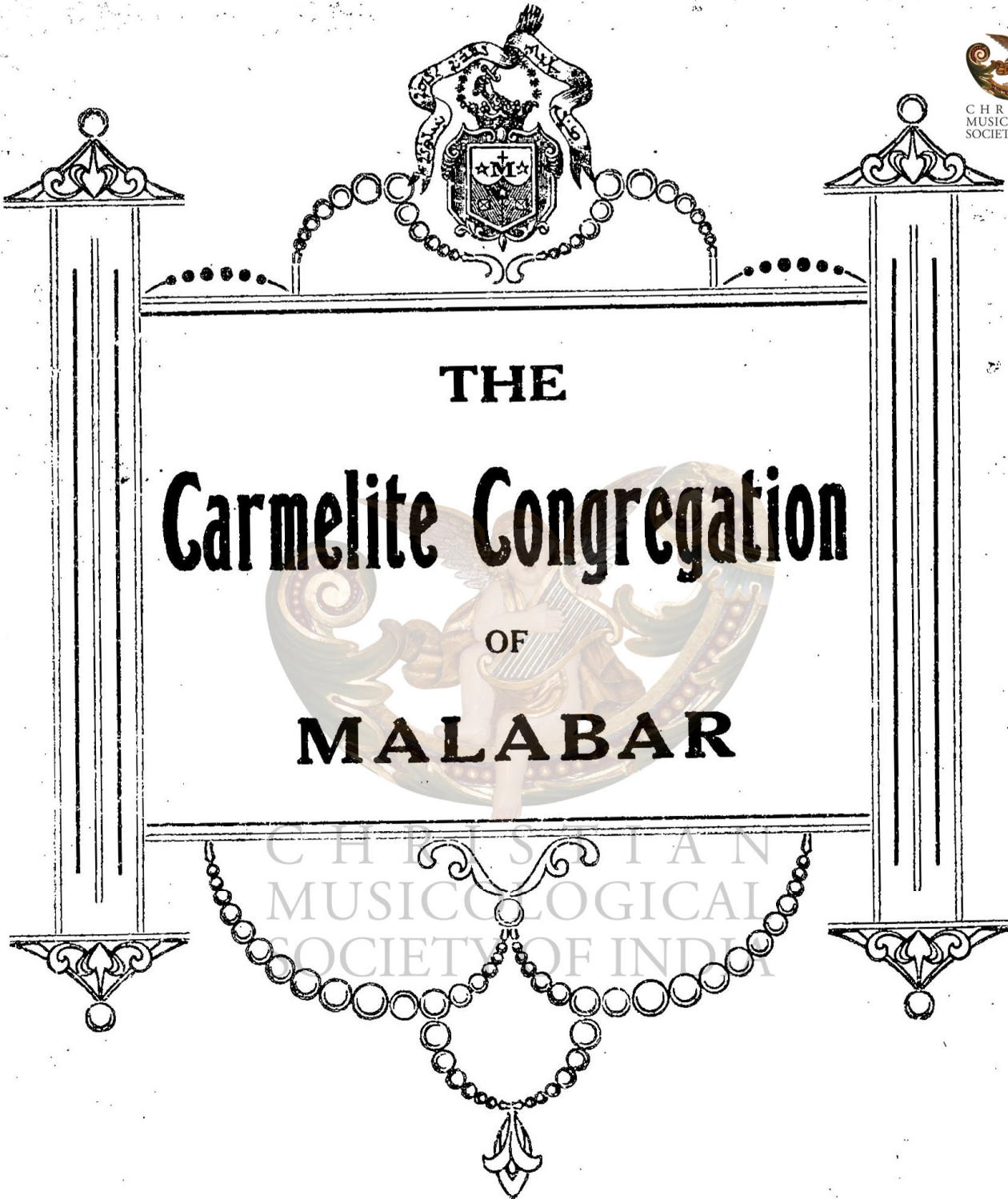




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THE
Carmelite Congregation
OF
MALABAR

1831-1931

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The

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of Malabar

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FOREWORD

MALABAR, the cradle of Christianity in India, from remote Apostolic times, has always been characterized by her filial devotion towards the Mother of God. Tradition has it that the Apostle, St. Thomas, had an apparition of our Lady on Malayattur Mount, where he was encouraged by her to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of the land. Christian monuments of antiquity unmistakably proclaim how deep-rooted was devotion to the Mother of God in the hearts of the St. Thomas Christians. Many of their churches that are in existence now for over fifteen or sixteen centuries, are dedicated to our Blessed Lady, the Virgin Mary. The Divine Maternity is commemorated several times daily, in the Mass, in the Liturgical prayers, in the public religious functions, and in the popular hymns and songs. The holy name of Mary was constantly on the lips of the Malabarians, and her feasts were kept up by them with all possible solemnity. There was scarcely a family—as even now—but proudly owned a daughter named *Mariam*; and priests added to their Christian name that of the Mother of God. The devotion of the “eight days’ fast,” consisting of voluntary abstinence, fast, and unceasing prayer in one or other of the famous churches dedicated to our Lady, is peculiar to the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. This practice—observed particularly by young women—dates as far back as the 9th century and is nowhere in vogue in the Christian world except in Malabar.

