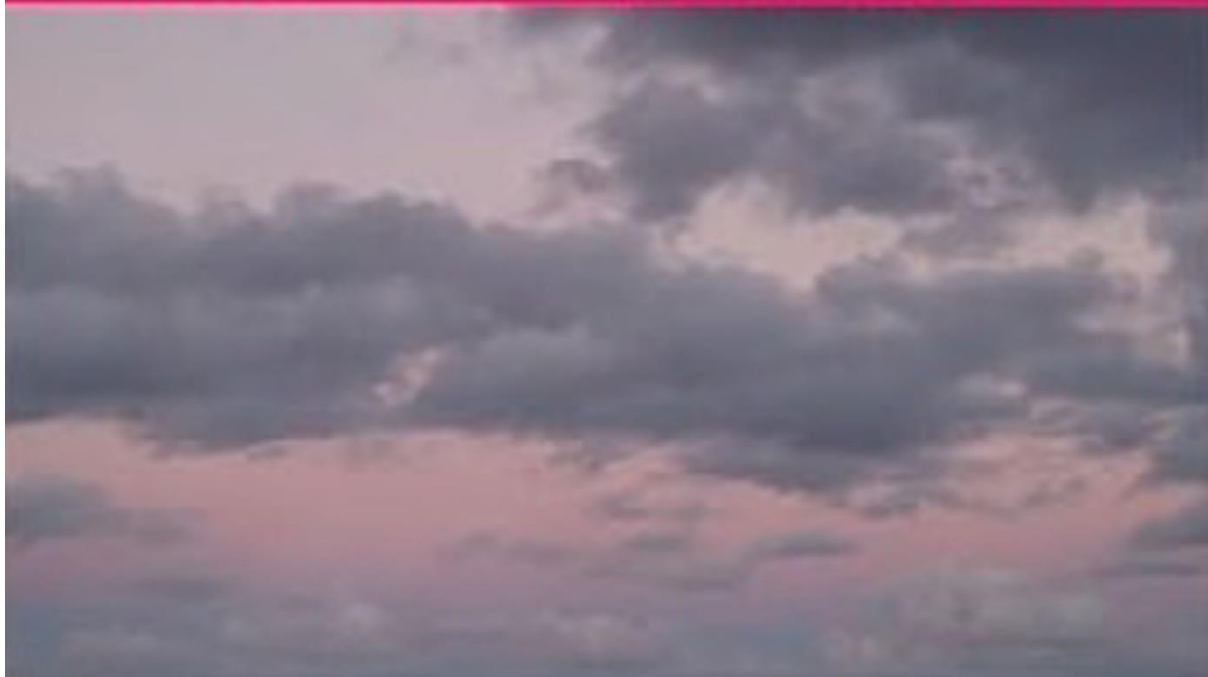


Never Shall the Twain Meet?:

Eastern Nazranis Collide with Western Christians

ZACHARIAS THUNDY



Never Shall the Twain Meet?: Eastern Nazranis Collide with Western Christians

(Nazrani Brahmins Volume Two)

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When we stand face to face, though we come from the ends of the earth!*

“The [modified] Ballad of East and West” by Rudyard Kipling

Professor Zacharias P. Thundy
Northern Michigan University

*Dedicated to the Memory of my
Late Sister Laisamma Scaria Mattam*

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1. General Introduction

This four-volume series on the Nazrani Brahmins of Kerala is about a very distant past. We have now a bright present because of that past. Indeed, in retrospect we know only too well that we are just dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. So we are “richer” and we see more and better. And we will have a better future because now we have a good present. Of course, we all love our past, but deep in our hearts we know that we do not and cannot live in the past, but the past is part of the make-up of the present, so we cannot totally ignore it. That is the message of this intriguing book.

From the beginning or in the beginning we, the followers of the Way of Jesus and Apostle Thomas, were simply known as Nazranis, a classical offshoot of biblical Judaism. The known leaders of this dissident or reform group in the first-century Palestine and Egypt were John the Baptist and Nazrani Jesus (known in Aramaic as Nazraya, in Greek as Nazraios, in Latin as Nazarenus, in Arabic as Nazrani, but

unfortunately “Nazorean” is parroted in popular Christian parlance as “from or of Nazareth”). Our Jewish or Galilean ancestors preferred to follow the teachings and leadership of a Jesus known as Nazrani or Nazorean, while other Nazranis opted to follow the teachings of the other leader John the Baptist and called themselves Mandaye (“Baptists” for followers of the Baptist). The Greek Nazranis or followers of Jesus opted to call themselves Christianoi or Christians by deriving the word from the Greek Christos (the “Messiah” (Mshiha in Aramaic or “the Anointed One”). The reason for the change in name was orchestrated and necessitated primarily for linguistic reasons on account of the fact that the Greek-speaking followers of Jesus wanted to be known as Greeks and not as Aramaic-speaking Jews. attached to the word Nazorean or Nazrani, because the word in the Jewish parlance of the first century came to mean “rebel” against imperial Rome or “seditionist” or “blasphemer,” a serious charge made against

2. Introduction to the Second Volume

The Council of Diamper, imposed on Nazranis by the colonial power of Portugal and the imperial ecclesiastical authority of Rome, created a sea-change in the Nazrani culture forever. The Council with the forced approval of Nazrani representatives gathered at the Council created a new legal fiction, which reduced the caste status of Nazranis from Brahminhood to Christianhood, implying that the Christian republic, being devoid of the caste system, denounces the prevalent Indian practice of the discrimination of marginalized Indians according to caste distinctions.

