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## Underdevelopment and the Crisis of a Religious Utopia: Implications of Secularization for the Catholic Church in Kerala, India

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UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF A RELIGIOUS UTOPIA:  
IMPLICATIONS OF SECULARIZATION FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN KERALA, INDIA

by

PAUL V. PARATHAZHAM

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate  
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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## VITA

The author, Paul V. Parathazham, was born of Varkey and Mariam Parathazham on June 29, 1946, in Karimannoor, Kerala, India.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Problem and Its Significance

Kerala, a small state tucked away in the south-west corner of India, is popularly known as "the Cradle of Indian Christianity." Although Kerala's population constitutes only 3.7 percent of the total population of India (684 million), 37 percent of India's Catholics live within its boundaries.<sup>1</sup> According to tradition, Christianity in Kerala is as old as Christianity itself.<sup>2</sup> Despite a checkered history, the Church in Kerala<sup>3</sup> has grown and flourished over the centuries and has developed a unique social and cultural identity of its own. The beautiful churches with steeples rising above the scenic coconut groves (the name "Kerala" means "the land of coconut trees"), the vast network of schools and colleges which educate students of every caste and

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<sup>1</sup>Although Christians in India constitute only 2.6 percent (1.45 percent Catholics) of the total population, they are the third largest religious group in India behind Hindus (82%) and Muslims (12%).

<sup>2</sup>For a brief sketch of the history of Christianity in Kerala, see the final section of this chapter.

<sup>3</sup>In this dissertation "Church in Kerala" refers to the Roman Catholic Church in Kerala.

creed, the numerous hospitals which deliver the best medical care in the state, the orphanages, the homes for the aged, and other social service agencies are all eloquent symbols of the richness and vitality of the Christian heritage in Kerala. The fact that Kerala has the highest number of vocations anywhere in the world today (with the possible exception of Nigeria) is perhaps the most telling testimony of the robust faith of the Keralites (C.B.C.I., 1982).

The process of modernization that is sweeping across the world has generated new problems, mounted new challenges, and opened up new possibilities to religions everywhere. The Church in Kerala has been no exception. This study seeks to investigate the sociological implications of modernization for the Catholic Church in Kerala as perceived by a group that is uniquely qualified to understand and interpret its dynamics, the diocesan clergy of Kerala.

This investigation of the impact of modernity on institutional religion is of special theoretical significance because of the peculiar nature of modernization in Kerala. Kerala represents a case of what might be termed "truncated modernity." Modernization involves institutional changes as well as a transformation of consciousness (see Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Kahl, 1968; McClelland, 1961; Hagen, 1962; Berger et al., 1973). The people of Kerala have been awakened by modern consciousness, but the institutions of Kerala still remain largely untouched by the ethos of modernity. In other words, there is in Kerala a high degree of

modernization of consciousness with little or no modernization of institutional structures.

There is, of course, a linkage between the institutional processes of modernization and the configurations of consciousness which develop in conjunction with them. Berger et al. (1973) use the Weberian term "elective affinity" to characterize the causal reciprocity between these two dimensions of modernization. Historically, the institutional processes of modernization and their psychological counterparts have evolved in interaction with each other. However, once generated, the institutional and psychological aspects of modernization are capable of developing and operating autonomously. "... institutional carriers "discard" their erstwhile "baggage" of packages of consciousness. Conversely, the latter "go off on their own" and leave behind the institutional contexts to which they were originally linked" (Berger et al., 1973:102).

Clusters of modern consciousness can develop separately from their original institutional moorings when modernization occurs not through its "primary carriers," namely, technological production and bureaucratically organized state, but through its "secondary carriers," such as "mobilized" stratification systems, mass education and its extension, the mass media of communication, etc. (Berger et al., 1973). The most important "primary carrier" of modernization, technological production, is virtually non-existent in Kerala. Kerala is the least industrialized among

the twenty-two states of the Indian Union. Agriculture, which is the occupation of more than 80 percent of the Keralites, remains practically unaffected by technological innovations. The vast majority of farmers still use primitive methods of cultivation; they plough the fields with bullocks, sow, weed, and harvest with hands, and transport the produce on heads. As for the other "primary carrier," bureaucratic organization of the state, Kerala is bureaucratically organized. But the bureaucracy in Kerala is very small and much less complex compared to that of the modernized nations of the West.

While "the primary carriers" of modernization have remained undeveloped in Kerala, certain "secondary carriers" have been very active. Two such "secondary carriers" have been especially significant: "mobilized" stratification system, and mass education and its corollary, mass media of communication.

For centuries, Indian society was organized on the basis of the caste system, in which social mobility was non-existent. The individual's social position, economic status, occupation, civil rights and duties, and potential marriage partners were all determined by the caste into which he/she was born. One could never change one's caste. This system of institutionalized inequality was legitimated by the Hindu theology of Karma and rebirth. The law of Karma is a law of moral causation, an extension of the physical law of cause and effect into the moral realm. Accord-

ing to this doctrine, an individual's history does not begin with his/her birth. This life, by itself, has no meaning; it has meaning only as a link in a chain of births in the past and rebirths in the future. The state in which one finds oneself is the direct result of one's deeds (Karma) in the previous birth. Everyone carries with himself his past and will carry into his future his present. No one can escape the consequences of his actions. Happiness and prosperity in this life are the result of the good deeds in the previous birth, and pain suffering, the result of evil deeds. There is nothing one can do to change one's condition in this life. Thus, our characters and destinies are shaped from life to life, not according to our personal capabilities or efforts, nor according the arbitrary decrees of a whimsical god, but according to an inexorable law wrought into our nature. Reinforced by this fatalistic world view, the caste system made social mobility impossible and inconceivable.

This rigid stratification system based on caste began to erode during the British rule of India. Under the constitution of independent India promulgated in 1950, all are equal before the law, and any discrimination on the basis of caste or creed is a serious offense punishable under the law. For the first time, social mobility became a possibility, and a revolution of rising expectations was set in motion. This "mobilization of aspirations," however, was not accompanied by commensurate mobilization of the economic

processes necessary to realize those aspirations for a better life.

The other "secondary carriers" of modernization that have been operative in Kerala are mass education and the mass media of communication. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India.<sup>4</sup> High literacy, in turn, has contributed to the growth and expansion of the mass communications media -- newspapers, magazines, radio and cinema theaters. Besides exposing them to the astounding achievements of modernization in the West, education and mass media also expedited the process of "the conscientization" of the people of Kerala, the growth of the awareness that human dignity and decent living are not the privilege of a few, but the inalienable right of all. Keralites today not only "aspire" for a better life, they also demand it.

The Catholic Church in Kerala exists in a milieu where there is a rising tide of expectations for a better life, but which lacks the economic means required to translate those expectations into realizable goals. This study seeks to identify the consequences of this "truncated modernity" for the Catholic Church in Kerala.

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<sup>4</sup> Kerala has a literacy rate of 61 percent while the national literacy rate is only 29 percent (source: Manorama Yearbook, 1978).



Secularization: Theoretical Perspectives on Religion In  
Modernity

The Meaning of the Concept

"Secularization" is a concept that bristles with ambiguity. It has been used to refer to such a large number of discrete and disparate processes that it has become imperative to preface every discussion of it with a definition of the meaning of the term. The content of the concept of secularization is so varied and filled with ideological and counter-ideological overtones that several sociologists have called for a moratorium on its continued use in sociological literature (see Martin, 1969; Glasner, 1977).

There is a plethora of typologies of the various meanings of secularization. Henri Desrosche (see Fenn, 1969:112) has distinguished seven different meanings for the concept: (1) expropriation of ecclesiastical property, (2) renunciation of powers by religion, (3) declericalization of structures, (4) deconfessionalization of social services, (5) desacralization of cultures, (6) deideologizing of tradition, (7) demythologizing of sources. Shiner (1967) reviewed the literature on secularization and concluded that the term has been employed in six different senses: (1) decline of religion, (2) disengagement of society from religion, (3) transposition of religious beliefs and institutions, (4) desacralization of the world, (5) conformity with this world, (6) movement from a sacred to a secular society. David Martin (1969) has delineated four main spheres of

secularization: (1) replacement of religious legitimation by secular legitimation and the concomitant decline of the power, prestige, and range of influence and control of religion; (2) secularization of religious customs, practices, rituals, and the concomitant diminution in their frequency, intensity, and the estimate of their efficacy and importance; (3) demystification and translation of religious concepts and symbols within a human, and therefore, temporal reference; (4) a secular attitude which rejects the reverential and indifference to charismatic appeals, halo effects, awe, or the numinous. Such typologies may be multiplied, but these suffice to show that secularization denotes neither a unitary process nor a unified syndrome of characteristics.

As Robertson (1970) has pointed out, the different meanings of secularization arise from the different ways of defining religion. Since the term is employed to designate changes that are allegedly taking place in the sphere of religion, its meaning varies according to the definition of religion employed in each instance.

Using the type of definition of religion as the criterion, Peter Glasner (1977) has offered one of the most comprehensive codifications of the meanings of the concept. According to him, there are three major types of definitions: "institutionally based," "normatively based," and "cognitively based"; accordingly, there are three categories of meanings for the term "secularization."

"Institutionally based" definitions of religion tend to identify religion with its institutional manifestations. Those who employ this type of definition conceive secularization either as the erosion of commitment to institutional religion, or as the disengagement of society from religion. The Lynds in their pioneering studies of Middletown (1929, 1937) viewed secularization as the decrease in formal church participation measured by such indices as attendance, membership, Sunday school attendance, church marriages, etc. Like the Lynds, Stark and Glock also view secularization as the erosion of commitment to institutional religion. Citing as evidence Gallup poll findings that indicate a decline in church attendance and growing scepticism about the tenets of institutional religion, they conclude, "...the religious beliefs that have been the bedrocks of Christian faith for nearly two millenia are on the way out; and this may well be the dawn of a post-Christian era" (1971:68). Bryan Wilson is the representative of this approach in Britain. He defines secularization as "the process whereby religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose their social significance" (1976:xiv). Wilson adduces the decline in rates of infant baptisms, confirmations, church marriages, membership, and attendance as evidence of this process in England.

A second meaning of secularization that stems from the "institutionally based" definition of religion is the differentiation or disengagement of society from religion.

Parsons has identified secularization with the process of

structural differentiation. He argues that secularization should not be viewed as the decline of religion, but rather as the redefinition of the role of religion in the contemporary social scene. Of the changing role of religion in modern America, he writes:

Looked at by comparison with earlier forms, religion seems to have lost much. But it seems to me that losses are mainly the consequence of processes of structural differentiation in society, which correspond to changes in the religious values themselves (Parsons, 1960:320).

Similarly, Bellah has analyzed the religious evolution as a process of increasing differentiation, which takes place in five distinct stages: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern, and modern. For him the hallmark of the modern religious situation is the fact that "the symbolization of man in relation to the ultimate condition of his existence is no longer the monopoly of any group explicitly labelled religious" (1964:7).

A variant of this approach is the view of secularization as the disengagement of society from religion. Secularization is seen as the emancipation of key aspects of social life from ecclesiastical tutelage. Most of the work from this perspective has been limited to descriptive, historical analyses of the changes in Western Christianity since the Middle Ages, with little or no explanatory content. A notable exception to this is the work of David Martin (1978) which seeks to identify general patterns underlying the wide-ranging changes in the West and weave them together into a coherent general theory of secularization.

His theory will be examined in some detail later in this section.

A second set of meanings for secularization is derived from the "normatively based" definitions of religion. Secularization in this sense means the erosion of the normative control of religion; that is, conventional religious beliefs cease to determine the orientation for action. This approach has two variants: "generalization" and "desacralization."

"Generalization" means that the overarching operative norms and values of a society are no more embodied in its conventional religions, but in "a common religion," a sort of a common denominator of all the religions in that society. Herberg (1967) distinguishes between "conventional religion" and "operative religion" and conceives secularization as the increasing chasm between the two. According to him, "the operative religion" of modern Americans is a "religion-in-general" that includes the tri-faith system (Protestant-Catholic-Jew) as well as the concept of American Democracy and American Way. In similar fashion, Bellah (1967) has postulated the concept of "civil religion." He observes that, although in America religious beliefs and practices are considered to be the private affairs of the individuals, a great majority of Americans share certain common elements of a religious orientation. This religious dimension of public life, which is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, Bellah calls "the American

Civil Religion."

"Desacralization," the second major perspective on secularization rooted in the "normatively based" definition of religion, means that the world and its phenomena are being increasingly perceived as devoid of any sacred character as a result of the adoption of an exclusively rationalistic world view. The classical formulation of this perspective is found in Weber's concept of "disenchantment" (Entzauberung). Weber viewed "the disenchantment of the world" as an inevitable consequence of the irreversible process of rationalization. In his essay "Science as a Vocation," Weber says, "It (Entzauberung) means that principally there are no mysterious, incalculable forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation" (Gerth and Mills, 1968:155). Among contemporary scholars, Nisbet and Fenn are the major representatives of this approach. Nisbet spells out his view as follows:

The process of secularization results in the novel respect for values of utility rather than of sacredness alone, control of the environment than passive submission to it, and, in some ways most importantly, concern with man's welfare on this earth rather than his supposed immortal relations to gods (Nisbet, 1970:383).

Fenn has argued that, in future, traditional religions will cease to provide the basis for the legitimacy of the social order. He sees the emergence of a new, non-religious, and utilitarian plausibility structure for the modern society. "Neither religious nor moral values, but only established priorities, effectiveness, and propriety become the primary

sources of legitimacy" (Fenn, 1972:28).

The final category of meanings of secularization are based on definitions of religion that emphasize the cognitive aspect. The main exponents of this perspective are Berger and Luckmann. For Luckmann (1967), secularization is a process of "the privatization of religion." In simple societies, the official religious world view is internalized by most members of the society, and religious representations serve to legitimate conduct in all spheres of social life. There is thus a remarkable congruence between the official model of religion and the subjective system of ultimate significance. However, as societies become more differentiated, official models of religion cease to be the overarching system of ultimate significance. Individuals must now construct their own personal systems of ultimate significance from an assortment of available religious themes, themes which are distributed throughout society in a variety of secondary institutions like syndicated columns, popular psychology books, magazines, etc. The official model of religion becomes just one of the many available options for the individual from which to construct his own private system of ultimate significance. Berger views religion as a "sacred canopy" designed by man to protect and perpetuate a man-made, hence tenuous, social order. Like every socially constructed reality, religion requires a plausibility structure, a social base where its reality is taken for granted. In traditional societies, religion

enjoyed a strong, broad-based plausibility structure. In modern societies, however, the plausibility structure of religion has considerably weakened because of "pluralism"; that is, the rise of alternate plausible explanations of where the world came from and how it is maintained. As Berger puts it, "The crucial sociological and social-psychological characteristic of the pluralistic situation is that religion can no longer be imposed but must be marketed" (1969:145).

The validity of the secularization thesis has been called into question by several sociologists on theoretical as well as empirical grounds. The most convincing theoretical critique of the concept comes from David Martin. In his book The Religious and the Secular, Martin denounces the concept as a "tool of counter-religious ideologies" because it involves several fallacies, such as a false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, an utopian view of history, and an over-secularized concept of man (1969). More recently, Peter Glasner (1977) has offered a thorough-going theoretical and methodological critique of the concept in an effort to show that it is an example par excellence of a "social myth" (see also Shiner, 1967; Robertson, 1971).

A second group of sociologists has disputed the validity of the secularization thesis on the basis of empirical evidence for "the persistence of religion" (Greeley, 1971; Hertel and Nelson, 1974; Goodridge, 1975). Greeley, the main exponent of this perspective, citing as many as twenty-



one different items of empirical evidence, asserts, "The basic human religious need and the basic religious functions have not changed very notably since the late Ice Age" (1971:1). Still another group of sociologists, notably Berger (1977) and Bell (1971), feel that the news of the "death of God" has been greatly exaggerated. They see signs of a reversal of the process of secularization and are enthusiastically applauding "the return of the Sacred."

Those who dispute the secularization thesis, whether they be advocates of "the persistence of religion" or "the return of the Sacred," are unanimous on one point: "persistence of religion" does not mean persistence of institutionalized religion; "return of the Sacred" does not imply return to institutionalized religion. In other words, there is a consensus among sociologists that modernization has significantly changed the role of institutional religion in the world today. And it is in this sense of the impact of modernity on institutional religion that secularization is conceptualized in this study.

#### Patterns of Secularization

Although secularization, in the sense specified above, is a universal process, it unfolds itself in different patterns in different cultural contexts. In his general theory of secularization, David Martin (1978) sets out three basic categories of cultural contexts: laissez-faire, duopoly, and monopoly. In each of these, secularization follows a diffe-

rent socio-logic.

Religious laissez-faire or pluralism refers to a situation where multiple religious groups of more or less equal status compete in a relatively free religious market. There are various degrees of religious laissez-faire. This pattern is found in its purest form in the United States of America, where religion is formally separated from state, and the various churches function as voluntary associations. There is a greater degree of Anglican dominance in Canada and Australia; England combines nationalization with laissez-faire within a church-state format. The major characteristics common to all the varieties of laissez-faire are the following: (a) they have fairly stable democratic regimes; (b) their history is not marked by any serious conflict around the issue of religion; (c) they have cumulative systems of legitimation as opposed to alternative systems; (d) they are not characterized by anti-clericalism or large-scale secular religions such as Communism.

Duopoly, or the mixed pattern, involves two churches in which the Protestant church is the major partner. This pattern is found in Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Northern Ireland. The main social consequences of duopoly are: (a) like laissez-faire societies, religion itself is not a major issue of confrontation; (b) the Catholic Church, the conservative, hierarchically organized religion, joins hands with the reformists; (c) the various institutional spheres like education, socialization, communication, work, and lei-

sure continue to be organized, to a large extent, under the aegis of religion.

Martin's third category refers to societies where there is a religious monopoly. The Catholic countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, and France belong to this category. Monopolistic societies, according to Martin, are characterized by the rise and growth of militant secularism.

In Catholic societies, there arises a social split, with Catholics and legitimists on one side, and other groups, either newly ascendant or previously persecuted, or both, on the other... The existence of rival societies within a single social whole creates a violence of expression and clarity of difference absent from the Protestant pattern (Martin, 1978:38).

The intelligentsia join the secular elites in opposing the church. The control over education is likely to be the arena of the fiercest battle between the church and the militant secularists. "This means that education becomes the key to the future because neither side dare allow the other indoctrinate the next generation. So education is the nub of the conflict" (Martin, 1978:10). However, there are certain circumstances that may help unwind the "vicious spiral" in monopolistic societies. The threat of external domination and equal strength of the opposing factions, which makes a decisive victory for either side improbable, may subdue conflict and promote compromise and mutual accommodation. Martin cites Poland, Belgium, and France as examples of muted conflict in monopoly.

## Responses to Secularization

Responses to secularization have been varied. Bryan Wilson (1976) has distinguished five different types of responses to secularization: ecumenism, charismatic renewal, voluntary destructureation, rationalization, and eclecticism. One of the first responses of western Christianity to secularism was to initiate the ecumenical movement with a view to bridging the internal divisions among the Christians and projecting a common front against a common enemy. Those efforts, however, soon ran into trouble, and, as Wilson notes, "the belief that ecumenism would lead to a more vigorous, growing church ... has largely evaporated" (1976:31). The charismatic movement, which is based on the belief that the gifts of the Spirit are still in operation, is a more spontaneous and widespread response to secularism. Voluntary destructureation involves the shedding of old forms and procedures in order to accommodate the church to the demands of modernity. The abandonment of the Latin mass, the adoption of secular symbols in liturgy, the introduction of sacramental roles for lay persons, etc. are examples of this mode of adaptation. Rationalization, the fourth type of response to secularization, involves the cooptation of the rationalization impulse by the churches in the sense that the churches seek to rationalize their operations and procedures much like the other sectors of modern society. Finally, eclecticism refers to the tendency to incorporate into worship elements from other cultures and subcultures as

well as from other social contexts. Wilson cites as an example of this type of adaptation Harvey Cox's recent call for the establishment of a "global religious commune" where the symbolic treasures from the full sweep of human history, everything from the oldest cave drawing to disco dances, may be considered legitimate material for incorporation into worship. Wilson is not inclined to believe that any of these will be successful in stemming the rising tide of secularization. In his words, "Religions are always dying. In the modern world it is not clear that they have any prospect of rebirth" (1976:112).

Peter Berger (1970) is another author who has theorized on the way religion responds to the challenges posed by secularization. His discussion is focused on the cognitive level. Berger believes that, because of the erosion of the plausibility structure of religion, those who still consider the supernatural as a meaningful reality find themselves in the status of a cognitive minority. As a cognitive minority, believers are faced with three possible options: cognitive defiance, cognitive surrender, and *aggiornamento*. Cognitive defiance, or the sectarian option, "entails an attitude of the stiff upper lip, a steadfast refusal to 'go native,' a (literally or otherwise) pontifical insouciance about the opinions of mankind" (1970:17). Since cognitive defiance cannot be maintained over a long period of time without a supporting social base, this option involves the establishment of a counter-community, a religious ghetto.

The second option, cognitive surrender, is the polar opposite of the first.

In this option, the cognitive authority and superiority of whatever is taken to be "the Weltanschauung of the modern man" is conceded with few, if any, reservations. Modernity is swallowed hook, line, and sinker, and the repast is accompanied by a sense of awe worthy of Holy Communion (Berger, 1970:19).

This option requires the translation of traditional religious affirmations into terms that are congruent with the ethos of modernity, a task which Berger views as tantamount to the "self-liquidation of theology." Between the two extremes lies the third and the most common response to secularization, *aggiornamento*. This option involves making some "tactical modifications" in the traditional religious institutions and message in order to accommodate the more rebellious sections of its clientele, whether they be intelligentsia, the working class, or the youth. Berger feels that even this option will be to the detriment of religion because cognitive bargaining always leads to cognitive contamination.

The discussions of both Wilson and Berger deal with the responses of religion in general to the challenges posed by secularization. The only theorist who has addressed the specific question of the responses of the clergy to secularization is David Martin (1978:278-305). According to him, there are three analytically distinct phases of secularization, each of which elicits a different set of responses from the clergy. In phase one of secularization, there is a

collusion of church and state; today, this phase persists in countries like England and Scandinavia, where there is a collusion of church and state over basic values. At this stage, the sacred order is considered to be an ontological part of the social order. Therefore, the presence of clergymen at all major events of personal and social life is deemed appropriate, or even necessary. Thus, the role of the clergyman enjoys almost universal support, and the clergy, for the most part, are satisfied with it. Dissatisfaction, if any, with the clerical role is likely to arise from the ranks of the clergy themselves. Younger clergy, exposed to modern theology, may view the identification of the priestly role with the performance of cultic and social rituals as a travesty of the authentic priesthood and may aspire for more genuinely religious definitions of his priestly role. In the second phase, the church is no longer considered an integral part of the social order. The church becomes a voluntary association, and the clergy become marginal to the national and local elites. The typical response of the clergy in this phase is to shed their secular roles and to emphasize the specifically religious elements of the priesthood. This response is accompanied by a new emphasis on the necessity of adequate theological training for the clergy. In the third phase, the voluntary associations of the churches become segmented, and their influence on the membership dwindles. With progressively diminishing active constituency, the role of the priest as a "religious

specialist" becomes less and less relevant. A possible response at this stage is to slip out of all constricting role-structures to assume the role of a universal prophet and to confront the whole world with a radical critique. Another possible response at this stage is to attempt to establish small, face-to-face groups like the charismatic groups. Between these two possibilities is the social work alternative, in which the priest combines limited social criticism with social action.

It is important to note here that Martin postulates an intermediary phase between phase one and two for Catholic countries, when the clergy are supported by one half of the society and opposed by a militant secularist half. The current situation in Kerala seems to belong to this intermediate phase. Unfortunately, Martin does not indicate what the typical responses of the clergy might be in this intermediate phase.

Several sociologists have studied the attitudes and perceptions of the Roman Catholic Clergy regarding their life and ministry in the modern world. None of these studies was undertaken with the specific intent of measuring clergy responses to secularization. However, since secularization is a universal process, the findings of these attitudinal studies may be expected to reflect, at least in some measure, the way in which the process of secularization impinges on the attitudes and values of the clergy.

Neal (1965) studied how the diocesan priests of the



Boston archdiocese respond to historical pressures of change, with a view to assessing the role of values and interests in their orientation to change or non-change. She found that, on the basis of values, 35 percent were oriented to change, and 21 percent were opposed to change; and on the basis of interests, 11 percent were for change, and 28 percent against change. Neal concluded:

The overall picture for the diocese optimistically indicates that Boston priests will cooperate with and initiate these new programs for reform not because of special interest factors for institutional aggrandizement, but for realization of the basic values for a Christian commitment (1965:159).

Fichter conducted a nation-wide survey of "America's Forgotten Priests" (diocesan clergy who are not pastors) in order to find out "what they are saying" in the context of the recommendations of Vatican II (1968). His findings include: age is negatively correlated with satisfaction with the pace of change; majority favor married clergy; most feel the need of continuing education after ordination; and the majority, while dissatisfied with their relationship with their bishop, are satisfied with rectory relations. The largest and most inclusive survey of Roman Catholic Clergy ever undertaken is the one conducted by the National Opinion Research Center under the direction of Greeley (1972). A national sample of six thousand included both diocesan and religious clergy, as well as bishops and superiors of religious communities. The final report of the survey does not indicate the theoretical framework of the study; however, it

does contain a vast fund of information on the perceptions and attitudes of the clergy towards the various aspects of their life and ministry. On the basis of their findings, the researchers conclude:

We have discovered no evidence that the Catholic Priesthood is in a state of collapse or even near collapse. There are many strong and positive forces at work in the priesthood, and it would be an unwise man who would conclude on the basis of our data that it will disappear (1972:315).

These studies seem to indicate that the Roman Catholic priests in the United States have successfully adapted to the changes brought about by secularization. Unfortunately, no such studies of the Catholic priesthood have been reported from other cultural contexts.

