius Bulgakov* puts it, "For Orthodoxy, faith in Christ -- is not a Christological doctrine, but life itself."[198]

Furthermore, one has to take into consideration that, before the arrival of the Portuguese, St. Thomas Christians were practically unaffected by the controversies in Christology.[199] Still in 1974, Patriarch Moran Mar Ignatius Yakoob III accused the united Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of not denying the "heretic two-nature theory propounded by Pope Leo at the Chaldean Synod."[200] It has to be remembered that these accusations were said in a very polemical situation, as the church in India was about to fall again into two factions at that time. Nevertheless, these words may indicate that the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India are still today less orientated to Christological questions than some other Oriental Orthodox churches.

The argument with which Kaniyamparambil proves the authority of St. Cyril of Jerusalem is anyhow interesting, and it includes an evident inconsistency. At many points, Kaniyamparambil refers to Luther and

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[196] WSID3, 77.
[197] WSID1, 6.
[198] *Bulgakov* 1935, 121. However, a monophysitic confession of faith has been traditionally said, for example, while celebrating the Eucharist in the MSOC. *Verghese* 1974c, 80-81. Thus these Christological details are by no means totally insignificant.
[199] *Tisserant* 1957, 18; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 106.
[200] *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 396.

other Protestant theologians to support his own views. At the same time, he does not accept all of their teachings. If he was completely logical, referring to Luther would mean that one should believe everything Luther has taught.

It may seem also somewhat surprising that Kaniyamparambil uses so much time to prove that the Eucharist is not just an act of collecting money. What is behind this is an old practice of selling coupons for the saying of *Qurbana. Susan Visvanathan* states that in this practice, economic considerations predominate over ritual ones. Cashiers collect money (*Qurbana pannam*), a certain sum per each person for whom *Qurbana* is said. One part of the money goes to the priest, a smaller fraction to his deacon, and the largest part to the church for its maintenance and the buying of incense, candles, bread, and wine. Priests who are affiliated to wealthy churches particularly profit from this custom.[201]

This practice of *Qurbana pannam* was strictly opposed already by the Portuguese as well as the CMS missionaries. Also the reformer Abraham Malpan, whose work led to the formation of the Mar Thoma Church, strongly criticised the practice. Furthermore, there are priests who make money from *Qurbana pannam.* These priests are not respected by their parishioners, and the problem is current especially among the Jacobite Syriac Orthodox priests. The priests of the MOSC have received fixed salaries for a long time, while the priests of the Patriarchal Party have been dependent on these gifts until quite recently.[202] Consequently, it is not surprising that Kaniyamparambil has to use time for defending this old custom.

Another critical question concerning the Eucharist is also stated: "'And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the

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[201] *Visvanathan* 1993, 220-221, 255.
[202] *P. Cheriyan* 1935, 226; *Visvanathan* 1993, 220, 255-256.

same sacrifices which never take away the sins.' (Heb 10:11) Why then do you have the Holy Mass?" Kaniyamparambil answers that this Bible verse speaks about Jewish priests and their sacrifices. Paul Philipose widens this short answer of the original version by quoting from the New American Bible.[203] Mar Osthathios, too, speaks about the New Testament priesthood. He states that Christ's absolute sacrifice is perpetuated and continued in the Holy Eucharist. He points out that it is not a new sacrifice, nor the repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary, but the continuation of the unique sacrifice of Christ.[204] Thus Mar Osthathios uses quite the same concepts in describing the relation between sacrifice and the Eucharist as, for example, Martin Luther did.[205]

Kaniyamparambil points out that the Eucharist is beneficial not only for the living but also for the dead. He states that "it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn Sacrifice is laid out."[206] This thought becomes also evident if one looks at the practice of Syrian Orthodox Christians. Celebrating the Eucharist, a prayer of intercession is read for those for whom the sacrifice is offered. This intercession is present throughout the Orthodox world, but it is especially emphasised among the Orthodox in South India. Also during the 40 days following somebody's death, *Qurbana* must be celebrated every day if possible for the soul of the dead person. Furthermore, on commemoration day, a memorial service is held in the church and *Qurbana* is said in the memory of the deceased.[207]

Kaniyamparambil also speaks about the prerequisites which should be completed before partaking in the Eucharist. A person has to examine

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[203] RNEC, 102; WSID4, 101.
[204] 40Q1, 12.
[205] Luther admitted that the absolute and eternal sacrifice of Christ is present in the Eucharist. *Jolkkonen* 2004, 144-145.
[206] WSID3, 77.
[207] *Visvanathan* 1993, 142, 144; *Binns* 2003, 52.

whether he or she is sinful or not. If sinful, one is not worthy to receive Jesus Christ. Kaniyamparambil goes on proving that it is possible for a believer to commit sins. Since even St. Paul and St. John said that they could commit sins, it is clear that even if one knows the truth, he or she can sin against God. The only way to be absolved from these sins is the act of confession. Naturally, Kaniyamparambil reminds also of the prerequisites concerning the person who conducts the celebration of the Eucharist. Only those appointed by the apostles, i.e. the ordained ones, have the authority to do this.[208]

Kaniyamparambil reminds that a believer can fall and that is why he or she needs confession. Mar Osthathios pays attention to the same topic and speaks at the same time about salvation in a wider sense. He states that it is "the fundamentalist brethren who are definite that they are saved and want to know whether you are saved." According to Mar Osthathios, they forget that salvation is at the same time past, present, and future. It is a continuous process which is not accomplished once for all. "The so called assurance of salvation" is forgetting the needed response, and the lack of assurance on the basis of one's own inadequacies forgets that salvation is free and unmerited.[209]

It is worth noticing that already the Church Missionary Society, which became closely connected with Malankara Orthodox Christians at the beginning of the 19th century, was based on the evangelical movement in Britain. The theologians of this movement taught that assurance was the normal experience of the believer from the time of his conversion onward. Once experienced, the conversion could not be lost.[210] On the other hand, Mar Osthathios rejects the total lack of assurance as well.

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[208] WSID3, 73, 78-79.
[209] 40Q2, 30.
[210] *Bebbington* 1995, 45-46; *Ward* 2000, 21.

Having spoken about assurance, Mar Osthathios proceeds to the original sin. He criticises the title "original sin", because it "gives the false idea that cohabitation of the married couple is a sinful act." He considers it an Old Testament idea, which is not in line with the sacrament of marriage. The Christian teaching on the universality of sin is taken care of by the phrase "Adamic sin". According to Mar Osthathios, the question whether man commits sin because he is a sinner or whether he commits sin and hence becomes a sinner is only theoretical. The being and doing of sin go together.[211] Thus Mar Osthathios considers it unnecessary to take a stand on the exact definitions of the original or Adamic sin.

Although Mar Osthathios deals with some soteriological teachings, such as assurance or the original sin, it is interesting that themes such as predestination, free will, and synergism are still very rare in Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts. One reason for this silence may be the fact that those Protestant groups that are attracting Syrian Orthodox Christians in India are usually modern evangelical and charismatic groups. These groups have adopted the doctrine of the free will, partly even from the Orthodox themselves.[212] At the same time, those old Protestant churches that have a more positive attitude to the doctrine of predestination are also losing members to these evangelical and charismatic groups. The traditional Protestant churches are not a threat to Syrian Orthodox churches, and thus Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios are able to concentrate on defending their churches against evangelical and charismatic groups.

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[211] 40Q2, 31.

[212] John Wesley, for example, referred to the Eastern doctrine of deification as he put forward arguments for his own view on sanctification. Furthermore, through Wesley many patristic and Orthodox teachings have become a part of the Holiness movement as well as Pentecostalism. Moreover, it is possible to find considerable similarities in the way in which Syrian mystics and adherents of evangelicalism have tried to find signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a Christian person. *Pokki* 2005, 15-16, 50, 186-187, 199, 202-203, 275.

3.5. Practical Questions

Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios answer not only to doctrinal questions, but also questions concerning Christian customs and other practicalities. One of them is the question of the cross. Kaniyamparambil puts forward a claim stated by hypothetical Protestant opponents: "Respecting the cross and kissing it etc... are all against the Bible and against the Ten Commandments." Kaniyamparambil's answer is that the traditional churches throughout the world respect the cross. It is only "the modern Christian communities who speak against the cross." He points out that the cross is the basis of Christianity and all of the sacraments. As an Orthodox Christian bows and kisses the cross, he or she does it to respect Jesus Christ.[213]

Susan Visvanathan has also paid attention to the importance of the veneration of the cross in the liturgical life of Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians, especially in the Passion Week. According to her, the cross is treated as if it were the Christ.[214] Thus it is not surprising that some Protestant groups may have criticised this practice and that Kaniyamparambil has to defend it against these critics.

Kaniyamparambil goes on with another similar question: "The bells, candles, other lamps in the church, and burning of incense -- Are they not copied from the gentiles?" Kaniyamparambil begins his answer by stating that most people try to evaluate or interpret without reading the Bible properly. He mentions that one Christian community, which proposes this view, uses drums and other musical instruments inside the church. He shows the inconsistency of this argument by saying that "if one uses a bronze bell inside the church, it is anti-Christian, but a drum-set is Christian." Having refuted this argument, Kaniyamparambil refers to

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[213] WSID5, 130.
[214] *Visvanathan* 1993, 208.

the Bible to show the basis of the Syriac Orthodox practice. This practice is to ring the bell to remind believers about the time of a prayer. The bell is also rung during the important parts of the celebration of the Eucharist. Kaniyamparambil summarises that "the candle lights, incense, etc... are ordered by God for each generation, and that it was practiced by the generations up to the apostolic times, and that it was continued by the apostles and the early church."[215]

Kaniyamparambil further corrects Protestant misunderstandings. The next argument stated by the opponents is: "Prostrating in prayer, praying on ones death anniversary, offering sacrifices on that day, and the use of gold among church members are all against God. Aren't they all copied from the gentiles?" Kaniyamparambil gives short quotations from the Bible and Tertullian to support the practice of kneeling and celebrating the death anniversary. The most attention, however, he gives to the question of using gold. He points out that a Christian should aim at simplicity but that using gold ornaments is not against God.[216] He goes on:

> I recently heard from one Protestant pastor that ladies in their community couldn't wear gold ornaments as it is against God. Abraham the father of all nations, gave his daughter-in-law Rebecca, ornaments ("Then he brought our objects of silver and gold and articles of clothing and presented them to Rebecca"). Since Abraham did this, and God expressed no displeasure, why should we ban woman from wearing it?[217]

Kaniyamparambil also responds to the charges of idolatry brought by those groups that do not accept icons. He mentions that it is true that there are pictures in Syriac Orthodox churches, but he points out that "we don't pray to it and we don't believe those pictures have any holy power from God present in them." He takes an example from England: "The

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[215] WSID5, 131.
[216] WSID5, 132.
[217] WSID5, 132.

currency of England ('*Pound*') has the picture of their patron St. George on it. Are they praying to the coins? No, it is meant as a respect to the patron." In the same way Syriac Orthodox Christians keep pictures in their churches because of their respect for these people. Kaniyamparambil concludes: "We don't pray to these pictures."[218]

It is worth noting that Kaniyamparambil opposes the view that icons would have any holy power from God. This idea, however, was common among the iconophiles of the first Christian millennium.[219] Generally speaking, icons have much less important position in the Oriental Orthodox churches than among Eastern Orthodox. Pictures are little used, and there is no iconostasis, for example, in Syrian Orthodox churches in South India.[220] Perhaps this Oriental Orthodox tradition is one reason for Kaniyamparambil's view.

Using images has caused clashes with Protestants in India since the 19th century. Before that, the Portuguese had reinforced some practices – such as the veneration of the Virgin and the use of images of the saints – with which the Syrian Orthodox Christians were already familiar. From the 1830s and 1840s onward, many Syrian Christians began to smash cult statues and images espousing the most radical CMS teachings of iconoclasm. Public image-smashing sometimes turned into mob attacks on "un-reformed" churches and festival processions. The raids provoked several riots and at least one murder.[221] Nevertheless, the Protestants have not been the only iconoclasts in the history of St. Thomas Christians. Already in 1747, a bishop from the Antiochene Church, Mar Ivanios arrived in Malabar and burned images, figures of Christ, and crosses.[222]

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[218] WSID5, 128.
[219] *Pelikan* 1977, 125.
[220] *Binns* 2003, 56, 97.
[221] *Bayly* 1992, 286, 304; *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 246-247.
[222] *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 217.

One argument by the hypothetical opponents concerns fasting. The question is, whether this practice is biblical at all.[223] Kaniyamparambil answers:

> If you belong to a Christian community, who still find it difficult to obey what our Lord taught and practiced, and from the teachings of the apostle and prophets, I can bring in more evidence from their own church leaders. Anglican's one of the early Protestant churches says that fasting existed in the early church in their own book of common prayers.[224]

Kaniyamparambil refers to the Book of Common Prayer to show that the Big Lent is observed before Easter. He further refers to Irenaeus and Tertullian to prove that this was the practice from the apostolic period. He goes on: "Protestant Bishop Beveridge[225] says that St. Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, Augustin, Cyril etc.. testify that fasting and Lent were instituted by apostles and was practiced."[226]

Kaniyamparambil uses Anglican sources to prove that fasting existed in the early church. He does not recall the early 19th century and the radical CMS missionaries who served only meat food to the Syrian Orthodox students on Lent days when they were not supposed to eat meat.[227] Stressing these negative events in history would not fit Kaniyamparambil's argumentation. As we have seen, the aim of this argumentation is to show that many Protestant authorities are on the Syrian Orthodox side. Using this kind of argumentation once again, he tries to correct the views of his Protestant opponents by their own arms. He refers to the Bible or Protestant sources, such as the Book of Common Prayer or Protestant theologians. He uses Protestant scholars and pastors efficiently to refute arguments stated by some Protestant

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[223] WSID5, 133.
[224] WSID5, 133.
[225] Kaniyamparambil refers to William Beveridge (1637-1708), Anglican bishop of the Diocese of Saint Asaph, Wales.
[226] WSID5, 133.
[227] *C. V. Cheriyan* 2003, 248.

groups. At the same time he paints quite a negative picture of the present situation, in which most people try to interpret without reading the Bible properly. The Orthodox Church thus has an important task to preserve the authentic apostolic customs.

