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Lutheran contacts with the Syrian Orthodox Church of the St. Thomas Christians and with the Syrian Apostolic Church of the East in India (Nestorians)

The dialogue between the Lutherans and the Syrian Orthodox Malankara Church in India is an epoch-marking dialogue between Lutherans and Orthodox Syrian St. Thomas Christians.¹ The visionary strength of the great ecumenist, Mar Gregorius, the Metropolitan of New Delhi, provided the main impulse for this dialogue. He had earlier gained a reputation as one of the leading representatives of the ecumenical movement. However, this dialogue in the second half of the twentieth century was not the beginning of inter-confessional contact between Lutherans and Syrian Christians. The Lutherans had always shown an interest in India's old Christendom. The interaction between Lutherans and Syrian St. Thomas Christians did not begin in the post-colonial period, but with the arrival of the first Lutheran missionaries in India.²

Keywords: Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Saint Thomas Christians, Lutherans.

¹ K.M. George/ Herbert E. Hoefler, 1983: A Dialogue Begins. Papers, Minutes and Agreed Statements from the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue in India 1978–1982, Madras/Kottayam: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College/Sophia Centre, Orthodox Theological Seminary.

² My earlier attempts: Martin Tamcke, Die frühen lutherischen Missionare in Indien in ihrem Kontakt zur syrischen Thomaschristenheit, in: Tuomas Martikainen, Ego sum qui sum, Festschrift till Jouko Martikainen, Studier i Systematik Teologi vid Abo Akademi 29, Abo 2006, S. 115–156; Martin Tamcke, Mar Thoma to Mr. Carolus, in: Andreas Gross / Y. Vincent Kumaradoss / Heike Liebau, Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India, Volume III, Communication between India and Europe, Halle 2006, S. 1379–1382; Martin Tamcke, Lutheran Contacts with the Syrian Orthodox Church of the St. Thomas Christians and with the Syrian Apostolic Church of the East in India (Nestorians), in: Andreas Gross / Y. Vincent Kumaradoss / Heike Liebau, Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India, Volume II, Christian Mission in the Indian Context, Halle 2006, S. 831–878.

1. Ziegenbalg (1682–1719)

In the process of dialogue the “I” becomes “you”. This basic understanding is not only true of the dialogue between individuals, but also of that between groups. In and through the encounter self-understanding is transformed and the understanding of the ‘Other’ also changes. Europeans had heard of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians since the Middle Ages. Those who traveled to India often took with them an image of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians based on mediaeval and modern sources about this variant of Christianity in India. Once in India, however, there was no need to hold on to this image, since real interaction could take its place. For the early Lutheran missionaries, however, a problem arose. There were no representatives of old Christendom in their region, and only vague information based on hearsay reached them. Once the Reformers had looked for contact, or even the union with the Orthodox churches. The attempt had failed because of questions of doctrine. The Lutheran missionaries were therefore interested in India’s old Christendom in order to find a common basis with it on the sub-continent. Since they did not find it in their region, they had to collect new information that would lead them closer to their goal.

The first person who took the initiative in this matter was Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg. In two letters he reports on what he knows about the Indian St. Thomas Christians and on his efforts to get more reliable information about them and to establish contact with them.

1.1 Ziegenbalg’s first investigations

The first of these letters was addressed to Court Chaplain Böhme in England and was written on 16 September 1712.³

The remarks about the St. Thomas Christians, which run over several pages, are indeed somewhat like an inventory about Ziegenbalg’s knowledge concerning India’s apostle and his descendants. Ziegenbalg, therefore, begins his portrayal with the words: “We can report the following about the holy apostle, St. Thomas, and about the so-called St. Thomas Christians.”⁴ Ziegenbalg reports that the city of Mailapur, an hour’s journey south of Madras, was called St. Thome by the Portuguese, “because this disciple of the Lord came to this place and preached the gospel of Christ to the Malabar heathens there. He also reinforced his teachings with many miracles and converted a large number of people who since then have been called St. Thomas Christians.” With regard to the term “St. Thomas Christians” Ziegenbalg wondered whether the Portuguese had ascribed this term to them because for a long time they had not wanted to profess the Roman Catholic faith. Those who expect that Ziegenbalg will provide them with information about the St. Thomas Christians in the following pages are mistaken. Ziegenbalg gives a detailed account of the numerous legends surrounding the small and the large St. Thomas mounts, but he makes it quite clear

³ AFSt/M 1 C 4 : 10a Letter from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to Anton Wilhelm Boehme from Tranquebar on 16.9.1712, an edition in: *Achte Continuation Des Berichts Der Königlichen Dänischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien*, Halle 1715 (2nd edition, Halle 1717, 3rd edition Halle 1745) pp.605–614 (excerpts), edited again in: Arno Lehmann, 1957: *Alte Briefe aus Indien, Unveröffentlichte Briefe von Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg 1706–1719*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 233–243.

⁴ AFSt/M 1 C 4 : 10a; Lehmann, p. 240. There also the following.

that he has heard all these stories from the Roman Catholics – the ‘Papists’ – who admitted that these were stories they had heard from the Malabars. They themselves did not have any descriptions of the mounts, except for what the Malabar ‘heathens’ had told them on their arrival.⁵

Ziegenbalg considered this train of transmission to be broken at several places. He, therefore, could not decide whether it was safe to assume an origin from the early St. Thomas Christians. He continued to be dependent on the information relayed to the Portuguese by the ‘heathens’ of Mailapur which was, to a large extent, the construction of miraculous legends around Apostle Thomas. This was, however, not information about the oldest form of Christianity in the region. Ziegenbalg considered only the cross with the inscription on the large St. Thomas mount to be of greater historical interest. But “till now no one had been able to read the inscription”. Ziegenbalg notes with regret that there are no St. Thomas Christians to be found around St. Thome/ Mailapur any more. The Portuguese, however, told him that these Christians could be found in Cochin on the Malabar Coast and that they were now part of the Roman Catholic Church.⁶ Yet, even the information about the distant descendants of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala is obscured by a legend. Ziegenbalg possibly writes about this matter, which is at the most of ethnological interest, because of its curious nature. It fitted into the interest in exotic matters represented by the cabinet of curiosities in Halle. The right leg of all St. Thomas Christians, it was said, was fat, because their ancestors used this leg to stop the persecutors of the apostle from reaching his abode. This story is naturally simply too incredible even for Ziegenbalg who had generally practiced restraint in the narration of legends surrounding St. Thomas. However, since it was part of the mental make-up of the St. Thomas Christians among the Tamilians, he included it as a characteristic of this mental stereotype. “This is a common belief here”, says Ziegenbalg. He himself, however, he continues, cannot report having seen this, since he has not yet “seen such Christians”. All that Ziegenbalg could examine were the stories of the ‘Malabar heathens’ which he apparently tried to verify himself by visiting the two St. Thomas mounts and the city of Mailapur/St. Thome.

1.2 Ziegenbalg’s observations on his journeys

The letter was based on the impressions and observations that Ziegenbalg had gathered on a journey north. In addition, Plütschau, Gründler and Bövingh sent a report to Halle on 6 February 1710 in which they quoted extensively from letters written to them by Ziegenbalg while on his journey.⁷ During this journey contact was established with the English and the Dutch, but also with French and Portuguese missionaries. In Madras Ziegenbalg took part in an Armenian service and spoke with the priest of the congregation. Such contacts with the Armenians in India came about very often, and Ziegenbalg not only received sympathy from them, but also concrete help, for example, in his search for

⁵ AFSt/M 1 C 4: 10a; Lehmann, p. 241. There also the following.

⁶ AFSt/M 1 C 4: 10a; Lehmann, p. 242. There also the following.

⁷ AFSt/M 1 C 3 : 1 Letter from Heinrich Plütschau, Johann Ernst Gründler, Johann Georg Bövingh to August Hermann Francke, dated 6.2.1710 from Tranquebar (this was edited in: *Zweyte Continuation Des Berichts Der Königlich-Dänischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien*, Halle 1710, 2nd edition 1714, 3rd edition 1718, pp. 102–109).

the Syrian St. Thomas Christians.⁸ However, the authors of the letter did not say what transpired in this meeting between Ziegenbalg and the Armenian priest. Ziegenbalg had reached Madras on 16 January 1710; on January 20 he went to the St. Thomas mount where he admired the church and spoke with a Catholic priest; from there he went to the ‘other St. Thomas mount’ where the apostle is said to have lived. There he saw the cross, the well and the imprint of his hand on a stone. St. Thomas is said to have been stabbed on the first mount and to have lived on the second. However, Ziegenbalg was not successful in getting information about the descendants of the St. Thomas Christians in the city. The report sent by the three missionaries was little more than a reproduction of Ziegenbalg’s journey to find St. Thomas Christians.

1.3 Deeper Knowledge

A year later, Ziegenbalg proves himself to be better informed. In a letter to Berlin dated 15 November 1713 he refers to his communications from the previous year.⁹ “Last year we sent some information about the St. Thomas Christians.”¹⁰ The Portuguese dispelled all doubts about the fact that these long-established Christians were descended from the apostle, St. Thomas, and cited an old follower of the St. Thomas Christians who had told them the story of St. Thomas and had shown them numerous monuments relevant to this. The ‘real’ St. Thomas Christians, however, had moved to the Malabar coast and had increased in strength there. Ziegenbalg’s tenacious investigations did not end with this. Finally, he found something. From an Armenian book which, according to information given to him, had been written “in Armenian even before the arrival of the Portuguese in East India”, he got reliable information that St. Thomas had actually traveled to India and had lived in Mailapur. There were also many books of the Indian Christian tradition about this. One of the disadvantages of these books was for Ziegenbalg the fact that they were “all written later”, i. e. after the arrival of the Portuguese. This fact appeared to him to be

⁸ The important role played by the Armenians in providing information about the Syrian St. Thomas Christians is remarkable. Ziegenbalg felt that he owed the first, seemingly reliable, piece of information to them. Contacts with Armenian merchants existed from the earliest time onwards. The great significance of the Armenians for Nikolaus Ludwig, Count of Zinzendorf, has never been disputed. The intensive contacts he had established with the Armenians in Amsterdam during his Grand Tour were never broken. Occasionally, the advice and suggestions of the Armenians had been of prime importance, as, for example, in the adventurous attempt of the Moravian Brethren to establish a mission in Isphahan in Persia. However, for the missionaries of the Danish-Halle mission there were more obvious reasons, the chief one being the existence of the significant Armenian congregation in Madras to whom Ziegenbalg owed his information about the Syrian St. Thomas Christians. This situation did not change even when a query from Gotthilf August Francke about the Armenians living in Bengal was met with unequivocal criticism of the Armenian Christians in Calcutta by Johann Zacharias Kiernander. Later, Johann Christian Breithaupt’s report about the uprising in Bengal, directed equally against the English and the Armenians, reinforced Kiernander’s views. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 1755 the Ten Commandments as well as the Lord’s Prayer in the Armenian language were sent to Halle, even though this language was not of prime importance there. Not only was there as exchange of letters with Armenians in Batavia, but an Armenian from there was also invited to work in the mission in India.

⁹ AFSt/M 1 C 5 : 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21 : 50, transcript of the previous letter) Letter from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to the dear fathers and men in god in Berlin of 15.11.1713 from Tranquebar, edited in Lehmann, pp. 345–356.

¹⁰ AFSt/M 1 C 5 : 75/ 1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21 : 50); Lehmann, p. 349. There also the following.

a very strong qualification of the value of these texts which, in addition, “also contained many fables”. The information that he got didn’t satisfy his thirst for knowledge. His investigations on the east coast of India always led to the same result. Everywhere he was told, “that the apostle, St. Thomas, had really been to India” and that the Indian Christians of the pre-colonial era had got their name from him. What disturbed him about the information he received was that it was “mixed with many fables”. Ziegenbalg felt that his investigations could only really be successful if he could travel to the Malabar coast and talk to some St. Thomas Christians himself in order to get at the truth. The reason for his growing scepticism was information that these Christians were not descended from Apostle Thomas, but “from a Syrian”, from whose name, Mar Thomas, they had also got their name. Mar Thomas, however, had come to India only in the fifth century and had preached Christianity. From this time on and till the arrival of the Portuguese these Christians had only had bishops from Syria who had also introduced church services in the Syrian language.¹¹ Since it was difficult for Ziegenbalg to undertake a journey to these Christians, he came upon the idea of establishing contact through letters – a method he had found successful even otherwise. His interest lay chiefly in the question of doctrine which he wanted to know first-hand. This interest was motivated by Ziegenbalg’s suspicion of Catholic attempts at establishing a union. The ‘Roman Church’, he writes, has tried very hard “to bring these St. Thomas Christians to the Holy See”, but that these old Christians had never taken this step voluntarily. At first, the ‘Papists’ had tried to win over the St. Thomas Christians with kindness and promises, but the latter had resisted and had wanted to have nothing to do with a “Pope and with strange dogmas”.¹² When the Portuguese had established themselves in India, the union of these Christians with the Roman Catholic Church was carried out by force. They imprisoned the bishop and compelled the people to accept the new dogma. Ziegenbalg also knew about later attempts to restore the contact between the Syrian home church and India. He says that Syrian bishops came to India, but that the Portuguese stopped them. He understood the difficulties that led to such conflicts among the Christians. He also knew about a Syrian bishop of the St. Thomas Christians who was still imprisoned in Pondicherry and who did not have the freedom to preach. This bishop had earlier been sent to the Pope in Europe. On account of his promise to stay with the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope had ordained him as a bishop and had sent him back to the St. Thomas Christians. However, after his return to India, the bishop had continued to advocate the teachings of the Syrian Church. This had led to his imprisonment. Numerous St. Thomas Christians had tried to liberate themselves from Portuguese tyranny by seeking the protection of the Dutch who did not profess the Roman faith. Other St. Thomas Christians, who also did not profess the Roman faith, were “inside the country”. They had used the later loss of power of the Portuguese in order to freely follow their original dogma under “heathen rulers”.

¹¹ AFSt/M 1 C 5 : 75/ 1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21 : 50); Lehmann, pp. 349–350.

¹² AFSt/M 1 C 5 : 75/ 1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21 : 50); Lehmann, p. 350. There also the following.

1.4 The historical facts of Ziegenbalg's reports

Ziegenbalg's scepticism about the oral tradition increasingly enabled him to come closer to the actual historical genesis of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians. The most important question about St. Thomas Christians was always the question of their origin. Consequently, an important part of Ziegenbalg's efforts concerned the question of the presumed apostolic origin of this part of world Christendom.¹³ The fact that Ziegenbalg was not in a position to resolve this question, reflects the problematic situation of the sources even today. If one accords a measure of validity to the oral tradition, then, even for modern historians, the presence of the apostle in India must be taken into consideration.¹⁴ If one uses the strict standards of the textual tradition, which only validates that which is textually incontestable and which can be considered the sole explanation for an issue at hand, then we must reckon with a much later period for the rise of Indian St. Thomas Christianity.¹⁵ Ziegenbalg's information about a Syrian origin corresponds to sources that are difficult to verify historically. They concern a merchant Thomas from Cana who is said to have arrived in Cranganore in the year 345 with 72 families and to have settled there. Syrian St. Thomas Christianity is said to have originated from him. The time period Ziegenbalg mentions, however, namely the fifth century, contradicts the generally accepted time period for this migration. It is characteristic for Ziegenbalg's efforts that, on the one hand, he tries to get to the core of the information he receives with methods that correspond to contemporary criteria of historicity. On the other hand, he confronts all available sources, even those that appear to him to be particularly doubtful, since they seem to be rooted only in the oral tradition. His information regarding the union of the Syrians with Rome is correct. It is, however, not very specific and is included mainly because of the contemporary attitude of a mild confrontation with Catholicism and the Roman Catholic mission.¹⁶

Ziegenbalg's hypothesis about the migration of the St. Thomas Christians from the east to the west coast presents a problem. However, since European travelers in the Middle Ages had in fact testified to St. Thomas Christianity for the east coast, this hypothesis is not completely false, just as present hypotheses cannot be completely ignored when they talk about a merging of the St. Thomas Christians of this region with syncretic cultures that led to a disappearance of Christianity here.¹⁷ Even during the time of the missionaries in the first half of the eighteenth century St. Thomas Christians still went on a pilgrimage to the two St. Thomas mounts.¹⁸

¹³ Martin Tamcke, 2002: *Der heilige Thomas – Apostel Indiens?*, in: Georg Röwekamp, 2002: *Entlang der Seidenstraße. Das Christentum auf dem Weg nach Osten*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, pp. 66–67.

¹⁴ Edouard R. Hambye/ Johannes Madey, 1972: *1900 Jahre Thomas-Christen in Indien*, Freiburg: Kanisius, esp. pp. 12–16.

¹⁵ Jürgen Stein, 2002: *Eine traditionsreiche Gemeinschaft. Die Geschichte der Christen in Indien*. In: Georg Röwekamp, 2002: *Entlang der Seidenstraße. Das Christentum auf dem Weg nach Osten*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 68–73.

¹⁶ In general on this: Joesph Thekkedath, 1988: *History of Christianity in India II, From the Middle of the Sixteenth to the end of the Seventeenth Century (1542–1700)*. Bangalore: Church History Association of India.

¹⁷ Cf. for this statements by Folker Reichert, 1987: *Die Reisen des seligen Odorich von Pordenone nach Indien und China (1314/18–1330)*. Heidelberg: Manutius.

¹⁸ W. Germann, 1877: *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Kirchen*. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, p. 559

Ziegenbalg's information that bishops were sent from Syria to India is undoubtedly correct, whereby Syria is used as a collective term here for the regions settled by East and West Syrians. Ziegenbalg's statement that these bishops introduced Syrian liturgy in church services does not mean that another language had been used in earlier liturgy. It simply means that with the beginning of liturgical ceremonies the Syrian mother tongue of the bishops was also used as the language of liturgy. Whereas Ziegenbalg originally assumed that all Syrian St. Thomas Christians of Kerala professed the union with Rome, he later discovered the schism within Syrian St. Thomas Christianity. He viewed the schism as a result of the new political situation caused by the change of colonial rule from the Portuguese to the Dutch. It was Dutch protection that enabled a renewed move for independence from Rome. Ziegenbalg does not indicate whether he was aware of the fact that the religious policies of the Dutch in Kerala knew how to distinguish between the different groups of St. Thomas Christians. He also does not mention that the Dutch set themselves up as patrons of the group of St. Thomas Christians who were united with Rome.¹⁹ Ziegenbalg seems to be unaware of the fact that the renewed independence of the St. Thomas Christians took place independently of Protestant-Dutch rule and at a time when the Portuguese were still the colonial rulers. However, this mistaken perception could have arisen because Ziegenbalg names a third group of St. Thomas Christians along with the unified and the independent groups. This third group, he says, took advantage of the weakness of the Portuguese and placed itself under the protection of the Indian kings of Cochin in order to escape from Portuguese rule and from the compulsion to unite with Rome. It is clear that he is referring to the Christians under Mar Thomas. It then remains uncertain who the members of the independent group were. In all probability these were the Christians gathered around Mar Gabriel.²⁰

That the Portuguese tried everything in their power to hamper the Syrian bishops who came to India is a well-established fact of Indian church history after the Church Council of Diamper (June 20–28, 1599). Since 1652, the Syrians who were intent on their independence had been forced in the direction of the Miaphysites by the Syrian bishop, Athathalla.²¹ The subsequent restoration of the independence of the St. Thomas Christians on 3 January 1653 (the oath at 'Kunan Kurishu') was the signal for the renewed independence of the Indian Syrians from Rome.²² The Syrian metropolite, Mar Simon, who Ziegenbalg mentions in his report, is one of the mysterious figures of Syrian church history in India. His denominational association itself presented a problem. Julius Richter, for example, clearly identified him as a 'Nestorian' (i.e. as a member of the East-

¹⁹ See below in the letters of Mar Thoma.

²⁰ See below in W. Gründler.

²¹ Stephen Neill, 1985: *A History of Christianity in India. The beginnings to AD 1707*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 316–319; Thekkedath, pp. 91–94, Hambye/Madey, p. 35.

²² The extent to which the different denominational perspectives of present church historians determines the result of their analyses has been studied with reference to the Church Council of Diamper and its consequences: Karen Hermes, 1995: *Countdown to 1999. Die Synode von Diamper (1599) im Spiegel der verschiedenen Kirchen der südindischen Thomaschristenheit*, in: Martin Tamcke, Wolfgang Schwaigert, Egbert Schlarb, 1995: *Syrisches Christentum weltweit. Festschrift Wolfgang Hage, Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 1*, Münster; Bibliographie, pp. 325–340. Till now there are no studies that can claim to have evaluated facts independent of the denominational perspective of the author.

ern Apostolic Church) who tried to “retrieve the lost province of the Church” from the ‘Jacobites’ (i.e. the Syrian Orthodox Church).²³ Richter was wrong about this denominational association: officially Simon belonged to the Chaldaec Church (i.e. to the East Syrians in the Near East who were united with Rome).²⁴ Although the independent St. Thomas Christians had called him to India, on 22 May 1701 he ordained Angelus Francis, a member of the Carmelite Order, who had been appointed apostolic vicar for North and South Malabar by the Pope.²⁵ The Metropolitan Simon of Adana had been sent to India from Diyarbakir by the Supreme Head of the East Syrians who were united with Rome.²⁶ The ordaining of the Hierarch from the Carmelite Order led to unrest and dissent among the independent St. Thomas Christians. In order to restore peace, the Metropolitan was forced to board a ship to Pondicherry. There he waited for his return to the Syrian St. Thomas Christians in Kerala. There is no evidence of his work as a bishop in the following period beyond this act of ordaining.²⁷ The regular sources assume that the Carmelites in Pondicherry imprisoned him. The later East Syrian bishop, Mar Gabriel, was of the same opinion: Simon, he says, announced his arrival in a letter sent in advance to the St. Thomas Christians. The Carmelites and Jesuits intercepted this letter. They are said to have then posted guards who arrested the bishop and brought him to Pondicherry.²⁸ After being imprisoned for twenty years he is said to have “died mysteriously”²⁹ This is con-

²³ Julius Richter: *Indische Missionsgeschichte*. Allgemeine evangelische Missionsgeschichte 1, 2nd ed., Gütersloh, p. 97.

²⁴ Germann was the first to place him initially in the correct denomination: Cf. W. Germann, p. 509. Later, even he considers him to be a ‘Nestorian’: Germann, p. 531. Special studies on his person and his writings: E.R. Hambye, 1975/76: *Le Metropolitan chaldean. Simon d’Ada, et ses aventures en Inde*, Parole de l’Orient VI/VII, pp. 500–508; Khalil Samir, 1975/76: *La relation du voyage en Inde en 1701 du Metropolitan Chaldean Simon*, Edition, traduction et notes philologiques, Parole de l’Orient IX, pp. 277–303.

²⁵ Germann, p. 509; Neill, p. 330. Germann was the first to consider the possibility that Simon had been called to India by the independent St. Thomas Christians. Germann, p. 531.

²⁶ Germann, p. 509; Neill, p. 330 (incorrect description of church hierarchy by Neill). Germann is of the opinion that Simon was sent to India by a Catholic bishop. On the situation of the group at this time cf. Albert Lampart, 1966: *Ein Märtyrer der Union mit Rom: Joseph I. (1681–1696), Patriarch der Chaldäer*. Einsiedeln: Benzinger.

²⁷ Neill p. 493, footnote 70.

²⁸ Germann quotes from letters of Mar Gabriel given in Canter Vischer: Germann, p. 531. Gabriel stated that Simon was being held in irons in Pondicherry. Germann denies that Simon stayed willingly in Pondicherry from 1701–1720. “No, after using the unwelcome person for the ordaining ceremony, he was taken to the monastery as a prisoner.”