#### Christianity in Kerala: A Brief Historical Note

Kerala is generally believed to have been first evangelized by St. Thomas, the Apostle, during the first century A.D. Although there is no conclusive historical evidence to support this belief, the majority of church historians today accept the evangelization of Kerala by St. Thomas as a historical fact (see Koodapuzha, 1980; Podipara, 1972). The Syrian Christians, the largest group of Christians in Kerala, call themselves "St. Thomas Christians" because they believe that they are the descendents of the upper-class Hindus converted to Christianity by St. Thomas.

Whatever the veracity of this tradition about the evangelization of Kerala by the Apostle Thomas, there is ample historical evidence to support the presence of Christians

(then known as "the Nazareans") in Kerala from the fourth century A.D. onwards. Details about the life of the early Christians in Kerala are sketchy. But there is a general consensus among historians on the following: (a) the Christians in Kerala were closely associated with the Chaldean Church in Persia and were governed by bishops from Persia appointed by the Patriarch of the Chaldeans; (b) their liturgy, sacraments, and religious practices were similar to those of the Chaldeans, and their liturgical language was Aramaic, a variant of Hebrew; (c) they had successfully indigenized Christianity by integrating their faith and religious practices into the local culture.

The arrival of the Portugese colonizers in 1498 under the leadership of Vasco da Gama marks the beginning of a turbulent and, in some ways, unfortunate period in the history of Christianity in Kerala. As the Portugese consolidated their political power, numerous missionaries from Portugal came to Kerala and began to evangelize its coastal areas. Large-scale conversions followed. Since the Portugese missionaries belonged to the Latin rite, the new converts were inducted into the Latin rite. This is how the Latin-rite Christians originated in Kerala. Since the new converts who constituted the Latin Christians were originally low-caste Hindus (mostly fishermen), they were, and are still, looked down upon by the St. Thomas Christians (Syrian Christians). By the middle of the sixteenth century, two Latin dioceses were established in India, one in

Cochin, Kerala, and the other in Goa. The Portugese bishops who were in charge of the Latin Christians began to look at the native Syrian Christians with suspicion because their liturgy, customs, and religious practices were different from those of the Latin Christians. They suspected unorthodoxy and attempted to force the Syrian Christians to abandon their liturgy and practices and adopt, instead, the Latin rite, its liturgy, practices, and life style. The Syrians resisted. And a long struggle ensued. In the meantime, the bishop of the Syrian Christians, who was appointed by the Patriarch of Persia, died. The Portugese Archbishop, Menezes, who was then in charge of the Latin-rite diocese of Goa, came to Kerala and claimed that, since the Syrians were without a bishop now, the Pope had placed them under his jurisdiction and had asked him to correct their "doctrinal and liturgical aberrations." Later it became clear that he had no such authorization from the Pope. In any case, Menezes took this opportunity to summon the Udayamperoor synod (Synod of Diamper), in which he engineered the "latinization" of the Syrian Christians. The Syrian priests were given copies of the Latin-rite liturgical manuals (translated into Aramaic), and they were asked to celebrate the mass and the other sacraments according to the Latin rite. They were also required to use the liturgical vestments and vessels of the Latin rite and reorganize the administrative procedures of the Syrian parishes according to the Latin pattern. It was at this synod that celibacy was made a

requirement for the Syrian priests. Thus, the liturgy, practices, and lifestyle of the Latin rite were superimposed on the Syrian rite.

In 1652, the Chaldean Patriarch of Persia sent a new bishop to Kerala to replace the one who had died. The St. Thomas Christians, long without a bishop of their own, eagerly awaited the arrival of their new bishop. But the Portuguese bishop in Cochin (Latin rite) had other plans. He maintained that the Patriarch of Persia had no longer the authority to appoint bishops for St. Thomas Christians, and that, in any case, no new bishops could be appointed for Kerala without the prior approval of the King of Portugal. With the help of the Portuguese authorities, he prevented the ship carrying the new bishop from docking at the Cochin harbor, and it was forced to return to Persia. To make matters worse, rumor spread that the Portuguese had murdered the new bishop of St. Thomas Christians. Angry and indignant, a group of St. Thomas Christians assembled at a church in Mattanchery and, holding the Bible and the cross, swore that they will never accept the authority of the Portuguese bishops of the Latin rite. This came to be known as the "Koonan Kurisu Sathyam," and it resulted in the splitting of the St. Thomas Christians into two factions. The dissident Syrians broke away from Rome and placed themselves under the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. This group came to be known as the Jacobites.

In 1930, Pope Pius XI established a separate hierarchy

for the Syrians (known as the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy) with four dioceses headed by native Syrian bishops. In 1960, their liturgy and sacraments were restored to their original form (prior to the synod of Diamper), and the vernacular, Malayalam, was designated as the official liturgical language. Today, there are eleven Syro-Malabar dioceses in Kerala, and the Syro-Malabar Christians constitute the largest group of Catholics. The Latin-rite Catholics, the descendants of those who were converted to Christianity by the Portuguese and other missionaries from the West, have now seven dioceses. They form the second largest group of Catholics. The smallest group is the Syro-Malankara Christians. This rite consists of those Jacobites who returned to the Communion of Rome in 1932 under leadership of two of their bishops. When they returned to the Catholic fold, they were allowed to retain the liturgy and practices they had in the Jacobite Church.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY AND A PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

#### Methodology

The unit of analysis of this study is the active, Catholic, diocesan priest in the state of Kerala, India. All the active diocesan priests incardinated in the twenty-one Catholic dioceses of Kerala constitute the population of this study. The study was limited only to the diocesan priests because the inclusion of the religious priests would have extended the scope of this study beyond the resources available to it. At the time this study was initiated, March, 1980, there were 2816 active diocesan priests in Kerala.<sup>1</sup> From this population, a probability sample of one thousand priests was selected as respondents in this study. In order to ensure adequate representation for each of the twenty-one dioceses, the population was first stratified according to diocese, and then a systematic sample was selected for each diocese from an alphabetically ordered list of all its diocesan priests. The size of the sample chosen for a diocese was proportionate to the total number

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<sup>1</sup>This estimate is based on the statistics published in the latest "Diocesan Directories" of the various dioceses in Kerala.

of active priests incardinated in it. The names and addresses provided in the latest Diocesan Directories (published annually) were used to develop the sampling frame. There was no way of anticipating what the response rate might be for this study since no study of this sort had been previously conducted in this population. Therefore, a relatively large sample of 1000 was selected so that, even if the response rate were to be very low, there would still be sufficient number of cases to meet the requirements of statistical analysis and inference.

The data for this study were collected through a mailed questionnaire survey. The mailed questionnaire method was deemed appropriate for this study mainly for two reasons: first, the questionnaire contained several questions of a personal nature to which candid responses were unlikely unless the anonymity of the respondents could be ensured, and the mailed questionnaire method allowed the respondents to remain anonymous; second, the respondents in this study were scattered all over the state of Kerala, and the cost of time, money, and effort of reaching them by any other method was clearly beyond the resources available for this study.

The survey instrument was constructed with a view to eliciting information on four distinct aspects of the life and ministry of the Catholic priest in Kerala:

1. Background information: The questionnaire sought information on a number of background variables of



interest, such as age, years in ministry, rite, diocese, level of education, socioeconomic status of the family of origin, father's education, father's occupation, etc. Besides being indispensable for explanatory purposes, this information is of considerable value in itself because such sociodemographic data on the Catholic priests of Kerala have never been collected before.<sup>2</sup>

2. Attitudes and values of the clergy: This section of the questionnaire consisted of a set of items designed to measure the attitudes of the clergy on a number of current theological, moral, and sociopolitical issues. The purpose of this section was to discover whether the clergy in Kerala today tend to be plausibility-oriented or orthodoxy-oriented (see chapter III).
3. The Priest and His Ministry: The questions in this section were aimed at obtaining information on how the priests in Kerala today view their ministry, its problems, challenges, and rewards (see chapter IV).
4. Perspectives on the Kerala Church: The fourth and final section of the questionnaire focused on the attitudes of the clergy towards the Church in Ker-

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A sociodemographic profile of the Catholic priest in Kerala will be presented later in this chapter.

ala. The items included in this section were selected with the assistance of a panel of experts on the Church in Kerala (see chapter V).

All the aspects specified above, except the last one which concerns the local Church in Kerala, were included in the NORC study of the Catholic Priest in the United States (Greeley, 1972). Therefore, the relevant portions of the NORC questionnaire were adapted to operationalize the first three aspects of this study. This makes it possible to compare the Catholic Clergy in Kerala with their counterparts in the United States on several questions and thus adds a valuable crosscultural dimension to this study.

The survey instrument was pretested among a group of diocesan priests from Kerala. Based on the pretest results, a few modifications were made in the original questionnaire.

The questionnaire was mailed from the Department of Social Sciences, Jnana Deepa Vidaypeeth, Pune, Maharashtra, on May 10, 1980.<sup>3</sup> To each respondent was mailed a package which included five items: a letter of introduction from the Rector (President) of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study and soliciting the respondent's cooperation, the questionnaire, a stamped

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<sup>3</sup>Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, which is about one thousand miles away from Kerala, was selected as the base for this study for two reasons: first, as the oldest and most prestigious center of higher education (ecclesiastical) in India, the Catholic priests recognize and respect this institution; secondly, this study was sponsored and partially financed by this institution.

and self-addressed envelope for returning the completed questionnaire, and a stamped and self-addressed post card bearing the respondent's identification number.<sup>4</sup> The stamped and self-addressed post card was a means of keeping track of who returned the questionnaire and who did not, while allowing the respondent to remain completely anonymous. The questionnaire itself had no identification marks. The respondent was asked to mail the post card which bore his identification number separately from the questionnaire, after he had completed and returned the questionnaire. This procedure enabled the respondent to let us know that he had returned the completed questionnaire without divulging which questionnaire was completed by him. As an incentive to complete and return the questionnaire, the respondents were promised that a summary of the findings of this study would be sent to them, if they so desired.

Within three weeks of the mailing of the questionnaire, about 25 percent (250) of the questionnaires were returned. At this point, the first set of reminders was mailed to those who had not yet returned the questionnaires. The second wave brought in the responses of another 10 percent (100) of the sample. About a month after the first set of reminders was mailed, the second and final set of reminders was dispatched to those who had failed to respond. The

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<sup>4</sup>The letter of introduction, the covering letter and the questionnaire are reproduced in appendix A.

subsequent weeks saw the return of 75 more completed questionnaires. When the last trickles ended, there were a total of 462 completed questionnaires, all but two of them usable. We were notified that 52 of the respondents could not return their questionnaires due to circumstances beyond their control; of these, 6 were dead, 13 were too old or sick to complete the questionnaire, 20 did not receive the questionnaire because of inaccurate addresses, and 14 thought that their completed questionnaires must have been lost in transit. There were ten refusals.

Thus, the survey had a response rate of 49 percent.<sup>5</sup> This is a conservative estimate because it is based on the assumption that all the respondents, except those who notified us otherwise, did in fact receive the questionnaires in the mail. This is very unlikely. When they received the reminder, about 50 respondents wrote to say that they had never received such a questionnaire. These, of course, were sent another copy of the questionnaire promptly. But there must have been so many more who did not receive the questionnaire in the mail and did not bother to write and ask that another copy of the questionnaire be sent to them. One of the reasons for the large number of inaccurate addresses was that the questionnaires were mailed during the weeks before Easter, the time of general transfer for priests in Kerala.

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<sup>5</sup>The response rate was calculated after excluding from the total sample those cases in which failure to respond was due to circumstances beyond the control of the respondent.

Dispatching the questionnaires very close to the Holy Week, the busiest time of the year for diocesan priests, also must have adversely affected the response rate. The response rate, broken down by diocese and rite, is presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Almost all the letters received in connection with the survey were positive, commending the effort and wishing success. Only two were negative: one thought that the survey was prompted by sinister motives of maligning the Church in Kerala, and the other felt that the survey would serve no useful purpose, except, perhaps, assisting the researcher to obtain his Ph.D.

Since this study is primarily descriptive in nature, crosstabular analysis is the preferred method of analysis. Where explanation is called for and feasible, the multiple regression analysis is employed to assess the relative and cumulative impact of the relevant independent variables on the dependent variable in question. The mathematical assumptions underlying the regression analysis require that the variables analyzed be measured at least at the interval level. In this study, however, regression analysis is performed on some variables that are measured at the ordinal level only. The use of multiple regression analysis on ordinal variables is considered warranted since it is employed in this study exclusively as a measure of association, and not as means of predicting the values of the dependent variable from the independent variables.

TABLE 1

## POPULATION, SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE, BY DIOCESE

Diocese	Popu- lation	Sample	# of responses	% of responses
Aleppey	66	23	9	39
Bathery	28	10	7	70
Calicut	58	22	11	50
Changanacherry	283	100	45	45
Cochin	61	22	7	32
Ernakulam	276	98	41	42
Irinjalakuda	127	46	16	35
Kanjirappally	82	29	15	52
Kothamangalam	215	76	54	71
Kottayam	128	46	23	50
Mananthavady	66	23	11	48
Palai	382	131	54	41
Palghat	17	6	3	50
Quilon	95	34	14	41
Tellicherry	198	70	36	51
Tiruvalla	104	38	20	53
Trichur	149	53	24	45
Trivandrum(A)	161	57	27	47
Trivandrum(D)	107	38	11	29
Verapoly	124	45	19	42
Vijayapuram	89	33	15	46
Total	2816	1000	462	46*

\* Unadjusted for cases that could not be reached.

TABLE 2  
POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND RESPONSE RATE, BY RITE

RITE	Popu- lation	Sample	# of Responses	% of Responses
Latin	600	217	86	40
Syro-Malankara	293	105	54	51
Syro-Malabar	1923	678	322	47
Total	2816	1000	462	46*

\* Unadjusted for cases that could not be reached.

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The Sample: A Sociodemographic Profile

The median<sup>6</sup> age of the Catholic priest in Kerala is 41.58 years. The Malabar clergy are likely to be younger than the Latinites or the Malankarites (Table 3). The average priest in Kerala has spent fifteen years (median) in ministry. Once again, as Table 3 makes clear, both the Malankarites and the Latinites have more priests who have

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<sup>6</sup>The median, rather than the mean is considered a more objective measure of central tendency because of the presence of extreme cases in the data, to which the mean is very sensitive.

been in the priesthood twenty or more years than the Malabarites. Sixty-two percent of the respondents are pastors and ten percent are associates. The rest are engaged in one or other form of special ministry. The Malankara dioceses have relatively fewer priests who are engaged in non-parish types of ministry than the Malabar and the Latin dioceses. (Table 3).

The vast majority of the respondents characterize the socioeconomic status of their family of origin as "lower-middle class" or "upper-middle class." Only two percent felt that their family of origin belonged to the poor class. And of the 462 respondents in this survey, only one thought that his family belonged to the upper class. It is important to emphasize that these characterizations of the social status of one's family of origin are based only on the subjective perceptions of the respondent, and not linked to any objective indices of economic status. Table 4 indicates that the clergy of the Latin rite are more likely to report that they hail from families with lower socioeconomic status than those of the Malabar rite, as one might expect for the historical reasons given above.

In an effort to develop objective indices of the socioeconomic status, the respondents were asked to report the gross annual income of their family and the amount of land their family owned at the time they entered the seminary. The median annual income of the respondent's family is 4017 rupees (about \$450). The median income of the the



TABLE 3

## AGE, YEARS IN MINISTRY AND CURRENT STATUS, BY RITE

(in percent)

<u>Age</u>	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	TL.
25 - 30 years	33	18	33	31
36 - 45 years	17	38	35	32
46 - 55 years	17	24	21	21
56+ years	33	20	11	16
Total	100 (83)	100 (51)	100 (322)	100 (456)
Median	46	44	40	42
<u>Years in Ministry</u>				
9 years or less	28	18	32	30
10 - 19 years	25	39	41	37
20 years or more	47	43	27	33
Total	100 (83)	100 (51)	100 (322)	100 (456)
Median	18	17	14	15
<u>Type of Ministry</u>				
Pastors	54	77	61	62
Associates	16	4	10	10
School/College Teachers	8	6	7	7
Seminary Teachers	6	6	9	8
Diocesan agencies	13	4	11	10
Other	2	4	3	3
Total	100 (83)	100 (51)	100 (319)	100 (453)

TABLE 4

## SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RESPONDENT'S FAMILY, BY RITE

(in percent)

<u>Social Class (self-defined)</u>	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	TL.
Poor class	5	4	1	2
Lower middle class	62	47	47	50
Upper middle class	33	49	51	48
Total	100 (81)	100 (51)	100 (320)	100 (452)
<u>Annual Family Income (in Rupees)</u>				
Less than 1000	15	18	8	10
1001 to 3000	38	40	29	32
3001 to 6000	28	21	28	27
6001 to 10,000	13	8	16	15
More than 10,000	6	13	19	16
Total	100 (61)	100 (38)	100 (243)	100 (342)
Median	3025	2975	4985	4017
<u>Land Owned by Family</u>				
One acre or less	41	13	7	14
Two to five acres	48	53	36	40
six to ten acres	10	24	30	26
eleven or more acres	0	10	27	20
Total	100 (72)	100 (51)	100 (308)	100 (431)
Median	2	4	7	5

families of the Latinites and the Malankarites is about three-fourths of the median income of the families of the Malabarites. It should be noted that the annual income reported by the respondents is of dubious validity as a measure of the economic status of family of the respondents mainly for two reasons. First, they were asked to report the gross annual income of their family at the time of their entry into the seminary, which, for many, is a long time ago; therefore, their recollections about family income are susceptible to error, especially since most families in Kerala do not keep any accounts of their finances. The unusually large number of "don't know" answers (118) is a clear indication of the problem of recall with regard to this question. Secondly, if a respondent who is sixty years old reports the income of his family at the time of his entrance into the seminary as, say, Rs. 3000, and another who is twenty-five years old also reports it as Rs. 3000, one cannot infer that their families have equal economic status because the value of the rupee has substantially changed over the years because of inflation.

The amount of land owned by the family is perhaps a more reliable measure of its economic status. In Kerala, the most commonly accepted index of a family's wealth is the amount of land it owns. When a marriage broker comes with a proposal for a girl, the first question which the girl's parents are likely to ask the broker is how much land the prospective groom's family owns. Land is the most common

form of investment even among those who are not engaged in agriculture. It should, however, be kept in mind that land is becoming more and more scarce in Kerala (it is the most densely populated state in India with 549 people per sq. km.), and, therefore, its value has greatly increased over the years. An acre of land today is worth several times more than it was ten years ago. Therefore, land, too, is an unreliable measure if it is used to assess the relative economic status of respondents in different age groups. However, it is useful in comparing different groups which are homogeneous with regard to age. As Table 4 shows, the respondents from the three different rites are clearly different in terms of the amount of land owned by their families at the time of their entrance into the seminary. Among the Latinites, thirty-eight percent owned only one or less acre of land, and only five percent owned more than ten acres. Among the Malabarites, on the other hand, only seven percent had less than one acre, and twenty-seven percent had more than ten acres. The Malankara priests come from families with lower socioeconomic status than the Malabarites but higher than that of the Latinites. All the three measures of the socioeconomic status of the respondent's family of origin point to a large difference in the socioeconomic status of the Malabarites and the Latinites. The Malabarites have the highest socioeconomic status and the Latinites the lowest; the Malankarites are in between.

Table 5 presents the education level of the respondent

TABLE 5  
RESPONDENT'S EDUCATION, BY RITE

(in percent)

<u>Ecclesiastical education</u>	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	Total
Basic Training	55	63	57	58
Bachelor's degree	31	14	28	27
Licentiate degree	6	18	10	10
Doctorate degree	7	4	4	5
Total	99 (83)	99 (50)	99 (320)	100 (450)
<u>Secular Education</u>				
High School	65	76	62	64
Pre-degree course	5	6	4	5
Bachelor's degree	21	4	15	15
Master's degree	7	12	17	15
Doctorate degree	2	2	2	2
Total	100 (83)	100 (50)	100 (320)	100 (453)

TABLE 6

## MAJOR SEMINARIES ATTENDED BY THE RESPONDENTS, BY RITE

(in percent)

RITE

	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	Total
<u>Philosophical Training</u>				
St. Joseph's, Alwaye	54	30	63	58
St. Thomas', Kottayam	0	2	18	13
Papal Seminary, Kandy/Pune	13	24	8	11
St. Peter's, Bangalore	4	0	1	1
St. Joseph's, Mangalore	8	16	4	6
St. Paul's, Tiruchirapally	10	18	3	6
Other	10	10	4	6
Total	99 (83)	100 (50)	101 (316)	101 (449)
<u>Theological Training</u>				
St. Joseph's, Alwaye	54	32	63	58
St. Thomas', Kottayam	0	2	18	13
Papal Seminary, Kandy/Pune	15	22	8	11
St. Peter's, Bangalore	4	0	1	1
St. Joseph's, Mangalore	10	16	3	6
St. Paul's Tiruchirapally	5	18	3	5
Other	14	10	4	7
Total	99 (83)	100 (50)	100 (316)	101 (449)

broken down by rite. As far as ecclesiastical education is concerned, fifty-eight percent of the clergy have only the basic seminary training; twenty-seven percent have a bachelor's degree in philosophy and/or theology; ten percent have a licentiate; and five percent have a doctorate. The differences among the three rites in this respect do not seem to be significant. Two-thirds of the priests of Kerala have only the minimum secular education required for candidates to priesthood -- namely, high school. Five percent have completed the pre-degree course (two years beyond high school); fifteen percent each have a bachelor's or master's degree; two percent have a doctorate. There are fewer college graduates among the Malankarites than the Malabarites or the Latinites.

There are two major seminaries in Kerala where diocesan candidates for priesthood receive their philosophical and theological training: St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary at Alwaye, and St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary at Kottayam. St. Joseph's, Alwaye, established in 1776, is the oldest and is meant for training priests for all the three rites. Fifty-eight percent of the priests of Kerala are the alumni of this institution. St. Thomas Seminary, Kottayam, was established only two decades ago and is meant specifically for the training of the Syrian priests: Fifteen percent of the respondents (mostly Malabarites) were trained in this institution. About one-third of the priests were trained in one or other seminary outside Kerala. The Papal Seminary, Pune,

(formerly at Kandy, Sri Lanka) is the most frequently attended institution outside Kerala. The Papal Seminary (now known also as "The Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth") was established in 1926 by the Holy See as a center of ecclesiastical higher education for Asia. Its administration is entrusted to the Society of Jesus. The Latinites and the Malankarites seem to be more likely to send their candidates for the priesthood to the Papal Seminary than the Malabarites. There is virtually no difference between the respondent's place of philosophical training and theological training because once a seminarian goes to an institution for his philosophical training, he, as a rule, continues his theological education in the same institution (see Table 6).

The fathers of three percent of the respondents have had no formal education. Forty-five percent have had primary school education (five years) and thirty-two percent have had middle-school education (eight years). Five percent have completed high school (ten or eleven years); two percent are college graduates. Table 7 discloses a significant difference among the three rites with regard to the respondent's father's education level. The fathers of the Latin clergy are, in general, more educated than the fathers of the Malankarites or the Malabarites. This is interesting in view of the fact that the Latinites are comparatively low on socioeconomic status. In other words, the Malankarites and Malabarites are high on socioeconomic status but low on education; the Latinites, on the other hand, are low on



TABLE 7

## RESPONDENT'S FATHER'S EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION, BY RITE

(in percent)

<u>Father's Education</u>	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	Total
No schooling	0	4	3	3
Primary school	39	38	48	45
Middle school	33	42	31	32
High School	25	16	16	18
College	4	0	2	2
Total	101 (80)	100 (50)	100 (317)	100 (447)
<u>Father's Occupation</u>				
Farmer	26	84	84	74
White collar worker	27	6	6	10
Small trade	21	2	5	8
Skilled blue collar	11	2	3	4
Unskilled manual worker	9	0	1	2
Professionals	6	6	1	3
Total	100 (80)	100 (51)	100 (318)	100 (449)

socioeconomic status but high on education (see Tables 4 and 7).

Three of every four priests' fathers are engaged in agriculture. This reflects the national occupational statistics, according to which almost eighty percent of India's population are engaged in agriculture. Ten percent have white collar jobs, and eight percent are engaged in small trade. There is a conspicuous difference in the occupations of the fathers of the Latin clergy and the Syrian clergy. Eighty-four percent of the Syrians (Malankarites and Malabarites) are farmers as opposed to only twenty-six percent of the Latinites. By the same token, a much larger percentage of the Latinites are engaged in white collar jobs, small trade and other non-agricultural pursuits.

To sum up: The average diocesan priest in Kerala today is forty-one years old and has spent fifteen years in priesthood; he is likely to be an alumnus of the St. Joseph's Seminary, Alwaye, and has neither an ecclesiastical nor a secular degree; when he left home to join the seminary, his family had middle class status, owned about five acres of land, and had an annual gross income of about four thousand rupees; his father is a farmer and has had only primary school education.

## CHAPTER III

### ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE KERALA CLERGY: "PLAUSIBILITY-ORIENTATION" VS. "ORTHODOXY-ORIENTATION"

#### Introduction

Pluralism, the hallmark of modernity, is a concomitant of secularization. In the past, religious interpretations of reality enjoyed a worldwide plausibility structure. Religion had a virtual monopoly in the business of reality definition and legitimation. Modernity, with its scientific ethos and secular temper, posed a serious challenge to this religious monopoly in the symbolic order. The first set of challenges was mounted by the physical sciences. Galileo and Copernicus undermined the cosmological assumptions of the religious order. Darwin and the Darwinists exacerbated this threat by proposing a credible alternative to the religious hypothesis on the origin of man.

The damage inflicted by the physical sciences on the plausibility structure of religion was mild compared to the radical relativizations of religious definitions by the human sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The historical scholarship of the nineteenth century strip-

ped religious contents of their absolute character by positing that they are historical products, and not eternal verities. Freudian psychology took the relativization of religion a step further by postulating that religion is nothing more than a gigantic projection of the infantile needs and desires in human subjectivity. On yet another level, sociology, especially sociology of knowledge, underscored the relativity of religious definitions by theorizing that religion is a socially constructed "sacred canopy" that lends legitimacy and stability to a man-made, hence intrinsically precarious, social order (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Berger, 1969).

The plausibility structure of religion eroded. The era of religious monopoly in the symbolic market ended. A new age of pluralism and religious free enterprise dawned. Religious beliefs lost their status as taken-for-granted certainties. Belief became a matter of "preference." Allegiance to religious affirmations could no longer be taken for granted. Today, the man in the street is free, or rather forced, to choose from a variety of world views that compete for his allegiance.

The modern individual lives in a plurality of worlds, migrating back and forth between competing and often contradictory plausibility structures, each of which is weakened by the simple fact of its involuntary coexistence with other plausibility structures (Berger, 1969:44).

The new pluralism thrust religion into the dynamics of a free, competitive market. Accommodation to consumer pre-

ference became a survival imperative.

The religious tradition which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be "sold" to a clientele that is no longer constrained to buy. The pluralistic situation is, above all, a market situation. In it, the religious institutions became marketing agencies, and the religious traditions became consumer commodities. And at any rate, a good deal of religious activity comes to be dominated by the logic of market economics (Berger, 1967:138).

This market situation in the symbolic sphere presents religious institutions with two basic options. They can either come to terms with the imperatives of a competitive market and modify their religious contents to dovetail with the secularized consciousness of modern man, or they can adopt a posture of intransigence, refuse to play the pluralistic game of religious free enterprise, and continue to affirm the traditional definitions as timeless truths. These two options, of course, are only ideal typical extremes, between which are a number of intermediate possibilities.

The Second Vatican Council represents the first systematic effort by the Catholic Church to address the plausibility problem created by the new pluralism. In order to accommodate itself to secular modernity, the Council instituted "aggiornamento," a program of renewal and change within the Church. Response to "aggiornamento," however, was not unmixed. Some hailed it as resurgence; others decried it as decadence. Pluralism without bred polarization within. On the one hand, there was the "plausibility-oriented" faction, which was anxious to restore the Church's diminishing plausibility by modifying its traditional defi-

nitions and structures to suit the secular tastes of the modern man; on the other hand, there was the "orthodoxy-oriented" faction, which wanted to preserve the traditional definitions in their pristine purity and denounced "aggiornamento" as capitulation to consumer preference. The conflict is far from over.

The socio-historical context of the Church in Kerala is more pluralistic than most other local units of Catholicism. The Church in Kerala has to compete for plausibility not only with religions in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also with non-Christian religions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism, and, above all, with an increasingly popular and militant secularism in the Marxist tradition. If pluralism outside generates polarization within, it is likely that there is considerable polarization within the Church in Kerala. In this context, this study attempted to address two questions: (a) what is the extent of polarization between the "plausibility-oriented" clergy and the "orthodoxy-oriented" clergy in Kerala?; (b) what, if any, are the sociodemographic variables that characterize this polarization?

To this purpose, the opinions of the clergy were sought on a number of issues currently debated in the Catholic Church. Debated items were selected to allow for maximum polarization. These items cluster around three topics: (a) the theology of the Catholic priesthood; (b) official Catholic prescriptions on sexual morality; (c) perspec-

tives on the changing Church.

### The Theology of Priesthood

Several traditional definitions of the meaning and function of the priestly role seem to be open to question today. The survey focused on the following aspects: (a) the permanence of the priestly commitment; (b) the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the laity; (c) role-uncertainty among priests; (d) the law of celibacy; (e) ministry and sociopolitical action (see Table 1).

Traditionally, the Catholic priesthood has been defined as a lifelong commitment, which could not be revoked for any reason whatsoever. Anyone who ventured to resign was labeled a deviant. However, in recent years, especially after Vatican II, there have been an unprecedented number of resignations from ministry. This phenomenon has cast serious doubts on the plausibility of the traditional definition of the priesthood as an irrevocable commitment. Therefore, attempts are being made in some quarters of the Church to redefine the nature of the priestly commitment in a way that would render resignations legitimate.

As Table 9 indicates, the vast majority of the clergy in Kerala still subscribe to the traditional notion of the priesthood as a lifelong, irrevocable commitment. It is significant that, while eighty percent of the respondents state that there is never a good reason for leaving the pri-

esthood, only fifty-eight percent disagree with the position that resignations from the priesthood is, in many cases, a wise and mature choice. This seems to indicate that at least some respondents perceive a distinction between what is objectively good and subjectively desirable.

Another debated issue is the nature of the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the laity. The official teaching upholds an "essential" difference between the two. This "essential" difference is attributed to the permanent character conferred on the priest in the rite of ordination. Recent efforts to reaffirm the importance of the role of the laity in the Church have prompted a lot of rethinking on this issue in theological circles. Some believe that the notion of an "essential" difference has been instrumental in promoting clerical domination in the Church. They argue that the realization of the Christian community would be better served if the difference between the clergy and the laity is perceived as merely "functional."

The respondents in our survey overwhelmingly endorse the traditional view that ordination confers on the priest a permanent character that makes him essentially different from the laity. One-third of the respondents think that this concept constitutes an obstacle to the full realization of the Christian community within the Church. Nor do most priests perceive any conflict between this notion of essential difference and the current tendency among priests to



TABLE 9

## VIEWS OF THE CLERGY ON THE THEOLOGY OF PRIESTHOOD

(in percent)

	Agree strongly	Agree strongly	Un- cer- tain	Disag- ree st- rongly	Disag- ree st- rongly	TL.
There is never a good reason for leaving priesthood.	62	18	1	9	10	100 (456)
Resignation from priesthood is, in many cases, a wise and mature choice.	11	17	14	15	43	100 (446)
Ordination confers on a priest a permanent character that makes him essentially different from the laity.	65	13	5	7	10	100 (451)
The idea that a priest is "a man set apart" is a barrier to the full realization of the Christian community.	16	20	3	16	45	100 (448)
Being a priest-psychologist or a priest-social worker is as priestly as working in parishes and missions.	37	32	4	13	13	99 (452)
I have become uncertain about the priest's role.	8	23	11	19	39	100 (415)
My own ideas about priesthood are shared by most priests I know.	24	37	20	12	7	100 (451)
Most of the laity with whom I work have ideas about priesthood that are quite different from my own.	13	29	11	24	23	100 (448)
Celibacy is essential for the realization of the full potential of priesthood.	32	21	11	16	20	100 (451)
Celibacy should be a matter of personal choice for diocesan priests.	30	20	4	11	35	100 (448)

engage in "secular" pursuits. In other words, the majority of priests in Kerala view the so-called "hyphenated priesthood" as legitimate.

"Crisis of identity" has been a recurring theme in post-Vatican II discussions of the Catholic priesthood. There is a general perception that, since the traditional role of the priest has lost its relevance, and no new and more plausible role definitions are as yet available, the Catholic priests today are experiencing "a crisis of identity." Those who entertain this view often point to the large-scale resignations from ministry in recent years as evidence of the prevalent role-uncertainty among priests.

The findings of our survey offer little evidence of a widespread "crisis of identity." Only thirty-one percent of the respondents reported experiencing any role-uncertainty. Sixty-one percent think that their role perceptions are the same as those of most priests they know. In contrast, only forty-seven percent feel that their perceptions of the priestly role are shared by most of the laity they work with. In other words, the priests of Kerala seem to think that there is a greater consensus on the priestly role among the priests themselves than between the priests and the laity.

By far the most popular controversy concerning the Catholic priesthood today is the the question of the linkage between celibacy and the priesthood. For centuries, the Catholic Church, with one or two local exceptions, has enjoined on its priests a life of celibacy. However, the

large numbers of priests who leave ministry, presumably to enter married life, and the increasing paucity of new candidates for priesthood have raised the question of the feasibility and plausibility of continuing the law of mandatory celibacy.

According to the survey results, fifty-three percent of the respondents believe that celibacy is essential for the realization of the full potential of priesthood, with thirty-six percent dissenting, and eleven percent undecided. However, only forty-six percent are in favor of continuing the present law of mandatory celibacy, and fifty percent think that celibacy should be made "a matter of personal choice." Thus, on this question there is a split right down the middle among the clergy of Kerala.

A priest, traditionally, is perceived as a "man of God," who ministers primarily to the spiritual needs of his people. And, as a rule, he is expected to limit his ministry to the spiritual sphere. Therefore, a priest's involvement in temporal affairs is often viewed as the politicization of ministry and is generally frowned upon. Today, questions are being raised about the wisdom of such a narrow definition of the priestly ministry, especially in the developing nations. Those who challenge the validity of this concept of ministry reject the traditional dichotomous view of man as "body and soul" and its logical corollary, the separation of the spiritual sphere from the temporal. They favor a more holistic view of man and emphasize that

TABLE 10

ASPECT OF THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY THAT NEEDS MOST EMPHASIS  
IN KERALA TODAY

(in percent)

Priest as "a man of God" whose primary concern is to achieve personal holiness and help others grow in holiness.	41.1
Priest as "a social worker" whose primary concern is to work with the poor and the underprivileged and help them improve their condition in life.	12.4
Priest as "a social critic" who provides an ongoing criticism of his social milieu in the light of the Christian values and challenges to change themselves and their society.	18.7
Priest both as "a man of God" and as "a social worker."	12.2
Priest both as "a man of God" and as "a social critic."	2.4
Priest as "a man of God," "a social worker," and "a social critic."	6.0
Other views	6.9
Total	100 (450)

man's spiritual welfare is inextricably bound up with his material welfare. Furthermore, they point out that when, priests concern themselves exclusively with the spiritual affairs of men and ignore the social injustice, economic exploitation, and political oppression in their milieu, they are, in effect, buttressing a dehumanizing status quo. They argue that, when dehumanizing elements are present in the context of ministry, engaging in socio-political action to liberate people from such dehumanization is a legitimate exercise of the priestly ministry.

Kerala, the context of this study, is one of the twenty-two states of the Republic of India, a developing nation. For centuries, Indian society was organized on the basis of caste, a system of institutionalized inequality. Although discrimination on the basis of caste has been outlawed since independence, the ugly scars of casteism continue to disfigure the face of India. Exploitation and oppression persist, albeit in subtler forms. For a priest in India today, the milieu of ministry is, in a sense, a milieu of misery, where hunger and disease, ignorance and injustice are rampant. In such a context, what is the aspect of ministry that needs to be most emphasized? Should the priest be primarily "a man of God," or "a social reformer"? Forty-one percent of the priests favor the emphasis on "the man of God" aspect, and thirty-one percent prefer to stress "the social reformer" aspect. However, among those who emphasize the "social reformer" aspect, there is sharp disagreement on the stra-

tegy for social reform. Some prefer the less controversial approach of a social worker who identifies himself with the poor and the underprivileged and helps them improve their lot in life. Others opt for the more radical approach of a social critic who provides an ongoing criticism of his social milieu in the light of Christian values and challenges his people to change themselves and their society (Table 10).

### Views on Sexual Morality

Perhaps, no other aspect of the teaching of the Catholic Church has lost as much plausibility in modern times as its prescriptions on sexual morality. Although there have been attempts within the Church to reformulate the precepts of sexual morality in accordance with contemporary consciousness, the Magisterium, the official teaching body of the Church, has, for the most part, only reiterated the traditional principles. In our survey, we sought to determine the views of the clergy in Kerala on three of the most discussed questions of sexual morality in the Church today: masturbation, abortion, and contraception.

On the question of the morality of masturbation, only one-fourth of the respondents concur with the official teaching that deliberate masturbation, in most cases, is a mortal sin. Almost one-half of the respondents feel that it is no sin at all. The remaining one-fourth of the respondents are inclined to think that those who deliberately mas-

TABLE 11  
 VIEWS ON THE MORALITY OF MASTURBATION

(in percent)

Adolescent masturbation is a normal developmental phase in a person's maturing sexuality, and among adults occasional masturbation is usually the result of stress or conflict; hence, in most cases not sinful	45.0
For both adolescents and adults, in most cases, deliberate masturbation is sinful, but no more than venially	26.4
For both adolescents and adults, in most cases, deliberate masturbation is a mortal sin.	26.4
Other views.	2.3
Total	100.1 (440)

turbate sin, but only venially (Table 11).

The morality of abortion is one of the most intensely debated issues of our time. Recently, India, too, joined the ranks of those nations which have declared abortion legal. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has repeatedly reaffirmed its opposition to abortion on moral grounds. Our survey shows that only thirty-two percent of the clergy in Kerala support the official teaching that direct abortion is always wrong. Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed believe that "in certain well-defined circumstances, direct abortion is morally permissible." The rest of the respondents seem to think that there is insufficient information to make a definitive judgement on the morality of abortion, and they would like to see an open investigation of the issue in the Church on moral, medical and social grounds (Table 12).

In the recent history of the Church, no papal document has drawn so much criticism as the encyclical "Humanae Vitae," in which Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the Church's traditional teaching that all methods of artificial birth control are morally wrong. This issue has particular significance for India, where overpopulation is recognized as the biggest obstacle in the path to development. Ever since independence, the Indian government, marshalling all the resources at its command, has been making sustained efforts to persuade the populace to control births by using artificial contraceptives. And the persistent opposition of the Church



TABLE 12  
 VIEWS ON THE MORALITY OF ABORTION

(in percent)

There is no need of theological development in the direction of change in the Church's teaching on abortion since direct abortion is always wrong.	32.4
The Church has to allow an open investigation of the issue not only on moral, but also on medical and social grounds.	28.5
In certain well-defined circumstances, especially when the mother's life is threatened, direct abortion can be morally permissible.	38.0
Other views	1.1
Total	100.0 (442)

TABLE 13

VIEWS ON THE MORALITY OF THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL METHODS OF  
BIRTH CONTROL

(in percent)

All artificial contraception is morally wrong because it is clearly forbidden by natural law and the Church's teaching.	20.5
It is not certain that all artificial contraception is morally wrong; still, the faithful are bound to follow the guidance of the Church and avoid all methods of artificial contraception.	16.0
It is not certain that all artificial contraception is morally wrong; therefore, the faithful are morally justified in using at least some methods of artificial contraception when they have adequate reasons for avoiding children.	30.7
Judgement concerning the morality of artificial contraception should be left to the responsibly formed consciences of the individuals involved.	27.8
Given adequate reasons for avoiding children, all methods of artificial contraception are morally acceptable.	5.0
Total	100.0 (443)

in India to artificial birth control has been viewed by many, both inside and outside the Church, as socially irresponsible.

Our survey indicates that there is very little support among the clergy for the Church's position on artificial contraception. Only twenty-one percent of those surveyed endorse the official view that all methods of artificial birth control are morally wrong. Sixteen percent are not certain whether artificial contraception is morally wrong, but they feel that the faithful are, nonetheless, bound to follow the Church's teaching. Thirty-one percent are of opinion that, given adequate reasons for avoiding children, the faithful are justified in using at least some methods of artificial contraception. Twenty-eight percent prefer to leave the judgement about the morality of artificial contraception to the consciences of the individuals concerned. The remaining five percent think that all methods of artificial birth control are morally acceptable (Table 14).

Perspectives on the Changing Church

As mentioned earlier, the Second Vatican Council was an attempt by the Catholic Church to shore up its eroding plausibility structure in the modern world. However, not all have perceived the changes initiated by the Council as beneficial to the Church. Some have claimed that the changes have only helped to further erode the plausibility structure of the Church by creating "anomie" in the Church.

As Table 14 indicates, almost all the clergy in Kerala are optimistic about the changing Church. Ninety-three percent of the respondents feel that the basic values of the Church remain the same, though their expression is changing. The vast majority perceive the changes in the Church today as a creative ferment that is enhancing their faith. Only a small fifteen percent feel that the post-Vatican II changes have created confusion, and thus weakened their faith.

There is no evidence to suggest that the renewed emphasis on the role of the laity has contributed to the deterioration of the relationship between the clergy and laity in Kerala. After the Second Vatican Council, the power of the parish priest in Kerala has been substantially curtailed. Today, he administers the parish according to the norms and policies laid down by the parish governing body known as the "Parish Council." He is accountable to this elected body in all matters related to the administration of the parish. Most of the priests feel that the new system of sharing power with the laity has had no adverse

TABLE 14  
PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHANGING CHURCH

(in percent)

	Agree stro- ngly	Agree some- what	Un- cer- tain	Dis- agree some- what	Dis- agree stro- ngly	TL.
The basic values of the Church remain the same, but their expression is changing.	69	24	3	4	1	100 (455)
The creative ferment in the Church today is bringing about a deepening of my faith.	37	34	19	7	4	100 (433)
The confusion following Vatican II is weakening my faith.	3	12	9	18	58	100 (449)
The relationship between the priests and the laity was much better before Vatican II.	10	18	12	23	37	100 (451)
More than ever before, today's Christian must emphasize openness to the Spirit than dependence on tradition.	51	31	6	8	4	100 (448)

impact on clergy-laity relationship. Only twenty percent of the respondents think that the relationship between the clergy and the laity was better before the Second Vatican Council.

Has the Church moved too far from its tradition? Is it time again for the Church to reemphasize its traditional moorings? The clergy in Kerala do not think so. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed feel that today's Christian must continue to emphasize openness to the Spirit rather than dependence on tradition.

To sum up this descriptive section, the findings of the survey suggest that the majority of priests in Kerala are "orthodoxy-oriented" in their views of the meaning and function of priesthood, with the single exception of the question of the law of mandatory celibacy. In contrast, the majority are "plausibility-oriented" on questions of sexual morality. On all the three issues included in the survey, masturbation, abortion, and contraception, it was found that there are more priests disagreeing with the official positions of the Church than agreeing with them. Finally, there is no evidence to suggest that the priests in Kerala perceive the situation of the post-Vatican II Church as "anomic." On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of priests characterize the current situation as "a creative ferment" that deepens their Christian commitment.

Correlates of "Plausibility-orientation"

In the foregoing section, an attempt was made to assess the extent of polarization between the "orthodoxy-oriented" clergy and the "plausibility-oriented" clergy in Kerala. In this section, we shall try to identify the correlates of this polarization.

A composite index of "plausibility orientation" was constructed using several of the items related to the doctrinal and moral issues discussed above.<sup>1</sup> The items included in the index were selected on the basis of face validity and subsequently tested for empirical correlations. A step-wise multiple regression of all independent variables on this index showed that five factors are significantly correlated to "plausibility-orientation." They are: age, frequency of traditional spiritual exercises, sense of economic deprivation, training in St. Paul's Seminary, Trichinopoly, and training in Papal Seminary, Pune. Within this system of five independent variables, there is a moderate positive correlation ( $r=.31$ ) between the frequency of traditional spiritual exercises and age, and a slight negative correlation ( $r=.21$ ) between the frequency of traditional spiritual exercises and the sense of economic deprivation. All other correlations within the system of independent variables were found to be negligible.

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<sup>1</sup>A description of the items that were used to construct the index of "plausibility-orientation" is provided in Appendix B.

These five independent variables together explain forty-one percent of the total variance in "plausibility-orientation" (Table 15). Age, the first variable in the equation, is negatively correlated to "plausibility orientation" and explains twenty-three percent of its total variance. That age alone accounts for more than one half of the explained variance in "plausibility-orientation" seems to indicate that the polarization among the clergy in Kerala is largely a generational phenomenon, with the younger clergy being more "plausibility-oriented," and the older ones more "orthodoxy-oriented."

The second variable entered into the equation is the index of the frequency of traditional spiritual exercises. This index was constructed by aggregating the scores on the frequency of the following spiritual exercises: reciting the rosary, saying the breviary, private meditation, and reading the Bible privately.<sup>2</sup> This variable, like age, is negatively correlated to "plausibility-orientation," and explains an additional fifteen percent of the variance, after the variance due to age has been partitioned. As indicated earlier, the index of the frequency of traditional spiritual exercises shows a moderate positive correlation with age, but does not appear to be significantly correlated to any other sociodemographic variable.

Another significant factor that covaries with "plausi-

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix B for a description of this index.



TABLE 15

## STEP-WISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF "PLAUSIBILITY-ORIENTATION"

Correlations with "plausibility-orientation"						
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial correlations of all variables entered on this and all previous steps				
		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
1. Age	-.48	---				
2. Frequency of Traditional spiritual exercises.	-.52	-.44	---			
3. Sense of eco- nomic depriv- ation.	.25	.24	.18	---		
4. Training in Trichinopoly seminary.	-.12	-.14	-.14	-.14	---	
5. Training in Pune Seminary.	.18	.14	.12	.12	.11	---
RSQ		.23	.38	.40	.41	.42
RSQ change		---	.15	.02	.01	.01
Tolerance		---	.90	.96	.99	.98
Beta		---	.40	.14	-.11	.09
Missing cases = 107						
Valid cases = 353						

bility-orientation" is the sense of economic deprivation. The measure of the sense of economic deprivation was derived from the reports of the respondents about the adequacy of their current income to meet their daily needs.<sup>3</sup> This variable is positively correlated to "plausibility-orientation" and explains about two percent of its variance. In other words, the greater a priest's sense of economic deprivation, the greater his "plausibility-orientation."

The last two variables in the equation refer to the institutions where the respondents received their priestly education. Most of the clergy in Kerala were trained in one or other of the following major seminaries in India: St. Joseph's Seminary, Alwaye, Kerala; St. Thomas' Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala; St. Peter's Seminary, Bangalore; St. Joseph's Seminary, Mangalore; St. Paul's Seminary, Trichinopoly; Papal Seminary, Kandy/Poona. Of these, only two institutions appear to have had a significant effect on the "plausibility-orientation" of their alumni. Those who were trained in St. Paul's Seminary, Trichinopoly, are generally less "plausibility-oriented" than those educated in other institutions. In contrast, the alumni of Papal Seminary, Poona, are high on "plausibility-orientation" compared to those who have had their training elsewhere. It is noteworthy that both these institutions are located outside the state of Kerala.

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<sup>3</sup>See item 13 in the questionnaire (appendix A).

We have so far discussed the factors that appear to be significantly correlated to the respondents' "plausibility-orientation". There are, however, some variables that are significant by their lack of correlation to "plausibility-orientation." The level of education, for example, is generally perceived as an important predictor of attitudes. But this does not seem to be borne out in the case of the clergy in Kerala. All the Catholic priests in Kerala have a minimum education level of about eight years beyond high school which, for the most part, are spent in the study of philosophy and theology. After this basic training, a select few are offered an opportunity for higher education. Higher education usually means pursuing either an ecclesiastical degree or a secular degree.<sup>4</sup> Such higher education, whether ecclesiastical or secular, does not appear to have any significant effect on "plausibility-orientation." This suggests that higher education for the clergy serves to consolidate, and not to alter, the attitudes already formed during their basic training.

Another factor that is conspicuous by its lack of influence is the respondent's current position in the Church. The priests occupy different positions in the

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<sup>4</sup>In India, there is a big difference between an ecclesiastical degree and a secular degree. Ecclesiastical degrees in theology and philosophy conferred by Catholic universities accredited by Rome are not officially recognized by the Indian government and, therefore, have little value outside the Church-context.

Church with varying degrees of power and prestige, such as parish priest, assistant parish priest, school teacher, seminary teacher, college teacher, etc. There is no evidence to suggest that the nature of a priest's ministry and, by implication, the amount of power he wields have any significant influence on whether he is more likely to be "plausibility-oriented" or "orthodoxy-oriented."

Other variables that were tested for effect on "plausibility-orientation," but found statistically insignificant are: socioeconomic status of the respondent's family, parents' religiosity, respondents' family size, father's occupation, father's education, respondent's rite, and respondent's level of happiness in childhood.

In sum, the single most important factor that accounts for the polarization among the clergy in Kerala is age. The older clergy are more "orthodoxy-oriented," and the younger clergy are more "plausibility-oriented." The second important correlate is the frequency of traditional spiritual exercises, which, like age, is negatively correlated to "plausibility-orientation." The respondent's sense of economic deprivation and the institution of his priestly training also are statistically significant correlates of "plausibility-orientation." However, since the amount of variance explained by these two factors is relatively small, they seem to be of little actual significance.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PRIEST AND HIS MINISTRY

#### Introduction

As we have seen in chapter I, the concept of secularization is rife with controversy. There is no agreement among theorists of secularization either on its content -- for example, is it process of differentiation or disenchantment, privatization or generalization? -- or on the significance of its content -- does it mean a "decline of religion" or a "renaissance of the authentic religion?"<sup>1</sup>

Controversies notwithstanding, there is one point of consensus among most theorists of secularization: secularization is part of the wider process of structural differentiation attendant upon the transition of societies from tradition to modernity, and its denouement is the emancipation of key aspects of social life from religious hegemony. Viewed thus, secularization entails considerable loss of power and prestige for institutional religion. And nowhere is this loss of power and prestige of institutional religion more evident than in the role of the priest, as he is the

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter I for a fuller discussion of the various meanings of the term secularization.

most visible symbol -- a personification, if you will -- of institutional religion at the local level. The erosion of the power and prestige of institutional religion directly translates into a loss of power and prestige for its local representative, the priest. In the presecularized context, or, as David Martin prefers to call it, at phase one of secularization, there existed a collusion between church and state. The sacred order was coextensive with the social order; therefore, the role of the priest was generally perceived as ontologically necessary to society.

He was integral to it (society), and his legitimating function indispensable even when supplemented by other legitimations. The parson (or 'person') might be corrupt, hated, despised or even physically an absentee, but he was not, conceptually, a dispensable adjunct of the social order. So there could be no social orders without holy orders; the clerk was locked into the social order at each level from the local parish to the whole community, and neither the local elite nor the wider elite questioned his place, even though they might question his power and/or his interpretation of the clerical function (David Martin, 1978:282).