One question of Christian customs concerns written prayers. The hypothetical opponents ask, "Your church has written prayers. Isn't it better for one to compose their own prayers than to read from someone else's prayer?" Kaniyamparambil responds by asking, "Isn't it pride to think that one is complete in all aspects of their own created prayers?" He reminds that the apostles asked Jesus Christ to teach them how to pray. Instead of telling them "to pray according to how they like", he taught them how to pray. According to Kaniyamparambil, some Christian communities have too much spiritual pride so that they do not even utilise the prayers used by the apostles. He states that written prayers "prevent us from our natural tendency to be selfish in submitting our own needs before God without a penitential heart."[228]

Kaniyamparambil points out that the Syriac Orthodox prayers are authored for each occasion. If one compares them with the prayers of other churches, he or she will notice that they are complete and special. "If you are not convinced we can prove it. We encourage you to read our prayers and you can decide for yourself."[229]

Mar Osthathios also asks the question: "Why only written prayers?" He mentions that the canonical prayers are written down in all the ancient churches but that silent and extemporaneous prayers have their place in the Orthodox Church as well. Prayers are "in the mother tongue in the major Orthodox churches." Mar Osthathios summarises that written prayers "prevent us from our natural tendency to be selfish in submitting

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[228] WSID5, 135.
[229] WSID5, 135.

our own needs before God without a penitential heart."[230] It is worth noticing that this idea is almost word for word expressed in Kaniyamparambil's text. This is the second time that both of these documents use almost the same wording.

Mar Osthathios also answers the question of whether a Christian can use medicines for healing. He states that certain Pentecostal sects forbid their members from using medicines and condemn those who use medicines as having inferior faith. Mar Osthathios points out that this view is "definitely unwise and unscriptural." He states that even if healing comes through the use of medicine, the source of all healing is God.[231]

Mar Osthathios gives attention to the question of tithing as well. He states that tithing is the least a Christian should do and gives a quotation from John Wesley as an instruction: "work as hard as you can, earn as much as you can, use as little as you can, and give as much as you can."[232] Kaniyamparambil also takes up somewhat similar issues as he states a question: "Your church encourages offerings and vows. Isn't it a sort of bribe to please God?" Kaniyamparambil answers by giving several Bible passages to show that both of these practices are biblical.[233] The attention paid to tithing is not surprising if one keeps in mind the fact that tithing is an important practice among Syrian Orthodox Christians in India. In fact, it is required in the canons of the church.[234]

Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios defend many practices that have caused disputes since the early 19th century. At that time the radical CMS missionaries and their supporters were horrified by the "idolatrous" nature of Syrian festivals with their music, bawdy songs, and Hindu-style drumming. "Romish" censing, genuflexions, and prostrations aroused

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[230] 40Q1, 15.
[231] 40Q1, 16.
[232] 40Q2, 40.
[233] WSID5, 134.
[234] *Visvanathan* 1993, 173, 256; *Selb* 1989, 251-252.

resistance, too. Using bells, candles, and incense in the church worship as well as all the other "mummeries" and "vain ceremonies" were associated by these missionaries with "vile papistry" and "heathenism." Their reports insisted that the whole population was paganised.[235]

Almost all of these issues are present in Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts too. The authors do not, however, recall these events in history but deal with the present-day disputes. At some points they also present Anglicans as supporters of the Syrian Orthodox customs, although it was the Anglican missionaries who attacked almost all of these traditions in the 19th century.

As Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios speak about Christian customs and other related practical questions, their response to the Protestant challenge is evident. Their questions indicate what kind of modern Protestant groups have extended their influence among Orthodox Christians in India. Many of the matters discussed may seem surprising, such as kneeling or using gold ornaments. It is difficult to estimate, however, to what extent these problems are real and to what extent it is about rhetoric. Namely, to describe Protestant groups as stressing quite trivial issues, such as the ban on using gold, is hardly likely to increase the credibility of these groups.

3.6. Responding to Other Religions and Modernisation

In Mar Osthathios' text, the Protestant challenge is not the only one waiting for a response. He pays attention to other religions and the process of modernisation as well. Kaniyamparambil, instead, does not speak much about other religions, and as we have seen earlier, he draws a parallel between the Protestant challenge and the challenge of

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[235] *Bayly* 1992, 298; *Visvanathan* 1993, 22.

modernisation. For him, Protestants are a part of those powers that have caused the negative consequences of modernisation.

Also Kaniyamparambil, however, says something about other religions as he defends the divinity of Christ. He points out that, since Jesus came to save the sinners, he differs from all other people who are believed to be incarnations of God in other religions. These people came to punish sinners.[236] Also, Mar Osthathios answers the question stated by representatives of other religions: "What do you mean when you say 'Jesus Christ is the only Savior'?"[237] He further pays attention to explaining the doctrine of the Trinity: "If God is Nirguna Brahma of Kevaladvaita, He is not Love. If He is Love, He is Trinity." Mar Osthathios mentions that there is no uniqueness in Christian theology without the uniqueness and centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity. "It is the only all-inclusive teaching about God."[238]

Mar Othathios states that the faith of the Hebrews in the time of Exodus was in fact the Islamic faith in predestination. Hence they believed that even the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh was God's work. Mar Osthathios, however, states that St. James makes it clear that God does not tempt anyone. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios resists the idea that one should abandon the Old Testament. In fact, he criticises those who say that the Old Testament should be replaced by the Vedas and the Upanishads for the Indian Bible. According to him, these people "are not giving due value to the simple fact that Christianity is a historical religion unlike Hinduism and the Hebrew Christian Revelation has unique continuity in spite of the discontinuity."[239]

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[236] WSID1, 5.
[237] 40Q1, 9.
[238] 40Q1, 7.
[239] 40Q2, 20, 22.

40 Questions Answered also deals with the question of whether evil spirit has power over the Christians. Mar Osthathios promises that a Christian does not have to be afraid of "any evil spirit or stars, or angels or principalities" since Christ has disarmed them by his death and resurrection. Similarly, one should not believe in fate or in fatalism. "Nothing happens to us without the knowledge of our Savior." Mar Osthathios further reminds that those who believe in "omens, *sakunam*, *rahu* and *dasa santhi*" are not true believers in Christ.[240]

As Mar Osthathios answers questions concerning the interpretations of certain Bible passages, he also refers to the "Sons of God and the daughters of men" who are mentioned in Genesis. Having set forth some possible interpretations, he brings the message of this verse to the present day: "The lesson for the modern student is that marriage partners should be carefully chosen from the sons of God and daughters of God and not from the wicked."[241] Mar Osthathios dedicates a larger chapter to this topic and begins with describing the current situation. The governments are encouraging mixed marriages as a means of national integration, and rationalists say that Christians are not having a universal and cosmic outlook when they forbid inter-religious marriages. He asks: "Are the Christians communalistic and narrow-minded when they say with St. Paul 'be not unevenly yoked' (II Cor. 6: 14)?"[242]

Mar Osthathios gives many reasons for the Christian practice of marrying only Christians. He states that marriage is a sacrament and that sacraments are not administered to the non-Christians as long as they do not join the Church. Having set forth the theological basis, he proceeds to the practical arguments. It will be difficult to bring up the children in a mixed marriage, if the couple wants to bring them up in the religious

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[240] 40Q2, 39.
[241] 40Q2, 32.
[242] 40Q2, 34.

nurture. Furthermore, many of these mixed marriages "are ending up in separation, alienation, or even divorce."[243]

Mar Osthathios is not writing only to the Christians in Kerala, but also to the diaspora youth in other parts of India. Undoubtedly, the question of mixed marriages is of current interest in the diaspora, and not just in India but also in North America. Mar Osthathios rejects clearly inter-religious marriages. At the same time he does not say anything against the marriage between representatives of two Christian churches. This decision evidently reflects his ecumenical attitude. On the other hand, it must be noticed that the current attitude still favours marriages between Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians.[244]

Kaniyamparambil concentrates on responding to the Protestant challenge and thus he does not pay a lot of attention to other religions. This does not mean, however, that he wouldn't see any reason for criticism in these religions. At all events, as Kaniyamparambil defends Syriac Orthodox Christians against modern Protestant groups, Mar Osthathios defends Christianity against other religions. What is interesting here is that Mar Osthathios has been known as a theologian who is confident that salvation is available to members of other religions as well.[245] However, in this work he seems to stress the differences and to show clearly that both Islam and Hinduism are in many ways incompatible with Christianity. This attitude becomes clear as he deals with some traditional Indian beliefs and the relation between the Old Testament and the Vedas.

The relations between the Syrian Orthodox Church and other religions have undergone many phases. Until the time of the British rule

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[243] 40Q2, 34.

[244] Malankara Orthodox Christians and members of other denominations have been separated by endogamy. In fact, the line may be sometimes drawn even between the two Syrian Orthodox factions, although this is not so common. *Verghese* 1974d, 164; *Visvanathan* 1993, 36, 103.

[245] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 51.

and the CMS missionaries in the early 19th century, St. Thomas Christians were integrated with the region's other powerful communities. *Susan Bayly* has pointed out that St. Thomas cult had created explicit links to the Keralan warrior goddess tradition. It also had many features in common with the local Muslim traditions. Furthermore, Christians had many practices and beliefs in common with the surrounding Hindu society. Large numbers of Syrians were also donors at local Hindu temple festivals. In reality this role was a privilege and a sign of rank and honour for Hindus as well as Syrians. The British Resident John Munro and the CMS missionaries, however, thought that the Syrian Orthodox Christians could only be participating in these "abominable heathen orgies" under duress. Consequently, Munro and the missionaries wanted to save these Christians from the supposed oppression as well as from the theological failings.[246]

The missionaries started a publicity machine which led to a decline in the status of St. Thomas Christians. Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century, these Christians were being shunned as ritually polluting by the region's caste Hindus. Once privileged participants in Hindu ritual, they were now attacked and denounced for approaching urban temple precincts. During the 1880s and 1890s there were several riots between Hindus and Syrians. In fact, it may be said that Syrian Orthodox Christians had not existed as a separate community until that time.[247]

Relations between the Syrian Orthodox Christians and other religious communities in Kerala have continued to face many difficulties in the independent India. On the other hand, there have also been signs of

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[246] *Thekkedath* 1988, 136; *Bayly* 1992, 280, 289; *Copley* 1997, 10.
[247] *Bayly* 1992, 285-287, 294, 314.

assimilation among Christians.[248] Nevertheless, many Christians have come to the conclusion that a radical change in the Christian stance towards neighbours of other faiths is absolutely necessary. It is especially needed as the unity of the country seems to be in danger. Many Christians long for the communal harmony which existed before the British era and which they regard as an Indian contribution to the Christian vision.[249]

The churches in Kerala have responded in different ways to this challenge. The Roman Catholics have been able to maintain connections with the Hindu population at the local level. In the case of the Syrian Orthodox Christians, dialogue with other religions has been at the risk of individual theologians. K. P. Aleaz, a theologian of the MSOC, has been the most active person in this field. In the MOSC, official dialogue with other religions has been restricted by the church hierarchy. There has been, however, an unofficial inter-religious dialogue in which Mar Osthathios has been one of the leaders.[250]

It is also worth noting that the MOSC has often been regarded as the most authentically Oriental of all the churches in India. The MOSC theologians have not been averse to using Hindu terms, signs, and symbols. On the other hand, some people living in diaspora have exhorted the MOSC to become "national" and "truly Indian." Yet individuals in general, both priests and laity, have been openly exclusivist and preached Syrian-Christian particularism. The youth seem to have a more positive attitude to inter-religious dialogue. Young people living in India outside Kerala are strongly of the opinion that this kind of dialogue leads to mutual understanding and spiritual enrichment. These diaspora youth

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[248] *Pothan* 1963, 101; *Chaitanya* 1994, 67; *Raj* 1996, 16. Further information about the Hindu traditions and rituals among some Christian groups in South India *Diehl* 1965.
[249] *Samartha* 1987, 22; *Manickam* 1999, 147.
[250] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 41-42, 54.

evidently do not seem to favour the isolationist policy of the elder generation.[251]

Thus there is a change going on in the attitudes to inter-religious dialogue. The web documents, however, do not stress the importance or the mutual benefits of this dialogue. On the other hand, the texts do not highlight the superiority of Christianity either. Both the Syrian Orthodox factions have officially adopted a moderate attitude to inter-religious dialogue, and the same thought may be present in the texts too. Another reason may be simply the fact that other religions are not the primary concern of the texts.

Mar Osthathios does not respond only to the challenge of other religions, but also to the challenge created by modernisation and secularisation. Performing this task, he pays attention to the Christian sexual ethics. He states that today one is surrounded by the so-called civilised people living in what is called a permissive society. "The old immorality is now called new morality. Any one who speaks of sexual discipline is called Victorian, puritanic and even old-fashioned." Mar Osthathios points out that the history shows that all the major cultures have fallen after the "weakness of the citizens in living a loose moral life." The total fall of the Roman Empire succeeded its fall in sexual morality. He further refers to Arnold J. Toynbee as a scholar, who has proved this argument.[252]

Mar Osthathios states that sex has its place just within the wedlock of marriage. Premarital and extramarital intercourses have no Christian sanction. He also reminds that "sexual perversions like homosexuality and masturbation must be understood as perversions and overcome with the grace of God." These words of Mar Osthathios are supplemented in the

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[251] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 52, 62, 73-74.
[252] 40Q2, 38.