²⁹ Thus Richter, p. 97; cf. Germann, p. 509. According to Germann, Simon fell into a well in August 1720 and drowned. Germann lists Catholic investigations of this case and refers to Müllbauer’s statement that “the ridiculous fairy-tale that he was murdered by Catholic missionaries hardly deserves to be mentioned.” In contrast to this, Germann was struck by the fact of an official investigation. “At any rate, the given vita is a puzzling one which leads to many questions”. Cf. also Maximilian Müllbauer, *Geschichte der katholischen Mission in Ostindien von der Zeit Vasco da Gamas bis zur Mitte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg 1852, p. 312. Germann did not trust the “church-book of the prison wardens”, Germann p. 531, footnote 3. If Simon had been kept in irons then it follows that he could not save himself when he fell into the well and therefore drowned. “Simeon drowns or is drowned” is how he formulates it carefully in the text: Germann, p. 531. Neill also refers to the sources which say that Simon lived with the Capuchins in Pondicherry, but Neill himself does not consider this to be very probable. His migration to the French colony, says Neill, does not appear to have been completely voluntary. He was kept under a strict watch. Neill, p. 493, footnote 70.

tradicted by the fact that from time to time he must have been allowed to move around freely, since the construction of the church at Ariyankuppam in 1714 is said to have been built with funds provided by the Metropolitane.³⁰ Ziegenbalg is particularly dismayed when he learns about this bishop of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians being imprisoned in Pondicherry. He believed that the bishop had been ordained by the Pope who had then sent him to India. However, since he then continued to follow the doctrines of the Syrian Church, he was arrested and thus prevented from preaching. Here information about Ahathalla and Gabriel³¹ is probably confused with information about Simon. Ziegenbalg's report is, however, undoubtedly marked by a genuine dismay at the fate of his contemporary who, at the time the report was written, had already been in prison for a long time, but who would have to face some more years of martyrdom before his violent end. The fact that Ziegenbalg makes a transition to this bishop in the context of Syrian bishops who were impeded in their work by the Portuguese shows that he was not only concerned with the political intervention of the Portuguese in ecclesiastical matters concerning the St. Thomas Christians. Rather, he was concerned with the interventions of all Catholic powers in favour of the Catholic Church against the independence of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians and their ties to their Syrian mother-church. Even denominational polemics thus contains a political argument. Indeed, Ziegenbalg considers it to be the defining argument with regard to developments in church history. In Eastern India the East Syrian bishop was more of an exceptional figure than a representative of Syrian Christianity. It is for this very reason that Ziegenbalg makes this come alive more concretely than all other relevant information.

Ziegenbalg's genuine interest in concrete interaction is demonstrated by the fact that his efforts culminate in the decision to now enter into a direct contact through letters with the Indian St. Thomas Christians. A dialogue does not emerge from books but from lived interaction. To understand the beliefs of the denominational Other, one should not proceed from texts and most certainly not from third-hand information. Naturally the Self in the Other is helpful on the path to the Other in the Other. The missionaries in Tranquebar now found themselves on this path.

³⁰ E.R. Hambye, 1997: *History of India*, vol. III, Eighteenth Century. Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, p. 174, footnote 20.

³¹ See below in Gründler.

2. The Syrian language

2.1 The necessity of knowing the language

If ever a direct contact had been established between the Halle missionary and the St. Thomas Christians, the missionary would have had to undergo a linguistic re-orientation. On the one hand, the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala had already started using Malayalam as their language of daily communication, but, on the other hand, they continued to use the Syrian language in the circles of the Church and in their liturgy. The Syrian St. Thomas Christians did not understand Tamil, the language that Ziegenbalg had learned, and they expressly rejected it as a possible language of communication. They could not comprehend its use by the missionaries and it aroused their displeasure.³²

Ziegenbalg at least had some idea about the Syrian language. Therefore he could use it as a base for comparison in his comments about the Arabic used in India.³³ Since he did not encounter Syrian St. Thomas Christians anywhere, his abilities in this area were not developed. The role of Syrian in Ziegenbalg's work remains vague. The knowledge of Syrian of the later missionaries is better documented and this knowledge serves as a basis for a correspondence that they then conducted in the Syrian language. They did not always gain this knowledge in Halle and would have had to have further training in any case. Especially Walther's knowledge of Syrian, with which he was in a position to carry on a correspondence in this language, was a result mainly of his own efforts in this area. He even progressed to the extent that a renowned Orientalist stated that he made fewer mistakes in the language than his Syrian correspondent.³⁴ Someone who does not speak the language of the Other cannot comprehend his singularity. Despite their linguistic efforts, however, the missionaries in Tranquebar remained dependent on Orientalists like Michaelis in Halle and Schaaf Sr. and Jr. in Leiden, as well as on Dutch intermediaries in Cochin who helped them with their translations. They themselves had, time and again, "undertaken in vain" to translate the Syrian letters that they received.³⁵ Anyway, they could only attempt to do this since they possessed a minimum knowledge of Syrian. But, this was not sufficient for a real understanding.

2.2 Syrian language in Halle

Knowledge of the Syrian language was not unusual for the staff in Halle. The project of the Collegii orientalis theologici of 1702 had already named Syrian as one of the prominent languages along with, for example, Arabic, Chaldaic (this meant Aramaic) and Ethiopian, which the students were expected to practise "with unflinching diligence".³⁶ Armenian – like Turkish, Persian, Chinese, and

³² Cf. for this the relevant statements of the Bishop Mar Thoma.

³³ Cf. his letter to Professor Michaelis in Halle dated 12.9.1713, Lehmann, pp. 302–307, here p. 306.

³⁴ Germann, p. 556, footnote 3.

³⁵ Germann, p. 556.

³⁶ August Hermann Francke, 2002: *Viertes Projekt des Collegii Orientalis Theologici, Halle (1702, Reprint Halle)*, (Kleine Texte der Franckeschen Stiftungen 8); the text can also be

New Greek – was only meant to be learned by the future staff members of Halle. The manuscript cabinet in the art and natural history room discovered in 1992 proves, however, what little value was placed in Halle on a knowledge of Syrian. The cabinet was richly decorated by the artist Gottfried August Gründler (1710–1775). In the crowning painting he shows the important languages of the earth ordered according to systematic principles. There is the division of East and West, of Greek and Latin, followed on the right by Armenian and Syrian as well as Osmanli and Turkish, while on the left there is German, Gothic and Runic script. The classificatory principle is that of the Biblical language. In the centre there is Hebrew, while the other languages follow on the right and the left. In the short quotes from each of the scripts it is not the content that is important, and neither is it the case that comparable quotations from the Bible are presented. Rather, it is the script alone that is important and the impression of the variety of scripts. The Syrian quote in this painting is written in the language of West Syria (Serto). Gottfried August Gründler painted the quotation from the copy of the Syrian manuscript in the cabinet and he chose a liturgical-theological text from this. He did not understand the text and couldn't read it either. This is apparent from the fact that he omitted the first word of the cited text. The fact that some of the staff in Halle still managed to achieve considerable mastery in Syrian is proved, for example, by Benjamin Schultze. He had already learned Syrian in school in Berlin (along with Hebrew, classical Greek, Latin and French).³⁷ Schultze became a specialist for Oriental languages which he, in his own words, had no trouble learning. He says that on his journeys in the Orient he had not wanted to speak through an interpreter.³⁸ Schultze learned Arabic by beginning a course in Arabic in 1718 with the Christian Syrian, Carolus Dadichi (+1734).³⁹ Benjamin Schultze had had the opportunity of procuring a Syrian manuscript and bringing it to Halle, which is still in the "Wunderkammer". The manuscript is a Syrian alphabet book written in the West Syrian script, in Serto.⁴⁰ It served as a textbook for learning Syrian ("Book for beginners in the Syrian language"). The pupils had always given an introduction to Syrian mainly through the psalms that had to be learned by heart. The textbook kept in Halle contains parts of 11 psalms and only psalms 148 and 104 are given in

found in Gustav Kramer, August Hermann Francke, 1. Teil, Halle 1880, pp. 278–285. After this the relevant source text is quoted in Benjamin Ziemer, *Die Sprachen Babels und die Sprachen der Bibel – das Programm der Bemalung des Schriftenschranks*, in: Heike Link und Thomas Müller-Bahlke, *Zeichen und Wunder, Geheimnisse des Schriftenschranks in der Kunst- und Naturalienkammer der Franckeschen Stiftungen*, Kleine Schriftenreihe der Franckeschen Stiftungen 4, Halle 2003, pp. 38–55, quote on p. 54.

³⁷ Heike Liebau/ Kurt Liebau, 2003: Der Missionar Benjamin Schultze: Eine Notiz zu seiner Korrespondenz und sein Beitrag zur Herausbildung der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft, in: Heike Link und Thomas Müller-Bahlke, *Zeichen und Wunder, Geheimnisse des Schriftenschranks in der Kunst- und Naturalienkammer der Franckeschen Stiftungen*, Kleine Schriftenreihe der Franckeschen Stiftungen 4, Halle, pp. 94–110, here p. 95. On Schultze's significance for linguistics, cf. Heike Liebau, 1988: *Die Sprachforschungen des Missionars Benjamin Schultze*, Halle.

³⁸ Heike Link, 2003: *Der Schriftenschränk als Hort wundersamer Schriften und Endstation langer Überlieferungswege – Schlaglichter auf die Geschichte eines pietistischen Waisenhauses*, in: Heike Link und Thomas Müller-Bahlke, *Zeichen und Wunder, Geheimnisse des Schriftenschranks in der Kunst- und Naturalienkammer der Franckeschen Stiftungen*, Kleine Schriftenreihe der Franckeschen Stiftungen 4, Halle, pp. 15–37, here p. 19.

³⁹ Heike Liebau/Kurt Liebau, Schultze, p. 96.

⁴⁰ My remarks follow here the observations and descriptions in Matut, pp. 85–88.

their entirety. In addition, there are parts of psalms 51, 140, 141, 91, 132, 63, 19 and 4. Elementary knowledge of prayer and doctrine are mediated through the Lord's Prayer and the confession of faith. The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount according to the evangelist Matthew have been inserted between psalms 19 and 4, of which the hymns are also a part. The psalms are followed by the petitionary prayer of Mar Ephraem and Mar Jakob of Sarugh. Two prayers complete the textbook: one is to be recited in the evening of Fast Sunday, the other in the morning of a fasting day. Till now, scholarly investigation has granted the probability of the textbook coming to Halle via the missionaries of the Tranquebar mission. It is also possible that Stefan Schultz could have brought it with him from his journeys in the Near East, but the fact that he mentions contacts with Christian Syrians only in passing in his travel diary does not make this assumption appear very probable.⁴¹ In addition, his classification of these Syrian Christians is inaccurate. In Aleppo he claims to have met Syrian Christians who he calls 'Sorians' and he equates them with the Nestorians.⁴² This equation is surprising. In Aleppo, members of the Syrian-Orthodox Church were always far more numerous than the Nestorians. At Easter in 1754 he joined the excursion of pilgrims to Jericho, to the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Apart from European Christians at its head, the procession also consisted of Greeks, Armenians and 'Sorians', i.e. Syrian Christians. The end of the procession consisted of the janissaries of the Ottoman governor.⁴³ Whereas the Syrian-Orthodox Christians have always had a considerable presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the community of the Apostolic Church of the East (Nestorians) is much smaller. In addition, the Christian communities named are those that share the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (only the Egyptian Copts and the Ethiopians are missing). Therefore, the participants in the procession were, in all probability, Syrian-Orthodox Christians. Since Schultz, even otherwise, tends to equate Nestorians (East Syrians) with Syrian traditions rather than the Syrian-Orthodox (West Syrians), this classification appears somewhat plausible.⁴⁴ Thus, Schultz would have actually met Christians who spoke the West Syrian language. However, the erroneous perceptions and the lack of any remarkable encounters make

⁴¹ On him: Editha Wolf-Crome, Stephanus Schultz, 1989: *Aus den Lebenserinnerungen*, Hamburg 1977; Paul Gerhard Aring, *Christen und Juden heute – und die 'Judenmission'?* 2nd ed. Frankfurt/Main, pp. 115–123; Manfred Fleischhammer, *Arabische und türkische Urkunden in den Franckeschen Stiftungen*, in: Heike Link/Thomas Müller-Bahlke, *Zeichen und Wunder*, pp. 56–70, here p. 57. Cf. Also the reference to him in the context of the despatch of the book in Diana Matut, *Ein syrisches Alphabet-Büchlein*, in: Heike Link/Thomas Müller-Bahlke, pp. 83–93, here: p. 91. Matut also points out that Stephan Schultz does not mention direct contacts with Syrian Christians in his travelogue, neither does he mention the purchase of books. However, Matut continues to believe in the possibility of the purchase and despatch of the book by Stephan Schultz ("the possibility existed").

⁴² Wolf-Crome, p. 92.

⁴³ Wolf-Crome, p. 95.

⁴⁴ Callenberg had given him the task of finding an ostensible prince of Lebanon who had presented himself to Prince Leopold of Dessau. The man proved to be a Maronite and was not simply a ruler. He spoke French, Arabic and German, and his family was Maronite. Schultz, therefore, constructed the following religious genesis: at one time, the Maronites had been part of the Syrian, or the Nestorian, Church, and later, with Bishop Marun, they had aligned themselves with the Roman Catholic Church. However controversial the historical genesis of the Maronites may be till today, a Nestorian origin of this Church, which probably arose from monotheletism, is false. For the accounts written by Schultz on the prince, cf. Wolf-Crome, pp. 99–100 (chap. 45). On the origin of the Maronite Church: Harald Suermann, 1998: *Die Gründungsgeschichte der Maronitischen Kirche*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

the procuring of the alphabet-book by him considerably more improbable than a possible dispatch from India. There, the association with the Syrian Christians was consistently sought out who had long since started using the West Syrian script instead of the East Syrian. In any case, the missionaries made serious efforts to learn the Syrian language and the script. In view of their willingness to search for relevant information, to send Syrian letters to Halle and to locate Syrian books in Kerala, it appears plausible that they had procured the alphabet-book. The main partner of the missionaries in Syrian matters in Halle was Christian Benedict Michaelis. He was not only interested in the history of the St. Thomas Christians⁴⁵ and in continuing the correspondence with them,⁴⁶ but he also contributed decisively to an understanding of Syrian.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ AFSt/M 1 C 11 : 63 (ALMW/DHM 4/5b : 10) Letter from Christian Benedict Michaelis to Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler, dated 25.11.1718 from Halle in which Michaelis lists a treatise about the St. Thomas Christians that is still awaited. Johann Wilhelm Schröder also requested information about the St. Thomas Christians: ALMW / DHM 8 / 16 : 53 Letter from Johann Wilhelm Schröder to Nikolaus Dal, Martin Bosse, Christian Friedrich Pressier, Christoph Theodosius Walther, Benjamin Schultze, dated 7.1.1727 from Copenhagen; ALMW / DHM 8 / 16 : 60 Letter from Johann Wilhelm Schröder to Nikolaus Dal and Christian Friedrich Pressier, dated 11.11.1730 from Copenhagen; cf. also ALMW / DHM 8 / 16: 66 Letter from Johann Wilhelm Schröder to Nikolaus Dal, Martin Bosse, Christian Friedrich Pressier, Christoph Theodosius Walther, Andreas Worm, Samuel Gottlieb Richtsteig, dated 7.11.1772 from Copenhagen.

⁴⁶ AFSt/M 1 H 3 : 2 Letter from Nikolaus Dal to Christian Benedict Michaelis, dated 1.9.1725 from Tranquebar (containing information about the beginning of correspondence with the St. Thomas Christians). Callenberg and Francke also sought information and received replies from the missionaries to their questions regarding the relations of the missionaries with the St. Thomas Christians, AFSt/M 2 A 1 : 12: Reply from Benjamin Schultze and Jens Siewerts to questions from Johann Heinrich Callenberg and Gotthilf August Francke [year not mentioned] (1729/1730) [no place] (Tranquebar).

⁴⁷ ALMW / DHM 4/5b : 23 Letter from Christian Benedict Michaelis to Christoph Theodosius Walther, dated 7.1.1730 from Halle (the remarks in this about the language of the St. Thomas Christians are not written by Michaelis).

3. Johann Ernst Gründler (1677–1720)

The efforts undertaken by Johann Ernst Gründler point in this direction

The letters of 16 September 1712 and 15 November 1713 had been written both by Ziegenbalg and Gründler.⁴⁸ The report of 6 February 1710 had also been co-authored by Gründler.⁴⁹ All three letters dealt mainly with the Syrian St. Thomas Christians. In the following period Gründler carried on the efforts concerning the St. Thomas Christians. His efforts show that the missionaries had arrived at a significantly advanced stage: it was now no longer a question of the most elementary facts or of vague statements of outsiders based on hearsay. Concrete information was now available and intermediaries could give concrete information. Interaction, via third persons at least, had begun, even though it really did not deserve this name, because it was only the Lutherans who actively asked questions, while the Syrian St. Thomas Christians at first only passively submitted to the interest of the Germans.

On 4 February 1715, Gründler requested Georg Friedrich Berbisdorff to establish greater contact. The urgent requirement was still to find out the actual history of St. Thomas Christendom.⁵⁰ Berbisdorff was therefore equipped with a description of the history of the St. Thomas Christians. He was told to discuss this with the Dutch preacher and with other ‘learned men’. He was supposed to examine the present condition of the St. Thomas Christians with these interlocutors and try and get as much historically reliable information as possible. He was also given a series of concrete questions for this enquiry. He was supposed to find out, for example, if the Syrian St. Thomas Christians there still had a Syrian bishop. Gründler therefore knew about the problems regarding the provision of Syrian bishops. He therefore narrowed down the question to those St. Thomas Christians who were not united with Rome. Gründler also wanted to know whether these St. Thomas Christians still had Syrian books in their church. The question of dogma was naturally also of interest. In this regard the task was to find out whether their dogmas differed from those of the ‘Papists’. Yet, Gründler did not want to leave it at that. He wanted to be able to have a mental picture of the dogmas of the St. Thomas Christians. If Berbisdorff could get a Syrian book with the dogmas of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians, Gründler stated that he “would be very pleased”.

⁴⁸ AFSt/M 1 C 4 : 10a Letter from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to Anton Wilhelm Boehme, dated 16.9.1712 from Tranquebar, ed. in *Achte Continuation Des Berichts Der Königlichen Dänischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien*, Halle 1715 (2nd ed. Halle 1723, 3rd ed. Halle 1745), pp. 605–614 (excerpts). New edition in : Arno Lehmann, *Alte Briefe aus Indien. Unveröffentlichte Briefe von Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg 1706–1719*, Berlin 1957, pp. 233–243; AFSt/M 1 C 5 : 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21 : 50, transcript of the previous letter) Letter from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to the dear fathers and men of God in Berlin, dated 15.11.1713 from Tranquebar, ed. in Arno Lehmann, pp. 345–356.

⁴⁹ AFSt/M 1 C 3 : 1 Letter from Heinrich Plütschau, Johann Ernst Gründler, Johann Georg Bövingh to August Hermann Francke, dated 6.2.1710 from Tranquebar. Ed. in: *Zweyte Continuation Des Berichts Der Königlich-Dänischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien*, Halle 1710, (2nd edition 1714, 3rd edition 1718), pp. 102–109.

⁵⁰ AFSt/M 1 C 6 : 122 Letter from Johann Ernst Gründler to Georg Friedrich Berbisdorff, dated 4.2.1715 from Tranquebar.

The letter from Theophil Siegfried Bayer, dated 3 January 1719, could also be considered to be closely connected with the efforts of Gründler and Michaelis. Written in Latin from Königsberg only a few weeks after the letter from Michaelis, it shows that the interest in the St. Thomas Christians had long since gone beyond the inner circle of the missionaries and their correspondents in Halle. Bayer also provided the missionaries with the information that the Patriarch of Antioch had himself gone over to the union with Rome. The Syrian bishop, Mar Thomas, who also entered into a correspondence with the missionaries, turned, time and again, to this very patriarch who had been accused before a Muslim court as a reformer and an enemy of the Ottoman Empire. After his conviction he is said to have been sent into exile where he died.⁵¹ With Berbisdorff's help Gründler was able to substantially increase his knowledge about the St. Thomas Christians. In his letter of thanks to Berbisdorff, dated 3 October 1715, he asked for a copy of the translation of the history of the St. Thomas Christians done by van Mechern and spoke about continuing his studies on this group of Christians. For the first time he was also able to send information about two Syrian bishops in Cochin – Mar Thomas and Mar Gabriel – about their conflicts with each other and also about Dutch protection of the St. Thomas Christians.⁵² The missionaries were able to establish a particularly intensive contact with the hierarch of the independent St. Thomas Christians, Mar Thomas IV (1688–1728), who had the same name as his predecessors and successors.⁵³ At this point of time Mar Thomas IV was engaged in a fierce defensive battle against the East Syrian bishop, Gabriel. This hierarch from Urmia in Iran had been ordained as metropolite of Mar-Shalita in Azerbaijan by the patriarch of the Apostolic Church of the East, Simon XIII Denha.⁵⁴ In Diyabakir, while returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he met with circles interested in a union with Rome around the patriarch Joseph II, who was in union with Rome and with whom a part of the Eastern Church had aligned itself.⁵⁵ Gabriel also delivered a profession of faith that was sent to Rome and was meant to establish him as a true believer in the sense of the union.⁵⁶ This act on the part of a young bishop was hardly spectacular, since the patriarch who had ordained

⁵¹ Germann, p. 550. This information had been communicated to Prof. Bayer in Königsberg in a letter from a Syrian 'youth' from Aleppo.

⁵² AFSt/M 1 C 7 : 159 Letter from Johann Ernst Gründler to Georg Friedrich Berbisdorff, dated 3.10.1715 from Tranquebar. The letter also included the request to send him van Mechern's translation of the history of the St. Thomas Christians. Even three years later, the main concern was still the enquiry into the actual history of Syrian St. Thomas Christendom in India. Michaelis also again mentions a treatise about the St. Thomas Christians, AFSt/M 1 C 11 : 63, Letter from Christian Benedict Michaelis to Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler, dated 25.11.1718, from Halle. The efforts continued even in the following year. Cf. AFSt/M 1 C 12 : 6 Letter from Theophil Siegfried Bayer from Königsberg, dated 3.1.1719.

⁵³ See below on the letters of Mar Thoma for information about him.

⁵⁴ Hambye, 46. Simon XIII Denha (1662–1700) was initially a representative of the East Syrian Christians united with Rome (so-called "Chaldaic patriarch" in the line of succession of Johannes Sullaga). In 1672 he broke off the union with Rome. In the monastery Kotchannes west of the Urmia lake in the Hakkari mountains of south-east Turkey he re-established the patriarchate of the Eastern Apostolic Church as an independent patriarchate. Cf. Wilhelm Baum/Dietmar W. Winkler, 2000: Die Apostolische Kirche des Ostens, Geschichte der sogenannten Nestorianer, Klagenfurt: Kitab, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Cf. Lampart.

⁵⁶ Hambye, p. 46, footnote 3.

him had only just terminated the union with Rome and the young bishop had therefore originally grown up in a situation determined by the union.⁵⁷ Rome now encouraged the young hierarch to support the unification of the East Syrian Christians with the part of the Church that was now united with Rome. Although the Near East had been envisaged as the place for Gabriel to effect this unification, he arrived in Kollam via Madras in December 1708⁵⁸ and cited the task given to him by the Pope. The Metropolitan who continued to follow East Syrian liturgy, who used the Julian calendar and leavened bread encountered rejection from the Carmelites.⁵⁹ His doctrinal association with the Chaldees was still doubtful. He had with him two letters from the independent patriarch, Elias XI Maraugun (1700–1722).⁶⁰ These letters from the Superior of the Church living near Mosul raise doubts about the loyalty of the metropolitan with regard to his association with the group united with Rome in the region of what is today South East Turkey. Nevertheless, Gabriel's work met with great success. Within a very short time (1708–1710) he was able to restore almost 40 churches and was accepted by these congregations as their bishop. Almost all these congregations had earlier come under the Carmelites. Their apostolic vicar made Gabriel issue a renewed profession of faith with which the doubts regarding his affiliation to the East Syrians united with Rome were meant to be dispelled.⁶¹ However, Gabriel's influence – even over some congregations of St. Thomas Christians independent of Rome – was not affected by this. He simply ignored a summons to Rome in 1714.⁶² In negotiations with the Dutch commander in Cochin, Jacob de Jong, he tried, without success, in 1719 to get permission for married priests to be admitted to the Church. The Dutch refused on the assumption that Gabriel was a Catholic. Till his death in 1731 Gabriel associated with a substantial section of Syrian St. Thomas Christians and maintained his position between the group united with Rome and the independent group. The attempt to appoint his successor from the Near East failed in 1784.⁶³ The differences between Gabriel and Mar Thomas clearly characterized the contradictory dogmatic position. In a letter written in 1709 to the Patriarch of Antioch Mar Thomas describes his opponent.⁶⁴ This man, he says, calls himself Metropolitan of Ninive and says he was sent to India by Catholicos Elias. For Mar Thomas, at least, the metropolitan therefore belonged to the Church of the dogmatic opponent and not to Rome.

⁵⁷ Baum/Winkler, p.108.

⁵⁸ Hambye, pp. 46–47. His stay in Madras creates some problems. Germann refers to Gabriel's own noting that he had landed in India in 1705 already, Germann, p. 534, footnote 1. The note is in Jan Pieter Nicolaas Land, 1862: *Anecdota Syriaca I*, Lugduni Batavorum, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Hambye, p. 47.

⁶⁰ In fact, a predecessor of the patriarch, Elias IX (1660–1700) had had contact with Rome since 1668 with the aim of setting up a union. The negotiations for a union were not concluded. Elias X Maraugun (1700–1722) and his successor Elias XI Denha (1722–1778) were the last patriarchs who resided in the monastery of Rabban Hormizid before the monastery was destroyed by the troops of the Iranian ruler, Nadir Shah, in 1743. From then on the patriarchs resided in Alqosch. This place then became the centre of this line of patriarchs in the Eastern Apostolic Church. Cf. Baum/Winkler, p. 108.

⁶¹ Joseph Simon Assemanus, 1975: *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana III/2 (De scriptoribus Syris Nestorianis)*, Hildesheim: Olms (Reprint Rome 1728), p. 448.

⁶² Hambye, p. 48, also the following.

⁶³ Hambye, p. 48, footnote 9.

⁶⁴ Germann gives a complete German translation of Thomas Yeates' letter: Germann, pp. 535–536, footnote 3; Germann also gives a complete German translation from the Latin of Assemani who had also added the Syrian text from the *Proaganda Fide*: Germann, pp. 545–546.

Mar Thomas accused him of professing to two natures and two persons in Christ. There can be no doubt that the person being described here is a 'Nestorian', i.e. a Christology of dyophysites. In addition, Mar Thomas states, he spoke in no uncertain terms against the view that Mary is the mother of God. This too would place Gabriel clearly in the dogmatic tradition of the Apostolic Church of the East.

4. The letters of Bishop Mar Thomas⁶⁵

4.1 The circumstances surrounding the receipt of the Syrian letters

The letters written in Syrian that are kept in Halle can be clearly ascribed to Mar Thomas. C. T. Walther gives a detailed account of the course of events leading to the receipt of these letters when he writes to Prof. Michaelis in Halle on 23 October 1728.⁶⁶ Michaelis had expressly urged the India missionaries to seek contact with the St. Thomas Christians. He hoped that the missionaries would then offer the St. Thomas Christians the "Malabar Bible" prepared in Halle. The missionaries were told to point out that this edition had not only had to be written on the basis of the Syrian bible, but also on the basis of the bible in Hebrew. However, this newly prepared text, he said, could certainly be of use to the St. Thomas Christians alongside the Syrian version that had been handed down. On his journey through Holland Walther had already met Professor Schaaf in Leiden, in order to prepare for a possible contact with the St. Thomas Chris-

⁶⁵ My earlier attempts to one oft he letters: Martin Tamcke, *Der Brief des Mar Thomas V. von 1728 (AFst/M 1 B 1 : 11 ab) als Quelle zur Geschichte der syrischen Thomaschristenheit*, in: Rainer Voigt, *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen (V. Deutsche Syrologentagung)*, Berlin 2006, *Semítica et Semito-hamítica Berolinensia* 9, Aachen 2010, p. 251–266; Martin Tamcke, *A letter of Mar Thoma's from 1728 as source for the history of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians*, in: *The Harp*, XXII, Kottayam 2007, p. 201–214; Martin Tamcke, *Mar Thoma: eine indische Stimme der syrischen Thomaschristenheit in der Interaktion mit deutschen und niederländischen Protestanten*, in: Ciprian Burlacioiu und Adrian Hermann, *Veränderte Landkarten, Auf dem Weg zu einer polyzentrischen Geschichte des Weltchristentums, Festschrift für Klaus Koschorke zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiebaden 2013, S. 95–110; Martin Tamcke, *Who is Bishop Gabriel? Essay on the East Syrian opponent of Mar Thoma V*, in: *The Harp* XXVII, Kottayam 2011, S. 211–224; Martin Tamcke, *Der Brief des Mar Thomas V. von 1728 (AFst/M 1 B 1 : 11 ab) als Quelle zur Geschichte der syrischen Thomaschristenheit*, in: Rainer Voigt, *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen (V. Deutsche Syrologentagung)*, Berlin 2006, *Semítica et Semito-hamítica Berolinensia* 9, Aachen 2010, S. 251–266; Martin Tamcke, *A letter of Mar Thoma's from 1728 as source for the history of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians*, in: *The Harp*, XXII, Kottayam 2007, S. 201–214.

⁶⁶ AFSt: Walther's consignment of letters also contains the letters from the Bishop Mar Thoma (see there for accession numbers). The New Testament presented by Schaaf could have been the 1704 edition that he had prepared for publication. But it is also possible that it was the copy sent to Schaaf by Mar Gabriel on 15 March 1720. Mar Thoma sent him a New Testament only on 25 July 1725 ("Novum Testamentum Syriacum manuscriptum").

tians. Schaaf was of great help. He showed Walther a Syrian letter from the bishop of the Indian St. Thomas Christians, Bishop Mar Thomas. He also showed him a copy of the Syrian New Testament. Walther, who then arrived in India, got the opportunity in 1727 to establish contact with Mar Thomas. Because of his acquaintance with Schaaf Walther made efforts to win the bishop as a “friend and acquaintance” by sending him a letter in Syrian and one in Tamil. On this occasion he also sent the bishop the New Testament in Tamil. Walther sent the Syrian letters to Michaelis with the request to forward them as they were to Prof. Schaaf in Leiden after he had read them. A copy of the attached Latin translation could also go to Schaaf after it had been revised and corrected. Schaaf was thus often the final destination for many letters from Mar Thomas in his struggle against his opponent, Mar Gabriel.⁶⁷ On the advice of the Dutch governor, Adam van der Duin, Mar Thomas had written a letter to the Syrian-Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch to send learned and highly-placed priests to India. The governor ensured the delivery of the original letter to the Patriarch and, in addition, asked for a copy. Although the original was taken on a battleship to Antioch, the Dutch were in possession of the contents of the letter through a translation done in Leiden by the lecturer for Oriental languages, Karl Schaaf (+1729, Professor extraordinarius at the University of Leiden since 1720), a scholar from Duisburg, Germany. Schaaf published his translation in 1714 in Leiden along with the letter written “in somewhat barbaric Syrian” by Mar Thomas and his own reply.⁶⁸ Schaaf received a number of further letters from Mar Thomas and soon carried on an extensive Syrian correspondence. Mar Gabriel too turned to him and asked for a letter from Schaaf to Patriarch Elias.⁶⁹ Schaaf later maintained that an influential countryman gave his translation of Mar Thomas’ Syrian letter to the Pope, and that he himself had had nothing to do with this.⁷⁰ The letter finally landed in the hands of the Propaganda Fide in Rome.⁷¹ Schaaf said that Mar Thomas was happy about this, since the East India Company subsequently took him under their protection. It is said that in 1724 a box containing the Syrian letters of Mar Thomas there was also a Syrian New Testament.⁷² However, on 15 March 1720 Mar Thomas’ opponent, Mar Gabriel, had already granted

⁶⁷ In his letters Mar Thoma requested the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church to send him learned priests in order to be able to fight the battle within St. Thomas Christendom. Julius Richter’s portrayal of these events clearly shows his dismay at the ruthless research impetus of the Dutch scholars. “These letters were to no avail, since they fell into the hands of vain Dutch scholars (Professors Schaaf, father and son) who boasted about this Syrian correspondence in the academic world, but who were so ignorant that they did not even know where the Patriarch of Antioch lived.” Richter, pp. 97–98.

⁶⁸ *Relatio Historica ad Epistolam Syriacam a Maha Thome id est Magno Thoma, Indo, aniquorum Christianorum Syrorum in India Episcopo ex Chaddenad in Malabaria scriptam ad Ignatium, Patriarcham Antiochenum. Et ipsa illa Episcopi Indi Epistola Syriaca cum versione Latina. Accessit epistola Syriaca ad eundem Episcopum etiam cum versione Latina. Accessit epistola Syriaca cum versione Latina. Accurante Carolo Schaaf, ex auctoritate Perillustrum D. D. Procerum Universitatis Lugduno-Batavae Linguarum Orientalium Doctore. Lugduni Batavorum, Sumptibus Editoris et Authoris MDCCXIV.* Germann talks of „a boastful preface“ to this by Schaaf, Germann, p. 535.

⁶⁹ Karl Schaaf’s letter to La Croze, dated 25 July 1725, cited from Germann, pp. 538–539, here: p. 538.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ The German translation of the complete text on the basis of the edition in Assemani (*Bibliotheca Orientalis III*) in Germann, pp. 545–546.

⁷² Germann, p. 539.

Schaaf's requests for a Syrian New Testament as an enclosure to a well-formulated letter. He had written this letter in the house of the Commandant in Cochin. With this he also sent a 'Nestorian' profession of faith. In his letter he asked for freedom from the Portuguese and requested that his letters be sent to the Patriarch of the Eastern Church, Mar Elias. He described his ecclesiastical position as an intermediate one between the independent St. Thomas Christians and those united with Rome, in order, particularly, to win over the latter to his side. Schaaf did not enter into a further correspondence with Mar Gabriel, since he was offended both with his understanding of liturgy as well as by his Nestorian profession of faith.⁷³ Mar Thomas' letters, in the meantime, strongly urged Schaaf to become politically active on his behalf with the Company and to tell them about the persecution by the 'Franks' (20 January 1715)⁷⁴ On 30 September 1720, Mar Thomas complained that he was still awaiting a reply and he enclosed a letter with the request to the Patriarch of Antioch to send it out learned priests.⁷⁵ Johann Heinrich Schaaf, the son of Karl Schaaf, replied to this letter on 12 December 1720 saying that five letters had already been sent. The letters had evidently been intercepted by Catholic agents. The Patriarch of Antioch, however, had already been condemned before Mar Thomas had written the letters and had died in exile before even one of the letters could be handed over to him.⁷⁶ Interestingly, Mar Thomas tells the Syrian-Orthodox patriarch that Metropolitane Gabriel had been sent by Patriarch Mar Elias.⁷⁷ They – the clerics of the independent St. Thomas Christians – did not "have the wisdom" to "answer" the learned East Syrian. In addition, he requests that the Patriarch write a letter to the Dutch commandant in Cochin for the protection of the independent St. Thomas Christians.⁷⁸ Johann Heinrich Schaaf continued the correspondence with Mar Thoma till October 1735.⁷⁹ The letters from the Syrian bishop that are still kept in Halle came from Schaaf. They are all addressed to Schaaf as an intermediary who could intervene for Mar Thomas with the king or the Company.

4.2 The content of Bishop Mar Thomas' letters

Astoundingly, the content of the letters is widely similar. They were written on the same day: on the Twelfth Day (the Epiphany), that is on 6 January 1728.⁸⁰ The place where they were conceived was the Virgin Mary's Church from Kandanad.

The three letters begin all with the introduction of the Bishop, and rhetorical phrases depict him as being "unworthy", call him "the miserable", or simply "the weak". In the tradition of the Syrian bishops and patriarchs such rhetorical phrases have a theological basis and express to some extent the writer's spirituality. The latter discovers himself in his own weakness and incompetence, or at

⁷³ Germann, pp. 542–543

⁷⁴ Germann, pp. 541–542. A second letter of 10 October 1717 with the same contents was attached which contained a short poem in the appendix.

⁷⁵ Germann, p. 545.

⁷⁶ Germann, p. 550.

⁷⁷ Germann, p. 546.

⁷⁸ Germann, p. 546–547.

⁷⁹ Germann, p. 540.

⁸⁰ AFSt/M 1 B 1 : 11a b 1–7; AFSt/M 1 B 1 : 11a b 08–13; AFSt/M 1 B 1 : 11a b 14–20.

least he identifies himself with the sea of human experiences gained in the same manner. Then Mar Thomas has this general self-description, which should be regarded as a mere usual topos, followed by a just description of position. “Metropolitan and bishop of the true St. Thomas Christians from India”, or “Bishop of the Syrians, of the Indian Christians”, or “Bishop of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians from India”. Not only is the position of the church indicated here. The bishop considers himself responsible for all the Christians from India who assert themselves as belonging to the St. Thomas’ tradition. He correctly designates these believers as “Syrians”. The fact that he places on a par the Syrian Christianity represented by them in India with the Indian Christianity proves his being aware that the original Christianity in India was the Syrian one, and that all the other denominations and churches belong to not Indian ecclesiastical power centres. As clear as this enunciation of the historical understanding may have seemed at that time, it was actually a challenge for the Protestants to whom he addressed this letter. In the first letter not only does he emphasise that his believers embody “the true St. Thomas Christians from India”, but he even stresses upon that, adding in the next sentence that his community is one of “true Syrians”. Therefore, starting with the introductory phrases, it becomes obvious that the author of the letter writes on behalf of a group who had to assert their existence against another group. Mentioning that this group “was Christianized by the Apostle Thomas, who touched the Lord’s rib”, the bishop not only places them in the apostolical succession, but emphasizes their guaranteed connection with the Christ’s era. In the second letter both emphases are rather held back. India is only described here as being the geographical area “where the blessed Apostle St. Thomas” used to preach. Here stands out another aspect of the emphasis upon the intercommunion with Thomas and with Christ’s era: “I was named Mar Thomas because I was raised on the seat of the Apostle St. Thomas.” In order that this direct connection between the bishop and the Apostle conceived as a rightful apostolical succession shouldn’t be regarded as aleatory or as a mere florid indication, this explanation of his name is followed by a strengthening redundancy: “(Therefore) I was named Mar Thomas after the name borne by this Apostle.” Whereas the first sentence claimed the canonical status, the second one stressed once again the direct connection between the bishop and the Apostle.

The bishop doesn’t leave his reader in the dark in what his denominational status is concerned. He belongs to “the glorious and holy See of Mar Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch, who rules us all today.”

The Patriarch of Antioch is “the fourth Patriarch, invested by our true orthodox 318 Fathers who gathered in the city of Nicaea. This one is famous and well-known in all four corners of the world. So be it. Amen.” A double aspect is to be noticed here: the positioning of the Patriarch in world Christendom and the link back to the Council of Nicaea. Nicaea was the only Council acknowledged by the East Syrians as well, under the jurisdiction of whom Syrian Christendom from India was before the arrival of the Portuguese. The controversial Council of Ephesus is not mentioned. Speaking of India as an eastern diocese of Antioch, the bishop designates his own position in the Syrian Hierarchy. The position of the Patriarch of Antioch corresponds to the order developed among the Old Church, where Antioch comes on the fourth place after Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria, nowadays belonging further to the Byzantine Orthodoxy.

The bishop uses various titles when addressing to his interlocutor: general or even king. Each title is joined by superlatives: the latter seems to be grand,

respected, famous, and well-known in all four corners of the world (that is worldwide), apparently he is the Lord who rescues and who knows what is right and just. His own modesty and the grandeur of his interlocutor correspond to each other. This is obvious in the first letter in a direct phrase like “I am unworthy before your Majesty”. But due to the letter sent to him by the leader of the company, “and due to the love and the friendship you showed me”, he dares to turn to him. The second letter doesn’t express any longer a direct connection between the author of the letter and its receiver, but refers only to the difference between their positions and afterwards to the main request. “I am not worthy to write to you, who so much resemble the Sun, because your concerns are not the common people, but justice and righteousness.” Yet he sends his request because he is in need and hopes to make his situation known. In the last letter the flourish is even less shiny and the request is quickly enunciated, together with the usual difference of status of both actors. He is not worthy to write to his Majesty, yet he, the weak, does it in order to make his petition known. The Franks are the enemies of the Syrians. Recalling the former good relationship between the Dutch and the Syrians, the bishop asks for a written paper which would ensure his protection. The ambassadors of the Catholic monastic order – “Patrimar Sanpaulo Karmalita” – should stay away from his people. This means that they shouldn’t be allowed to enter the kingdom of Cochin. Therefore, if the king of Cochin got furious because of him, a letter signed by the high leader of the company could save him. The letter should be written both in Dutch and in Syriac. The two letters written in Syriac which were sent to them before could have been read. They do not understand another language. Even Tamil is alien to them. They don’t understand why a letter written in Tamil was sent to them. “You are writing like this, but we cannot understand why, and who should benefit from it. And you can not even speak the language of our countries.” He will be, nevertheless, “a treasure for the bishop until the end of the world.” The help request was preceded by an act of military cooperation between the Syrian Christian and the king of Cochin. When “the enemies came and besieged the Cochin fortress, our people supported the son of the heathen (literally: unbeliever or denying) kings of India.” The Syrians sent their military support to the oppressed because the besiegers settled in their country and “were living on their food and on the taxes (literally: the tenth) they were forced to pay.” In the second letter, the bishop’s request becomes more urgent: “O Lord, for the sake of God please accept my request, because we were with you, Landiers, in communion, and far from the Franks.” A brief from the leader of the company could persuade the king of the Cochin fortress to save the Syrians. In this context “to save” means that the ambassadors of the Catholic monastic order should stay away from his people and from the kingdom of Cochin. He will immediately show the document to the rulers in Cochin. Then they will be able to help him on their territory. “O Lord, do this benefit to me. I’m begging you for Heaven’s sake. So be it. Amen.” The third letter contains a couple of further stresses and clarifications. What he now needs is that the monastic ambassadors connected to the Franks should stay away from his people and from the Cochin kingdom. Obviously, the ecclesial-denominational competition is also indicated in the competition between the colonial powers. The leader of the company may issue such a letter of protection because the Syrians were “in communion” with them and “connected to you”. The bishop doesn’t insist here upon an ecclesial communion, which never existed. He persistently refers to the politic coalition between the Syrians and the Dutch. The territory of the Christians

whom he represents is clearly outlined by the bishop: “From the Kullam fortress up to the Scherway (Chatuvay) fortress there are Christians from our tribe.” Yet the Syrians covering this area are divided into two groups. “Among them there are some connected to the Franks and another half is faithful to us. The St. Paul’s adherents and the Kermalites belong to the foreigners living at the sea.” There were, for sure, Syrians united to Rome and now it was also the danger that the monastic ambassadors should come again upon the Syrian people as an effective influence from outside. “They shouldn’t reach our people. For the sake of our living God. If you order, I will survive. So be it. Amen.” Besides, the first letter illustrates the political consequence of the ecclesial separation of the Syrians, up to the issuing of the taxes. “If it comes to levy and taxes against people’s will (against the will of those who belong to the Franks), some of them will follow me and some of us will follow them.”

4.3 The historical course of events, in Mar Thomas’ report

In 1653 the Syrian St. Thomas’ Christians had been allowed to have their own leader and suddenly they situated themselves dogmatically opposite the Nestorians, although until then they had belonged to the latter: they became part of the miaphysite tradition.⁸¹ The hands of twelve representatives and one written confirmation – probably conceived by Ahatalla – were raised as signs of authorisation. The hierarch’s name was Mar Thomas. After his death he was succeeded by other church leaders bearing the same name: Mar Thomas. At least the local tradition ascribes the consecration of Mar Thomas to the bishop Mar Gregorius (+ 1672), who was sent by the Syrian orthodox patriarch in 1665. Ever since became the church more intensely aligned with the dogmatic orientation of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The conquest of the last big Portuguese fortress on the Malabar Coast, at Cochin, sealed the fall of the Portuguese rule. The St. Thomas’ Christians played a crucial role in the political and martial controversies for hegemony between the colonial powers. “If the Portuguese had hoped to be supported by the St. Thomas’ Christians in conquering and controlling India, in the end they realised that owing to their and to the Jesuits’ inverted politics the St. Thomas’ Christian didn’t move a finger to save them from falling.”⁸² It is these circumstances that bishop Mar Thomas relies on in his writing. He rather understands the attitude he and his believers assumed as not at all passive, but as an active support of the Dutch against the Portuguese. Also the ecclesial scene in Kerala changed. Even though the Dutch agreed to reduce the activity of the Catholic mission, they proved inconsistent and gave the Carmelites more rope. The Dutch governor Hendrik Adrian von Rheede (1669–1677) allowed them to settle near Cochin. Among the St. Thomas’ Christians united to Rome it came now to a stronger competition between the further acting Jesuit archbishops like Antonius Pimentel (1721–1752) and bishops like Franz de Vasconelles (1721–1743) from Cochin, and also between these and the Carmelites dedicated to the activity among the united St. Thomas’ Christians. The Jesuits appealed then to the (Papal) bull issued in 1600, which conferred to the Portuguese Crown the auspices over the Episcopate of Cochin and over the Archbishopric of Kranganur. Despite

⁸¹ Thekkedath, S. 91–109 (cf. also Richter and Neil).

⁸² Richter, S. 92

the fall of the Portuguese colonial power, they strove to regain their influence upon the St. Thomas' Christians. The struggle between the two orders ended at first with the cancellation of the Jesuit Order. Now the Carmelites enjoyed the very protection of the Dutch. And through the Carmelites the Dutch favoured also the St. Thomas' Christians united to Rome. In the contracts with the local Indian leaders, especially in Cochin, they assumed the protection of the Syrians united to Rome. Henceforth, the Indian leader could have levied taxes from the St. Thomas's Christians united to Rome only with the consent of the Dutch. The highest jurisdiction was also connected to the protection right. The bishops bearing the name Mar Thomas regarded themselves as leaders of the St. Thomas' Christians independent of Rome, and opposed to one fivefold matter: the Jesuits were working further under the late glamour of the Portuguese colonial empire and the Carmelites' influence was very effective among the St. Thomas' Christians united to Rome. The efficiency of the Carmelites was possible even under the visible protection exercised by the Dutch. The independent St. Thomas' Christians thought of losing any protection against the local leaders and of submitting to the latter's discretion. The fifth danger was the activity of the east-Syrian metropolitan Gabriel, which could have gained on the side of the east-Syrian Church parishes belonging to the Church independent of Rome. However, it is really interesting the fact that Mar Thomas doesn't express clearly anywhere this fifth aspect in respect of his achievement. Even the actual attitude towards the Dutch is left out of consideration.

The bishop expresses his need of help against the three main dangers. On the one hand he tried to defend himself against the two orders, on the other side he was concerned to gain for his believers the same privileges enjoyed by the united part of the Church, owing to the Dutch's favour. He has no doubt that the local rulers' politics is unreliable in what the independent St. Thomas' Christians are concerned and their depression caused by the never ending taxes and tributes. With regard to the Dutch, he exercised his discretion and reminded them of the fortress Cochin for which they fought together. Yet the situation changed radically. The Dutch mistrusted the independent St. Thomas' Christians and turned their favour exclusively towards those united to Rome. But this lack of balance didn't lead to the fall of the independent St. Thomas' Christian, as it is constantly recorded in the secondary literature connected to the European mission in India, which goes up to the second half of the 20th century. Apart from the political favour, it was underlined this way the moment of mutual resistance.⁸³ Obviously, Mar Thomas IV hoped that his writings would help him out of the crushing clasp.

His successor, Mar Thomas V, was in a difficult situation in 1728, when these letters were conceived. His uncle, the successor of whom he was, died before having consecrated him. Mar Gabriel refused to acknowledge him as well.⁸⁴

⁸³ „The Dutch had been pleased to afford protection to the adherents of Bishop Chandy (the united hierarch and cousin of Mar Thomas); the party of Thomas, as we have seen, was left without the advantage of such protection. Yet that party managed to maintain its position, to hold the flock together, and to stand up for the rights and privileges of the Thomas Christians against the perpetual danger of encroachment by Hindu rulers“ Neill, p. 328. Unlike the St. Thomas Christians united to Rom, who “benefited by a definitely favourable peace”, “the free Syrians”, “whom the Dutch treated coldly and mistrustfully for a long time, and who could, therefore, only hardly resist the depression and the extortions exercised by many rajahs” couldn't have benefited by anything like that. Richter, p. 93.

⁸⁴ Hambye, p. 49

Our three letters date from the first year of the new bishop, to whom the canonical acknowledgement lacked entirely. Only much later after the elaboration of the letters did Mar Thomas V intensify his efforts for a legal consecration: in 1746 he wrote in this respect to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch. Through the mediation of an influential Jew in Cochin, the metropolitan Mar Yuhanon was sent to Kerala.⁸⁵ He corrected immediately the Latin influence, he endeavoured to legalize the marriage for the priests, ordained himself a few priests, but he didn't consecrate Mar Thomas, as it was hoped and expected. Thereupon, at the instigations of Mar Thomas he was arrested by the ruler of Cochin, and only with the Dutch support was he finally rescued. Mar Thomas turned to the Pope in Rome for the reunion (undated letter, possibly from 1750) and at the same time he approached the Carmelites. A new demanding appeal to the patriarch called forth the sending to India of the second highest Syrian Orthodox hierarch. If the demand had proved successful, the Dutch would have been rewarded by Mar Thomas a great sum of money. Indeed, on 23 April 1751 the Maphrian Basilius landed together with seven attendants in Cochin.⁸⁶ Bishop Gregorius followed him after eleven months. Yet the Dutch prevented a meeting between the Maphrian and Mar Thomas V who barely escaped being arrested by the Dutch. In 1754 it came to an agreement between the two Church leaders. Yet the Maphrian died in 1764, Mar Thomas in 1765, and the consecration still didn't become reality.⁸⁷ Only Mar Thomas VI succeeded in 1770 to obtain the consecration from the Delegation of the Syrian bishops who remained in India.⁸⁸ The Dutch preacher from Cochin described before 1723 both main counterparts regarding the independent St. Thomas Christians.⁸⁹ Mar Gabriel is depicted as being a white man sent from Baghdad to India. He is old, has a long white beard and his appearance is a venerable one. He is dressed like the Jewish priests and wears a cap with the shape of a turban. His behaviour is polite and with fear of God. He doesn't show any exterior splendour. Only around his neck he wears a golden crucifix. Moreover, he restrains himself from animal food. As far as the dogmatic principles are concerned, he belongs to the Nestorian doctrine. On the other hand, Mar Thomas is an Indian native. He is a dark man, ponderous and slow in his movements. Besides, he lives lavishly and shows up accompanied by several soldiers, as if he were a local prince. Crosses are sewed on the silk habit which covers his head. He proves no wit in his arrogance, allegedly professed Eutyches' doctrine, and pointed Mar Gabriel as heretic.

Now, this Mar Thomas V was the author of three letters. On 26 October 1725 the missionaries besieged again the Dutch preacher from Cochin with questions about St. Thomas Christians.⁹⁰ The preacher Valerius Nicolai, who arrived in Cochin on October 30th, answered them only on 1 July 1728. He let them know that Mar Thomas had just died and that he had been followed by his nephew.⁹¹ C. Th. Walther and his comrades turned to Mar Thomas himself in the year 1725. The three letters had a very significant role for the preparation of this direct

⁸⁵ Hambye, p. 50.

⁸⁶ Hambye, p. 51.

⁸⁷ Hambye, p. 52.

⁸⁸ Hambye, p. 53.

⁸⁹ Germann, p. 550–552.

⁹⁰ Germann, p. 548.

⁹¹ Germann, *ibid.*

contact. According to Walther's information they had been provided by Professor Karl Schaaf in Leiden in order to facilitate this step towards direct correspondence.

5. Christoph Theodosius Walther (1699–1741)

5.1 Increasing knowledge of details

Walther considered with express solidarity the resistance of the St. Thomas Christians against Rome. He clearly explains in his letter towards Michaelis how intensely he had dealt with the failure of the Catholic endeavours to unification in Ethiopia. With this example he wanted to prove to the Christians from India how the endeavours of the Catholics could possibly fail. Walther had sent letters written in Syriac and Malabaric to Mar Thomas. According to Walther's statements he conceived both letters in 1727 (on 23 October 1728 he says that one year before he had the opportunity to write to the bishop) and sent them via Nagapattinam and Colombo to the bishop, whose address had been reported to him by the professor from Leiden. The purpose of his letters is said to have been "the seeking of the bishop's friendship and acquaintanceship."⁹² The missionaries had read Mar Thomas' letter to Schaaf, dated 26 October 1721. They reached the conclusion that the belief of the bishop was also their belief.⁹³ Their spiritual fathers ordered them to pursue his friendship. As a sign of their deference they enclosed the New Testament in Tamil.

The enclosed Latin translations of the letters often approach the statement of the Syriac texts, but occasionally they also lay it aside. There was constantly previous knowledge that came as interpretation of the translation and distorted the content. Therefore, already in the first letter the author justifies his demand, reminding that the Syrians had always been companions of the Dutch and that they separated from the Franks. The enemies entered the territory helped by Syrian traitors and by the infidelity of the Indian king. The present king couldn't stand the bishop at all. The Paulists and the Carmelites had joined the "proselytes", who were living at sea, and wouldn't trespass to the independent Syrians. The notes could unexpectedly prove that the nepotism was quite familiar to the Indians and that the spiritual authority was handed down to the kinsmen. And the tradition of the 318 fathers, a tradition obviously unknown to the translators, is corrected in the year 325 for the Council of Nicaea. But illuminating comments are due to the knowledge of the local history. The phrase "Padrimar Sam Paulu", which is barely comprehensible, is explained as originating from the Lusitanian Padri. The further designation leads back to the Collegio Paullino (after Pope Paul III). In short: here it is the Jesuits that are meant. "Landier" is

⁹² Nikolaus Dal mentions, on the other hand, the recording of the correspondence already in 1725, cf. AFSt/M 1 H 3 : 2 Letter sent by Nikolaus Dal to Christian Benedikt Michaelis, dated 01.09.1725, Tranquebar. To Walther: AFSt of the covering letter for the correspondence with the letters of the bishop Mar Thomas. (Signatures cf. there).

⁹³ Germann, p. 555.

the Indians' spoiled form for the Dutch. In the letter sent to the Syrians in 1727 the addressees detect ten senders: "1. Nicolaus, 2. Dal, 3. Martinus, 4. Bosse, 5. Christianus, 6. Fridericus, 7. Pressier, 8. Christophorus, 9. Theodosius, 10. Walther." But the supposed ten are only the well-known missionaries Benjamin Schulze, Nicolas Dal, Martin Bosse, Christian Frederic Pressier and Christopher Theodosius Walther.⁹⁴ The explanation added Benjamin Schultze, who was not mentioned in the text.⁹⁵ The bishop is said not to speak Tamil, but Malayalam. Chetuvay is a town not far from Cochin and the Dutch are said to own there trading centres.

In the above mentioned writing addressed to Schultze, Dal, Bosse, Pressier and Walther, the Dutch preacher Jakobus op den Akker / Jakobus Canter Visscher provides them with information about the situation of the Syrians. According to Jakobus, it is hard to bring the Syrians to the Protestant divine service. They are of a noble origin and proud of their past. Too proud "to think highly of the holy matters". Only the poor could be won. Many of them are important traders. Many renounce the bishops during the Lusitanian rule because the Catholic "insidiousness". Yet there still exist over 100 000 Christians in the ancestral tradition. Firstly they are regarded here as representing "the Greek confession". However, in the note concerning the Latin text it is correctly stressed that after the Council of Ephesus the Syrians and the Greeks have been no longer parts of the same community. These Christians, who remained independent of the Catholics, could easily convert to the Protestantism. The author of the letter grounds his view on his own experience. Most of the Syrians decided not to acknowledge the Roman Pope and also to turn down the adoration of the icons. Two bishops are well-known. One of them is Mar Gabriel and was sent from Syria or from Babylonia. He is a holy, mild man and an erudite. The other one is Mar Thomas, a native, who proves to be arrogant, insincere and ignorant, but rich and powerful. Both believers are subjects to the governmental power of the local Indian ruler. The letter written by the Dutch preacher Valerius Nicolai, dated the 1 July 1728 and consisting of the answer to the letter sent by the missionaries on 26 October 1725, underlines once again the fact that the Syrians have no country of their own. They live dispersed under the rule of the local princes. He characterises once again the competing bishops. Mar Thomas is said to be "black" and originating among the St. Thomas Christians. He is the one to whom the missionaries sent different letters. He has recently died and was followed by his nephew. This one bears the same name as his late uncle, which is Mar Thomas. The other bishop is Mar Gabriel and comes from Jerusalem. The two bishops represent the two separated groups of Syrian Christians. Yet he couldn't explain which doctrine they professed. And the missionaries still didn't receive the needed answer from the Indian bishop. On 23 October 1728 Christoph Theodosius Walther sent the three letters which the late bishop left to him, adding some clues regarding the information inside. This information concerned the separation between the Syrian Christians and their bishops.

⁹⁴ Germann is pleased to report – p. 556 – that Schaaf was also subject to the same error as the Indians assuming that there were ten missionaries, counting the first names of four missionaries as "autonomous individuals".

⁹⁵ Germann reports correctly, p. 556, note 1: Nicolaus, Dal, Martinus, Bosse, Fridericus, Pressier, Christopherus, Theodosius, and Walther. He accurately speaks about four missionaries, not about five.

5.2 The controversy with Karl Schaaf (+1729)

The materials placed by Schaaf at the missionaries' disposal enabled them to establish a direct contact with the bishop. Only now are the borders towards interaction trespassed. The information delivered by a third person was no longer admitted; it was a real dialogue with the desired interlocutor. If this one had answered the letter, the direct correspondence would have been established and a first dialogue would have been opened. This would have accomplished Ziegenbalg's intention.

Only after two years did the Dutch deliver to Mar Thomas the letter of the missionaries. Yet Schaaf had wanted by no means to be an intermediary for an agreement, where he would have been superfluous. The missionaries' autonomous letter written in Syriac caused the fierce and long exacerbated reaction of both Schaafs. Until 1735, father and son Schaaf had been insistently writing to Mar Thomas before his death (his follower didn't continue the correspondence) and to the Dutch governor. Johann Heinrich Schaaf reported that while travelling through Leiden Walther had visited Karl Schaaf. During this visit he was provided with information about the correspondence with the Syrians. How much Syriac knowledge he disposed of resulted from his ordering in England a Syriac alphabet. The letter which Walther wrote afterwards must have been pieced together from the previous Syriac letter. Moreover, the letter contains many mistakes. Walther must have craftily taken the three letters. Before the governor in Cochin, who couldn't decipher the address, Walther pretended that the letters were addressed for Tranquebar. There the letters were unsealed and damaged, and the translating attempt failed. The letters were sent afterwards in a poor condition to Professor Michaelis in Halle, who was supposed to publish the letters and the covering letters of both Dutch preachers. The procedure is obviously a crime and has already been reported as such. Mar Thomas is said not to have answered the Danes. They are Schaaf's rivals. Schaaf underestimated Walther, claiming that he disposed of very little and inadequate Syriac knowledge. On the other hand, Land noticed that Walther's Syriac was not at all so bad.⁹⁶ When Schaaf had to choose according to the theological solidarity between Mar Gabriel and Mar Thomas, he chose Mar Thomas.⁹⁷ Mar Thomas' "Monophysitic" confession seemed to him closer to the Reformed one than Mar Gabriel's Diophysitic confession. Schaaf was not against the approaching of Mar Thomas, but against that of the missionaries. The German professor in the Netherlands suspected their pietism and in the year 1730 he wrote Mar Thomas about them.⁹⁸ Yet the missionaries had already sent their letter to Mar Thomas and, although the Dutch prevented for two years the delivering of the letter, it reached the addressee. The missionaries didn't know anything about Schaaf's hostility. The delayed delivery of the missionaries' letters to Mar Thomas made unnecessary their decision to send one negotiation group of their own to Mar Thomas, a decision which they shared to Professor Bayer's on 16 October 1726.⁹⁹ The Dutch must have had some interests in not hiding from the German missionaries their efforts concerning the St. Thomas Christians and their scepticism regarding the group around Mar Thomas. Yet: only now had the missionaries the opportunity of assuming a direct dialogue.

⁹⁶ Germann, p. 556 notes 2 and 3.

⁹⁷ Germann, p. 543. Hambye wrongly describes Schaafs as being „German Lutheran“, Hambye, p. 81 and 82.