As societies move from tradition to modernity, they become increasingly differentiated. Differentiation results in the disjunction between society and religion, between the social order and the sacred order. The realm of the sacred shrinks; consequently, the domain of influence of the custodians of the sacred, too, dwindles. Thus the transition of societies from tradition to modernity entails the transition of the clergy from a dominant elite to a marginal elite.

The Catholic priests in Kerala today are still in the throes of this transition. In this context, the survey

sought to investigate how they perceive and evaluate their ministry. The discussion in this chapter will focus specifically on the following aspects of priestly ministry: Preparation for ministry, level of job satisfaction, sources of satisfaction, sources of problems, functional relevance of celibacy, and future plans in the priesthood.

### Preparation for Ministry

In Kerala, the candidates for the priesthood have to spend a minimum of ten years in training before they are ordained priests. Although the concept of priestly training and the content of the curriculum have changed considerably over the years, the basic structure and duration of the formation program have remained largely unchanged. There are three distinct phases in the formation of a diocesan priest in Kerala: orientation, philosophical studies, and theological studies.

The first phase of training, the orientation, takes place in a minor seminary, which the candidates enter after they have successfully completed their high school education.<sup>2</sup> Each diocese conducts its own minor seminary program, and the content of the program may vary from diocese to

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<sup>2</sup>In Kerala, it takes ten years of schooling (excluding kindergarten) to graduate from high school. A student can graduate from high school only if he/she passes a qualifying examination (SSLC) conducted once a year at the state level by the government's ministry of education. As a rule, less than fifty percent of the students who take this examination pass on the first attempt and qualify for college studies.

diocese. Generally, the minor seminary training takes place over a period of three years.<sup>3</sup> The first year of the minor seminary program is usually devoted to providing the candidates a general orientation to the priesthood. During the second and third years of the program, the candidates are allowed to complete their Pre-degree Course. The Pre-degree Course, a two-year program after high school, is the first step towards a college degree. Only after the successful completion of the Pre-degree Course can one enter the Bachelor's degree program, which spans over a period of three years. In some dioceses, the candidates are offered the Pre-degree Course privately as a part of the seminary curriculum; in others, the candidates attend the Pre-degree Course in a nearby college as day scholars. In either case, the candidates remain under the supervision of the seminary formation team at all times.

The second phase of priestly formation begins as the candidates leave the minor seminary and enter the major seminary.<sup>4</sup> This phase consists of a three-year program of philosophical studies. During this period, the candidates are

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<sup>3</sup> Before the Second Vatican Council, the minor seminary training was for a duration of two years. At that time, the candidates did not do the minor seminary program concurrently with the pre-degree course, as is the case now; instead, the two years were devoted exclusively for preparing them for major seminary studies.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of the various major seminaries attended by the seminarians of the dioceses of Kerala, see chapter II.



offered a variety of courses in philosophy, both Western and Indian, and in several allied subjects like psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, etc.

After the philosophical studies, the candidates begin the third and final phase of their training, the theological studies. From this phase onwards, the candidates are required to wear a white cassock, the official dress of the Catholic priest in Kerala. The theological studies extend over a period of four years, at the end of which candidates are ordained priests and commissioned to ministry.

As can be seen from Table 16, the great majority of priests in Kerala evaluate their overall seminary preparation favorably. Seventy-two percent of the respondents rated their overall seminary preparation as either "very good" or "moderately good." Only twenty-eight percent felt otherwise.

In order to identify the correlates of the respondent's attitude towards overall seminary preparation, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The best regression equation that emerged from this analysis consisted of five independent variables: respondent's age, training in Kandy/Pune Seminary, respondent's "plausibility-orientation," respondent's traditional spirituality orientation, and respondent's feelings about the way authority is exercised in the Church. Since it was not possible to establish a causal order among these five independent variables, the hierarchical regression procedure was deemed inap-

TABLE 16

## CROSSTABULATION OF VIEWS ON OVERALL SEMINARY PREPARATION, BY SEMINARY

(in percent)

Overall Preparation	SEMINARY						TL.
	Al- waye	Kott- ayam	Kandy/ Pune	Mang- alore	Trichy	Other	
Very good	14	14	34	31	15	28	18
Moderately good	52	56	52	46	70	66	54
So-so or not very well	29	28	14	23	15	6	24
Very Badly	5	2	0	0	0	0	39
Total	100 (259)	100 (57)	100 (50)	100 (26)	100 (27)	100 (32)	99 (451)

propriate in this case. On the other hand, a simple standard procedure would treat the sociodemographic variables on the same level with the attitudinal variables and thus underplay the significance of the former because of multicollinearity. Therefore, a combination of the two procedures was preferred here. Accordingly, the two sociodemographic variables (age and seminary of training) were entered on the first step, and the three attitudinal variables were entered on the second step.

As Table 17 shows, the regression equation of five independent variables explains about twenty percent of the total variance in the attitude towards overall seminary preparation. The two variables entered on the first step, age and training in Kandy/Pune, together account for four percent of the variance. Age is positively correlated to a favorable attitude towards overall seminary preparation and has a unique explained variance of two percent. The fact that the older clergy are more likely to view their seminary training favorably is interesting in view of the post-Vatican II changes in the concept of seminary formation as well as in the content of the curriculum. Apparently, these changes have not led to a greater appreciation of the overall training offered in the seminary. In other words, there is no evidence to suggest that the post-Vatican II priests are likely to look upon their overall training more favorably than their pre-Vatican II counterparts.

The second variable in the equation is training in the

TABLE 17

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ADEQUACY  
OF OVERALL SEMINARY PREPARATION

Independent Variables	Zero-order correlations	Partial correlations	Beta	Tolerance	Unique variance
-----					
STEP ONE					
1. Age.	.16	---	.14	---	.02
2. Training in Kandy/Pune	.14	---	.12	---	.01
-----					
STEP TWO					
3. Traditional spirituality orientation	.32	.30	.19	.90	.02
4. "Plausibility-orientation"	-.34	-.32	-.19	.77	.02
5. Negative attitude to authority in Church	-.30	-.29	-.18	.98	.03
-----					
		Step I	Step II	Equation	
RSQ		.04	.16	.20	
Common variance		.01	.09	.10	
-----					
Missing cases = 107					
Valid cases = 353					
=====					

Kandy/Pune seminary. Those who were trained in Kandy/Pune are more likely to view their overall training as adequate than those trained elsewhere. As is clear from Table 16, those who were trained in Mangalore and Trichinopoly (Trichy) seminaries, too, seem to have a better appreciation of their overall seminary training. However, these relationships cease to be significant when controlled for the effects of age. Training in Kandy/Pune seminary, on the contrary, accounts for a unique variance of one percent even when controlled for the effects of age.

The three variables entered on the second step together explain an additional sixteen percent of the total variance in the attitude towards overall seminary preparation. Of these three, traditional spirituality orientation is positively correlated with a favorable attitude towards seminary preparation and has a unique variance of about two percent. "Plausibility-Orientation," on the other hand, is negatively correlated with a favorable attitude towards seminary preparation and explains another two percent of the variance. The third variable on this step, the respondent's view of the way authority is exercised in the Church, accounts for an additional three percent of the variance. Those who have problems with the way authority is exercised in the Church are more likely to view their seminary training negatively. Of the total sixteen percent of the variance explained by the three variables entered on the second step, nine percent is common variance, which suggests that

there are moderately strong correlations among these variables.

It is important to note that, although the respondent's age and the seminary where he was trained have an effect on the way he evaluates the adequacy of his training, the amount of variance explained by these two variables is relatively less significant than that explained by the attitudinal variables entered on the second step. In other words, the most important factors that affect a priest's view of the seminary training are neither his age nor the seminary where he was trained, but his current attitudes and orientations.

Although most priests of Kerala are satisfied with their overall seminary preparation, when they were asked to evaluate the relevance of certain specific aspects of their training, the great majority of them had negative reactions. As Table 18 shows, eighty-five percent of the priests feel that most of the courses offered in the seminary were too theoretical; seventy-three percent are of the opinion that many of the courses taught in the seminary were irrelevant to pastoral needs; seventy-nine percent think that the seminary made few attempts to help the seminarian learn how to deal with people; and sixty-three percent believe that the seminary was too sheltered from the mainstream of life.

The apparent contradiction between the majority's favorable evaluation of the overall seminary training and the unfavorable evaluation of the relevance of training

seems to indicate that relevance to ministry is neither the sole nor the primary criterion on which the respondents based their evaluation of the overall training. In other words, the respondents do not view the learning of the skills for the ministry as the primary goal of seminary formation.

The cross tabulation of the views on the relevance of training by age in Table 18 exhibits an interesting pattern. Those trained in the post-Vatican II period (25-35 age-group) are more likely to perceive their training as relevant than those trained during the period immediately preceding the Vatican II (36-45 age-group). This seems to suggest that the changes introduced in the seminary program in the wake Vatican II have, indeed, enhanced the relevance of the seminary formation.

Table 19 enables us to compare the views of the alumni of different seminaries on the relevance of training. More than one-half<sup>5</sup> of the priests of Kerala have had their training in the St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye, and it is the alumni of this seminary who are most likely to perceive their training as irrelevant. Those who were trained in Kandy/Pune, on the other hand, are less likely to perceive their training as irrelevant compared to their colleagues trained elsewhere. The seminary at Kottayam was established during the years of the Second Vatican Council;

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<sup>5</sup>This estimate is based on sample.

TABLE 18

CROSSTABULATION OF THE VIEW OF RELEVANCE OF THE SEMINARY  
TRAINING, BY AGE

(percent agreeing)

STATEMENTS	AGE				
	25-35	36-45	36-55	56+	TL.
Most of the courses were too theoretical.	84	88	91	73	85 (385)
Many of the courses were irrelevant to ministry.	73	82	66	66	73 (330)
Few attempts were made to help seminarian learn to relate to people.	76	83	75	80	79 (354)
Seminary was too sheltered from the mainstream of life.	55	68	71	61	63 (281)



TABLE 19  
 CROSSTABULATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RELEVANCE OF  
 TRAINING, BY SEMINARY

(percent agreeing)

STATEMENTS	SEMINARY						TL.
	Al- waye	Kott- ayam	Kandy Pune	Mang- alore	Trichy	Other	
Most of the courses were too theoretical	89	84	84	77	77	72	85 (385)
Many of the courses were irrelevant to ministry.	75	82	64	73	69	73	73 (330)
Few attempts were made to help the seminarian learn to relate to people.	83	71	69	81	82	79	79 (354)
The seminary was too sheltred from the mainstream of life.	70	59	50	65	30	66	63 (281)

therefore, one would expect the alumni of this seminary to perceive their training as more relevant since the post-Vatican II priests are, in general, more likely to perceive their training as relevant. However, this is not borne out by the data in table 19. The data about Mangalore, Trichinopoly (Trichy), and other seminaries are of dubious statistical validity as they have some cells with expected frequencies of less than five.

### Job Satisfaction in the Priesthood

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the disengagement of society from religion has entailed considerable loss of power and prestige for the professional guardians of the sacred in Kerala. Has this loss of status made the priests of Kerala unhappy and discontented in their ministry? The evidence from our survey suggests a negative answer. Eighty-four percent of the respondents stated that, all things considered, they are either "very happy" or "pretty happy" as priests (table 20).

In order to measure more precisely the level of job satisfaction enjoyed by the Kerala clergy and to identify its correlates, the work-satisfaction scale developed by Patricia Smith and associates was used in our survey (Smith et al., 1969). The Smith scale of work-satisfaction consists of a list of seventeen different adjectives (for example, "pleasant," "boring," "useful," "routine," etc.), and the respondent is asked to indicate whether or not each of

TABLE 20  
HAPPINESS IN MINISTRY

(in percent)

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All things considered, I am:

very happy	39
Pretty Happy	45
Not too happy	13
Not at all happy	2
Total	99
	(458)
	=====

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these adjectives describes his work.<sup>6</sup>

There has been, to our knowledge, no study conducted of other groups in India, clergy or otherwise, that has used the work-satisfaction scale developed by Smith et al. Therefore, a comparative evaluation of the job satisfaction of the priests of Kerala with that of other groups in India is, unfortunately, not possible at this time. However, the NORC study of the American Priests (Greeley, 1972) employed the same scale and thus provided a basis for a cross-cultural comparison of job satisfaction among Catholic priests,

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<sup>6</sup>A description of the work-satisfaction scale of Smith et al. is provided in Appendix B.

TABLE 21

## JOB SATISFACTION SCORES OF PRIESTS IN KERALA AND THE U.S.A.

(mean scores)

Diocesan Priests of Kerala:	38.4 (N=363)
Diocesan Priests of America:	34.6*
Religious Priests of America:	37.0*

\* Scores of American Priests as reported by Greeley, 1972.  
He does not report the number of cases in his sample.

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the limitations of such cross-cultural comparisons notwithstanding.

As Table 21 indicates, the diocesan priests of Kerala seem to enjoy a slightly higher level of job satisfaction than both the diocesan and religious priests of America. The breakdown of median scores of job satisfaction in Table 22 shows that, no matter what his current position in the Church, a diocesan priest in Kerala is likely to enjoy greater job satisfaction than a priest in the United States. Among the American priests, the highest job satisfaction is derived by those who work in the chancery or are on special assignment, and the lowest by those in parish work. In Kerala, unlike in the United States, the current position of the priest in the Church seems to have little impact on his job satisfaction. Furthermore, the Kerala priest seems to

have a higher level of job satisfaction than that of a middle-level manager in the United States. The American priest, on the other hand, has a job satisfaction level lower than that of a middle-level manager, with the associate pastor having a median job satisfaction score that is as low as that of an unskilled worker. While these comparisons are quite interesting, the caveat bears repetition: cross-cultural comparisons of job satisfaction scores, especially when, as in this case, the cross-cultural validity of the scale has not been previously established, are liable to errors; moreover, there is a time lag of eight years between these two studies.

In a multiple regression analysis of the job satisfaction scale, four variables emerged as its significant correlates: relationship with the bishop, traditional spirituality-orientation, relationship with the laity, and experience of loneliness. These four factors together account for twenty-eight percent of the total variance in job satisfaction<sup>7</sup> (see Table 23).

Once again, as it is not possible to argue for a causal order among these variables, the standard regression procedure is considered appropriate here. The most important factor that affects a priest's job satisfaction is the nature of his relationship with his bishop. This factor

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<sup>7</sup>A similar procedure is reported to have explained only six percent of the total variance in job satisfaction among the American Catholic Priests (Greeley, 1972).

TABLE 22

JOB SATISFACTION BY CURRENT POSITION FOR PRIESTS OF KERALA  
AND FOR PRIESTS AND MALE INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S.A.

Job satisfaction  
(median scores)\*

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Diocesan Priests of Kerala:

Pastors:	42
Associates:	42
Special assignment:	42
Chancery related work:	41

Diocesan Priests of U.S.A.:

Pastors:	37
Associates:	34
Special Assignment:	39
Chancery official:	39

Male industrial employees  
in the U.S.A:

Professionals:	45
Middle-level manager:	40
Unskilled workers:	34

\* Scores of American priests and industrial employees as reported by Greeley, 1972.

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TABLE 23

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN JOB SATISFACTION AMONG THE KERALA  
PRIESTS

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INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero-order correlations	Beta	Unique variance
Good relationship with the Ordinary.	.36	.27	.07
Traditional spiritu- ality orientation.	.36	.23	.05
Experience of problems in relating to the laity.	.30	.22	.04
Experience of loneli- ness in priestly life.	.32	.12	.01

---

RSQ: .28

Common Variance: .11

Valid cases: 346

Missing cases: 114

=====

accounts for a unique variance of seven percent. The better a priest's relationship with his bishop, the the greater his job satisfaction. The second most important factor that affects a priest's job satisfaction is his traditional spirituality-orientation. Those who are traditional spirituality-oriented are likely to enjoy greater job satisfaction in the priesthood than those who are not so oriented. This variable has a unique variance of five percent. Those who find the unrealistic demands and expectations of the laity a serious problem are likely to have lower job satisfaction; four percent of the variance is accounted for by this factor. Finally, experience of loneliness as a serious problem explains an additional variance of one percent. Those who experience loneliness as a serious problem in priestly life are likely to be much less satisfied in their ministry than those who do not.

In sum, priests who have no problems relating to the bishop and the laity, who are oriented to traditional spirituality, and who do not experience loneliness as a serious problem are likely to derive the most satisfaction from their ministry. Neither the priest's age, nor his current position in the Church, nor the level of his ecclesiastical or secular education seem to have any bearing on his job satisfaction.



Sources of Satisfaction in Ministry

We have examined thus far the level of job satisfaction a diocesan priest in Kerala enjoys in his ministry and the factors that seem to affect his job satisfaction. A priest's role, however, is not monolithic; rather, it involves a number of heterogeneous, and often disparate, functions ranging from that of a spiritual leader, who dispenses the sacraments and presides over the liturgy, to that of an administrator, who presides over the Parish Council and prepares the parish budget. And the question arises as to which of the various functions of his role a priest finds most satisfying, and which, least satisfying.

As table 24 makes clear, the sacramental aspect of their ministry is the most important source of satisfaction to most priests of Kerala. Eighty percent of the respondents report that the joy of administering the sacraments and presiding over the liturgy is of great importance to them as a source of satisfaction. The second most important source of satisfaction is the spiritual security that results from responding to divine call; sixty-three percent of the respondents consider this to be of great importance as a source of satisfaction. Opportunity to work with many people and be part of their lives is the third most important source of satisfaction. This is followed by, in order of importance, the challenge of being the leader of the Christian community and the opportunity to exercise one's creative and intellectual abilities. The respect that comes

to priestly office is least frequently mentioned as an important source of satisfaction.

Table 24 discloses an interesting pattern. For items two through four the perception of importance as a source of satisfaction is positively correlated with age; that is to say, the older priests are more likely to view these items as important sources of satisfaction than the younger priests. For items five through seven, on the other hand, the reverse is true; the younger priests are more likely to perceive these items as important sources of satisfaction than the older priests. This pattern points to an important difference between the younger and older clergy because these two sets of items represent two distinct aspects of the priestly ministry. Items two through four represent aspects of priestly ministry that are sources of comfort; items five through seven, on the other hand, represent aspects of ministry that are sources of challenge. That the younger priests place greater emphasis on the challenge-oriented aspects of their ministry seems to suggest that they tend to view the priesthood more as a source of challenge, while their older colleagues tend to view it more as a haven of comfort. Whether this difference in the approach to priesthood is merely a generational phenomenon -- that is, as the priests grow older, they tend to view priesthood more as a source of comfort -- or a reflection of a general change in the concept of the priesthood itself is a question that cannot be answered at this point.

TABLE 24

## CROSSTABULATION OF SOURCES OF SATISFACTION IN MINISTRY, BY AGE

(percent reporting "of great importance")

## AGE

SOURCES OF SATISFACTION	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+	TL.
1. Joy of administering the sacraments and presiding over the liturgy.	80	82	82	75	80 (365)
2. Respect that comes to priestly office.	15	21	16	25	19 (84)
3. Organizing and administering the work of the work of the Church.	27	39	39	39	36 (160)
4. Spiritual security that results from responding to divine call.	50	63	69	77	63 (278)
5. Opportunity to exercise creative and intellectual abilities.	40	32	34	25	34 (150)
6. Challenge of being the leader of the Christian community.	47	42	38	31	41 (183)
7. Opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.	60	49	45	45	57 (227)

### Problems in the Priesthood

Just as some aspects of ministry serve as sources of satisfaction, there are, of course, other aspects that are sources of problems and frustration for priests. The survey listed fourteen potential sources of problems in a priest's life, and the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent each of these was a problem to them personally. As Table 25 makes clear, the number one problem for a priest in Kerala today is the way authority is exercised in the Church. More than thirty percent of the priests consider this to be a great problem in the priesthood. This is consistent with the finding of the NORC study of American priests, in which, too, the way authority is exercised in the Church was most frequently mentioned (29%) as a great problem (Greeley, 1972:206). This cross-cultural congruence seems to suggest that dissatisfaction with the way authority is exercised in the Church arises neither from the cultural characteristics of the local churches nor from the personal characteristics of those who exercise authority in the local churches, but from the very nature of the structure and exercise of authority in the universal Church.

The second most important problem for the priests in Kerala is the loneliness of priestly life. Twenty-two percent of the Kerala priests experience loneliness as a great problem, while, according to the NORC study, only fifteen percent of the American priests reported this as a great problem. This is, indeed, to be expected in view of the

TABLE 25

## CROSSTABULATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE PRIESTHOOD, BY AGE

(percent responding "a great problem")

PROBLEMS	AGE				TL.
	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	
Lack of clear idea of what a priest is.	12	12	17	15	14(65)
Absence of challenge in priestly life	13	15	9	8	12(52)
The way authority is exercised in the Church.	32	32	30	26	31(139)
Relationship with bishop	12	12	21	14	14(64)
Relationship with fellow priests.	4	8	6	1	5(24)
Celibacy.	13	12	16	13	13(59)
Uncertainty about the future of the Church.	7	8	5	4	6(29)
Unrealistic demands and expectations of lay people.	20	23	17	21	20(92)
Loneliness of priestly life.	28	26	17	11	22(101)
Too little work.	14	14	14	7	13(57)
Too much work.	4	4	11	6	5(24)
Conflict with parishioners about issues of the day.	7	6	10	10	9(34)
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment.	18	11	16	7	14(61)
Anxiety about financial security in old age.	8	11	10	13	10(46)

fact that the sociocultural characteristics of the Indian context make companionship for priests far more difficult than it is for American priests. Most of the parishes in Kerala are single-priest units, and lack of telephones and personal transportation (in some cases, even public transportation) makes it virtually impossible to communicate and meet with fellow priests on a regular basis. Furthermore, it is hard for a priest in Kerala to find companionship among lay people because of the general apathy of the laity towards the clergy. Besides, the cassock,<sup>8</sup> which a priest is required to wear whenever he appears in public, tends to limit his relationship with the laity to the professional level. Overt friendships of any kind with women are out of question since there are very stringent cultural sanctions against such relationships; even a suspicion of the existence of such a relationship will irreparably damage his credibility as a priest.

The third most serious problem in ministry is the unrealistic demands and expectations of the lay people. Twenty-one percent of the priests report this as a great problem. This is a clear departure from the pattern observed among the priests in the United States, where only eight percent of the priests reported this as a great problem. This seems to suggest that the relationship between

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<sup>8</sup>Our survey indicates that three-fourths of the priests in Kerala are in favor of abolishing the current rule that a priest must wear a cassock whenever he appears in public.

the clergy and the laity is much more strained in Kerala than in the United States. Gone are the days when the cassock spontaneously evoked feelings of respect, trust, and admiration among the people. Today, the man in cassock is, for many, a man of dubious integrity and questionable intentions. The cassock is no longer viewed by all as a mantle of self-less service; on the contrary, it is viewed by many as a masquerade that makes the pursuit of selfishness look respectable.

Lack of a clear idea about what a priest is, relationship with the bishop, and lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment are viewed as great problems by about fourteen percent each of the respondents. Celibacy is seventh on the list of problems for the Kerala priests, with only thirteen percent finding it a great problem. Again, this is congruent with the findings of the NORC study, in which, too, celibacy was rated low as a problem in the priesthood. These findings seem suggest that the celebrated deprivation connected to celibacy may not, after all, be as serious a problem for priests as it is generally perceived. However, one may also argue that, since loneliness, which is a function of celibacy, is rated high on the list of problems by priests of both countries, celibacy is, indeed, a serious problem for priests indirectly, if not directly.

Too little work is mentioned as a serious problem just as frequently as celibacy. Thirteen percent of the priests of Kerala consider this a great problem as opposed to only

four percent of the American priests. Absence of challenge in priestly work and anxiety about financial security in old age are great problems to twelve and ten percent of the respondents respectively. Conflict with parishioners about issues of the day, uncertainty about the future of the Church, too much work, and relationship with fellow priests are perceived as great problems by less than ten percent each of the respondents.

Table 26 reveals that the current position of the priest in the Church affects his perception of problems. Those priests who are engaged in non-parish ministry are, in general, less likely to report great problems for themselves than those who work in parishes as pastors or associates.

From table 27 emerges another general pattern; that is, the priests of the Syro-Malankara rite are more likely to report great problems for themselves than the priests of the Syro-Malabar or the Latin rites. On all but four of the potential problems listed in the survey, the highest percentage of priests reporting a great problem are from the Syro-Malankara rite. The priests of the Latin rite are almost twice as likely to report celibacy and too much work as great problems as the priests of the Syro-Malabar or the Syro-Malankara rites. Only in the case of loneliness is there a higher percentage of Syro-Malabar priests reporting a great problem than the priests of the other two rites.

Are there some characteristics that distinguish priests who are more likely to report problems for themselves



TABLE 26

## CROSSTABULATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE PRIESTHOOD, BY CURRENT POSITION

(Percent reporting "a great problem")

PROBLEMS	CLERICAL STATUS				TL.
	Pastor	Asso- ciate	Special ministry	Chan- cery	
Lack of clear idea about what a priest is.	16	12	12	8	14(60)
Absence of challenge in priestly work.	12	10	15	11	12(52)
The way authority is exercised in the Church.	36	26	25	12	31(134)
Relationship with bishop.	16	12	9	8	14(60)
Relationship with fellow priests.	6	2	3	6	5(23)
Celibacy.	16	15	6	6	13(56)
Uncertainty about the future of the Church.	7	5	10	0	6(27)
Unrealistic demands and expectations of laity.	25	24	9	6	21(89)
Loneliness of priestly life.	25	23	15	15	22(96)
Too little work.	16	10	6	7	13(54)
Too much work.	4	2	6	11	5(22)
Conflict with parishioners about issues of the day.	9	7	5	3	8(33)
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment.	14	21	9	9	14(58)
Anxiety about financial security in old age.	13	5	5	4	10(42)

TABLE 27

## CROSSTABULATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE PRIESTHOOD, BY RITE

(Percent reporting "a great problem")

## RITE

PROBLEMS	Latin	Mala- nkara	Mala- bar	TL.
Lack of clear idea about what a priest is.	9	22	15	14(65)
Absence of challenge in priesthood.	12	20	11	12(52)
The way authority is exercised in the Church.	25	41	31	31(139)
Relationship with bishop.	12	20	14	14(64)
Relationship with fellow priests.	2	10	5	5(24)
Celibacy.	20	10	12	13(59)
Uncertainty about the future of the Church.	6	12	6	7(29)
Unrealistic demands and expectations of the laity.	23	35	17	20(92)
Loneliness of priestly life.	18	18	24	22(100)
Too little work.	8	20	13	13(57)
Too much work.	10	2	5	5(24)
Conflict with parishioners about the issues of the day.	8	13	7	8(34)
Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment.	16	14	13	14(61)
Anxiety about financial security in old age.	9	22	9	10(46)

than those who are less likely to do so? In an attempt to address this question, a multiple regression analysis was performed on the two items most frequently mentioned as great problems, the way authority is exercised in the Church and loneliness. For each of these, once again, a combination of the hierarchical and the standard regression procedures was employed; that is to say, the sociodemographic variables were entered on the first step, and the attitudinal variables were entered on the second.

A multiple regression analysis on the experience of authority in the Church as a problem showed that five factors are significantly associated with this variable: age, position as pastor, the level of secular education, the sense of economic deprivation, and "plausibility-orientation." Of these, age, position as pastor, and the level of secular education were entered on the first step; these together explained about five percent of the total variance in the experience authority as a problem. Those who are pastors are more likely to have problems with the way authority is exercised than those who occupy other positions in the Church. Position as pastor accounts for a unique variance of two percent. Age, which explains a unique variance of another two percent, is negatively correlated with problems with authority in the Church. The level of secular education, the third variable entered on the first step, has a unique variance of one percent; those priests who have had a chance to go to college and obtain a secular degree are

more likely to have problems with authority than those who have not had a college education. The two variables entered on the second step together explain an additional sixteen percent of the variance. "Plausibility-orientation," the single most powerful predictor of the problems with authority in the Church, alone accounts for a unique variance of ten percent. The "plausibility-oriented" are more likely to experience problems with the way authority in the Church than the "orthodoxy-oriented." The sense of economic deprivation, the last variable in the equation, is positively correlated with the experience of problems with authority; that is to say, those who feel economically deprived are more likely to be dissatisfied with the way authority is exercised in the Church than those who do not feel so deprived (see Table 28).

A multiple regression analysis on loneliness, the second most frequently mentioned problem for priests, yielded an equation that explained nineteen percent of its total variance with three independent variables, age, position as pastor, and "plausibility-orientation." Age and the position as pastor, the two variables entered on the first step, accounted for seven percent of the variance. Age is negatively correlated with the experience of loneliness as a problem and has a unique variance of four percent; position as pastor, on the other hand, is positively correlated with the problem of loneliness, with a unique variance of two percent. "Plausibility-orientation," the only variable on

TABLE 28

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF PROBLEMS WITH  
THE WAY AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED IN THE CHURCH

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
-----					
STEP ONE					
1. Age	-.15	---	-.17	---	.02
2. Current position as pastor	.11	---	.17	---	.02
3. Secular education	.07	---	.11	---	.01
-----					
STEP TWO					
3. "Plausibility- orientation"	.41	.38	.37	.75	.10
4. Sense of economic deprivation	.29	.27	.20	.92	.04
-----					
	Step I	Step II	Equation		
RSQ	.06	.16	.22		
Common Variance	.01	.02	.03		
-----					

Valid cases: 358

Misssing cases: 102

=====

TABLE 29

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF LONELINESS AS A  
PROBLEM IN THE PRIESTHOOD

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
--------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------	------	----------------	-------------------------

-----  
STEP ONE

1. Age	-.20	---	-.23	---	.04
2. Position as pastor	.13	---	.16	---	.02

-----  
STEP TWO

1. "Plausibility- orientation"	.42	.37	.40	.75	.12
-----------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

	Step I	Step II	Equation
RSQ	.06	.12	.19
Common Variance	.01	---	.01

-----  
Valid cases: 358Missing cases: 102  
=====

the second step, accounted for an additional variance of twelve percent. Those who are "plausibility-oriented" are far more likely to report loneliness as a serious problem than those who are orthodoxy-oriented (see Table 29).

The discussion in this section may be summarized as follows:

1. The three most important problems facing the priests in Kerala are the way authority is exercised in the Church, the loneliness of priestly life, and the unrealistic demands and expectations of the lay people.
2. The older priests are less likely to report serious problems for themselves than the younger ones.
3. Those priests who are engaged in parish work as pastors or associates are more likely to experience problems in priesthood than those who are engaged in non-parish ministry.
4. The priests from Syro-Malankara rite are, in general, more likely to report serious problems for themselves than the priests of the Malabar or the Latin rites.
5. "Plausibility-orientation" is the single most powerful predictor of the experience of authority and loneliness as serious problems in the priesthood.

### Functional Relevance of Celibacy

As reported in the preceding chapter, to the theological question of the necessity of celibacy for realizing the full potential of the priesthood, the majority of Kerala priests responded affirmatively; but to the policy question of the desirability of continuing the current law of mandatory celibacy, the majority responded negatively. Theological and policy considerations aside, the question remains as to what extent the priests of Kerala find celibacy helpful in their life and ministry. It is on this question of the functional relevance of ministry that the present discussion focuses.

The respondents in our survey were asked to assess the advantageousness of celibacy for three distinct aspects of their life and ministry: work, personal growth, and relating to others. As table 30 reveals, the vast majority of the priests in Kerala seem to feel that celibacy is very much of an advantage for doing their work better and for relating more fully to others. There is, however, a good deal of uncertainty about its usefulness for personal growth and holiness.

In fact, we learn from table 31 that fifty-eight percent of the respondents think that celibacy is harmful for some priests, although all but ten percent of the respondents are of opinion that a celibate life allows the priest more time to be available to people. Would a married clergy be more sensitive to the problems of the married people?



TABLE 30

## THE FUNCTIONAL RELEVANCE OF CELIBACY IN ONE'S OWN LIFE

(in percent)

Celibacy is ....

	Very much an advantage	Somewhat an advantage	Nei- ther	Somewhat a dis- advantage	Very much a dis- advantage	TL.
--	------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----

---

For doing my work better	56	27	11	3	2	99 (449)
For personal growth and holiness	38	27	22	8	5	100 (437)
For relating more fully to people	54	26	8	8	4	100 (446)

---

TABLE 31

## VIEWS ON THE VALUE OF CELIBACY AND FRIENDSHIP WITH WOMEN

(in percent)

STATEMENTS	Agree stro- ngly	Agree some- what	Un- cer- tain	Dis- agree some- what	Dis- agree stro- ngly	TL.
A married clergy would better understand the problems of married people.	18	22	17	13	30	100 (453)
The celibate life allows more time to be available to people.	69	21	3	4	3	100 (457)
Celibacy is, in fact, harmful for some priests.	23	35	20	9	13	100 (450)
Usually it is unwise for priests to have women as close friends.	39	27	7	15	1	99 (450)
When a priest has a warm friendship with a woman it helps him to become more fully human.	15	27	20	10	29	100 (456)

=====

The Kerala priests are sharply divided on this question, with forty percent agreeing and forty percent dissenting. The majority of the respondents are inclined to think that, when a priest has a warm friendship with women, it usually helps him to become "more fully human." Nonetheless, the vast majority feel that it would be unwise for priests to have such relationships.

An index of the functional relevance of celibacy was constructed using all of the items from table 30 and some of items from table 31 with a view to ascertaining the correlates of the perception of the functional relevance of celibacy.<sup>9</sup> A multiple regression analysis performed on this index yielded an equation of three independent variables, which explained forty-six percent of the total variance in the perception of the functional relevance of celibacy (see Table 32). Age, entered alone on the first step, explained five percent of the variance; the older clergy are more likely to perceive celibacy as valuable than the younger clergy. "Plausibility-orientation" and the sense of economic deprivation, entered on the second step, explained an additional forty-one percent of the variance. "Plausibility-orientation" is negatively correlated with the perception of the functional relevance of celibacy and accounts for an incremental variance of thirty-four percent. Finally, those

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<sup>9</sup> A full description of the index of the functional relevance of celibacy may be found in Appendix B.

TABLE 32

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE FUNCTIONAL  
RELEVANCE OF CELIBACY

	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
-----					
STEP ONE					
1. Age	.22	---	---	---	.05
-----					
STEP TWO					
2. "Plausibility- orientation"	-.66	-.64	-.69	.76	.36
3. Sense of econo- mic deprivation	-.28	-.27	-.12	.99	.02
-----					
		Step I	Step II	Equation	
RSQ		.05	.41	.46	
Common variance		---	.03	.03	
-----					
Valid cases: 343					
Missing cases: 117					
=====					

who feel economically deprived are less likely to view celibacy as valuable; this variable has a unique variance of two percent.

In sum, the majority of priests value celibacy because they believe that it enhances the efficacy of their ministry and, to a lesser extent, aids personal growth and holiness. However, the majority also believe that celibacy is, in fact, harmful for some priests and, presumably for this reason, are in favor of discontinuing the current law of mandatory celibacy and making it optional. More than one-half of the priests feel that, when a priest has a warm friendship with a woman, it usually helps him to become more fully human. Nevertheless, such friendships are considered unwise by the vast majority of the priests.

### Future Plans in the Priesthood

There are no statistics available about the rate of resignations from the priesthood in Kerala. One thing, however, is quite obvious: Resignations from the priesthood were practically unheard of in Kerala during the pre-Vatican II years, but they have become rather common during the post-Vatican II years. Will this trend ebb or escalate? The findings presented in table 33 suggest that no massive exodus from the priesthood is in the offing in Kerala. Asked about their future plans, eighty-six percent of those surveyed responded that they definitely or probably will not leave the priesthood; thirteen percent said that they were uncertain about their future; and only a little over one percent indicated that they will probably or definitely leave the priesthood.

Table 33 also discloses that the older priests are more likely to feel certain about continuing in the priesthood than the younger ones. More than twenty-seven percent of the priests under thirty-five years of age report that they either are uncertain about their future in the priesthood or have intentions of leaving the priesthood. This seems to suggest that the current trend of resignations from the priesthood is likely to continue unabated. We learn from table 34 that a priest's current position in the Church affects his future plans in the priesthood. Those who work in the chancery or are on special assignment are more likely to be sure of continuing in the priesthood than those

TABLE 33

## CROSSTABULATION OF FUTURE PLANS IN THE PRIESTHOOD, BY AGE

(in percent)

Will you leave the priesthood?	AGE				
	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	TL.
Definitely/probably not	73	87	96	96	86 (309)
Uncertain .....	25	12	3	4	13 (57)
Definitely/probably yes	2.2	1.4	1	0	1.3 (6)

engaged in parish work as pastors or associates.

The findings about the future plans of the Kerala priests are very similar to the findings of the NORC study of the American priests on the same question (see Table 35). The percentage of priests who reported that they definitely or probably will not leave the priesthood is virtually the same both in Kerala and in the United States, although the priests in Kerala seem to be more definite about not leaving than the priests in the United States.<sup>10</sup> However, twice as many American priests as Kerala priests indicated that they

<sup>10</sup> It is important to bear in mind the time lag between these two studies. The NORC study was conducted in 1972 and the present study was conducted in 1980.

TABLE 34

CROSSTABULATION OF FUTURE PLANS IN THE PRIESTHOOD, BY  
CURRENT POSITION IN THE CHURCH

(in percent)

	CURRENT POSITION				
Will you leave the priesthood?	Pastors	Asso- ciates	Special ministry	Chancery work	TL.
Definitely/ probably not	86	78	94	90	87 (379)
Uncertain	13	21	6	6	12 (52)
Definitely/ probably yes	0.7	2.3	0	4.1	1.1 (5)

definitely or probably will leave the priesthood.

Almost three-fourths of the respondents in our survey say that, if they were to have a chance to decide all over again, they would definitely or probably opt to enter the priesthood again. This finding seems to suggest that most priests of Kerala are continuing in the priesthood not because they feel forced by the circumstances, but because they want to (see Table 36). The table also indicates that the priests who work in parishes are less likely to want to enter the priesthood again than those who are engaged in non-parish ministry.



TABLE 35

## FUTURE PLANS IN THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE KERALA PRIESTS AND THE AMERICAN PRIESTS

(in percent)

Will you leave priesthood?	Kerala	U.S.A*
Definitely not .....	68	55
Probably not .....	18	32
Uncertain .....	13	10
Probably yes .....	0.9	2
Definitely yes .....	0.4	1
	----- 100(453) =====	----- 100 =====

\* Source: Greeley, 1972. Greeley does not report the number of cases in his sample.

Why do most priests of Kerala want to continue in the priesthood? As table 37 indicates, a sense of vocation is the reason most frequently cited by the Kerala priests for continuing in the priesthood. One-third of the priests point to this as the most important or the second most important reason for remaining in the priesthood. The second most frequently mentioned reason for continuing in the priesthood is the desire to give witness to Christ in

TABLE 36

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS REENTERING THE PRIESTHOOD, BY CURRENT POSITION

(in percent)

Would you reenter the priesthood?	Pastor	Asso- ciate	Special ministry	Chancery work	TL.
Definitely yes	49	45	63	65	47 (198)
Probably yes	28	24	20	26	26 (107)
Uncertain	15	8	6	7	12 (51)
Probably not	10	14	8	0	9 (37)
Definitely not	8	7	3	7	6 (26)

the modern world. Happiness in priestly work is the third most frequently indicated reason. This is followed by, in order of importance, salvation of one's soul, self-fulfillment, desire to renew the structures of the Church, feeling comfortable in the priestly way of life, fear of hurting one's parents and friends, fear of secular life, difficulty of earning a livelihood outside the priesthood, fear of being despised by the community, being too old, and the difficulty of obtaining a dispensation from Rome.

Table 37 also seems to bear out a point made earlier;

TABLE 37

## REASONS FOR STAYING IN THE PRIESTHOOD

(percent reporting "the most important"  
or "the second most important" reason)

---

Happiness in priestly work .....	31
To save my soul .....	12
I am convinced that this is my vocation .....	65
Self-fulfillment .....	10
To try to renew the structures of the Church	8
To give witness to Christ in the modern world	52
I feel comfortable in this way of life .....	6
I am too old to leave .....	1
If I leave, it will be hard to earn a decent livelihood .....	3
Fear of adjusting to secular life .....	3
If I leave, it will hurt my parents .....	6
If I leave, I will be despised by the community .....	2
It is hard to obtain a dispensation from Rome these days .....	1
	-----
	200*
	=====

\* Total equals 200 because of combined categories

---

namely, most priests of Kerala continue in the priesthood because they want to, and not because they feel constrained to either by the circumstances or by the fear of the unpleasant consequences of leaving the priesthood. Ninety-three percent of the respondents cite reasons that reflect free internal motivation (items one through seven in Table 37) only eight percent indicate reasons that imply external coercion (items eight through thirteen in Table 37).

To sum up: the great majority of priests in Kerala plan to continue in the priesthood, and the most frequently mentioned reasons for it are a sense of vocation and the desire to give witness to Christ in the modern world. Only fifteen percent of all the respondents expressed uncertainty about their future in the priesthood. However, the fact, that among priests under thirty-six years of age, almost three out of ten feel uncertain about their future in the priesthood does not augur well for the future of the Catholic priesthood in Kerala.

## CHAPTER V

### PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHURCH IN KERALA

#### Introduction

One of the basic assumptions of David Martin's (1978) general theory of secularization is the concept of the cultural refraction of secularization. As societies become industrialized, they manifest certain broad, universal tendencies towards secularization, such as disintegration of religious institutions, decline of religious practice, relativization of religious perspectives, differentiation of the religious sphere from other institutional spheres, and the privatization of religion (Martin 1978:3). However, these universal processes, which, according to Martin, are "empirically quite well established," neither unfold nor fructify in the same fashion in all societies. Their modus operandi and denouement vary according to the nature of the frame of the society in question.

... at certain crucial periods in their history societies acquire a particular frame and subsequent events persistently move within the limits of that frame. There is a contour of dykes and canals set up at a crucial turning point in history and the flow of events then runs according to that contour (Martin 1978:3).

The frame of a society could take any one of a variety of forms ranging from Catholic monopoly as in Spain and Portu-

gal to Protestant pluralism as in the United States. The nature of a society's frame determines whether "a vicious spiral" - spirals of internal hostility, repulsion and mutual antagonism - or "a beneficent spiral" - spirals of internal compromise and mutual adaptation - will be operative in that society. Thus, the fate and form of secular-ity in a society depends on the nature of its frame and the type of spiral at work in it. From these premises, Martin goes on to develop a typology of societal frames and the kind of refraction secularization undergoes within each type.

The situation in Kerala does not appear to conform to any of the types outlined by Martin probably because his typology of societal frames and the corresponding seculari-zation patterns are derived exclusively from the Western experience and, therefore, are inadequate as a framework of analysis for non-Western contexts. One cannot, therefore, hypothesize a priori about the pattern of secularization extant in Kerala. In the absence of plausible hypotheses derived from theory, this study attempted to gain insights about the pattern of secularization in Kerala by understand- ing the way the Roman Catholic priests of Kerala perceive the current state of their Church. This chapter will pre- sent the perceptions of the clergy on three different aspects of the Kerala Church: the present state of the Church, its pressing problems, and some proposed changes.

The State of the Kerala Church: A Deepening Crisis?

In order to ascertain how the priests of Kerala perceive the state of their Church, they were asked to express the extent of their agreement on a number of general statements about it. The findings, crosstabulated by age and rite are presented in Tables 38 and 39 respectively.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents feel that the Kerala Church is in a serious crisis today. The younger clergy seem more likely to perceive a serious crisis in the Church than the older clergy (Table 38). Among the three rites, the Malankara clergy seem more likely to perceive a serious crisis compared to the Malabar clergy; the Latin clergy, however, do not seem to differ significantly from the clergy of either of the other two rites (Table 39).

Two-thirds of the respondents in the survey agree that there is a wide-spread decline of faith among the Catholics of Kerala. Perception of the decline of faith is not significantly correlated with age. Compared to the Malabar priests, the priests of the Latin rite are more likely to feel that there is a wide-spread decline of faith in Kerala (Table 39). Eighty-nine percent of the priests feel that the large number of Catholic youth who are moving away from the Church is a matter of grave concern. On this question, the differences in the attitudes of the respondents of various age-groups and rites do not appear to be large enough to be significant (Tables 38 and 39).

Only thirty-seven percent of those surveyed think that

TABLE 38

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF THE GENERAL STATE OF THE KERALA  
CHURCH, BY AGE

(Percent "agreeing strongly" or "agreeing somewhat")

	AGE				
	25-35	36-45	46-55	56+	TL.
The Church in Kerala is in a serious crisis today.	59	52	57	48	55 (246)
There is a wide-spread decline of faith among the Catholics of Kerala.	64	64	72	67	66 (300)
The large numbers of Catholic youth who are moving away from the Church is a matter of grave concern.	91	86	86	93	89 (402)
The Kerala Church has always shown a readiness to change with the times and to make its message and mission relevant to the modern man.	30	35	45	51	37 (169)
There is a growing dissatisfaction among the Catholics about the way the Church functions in Kerala.	78	77	82	72	78 (353)
All things considered, one has reason to be happy and hopeful about the future of the Church in Kerala.	62	69	68	84	69 (314)



TABLE 39

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF THE GENERAL STATE OF THE KERALA  
CHURCH, BY RITE

(Percent "agreeing strongly" or "agreeing somewhat")

## RITE

Latin Malankara Malabar TL.

The Church in Kerala is in a serious crisis today.	54	61	53	55 (273)
There is a wide-spread decline of faith among the Catholics of Kerala.	73	69	64	66 (300)
The large numbers of Catholic youth who are moving away from the Church is a matter of grave concern.	90	84	89	89 (401)
The Kerala Church has always shown a readiness to change with the times and make its mission and message relevant to the modern man.	39	37	37	37 (169)
There is a growing dissatisfaction among the Catholics about the way the Church functions in Kerala.	78	86	77	78 (353)
All things considered, one has reason to be happy and hopeful about the future of the Church in Kerala.	74	57	70	69 (313)

the Church in Kerala has always shown a readiness to change with the times and make its message and mission relevant to the modern man. As might be expected, the younger clergy are much less inclined than the older clergy to think that the Church has shown a readiness to change with the times (Table 38). The respondent's rite, however, does not appear to have any effect on his attitude on this issue (table 39). Seventy-eight percent of the respondents see a growing dissatisfaction among the Catholics about the way the Church functions in Kerala. This feeling is shared more or less equally by the priests of all age-groups. Among the rites, however, there is a difference, with the Malankara clergy being more likely to perceive dissatisfaction among the Catholics than the Malabar or the Latin clergy (Table 39).

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents feel that, all things considered, one has reason to be happy and hopeful about the future of the Church in Kerala. Or, stated differently, almost one-third of the priests of Kerala do not see any reason for optimism about the future of their Church. Regrettably, the younger clergy, to whom the future belongs, are far more likely to feel hopeless about the future of the Church than the older clergy (Table 38). As Table 39 shows, pessimism about the future of the Church is much more prevalent among the priests of the Malankara rite than among the priests of the other two rites.

Clergy evaluations of more specific aspects of the Kerala Church are presented in Tables 40 and 41. Sixty per-

cent of the respondents perceive a rising tide of anticlericalism in Kerala. This perception appears to have a slight positive correlation with age (Table 40). The Malankara priests are much less likely to perceive growing anti-clericalism than those of the Latin or the Malankara priests (Table 41). Despite this general perception of the ascendancy of anticlericalism, the majority of priests do not feel that there has been, as yet, a significant erosion of their authority in Kerala. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents believe that the vast majority of the laity still respect and abide by the directives of their priests and bishops. And on this issue, the perceptions of the clergy do not seem to vary significantly according to either age or rite.

The elaborate network of Catholic institutions (schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, etc.) is the most powerful medium of the Catholic message and the most visible mode of the Catholic presence in Kerala. Today, the integrity of these institutions is called into question by an increasing number of people both inside and outside the Church. The priests and religious responsible for the administration of these institutions are often accused of turning these institutions of service into instruments of personal power and investments for profit. In this context, the survey sought to assess the opinions of the priests on the integrity of the Catholic institutions in Kerala. The results indicate that the vast majority of the priests, too,

TABLE 40

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND  
SOCIAL POLICY OF THE KERALA CHURCH, BY AGE

(Percent "agreeing strongly" or "agreeing somewhat")

	AGE				TL.
	25-35	36-45	46-55	56+	
Anti-clericalism is becoming very strong and wide-spread in Kerala.	57	55	68	64	60 (273)
The vast majority of the laity in Kerala still respect and abide by the directives of their priests and bishops.	74	81	77	82	78 (358)
Every Catholic can be proud of the high standards of honesty, fairness, and integrity maintained in the Catholic institutions like schools, colleges and hospitals.	23	15	24	31	22 (102)
Students educated in Catholic schools and colleges are in general more hostile to the Church than those educated elsewhere.	75	75	76	71	75 (340)
The Church in Kerala is widely perceived as a supporter of the rich and the powerful.	66	61	56	56	61 (271)
The Church's failure over the years to support the cause of the poor and the oppressed is one of the major reasons for the rise and growth of Communism in Kerala.	81	80	65	75	76 (348)

TABLE 41

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND  
SOCIAL POLICY OF THE KERALA CHURCH, BY RITE

(Percent "agreeing strongly" or "agreeing somewhat")

	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	TL.
Anti-clericalism is becoming very strong and wide-spread in Kerala.	70	70	56	60 (273)
The vast majority of laity in Kerala still respect and abide by the directives of their bishops and priests.	78	75	79	78 (357)
Every Catholic can be proud of the high standards of honesty, fairness and integrity maintained in the Catholic institutions like school, colleges and hospitals.	32	4	23	22 (102)
Students educated in Catholic schools and colleges are in general more hostile to the Church than those educated elsewhere.	74	71	76	75 (342)
The Church in Kerala is widely perceived as a supporter of the rich and the powerful.	59	64	60	61 (275)
The Church's failure over the years to support the cause of the poor and the oppressed is one of the major reasons for the rise and growth of Communism in Kerala.	76	92	74	76 (347)

share the prevalent perception of the Catholic institutions in Kerala. Only twenty-two percent of those surveyed feel that the Catholics can be proud of the standards of honesty, fairness and integrity maintained in the Catholic institutions. Age does not seem to affect the respondent's view of the integrity of Catholic institutions (Table 40). The same, however, is not the case with the respondent's rite. The priests of the Malankara rite are much less likely to feel that the Catholics in Kerala can take pride in their institutions (Table 41). That the institutional witness of the Church in Kerala boomerangs is further evidenced by the fact that three-fourths of the respondents feel that the students educated in the Catholic institutions are more hostile to the Church than those educated in schools and colleges conducted by the government or other private agencies. The reason for this phenomenon, presumably, is that those who attend the Catholic institutions have an opportunity to witness the workings of the Catholic Church from close quarters, and what they observe from this vantage point probably fills them with indignation rather than admiration. This perception of the Catholic education in Kerala is shared equally by priests of all age-groups and rites. Indeed, it is a tragic irony that the Catholic institutions, the testaments of the deep faith of generations of Catholics in Kerala, are today widely perceived as the monuments of the hypocrisy of those who preside over the Church!

The critics of the Church in Kerala have been intoning

for years the Marxist refrain: the Church in Kerala is a supporter of the rich and the powerful; it works in concert with them to promote its vested interests, while publicly paying lip-service to cause of the poor and the underprivileged. And the fact that the Catholic Church is the richest and most powerful private agency in Kerala helps to lend credence to this charge. Is this accusation warranted? Or, is it a mere propaganda ploy employed by the Communists to destroy the Church's credibility? Sixty-one percent of the priests agree that the Church in Kerala is widely perceived as a supporter of the rich and the powerful. The younger priests are slightly more likely to hold this view than the older ones (Table 40). Perhaps the strongest indictment of the official Church by its priests is their attribution of the success of Communism to the failure of the Church. An overwhelming seventy-six percent of the respondents feel that the Church's failure over the years to support the cause of the poor and the oppressed is one of the major reasons for the rise and growth of Communism in Kerala. The younger clergy are more likely to espouse this view than the older ones (Table 40). And among the three rites, the members of the Malankara rite are far more inclined to hold the Church responsible for the growth of its chief ideological rival, Communism (Table 41).

The picture that emerges from the foregoing analysis is that of a church that suffers from a serious crisis of credibility. Among its own membership, there is a growing

dissatisfaction about the way it functions. Its institutions seem to highlight not so much the beauty of the Gospel message as the ugliness of religious corruption. Its educational institutions appear to bear witness not so much to the loftiness of the Christian ideals as to the opprobrium of those who profess those ideals. Its sociopolitical posture projects the image not so much of a champion of the poor and the oppressed as of a promoter of the interests of the rich and the entrenched.

Using several of the items discussed above, an index<sup>1</sup> of the credibility of the Kerala Church was constructed in order to identify the correlates of the perception of a credibility crisis. A multiple regression analysis performed on this index yielded a three-variable equation that explained twenty-one percent of the total variance in the perception of a crisis of credibility in the Kerala Church (see Table 42). Age and membership in the Malankara rite, entered simultaneously on the first step, explained four percent of the variance. Age, which is negatively correlated to the likelihood of perceiving a crisis of credibility, accounted for a unique variance of two percent. Membership in the Malankara rite accounts for a unique variance of one percent; the Malankarites are more likely to perceive a crisis of credibility than the Malabarites or the Lati-

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<sup>1</sup>A complete listing of all the items used to construct this credibility index is provided in Appendix A.



TABLE 42

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF A CRISIS OF  
CREDIBILITY IN THE KERALA CHURCH

Independent Variables	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
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Step I

1. Age.	-.14	---	-.15	---	.02
2. Membership in Malankara rite	.14	---	.15	---	.02

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Step II

3. "Plausibility- orientation"	.43	.42	.47	.77	.17
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	Step 1	Step 2	Equation
RSQ	.04	.17	.21
Common Variance	.00	---	.00

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Missing values: 102Valid cases: 358  
=====

nites. As to why the Malankarites are more inclined to perceive a crisis, one can only speculate at this point. It could be because of their unique historical experience of schism and reconversion to Catholicism, or it might be be a function of their current minority status. "Plausibility-orientation," entered on the second step, explained an additional seventeen percent of the variance. The "plausibility-oriented" clergy are more inclined to perceive a crisis of credibility in the Church than the "orthodoxy-oriented."

### Major Problems of the Kerala Church

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, David Martin has hypothesized that the challenges and problems which secularization poses for institutional religion tend to vary from context to context. To identify the specific problems which secularization creates for the Church in Kerala, the survey listed a dozen possible problems, and the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of these constituted a serious problem for the Kerala Church.<sup>2</sup> The findings, crosstabulated by age and rite, are presented in Tables 43 and 44 respectively.

The lack of cooperation at the hierarchy level in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church was most frequently mentioned as a great problem. The Kerala hierarchy is notorious for its infighting, rivalry, and power struggle. The conflict among the members of the hierarchy involves personalities, politics, and rites. This ongoing spectacle of infighting and power struggle among the bishops, critics contend, makes a mockery of the Christian message of unity and love and thus sabotages the credibility of the Kerala Church. This indictment of the hierarchy is overwhelmingly endorsed by the priests of Kerala. Sixty-two percent of the respondents report that the divisiveness among the bishops is a great problem for

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<sup>2</sup>The problems included in the survey were selected from a list prepared by a panel of experts on the Kerala Church.

the Church in Kerala. The younger clergy are more likely to view the hierarchy disunity as a great problem than the older clergy (Table 43), and the Malankarites are less likely to see this as a great problem than the Latinites or the Malabarites (Table 44).

The second most frequently mentioned great problem is the the glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice. This is consistent with the earlier observation that the Church in Kerala is facing a serious crisis of credibility. The credibility gap is viewed as a great problem by forty-seven percent of the respondents. The perception of the seriousness of this problem is negatively correlated with age (Table 43)..

The third most frequently reported problem is the incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership for the Kerala Church. Forty-three percent of the respondents view this as a great problem. Here again the perception of the seriousness of the problem is negatively correlated with age (table 43).

The next most frequently mentioned problem is also related to the issue of credibility. Thirty-eight percent of the priests feel that uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives is a great problem for the Church in Kerala. Age does not seem to have any effect on the perception of the seriousness of this problem, but rite does (Tables 43 and 44). The clergy of the Malankara rite are more inclined to view this as a

TABLE 43

## CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS OF THE KERALA CHURCH, BY AGE

(Percent reporting "a great problem")

	AGE				
	24-35	36-45	46-55	56+	TL.
Lack of cooperation at the hierarchy level in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church.	77	59	50	53	62(278)
The glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice.	56	47	46	31	47(213)
Incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership.	50	43	39	32	43(193)
Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives.	33	41	43	33	38(172)
The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites.	42	30	35	46	37(169)
Corruption and mismanagement in Catholic institutions.	37	32	36	28	33(150)
Failure to change with the times.	46	35	26	11	32(147)
The spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and mass media.	26	37	37	31	32(147)
The increase in the power and influence of Communists and other anti-religious forces.	18	23	32	24	23(105)
Group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels.	16	13	17	14	15(67)
The increasing number of priests who leave their priesthood.	8	4	19	14	10(46)
Too much change too soon.	4	8	2	10	6(26)

TABLE 44

## CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS OF THE KERALA CHURCH, BY RITE

(Percent reporting "a great problem")

	RITE			
	Latin	Malan- kara	Mala- bar	TL.
Lack of cooperation at the hierarchy level in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church.	64	44	64	62(278)
The glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice.	41	50	48	47(213)
Incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership.	42	43	43	43(193)
Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives.	36	51	36	38(172)
The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites.	63	28	33	38(169)
Corruption and mismanagement in the Catholic institutions.	31	44	33	34(150)
Failure to change with the times.	28	39	33	33(149)
The spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and mass media.	25	45	33	33(147)
The increase in the power and influence of Communists and other anti-religious forces.	24	30	21	23(105)
Group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels.	25	18	12	15(67)
The increasing number of priests who leave their priesthood.	11	14	9	10(46)
Too much change too soon.	8	9	5	6(26)

serious problem than their colleagues in the Malabar and Latin rites. In fact, of all the problems listed in the survey, this is the one most frequently mentioned as a great problem by the Malankara clergy.

The ongoing rivalry among the three different rites is considered a great problem by thirty-seven percent of the respondents. As in the case of the problem of uncommitted priests, the perception of the importance of this problem does not seem to vary significantly with the age of the respondents (Table 43). However, the respondents' rite does have an effect on the attitude towards the problem of the conflict between the rites. The Latinites are far more likely to view this as a great problem than the Malankarites or the Malabarites (Table 44). The concern of the Latinites with the rite problem is probably due to the fact they perceive themselves as the underdogs in this conflict. Compared to the Latinites, the Malabar Christians have a longer history, stronger tradition, and higher socio economic status; besides, the Malabarites outnumber the Latinites almost three to one. Therefore, the Latinites are the ones who suffer most from the conflict between the rites.<sup>3</sup> The Malankarites usually are not directly involved in the rite conflict mainly for two reasons: (a) they are too small to

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<sup>3</sup>The rite rivalry has overtones of casteism. As mentioned elsewhere, the Malabar Christians pride themselves to be the descendents of upper caste Hindus, and they tend to look down upon the Latin Christians who are generally thought to be converts from low caste Hindus.

constitute a threat to either the Malabarites or the Latinites; (b) they are a variant of the Malabar Christians with common historical roots, and for all practical purposes they identify themselves with the Malabarites.

Corruption and mismanagement in Catholic institutions, failure of the Church to change with the times, and the spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and the mass media are viewed as great problems by about one-third each of the respondents. The Malankara priests are more inclined than others to perceive these as great problems for the Church in Kerala (Table 44). The younger priests are more likely to view the failure to change with the times as a serious problem, while the older priests are more likely to view secularism as a serious problem (Table 43).

Less than twenty-five percent of the respondents consider the following as great problems for the Church in Kerala: the increase in the power and influence of Communists and other anti-religious forces, group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels, increasing number resignations from priesthood, and too much change too soon.

In order to identify the factors that influence the respondents' likelihood of perceiving great problems for the Kerala Church, a multiple regression analysis was performed on two variables that were most frequently reported as a great problem, namely, the disunity of the hierarchy and the gap between preaching and practice in the Church. As Table



45 shows, nine percent of the total variance in the perception of the hierarchy disunity as a problem was explained by four independent variables: age, membership in the Malankara rite, "plausibility-orientation," and the sense of economic deprivation. Age and membership in the Malankara rite, entered together on the first step, explained five percent of the total variance. Both age and membership in the Malankara rite were negatively correlated with the perception of the hierarchy disunity as a problem and accounted for five percent of the variance. "Plausibility-orientation" and the sense of economic deprivation were entered on the second step, and these explained an additional four percent of the variance. The economically deprived and the "plausibility-oriented" are more likely to perceive disunity of the hierarchy as a great problem for the Kerala Church.

The perception of the glaring gap between preaching and practice as a problem for the Kerala Church was found to be significantly correlated with age, education level and "plausibility-orientation." Thirteen percent of the total variance in the perception of credibility gap as a serious problem was explained by these three independent variables (see Table 46). Age, entered first, accounted for two percent of the variance; the younger clergy are more likely to view credibility gap as a serious problem than the older ones. Education level (measured in number of years spent in studies, ecclesiastical as well as secular) and "plausibility-orientation" were entered on the second step, and these

TABLE 45

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF HIERARCHY  
DISUNITY AS A PROBLEM FOR THE CHURCH IN KERALA

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
Step I					
1. Age	-.21	---	-.20	---	.03
2. Membership in the Malankara rite	-.13	---	-.11	---	.01
-----					
Step II					
3. "Plausibility- orientation"	.22	.14	.14	.76	.01
4. Sense of economic deprivation	.17	.17	.12	.98	.02
-----					
	Step I	Step II	Equation		
RSQ	.05	.04	.09		
Common variance	.01	.01	.02		
-----					
Missing values = 101					
Valid cases = 359					
=====					

explained an additional variance of eleven percent. Education level, which had a unique variance of one percent, was negatively correlated with the perception credibility gap as a serious problem for the Kerala Church. "Plausibility-orientation," on the contrary, was positively correlated with the perception of credibility gap as serious problem, and it accounted for a unique variance of nine percent.

We have thus far reviewed the views of the clergy on the relative seriousness of a number of problems for the Kerala Church. However, it is possible that a respondent considers several of the problems listed in the survey as great problems, in which case it is not possible to identify which one he considers the most important problem facing the Church in Kerala. Hence the respondents were asked to identify the problem which they considered the most important one for the Church in Kerala today. Crosstabulation of the findings by age and rite are presented in Tables 47 and 48 respectively. The problem that is indicated as the most important one by the highest number of respondents is the lack of cooperation at the level of the hierarchy in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church. Thirty percent of the respondents considered this as the most important problem. The Malabar clergy, especially in comparison to the Malankara clergy, were slightly more likely to view the disunity of the hierarchy as the most important problem.

The glaring gap between the Church's preaching

TABLE 46

EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE GAP BETWEEN  
PREACHING AND PRACTICE AS A PROBLEM FOR THE KERALA CHURCH

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Zero- order corre- lations	Partial Corre- lations	Beta	Tole- rance	Unique vari- ance
Step I					
1. Age	-.17	---	-.18	---	.02
-----					
Step II					
2. Education level	-.07	-.09	-.09	.99	.01
3. "Plausibility- orientation"	.35	.35	.31	.76	.09
-----					
	Step I	Step II	Equation		
RSQ	.02	.11	.13		
Common variance	---	.01	.01		
-----					
Missing values = 103					
Valid cases = 357					
=====					

TABLE 47

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF "THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM" OF THE  
KERALA CHURCH, BY AGE (IN PERCENT)

	AGE				TL.
	24-35	36-45	46-55	56+	
Lack of cooperation at the hierarchy level in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church.	33	30	22	35	30
The glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice.	29	23	24	16	24
Incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership.	12	16	15	14	14
The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites in Kerala.	9	6	10	14	9
Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives.	5	10	6	6	7
The spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and mass media.	2	6	10	6	6
Failure to change with the times.	5	4	5	4	4
The increase in the power and influence of Communists and other anti-religious forces.	2	2	3	2	2
Corruption and mismanagement in Catholic institutions.	0	0	1	6	1
Group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels.	0	2	0	0	.8
The increasing number of priests who leave their priesthood.	.8	0	1	2	.8
Too much change too soon.	0	.8	0	0	.3
Others	2	.8	1	0	1
Total					99.9 (385) =====

and practice was identified as the most important problem by twenty-four percent of the respondents. The younger priests were more likely to consider this as the most important problem than the older ones. As in the previous case, the Malabar clergy seemed more likely to view this as the most important problem for the Kerala Church than the Latinites or the Malankarites. Fourteen percent chose the incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership as the most important problem. The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites was cited as the most important problem by nine percent of the respondents. As Table 49 reveals, the Latin clergy were far more likely to choose this problem as the most important one. This is consistent with the earlier observation that the Latinites are much more sensitive to the rite problem than the Syrians. Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives was the most important problem for seven percent of the respondents, followed by the spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life, which was considered the most serious problem by six percent of the respondents. Less than five percent of the respondents considered any of the other problems listed in the survey as the most important one for the Kerala Church.

The findings discussed above lead to a significant conclusion: The crisis in the Kerala Church arises from within, and not aroused from without. Or, to use the terminology of functionalism, the most serious problems facing

TABLE 49

CLERGY PERCEPTIONS OF "THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM" FOR THE  
KERALA CHURCH, BY RITE (IN PERCENT)

	RITE			
	Latin	Malankara	Malabar	TL.
Lack of cooperation at the level of hierarchy in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church.	26	23	22	30
The glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice.	15	16	27	24
The incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership.	19	18	13	14
The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites in Kerala.	23	5	6	9
Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives.	3	15	7	7
The spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and mass media.	3	8	6	6
Failure to change with the times	4	8	4	4
The increase in the power of Communists and other anti-religious forces.	3	5	2	2
Corruption and mismanagement in Catholic institutions.	1	3	1	1
Group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels.	1	0	1	.8
The increasing number of priests who leave their priesthood.	1	0	1	.8
Too much change too soon.	1	0	1	.3
Others	0	0	1	.3
Total				99.9 (385) =====

the Church in Kerala are internal instrumental problems of goal attainment, and not external instrumental problems of adaptation to a changing environment. The three most important problems of the Kerala Church, according to its clergy, are: divisiveness of the hierarchy, the gap between preaching and practice, and the incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership. All these problems are related to goal attainment. The gap between preaching and practice clearly refers to the failure to fulfill the functional requirement of goal attainment, assuming, of course, that the goal of the Church is to practice what it preaches. Since the primary responsibility of defining goals and mobilizing resources to attain these goals is vested in the leadership, failure to attain goals is usually viewed as a failure of the leadership. In other words, the divisiveness and the incompetence of the hierarchy are perceived as major problems because the breakdown in goal attainment, the crisis of credibility, is attributed to the failure of its leadership.

The finding that the Kerala Church's major problems are internal instrumental problems is very significant because it seems to negate one of the basic assumptions of secularization theory; namely, the major problems which secularization creates for religious institutions are external instrumental problems of adaptation to a changing environment. The implications of the Kerala experience for secularization theory will be discussed at length in the



ensuing chapter.

### Perspectives on Proposed Changes

The survey sought the opinions of the respondents on ten specific proposals for change in the Kerala Church. The proposals for change that were included in the survey were selected from the suggestions offered by a panel of experts on the Kerala Church. The findings are presented in Table 50.

Consistent with our previous observations, the proposal for change that was deemed most helpful by the greatest number of respondents was one that would enhance the credibility of the Kerala Church. Seventy percent of the respondents thought that it would be very helpful if the Church stopped spending large sums of money in constructing imposing churches and celebrating expensive feasts. The Kerala Church exists in one of the most penurious parts of the world, where the vast majority of the populace are struggling for the basic necessities of life. Despite the rampant poverty in its milieu, the Kerala Church has built, and continues to build, very imposing churches investing millions of rupees, thanks to the generous help received from its more affluent counterparts abroad. These "edifices" do not edify. Critics of the Church have questioned the wisdom and morality of building massive and luxurious abodes for invisible gods, while thousands of homeless humans languish outside. Towering over the lowly huts of poor peasants,

these churches speak ill of the church's sensitivity to the plight of the poor and the downtrodden. They cast doubts on the sincerity of the Church's pulpit professions about its commitment to the cause of poor and the oppressed and lend credence to the Communist allegation that the Church in Kerala is a "church of the rich for the rich." The fact that the proposed change most widely acclaimed by the priests of Kerala is a measure that would enhance the Church's credibility is yet another indication that the Kerala Church's biggest problem is the loss of its credibility.

The proposal to establish a uniform salary for all priests was deemed very helpful by fifty-seven percent of the respondents. The call for uniform salary for all priests must be understood in the context of the current salary structure. At present, the salaries of priests vary from diocese to diocese, and within diocese, from priest to priest. Those who teach in schools and colleges are on government payroll, and they receive a salary several times larger than that of the average priest. Those who are engaged in other types of special ministry, such as teaching in the seminary and working in the curia, also have a salary scale that is usually different from that of those engaged in parish ministry. For those who work in the parish a minimum salary is determined by the diocese. However, parishes vary widely in their size and economic status. Those who are assigned to rich and large parishes make much more than their minimum salary through stole fees and other such

TABLE 50

## CLERGY RESPONSES TO PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE KERALA CHURCH

(in percent)

	Very helpful	Some- what helpful	A little helpful	Not at all helpful	TL.
Establishing priests associations to protect and promote the interests of priests.	40	25	20	15	100 (448)
Greater participation of the laity in the decision-making and administrative processes of the parishes and dioceses.	38	42	15	5	100 (454)
Determining B.A./B.Sc. as the minimum secular education for all future priests.	29	35	24	12	100 (454)
Election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese.	35	27	14	24	100 (455)
Consulting the priest concerned before his appointment.	53	33	10	4	100 (458)
Decentralization of the power of the bishop by giving greater importance to the role of priests' senates, pastoral councils, etc.	53	33	10	4	100 (457)
Uniform salary for all priests.	57	29	8	5	100 (450)
Stop spending large sums of money in constructing imposing churches and celebrating expensive feasts.	71	21	6	2	100 (458)
Join hands with the Communists of Kerala in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class.	18	26	19	38	100 (450)
Make the accounts of all Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny.	40	30	14	16	100 (454)

extraneous income. Those who work in small, poor parishes, on the other hand, often find it difficult to draw even their minimum salary because these parishes lack sufficient funds. This system of differential rewarding has led to the emergence of several economic classes among the priests of Kerala. The sense of economic deprivation among priests, which was found to be correlated to clergy attitudes on a number of issues, must be understood in this context.

Fifty-three percent of the respondents feel that the decentralization of the power of the bishop by giving greater importance to the role of Priests' Senates, Pastoral Councils, etc. would be very helpful for the Kerala Church (see Table 50). In accordance with the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council, most dioceses in Kerala have established Priests' Senates, Pastoral Councils, and similar representative bodies. However, the vast majority of priests seem to think that these representative bodies must be allowed to play a greater role in the decision-making and administrative processes of the diocese.

At present, the Kerala priests are assigned positions solely on the basis of the judgement of the bishop without any prior input from the priest concerned about his preferences, plans, or problems. There is no institutionalized arrangement for consultation like, for example, the Personnel Board of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The survey findings indicate that most priests would like to see a change in the procedure for the assignment of priests. Fifty-three

percent of the respondents felt that consulting the priest concerned before his appointment or transfer would be a very helpful change.

As noted elsewhere, only one in every five respondents felt that the Catholics in Kerala can be proud of the standards honesty, fairness and integrity that are maintained in the Catholic institutions (see Table 40). And one-third of the priests of Kerala thought that the corruption and mismanagement in the Catholic institutions is a great problem for the Kerala Church (see Table 43). Because of the public's perception of corruption in the Catholic institutions, there have been repeated demands for making the accounts of the Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny. The Church leadership has thus far ignored such demands. As Table 50 reveals, forty percent of the respondents welcomed as very helpful the proposal to make the accounts of the Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny.

In its decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, the Second Vatican Council declared:

Worthy too of high regard and zealous promotion are those associations whose rules have been examined by competent Church authority, and which foster priestly holiness in the exercise of the ministry through an apt and properly approved rule of life and through brotherly assistance. Thus these associations aim to be of service to the whole priestly order (Abbot, 1966:551).

In accordance with this recommendation, priests of several dioceses in Kerala attempted to form priests' associations. The bishops, however, blocked these attempts arguing that such associations are not in the best interests of the

Church in Kerala. Forty percent of the respondents are of opinion that the formation of priests' associations to protect and promote the interests of the priests would be very helpful to the Kerala Church (see Table 50).

Greater participation of the laity in the administrative process of the Church and the election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese are welcomed as very helpful changes by more than a third of the respondents. The proposal to make a bachelor's degree (secular) a requirement for all future priests was supported as very helpful by twenty-nine percent of the respondents. Only one of the ten proposed changes was considered by the majority of respondents as "a little helpful" or "not at all helpful"; namely, Church should "join hands with the Communists of Kerala in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class." Nevertheless, the fact that forty-four percent of the priests ventured to endorse as "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" such a radical move suggests that the traditional walls of hostility between the Catholics and the Communists are beginning to crumble in Kerala.

As Table 51 makes clear, the younger clergy are, in general, slightly more likely to favor the proposed changes than the older clergy. The effect of age seems to be more pronounced on the attitude towards the following proposals for change: election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese, determining B.A./B.Sc. as the minimum secular education for all future priests, and joining hands with the

TABLE 51

CLERGY ATTITUDES TO PROPOSED CHANGES FOR THE KERALA CHURCH,  
BY AGE

(Percent reporting "very helpful")

	AGE				
	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	TL.
Establishing priests' associations to protect and promote the interests of the priests.	40	35	39	38	40 (178)
Greater participation of the laity in the process of decision making and administrative processes of the parishes and dioceses.	42	35	45	25	38 (171)
Determining B.A./B.Sc. as the minimum secular education for all future priests.	35	33	21	21	29 (131)
Election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese.	45	36	30	22	35 (160)
Consulting the priest concerned before his appointment or transfer.	55	56	55	41	53 (242)
Decentralization of the power of the bishop by giving greater importance to the role of Priests' Senate, Pastoral Council, etc.	59	52	55	43	53 (243)
Uniform salary for all priests.	60	59	51	56	57 (258)
Stop spending large sums of money in constructing imposing churches and celebrating lavish feasts.	75	70	66	66	71 (324)
Join hands with the Communists in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class.	23	19	12	13	18 (79)
Make the accounts of all Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny.	47	36	38	38	40 (181)

Communists of Kerala in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class.

Table 52 discloses another significant pattern. The Malankara clergy are more likely to favor the proposals for change than both the Malabar and the Latin clergy. The only exception to this pattern is in the case of the proposal to join hands with the Communists in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class, and even in this case the difference is too small to be significant. The attitudes of the Malankarites seem to be significantly different from those of the non-Malankarites with regard to the following proposals for change: greater participation of the laity in the decision-making and administrative processes of dioceses and parishes, consulting the priest concerned before his appointment or transfer, determining a uniform salary for all priests, and ceasing to spend large sums of money in constructing imposing churches and celebrating expensive feasts. The priests of the Latin rite seem to be relatively less inclined to favor making the accounts of the Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny and the election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese (see table 52).

To conclude, the findings presented in this chapter indicate that the Catholic Church in Kerala has serious internal problems. Its leadership is widely perceived as divided and incompetent; its practice is seen as a far cry from its preaching; its institutions seem to cast shadows on the integrity of its motives; and its sociopolitical stance



TABLE 52

CLERGY ATTITUDES TO PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE KERALA CHURCH,  
BY RITE

(Percent reporting "very helpful")

	RITE			
	Latin	Mala- nkara	Mala- bar	TL.
Establishing Priests' associations to protect and promote the interests of the priests.	41	43	39	40 (178)
Greater participation of the laity in the decision making and administrative processes of dioceses and parishes.	31	47	38	38 (171)
Determining B.A./B.Sc. as the minimum educational level for all future priests.	22	35	30	29 (131)
Election of the priests by the priests of the diocese.	26	41	37	35 (160)
Consulting the priest concerned before his appointment or transfer.	52	68	51	53 (241)
Decentralization of the power of the bishop by giving greater importance to the role of Priests' Senate, Pastoral Council, etc.	46	57	55	53 (243)
Uniform salary for all priests.	55	65	57	58 (258)
Stop spending large sums of money in constructing imposing churches and celebrating expensive feasts.	75	82	68	71 (324)
Join hands with the communists in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class.	18	16	18	18 (79)
Make the accouts of all Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny.	29	45	42	40 (181)

belies its sensitivity to the plight of the poor and the oppressed. In short, the Church in Kerala suffers from a serious crisis of credibility.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

#### UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THE CRISIS OF A RELIGIOUS UTOPIA: THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE KERALA EXPERIENCE

##### Introduction

The discussions in the preceding chapters centered on the concerns, problems and challenges of the Catholic Church in Kerala as experienced and expressed by its clergy. It now remains to assess the theoretical implications of the Kerala experience for secularization theory. The purpose of this concluding chapter is twofold: (a) to appraise critically David Martin's general theory of secularization in the light of the Kerala experience, and (b) to advance a new hypothesis about the impact of modernity on institutional religion in a developing context.

To place these concluding observations in perspective, it will be necessary to return briefly to the theoretical moorings of this study, the theory of secularization. As previously discussed, meanings of the term "secularization" -- a term used to designate the changes that are allegedly taking place in the sphere of religion in the wake of moder-

nization -- vary widely depending on what is designated by "religion" and which aspect of religion is under consideration. Those who focus their attention on the normative aspect of religion view secularization as the erosion of the normative control of religion; that is to say, religious values and beliefs no longer determine the individual's orientation for action (see Herberg, 1967; Bellah, 1967; Nisbet, 1970; Fenn, 1972). Those who emphasize its cognitive aspect perceive secularization as the "privatization of religion"; that is, official models of religion cease to be the overarching system of ultimate significance, and individuals construct their own private systems of ultimate significance from an assortment of world-views available in the ideological free-market (Berger, 1969; Luckmann, 1967). Finally, those who identify religion primarily with its institutional manifestations use the term secularization to describe the consequences of modernization for institutional religion (Lynds, 1929, 1937; Parsons, 1960; Wilson, 1966; Stark and Glock, 1971; Martin, 1978). While the validity of the secularization thesis in the "normative" and "cognitive" senses is widely disputed, it is generally accepted in the "institutional" sense. (see Martin, 1969; Glasner, 1977; Shiner, 1967; Goodridge, 1975; Berger, 1977; Bell, 1971; Robertson, 1971; Greeley, 1971; Hertel and Nelsen, 1974). In other words, there is a consensus among sociologists that modernization does have a definite impact on institutional religion, although the extent and significance of this

impact may differentially perceived. Thus far, there has been only one systematic attempt to identify the varied impact of modernity on institutional religion across the world, to seek out underlying commonalities and organize them within the coherent framework of a general theory of secularization. David Martin, the sociologist from the London School of Economics, is the author of this ambitious and laudable attempt. Regrettably, the Kerala experience documented in this study raises serious questions about the veracity of his logical premises and the validity of his empirical generalizations.

### Martin's General Theory: A Critical Appraisal

#### A Logical Critique

David Martin expounds his theory in his book A General Theory of Secularization. As evidenced by the title of the book itself, Martin's intent is to propose a general theory. He opens the book with this declaration: "A general theory of secularization is closer to realization in the Sociology of Religion than might be expected, in spite of the field being poorly developed" (Martin, 1978:1). He then goes on to demonstrate how the conceptual scheme he has developed can serve as a basis for such a general theory. However, Martin does recognize that his claim of the status of a general theory for a conceptual scheme that is abstracted exclusively from the historically and culturally relative experience of Western Christianity might seem arbitrary to

his readers. He, therefore, takes pains to explain why he thinks his generalizations, although derived from the West, are valid for the rest of the world. Here is his argument:

I have also assumed that certain advantages accrue from the fact that secularization has been firstly a 'Christian' phenomenon. ... the advantages for the framing of the theory stem from the fact that secularization initially occurs within the ambit of Christian societies. A general theory can be stated for societies within the Christian ambit (or, if you prefer, societies with Christian historical background) and subsequently be qualified for other societies, just as secularization was exported with modifications to other societies. An analysis of the initial 'breakthrough' is usually the crucial part of a theory. The point is that this breakthrough occurred in Christian cultures, whatever the precise relation of Christianity to secularity, and the core of the theory can be stated in relation to those cultures (Martin, 1978:1-2).

Martin's argument may be stated more succinctly as follows:

"The analysis of the initial breakthrough is the crucial part of a theory"; the initial breakthrough of secularization occurred in Christian Cultures; "the core of the theory can therefore be stated in relation to those cultures" and subsequently be extended to other cultures with qualifications.

This argument of Martin suffers from the same ethnocentric bias that vitiated the logic of the classical theorists of modernization. Since the breakthrough of modernization occurred in the West, the classical theorists of modernization derived the attributes of modernity from the Western experience and then posited the acquisition of these attributes as the criterion for modernization. Thus modernization was identified with Westernization. The classical

paradigm of modernization, abstracted and universalized from the Western experience, postulated that modernization is a uniform and unilinear process, which progresses through certain well-defined stages -- the developmental stages of the West -- to a clearly anticipated end, a monolithic modernity in the mold of the industrial West. Instances which appeared to differ from the classical paradigm were dismissed as "deviant" or "pathological" cases which signaled a breakdown in modernization (see, for example, Parsons and Shils, 1951; Bellah, 1958; Hoselitz, 1960; Smelser, 1964; Eisenstadt, 1973)

However, this ethnocentric view of modernization was eventually abandoned in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary from a number of modernizing countries like Japan, China, and India. Today, it is generally accepted in sociological circles that modernization is a pluriform and multidirectional process, which moves from multiple beginnings, through multiple routes, to multiple ends (Rudolf and Rudolf, 1967; Gusfield, 1967; Srinivas, 1967; Nettle and Robertson, 1966; Frank, 1967).

As Martin himself has pointed out, secularization is an aspect of the more general process of modernization. (1978:2-3). Therefore, one has to wonder why Martin sets out to state a general theory of secularization in terms only of the conceptual categories abstracted from the West, years after the fallacy of forcing the global reality into the Procrustean bed of Western experience has been thoroughly

demonstrated in the case of the more inclusive process, modernization.

Martin's attempt to posit the evolutionary pattern of Western Christianity as the ideal type of universal secularization is all the more intriguing in view of the fact that his theory is based on the concept of the cultural refraction of secularization. He recognizes that the sociology of secularization does not unfold uniformly in all cultural contexts. In fact, the very aim of Martin's theory is to establish a typology of cultural contexts and then to describe the pattern of secularization endemic to each type of context. The countries of the West are relatively homogeneous with regard to their cultural heritage, religious tradition and level of economic development. And even in this relatively homogeneous context, Martin finds not one but multiple patterns of secularization, patterns so different from each other that he finds it necessary to develop mutually exclusive conceptual categories for their explication. If, then, the pattern of secularization is different in two countries that are homogeneous in cultural heritage, religious tradition, and economic development like, say, Germany and the U.S.A., how much more obvious it ought to be that the pattern of secularization will be different in two countries that are fundamentally different in their cultural heritage, religious tradition and economic development like, say, the U.S.A and China. If the generalizations about the U.S.A cannot be extended with qualifications to Spain (his



generalizations about the U.S.A. are fundamentally different from his generalizations about Spain), how can they be extended with qualifications to India or Japan? Yet, Martin insists: "A general theory can be stated for societies within the Christian ambit ... and subsequently be qualified for other societies, just as secularization was exported with modifications to other societies" (1978:2).

#### An Empirical Critique

Empirically, the findings of this study clearly bear out the inadequacy of Martin's theory as a framework of analysis for the pattern of secularization in a Christian Church outside the West, not to speak of the non-Christian religions Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. To illustrate this, it is necessary briefly to review the basic conceptual categories of Martin's general theory.

Martin's theory, as indicated earlier, rests on the assumption that the contours of secularization in a society are shaped by the "frame" which that society has acquired at some crucial period in its history. Martin says:

I will ask a simple question. Is the basic frame of this society forged in a monopoly situation or some variety of pluralism?. If the former then certain consequences follow. If the latter then certain other consequences for secularization follow. This is perhaps my first generalization and it is the one on which the categories themselves are based (Martin, 1978:17).

Martin develops three different theoretical models of socie-

tal frames: monopoly, duopoly and pluralism.<sup>1</sup> In each of these three models, secularization unfolds according to a different socio-logic.

All Catholic countries come under the first category, monopoly. Spain and Portugal are the closest approximations of the monopoly model, followed by Italy, Belgium, France and Austria. Monopolistic societies are characterized by "a vicious spiral" set in motion by alternative or conflicting systems of legitimation. Militant faith breeds its antithesis, militant unbelief, and polarizes the society into two warring factions, with Catholics on the one side and secularists on the other. In this case, even non-Catholic religious groups may ally themselves with the secularists against the Catholic Church. Symbols of Catholicism, especially its priesthood, come under violent physical and verbal assaults. Because both groups want to shape the attitudes and command the loyalty of the emerging generation, there will be a fierce struggle to gain control over the socialization process. To this general pattern, Martin cites two kinds of exceptions, in which internal conflict is muted either because the threat of external domination makes internal unity imperative (Eire, Poland, Croatia, Brittany, Basque country), or because the strength of the opposing factions are so evenly matched that neither side believes

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<sup>1</sup>Initially, Martin had a fourth type, the English pattern. However, he does not develop this type separately as the other three, but treats as a variant of pluralism.

that victory through conflict is possible (Belgium, Austria).

Martin's second category is duopoly or the mixed pattern. In this type, rival monopolies coexist in about 60:40 proportion, with the Protestant Church as the major partner. The Catholic Church, the minor partner, usually leans politically to the center-left and serves to stabilize the political system. Duopolistic societies are typically characterized by "pillarization" or massive subcultural integration. Changing alliances among the various pillars break the vicious spiral and mute conflict. Secularist elements are pushed into an explicit pillar to the extreme left, and so it must either buttress the system as a whole or accept isolation. Secularist propaganda against religious pillars is muted so that workers within them are not alienated; by the same token, religious hostility to the left is also subdued. Holland, Germany, and Switzerland represent this mode of secularization.

Martin's final category is pluralism, and America, Canada, England and Scandinavia approximate this model to varying degrees. Martin sees America as "a logically pure type" of this model because it represents, what he calls, "the final leap towards pluralism." America, thus, provides the best illustration of how the socio-logic of secularization unfolds in pluralist cultures. Unlike monopolistic societies, which exhibit alternative or conflicting systems of legitimation, pluralist societies are characterized by a

cumulative system of legitimation. The "civil religion" in America is an example par excellence of this basic tendency of pluralist societies towards cumulative legitimation. Pluralist societies also tend to have a stable parliamentary democracy, in which the church and the state are formally separated. The various religious denominations coexist as competing multiple alternatives, and there are no major conflicts centered on the issue of religion or religious control of education.

They are not marked by anti-clericalism or large-scale secular religions such as Communism..... The clergy are assimilated to the concept of rival entrepreneurs running varied services on a mixed laissez-faire and oligopolistic model: their status however is usually not high. Religious styles constantly adapt and accept vulgarization in accordance with stylistic tendencies of their varied markets, sometimes in such a way as to weaken both content and intellectual articulation (Martin, 1978:28).

These, then, are Martin's basic generalizations. As pointed out earlier, Martin contends that these generalizations, though derived from the West, can be extended with qualifications to other cultures. However, the experience of the Catholic Church in Kerala documented in this study demonstrates that Martin's generalizations about the patterns of secularization are not valid for Kerala. Kerala clearly falls under Martin's category of pluralism. Of the 25.4 million people in Kerala, fifty-nine percent are Hindus (Nairs thirteen percent, Ezhavas twenty-six percent, Scheduled castes eight percent), twenty-two percent are Christians (Catholics fifteen percent, Syrian Orthodox four per-

cent, Marthomites and Protestants four percent), and nineteen percent are Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Cutting across all these religious groups is a strong faction of Communists, so strong that it has maintained control over the state government longer than any other political party. One would, therefore, expect secularization in Kerala to unfold according to the pattern Martin outlines for pluralistic societies. However, evidence from Kerala does not support Martin's basic assumptions about the socio-logic of secularization in pluralistic societies. Consider, for example, the following:

Item: According to Martin's theory, pluralistic societies are typically characterized by cumulative systems of legitimation; Kerala, although pluralistic, has conflicting or alternative systems of legitimation (religious, areligious and anti-religious), which in Martin's scheme are the hallmark of monopoly, the polar opposite of pluralism.

Item: According to Martin's theory, militant secularism is foreign to pluralistic societies. In his words, "They are not marked by ... large-scale secular religions such as Communism." In his scheme, militant secularism is a feature of monopolistic societies. However, Kerala, which is, indeed, pluralistic, has a militant secularist faction so strong that it has, for the most part, controlled the government of Kerala in recent decades.

Item: Martin asserts that religion or religious con-

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<sup>2</sup>Source: Houtart and Lemerciner (1979).

trol of education will not become a major issue of conflict in pluralistic societies. Yet, the two major political conflicts in the history of Kerala since its independence were centered precisely on the issue of the religious control of education. The first conflict occurred in 1958-59, when the Communists government then in power introduced "The Education Bill," which included provisions to curtail the power of the Catholic Church in Kerala over the state's educational system. In protest, the Catholic Church began a campaign of civil disobedience, which came to be known as "VIMUCHANA SAMARAM" (Liberation Struggle). Other religious groups and interested political parties joined in. The struggle so paralyzed the state that the Central Government of India intervened and dismissed the Communist government in the state on the grounds that it had lost its mandate to govern. The second conflict was similar to the first, and it occurred in 1972. At issue was a major modification planned by the Communist-led coalition government with the intent of limiting the power of private agencies in the management of colleges. The struggle against the planned action was, once again, initiated and led by the Catholic Church, which owns and operates the largest number of private colleges in Kerala.<sup>3</sup> Other churches and religious groups followed suit. The struggle gained momentum, and the

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<sup>3</sup> Thirty-four percent of all colleges and fifty-one percent of all professional schools in Kerala are controlled by the Catholic Church (see Houtart and Lemerciner 1979).

government was forced to abandon the proposed action. Thus, religion and religious control of education have been major issues of political struggle in pluralistic Kerala. This fact directly contradicts Martin's generalization about pluralistic societies.

Item: Martin contends that the Catholic Church in pluralistic societies will appear politically to the left of the center. In Kerala, however, the Catholic Church has historically supported the right-wing political parties like the Congress and the Kerala Congress and has consistently campaigned against left-wing political parties like the Communist Party of India and the Praja Socialist Party. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has not supported any of the liberal socialist measures introduced by the leftist governments in order to achieve a more equitable distribution of the state's resources and income.

Item: Martin's theory suggests that pluralistic societies are marked by relatively low level of anti-clericalism. Kerala, however, is characterized by a high level of anti-clericalism. As noted in the previous chapter, sixty percent of the clergy feel that anti-clericalism is becoming very strong and wide-spread in Kerala.

Kerala, without doubt, is pluralistic and democratic, but the pattern of secularization in Kerala contradicts all the major generalizations of Martin about the modality of secularization in pluralistic societies. Moreover, secularization in pluralistic Kerala exhibits characteristics which

Martin attributes to monopoly, the polar opposite of pluralism. The Kerala case, thus, suggests that Martin's conceptual scheme, valuable though it is as an analytical framework for the pattern of secularization in the West, is inadequate to serve as a basis of a general theory of secularization.

#### Underdevelopment and the Crisis of a Religious Utopia

Theorists of secularization, notably David Martin and Peter Berger, have conceptualized the impact of modernization on institutional religion almost exclusively as a problem of adaptation to the external environment. The various patterns of secularization which Martin has distinguished are, in fact, modalities of mutual adaptation of the various nomizing agencies in different societal contexts. In pluralistic societies, the various reality defining agencies adapt to each other as rival entrepreneurs in a competitive religious free-market; in duopolistic societies, they adapt to each other as independent pillars among which conflict is muted because of shifting alliances; and in monopolistic societies, we have adaptation through open conflict between two powerful factions, the religious and the anti-religious. In the same fashion, Peter Berger conceives the impact of modernization on institutional religion in terms of the challenges posed by a change in its environment, a change from an environment where it enjoyed a monopoly in reality definition and interpretation to an environment where it



must contend with competitive ideological pluralism. For both Martin and Berger, the emphasis is on the nature of the new environment of religions and the way in which this new environment shapes the relationships of religions among themselves and the other institutional spheres of society. Little is said about the way modernization impinges on the internal dynamics of the institutional religion.

However, as we have noted in the preceding chapter, for the Church in Kerala, secularization does not seem to constitute a problem of adaptation to the external environment. On the contrary, all the major problems of the Church in Kerala today are internal problems arising from the loss of the credibility of its hierarchy and institutions. Lack of effective leadership and the glaring gap between preaching and practice are viewed by the clergy as the greatest problems facing the Kerala Church. The vast majority of the clergy agree that the Church in Kerala is widely perceived as a supporter of the rich and the powerful. Its institutions are perceived as corrupt. Its schools and colleges are seen as serving to undermine rather than promote the Church's mission. On the other hand, external environmental problems like the rise and growth of Communism, the spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life, etc. are perceived as posing little or no problem for the Church in Kerala. Ironically, even the growth of Communism is perceived by the clergy as a result of the Church's failure to support the cause of the poor and the underprivileged. Hence, the

primary problem which secularization has created for the Catholic Church in Kerala is an internal one, the loss of the credibility of its leadership and institutions.

Does secularization induce a crisis of credibility in Kerala Church because there is, in fact, a greater gap between the Church's preaching and practice in Kerala than, say, in the West? This writer's experience in Kerala and in the West has led to the conclusion that the objective gap between the preaching and practice is by no means larger in Kerala than in the West. It is, therefore, this writer's hypothesis that the crisis of credibility in the Kerala Church is a function of the underdevelopment of its milieu. In other words, the fact that secularization generates for the Kerala Church a set of problems that are quite different from that of the Western churches must be understood in terms of the differences in the level of economic development in these two contexts.

As suggested in the introductory chapter, Kerala represents a case of "truncated modernity," with a high degree of modernization of consciousness with little or no modernization of structures. As Berger et al. (1973) have suggested, this disjunction between psychological modernization and institutional modernization arises when modernization occurs through its "secondary carriers" (mobilized stratification systems, mass education, mass media of communication, etc.) rather than through its "primary carriers" (technological production and bureaucratic organization of

the state). Kerala is the least industrialized state of the Indian Union. And most of the industries it does have process agricultural products (coir, rubber, coconut, cashew, tea, coffee, etc.); these industries employ traditional, labor intensive techniques, and not modern technology. Agriculture, which is the occupation of more than eighty percent of the Keralites, remains virtually untouched by technology. Kerala's average annual per capita earning is very low compared to the other states of India.<sup>4</sup> In 1969, seventy percent of the households in Kerala had a monthly per capita expenditure of less than Rs. 28, the equivalent of about 3 dollars. Although Kerala has the most educated and skilled labor force, it has the highest unemployment rate in India. One source has estimated that the unemployment rate in Kerala is as high as fifty percent (Houtart and Lemerciner, 1979).

Although Kerala has the most underdeveloped economy in India, it has the highest literacy rate, thanks largely to the efforts of the Catholic Church. Kerala has a literacy rate of sixty-one percent compared to the national average of twenty-nine percent. Tamil Nadu, which is the second most literate state in India, has a literacy rate of only forty percent, twenty percentage points lower than that of

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<sup>4</sup>For example, in 1970, the average per capita earning in Kerala was Rs. 1657 compared to Maharashtra's 3157, Gujarat's 2961, and Tamil Nadu's 2670 (see Houtart and Lemerciner, 1979:32).

Kerala. This gives an indication of relative difference between Kerala and the other states with regard to literacy. Kerala has a well-developed language, a rich literature, and extensive mass communication media. Virtually every house has a radio, and every village, a cinema theatre. The fact that Kerala is one of the only three states in India which has successfully reduced the rate of its population growth through artificial contraception is yet another indication of its high degree of modernization of consciousness. Thus, in Kerala, the modernization of consciousness has preceded the modernization of structures. Exposure through education and the mass media to the world of affluence beyond India has aroused in the masses aspirations for a better life. However, because of the lack of modernization of the infrastructure, there are few opportunities to realize those aspirations.

When modernization of consciousness occurs without commensurate modernization of structures, as is the case in Kerala, it thrusts institutional religion into the throes of a crisis of credibility. This is so because underdevelopment underscores the utopian character of religious ideology. The crisis of credibility in the Kerala Catholic Church is, in effect, a consequence of the intrinsic incompatibility between the functional imperatives of an institutional religion and the idealistic prescriptions of the Christian utopia. Suppose, for example, a priest in the United States speaks from the pulpit about Christ's injunc-

tion to his followers: "If someone asks for your shirt, give him your coat too. If someone asks you to go with him one mile, go two," chances are that atleast some in his audience will be prompted to greater generosity towards the poor and the needy. But if a priest in Kerala preaches the same message of Christian responsibility towards the poor and the needy, it is likely that, as he steps off the pulpit, he will find a number of shirtless people waiting to ask him for his shirt. Obviously, he cannot afford to give away his shirt, for, if he does, he too will soon be shirtless. Thus he cannot practice what he preaches. His credibility suffers. His message backfires. He becomes a hapless victim of a religious utopia.

Or again, in the U.S.A., a priest can expound the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan and impress upon his audience that a Christian ought to act not like the priest and the levite who turned a deaf ear to the pleas of the man attacked by thieves and abandoned by the wayside, but like the Samaritan who put his personal concerns aside and invested his time, energy, and money to help that helpless man. When he concludes his message, he gets off the pulpit, gets into his automobile, and drives away to his other concerns, gratified in the knowledge that at least some in his audience must have been inspired to greater sensitivity to the plight of the unfortunate and the oppressed. On the other hand, if a priest in Kerala delivers the same message, chances are that, as he steps off the pulpit and

steps out into the street (he, of course, has no automobile), he will be approached by numerous beggars, the poor and the hungry, the old and the infirm, the orphaned and the destitute, all pleading for a small contribution towards their next meal. If he does heed those anguished cries for help, he will have exhausted a month's allowance in a day. He, therefore, is forced to turn a deaf ear to their pleas and walk away as if he did not notice them. Thus he cannot practice what he preaches. His credibility suffers. His message backfires. He becomes a hapless victim of a religious utopia.

The same scenario unfolds at the institutional level. Education is the major apostolate of the Church in Kerala. The Church owns and operates hundreds of schools and scores of colleges in Kerala.<sup>5</sup> As the single largest private educational agency of Kerala, it controls literally thousands of jobs, which is a gold mine in Kerala especially since it has the highest unemployment rate in India. Daily, dozens of graduates knock on the door of the diocesan Education Secretary looking for possible vacancies as teachers. Not even one percent of those who apply can be hired. Those who are denied are frustrated, and, without a means of livelihood, they become bitter and cynical towards the Church. In recent years, several dioceses of Kerala have adopted a

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<sup>5</sup>The Catholic Church controls 11 percent (1036) of all the elementary schools and 56 percent (727) of all the high schools in the state.

practice of hiring which makes the Church's already tenuous credibility even more precarious. These dioceses hire those who make the largest monetary contribution to the Church. In other words, jobs are given to the highest bidders. The Church's rationale for this practice is that it cannot build more schools and generate more jobs without funds, and so those who benefit from the Church must contribute to its cause. Whatever the merits of such a rationale, this practice casts serious doubts on the Church's integrity. Those who had to pay to get the job become disgruntled because the Church extracted such a high price from them (the going price for a school teacher's job today being Rs. 15000 and above). Those who were denied the job because they could not come up with the required sum of money are indignant; they feel that the Church is helping to to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. In their view, this practice amounts to blatant discrimination against the poor and makes a mockery of its pious professions about its concern for the poor and the underprivileged. The taxpayers, too, are unhappy because they feel that the Church is enriching its coffers from the schools financed with their money.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the Church's involvement in the field of education seems to raise serious questions in the minds of its

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<sup>6</sup>Education through high school is free both in public and private schools. The government pays all teachers. In addition, the private management is paid a substantial grant to defray the cost of the maintenance of the buildings and equipment.

clientele about the integrity of its intentions and the sincerity of its professions. The findings of the survey seem to support this observation. When asked what ought to be Church's policy with regard to education in the future, twelve percent responded that the Church should withdraw from the field of education forthwith and hand over all its schools and colleges to the government; about fifty percent favored a freeze in the Church's involvement in this field, meaning that it should refrain from opening any more new schools or colleges; only thirty-one percent said that the Church should continue to expand its educational system as it has in the past. Perhaps, the most telling statistic in this regard is the fact that about six percent of the respondents wrote in on their own to emphasize the need to administer the Catholic schools more in accordance with the Christian principles.

What has been said about the Church's educational ministry is also applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other areas of the Church's ministry. Church-run hospitals, and there are hundreds of them, usually deliver excellent medical care. They are also very expensive. Therefore, only the rich can afford to go to the Catholic hospitals. The poor have to resort to the public hospitals, where the quality of medical care is poor and often very inadequate. The Church's reasoning seems to be that, unless it caters to the rich, it cannot generate the funds necessary to help the poor. Be that as it may, the net result is the reinforce-



ment of the general perception that the Church in Kerala is "a church of the rich for the rich."

Religion: An Opiate of the Affluent?

The upshot of the above discussion is that the functional requirements of institutional religion militate against the utopian elements in the Christian ideology. Compromise, therefore, is a universal imperative. Although the gap between preaching and practice is inevitable irrespective of the context, the perception of, and response to this gap are very different in developed and underdeveloped contexts. In an underdeveloped milieu like Kerala, the disjunction between preaching and practice results in a crisis of credibility for institutional church; whereas, in a developed context, such a disparity is likely to be dismissed by most as evidence of the obvious: man is not perfect. In other words, whether or not the utopian elements in its ideology seriously damage the credibility of institutional church depends on the level of economic development in its context.