Internet version by a quotation from the pamphlet *Chastity Protects* from Diocese of Memphis Natural Family Planning (NFP) Center. This pamphlet by a Roman Catholic Diocese sets forth the same ideals as Mar Osthathios has presented earlier. The pamphlet finds it very important that parents, schools, and churches teach these truths and ideals clearly and reinforce each other.[253] The threats are seen clearly:

> Otherwise, our young people will never hear the words or learn God's truth because the TV, movies, music and the world do not love the children or care about them. So many young people have lost their virginity and self respect because they believed the lies of the world.[254]

The question of the sexual ethics is evidently current in the North American context. For that reason, it is not surprising that Mar Osthathios' words are supplemented from an American Catholic source. It just reinforces the picture of the challenges among the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians in North America.

Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that there are four chapters, numbers 36-39, in Mar Osthathios' text that are not copied to the Internet version. This difference is caused by the fact that in the original version some chapters are divided into two or three sub-chapters. In the Internet version, however, these sub-chapters form their own main chapters, and thus the 40 questions required are achieved earlier.

In one of these removed chapters Mar Osthathios asks how the church festivals of the MOSC could be Christianised. He uses a Russian church festival as an ideal and compares it with those of Kerala. He states that festivals in Kerala should be centred on the Eucharist and devotional life like the Russian festivals. Providing shopping opportunities, artistic enjoyment and "opportunity for drunkards to drink and create trouble to

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[253] 40Q2, 38; CP.
[254] 40Q2, 38.

the faithful" should not be the contents of these festivals. Mar Osthathios also asks, whether a communist or a capitalist can be a Christian. His answer is that a true Christian cannot be a convinced communist or capitalist. He further gives attention to the question of whether a bishop or a priest can enter party politics.[255]

Religious groups in Kerala have been known for their affiliation with political parties. Furthermore, Marxism has been quite a strong force in India, and the communists have come to power in some states, among them Kerala.[256] Consequently, it is understandable that Mar Osthathios, being himself also known as a left-wing thinker, pays attention to party politics and to the question of communism and capitalism. It is clear that this fight between ideologies is not so current in North America. It is, however, difficult to find any clear reason why just these chapters are removed from the Internet version. It may also seem quite surprising that chapter 38 "What about Family Planning?" is also absent. The editor of the Internet version has removed this chapter and gives a large quotation from the Roman Catholic Family Planning Center instead. Is there a reason for this decision?

Mar Osthathios begins his original chapter by stating that family planning is necessary to avoid starvation deaths. He mentions that the Orthodox churches have not made any official declaration on this issue, such as *Humanae Vitae* in the Roman Catholic Church. What is important in the Orthodox discipline is the need of self-control on the forbidden days. According to Mar Osthathios, the Roman Catholic objection to the use of contraceptives should be directed to the bachelors and unmarried and not to "the married couple who do not take it as a license for self-

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[255] 40Q, 36-37, 39.
[256] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 140; *Adappur* 2000, 213.

indulgence." Conception control should be thus allowed, but not birth control by abortion.[257]

It is possible to find reasons why this chapter is not in the Internet version. Firstly, Mar Osthathios' main concern is the preventing of overpopulation. This matter is undoubtedly current in the Indian context, but it is not likely to be the main issue in North America. Furthermore, Mar Osthathios concentrates on the family planning of married couples. The quotation from the Roman Catholic NFP Center is centred on premarital relationships instead. It is probable that the latter issue is a greater problem among Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians in North America. Thus it is not so surprising that this chapter has been left out from the Internet version. Moreover, the added quotation indicates that those responsible for the Internet documents regard the Syriac Orthodox youth as one of their major target groups.

In India there has been an increasing assumption that a modernist technological lifestyle, along with consumerist values, is the most desirable human good. Local Christians have also noticed the dangers of this development. Western technology and science have brought emerging secularisation with them, and the new situation challenges the traditional culture and religion.[258] Therefore it is natural that also Mar Osthathios pays attention to the question of modernisation.

Secularisation and sometimes strict anti-religious attitudes have been true of India, too. Moreover, the impact of modernity may be seen in the loosening of the moral values as well as family values and structures. Generally speaking, however, it seems that in India people continue to be religious in spite of the modernisation. The consequences of modernisation have been more evident in the area of morals than of

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[257] 4OQ, 38.
[258] *Lott* 1987, 83; *Kurian* 1988, 61; *Abraham* 1994, 119.

religion.[259] On the other hand, also in the case of Syrian Orthodox Christians, people's personal relations with parish priests have often been far from satisfactory. There is a collapse of the traditional structures of the church largely because of the effects of secularisation. Furthermore, Christian communities in Kerala have been touched by the crisis of faith. Many, especially among the young, are known to have abandoned their faith or to have become indifferent to it.[260]

As the decline in family values is evident in India, it is not surprising that Mar Osthathios pays attention to matrimonial questions. It is also worth noticing that the situation in India has many things in common with that of the United States. On the one hand, people have remained religious in general. At the same time, however, there has been emerging secularisation that has had effect especially on moral values and family structures. Neither of these developments is unknown in the United States, and thus the suitability of the text for the situation of the diaspora Christians is clear in many ways. In fact, Mar Osthathios' response to the challenge of modernisation may be one reason why his text ended up in the website.

3.7. Focus of the Syriac Orthodox Response

Curian Kaniyamparambil and Geevarghese Mar Osthathios pay attention to various issues. It is not, however, an easy task to put the chapters under certain topics. The following diagram is based on the headings of the documents. Occasionally, the contents and the heading of the chapter do not conform to each other, and the division has been changed in these cases.

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[259] *Amaladoss* 1992, 42; *Chandran* 1994, 56; *Pothen* 1996, 10.
[260] *Visvanathan* 1993, 251-252; *Adappur* 2000, 225.

Diagram 1. *Subjects of the Chapters*
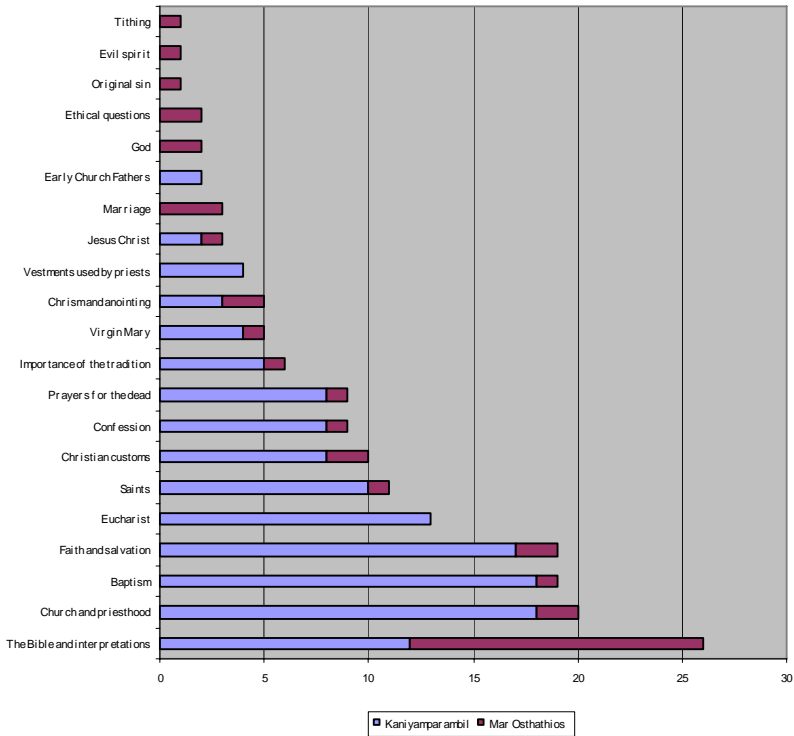
Mar Osthathios concentrates on the Bible and its interpretations, and this topic is definitely the most common one in the texts. Chapters concerning baptism and Eucharist also appear frequently in Kaniyamparambil's work, but Mar Osthathios does not give much attention to these sacraments. Church and priesthood constitute a large group as well, especially in Kaniyamparambil's text. These two themes are so closely interrelated that it is not possible to treat them as separate groups. The group "Christian customs" includes issues such as icons, incense, and Lent. It is worth noticing that the most popular themes are those which give rise to disputes with Protestants. Issues related to the Church and the sacraments occur repeatedly, while there are only few chapters concerning Trinity or

Christology, i.e. doctrines about which there seems to be a general agreement between Orthodox and Protestants.

Generally speaking, Mar Ostathios' text with its concentration on the Bible interpretations and ethical questions seems to have a strong pastoral dimension. He answers questions concerning everyday life situations and Bible passages that may be difficult to interpret. At some points his style of writing approaches pastoral counselling. Kaniyamparambil, on the other hand, concentrates on doctrinal questions, and his text is almost entirely dogmatic.

Historical consciousness has been very important to both the MOSC and the MSOC.[261] Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios, however, do not give much attention to the history of St. Thomas Christians in India. Kaniyamparambil, on the other hand, describes at some points the general history of the Syriac Orthodox Church outside India. This emphasis is in line with the fact that the MSOC is integrally a part of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Also Kaniyamparambil seems to regard the MSOC primarily as a Syriac church, not so much as an Indian church.

Although the texts do not stress the history of the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India, they obviously bear this history with them. Syrian Orthodox Christians in India have traditionally regarded themselves as ritually superior to all other Christian groups.[262] Kaniyamparambil's attitude to modern Protestant groups seems to be in many respects in line with this thought. He stresses the apostolicity of the Syriac Orthodox Church and points at the weaknesses in the Protestant views.

The reasons for this emphasis are not necessarily entirely historical but also issues of current interest. One reason may be the fact that Syrian Orthodox youth have become quite sceptical about the organised

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[261] *Visvanathan* 1993, 36.
[262] *Bayly* 1992, 243-244.

church.[263] In this situation, they are likely to find the modern Protestant communities more attractive than their own church. In fact, these young people may be Kaniyamparambil's chief target group, as he undertakes to prove that the Syriac Orthodox Church is the true apostolic Church and that the Protestant communities have diverged from this Church.

Another reason for the attractiveness of the Pentecostal churches may be the fact that they have led the way in indigenisation of the churches in India. One of the challenges of the Syrian Orthodox factions is to become more Indian.[264] Those Christians who consider their church too much Syriac and too little Indian may find these groups attractive. Kaniyamparambil's text seems to even strengthen this picture of the MSOC as a primarily Syriac church.

At all events, the established "mainline churches" have been experiencing a much smaller rate of growth than the evangelical churches both in India and in the United States. The Pentecostal movement continues to grow rapidly in India, especially in the south. Baptists are gaining new members as well.[265] This development is likely to be an important reason for the fact that Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios address their critique to the evangelical and charismatic movements. The old Protestant churches seem to be a far smaller threat than these new potential "sheep stealers." In fact, the old Protestant churches face the same threat of losing members to the rising movements.

Pentecostal-like movements in India preceded the development of the 20th century Pentecostalism in North America and Europe by at least 40 years in the 19th century. The Brethren Church was formed as some reformers separated themselves from the Mar Thoma Church. These

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[263] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 71.
[264] *Kurian* 1988, 59; *Mundadan* 1988, 58; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 83-84; *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 46.
[265] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 82, 84.

believers advocated more radical reforms, such as believers' baptism by immersion, the priesthood of all believers, and separation from worldly attachments and amusements. The movement began to spread to different parts of Malabar, and this revival of the late 19th century had its effects also among the Syrian Orthodox Christians. As modern Pentecostalism began in India in 1906, it developed independently, Christians of Malabar having an important role in this process. For example, the founder of the Indian Pentecostal Church, the largest and fastest growing Pentecostal group in India, was a former Syrian Orthodox Christian teacher. Furthermore, in the 1920s many Syrian Christians were baptised into Pentecostal churches in Travancore.[266] Thus Syrian Orthodox Christians have observed this movement from close range from the very beginning. Pentecostal groups have also gained Syrian Orthodox converts from the start.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Malayalam District of the South India Assemblies of God had over 500 churches, three Bible schools, and more than 700 ministers. The total number of Pentecostals in India was approximately 33.5 million at that time. It is also worth noticing that the Assemblies of God church in Kerala is active in missionary work and sends missionaries to other sections of India, to numerous countries in Asia, the Middle East, and the United States. The Neocharismatic movements in India have drawn converts also from traditional St. Thomas Christians of Kerala. However, the Pentecostals are not anymore as successful in attracting Syrian Orthodox Christians as they were in the early 20th century. For all that, they are still accused of being "sheep stealers."[267] Because the different charismatic and evangelical groups have challenged the Syrian Orthodox Christians continuously since the 19th

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[266] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 84; *A. C. George* 2001, 219-220, 223-224, 233.
[267] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 85; *Burgess* 2001, 85, 92, 95; *A. C. George* 2001, 227-228.

century, it is not a surprise that Mar Osthathios and especially Kaniyamparambil express the Syrian Orthodox doctrine in many ways as a response to this very challenge.

The First World War marked the watershed between the age of British dominance in the missionary movement and the era of American supremacy, which has continued to the present day.[268] This development has led to the situation in which many American churches and movements are also present in India. American missionaries have been active, for example, in the rise of many Pentecostal movements.[269] As we have seen, nowadays Indian Pentecostals do missionary work in the United States as well. Therefore the composition of the religious scene in India is not as different from that of North America as it used to be. Syrian Orthodox Christians face the same challenges of Protestantism and modernisation both in India and in North America. Furthermore, it is the evangelical movements that are growing much more rapidly than the old churches in both of these regions. Hence Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts are likely to be of current interest in their new American context, too.