Most importantly to reiterate, The two copper plates, the Thazhakkattupalli Plate and the Tarisapally Plate (c. 849 CE), help us understand the Nazrani way of life as articulated by their adherence to the Law or Teaching of Apostle Thomas (Marthommamute Margavum Vazhipaatum),

11. Baptismal Names

The Council (Session IV, Decree xvi in Portuguese but Decree ix in Malayalam) ordered that Nazranis should give their newborns the names of saints from the New Testament and not names from the Old Testament and avoid giving the name of Iso (Jesus) to their children. The Decree states: “In this bishopric Nazranis do take several of the names of the saints of the Old Testament, as also several of the names of the country, inasmuch that there are but very few called by any of the names of the law of grace.” The Portuguese authorities forgot that Nazranis had the custom of giving grandparents’ names first to their children according to an inherited and established order. To this day Nazranis follow that tradition by giving mostly Old Testament names or other local names of their choice to their children at baptism while giving other nicknames so that today it is hard to distinguish Nazranis from other Indians just by names

Appendix-1

Incipit Apostle Thomas Is the Author of the Fourth Gospel? Yes

But My Brother Insists that It is Only an Opinion
or Simply My Opinion. So Be It:

“It is hard for thee to kick against the goads”

What am I doing here proclaiming that Apostle Thomas is the author of the Fourth Gospel? Such a “ridiculous” statement, most of you will say, is like repeating the saying of Paul’s Jesus, who appears to quote the following proverb from Euripides’ Bacchae: “It is hard for thee to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14). The meaning of this Greek proverb is simply that the oxen are stupid and will suffer more when they kick against the goad, which is a pointed piece of iron on its tip used to prod the oxen when plowing. But I am not kicking

APPENDIX -2

Peter's Primacy with "Absolute" Power Over the Other Apostles and the Entire Community of the Followers of Jesus? Very, very, very Doubtful

*"Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely"—
Baron John-Dalberg Acton*

"The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?" Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are, you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."—Gospel of Thomas, 12.

Certainly, as the title of the appendix indicates, my views here will appear offensive to pious, evangelically oriented Catholics, who would insist that "I just believe," that I just believe "blindly" the teachings of the Catholic Church ruled by the Pope, the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter. Easily and simplistically said. I reject that call to that kind of blind faith because, as Jesus himself exhorts us that we

Appendix-3

Oath of the Bent Cross (Coonan Kurisu) and Split in Kerala Nazrani Community

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synod_of_Diamper

Great Oath of Bent Cross

The oppressive rule of the Portuguese *Padroado* provoked a violent reaction by the St. Thomas Christian community. The first solemn protest occurred in 1653. Under the leadership of Malankara Mooppen Thoma, Nazranis gathered at [Mattancherry](#) church on Friday, 24 January 1653 (M.E. 828 Makaram 3), and made an oath that is known as the [Great Oath of Bent Cross](#). Those who were not able to touch the cross-tied ropes on the the cross held the rope in their hands and made the oath. Because of the weight, it is said



Inside view of Thrissur Martha Mariam Cathedral



Martha Mariam Valiyapalli, Thrissur



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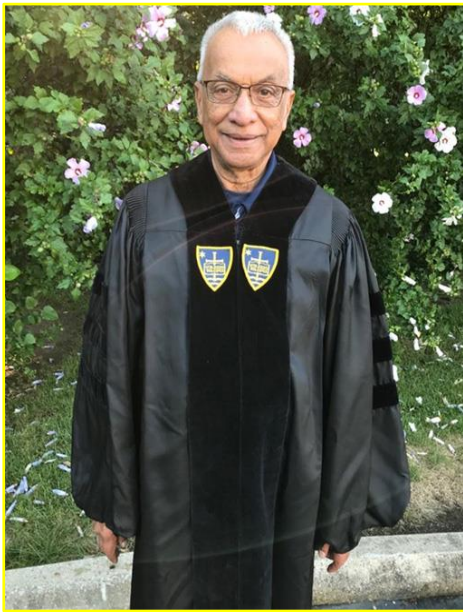
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Dr. Prof. Zacharias P. Thundy

It is indeed an honor to introduce Dr. Zacharias Thundy to the audience of the Aramaic Project. I have known Dr. Trundy for a long time as a friend and a scholar; whenever I had questions about Aramaic language, he is the one who would answer my questions and translate Aramaic passages for me. The Encyclopedia of Syriac Chants of the Syro Malabar Church contains much material that Dr. Trundy provided. See one example of Dr. Trundy's erudite and informed comments on the Christological hymn, Sagdinan Mar. Dr. Trundy is much more than an Aramaic scholar. He is a linguist, philosopher, theologian, medievalist, anthropologist, and a literary scholar. He has written and published more than thirty books and numerous articles and lectured in many parts of the world. He retired in 2001 from Northern Michigan University and resides in South Bend, Indiana, near the University of Notre Dame from where he had received his Ph. D. in 1969. Currently, he publishes books on social issues like the abortion question in the Bible, moral issues of contraception, same-sex marriage controversy, Gospel writers' use of Buddhist sources. His rationale for discussing controversial topics is this: "Dying dudes don't tell lies because soon, as Mark Twain says, they have to meet their maker (or destiny) and be accountable for all their deeds. So be it for now by telling truths."

For the last twenty years Dr. Thundy has been studying the problem of the literary indebtedness of the New Testament to the vast collection of the pre-Christian Buddhist Scriptures (see, *The Stupa and the Cross; Gospel Narratives of the Passion and Death of Christ and Their Buddhist Source*, Kindle Book, 2014)). For years, he had the hunch that there must be Buddhist parallels to the gospel narratives of the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus.