

WERE THE ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS  
NESTORIANS?

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

FATHER VANERELLO

AND

MR. RAGGIO.

CHRISTIAN  
MUSICOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF INDIA

*Stamp*

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IN TWO PARTS.

1902

*Mishra*

# A DIALOGUE

## BETWEEN

### FATHER VANERELLO

AND

### Mr. RAGGIO.

## PART I.

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*Mr. Raggio.* Good morning, Reverend Father.

*F. Vanerello.* Good morning, Mr. Raggio. When did you return from Madras?

*Mr. Raggio.* (1) Last night, Father.

*F. Vanerello.* What are the best news you have?

*Mr. Raggio.* (2) I read in these days "*Christianity in Travancore*" by G. T. Mackenzie Esquire, the British Resident in Travancore and Cochin. Oh! how much gratitude he deserves from us.

*F. Vane.* Did you read the note No. 116 taken from the manuscript sent by two Romo-syrian priests—Rev. E. A. Nidiri of Kuravilinguad and Rev. Father Bernard of St. Thomas of Mannanum Monastery?

*Mr. Rag.* (3) Yes, I read it with great interest and I congratulate those priests for their success.

*F. Vane.* Did you read the *Mylapore Catholic Register* which condem them horribly?

*Mr. Rag.* (4) Yes. I read three successive issues of that paper. viz. those of 26th April, 3rd and 10th May of this year. (1892).

*F. Vane.* Don't you see that those priests are silenced and crushed down by a *historicus philalethes*?

*Mr. Rag.* (5) Not the least. It is not necessary that those two priests should come forward to refute the arguments of *Historicus Philalethes*; but a simple layman like myself would suffice.

*F. Vane.* If so, show your ability first by guessing who is *Historicus Philalethes*.

*Mr. Rag.* (6) From the tone of his correspondence, he seems to be a well educated priest.

*F. Vane.* Have you anything more to say about him?

*Mr. Rag.* (7) He seems to deny the Apostleship of St. Thomas in India.

*F. Vane.* What leads you to make that supposition?

*Mr. Rag.* (8) The assertion that the "booklet (*Christianity in Travancore*) contains all the historical facts about Christianity in Travancore from the first dark beginnings up to the present times" leads me to suppose that he is one who denies the Apostleship of St. Thomas in India.

*F. Vane.* What makes our *Historicus Philalethes* to attack note No. 116 ?

*Mr. Rag.* (9) He is exceedingly mortified to find from that note that the Syro-Chaldean Christians in Malabar were Catholics before the Synod of Diamper.

*F. Vane.* What does he say about their position before the Synod of Diamper?

*Mr. Rag.* (10) He says or rather tries to establish from Barhebraeus, Asseman, Le Quien, Raulin and Acts of the Synod of Diamper that they were Nestorians before the said Synod, although he discredits the same authors and numerous other writers on the *Apostleship of St. Thomas in India* which is unanimously defended by them all.

*F. Vane.* What is your opinion about the faith of the Chaldean Christians in Malabar before the Synod of Diamper.

*Mr. Rag.* (11) My opinion or rather firm belief is that their faith before that Synod was Catholic.

*F. Vane.* I think it is very thoughtless of you to assert that they were Catholics before the said Synod, while so many eminent authors stand against it.

*Mr. Rag.* (12) I can by the grace of God, prove their Catholicity from these very authors.

*F. Vane.* What are the four points put forward by *Historicus Philalethes*?

*Mr. Rag.* (13) They are these:—

“What proves that the Thomas Christians were Nestorians are the following points.

(1) The Solemn declaration of Archdeacon George made in 1598, to the effect, that he would never make a profession of faith, nor subject himself to the Pope of Rome, nor to the Archbishop of Goa who had nothing to do with the † Thomas Christians. This declaration was confirmed by a great synod in Angamale, at which, by solemn oath, it was resolved, *not to permit, any change in matters of faith, nor to acknowledge Bishops but those sent by the Patriarch of Babylon.* (Raulin cap. 11 see I in II) I can not imagine that the Thomas Christians would have taken such an oath if they had been good Catholics as is pretended.

(2) According to Synodus Diamperitana, act III Decree VIII. The Thomas Christians commemorated in their prayers the Patriarch of Babylon, calling him universal pastor, Head of the Catholic Church. Would they have honoured the memory of the Patriarch of Babylon if they were Catholics?

(3) According to the decree IX of Actio III they celebrated the feasts of Nestorius, Theodorus, Diadorus, and other Nestorian Saints. Who can understand that the good Catholic Thomas Christians would have done this?

(4) In the same actio III of the synod, a great number of Nestorian books are mentioned and errors contained in them pointed out. Now are we to suppose that these Nestorian books were sent to Malabar by the Pope, whose faithful children the Thomas Christians are said to have been always?.....

*F. Vane.* Do you think yourself to be able to relate these four points?

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† *Historicus Philalethes* would never use the word “St. Thomas” which also shows that he denies the Apostleship of St. Thomas in India.

*Mr. Rag.* (14) I have already said that I can, by the grace of God, prove the Catholicity of the St. Thomas Christians from those very books which speak against them and consequently I can and will refute these 4 points.

*F. Vane.* What does *Historicus Philalctes* promise to do if his opinions on these 4 points are refuted and proved to the contrary conclusively?

*Mr. Rag.* (15) He promises that, if these four points are conclusively proved he will change his opinion.

*F. Vane* Prove the first point mentioned in the answer 13.

*Mr. Rag.* (16) The resolution taken and confirmed by the St. Thomas Christians in the great synod of Angamale in 1598 was, "Declaring to *Historicus Philalctes* not to change their Nestorian faith, nor to acknowledge any Bishop but those sent by the Patriarch of Babylon and this they did in spite of the advice given them by Dom Menezes. Consequently those who made such sacrilegious acts are formal heretics who are already out of the Communion of the Catholic Church. What is the attitude to be taken towards such heretics? or in other words how are Catholics to treat them? This is a question to be answered.

There are many things to be observed in this respect, the prominent are these:—

(1) Catholics can have no spiritual communion with them. (2) As they are out of the Communion of the Catholic Church, no Catholic Bishop would dare to give them a precept under pain of excommunication and by virtue of Holy Obedience, nor any heretic obey such order.

This is unquestionable. Can you contradict to what I say Father?

*F. Van.* No. I fully agree with you in this. But what is your object in quoting this.

*Mr. Rag.* (17) My object is to affirm that (a) if this is true, St. Thomas Christians were not Nestorians as our *Historicus Philalctes* thinks them to be, but they were good Catholics and that (b) their resolution in the synod of Angamale in 1598 was only a fabrication or mis-representation of facts.

*F. Van* Although the above said is unquestionably true, yet how does it show that the St. Thomas Christians were Catholics?

*Mr. Rag.* (18) In a pastoral letter or circular dated the 14th. May 1599 published 37 days before the synod of Diamper, (This letter can be seen in Raulin, Geddes, Gouvea etc.) Archbishop Menezes commanded them by virtue of holy obedience and under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ* to come to the synod, although, in the same letter, he called the Chaldean Bishops that governed them till that time, *heretics, schismatics* and *Nestorians*. By the declaration of the pain of excommunication, Dom Menezes virtually said to the Syrians "You are members of the Catholic Church and I will put you out of the communion of it, if you would not come to Diamper for the Diocesan synod."

Where are in the world such Christians who are both heretics and Catholics at the same time? Who would make such a useless threat of putting out of the Communion of the church those who were already out of it?

There are numerous examples in Raulin, Gouvea, and other Portuguese histories, which go to prove that the Portuguese Priests and prelates from their arrival in India, up to the synod of Diamper had spiritual communion with the Syrians. On many occasions, they came to the Syrian Churches and had their masses offered in them and in turn, the Syrian Priests also offered their masses in the churches belonging to the Portuguese and on many occasions, the Portuguese Priests heard the confession of the Syrians and gave them Holy Communion. (*Oriente conqui II.*) Do these facts not prove of the Catholicity of St. Thomas Christians?

Syrians which the missionaries judged important, as the Portuguese after them erroneously judged about the Chaldean Bishops and accused them before the pope.

7th. No one would venture to say that whenever any division or phantom of schism or clouds of error exist among the heretics, a foreigner would refer the matter to the Pope, to interfere in it and to quell it. It is the same as to assert that the Pope assists heretics in quelling the quarrels, divisions and the errors among them.

8th. It would appear impossible that, if the Pope intermeddled in the internal or external matters of the heretics they should obey him.

9th. It is unnatural to think and say that the Patriarchs and the Bishops of the heretics should allow or suffer such interference of the Pope in matters regarding their Christians.

10th We have ample proofs to show that the St. Thomas Christians obeyed the Pope in the person of his Legate Marignoli, when he came to Quilon as his representative, some ten or twelve years after.

11th No one has ever ventured to prove by historical quotations that the alleged Nestorian Christians of St. Thomas were converted before the arrival of Marignoli so that, they might have obeyed him when he came, although there were Missionaries in Malabar at that period to write such records of the conversion.

Now Father Vauerello, let me take your leave. Have you anything more to question me?

*F. Van.* No, I have nothing to ask you.

*Mr. Rag.* Please show me those papers which I see with you.

*F. Van.* Take and read them if you like.

*Mr. Rag.* (After having taken and read them.) Ah, This is an answer written by His Lordship Dr. Medlycott to the contents of the note number 116 of Mr. Mackenzie's *Christianity in Travancore* and printed lately in the "*Voice of Truth*" at Ernakulam a trimonthly journal under the direction of the Carmelite Fathers of the Arch diocese of Verapoly. Now I understand that all the questions you had put in Part II. of this dialogue are taken from this answer, and happily, by your questions, I have cleared away all the dark clouds brought forward by it against the orthodoxy of the St. Thomas Christians. Deo-Gratias. I think that His Lordship would have never ventured to write such an answer, had he made a critical examination of those histories which contain numerous contradictions, and so those who led His Lordship to write it are gravely mistaken. Bishop Medlycott's assertion "All Malabar besides knows and admits it (Nestorianism) notwithstanding any vain attempts to falsify history" is quite against the contents of the documentary letter under date the 15th. September 1894, which was submitted by the Bishops of Malabar to T. Rama Row Esqr. the then Dewan of Travancore. In that letter, representing the evils of the intended marriage regulation, the Bishops say:—"2 No case has been made out calling for any special regulation affecting Native Christian marriages of Catholics. These have, in the past, been "solemnized according to the rules, rites, ceremonies and customs" of the Catholic Church, which makes ample provision for the proper celebration of marriages by duly ordained and appointed ministers, for the registration of every marriage and these registers are kept at every Catholic Parish Church whether of the Latin or Syrian rite. 3 From the first centuries of the Christian era, this Church has been established in this land of Malabar and she remains over eighteen centuries of continuous existence long in fact before



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