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[268] *Stanley* 1990, 135.
[269] *A. C. George* 2001, 224-225.

4. THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNET MATERIAL

4.1. From South India to North America – the Streams of Exclusivism and Ecumenism

One of the most prominent documents on the website is a letter written by Fr. Kuriakose Abraham Karukayil, the Vice President of the Association for Protection of Antiochean True Faith (APATF). There is a link to this document on the front page, and this letter undoubtedly gives valuable information about the situation of the Syriac Orthodox immigrants in North America. Karukayil begins his letter as follows:

> Association for Protection of Antiochean True Faith is a spiritual organization that was established with the mission to protect the one True, Apostolic, and Catholic faith of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church. The Association was formed at the time when the true Syriac Orthodox faith, passed on to us by our forefathers, was questioned. During the past decade, the Association has stood firm in the Antiochean true faith and has always extended its whole-hearted support, faith, obligation, and acquiescence to the Holy Throne of St. Peter and His Holiness the Patriarch of Antioch.[270]

These hard times, when the "true faith was questioned", were in the mid-1990s, as the official and canonical status of the rival Catholicos Party was affirmed by the Supreme Court verdict in India.[271] Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians saw this verdict as a violation of the supreme authority of the patriarch and thus regarded it as a threat to the "Antiochean true faith." Karukayil's words imply that the authority of the patriarch as a unifying factor became perhaps more important in this new situation. As the authority was questioned, Syriac Orthodox Christians

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[270] APATF.
[271] APATF.

replied by building their identity on this authority. Thus it is not surprising that the patriarch is also the Supreme Patron of the APATF.

The idea of establishing a particular North American chapter of the association came into being in the late 1990s. A few church members in New York and New Jersey "felt the importance of protecting the true Antiochean faith and passing it on to their children."[272] Without specifying or explaining the challenges of the Syriac Orthodox Christians further, Karukayil goes on telling the heroic story of the association:

> The Lord strengthened its members to face all the atrocities, and by the grace of God, they were able to fight a successful war against the forces that threatened the existence of our Holy Church. The prayers and the true faith of the faithful were so strong that they were able to hold on to the true Syriac Orthodox faith and traditions.[273]

Karukayil also mentions that the APATF has spread the word of God to its members through prayer meetings and gatherings. The association urges its members "to stay strong in faith through unconditional prayers and devotion to cast out the intruders and invaders from the Church as Jesus Christ did at the Jerusalem temple." Karukayil further points out that the association highly welcomes the participation of young people. He says that the association plans arrangements "to teach the younger generation the true faith and the rich traditions of the Syrian Orthodox Church."[274]

Confessional emphasis is evident in Karukayil's document. What is important is the preservation of the "true Antiochean faith." This emphasis is strengthened by laying stress on the authority of the patriarch and thus on the church hierarchy. The ethnicity of the immigrants is not mentioned at all. What is significant for Karukayil is not that these

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[272] APATF.
[273] APATF.
[274] APATF.

immigrants are Keralite Christians or Asian-Indian Christians but that they are true Syriac Orthodox Christians. The exclusivist tendency of the document does not seem to leave much room for ecumenical efforts either.

Karukayil's ideas clearly resemble those of Curian Kaniyamparambil. Both authors seem to lay stress on the church hierarchy and the uniqueness of the Syriac Orthodox Church. They find it extremely important to preserve the original Syriac Orthodox faith. From this point of view, it is not a surprise that Kaniyamparambil's text is available on the website. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios' ecumenical thought seems to be left without any support from Karukayil's document. Hence there is reason to ask, whether Karukayil's letter describes the challenges of the Syriac Orthodox immigrants in their entirety. Is the preservation of the "true Antiochean faith" really the major problem among these immigrants? How do the documents written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios respond to the challenges experienced by immigrants?

At first, it is necessary to look at the history of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants in North America. The changes in the immigration laws during the 1960s actually triggered the migration from India. Within a short period of time, a large number of Asian Indians settled in North America to work as physicians, engineers, scientists, technicians, professors, and also personnel in some other professional fields. Those who came were part of the "brain drain" from the Third World to the Western countries. The Kerala state had not achieved very much industrial advancement, so educated people had to move out of Kerala to earn their living. The high density of population in Kerala was one factor which increased migration to other parts of India, as well as to North America.[275]

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[275] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 9, 55; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 15.

The job opportunities in the United States resulted in the arrival of a large number of Keralite nurses. Furthermore, most of these nurses were Christian. In the mid-1980s, it was estimated that about 85 percent of Kerala immigrants were Christians, and the main reason for the Christian dominance was the large number of nurses among these immigrants. Early Asian-Indian immigrants were generally wealthy, although those who arrived after 1975 did not have as good income as those who had come before. However, especially after 1986, wealthy immigrants have arrived in Canada.[276]

There were also several other qualities that contributed to a smooth transition as these immigrants came to North America. Their knowledge of English, occupational skills, and a high level of education which these people brought with them were helpful for a successful life in America. In the 1980s, one was able to say that Asian Indians were the most talented and the most easily acculturated immigrants in the long history of American immigration.[277] But what were the Syrian Orthodox clergy thinking about this situation? An easy process of acculturation and assimilation could perhaps mean the loss of the "true Antiochean faith." Both the lay immigrants and the clergy started to develop effective strategies of adaptation.

Religion tends to play an important role as immigrants begin to integrate into a new society, and this has been the case among Asian-Indian immigrants as well. Religion becomes the life blood of immigrant communities since it supplies continuity with the traditional culture. It provides a sense of identity and thus helps to meet the challenges of the new society. Religion also helps immigrants preserve cohesion in their group, and thus it is not surprising that they usually become more

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[276] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 9-11; *Daniels* 1991, 363–36; *Coward* 2000, 148.
[277] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 10, 105-107; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 21; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 44

religious in their new environment than they were before they left home. Since religion is a social category with considerable acceptance in the United States, the emphasis on religious affiliation and identity allows the immigrant to maintain self-identity while simultaneously acquiring community acceptance.[278]

According to *Raymond Brady Williams*, the establishment of Asian-Indian Christian groups in the U.S. can be traced in three stages. In the early 1970s, the few immigrant Christians attended churches of established American denominations. The common custom was to keep formal membership with the church in India, but to participate in the American congregations. In conjunction with that participation, multilingual and interdenominational Indian prayer groups began to meet occasionally. The adaptation process was primarily national, but there was also a strong ecumenical aspect in it. There was already a long tradition of cooperation between religious groups in the United States at that time, and thus these Indian forms of joint Christian worship were nothing unprecedented in the American context.[279]

In the second stage, the immigrants established separate groups for worship in the regional languages. The language groups incorporated persons from various denominations, so that a Malayalee leader could remark, "We even had Pentecostals in our meetings." The strategies of adaptation continued to be in many ways ecumenical and based on joint worship, but national groups gave way to more specific ethnic and regional groups. The ethnic strategy of adaptation seems to have been most effective among immigrants of the first generation. These people have had a strong loyalty to memories of church and culture in India.[280]

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[278] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 140; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 11; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 45.
[279] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 109, 281; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 27-29.
[280] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 105, 109-110.

The third stage, beginning in the late 1970s, following the dramatic increase in immigration, brought the establishment of denominational congregations and ecclesiastical structures. As Malankara Syrian Orthodox immigrants had earlier built their identity upon national or regional basis along with other Christians, this third stage meant the development of a confessional identity and growing allegiance to the church hierarchy. The ancient relations with Antioch as well as the Syriac heritage started to become increasingly important.[281]

Denominational loyalty proved to be strong. Statistics have shown that in the 1990s, almost 90 percent of Asian-Indian immigrants participated in the same church or group in the United States as they did in India. Of the respondents, 70 percent indicated that they attended services of their own church only. Thus Asian-Indian Christians have been considerably committed to their churches. Furthermore, their early professional and economic success have enabled them to establish strong networks and Christian organisations.[282]

Williams has adopted the concept "denominational strategy of adaptation" to refer to this phenomenon.[283] As earlier phases had included national, ethnic, and ecumenical strategies, this third phase saw adaptation primarily along denominational lines. This distinction between different strategies is very helpful. It is worth noting, however, that the word "denominational" is in this context used as a sociological concept. Thus the concept "denominational strategy" may be applied to all churches and Christian immigrant groups regardless of whether they see themselves as a part of the American field of denominations.

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[281] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 28; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 13, 110; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 102.
[282] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 45.
[283] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 106-108.

This third stage seems to be the ideal one in Kaniyamparambil's and Karukayil's thought. The former of these authors strongly discourages his readers from attending Protestant services. The earlier phases included just this kind of activity, as it was possible for St. Thomas immigrants to pray together with Evangelical Christians. After those days, the number of denominational congregations, such as Syriac Orthodox parishes, has continued to increase smoothly. Nevertheless, the crucial question is, whether the denominational phase will be the final stage of development.

In the first quarter century of immigrant experience, religious groups which stress ethnic identity have grown rapidly. These groups have often been denominational, since ethnic and denominational trajectories tend to reinforce one another. Many parents have also found it reasonable to transmit the allegiance to the church hierarchy to their children. They have regarded the transmission of language or ethnic identity to be far more difficult. At the same time, ecumenical and national strategies have been less popular among immigrants.[284]

The Malayalam-speaking Christians from Kerala have been very active and successful in using the denominational strategy and establishing churches in the United States. In fact, the history of Christianity in Kerala and its divisions may be an important reason for this development among immigrants. Christian groups have survived in India by establishing boundaries between themselves and other religious groups, and those boundaries have survived in America. Furthermore, this kind of development has been particularly characteristic of the Oriental Orthodox churches in North America, but also the Eastern Orthodox churches have experienced similar trends. The ethnocentric character of these churches has limited their ability to become assimilated to the tradition of religious pluralism and ecumenical cooperation in North America. For example, a

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[284] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 282-283.

large sector of Syriac Orthodox clergy pursues an active policy of discouraging interdenominational marriages.[285]

Orthodox churches in the U.S. have been in general hesitant to recruit new members and to convert people into Orthodox faith. In the case of Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians, missionary activity and openness to converts have been at a low level as well. In fact, Syriac Orthodox parishes have been the most reluctant ones among the Orthodox parishes in this respect. In his research, *Alexei D. Krindatch* could not find any active recruiting work among them.[286]

Keeping this fact in mind, it is interesting that the translation of Kaniyamparambil's text seems to have a clear missionary function, so that it could even be seen as proselytising other Christians. Paul Philipose mentions in the Introduction that he translated the text, because there are "millions of Christians all over the globe who have never heard of our true apostolic faith." Although the primary goal of the text is probably to educate the members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, this missionary aim must be taken into consideration as well. It is a significant initiative within a church which has not been known for its openness to converts. Furthermore, as we have seen, Mar Osthathios also stresses the missionary character of the Church in his text.

The Syriac Orthodox Church in the U.S. is doing much work to preserve its ethno-cultural identity. In fact, there is a significant difference between this church and all the other American Orthodox churches in this regard. These other churches find it far less important to preserve their ethno-cultural identity. For example, three percent of the members of the Orthodox Church of America say that their church has strong ethnic heritage and that their own parish is trying to preserve it. The percentage

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[285] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 104; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 101–102; *Krindatch* 2002, 561-562; *Binns* 2003, 8, 158-159; *Krindatch* [2003], 5, 8.
[286] *Krindatch* 2002, 545; *Krindatch* [2003], 12.

among Syriac Orthodox Christians is 79.[287] This pattern is in line with the general development of Asian-Indian immigrant churches in North America. These churches have developed independently, having little ecumenical cooperation with other Asian-Indian or American denominations.[288] They have preserved both ethnic and denominational identity.

There have also been negative consequences resulting from the fact that most Asian-Indian Christians have had little contact with Christians of other national, ethnic, or denominational groups. This situation has reinforced tensions and mutual misunderstandings. The lack of personal interaction has left space for stereotypes which derive from representations of American families and young people in the media. At the same time, Orthodox Christianity is generally unknown to Americans, and they often have wrong prejudice.[289] It is worth noticing that Paul Philipose mentions that he translated Curian Kaniyamparambil's book because he wanted to make his church better known for Americans. Indeed, one of the functions of the text on the Internet may be to prevent misunderstandings. On the other hand, the text seems to include some stereotypes concerning Protestant churches.

Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants are likely to preserve their distinct identity, both because of their Orthodox background and because of their history in Kerala. We have also seen that both ethnic and denominational strategies of adaptation are applied by these immigrants. Kaniyamparambil's and Karukayil's texts stress the importance of the latter of these patterns, namely the denominational allegiance and the importance of the church hierarchy. They defend the worldwide Syriac

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[287] *Krindatch* [2003], 12; *Krindatch* 2005, 2-3.
[288] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 251-252. On the other hand, some immigrant churches, such as Pentecostal groups, have been active in creating ties to other Pentecostal groups, while trying to maintain their cultural identity. *Wilkinson* 2000, 223, 225.
[289] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1986, 890; *Ugolnik* 1992, 610; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 269.

church, not an ethnic Indian church.[290] These texts do not stress the ethnic identity, but since they are published on the website of an ethnic archdiocese, the ethnic context is evident. Furthermore, there are some ethnic aspects in Mar Osthathios' text which are related to the local culture of Kerala. Thus, it is possible to say that the content of the website supports the ethnic, as well as the denominational strategy, both of which are characteristic of Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants.