After the advent of the Portuguese, Western forms of Marian devotion were introduced into Malabar, where, in the hearts of the sons of St. Thomas, they found a soil congenial to their growth and development. It was at this period, in 1577, we read of Pope Gregory XIII, sending 50,000 rosaries to the St. Thomas Christians, to augment their devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In 1585 or 1586, Rev. Fr. Roz, S.J., wrote in admiration of the strenuous efforts of the Syrian Clergy of Malabar to promulgate, by their public preaching and teaching, the glorious title of Mary “Mother of God”.

Fr. Roz was a witness of the extraordinary devotion to the Mother of God of the then Archdeacon of the Syro-Malabar Church, George of Christ. He had, in 1576, built a church in honour of our Lady of the Assumption, and had procured for it privileges from Pope Gregory XIII, through the Rajah of Cochin.

The Schism of 1653 did not interfere with the queenly sway Mary held in Malabar. The Papal Commissary, Mgr. Sebastiani of the Carmelite Order, sent to stem the Schism, was highly gratified to find more than 5000 Catholics, in the parish of Kuravilangad alone, wearing the scapular of our Lady of Mt. Carmel. The schismatics who had unhappily severed all connections with the Holy See, could not find it in their hearts to turn away from the Mother of God, as did their contemporary sectarians of the West.

The Carmelite rule that followed, strengthened and confirmed the filial attachment of the Christians of Malabar to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Marian devotion in its various forms is now so admirably practised by Catholic Malabar, as to suggest to any one that the Catholic religion and Marian devotion are synonymous on the Malabar coast, so much so, that a Catholic without the scapular of our Lady about his shoulders, is liable to be taken for a non-Catholic. The word "Matha" (mother), used by a Malabar Catholic without any qualifying epithet, is taken to refer to our Lady *per se*. You will search in vain for a house in Catholic Malabar, that does not possess an altar dedicated to the Divine Mother, before which the inmates daily recite the Rosary and pay special homage during the month of May. All these proclaim, how devoted the St. Thomas Christians were and are to the Mother of the Word made flesh. Malabar is really 'Mary's Land'; may it not be allowed to adopt the enviable title "Mary's Dower" unhappily forfeited elsewhere?

It was as it were to crown the Marian cult in the Syro-Malabar Church that Providence designed the Institute of the Carmelite Congregation of Malabar in 1831. The year was a propitious one, as it witnessed the celebration of the Fourteenth Centenary of the

Council of Ephesus, that crowning triumph of our Blessed Lady over heresy.

This Congregation limited in its resources, has yet signalised itself by promoting loyalty towards the See of St. Peter and devotion towards the Mother of God, as did the Council of Ephesus in 431. Students of Malabar Church History are well aware that, but for the Congregation, the Rocosian and the Mellosian Schisms would certainly have cut Malabar off from the vivifying union with the See of Peter. The Congregation has, from its very first beginnings, always worked zealously to promote devotion to Mary among the Christians of Malabar. It is no exaggeration to state that the Marian devotion as it exists today in Malabar, owes a great debt to the untiring labours of the members of the Congregation. Conspicuous among the results of this salutary devotion has been the erection of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. For, His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, now gloriously reigning, in the course of his Consistorial allocution on December 21, 1923, proclaiming the erection of the Hierarchy, remarked among other things: "Id autem omnino Postulabat.....singularis eorumdem erga Beatissimam Virginem Mariam pietas."