⁹⁸ Hambye, p. 82.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

5.3 Apologetic use of the History

Schaaf's claiming that Walther pretended before the Dutch governor that the letters were sent to Tranquebar cannot lead to a clear conclusion. Schaaf could only have founded his statement on his correspondence with the governor, who struggled to win the St. Thomas Christians on the side of the Dutch Reformists. Did Walther secure himself access to the Syrian St. Thomas Christians with the help of the Dutch governor under false pretences? Or does this claim underline Schaaf's regret to have helped Walther in establishing a direct contact at the very moment when the Dutch themselves were struggling for a unifying with the St. Thomas Christians?

Walther built his commitment to the St. Thomas Christians on their resistance before Rome and got therefrom an important argument for his missionary strategy. He compared the procedures under the rule of the Portuguese and of the Jesuits in India with those under the Portuguese and the Jesuits in Ethiopia. The Christians there were as resistant to submitting to the Pope as the Syrian Christians on the "Pepper Coast". At both places strived the Catholics in vain. Should the two historical processes be compared, it would become obvious that the same comedy was played, although by different actors. Both the Jesuit patriarch Alphons Mendez and the archbishop Alexis de Menez argued the errors of the Indian Christians and demanded their submission to the Pope. The former competed against Dioscorus, the latter against Nestorius. Walther blamed both for rebaptism. They are said to have introduced the adoration of icons, which is an abomination both for the Indian and for the Ethiopian Christian. Their imperiousness brought about uprisings and they did everything in order to bring both countries under the rule of the Portuguese King. They attracted the "ignorant" people with their magnificent churches. The Syrian Bible was corrected according to Vulgata, the way the new Amharic Bible was created according to the Vulgata. Moreover, an Alexandrine metropolitan had been prevented from coming to Ethiopia and a Babylonian metropolitan from coming to India. The similarities between the course of events in Ethiopia and India made Walther believe that the example of the effective Protestant missionary Peter Heyling in Ethiopia could be successful before the Indian in their Christianity. He used his contacts with the peregrine Armenians and asked for a biography of Heyling. At Walther's insistence, the peregrine Armenian merchant Peter Nuri from Persia obtained the report of the Armenian Morad, written in Persian, which illustrated Heyling's end. The merchant also had the task to search all over the world for information concerning Heyling and, if something was found, to send it to Madras. However, Walther was not very confident, because not even at the royal court in Ethiopia was anything to be found about Heyling. Walther had an abstract about Heyling's life written and also a report concerning the riot in Ethiopia that led to the chasing away of the Jesuits and of the Portuguese. Therefore, the Indian local catechists could learn from the comparison between the Ethiopian and the Indian courses of events how vainly it was the Catholics' effort to submit these countries to the Pope. At the same time they could learn how the Catholics had used in both countries the same disguised strategy in order to reach their aim. Consequently, the existence of the Syrians independent of Rome was a very significant element for the Lutheran missionary's activity in India concerning the Roman competitors. He expected that the confessional independent Syrians should support him with a strong resistance against the Roman activity and that the Christian Indians should be deeply self-confident, just like their ancestors who confronted heroically the Roman oppression.

5.4 The history behind the new information and further contacts

The Dutch informants encouraged the missionaries to try to win the independent St. Thomas Christians on the side of the Lutheran belief. Due to their confessional independent position, they seemed appropriate for an annexation. Yet the informants reveal the missionaries the low esteem in which they held Mar Thomas, dead in 1725. The Dutch's scepticism regarding the independent St. Thomas Christians becomes obvious here, when they express their view upon the Syrian hierarchs. What is really interesting is that one Dutch informant holds out a surprising alternative for the German recipient of the letter. He doesn't refer to the St. Thomas Christians united to Rome and to their Carmelite and Jesuit hierarchs, but to a third group, which occasionally could successfully establish among the St. Thomas Christians. Richter suggested that it was about a "Nestorian".¹⁰⁰ Indeed it is about the already mentioned Mar Gabriel, who between 1705 and 1730 managed to exert an amazing influence upon both parts of St. Thomas Christians, without belonging to any of the two groups and yet manifesting solidarity with both. Temporarily it seemed, indeed, that half of the St. Thomas Christians united to Rome would join him. The pressure was so strong on the part of the Syrian Orthodox St. Thomas Christians that Mar Thomas strove for the sending of erudite priests from the Middle East. They had to be able to assume the spiritual struggle against this successfully campaigning Syrian. The Dutch didn't leave any doubt regarding the supposed advantages of this man. Mildness, sanctity and erudition were assigned to this foreigner coming from the Middle East. His counterpart's belonging to the aboriginal people was emphasised and, probably in a disrespectful undertone, the colour of his skin was indicated as "black"; furthermore, an accumulation of degrading features is to be taken into account: he is said to be arrogant, ignorant, false, rich and powerful. This characterization is definitely biased. The Dutch informants follow the path of the Dutch policy supporting the colonialism.¹⁰¹ However, the historical knowledge was effective on the side of the German recipients of the letter, and worked as a corrector of this partially coloured information. Due to the meaning of (this connection to) the resistance against the unification with Rome, they held on to their conviction that the act of resistance itself generated a moment of togetherness, and that from that moment on the process could be further developed. The Ethiopian example helped them to consolidate this attitude among the Indian Christians and to bring them towards a collective recall, the most significant moment of which was the successful resistance against the affiliation by force to Rome. The missionaries relied no longer on their informants. Meanwhile, due to their missionary-theological intentions, to their historical knowledge and to their increasing familiarity with the St. Thomas Christians from India, they became themselves capable to build an independent position. And yet they turned in the end to the path opened by their Dutch informants. Already in 1729 the missionaries acquired a translation of one letter written on palm leaves by Mar Thomas VI himself. With this letter dated 8th of June 1729 he turned to the governor Jakob de Jong.¹⁰² Despite their sympathy for Mar Gabriel, the Dutch considered it convenient to provide the German Lutherans with the information contained by the letter. Mar Thomas

¹⁰⁰ Richter, p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Germann noticed as well the Dutch's bias in their estimation of the two bishops; cf. Germann, p. 551.

¹⁰² Germann, p. 557.

draws from the beginning a connection between Nestorius, who was condemned in Ephesus because of his Diophysitism, and Mar Elias, the Patriarch who sent Mar Gabriel to India. He blamed the Diophysites for murdering two bishops, whom he reckoned on his side. Then Mar Gabriel is said to have submitted to the Pope and to have come to India with papal recommendation. Mar Thomas V couldn't agree with him in matters of belief. Both went to the Dutch commander and handed him over their documents. Thereupon the Dutch disposed that the group around Mar Thomas should include Mar Gabriel in their community, should pay him a salary and place a church at his disposal. In the end Mar Gabriel intended one night to murder Mar Thomas. Then Mar Thomas VI shortly indicates that his church belongs to the Patriarchy of Antioch. In dogmatic terms, he stated that Christ is only one person and only one nature and that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. During the Eucharist they use only fresh bread that must have been baked on that very day. Mar Gabriel was celebrating the liturgy after the Roman rite, and during the fasting time he used to admit the Syrian Orthodox practice. The comment upon Mar Gabriel's attitude towards the liturgy contradicts the other information according to which he had been faithful to the East Syrian tradition. The missionaries categorically rebut the reference to the possible murder attempt. "This is definitely a mere unfounded suspicion."¹⁰³ They appeal to the attestation of the preacher Canter Visscher dated April 1728, who certifies that Mar Gabriel was a holy and spotless man. On behalf of the Dutch East-Indian Company, the Dutch preacher Valerius Nicolai turned to both parties, blamed them both for heresy – he called the people around Mar Thomas "Eutychianists", and those around Mar Gabriel "Nestorians" – and invited them both to accept his mediation "so that they should gather in the true, orthodox doctrine".¹⁰⁴ Mar Gabriel answered several times with arguments seemingly voicing the Roman influence. Mar Thomas answered on 11 February 1730 that he can't admit the Dutch mediation before receiving adequate instructions from his Patriarch of Antioch. To this context of Nicolai's attempting to assimilate the St. Thomas Christians to the Protestants belongs also his encouraging letter addressed to the missionaries from Tranquebar. Because Nicolai was himself obviously frustrated, the missionaries in Tranquebar sceptically considered a possible unification between the St. Thomas Christians and the Protestants and even said that "it was out of the question".¹⁰⁵ They regarded the local priesthood of the St. Thomas Christians as an asset, which they at once wished for themselves.

Before his death, Mar Gabriel sought the contact with Mar Thomas, but the latter hesitated too long and Mar Gabriel eventually died, before he could rightfully consecrate his adversary.

The change in the missionaries' attitude occurred after the direct contact with a priest belonging to Mar Gabriel's party, who visited the missionaries on 8 December 1733 in Tranquebar.¹⁰⁶ It was during his pilgrimage to the St. Thomas

¹⁰³ Germann, p. 557, note 3. Canter Visscher's estimation regarding Mar Gabriel: „Gabriel est sanctus, mansuetus et doctus, indigena Mar Thomas est superbus fucusus et intoctus, sed dives et potens.“

¹⁰⁴ Germann, p. 558. The following as well.

¹⁰⁵ Germann, p. 561. Cf. The missionaries' answer to Callenberg and Francke regarding the relationship between the missionaries and the St. Thomas Christians AFSt/M 2 A 1 : 12 Answer from Benjamin Schultze and Jens Siewerts to the questions asked by Johann Heinrich Callenberg and Gotthilf August Francke n. d. (around 1729/1730, Tranquebar).

¹⁰⁶ Germann, p. 559–561.

mount. He was going for the second time on pilgrimage although his enterprise provoked the Roman Catholics' indignation. This priest, who was a Syriac teacher, was consecrated by Mar Gabriel. He considered that the main controversial subject between the two parties was the use of stale or not-stale bread for the Eucharist. The priest could provide a treatise of Mar Gabriel's, in which the latter proved that the sale bread had been introduced by the West Syrian bishop Johannan of Jerusalem together with bishop Gregory and with another two recently dead holy men. However, according to 1 Corinthians 5, 8 it was something unusual. Illustrating the practice of the group around Mar Thomas as a West Syrian innovation on the background of the older East Syrian tradition in India, Mar Gabriel emphasised once more the belonging of the Indian St Thomas Christendom to the Apostolical Church of the East.

Moreover, the priest could provide the missionaries with explanations regarding the instruction of the clergy men in his church. The priests were supposed to learn Syriac using a grammar book and under the guidance of the Syrian specialist. Still, the Syriac knowledge was subject to decline. What was read out in Syriac in the church, it was explained to the people in Malayalam. Already at that time, the youth among the St. Thomas Christians were learning in Malayalam the Creed, Our Father, the most significant prayers and parts of the catechism. Also the St. Thomas Christians, who were independent of Rome, gave up the marriage practice for the priests. But the reason of the visit was not to inform the missionaries about these necessary points. The priest had a request. He asked them to support the Syrian Christian who, after the death of Mar Gabriel, should receive in India a new Syrian bishop. It was not by chance that a couple of months before the priest's journey in the year 1733 the rival Catholic bishops had gathered against the arrival of a Syrian Metropolitan from Babylon, who was certainly a "Nestorian".¹⁰⁷ The European observers feared an increased discord among the St. Thomas Christians if such a bishop had arrived in India. He would have further nourished the Syrian St. Thomas Christians' sympathy for the East Syrian Christendom, just as Mar Gabriel had already done, and the split with Mar Thomas' group oriented towards the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchy would have grown deeper.

¹⁰⁷ Germann, p. 562, note 1.

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Лютеранские контакты с Сирийской православной церковью святых Томасов и с Сирийской апостольской церковью Востока в Индии (*несторианцы*)

Диалог между лютеранами и Сирийской православной церковью Маланкара в Индии является эпохальным диалогом между лютеранскими и православными сирийскими христианами. Главным импульсом для этого диалога явилась пронизательная сила великого экумениста Мар Григория, митрополита Нью-Дели. Ранее он завоевал репутацию одного из ведущих представителей экуменического движения. Однако этот диалог во второй половине двадцатого века не стал началом межконфессиональных контактов между лютеранами и сирийскими христианами. Лютеране всегда проявляли интерес к древнему христианству в Индии. Взаимодействие между лютеранскими и сирийскими христианами церкви святого Томаса началось не в постколониальный период, а с приходом первых лютеранских миссионеров в Индии.

Ключевые слова: Египет, копты, исламисты, конфликты.