It is also noteworthy that both of the web texts have been written by Indian authors, not by Syriac Orthodox theologians from the Middle East. This fact is notable especially in the case of Mar Osthathios, who represents the rival church. Those responsible for the website have preferred his text to those written by theologians loyal to the Patriarch of Antioch. This choice implies clear ethnic orientation.

However, the emphases of Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts slightly differ from each other. The background of these authors undoubtedly has something to do with this difference. Kaniyamparambil, belonging to the MSOC, brings forward the idea of a worldwide Syriac Orthodox Church with the Patriarch of Antioch as its supreme head. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios, belonging to the autocephalous MOSC, finds it easier to speak of Indian customs. Nevertheless, denominational and ethnic emphases are not the only ones present in the texts. There is a prominent ecumenical stress in Mar Osthathios' document. Does this ecumenical thought have any relevance to the immigrants?

There are signs that the younger generations may find the ecumenical fellowships attractive again. These interdenominational groups have not been able to provide a clear identity to their parents, who have divided

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[290] According to the Orthodox principles, the fact that there are dozens of national and ethnic Orthodox churches in North America may be seen as a significant problem. *Smith* 1978, 1184; *Constantelos* 1979, 201. From this point of view, Kaniyamparambil's stress on universality instead of ethnicity seems to be appropriate in the American context.

into groups along ethnic and denominational lines. But young people and recent immigrants may adapt an ecumenical strategy which takes precedence over ethnic or denominational identification. Ethnic customs have been under attack by young people, and it has been difficult for the elders to distinguish between relatively insignificant aspects of cultural heritage and the fundamental beliefs and practices that are part of their Christian commitments. Furthermore, one factor promoting increasing ecumenism may be the fact that American Protestant churches have begun to recognise their new neighbours and to develop working relations with them.[291]

Ecumenical initiatives among Asian-Indian immigrants have moved along structural lines, and churches under episcopal control have also contributed to this development. These "episcopal churches" have found that they have many things in common both historically and liturgically. At the same time, this ecumenical movement tends to exclude strongly evangelistic groups.[292] What is interesting is that Kaniyamparambil, while stressing the authenticity and originality of the Syriac Orthodox Church, seems to give some support to this kind of ecumenism. He draws a clear distinction between episcopal Protestant churches and modern Protestant groups, which is in line with this kind of ecumenism. Thus his attitude, which seems to be quite exclusivist at first sight, may indeed have ecumenical relevance in the American context.

Many Christian Kerala immigrants have drawn together in ecumenical meetings just like they did in the first phase of immigration, before they split into denominational congregations as the community grew larger. However, the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese has not been considerably active in the ecumenical field. The Syriac Orthodox Church,

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[291] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 3, 117, 280; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 8–9, 277.
[292] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 102–103.

in general, as well as the MOSC, have been more active in this respect in the U.S. In fact, the Syriac Orthodox Church as a whole seems to be more ecumenically orientated than many other North American Orthodox churches.[293]

One may say that there are two competing streams among Kerala immigrants, one promoting ecumenism and the other stressing denominational identity. Moreover, it seems at first sight that Mar Osthathios represents the former, ecumenical strategy of adaptation, while Kaniyamparambil promotes the latter, denominational strategy. This conclusion, however, is oversimplified. The ecumenical strategy of adaptation among Asian-Indian immigrants has meant that individual immigrants have participated in interdenominational worship. Some entirely new ecumenical churches, too, have been established by these immigrants.

Neither Mar Osthathios nor Kaniyamparambil seem to promote this kind of ecumenism. Rather, Mar Osthathios stresses the importance of ecumenism at the level of churches. It is the churches that have the responsibility for striving for unity. He does not encourage any Syrian Orthodox believer to leave his church and to join an ecumenical church. Thus Mar Osthathios does not represent the ecumenical strategy of adaptation in its traditional meaning. Furthermore, from this point of view, the difference between Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios is not so fundamental. In fact, it may be said that both of them promote the denominational strategy of adaptation in their writings. As we have seen in the second chapter, the difference between these authors concerns the way in which they see the relation between the Orthodox Church and other churches. In this respect, Kaniyamparambil seems to represent quite an exclusivist view, stressing the uniqueness and the superiority of the

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[293] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 116; *Krindatch* 2002, 545-546; *Krindatch* [2003], 8, 13.

Syriac Orthodox Church. From Mar Osthathios' viewpoint, the ecumenical dialogue between churches takes place on a more equal basis.

The greatest anxiety among many immigrant groups is about whether the children will be able to maintain the continuity which will lead to healthy personal and group identity. Most of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants agree that life in the diaspora involves the risk of losing their liturgical and patristic tradition as well as their history and faith. Parents find it difficult to pass these religious commitments on to their Americanised children. The church leaders are for their part struggling to make their church responsive to their youth, while attempting to maintain the fundamental traditions.[294] Thus it is evident that, particularly Kaniyamparambil's, but also Mar Osthathios', words are current, as the Syriac Orthodox Church attempts to prevent the youth from abandoning denominational ties and attending ecumenical churches.

It is worth noticing that the denominational phase of adaptation has not been entirely trouble-free. New challenges have arisen since the Indian churches have established their own structures in the United States. Many leaders fear that other Christian pastors and groups will "steal their sheep." This fear has also compelled many immigrant churches to maintain their ethnic nature along with the denominational identity.[295] As we have seen, the Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants have been very active in trying to preserve their ethnic and denominational identity. Perhaps the fear of "sheep stealers" has been one reason for this strategy.

Nevertheless, the older immigrants have been compelled to make concessions to young people. The confrontation with the American society has resulted in gradual adjustments and alterations in traditional customs. On the other hand, particularly the older generation has

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[294] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1986, 890; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 209; *Chaillot* 1998, 75-76.
[295] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 252; *Raymond Brady Williams* 2000, 21.

responded to the challenge by creating new boundaries and stressing religious commitments. Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants are Christians in a Christian country, but at the same time they may regard themselves as aliens in a secularised country that threatens their old values and customs. Christian immigrants must work out their new identities amidst the tensions between Western secularism and American Christianity.[296] It seems to be clear that the church leaders find the Western secularism to be a negative phenomenon. But how should one fight against its impact? And what kind of position should be taken on the American Christianity in this process?

This is the challenge to which the web documents are responding, even though they were not originally written in the American context. As we have noticed, the responses of the authors are different in certain respects. Kaniyamparambil seems to draw a parallel between Western secularism and modern Protestantism. Mar Osthathios, on the other hand, sees the traditional Protestant churches as allies in the fight against Western secularism.[297] Nevertheless, the challenges remain the same, and we will focus our attention on these challenges in the next chapter.

4.2. Challenges of the Diaspora in India and in North America

Speaking about the challenges experienced by Malankara Syrian Orthodox immigrants in North America, one has to bear in mind that this diaspora is not the first one in the history of these Christians. In the latter half of the 20th century, Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians of Kerala began to migrate to various parts of India, mostly in search of employment. This

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[296] *Smith* 1978, 1161; *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 114-115; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 38, 182.
[297] The threat of secularism has promoted ecumenism on a larger scale, too. The challenge of pluralistic society was an important reason for the fact that the first official dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholics since the 15th century took place in the U.S. *Borelli & Erickson* 1996, 21.

migration often resulted in a crisis of faith as Christians reacted to the pluralistic situation in the diaspora. On the other hand, since the diaspora in North America is comparatively younger than its Indian counterpart, its problems are not necessarily similar to those of India.[298] Nevertheless, it is relevant to take into consideration the diaspora challenges in India as well. Mar Osthathios originally directed his text to young people living in the diaspora in India, and also Kaniyamparambil was certainly aware of the problems of this diaspora. Thus the challenges experienced in India may help us understand how the texts respond to the challenges in North America.

The challenges of the diaspora have forced the older generation of the immigrants to make certain concessions. One of them is the increasing use of English. In the MOSC, for example, the use of English is encouraged in both liturgical and social activities among people in the diaspora. However, many important books are still waiting for translation into English. The problem is not entirely new. Syrian Orthodox Christians in Kerala have discussed, over a long period of time, the extent to which the church should use Malayalam, the local language, along with Syriac, the official liturgical language unknown to local people.[299]

It is evident that the change from Malayalam into English is not simply a matter of language, since it touches wider spheres of life. The chanting of Malayalam is not possible in English, and Marthomites have experienced that the absence of their traditional language is likely to result in a transition from the Orthodox orientation of the church to the Anglican. Ecumenically this means that the Mar Thoma Church may identify itself with the Episcopal Church in North America, whereas in India it has tried to preserve its nature as a Syrian church. People of the

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[298] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, xxi, 66.
[299] *Samuel* 1988, 101; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 125–126; *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 96.

first generation have felt at home using Malayalam, the language that was a binding factor already before they left Kerala. But the second generation is used to speaking English in everyday life.[300] The website of the Malankara Archdiocese may be seen as an indicator of the development. All the texts on the site have been written in English, such as Mar Osthathios' document, or translated into English, such as Kaniyamparambil's text. This fact is a clear sign of the increasing domination of the English language.

From the viewpoint of the older generations, this development involves many risks. As we have seen, Asian-Indian immigrant churches have tried to preserve their ethnic character in order to avoid "sheep stealers", who tend to be Protestant groups. The loss of Malayalam as a unifying force may be a serious set-back in this fight against "sheep stealers." Furthermore, the Marthomites have regarded the change of language as a sign of some kind of "Protestantisation." Perhaps the weakening of the ethnic identity among the youth has compelled the church leaders to stress the denominational identity instead. Perhaps many of them think that the use of English needs to be accompanied by a strong and exclusive denominational emphasis, such as in Kaniyamparambil's and Karukayil's texts. It is possible to speculate that, having noticed the difficulties in preserving a strong ethnic identity, the leaders and webmasters of the archdiocese have concentrated on protecting the denominational identity. At all events, the missionary goal which Paul Philipose gives to Kaniyamparambil's text can be seen as an example of stressing denominational identity at the expense of ethnic identity.

The question of the language is also current in the Indian diaspora. For those young people, who have grown up outside Kerala, Malayalam is

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[300] *Pothan* 1963, 91; *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 123.

simply the language of the liturgy and not their "thinking language." At the same time, most youth in the MOSC seem to feel that the Eucharist in any language other than Malayalam is less than complete. These young people also feel that it is essential for the future of their church to preserve its Syrian Christian identity. The Syrian identity and the Malayalam language have been deeply imprinted in the mind of the youth, despite the fact that they have been closer to other cultures and languages.[301]

Philip Kuruvilla has noticed that one problem related to the language is the paucity of relevant literature in English or Hindi available to the average youngster in the Indian diaspora. The few publications in English intended for the youth invariably make mention in the preface of how they were written to help the youth outside Kerala. Kuruvilla mentions Mar Osthathios' *40 Questions Answered* as an example of this kind of book. According to Kuruvilla, however, many of these books "churn out dry doctrines and dogma's which pre-suppose a non-existent, high theological level of knowledge among it's readers."[302] Perhaps Kaniyamparambil's text with its dogmatic emphasis may be included to this group. Thus, if we look at the Internet documents from the viewpoint of the youth in the North American diaspora, Mar Osthathios' text with its practical and pastoral stress is likely to have more relevance among these youth.

One challenge among the Syrian Orthodox Christians in India has been the indigenisation of their church. This challenge is also related to the question of the language. Furthermore, this issue is by no means simple. Some theologians have pointed out that Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians have to stress the tradition of the Church Fathers. Others, however, feel that the "borrowed identity" with other Orthodox

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[301] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 84, 88-89, 98.
[302] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 89-90.

churches constrains the church from achieving its goal of indigenisation. They feel that their church has not assimilated enough to the surrounding Indian culture and society.[303]

The question of the indigenisation is not a new one. The CMS-leader Henry Venn stated already in 1869 that the Malankara Church was too closely connected to Antioch. According to Venn, the church had not been able to become an Indian church which could grow. His goal was a native church of India, which could stand on its own feet.[304] Today many Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians seem to have same kind of views. According to them, the fathers of the Malankara Church sought to remain Syrian rather than Indian. Thus Indian Christians became more interested in a Syrian identity than in evolving for themselves a Christian identity within the Indian context.[305]

Although many persons share the view that Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christianity should become more Indian, some of them still regard the Syrian Christianity of Kerala as the most deeply Indian form of Christianity.[306] It is also worth noticing that the process of indigenisation can be more easily carried out in the autocephalous MOSC than in the MSOC, which is in many respects dependent on the Patriarchate of Antioch. Thus it is not surprising that it is Kaniyamparambil who stresses the Syriac Orthodox heritage of his church. He does not speak of his church as an Indian church but as a Syriac church. Mar Osthathios, on the other hand, pays attention to the Indian traditions and Indian context as well. The difference between these two churches becomes evident in the question of indigenisation.

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[303] *Cherian* 1986, 113; *Tharakan* 1988, 40; *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 47, 57.
[304] *Peter Williams* 2000, 169-171.
[305] *Samuel* 1988, 103; *Tharakan* 1988, 40.
[306] *Sahi* 1987, 132.

Why have these two texts, representing somewhat different views on indigenisation, been put on the Internet in North America? The answer may be that both of them reflect the problem of indigenisation in the American context. In India, Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians have been regarded as Syriac, but in North America they have been regarded as Asian-Indian. The indigenisation process, which has been in many ways unfinished in India, seems to go on in North America. But now the question is not just about being a Syriac Christian or an Indian Christian. Now there is also a third alternative. One has to try to find a balance between Syriac, Asian-Indian, and American identities. In this situation it is also relevant to think, whether to use Syriac, Malayalam, or English.