All Malabar knows and appreciates the work effected by the Congregation during its century-long existence. Along domestic, social, educational and spiritual lines, Catholic Malabar has made rapid progress, owing, in great part, to the disinterested labours of this indigenous Carmelite Congregation. It is therefore, but proper, that a short sketch of its history be published in book form as a souvenir of its Centenary celebrations during the years 1931 and 1932, sealed with a special blessing and unique favours granted by the Holy See. The work of drafting the sketch was entrusted to the Very Rev. Fr. Bartholomew of Jesus, Prior, Chethipusha Monastery, and to the Rev. Fr. Placid of St. Joseph, Ph.D., D.D., D.C.L., and carefully revised by the Very Rev. Fr. Hyacinth of the Mother of Dolours, Prior, Mannanam Monastery, and by the Rev. Fr. Romeo Thomas of the Immaculate Conception, M.A., L.T. I therefore, on my part, gladly give my approbation to its being sent to the Press, with the hope that it will prove a fitting token

of thanksgiving to God Almighty, for all the graces and favours He has bestowed on the Church and people of Malabar, through the instrumentality of the "Carmel in Malabar". May it also be a medium of expressing our gratitude to all the generous benefactors and well-wishers of the Institute, who have contributed to make it what it is at present: "The most important Religious Congregation of the Indian Church."

E. D. et M.

MONASTERY OF THE SACRED HEART,
THEVARA,
17th April, 1932.
Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph.

FR. JOHN OF JESUS MARY,
T. O. C. D.,
Prior General.



INTRODUCTION

I. 1. "The kingdom of heaven", said Our Lord, "is like to a grain of mustard - seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least indeed of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof" (Matt. xiii. 31, 32). This parable which was also a prophecy, was surely meant to apply primarily to the kingdom of God



His Eminence, Cardinal Sincero, Secretary of the S. Congregation
for the Oriental Church.

upon earth, the Church. It prefigured also the Church's various institutions having as their aim the salvation and the sanctification of souls, among which, Religious Orders and Congregations hold

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a conspicuous place. Their history will tell us how humble their origin was, how slowly they grew, what fruits they have borne. The Carmelite Congregation of Malabar, the history of which we propose to sketch in this brochure, cannot indeed in any way compare with the great Religious Orders in the Church, which have ever stood out as her glory. There is, however, every indication, as may be seen from its history, that it too is a seed, sown by the divine Sower and fostered by Him fondly, these past one hundred years, till it has grown to be a small tree, the branches of which spread over all the Malayalam-speaking states of India, i. e., Travancore, Cochin, and British Malabar. The very existence of this Religious Congregation for a century in this country, while many others became extinct after a short life, compels one to cry out, "The finger of God is here." Whether or not the Congregation has justified its century-long existence, God knows; it is for others to judge. We mean in these pages merely to make a short survey of men and events, as they present themselves to us in a hurried review of them.

2. The Religious Congregation under review is of the Syro-Malabar Rite. It is an indigenous one in its origin. The divine Planter, who had sown the seed, put it under foreign influence in order to make it grow according to His eternal designs. As plants and trees get reformed in quality by means of grafting, so too, this plant adapted itself to the Western Mode of religious life, by adopting much that was found suitable to time and circumstances. The plant is indigenous, but it has been largely nourished and fertilized by the luxuriance of Carmel.

II. 1. Before beginning our sketch, we deem it not irrelevant to say a few words about the Catholic Church in Malabar, of which the Carmelite Congregation is a fruit.

2. Both history and tradition testify that St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Our Lord, evangelized South India and left there a living legacy in the persons of the Syrian Christians known always in history as "The St. Thomas Christians." Tradition has it that from the very beginning they used the East Syrian or Syro-Chaldaic Rite.

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3. In the 16th century, the West coast of India came under Portuguese influence. The Portuguese started active missionary work. The King of Portugal was granted by the Holy See the right of Patronage



His Excellency, Mgr. E. Mooney, Delegate Apostolic of the East Indies.
1926—1931

Patronage (Padroado) over the new missions. In 1534, a Bishopric was established at Goa. In 1558, it was raised to an Archbishopric, and a suffragan See was established in Cochin. The Syrian Christians attracted the attention of the Portuguese, and they felt the influence of the Padroado. In 1599, Mgr. Alexis de Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, at a Synod held at Diamper,

brought them under the Padroado and Latin rule. The Syrian See of Angamaly was placed under a Latin Bishop of Portuguese nationality, [and it was transferred to Cranganore in 1605. This change occasioned dissatisfaction among the Syrians. In 1653, it

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culminated in a great schism in the till-then-undivided Church of Malabar.