In India it has been important for Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians to have a Syriac identity, as distinct from other people. In North America, however, it seems to be important to have both a Syriac identity and an Asian-Indian identity as distinct from Americans. In India it has been important for preserving one's distinct identity that these Christians have adapted a Syriac identity, but as they come to a new context, it is suddenly important for them to "become" Indian. This goal becomes important even for the members of the MSOC, and an implication of this process is the fact that the Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants have their own ethnic archdiocese in North America. From this point of view, it is not so surprising that Mar Osthathios' document has been put on the website of the MSOC. Although he represents a rival church, this rival church has a far stronger tradition of seeing itself as an Indian church than the MSOC. This aspect has become important in the diaspora.

It is worth noticing that during the last decades, one part of the process of indigenisation among churches in India has been to convert the

churches sensitive to the needs of the modern and secular India.[307] This is also a challenge to which the web texts are responding for their part. What is important is that the same challenge seems to be an integral part of the indigenisation process among the immigrants in North America. Finding a balance between Syriac, Asian-Indian, and American identities evidently involves responding to the challenges created by Protestantism and secularisation. To respond to the American challenge seems to be in many ways to respond to these two challenges of Protestantism and secularisation. At first we will pay attention to the Protestant challenge.

Pentecostals are the fastest-growing Christian group both in India and among Asian-Indian immigrants in America. There are also churches who occupy a liturgical niche between "Syrian ritualism" and "Pentecostal emotionalism." These churches, such as the Indian Brethren, draw members from both Syrian and Pentecostal immigrants and attempt to protect their own members from the allure of both.[308] Thus, from the Syriac Orthodox viewpoint, certain Protestant groups, either more or less charismatic, can be seen as a threat both in India and in North America. This correspondence makes it possible that the texts written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios are also relevant in the North American context in responding to the Protestant challenge.

The reasons for the attractiveness of the Pentecostal and other charismatic groups are various. It seems that the charismatic ethos has the power to break down the differences of gender, race, class, and education. Part of this attraction of the charismatic movement is the revaluation of both language and gesture in Pentecostal meetings. Speaking in tongues involves the elevation of speech to a level removed from domination by either Indian or American syntax. The formulaic speech patterns do not

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[307] *Mundadan* 1988, 48; *Tharakan* 1988, 41.
[308] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 107; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 159, 161.

require long training or great expertise to employ or appreciate. Particularly the youth seems to be attracted to the lively music, friendliness, and high emotion of charismatic gatherings. Young people also have difficulties appreciating and learning the elaborate symbolism of the Syrian Orthodox rites.[309]

Some Baptist conventions and Pentecostal organisations in North America view the immigrants as "the mission field that moved next door." At the same time, there is uncertainty about whether the mission is to gather the newly arrived Christians into ethnic churches or to convert nominal Christians and those who are not Christians into the missionary church. Individual Asian Indians and Asian-Indian parishes are for their part somewhat apprehensive when they are approached as objects of mission. Furthermore, collective membership in most of the Indian churches is threatened by the pattern of individual conversion propagated by some evangelical and Pentecostal churches.[310]

It is evident that Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts provide means for responding to these challenges. The documents also take part in an ongoing discussion between immigrants supporting old episcopal traditions and those representing evangelical and charismatic groups. Some rely upon the written Bible and neglect oral tradition and the rich symbolism of rituals. These conservatives and evangelicals accuse those who rely upon "empty ritual" of being only nominal Christians without any personal knowledge of either the words or gesture language of the liturgy. Representatives of the traditional churches may for their part regard these evangelicals as Gnostic heretics.[311] This latter criticism also receives support from the text of Mar Osthathios and especially from Kaniyamparambil.

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[309] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 164, 192–194.
[310] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 206, 265.
[311] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 190.

One aspect of the Protestant challenge is the fact that television evangelists and the music in religious TV-programmes have a significant influence on immigrant Christians. These programmes inculcate the evangelists' condemnation of American mores and society. At the same time they make immigrants assimilate elements of American evangelical Christianity, including its musical styles. Thus television programmes have a great influence on the socialisation of both immigrants and their children.[312] It is worth noticing that the situation is twofold. On the one hand, television evangelists help the immigrants to keep their distance from the secularised society. On the other hand, they promote evangelical Christianity, which the Syriac Orthodox clergy is not likely to be so happy with. In Kaniyamparambil's text this latter function of televangelism is emphasised at the expense of the former one. He seriously warns his readers of these televangelists.

As we have seen, Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios do not pay much attention to themes like predestination, free will or synergism. One reason may be the fact that those Protestant groups that are attracting Syrian Orthodox Christians in India are usually modern evangelical and charismatic groups. These groups have largely adopted the doctrine of the free will. At the same time, the old Protestant churches, which have a more positive attitude to the doctrine of predestination, are also losing members to evangelical and charismatic groups. It is worth noticing that the same process has been going on in North America. Thus the traditional Protestant churches are not likely to be a threat to Syrian Orthodox churches in the new diaspora context either, and that's why the web texts, with their response to the charismatic and evangelical challenges, are relevant in North America as well.

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[312] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 200–201.

These certain similarities between the context of India and that of North America may also be observed in the case of practical questions. As we have noticed, one of the current issues in India is the practice of paying for sacraments. Kaniyamparambil also pays a lot of attention to defending this practice. In North America, most of the priests are married men with secular jobs and families. They receive gifts at ceremonies like baptism, marriage, and funerals. Those people, who do not recognise that these gifts have been the only income of the priests from their church, have accused these priests of "selling the sacraments."[313] Thus the critique, to which Kaniyamparambil responses in the Indian context, is by no means unknown in North America either.

The online documents also defend the right to use medicines. Already in the early phase of Indian Pentecostalism, leaders preached reliance on faith healing, causing Pentecostals to refrain from establishing hospitals. Also today some immigrants belong to congregations that emphasise faith healing and view reliance on modern medicine as evidence of immaturity in faith.[314] Thus Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' words are current also in North America.

The Protestant challenge may have some similarities with the question of syncretism, which is an issue of current interest in the Indian diaspora. Studies have shown that the majority of the young MOSC-members in the Indian diaspora feel that in the future Christians of the diaspora will be more closely identified with those of other faiths in their neighbouring areas than with Christians in Kerala. Furthermore, a far greater number has agreed that in the event of this scenario becoming true, it would still not make them "less Christian."[315] If this is the case with other religions in India, it is easy to understand that the same trend is current in North

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[313] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 114.
[314] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 164, 170.
[315] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 88.

America. Furthermore, in North America the surrounding communities are usually Christian. This makes it perhaps even easier for immigrants to adapt things from these communities and also to join them.

The parish priests in the Indian diaspora have a clearly negative attitude to religious tolerance and signs of syncretism. On the other hand, some theologians of the MOSC, such as Mar Osthathios, have had a different opinion. According to him, one's persistent fear of syncretism is due to the "lack of faith in the transforming Christ, the Logos at work in all religions and ideologies."[316] Mar Osthathios does not, however, bring these thoughts forward in his book *40 Questions Answered.* This may be one reason why the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese has been able to put the text on its website.

The challenge of secularisation is closely related to many of the challenges presented above. Mar Osthathios clearly tries to respond to this challenge, and his response includes the idea that the Orthodox Christians should ecumenically cooperate with Roman Catholics, as well as with traditional Protestant churches. These churches should fight together against secularisation. Kaniyamparambil, on the other, concentrates on the challenge of Protestantism and does not explicitly say much about secularisation. Nevertheless, doing so, Kaniyamparambil seems to identify the Protestant churches in many ways with secularisation. Thus he may be seen as indirectly speaking about secularisation.

This connection between Protestantism and secular culture is evident in the North American context. Asian-Indian Christian immigrants feel under siege in the American culture, made all the more threatening because it appears as a "false friend" wearing some familiar trappings of Christianity. Among Syrian Orthodox Christians, the feeling is strong that

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[316] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 82-83, 92.

the youth need protection from the vices and sins of the American youth culture, which has even gained footing among the Christian youth.[317]

New Asian-Indian immigrants often visualise Western countries as "cities set on a hill" dominated by the Christian ethos. They are often greatly disappointed and troubled, as this expectation does not seem to correspond with reality. They fear that their children will be drawn into the secularism and immorality of American society through the churches themselves. In fact, the need for overcoming the initial disappointment and avoiding commitment to these "suspicious" American churches drives immigrants to establish ethnic Indian churches in the United States.[318] As we have seen, Kaniyamparambil states that the Protestant doctrines have driven a lot of pastors and church-members to lose their faith. Saying this, Kaniyamparambil seems to describe the feelings of many Asian-Indian immigrants.

Having assumed this critical attitude to the secularised culture, new immigrants tend to become almost immediately tentative and unwilling participants in the culture wars which divide American society. On the other hand, one strategy assumed by the immigrants is to erect elusive boundaries in the attempt to protect themselves and their families from the negative consequences of assimilation.[319] Immigrant parents are frightened by peer pressures on their children regarding dating, marriage, drugs, alcohol, and familial relations. And as their children grow in the middle of the American culture, religion becomes a significant arena of negotiation between the generations.[320] As we have seen, Mar Osthathios' text also deals with this kind of problems, such as dating and familial relations. Thus both Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios seem to

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[317] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 127, 185.
[318] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 26, 104.
[319] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 186-187, 233-234.
[320] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1988, 287; *Aydin* 2000, VI.

respond to the challenge of secularisation. Both of them do it in their own way, but both ways seem to be relevant in the immigrant context in North America.

The relations between immigrant parents and their children involve many chances for conflicts. In many cases, however, the problem of disrespectful children does not differ so much from the conflicts of other families in the society. Immigrants just tend to interpret these conflicts as peculiar to their immigrant status. Nevertheless, a conflict of values seems to be common in the relations between the first and the second generations. The parents have a memory of India, and they try to establish that set of values and customs. They may feel that traditional Syrian Christian values are being devalued or even lost. Young people, on the other hand, have been very confused about how they should live.[321] One issue creating conflicts is the fact that Asian-Indian parents tend to have strong prejudices against intermarriage between persons from different ethnic groups. Their children, however, often judge these prejudices as an un-Christian imposition of casteism and racism from India. In this situation, the church is usually the only inter-generational association to provide opportunities for serious discussion of values and problems.[322] Thus it is not surprising that material concerning sexual ethics has been added to Mar Osthathios' text in North America.

Priests and bishops work to maintain the unity of the memory of the past, present realities, and future potentials that will preserve the integrity and coherence in Asian-Indian Christian experience in North America. The Asian-Indian church leaders in general have also been interested in developing their church organisations in a more democratic direction in the diaspora. As doctrinal and moral matters are concerned, however, they

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[321] *Daniel* 1972, 162; *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 211; *Raymond Brady Williams* 2000, 25.
[322] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 212, 219.

tend to be fairly conservative.[323] The online documents also support this latter view for the most part, although Mar Osthathios' liberal theology does not fit in with this generalisation.

Finding a balance between integration and isolation is a current issue in the Indian diaspora as well. In the case of the diaspora youth belonging to the MOSC, the result has been a deep cultural and linguistic integration into the surrounding society. At the same time they feel that their church has been in many ways introvert and alienated and that it has often regarded itself as superior. Studies also indicate that the youth have integrated well into the surrounding societies, but that the church seems not to have. Many of these young people have learned from the Sunday Schools and the sermons emanating from the pulpits that any form of integration is a compromise, unacceptable to God and the church. They have had the feeling that to integrate is to lose one's identity and that an increased isolation is the only option.[324]

The Syrian churches in the diaspora have faced problems in integrating locally in terms of culture, language, and religion.[325] Thus the Indian diaspora does not differ much from its North American counterpart in this respect. The differences in customs and practices, value systems and the nature of human interaction have often been as hard to accept in North America as in the Indian diaspora outside Kerala.[326] In both contexts the church has tried to preserve its identity, beliefs, and practices. Since these two diaspora contexts have many similar challenges, it is not surprising that texts written in the Indian context may be quite easily introduced in North America. At the same time, one has to take into consideration that it was just in the North American context

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[323] *Raymond Brady Williams* 1996, 224, 226.
[324] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, xxii, 90, 92, 99.
[325] *Philip Kuruvilla* 2000, 38-39.
[326] *Thomas & Thomas* 1984, 104.

where the texts were put on the Internet. The online presence of these texts may give some particular functions to them. That is why we also have to pay attention to the character of the Internet as a communication tool.

4.3. Internet as a Field of Religion and Ethnicity

There are two forms of religious participation online. The first one can be called "religion online", and it is based upon traditional religious hierarchical structure, attempting to harness the Internet as a tool of top-down, organised communication. This kind of communication is centred on giving information about religion, such as doctrine, organisation, beliefs, and opportunities for service. On the other hand, "online religion" invites the visitor to participate in the religious activity on the web. The Internet adapts some functions of the church, acting as a field of liturgy or prayer.[327] The website of the Malankara Archdiocese clearly represents the first one of these two categories, namely "religion online".

Another possibility to categorise different uses of the Internet is to compare the Internet either to television or to telephone. In the first case, the Internet transmits messages from content provider to content consumer. In the second case, the Internet connects people from various places.[328] Using this distinction, it is possible to find both aspects on the Malankara website. Although the website is concentrated on providing information and working as a television, it may also have a function of bringing together immigrants from various places in North America.

Nevertheless, the website of the Malankara Archdiocese, with its emphasis on one-way communication, is not an exception among the religious websites. The web pages of most religious groups have become

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[327] *Hadden & Cowan* 2000, 8-9; *Helland* 2000, 206; *Young* 2004, 93.
[328] *Højsgaard & Warburg* 2005, 6.

more and more professional. They provide a lot of information, but at the same time the potential of the new media is being forced into the familiar form of the old media.[329] This one-way communication is also quite safe for the church hierarchy. Using the Internet in this way makes it possible to retain control over the belief system and present it without allowing for any reciprocal input from those receiving the message. Furthermore, to use the website in an educational manner finds parallels in religious communities that exist in diaspora. The religious education of children may be greatly assisted by visits to well-resourced and authoritative websites.[330] Thus, the informative texts of Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios are not extraordinary content on a Christian website. Moreover, the information provided by these articles may have particular relevance in educating young people in the diaspora. The control over the belief system is retained, since the authors both ask and answer. They use the voice of critical Protestant opponents themselves.

The information on a church website may be directed either to members of this church or to non-members. Some churches appear to focus on communicating with their own members, while others clearly seem to view the Internet as an instrument for communicating with persons and agencies outside of their regular constituencies. Additionally, there are many religious websites designed as much for the support of those already within the membership as for the interest of those external to it.[331] Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts on the Malankara website may be seen as a part of this last group. They seem to be addressed to both members and non-members.

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[329] *Horsfall* 2000, 175; *Larsen* 2000, 2; *Dawson* 2005, 30. Translating religious texts and publishing them electronically is very common. *Beckerlegge* 2001, 233. Thus the Malankara website is not an exception in this respect.
[330] *Helland* 2000, 220; *Beckerlegge* 2001, 229.
[331] *Horsfall* 2000, 154; *Beckerlegge* 2001, 231-232.

Almost all of the religious websites have an evangelistic element, more or less prominently displayed according to the nature of the group. Each group, however subtly, is advertising a religious practice, which they are inviting to join.[332] Small churches and congregations are particularly interested in using the Internet for inviting new members. [333] In this respect, Paul Philipose's evangelistic and missionary emphasis as regards Kaniyamparambil's text is by no means an exception. Furthermore, Mar Osthathios' text, too, is directed to those people of other faiths, who want to come to know the Syrian Orthodox faith. As we have seen, Syriac Orthodox Christians have had a very negative attitude to missionary activity in North America. On the other hand, the Malankara website seems to have a clear missionary goal. Perhaps the character of the Internet as a field of missionary websites has made this significant change in attitude possible.

On the other hand, dissemination of directives concerning ethics through the Internet is usually directed to members of the church. This is true of published texts and materials as well. Furthermore, this kind of activity is likely to be more important to groups that have a dispersed membership.[334] The Malankara Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese in North America is geographically extremely large in comparison to its counterparts in Kerala. Furthermore, the number of members is quite small. Hence, the Internet is likely to have an important role in creating contacts to church members in different parts of North America.

So far we have dealt with the question, how churches use the Internet. In addition, it is also important to ask, how individual Christians and so-called "religion surfers" use the web. In fact, the great majority of people using the Internet seem to use it for looking for information about

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[332] *Horsfall* 2000, 173.
[333] *Larsen* 2000, 10.
[334] *Horsfall* 2000, 177.

religion. In the United States, 64 percent of the nation's 128 million Internet users have done things online which relate to religious or spiritual matters.[335] The most active religion surfers seem to be also the most active off-line participants in their faiths. The Internet enhances their already-deep commitment to their churches.[336]

Studies suggest that almost half of the religion surfers say that they hardly ever or never look for information about religious traditions that are not their own. The vast majority prefer environments that agree with their own denominations. This suggests that many people are only interested in being able to find information about their own tradition.[337] Also the reasons the religion surfers give for their visits on religious websites indicate that they prefer visiting websites of their own traditions. The most common answer was to use the Internet for seeking reinforcement for one's personal beliefs.[338]

Nevertheless, many others do explore information about faith traditions which they are not familiar with. Most churches seem to have a concern with protecting their own, especially their youth, from proselytisation by other faith traditions.[339] The Internet provides both a possibility and a threat to these churches. On the one hand, they may welcome visitors from other traditions on their website. At the same time, however, they have to address their message to their own members, who use the Internet to look for information about other traditions. This twofold aim may be seen on the Malankara website as well.

The Internet provides means for religious seeking, but searching for information seems to be a more common reason for visiting websites of other faiths. In a survey carried out within the Pew Internet & American

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[335] *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004, i; *Dawson* 2005, 15; *Højsgaard & Warburg* 2005, 3.
[336] *Larsen* 2001, 3; *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004, 6.
[337] *Bedell* 2000, 189-190; *Laney* 2005, 177.
[338] *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004, 8; *Laney* 2005, 171-172, 175.
[339] *Bedell* 2000, 200.

Life Project, 51 percent of those who got information about other faith traditions said that they visited these websites out of curiosity. In addition, 13 percent said they did it for purposes of their own spiritual growth, and 31 percent said both these reasons were important for them. It is still much rarer that a religion surfer is actively using the web for finding a new church or religion to join.[340]

It is worth noticing that Protestants and especially evangelical Christians are particularly likely to use the Internet for personal religious and spiritual purposes. Evangelical Christians are also more likely to seek information about traditions other than their own.[341] Probably the articles on the Malankara website are not there just by accident. These articles largely respond to questions stated by evangelical Protestants, and from the Christians representing other churches it is these evangelical Protestants that are most likely to visit websites of other traditions – among them the Malankara website. Paul Philipose's aim to tell the truth to those Christians "who have never heard of our true apostolic faith" is in line with these results concerning the surfing habits of the evangelicals.

Studies show that use of the Internet does not lead the religion surfers to join a new religious community as much as help them connect better with organisations to which they already belong. This finding indicates a clear difference between religious groups and many secular kinds of communities on the Internet. Only a minor percentage of conversions are likely to be considerably influenced by Internet experiences. It is unlikely that the Internet, in and of itself, will provide adequate means for religious recruitment.[342]

Attempting to find information about a faith tradition is a very common reason for visiting a religious website, and this is true of visiting

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[340] *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004, 7-8; *Laney* 2005, 177-178.
[341] *Hoover & Clark & Rainie* 2004, 13, 20.
[342] *Helland* 2000, 220; *Horsfall* 2000, 173; *Mayer* 2000, 252; *Larsen* 2001, 17-18.

the website of one's own church as well as visiting websites of other traditions. This information may be doctrinal as well as ethical, concerning, for example, family ethics.[343] In this respect, the Malankara website responds to the demand. Mar Osthathios' text with its ethical dimension is thus also of current interest.

So-called religious outsiders are particularly interested in using the Internet to meet others of their own faith. These outsiders are those who see themselves as a minority and not part of mainstream religious groups. In many cases, the Internet makes it possible to find information on these small religious communities. Many small Christian churches belong to this group of outsiders, and it is also possible to see the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Christians in North America as a part of this group. Although the religious outsiders are more likely to use the Internet than religious insiders, the differences are not significant.[344] Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that the Internet may be more important for the members of the MSOC in North America than for the members of the mainstream churches.

It is also important to ask, how the material on the religious websites influences those who read it, as well as the beliefs and practices of the religious community itself. Firstly, religious texts published on the Internet seem to have influence on religious beliefs.[345] Thus the texts on the Malankara website are not necessarily only a description of the present thought within the church, but they may also have a constructive role in forming the identity of the church in the future.

The web material may also have influence on the believer. Web documents may influence one's notions of the nature of reality itself. Especially new members may be impacted by the web material of a

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[343] *Larsen* 2001, 4, 16, 20; *Laney* 2005, 176.
[344] *Larsen* 2001, 3, 12-13, 20.
[345] *Horsfall* 2000, 179.

religious community.[346] In a survey carried out in the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 27 percent of the religion surfers said that their use of the Internet had improved their spiritual life to at least a modest degree. Some also felt that it had made them feel more committed to their faith.[347] On the other hand, the Internet also seems to involve risks. Many people fear that the Internet contributes to increasing religious syncretism as well as growing insecurity among young people. Furthermore, some have seen the Internet as a threat to generational integration and cross-generational communication in the churches.[348] Thus the threats of the Internet are issues that are also current topics in the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese in North America. In this respect, the web texts written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios try to respond to challenges and threats that are in fact reinforced by the Internet itself.

The religious websites also have a role to play in the identity-formation process, particularly in the case of the youth. For some of these young people, a return to the values of a very traditional religious organisation provides a way to ensure clear boundaries between different meanings and consistency for their own religious identities. Boundaries are helpful in handling insecurity, for example. Finding and disseminating information are also ways in which the Internet provides tools for individuals to connect to a religious collective. This seems to be the case especially among those religious communities which in some way diverge from mainline religion.[349] Perhaps the Archdiocese of the MSOC in North America may be included in this group. At all events, the web texts written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios are likely to have

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[346] *Horsfall* 2000, 180; *Dawson & Cowan* 2004, 9.
[347] *Larsen* 2001, 3.
[348] *Schultze* 2000, 179; *Beckerlegge* 2001, 258-259; *Lövheim* 2004, 65.
[349] *Lövheim* 2004, 60, 63, 70-71; *Lövheim & Linderman* 2005, 126-127.

significance for the identity-formation process of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox youth in North America.

The character of the Internet as a medium leaves its mark also on the way in which the message is transmitted. In this process, stereotypes seem to play an important role. Internet users often fall back on stereotypical conceptions to ease and hasten interaction. The Internet may be seen as an often unrestrained venue for movement/counter-movement propaganda.[350] In this way, the character of the Internet promotes stereotypes and sharp contrasts. As we have seen, Paul Philipose mentions that he translated Curian Kaniyamparambil's book because he wanted to prevent stereotypes and misunderstandings and to make his church better known for Americans. On the other hand, the text with its rhetorically efficacious, at some points rather simplistic and sharp style, seems to include some stereotypes concerning Protestant churches. Thus the text seems to be in line with the nature of the Internet as a communication tool.

Many scholars have made comparisons between religious uses of the Internet and those of television, most notably televangelism. These comparisons have significance for our topic, too, since Kaniyamparambil's text also deals with televangelism. There are important continuities between the religious uses of these technologies, but there are important differences as well.[351] If we look at the similarities, both television and the Internet are products of the late modern age of uncertainty. At the same time, religious groups may use them to prevent this uncertainty. As churches are afraid of losing touch with their computer-literate members, or see the faithful being evangelised away from them by more technically adept preachers, increasing number of churches and dioceses are building

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[350] *Cowan* 2004, 258; *Dawson* 2004, 77-78.
[351] *Beckerlegge* 2001, 224; *Dawson & Cowan* 2004, 9.

homepages. This fear may be current in the case of the Malankara Archdiocese as well, since conservative Christian broadcasters have strongly established their presence on the Internet.[352] We have seen how Kaniyamparambil reminds that many of today's preachers and ministers can be false apostles and deceitful workers who bombard people with "Christian message" through radio, television and other media. Now Kaniyamparambil's own message is communicated through the Internet, one of these media. The MSOC has come to use the same medium as these "false apostles" in order to compete with them or at least to respond to the challenge created by them.

In the case of the Malankara website, the aspect of ethnicity has to be taken into consideration as well. One has to remember that the profile of Internet users is not as white as many commentators have believed, even in the latter part of the 1990s.[353] On the other hand, as we have noticed, the ethnic emphasis is not as strongly present in the articles on the Malankara website as, for example, the confessional emphasis promoting the denominational strategy of adaptation. The ethnic strategy has been very popular and efficient among Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants in the every-day parish life, but why is the ethnic aspect quite invisible in the web texts?

It is worth noticing that the character of the Internet as a communication tool itself often encourages ethnic users to avoid any reference to their ethnicities. Ethnicity is present without being declared.[354] This finding seems to be valid in the case of the Malankara website. There is a clear strive for universality especially in Kaniyamparambil's article, which concentrates on the worldwide Syriac Orthodox Church. Although ethnicity is emphasised in the every-day

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[352] *Dawson* 2000, 46; *Hadden & Cowan* 2000, 8; *Helland* 2004, 26.
[353] *Leung* 2005, 145.
[354] *Nakamura* 2002, 47; *Leung* 2005, 51.

parish life, the Internet is a space where ethnicity is often invisible. In India, where Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts were originally written, it was not essential to stress ethnicity, and the situation seems to be in many ways the same on the Internet.

Furthermore, one aspect typical of representations of ethnicity is that the intended audience is white. Ethnic websites are usually created in order to be consumed by the "white gaze."[355] This seems to be the case at least in some way on the Malankara website. Paul Philipose addresses Kaniyamparambil's text to an average American Protestant, who has never heard of the "true Syriac Orthodox faith."

At the same time, the Internet provides immigrants with means for rejecting the mainstream cultural values and creating a sense of community. The Internet creates new possibilities for the migrated to discover or sustain commonality with those "back home" and with others who have migrated. The web is not just being used to publish information, but to actively construct identities. Websites are one recent and dramatic illustration of new notions of identity as multiple yet coherent. They seem to promote independent or traditional responses, rather than mere assimilation to the new society.[356] Although ethnicity does not seem to be emphasised on the Malankara website, the website also seems to provide material which contributes to creating a sense of community, both along denominational and ethnic lines.

The Internet may have many functions in the process of migration. Pre-migrants may find the computer enormously useful in obtaining information on the new society.[357] Post-migrants also seem to use the Internet to obtain information about their new community to facilitate integration as well as to retain ties to home community. Settled migrants

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[355] *Leung* 2005, 147.
[356] *Turkle* 1997, 259, 267; *Hiller & Franz* 2004, 733; *Leung* 2005, 52, 61.
[357] *Hiller & Franz* 2004, 738.

use the Internet for rediscovering an eroding identity in the diaspora.[358] Articles on the Malankara website seem to respond to all of these needs, at least in a certain sense. They provide information about the challenges that are current in the North American society, but they also remind of the traditional Indian values.