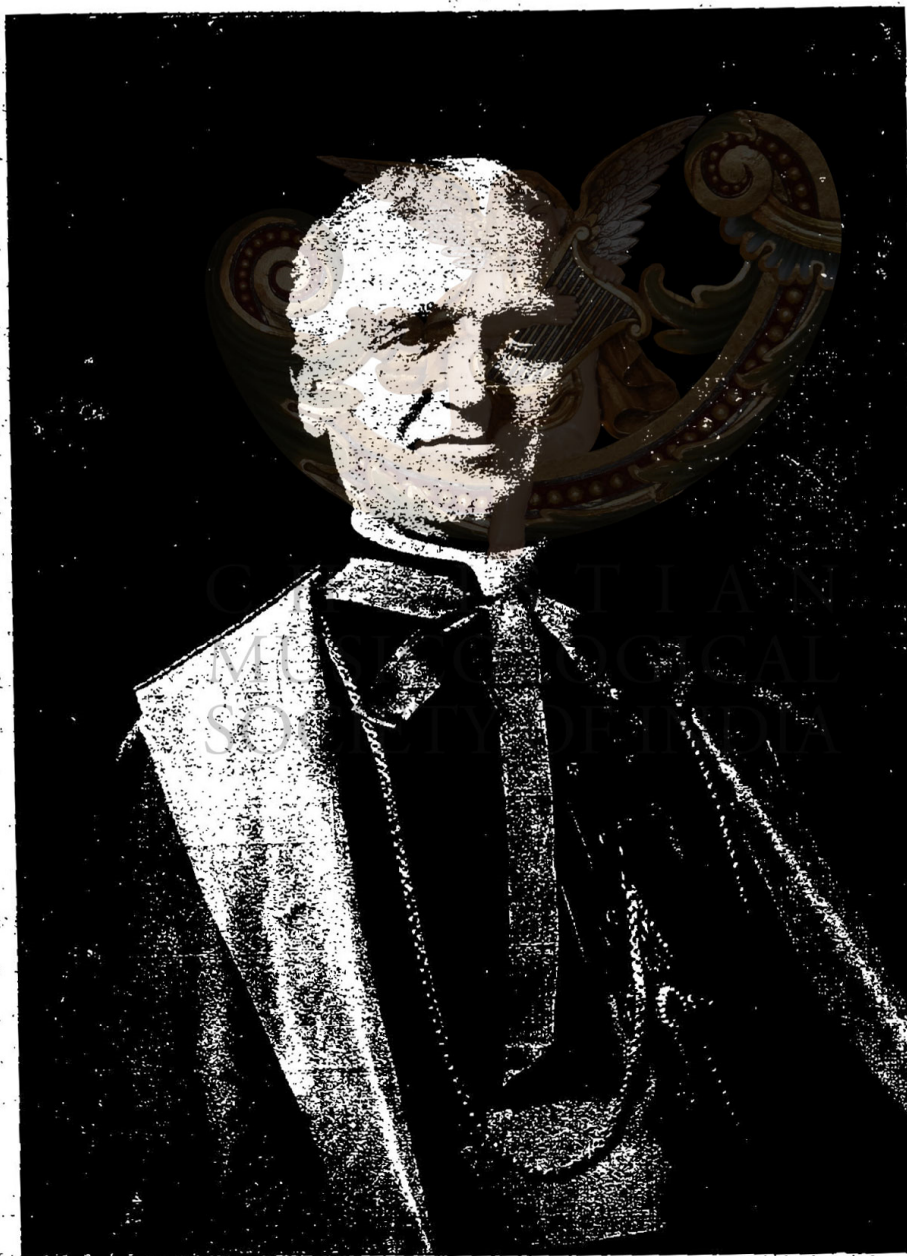
4. Those Syrians who were not involved in the schism sent a petition to the Holy See. At their request, Italian Carmelite Missionaries were sent to Malabar in 1656. Some influential members of the Syrian Clergy co-operated with the Carmelites, and the mission proved a success. Since the Catholic Syrians did not like to continue under the jurisdiction of the Padroado Archbishop of Cranganore, the Holy See placed them under the jurisdiction of Mgr. Sebastiani, the head of the Carmelite Mission. The Vicariate of Malabar or Verapoly was established for the Syrians, and when Mgr. Sebastiani was forced by the Dutch to leave India, an indigenous Syrian Priest, Alexander de Campo, was consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Malabar in 1663. The Vicariate was independent of the Padroado and was subject to the Propaganda. After the death of the Syrian Bishop, the Vicariate was placed under Latin and Carmelite Prelates. Hence, by the beginning of the 18th century, many Syrians reverted to the jurisdiction of the Padroado Archbishop of Cranganore. About a century later, in 1838, when along with the Padroado, the Diocese of Cochin and the Archdiocese of Cranganore were suppressed by the Holy See, the Syrians of Cranganore were again placed under Verapoly. In 1857, on the restoration of the Padroado, a part of the Syrians again came under Padroado jurisdiction.