Although the Internet seems to have its influence on the character of different communication processes, there is still a strong correspondence between reality and the Internet. There is very little in the real world that is not electronically reproduced online, and very little online that has no off-line foundation.[359] The texts written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios reinforce this view. They reflect and respond to challenges that are of current interest in the real world.

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[358] *Hiller & Franz* 2004, 739.
[359] *Cowan* 2004, 257; *Dawson & Cowan* 2004, 6, 12.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Curian Kaniyamparambil usually speaks about Protestants as a group containing many different churches and movements. From all these churches, Kaniyamparambil sees particularly Anglicans, and in some cases also Lutherans, as mediators between Orthodox churches and heretical movements. The Anglican Church is nearly on the same level with the Orthodox Church. In many cases Kaniyamparambil sees the Anglican Church standing side by side with the "traditional churches", or even as one of these churches. For example, in spite of the fact that he clearly rejects doctrines of symbolism and virtualism, Kaniyamparambil presents the Anglican Church as the defender of the true doctrine of the Eucharist.

Neither Kaniyamparambil nor Mar Osthathios treat Protestants as a uniform group. They make a clear difference between traditional and modern Protestant communities. In fact, the gap between these two church groups seems to be quite wide. At the same time, these authors do not seem to make a clear difference between those communities which they regard as "modern." Both Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios may easily speak about Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses in the same sentence. From their viewpoint, all of these communities represent modern Protestant communities which have arisen since the 19th century. These communities differ so much from the traditional churches that they may be seen as members of a uniform group.

While Kaniyamparambil concentrates on the debate between Orthodox and Protestant churches, Mar Osthathios focuses his attention on the unification of the Church. In this outlook, the Orthodox Church is between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches and, although not perfect, it has preserved best the tradition of the undivided

Church. These three churches bear the tradition of the one Church. Beyond these churches are the sectarian (modern Protestant) groups which do not have any prominent role in the one Church. Kaniyamparambil, on the other hand, does not express that Protestant churches could have anything to give to the Orthodox Church. They have diverged more or less from the "real Church." Especially the modern communities have abandoned the tradition and the history of the Church, and they do not have apostolic succession.

Curian Kaniyamparambil pays a lot of attention to the way in which Protestants treat the Bible. According to him, Protestant translators have altered the text of the Bible for their own selfish gains. Furthermore, the self-interpretations of the Bible have also given rise to many modern communities and have turned people away from Christ. Kaniyamparambil draws a parallel between Protestant churches and heretics, about whom Apostle Paul warned. Nevertheless, Mar Osthathios also sees a positive side in individualistic interpretations of the Bible. They can have a corrective role, but only when the Church gives this role to them. Similarly, Mar Osthathios seems to have a more positive stand on the modern English Bible translations.

In fact, Mar Osthathios seems to approach liberal Protestants in his views. As Kaniyamparambil stresses that altering a word from the Scripture is a grave sin, Mar Osthathios admits that these words are changing and even fallible. He points out that the truth of God is behind these words. Kaniyamparambil complains repeatedly about Protestants who have abandoned the miracles of the Bible. Mar Osthathios, on the contrary, is ready to adopt some liberal Protestant ideas concerning miracles. Thus Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios seem to respond to the Protestant challenge in different ways. The former rejects the Protestant views quite categorically, while the latter is ready to adopt some

modern and Western ideas from these Protestants. Kaniyamparambil's response is to make a clear distinction between Protestants and Orthodox, while Mar Osthathios' response is to lower the threshold between these two church families.

Presenting the Syriac Orthodox doctrine, Kaniyamparambil pays much attention to the role of the Bible. Moreover, the chapter concerning the *Peshitta* text is far larger in the Internet version than in Kaniyamparambil's original Malayalam version. In North America, there are numerous different Bible translations. In this environment it is obviously essential to defend one's own Bible – especially if it has so great importance for one's identity as seems to be in the case of Syriac Orthodox Christians.

While speaking about the Bible, both Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios give a very important role to the Church as the sole true interpreter of the Bible. Kaniyamparambil also stresses the role of the Bible in Syriac Orthodox prayers and sacraments. He does not, however, mention the fact that this practice was largely started in India by the CMS missionaries. In this case, the Protestant influence seems to be so completely merged into the Syriac Orthodox practice that it can be used as an argument against Protestant opponents themselves.

As Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios speak about Christian customs and other related practical questions, their response to the Protestant challenge is evident. Their questions indicate that different kinds of evangelical and charismatic groups have extended their influence among Orthodox Christians in India. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that the most popular themes in Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts are those which give rise to disputes with Protestants. Issues related to the Church, priesthood, and the sacraments occur repeatedly, while there are only few chapters concerning Trinity or Christology, i.e.

doctrines about which there seems to be a general agreement between Orthodox and Protestants.

Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios do not pay much attention to themes such as predestination, free will or synergism. One reason may be the fact that those Protestant groups that are attracting Syrian Orthodox Christians in India are usually modern evangelical and charismatic groups, which have largely adopted the doctrine of the free will. This also explains why infant baptism, for example, is so strongly defended in the web texts. At the same time, the old Protestant churches, which have a more positive attitude to the doctrine of predestination, are also losing members to evangelical and charismatic groups. It is worth noticing that the same process has been going on in North America. Thus the traditional Protestant churches are not likely to be a threat to Syrian Orthodox churches in the new diaspora context either, and this is why the web texts, with their response to the charismatic and evangelical challenges, are relevant in North America as well.

Kaniyamparambil uses the Anglican Church as an example and tries to say to the modern Protestant communities that they should learn from Anglicans. It is not in accordance with his intention to stress the negative experiences which may be found in the history of interaction between Anglicans and Malankara Syrian Orthodox Christians. Nowadays there are many Protestant groups that hold the same goals with the past CMS missionaries. To refute their arguments, it may be useful to search the Anglican sources for support and not to recall the old quarrels with Anglican missionaries.

Kaniyamparambil's aim is to show that many Protestant authorities are on the Syrian Orthodox side. Using this kind of argumentation, he tries to correct the views of his Protestant opponents by their own arms. He refers to the Bible or Protestant sources, such as the Book of

Common Prayer or Protestant theologians. He uses Protestant scholars and pastors efficiently to refute arguments stated by some Protestant groups. It is worth noticing that Kaniyamparambil does not categorically reject or ignore the views of modern Protestant churches. On the contrary, he is prepared to search them for support.

In Mar Osthathios' text, the Protestant challenge is not the only one waiting for a response. He pays attention to other religions and the process of modernisation as well. Kaniyamparambil concentrates on responding to the Protestant challenge, and thus he does not pay much attention to other religions. This does not mean, however, that he would not see any reason for criticism in these religions. At all events, as Kaniyamparambil defends Syriac Orthodox Christians against modern Protestant groups, Mar Osthathios defends Christianity against other religions. Although Mar Osthathios has been known as a theologian who is confident that salvation is available to members of other religions as well, in this text he seems to stress the differences and to show clearly that both Islam and Hinduism are in many ways incompatible with Christianity.

Responses to the Protestant challenge and to the challenge of modernisation are in many ways interrelated. Stating the question about miracles in the age of science, Mar Osthathios seems to respond especially to the challenge of modernisation. Doing this, he sees Protestants as allies who have also faced the same challenge and who have developed noteworthy means to cope with the new situation. Kaniyamparambil can be seen responding to the same challenge. For him, however, Protestants are a part of those powers that have caused the negative consequences of modernisation. Thus he does not criticise only evangelical and charismatic groups but also liberal Protestants.

Responding to the challenges of modernisation and secularisation, family ethics are an important aspect. As the decline in family values is evident in India, it is not surprising that Mar Osthathios pays attention to matrimonial questions. Furthermore, a quotation from the Roman Catholic NFP Center has been added to his text in North America. Centred on premarital relationships, rather than Mar Osthathios' emphasis on married couples, this quotation seems to have relevance in the situation of the diaspora youth in North America. Ethical instructions addressed to young people also seem to reflect the fact that the church has an important role in providing opportunities for serious discussion of values between immigrant generations.

It is also noteworthy that the situation in India has many things in common with that of the United States. On the one hand, people have remained religious in general. At the same time, however, there has been emerging secularisation that has had effect especially on moral values and family structures. Neither of these developments is unknown in the United States, and thus the suitability of the text for the situation of the diaspora Christians is clear in many ways. In fact, Mar Osthathios' response to the challenge of modernisation may be one reason why his text ended up on the website. Since the challenges of Protestantism and modernisation resemble each other in India and in North America, Kaniyamparambil's and Mar Osthathios' texts are likely to be of current interest in their new American context, too.

One may say that there are two competing streams among Kerala immigrants, one promoting ecumenism and the other stressing denominational identity. Moreover, it seems at first sight that Mar Osthathios represents the former, ecumenical strategy of adaptation, while Kaniyamparambil promotes the latter, denominational strategy. This conclusion, however, is oversimplified. The ecumenical strategy of

adaptation among Asian-Indian immigrants has meant that individual immigrants have participated in interdenominational worship. Some entirely new ecumenical churches, too, have been established by these immigrants.

Neither Mar Osthathios nor Kaniyamparambil seem to promote this kind of ecumenism. Rather, Mar Osthathios stresses the importance of ecumenism at the level of churches. It is the churches which bear the responsibility for striving for unity. Thus Mar Osthathios does not represent the ecumenical strategy of adaptation in its traditional meaning, and also his words are current, as the Syriac Orthodox Church tries to prevent the youth from abandoning denominational ties and attending ecumenical churches. Furthermore, from this point of view, the difference between Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios is not so fundamental. In fact, it may be said that both of them promote the denominational strategy of adaptation in their writings. The difference between these authors concerns the way in which they see the relation between the Orthodox Church and other churches. In this respect, Kaniyamparambil seems to represent quite an exclusivist view, stressing the uniqueness and the superiority of the Syriac Orthodox Church. From Mar Osthathios' viewpoint, on the other hand, the ecumenical dialogue between churches takes place on a more equal basis.

The denominational strategy of adaptation is more clearly visible in the text than the ethnic background. This seeming absence of ethnicity is not, however, by any means exceptional on the Internet. In fact, the character of the Internet as a communication tool itself often encourages ethnic users to avoid any reference to their ethnicities. Ethnicity is present without being declared. This finding seems to be valid in the case of the Malankara website. There is a clear strive for universality especially in Kaniyamparambil's article, which concentrates on the worldwide Syriac

Orthodox Church. Although ethnicity is emphasised in the every-day parish life, the Internet is a space where ethnicity is often invisible. On the other hand, Mar Osthathios' text does include ethnic aspects. In North America, it seems to be important for Syriac Orthodox Christians, who have been in many ways Syriac in India, to "become" Indian. From this point of view, it is not such a surprise that Mar Osthathios' document has been put on the website of the MSOC. Although he represents a rival church, his church has a far stronger tradition of seeing itself as an Indian church than the MSOC.

Almost all of the religious websites have an evangelistic element. In this respect, Paul Philipose's evangelistic and missionary emphasis regarding Kaniyamparambil's text is by no means an exception. Furthermore, Mar Osthathios' text, too, is directed to those people of other faiths, who want to come to know the Syrian Orthodox faith. Syriac Orthodox Christians have had a very negative attitude to missionary activity in North America, but the Malankara website seems to have a clear missionary goal. Perhaps the character of the Internet as a field of missionary websites has made this significant change in attitude possible. Although the primary goal of the text is probably to educate the members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, this missionary aim must be taken into consideration as well.

The web articles largely respond to questions stated by evangelical Protestants, and from all the Christians it is these evangelical Protestants that are most likely to visit websites of other traditions – among them the Malankara website. Paul Philipose's aim to tell the truth to those Christians "who have never heard of our true apostolic faith" is in line with these results concerning the surfing habits of the evangelicals. At the same time, the Internet provides both a possibility and a threat to the churches. On the one hand, churches may welcome visitors from other

traditions on their website. On the other hand, since the Internet is also the playground of "false apostles", churches have to address their message to their own members, who may use the Internet for looking for information about different heretical traditions. This twofold aim may be seen on the Malankara website as well. The web texts written by Kaniyamparambil and Mar Osthathios try to respond to challenges and threats that are in fact reinforced by the Internet itself. The MSOC has come to use the same medium as the "false apostles" in order to compete with them, or at least to respond to the challenge created by them.

There are many reasons to suppose that the texts written by Curian Kaniyamparambil and Geevarghese Mar Osthathios did not end up by accident on the website of the Malankara Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese. They reflect the challenges experienced by Malankara Syriac Orthodox immigrants in North America, and they also respond to these challenges. An important question is whether these texts are likely to be helpful in resolving ecumenical challenges in the North American context, or whether they are likely to deepen these challenges by feeding prejudice. The answer is twofold. These texts have significant potential for ecumenical progress, but they may also promote exclusivist attitudes. The final outcome is not clear, and it will depend on many factors.

Abbreviations

APATF	Association for Protection of Antiochean True Faith
BTESSC	the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College
BTTBPSA	the Board of Theological Text Book Programme of South Asia
CMS	the Church Missionary Society
CSI	the Church of South India
Dr.	Doctor
ed.	edited / editor
Fr.	Father
h.c.	honoris causa
hrsg.	herausgegeben
ISPCK	Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
KJV	King James Version
MSOC	Malankara [Jacobite] Syriac Orthodox Church
MOSC	Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
M.Th.	Master of Theology
NFP	Natural Family Planning
SE	Second Edition
St.	Saint
STKSJ	Suomalaisen Teologisen Kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja
Th.D.	Doctor of Theology
transl.	translated
übers.	übersetzt
U.S.	the United States

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