5. When the Dutch expelled the Portuguese from Cochin, at the end of the 17th century, Verapoly was given jurisdiction also over the Latin churches. Thus Verapoly ruled over both Syrians and Latins. In 1845, the Holy See decreed the separation of the South Travancore Mission from Verapoly. The decree was given effect in 1853, and the new Vicariate of Quilon was thus established.

6. The intense desire of the Syrians to be governed by a Bishop of their own Rite, again gave rise to the Rocosian schism in 1861 and the Mellisian schism in 1874. Moved by the repeated petitions of the Syrians, the Holy See determined to grant them indigenous rule. As a first step, the Holy See in 1887, withdrew the Syrians from the jurisdiction of Verapoly and Cranganore and

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placed them under two new European Vicars Apostolic. In 1896, three indigenous Syrians were consecrated Vicars Apostolic. Finally, in 1923, the Holy See established the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy with the Archbishop of Ernakulam as Metropolitan and the Bishops of Changanacherry, Trichur, and Kottayam, as suffragans. The Syro-



Malabar Rite is a modified form of the ancient East-Syrian or Syro-Chaldaic Rite.

7. The schismatic Syrians who were cut off from the Mother Church in 1653, fell into the Jacobite heresy in 1665; in course of time they adopted the West Syrian Rite of

His Excellency, Mgr. L. P. Kierkels C. P., the present Delegate Apostolic. ~~This Rite permits Arabic translations for certain prayers and Rubrics. Among the Malabar~~

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Jacobites, Malayalam took the place of Arabic. Protestant Missions followed in the wake of Jacobitism; they made converts chiefly from the depressed classes. Several attempts at reunion were made. The one set on foot by the Bethany Movement deserves the praise and esteem of all. Mar Ivanios, Archbishop of Bethany, and his suffragan, Mar Theophilos of Tiruvalla, were received into the Church on the 20th of September, 1930. They retain the West-Syrian Rite of Antioch, as used by the Malabar Jacobites, with necessary corrections. This new Rite is called the "Malankara Syrian Rite" to distinguish it from the "Syro-Malabar Rite". Malabar and Malankara mean the same, and the word "Syrians" in Malabar, refers to the St. Thomas Christians.

8. A word about the Latin Catholics of Malabar. In 1886, when the Indian (Latin) Hierarchy was established, Verapoly became an Archdiocese with Quilon under it. Cranganore had been suppressed long before; Cochin still continues to be under Goa as it was from its beginning. In 1930, the southern portions of Verapoly and Quilon were constituted respectively into the new Dioceses of Vijayapuram and Kottar. Verapoly and Kottar are entrusted to the indigenous Latin Clergy; Vijayapuram and Quilon are administered by the Discalced Carmelites of the First Order, and Verapoly still enjoys the title of the Archdiocese.

III. I. Religious life for the St. Thomas Christians was not a novelty. Ossorius in the 16th century wrote thus about them:—
 "There are among them sodalities of monks and communities of sacred virgins, who, however, live in remote dwellings: Chastity is observed by them with the utmost zeal. They derive this custom from the time of St. Thomas" (Raulin). There was a monastery and a church of striking dimensions at Mylapore near the tomb of St. Thomas, whither many of the St. Thomas Christians resorted to spend their lives in prayer and contemplation. Like the Chaldean monks they must have been following the ancient Rule of St. Antony. The Chaldean bishops who came to Malabar in 1504 make mention of this monastery in their letter to the Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon. On the following passage in that letter of the bishops, "~~some christians have begun to inhabit the house (Dair) of St.~~

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Thomas the Apostle," the Rev. Fr. H. Hosten, S.J. makes the following comment:—"The Syrian bishops of 1504 would apply to it the expression used by 'Amr (c. A. D. 1340); and the Dair Thuma of Yakut and the poet Marrar al-Fak'asi might be Yonan's monastery of St. Thomas in India, near (or below) the Black Island



The Very Rev. Fr. General of the Carmelite Congregation of Malabar with his Councillors.

(before 363 A. D.) which we think should be identified with the monastery and church of great size and magnificence visited by Theodore, before A. D. 593-594 at the place in India where St. Thomas' body was first buried (i.e. Mylapore). . . . Mar Yonan's monastery (before 363 A. D.) was near the town of Milon, which we identify with "Amr's Meilan, i. e. Mayila-pur (peacock-town)." (Kerala Society Papers, Series 5. p. 245.)

2. Thus we find that the Carmelite Congregation of Malabar is but a revival, in modern times, of religious life among the St. Thomas Christians. The Malankara Syrian Church too has Religious Institutions known as the Bethany Brotherhood and Bethany Sister-



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