This is so because the self-perception of the faithful in an underdeveloped area is likely to be very different from that of those in a developed context. An example will illustrate this. One of the best statements of the implications of the Christian way of life is the parable of the Last Judgment, where Christ speaks of returning from heaven at the end of time with all the nations assembled before

him. Seated on his throne, he will separate the assembled into two groups, one on his right and the other on his left. Those on the right will be told that they can now enter into everlasting joy because they fed him when he was hungry, gave him to drink when he was thirsty, clothed him when he was naked, nursed him when he was sick, etc. But to those on the left, he will deliver a different message: they are condemned to eternal damnation because they failed to feed him when he was hungry, to give him to drink when he was thirsty, to clothe him when he was naked, to nurse him when he was sick, etc. (Gospel of Mathew, 25). When people in an affluent country read or listen to this parable, they are most likely to identify themselves with either the good people on the right or the bad people on the left (or some combination of both). Accordingly, it will elicit in their minds feelings of gratification or remorse, as the case might be. In any case, the parable is likely to lead to introspection and self-evaluation. On the other hand, in an underdeveloped country, where the vast majority are poor and hungry, those who read or listen to this parable are not likely to perceive themselves as either the good people on the right or the bad people on the left, but rather as the people who need to be helped, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the homeless, etc. And since the institutional church even in an underdeveloped context tends to be relatively rich and powerful (in Kerala, the Catholic Church is the largest and richest private corporation), the

deprived are likely to view the agents of the institutional church as the people on the left side of Christ, people condemned because they can help and, yet, refuse to do so.

This perception generates mistrust, bitterness and cynicism towards the church. Disillusioned and indignant, many will join the ranks of the anti-religious. It is not surprising then that Kerala, the most Christian state of the Indian Union, was the first state to vote a Communist government into power; and, still today, it is one of the only two states where the Communists are in power.

Long ago, Karl Marx declared that religion is an opiate of the impoverished and oppressed masses. Modernization of consciousness seems to have reversed this role of religion. If it is still an opiate, it is an opiate only of the affluent, not of the impoverished. Religion still serves to soothe the existential angst of the affluent by providing them with meaning, security and purpose amid the absurdities, uncertainties and impossibilities endemic to the human condition. But for the impoverished masses frustrated by aborted aspirations, the Christian message of the right of all to justice, freedom and dignity is a clarion call to rebellion against those perceived as perpetrating and perpetuating injustice and oppression. And in their minds, there is little doubt about which side the Church is on: not on their side. The message, thus, backfires on the messengers.

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APPENDIX A

Department of Social Sciences  
 Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth  
 Papal Seminary, Poona 411 014  
 March, 1980.

Dear Reverend Father,

The opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of no other group seem to be as consequential to the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Kerala as those of its clergy. Yet, no comprehensive study has so far been undertaken to ascertain scientifically the views of the Catholic priests on the various vital issues and problems confronting them and the Church in Kerala today. I have, therefore, undertaken a comprehensive sociological study of the Catholic Priesthood in Kerala. You are one of the 1000 diocesan priests selected from all over Kerala by an equal probability sampling method to participate in this survey.

This questionnaire is the outcome of several months of careful study and discussion with research scholars, theologians, and a number of diocesan priests active in Kerala. None of the questions should be interpreted as calling for a manifestation of conscience. Some items may concern controversial issues, but no question is worded to impute or imply any judgement from my part. There are no right or wrong answers. Every answer is important as an expression of the thinking of the priests in Kerala. However, your freedom to omit a response is always respected.

The anonymity of your answers is absolutely ensured. The questionnaire bears no identification marks, and there is no way of knowing which answer comes from whom. However, it is important for me to know who have not returned the questionnaire for the purpose of sending reminders to them. Therefore, I am enclosing a self-addressed post card with an identification number which is to be mailed back SEPARATELY from the questionnaire itself. When I receive that post card I will know that the person concerned has returned the questionnaire, but, of course, I will not know which questionnaire belongs to him. Furthermore, even the mere fact that you are one of the participants in this study is known only to me and those who assist me in this project, and this information will not be divulged to any one under any circumstances.

The questionnaire is very easy to fill out. All that you need to do is to draw a circle around the code number of the answer you choose for each item. The estimated time for completing this questionnaire is about forty minutes.

I cannot emphasize more how vital your cooperation is for the success of this study. May I request you to fill out this questionnaire and send it back to me in the enclosed, prepaid, return envelope before you get busy with the hectic activities of the Holy Week. If you would like me to send you a summary of the findings of this study, please indicate that on the post card. In any case, please remember to mail the post card separately from the questionnaire.

I would like to thank you for the time and thoughtful consideration I hope you will give this questionnaire.

Wishing you a Happy and Holy Easter,

Faternally,

Fr. Paul Parathazham

Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth  
(Pontifical Athenaeum)  
Poona 411 014  
March 10, 1980

Dear Reverend Father,

I am writing to introduce to you the author of the accompanying questionnaire and give some relevant information which will, hopefully, facilitate your cooperation in this project.

Father PAUL PARATHAZHAM is well known to me both as an ex-alumnus of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth and as one of our future professors. The enclosed questionnaire is part of a survey of the Catholic Priesthood in Kerala, a study in which he is currently engaged and which is patronised by Janana Deepa Vidyapeeth.

Father Parathazham is well qualified, both academically, and personally to make this study. Having obtained an M. A. first class in Sociology in the Poona University, he is now associated with Loyola University of Chicago, USA, as a doctoral candidate and part time lecturer in Sociology and Research Methods. Both the proposal for this study and the accompanying questionnaire have been examined and approved by the Dept. of Sociology of Loyola University. Experts at the Department will continue to monitor the progress of this study.

On the personal level, the fact that Fr. Parathazham is a diocesan priest from Kerala gives him a peculiar sensitivity to and perceptive appreciation of the special situation and problems of clergy in Kerala.

Finally, I need hardly advert to the timeliness and importance of this study both for those who have a special responsibility for the Church in Kerala and, more widely, for all who have its good at heart. It is to you, then, that these lines are addressed, with a request for your valuable cooperation.

Rev. L. Mascarenhas, S. J.  
Rector

(Over)

## CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD IN KERALA: A SURVEY

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Almost all the questions can be answered BY DRAWING A CIRCLE AROUND THE CODE NUMBER that corresponds to the response of your choice. Here is an example :

What is your religion ?      Hindu ... 1      Christian .... 2  
    Muslim ... 3      Other ... 4

If the response of your choice for this question is 'Christian', draw a circle around '2' which is the code number that corresponds to the response category 'Christian'. More specific instructions are given after each question. Please follow these instructions closely as they are very important for processing the data.

1. In which diocese are you now incardinated ? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been a priest ? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the nature of your present ministry ? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY
 

Parish priest            .....	1	Curia Administration .....	4
Assistant parish priest .....	2	College teacher        .....	5
School teacher        .....	3	Seminary teacher       .....	6
Other ( Specify )       .....	7	_____	
4. To which rite do you belong ?
 

Latin ...	1	Syro-Malankara ...	2	Syro-Malabar ....	3
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5. Here are some statements about priesthood. For each of the statements circle the code number below the category of response that best fits your present thinking.

		agree strongly	agree somewhat	Uncertain	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly
(a) Since priesthood is a life-long commitment, there is almost never a good reason for leaving.	1	2	3	4	5	
(b) Being a priest-psychologist or a priest-social worker is as priestly as working in parishes and missions.	1	2	3	4	5	
(c) My own ideas about priesthood are pretty much the same as most priests I know.	1	2	3	4	5	



	agree strongly	agree somewhat	Uncertain	disagree somewhat	disagree strongly
( d ) Ordination confers on the priest a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	1	2	3	4	5
( e ) The idea that the priest is " a man set apart " is a barrier to the full realization of the Christian community.	1	2	3	4	5
( f ) In many cases a decision to resign from priesthood is a wise and mature choice.	1	2	3	4	5
( g ) Most of the laity with whom I work have ideas about what a priest is and what he should do that are quite different from mine.	1	2	3	4	5
( h ) I used to think I knew what a priest was supposed to do, but I really don't know anymore.	1	2	3	4	5
( i ) It is the job of the priests to call into question the values of his parishioners.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Think of your present work. What is it like most of the time ? In the blank beside each word given below, write ' Y ' for ' yes ' if it describes your work, and ' N ' for ' no ' if it does not describe your work.

The work on present assignment is :

- |               |               |                                 |                  |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| — fascinating | — tiresome    | — routine                       | — healthful      |
| — satisfying  | — challenging | — boring                        | — running around |
| — good        | — frustrating | — creative                      | — simple         |
| — respected   | — endless     | — pleasant                      | — thankless      |
|               | — useful      | — gives sense of accomplishment |                  |

7. The priestly role has several aspects which one may consider equally important. However, specific situations often call for an emphasis on one or other aspect of his role over the others. Think of the situation in Kerala. Which one of the following aspects of the priestly role needs to be most stressed in Kerala today ? ( CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY )
- ( a ) ' A man of God ' whose primary concern is to cultivate personal holiness through spiritual exercises and to help others grow in personal holiness through the sacraments and other devotional practices. .. .. . 1
- ( b ) ' A social critic ' who offers an ongoing criticism of his social milieu in the light of Christian values and challenges his people to change themselves and their society. .. .. . 2
- ( c ) ' A social worker ' who identifies himself with the poor and the underprivileged and helps them to improve their lot in life. .. - .. 3
- ( d ) Other ( Please Specify ) \_\_\_\_\_ .. .. . 4

8. How old are you now ? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is/was your father's occupation ? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How would you characterize the socio-economic status of your family at the time you entered the seminary ? (CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY).

Poor (low) class	.. 1	Upper middle class	.. 3
Lower middle class	.. 2	Upper class	.. 4

11. What was the gross annual income of your family at the time you entered the seminary ? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Approximately how many acres of land did your family possess when you joined the seminary ? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Think of your present income and indicate which of the following best describes it. (CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY).

More than I need	..	..	1
Adequate for normal expenses	..	..	2
Sufficient for bare necessities only	..	..	3
Not enough even for necessities	..	..	4

14. Indicate how frequently you engage in each of the following activities. (CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE).

		seldom or never	once in a way	once in a week	several times a week	Daily
(a) Say the breviary	..	1	2	3	4	5
(b) recite the rosary	..	1	2	3	4	5
(c) pray or meditate privately	..	1	2	3	4	5
(d) read the Bible privately	..	1	2	3	4	5

15. There are many sources of satisfaction in the life and work of a priest. Would you indicate how important each of the following is as a source of satisfaction to you ? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	As a source of satisfaction this is of			
	Great importance	Some importance	Little importance	No importance
(a) Joy of administering the sacraments and presiding over the liturgy.	1	2	3	4
(b) Respect that comes to priestly office.	1	2	3	4
(c) Satisfaction in organizing and administering work of the Church	1	2	3	4
(d) Opportunity to exercise creative and intellectual abilities.	1	2	3	4
(e) Spiritual security that results from responding to divine call.	1	2	3	4

(3)

	As a source of satisfaction this is of			
	Great importance	Some importance	Little importance	No importance
(f) Challenge of being the leader of Christian community	1	2	3	4
(g) Opportunity to work with many people and be part of their lives	1	2	3	4
(h) Other (SPECIFY) _____	1	2	3	4

16. There are many problems which priests have to face today. Would you indicate to what extent each of the following is a problem to you personally on a day to day basis ?

CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	A great problem	Somewhat of a problem	Very little problem	No problem at all
(a) Lack of clear idea of what a priest is	1	2	3	4
(b) Absence of challenge in priestly work	1	2	3	4
(c) The way authority is exercised in the Church	1	2	3	4
(d) Relationship with the bishop	1	2	3	4
(e) Relationships with fellow-priests	1	2	3	4
(f) Celibacy	1	2	3	4
(g) Uncertainty about the future of the Church	1	2	3	4
(h) Unrealistic demands and expectations of lay people	1	2	3	4
(i) Loneliness of priestly life	1	2	3	4
(j) Too little work	1	2	3	4
(k) Too much work	1	2	3	4
(l) Conflict with parishioners about the issues of the day	1	2	3	4
(m) Lack of opportunity for personal fulfillment	1	2	3	4
(n) Anxiety about financial security in old age.	1	2	3	4
(o) Other (SPECIFY) _____	1	2	3	4

17. (a) How devout would you say your parents were when you were growing up ?

	Father	Mother
Very devout	1	1
Fairly devout	2	2
Indifferent to religion	3	3
Agnostic	4	4
Anti-religion	5	5
Does not apply	6	6

- (b) How many brothers and sisters do/did you have ? Brothers \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters \_\_\_\_\_

18. Given below are a number of statements that are frequently made today. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of them. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER FOR EACH.

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Un- certain	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
(a) The basic values of the Church remain the same, but their expression is changing.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) I often feel that many things the Church stood for are now disintegrating.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) The relationship between the priests and the laity was much better before Vat. II when everyone knew how he was supposed to act.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) To doubt one article of faith that is de fide is to question the whole of revealed truth.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) Today's Christian must emphasize more than ever before openness to the Spirit rather than dependence on traditional ecclesiastical structures.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) The creative ferment in the Church today is bringing about a deepening of my faith.	1	2	3	4	5
(g) The confusion following Vat. II is resulting in a gradual weakening of my own religion.	1	2	3	4	5
(h) There are times when a person has to put his personal conscience above the Church's teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

19. What was the highest educational attainment of your father ?

No. school .. 1      Primary school .. 2      Middle school .. 3  
 High school    4      College        .. .. 5

If college, which degree ? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Which major seminary did you attend ?

For Philosophy : \_\_\_\_\_

For Theology : \_\_\_\_\_

21. Do you have any ecclesiastical degree ? Yes .. 1      No. .. 2

If 'YES', which degree ? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you have any secular degree ? Yes ... 1      No. .. 2

If 'YES', which degree ? \_\_\_\_\_

23. How well would you say your seminary training prepared you to do the major duties of your priestly work ? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY

Very well .. 1      Moderately well .. 2      So-so .. 3  
 Not very well    4      Very badly        .. 5

24. A number of criticisms have been made about seminary training. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree
( a ) Most of the courses were too theoretically oriented.	.. 1	2
( b ) Many of the courses were irrelevant to modern pastoral needs.	.. 1	2
( c ) Few attempts were made to help the seminarian learn how to deal with people.	.. 1	2
( d ) The seminary was too sheltered from the main stream of life, intellectual and social.	.. 1	2

25. There has been much discussion in recent years about questions of sexual morality. Within the Christian tradition moral theologians have undertaken new investigations in these areas. What is your personal opinion about the following statements ?

( a ) Thinking of people in general, what is your opinion about masturbation ?

CIRCLE THE CODE NUMBER OF THE ONE STATEMENT YOU AGREE WITH MOST

Adolescent masturbation is a normal developmental phase in a person's maturing sexuality, and among adults occasional masturbation is usually the result of stress or conflict, hence in most cases not sinful. .. 1

For both adolescents and adults, in most cases deliberate masturbation is sinful, but no more than venially. - 2

For both adolescents and adults, in most cases deliberate masturbation is a mortal sin. .. 3

Other ( SPECIFY ) \_\_\_\_\_ .. 4

( b ) The Church's teaching on direct abortion remains clear. But the Indian government has recently enacted very permissive abortion laws. What is your opinion in this matter ?  
CIRCLE THE CODE NUMBER OF THE ONE STATEMENT YOU AGREE WITH MOST.

There is no need of theological development in the direction of change in the Church's teaching, since direct abortion is always wrong. - 1

The Church has to allow an open investigation of the issue not only on moral, but also on medical and social grounds. .. 2

In certain well-defined circumstances, especially when the mother's life is threatened, direct abortion can be morally permissible. .. 3

Other ( SPECIFY ) \_\_\_\_\_ .. 4

26. Indicate which of the following statements comes closest to your personal convictions about artificial contraception.

CIRCLE THE CODE NUMBER OF THE ONE STATEMENT THAT YOU AGREE WITH MOST.

All artificial contraception is morally wrong because it is clearly forbidden by natural law and the Church's teaching. - 1

It is not certain that all artificial contraception is morally wrong; still, the faithful are bound to follow the guidance of the Church and avoid all methods of artificial contraception. .. 2

It is not certain that all artificial contraception is morally wrong; therefore, the faithful are morally justified in using at least some methods of artificial contraception when they have adequate reasons for avoiding children. .. 3

Judgement concerning the morality of artificial contraception should be left to the responsibly formed consciences of the individuals involved. -- 4

Given adequate reasons for avoiding children, all methods of artificial contraception is morally acceptable. .. 5

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ -- 6

27. In your opinion, approximately what proportion of the married Catholics in Kerala use artificial methods of birth-control? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.

Most -- .. 1      Very many -- .. 2      Many .. .. 3  
A few ... -- 4      Uncertain .. .. 5

28. The Church in Kerala has been making efforts to familiarize Catholics with natural methods of birth-control. How effective would you say the natural methods are as an alternative to artificial methods? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.

Very effective ... -- 1      Somewhat effective .. .. 2  
Little effective .. .. 3      Not at all effective .. .. 4      Don't know .. .. 5

29. There has been a lot of discussion recently about how a priest should dress today. Indicate which of the following options best describes your personal opinion on this issue.

CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.

Must wear a cassock whenever he appears before others -- 1

Must wear a cassock whenever he performs a priestly function. -- 2

Must wear a cassock within the boundaries of his diocese .. 3

Wearing of cassock should be made optional. ... 4

The cassock as priestly dress must be abolished. The dress of a priest should not be very much different from that of the people with whom he works. .. 5

Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ .. 6

30. How would you describe your life at home during the years before you joined the seminary? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.

Very happy .. -- 1      Somewhat happy .. .. 2  
Somewhat unhappy .. 3      Very unhappy .. -- 4

31. Thinking of all people (including relatives) whom you consider really close friends—people you feel free to talk to about personal matters—would you say you have many, a few, or no such friends. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.

Many .. -- 1      A few .. -- 2      None .. .. 3

If 'many' or 'a few', who are these friends? CIRCLE ALL CODE NUMBERS THAT APPLY.

(a) Family members or relatives ... 1      (b) Fellow priests .. -- 2

(c) Women religious -- 3      (d) Lay men .. .. 4

(e) Lay women .. 5      (f) Other (SPECIFY) .. 6

32. In general, how would you describe your relationships with the following.  
CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Do not have
(a) Bishop	1	2	3	4	5	6
(b) Parish priest	1	2	3	4	5	6
(c) Assistant priest	1	2	3	4	5	6
(d) Resident priests	1	2	3	4	5	6
(e) Parish council	1	2	3	4	5	6
(f) Parishners	1	2	3	4	5	6
(g) Women Religious in the parish	1	2	3	4	5	6

33. Individual priests evaluate celibacy for themselves in different ways. Please indicate how you feel about the following aspects of celibacy yourself. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Celibacy is.....				
	Very much of an advantage	Somewhat of an advantage	Neither advantage nor disadvantage	Somewhat of a disadvantage	Very much of a disadvantage
(a) For doing my work better	1	2	3	4	5
(b) For personal growth and holiness	1	2	3	4	5
(c) For relating more fully to other people.	1	2	3	4	5

34. You have probably heard many of the statements listed below. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Un-certain	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
(a) Usually it is unwise for priests to have women as close friends.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) Celibacy is essential to realize the full potential of priesthood.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) Celibacy should be a matter of personal choice for diocesan priests.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) When a priest has a warm friendship with a woman, it usually helps him to become more fully human.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) Temptations to impurity are the most serious temptations in the lives of most priests.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) A married clergy would better understand the problems of married people.	1	2	3	4	5

- |  | Agree<br>strongly | Agree<br>somewhat | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>somewhat | Disagree<br>strongly |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| (g) The celibate life allows more time for the priest to be available for people.  | 1                 | 2                 | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |
| (h) Today's deeper understanding of the person is helping us to realize that celibacy is in fact harmful for some priests. | 1                 | 2                 | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |
35. In a period of rapid social change and self-study one must consider the reasons for his choices. Which of the following reasons comes closest to the explanation why you remain a priest today. Please mark TWO of the reasons in order of importance. Mark '1' in the blank before the most important reason, and '2' in the blank before the second most important reason.
- Happiness in priestly work
  - To save my soul
  - I am convinced that this is my vocation
  - Self-fulfillment
  - To try to renew the structures of the Church
  - To give witness to Christ in the modern world
  - I feel comfortable in this way of life
  - I am too old to leave
  - If I leave, it would be hard for me to earn a decent livelihood
  - Fear of adjusting to secular life
  - If I leave, it would hurt my parents, relatives, and friends
  - If I leave, I will be despised by the community
  - It is very hard to obtain a dispensation from Rome these days
36. Which of the following statements most clearly reflects your feeling about your future in priesthood? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.
- |                                |        |                           |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|
| I definitely will not leave    | .... 1 | I probably will not leave | ... 2  |
| I am uncertain about my future | .. 3   | I probably will leave     | .... 4 |
| I have decided to leave        | .. 5   |                           |        |
37. If you had your choice again, would you enter priesthood? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.
- |                |       |              |        |                |        |
|----------------|-------|--------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Definitely yes | ... 1 | Probably yes | -- 2   | Definitely not | .... 5 |
| Uncertain      | ... 3 | Probably not | .... 4 |                |        |
38. Taking things all together, how happy would you say you are as a priest today? CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY.
- |               |        |                  |       |
|---------------|--------|------------------|-------|
| Very happy    | ... 1  | Pretty happy     | -- 2  |
| Not too happy | .... 3 | Not at all happy | ... 4 |



39. Given below are some statements about the Catholic Church in Kerala today. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Un- certain	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
(a) There is a widespread decline of faith among the Catholics of Kerala.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) The vast majority of lay people in Kerala still respect and abide by the directives of their priests and bishops.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) All things considered one has reason to be happy and hopeful about the future of the Church in Kerala.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) Anticlericalism is becoming very strong and wide-spread in Kerala.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) The Church in Kerala is widely perceived as a supporter of the rich and the powerful.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) There is growing dissatisfaction among the Catholics about the way the Church functions in Kerala.	1	2	3	4	5
(g) The recent directive issued by the bishops of Kerala asking the faithful not to vote for certain political parties was a legitimate exercise of their pastoral responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
(h) The large number of Catholic youth who are moving away from the Church is a matter of grave concern.	1	2	3	4	5
(i) The Kerala Church has always shown a readiness to change with the times and to make its message and mission relevant to the modern man.	1	2	3	4	5
(j) Every Catholic in Kerala can be proud of the high standards of honesty, fairness, and integrity that are maintained in the administration of the Catholic institutions like schools, colleges, hospitals etc.	1	2	3	4	5
(k) Students educated in Catholic schools and colleges are in general more critical and hostile to the Church than the students educated elsewhere.	1	2	3	4	5
(l) Church in Kerala is in a serious crisis today.	1	2	3	4	5
(m) The Church's failure over the years to support the cause of the poor and the oppressed is one of the major reasons of the rise and growth of Communism in Kerala.	1	2	3	4	5

40. Of late there has been a lot of discussion about the role of the Church in education in Kerala. Which of the following options best represents your point of view on the issue. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER ONLY

- (a) The Church should continue to expand its role in education in Kerala by establishing as many new educational institutions as possible. .. 1
- (b) Do not expand. But keep the schools and colleges we already have. .... 2
- (c) Withdraw from the field of education by handing over our institutions to the Government. .... 3
- (d) Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_ .. 4

41. Please indicate to what extent each of the following is a problem to the Church in Kerala. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Very much of a problem	Somewhat of a problem	Little of a problem	Not at all a problem
(a) Lack of cooperation at the level of the hierarchy in planning and formulating common policies for the Kerala Church.	1	2	3	4
(b) The incompetence of the hierarchy to provide effective leadership.	1	2	3	4
(c) The increasing number of priests who leave priesthood.	1	2	3	4
(d) Uncommitted priests who destroy the credibility of all priests by leading scandalous lives.	1	2	3	4
(e) The glaring gap between the Church's preaching and practice.	1	2	3	4
(f) The increase in the power and influence of Communists and other anti-religious forces.	1	2	3	4
(g) The spread of liberal ideas and secular views of life through education and mass media.	1	2	3	4
(h) The ongoing rivalry between the three different rites.	1	2	3	4
(i) Corruption and mismanagement in Catholic institutions.	1	2	3	4
(j) Group conflicts among priests at the diocesan levels.	1	2	3	4
(k) Too much change too soon.	1	2	3	4
(l) Failure to change with the times.	1	2	3	4

42. Please review the items above, and indicate which one you consider to be the most important problem and the second most important problem for the Church in Kerala. Please indicate your choices by writing in the letter preceding the items concerned.

The most important problem is : \_\_\_\_\_

The second most important problem is : \_\_\_\_\_

43. Here are a few proposed changes for the Church in Kerala. Please indicate how helpful each of the proposed changes would be for the Kerala Church. CIRCLE ONE CODE NUMBER IN EACH LINE.

	Very helpful	somewhat helpful	A Little helpful	Not at all helpful
( a ) Establishing priests' associations to protect and promote the interests of the priests.	1	2	3	4
( b ) Greater participation of the laity in the process of decision-making and administration of the parish and diocese.	1	2	3	4
( c ) Determining B. A. / B. Sc. as the minimum secular education for all priests-to-be.	1	2	3	4
( d ) Election of the bishop by the priests of the diocese.	1	2	3	4
( e ) Consulting the priest concerned before any appointment or transfer.	1	2	3	4
( f ) Decentralisation of the power of the bishop by giving greater importance to the role of priests' senate, pastoral council etc.	1	2	3	4
( g ) Uniform salary for all priests.	1	2	3	4
( h ) Stop spending large sums in constructing imposing Churches and celebrating expensive feasts.	1	2	3	4
( i ) The Church should join hands with the Communists in Kerala ( CPI and CPM ) in working for the uplift of the poor and the working class.	1	2	3	4
( j ) Make the accounts of all Catholic institutions available for public scrutiny.	1	2	3	4
( k ) Other ( SPECIFY ) _____	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B

## DESCRIPTION OF INDICES

Index of "Plausibility-Orientation"

The index of "plausibility-orientation" was designed to measure the degree of plausibility-orientation of the clergy in Kerala with regard to theological and moral issues. This index was constructed by aggregating the responses of the respondents on the following questionnaire items, each of which had five response categories ranging from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly".

There is never a good reason for leaving the priesthood.\*

Ordination confers on a priest a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity.\*

The idea that a priest is "a man set apart" is a barrier to the full realization of the Christian community.\*\*

In many cases, a decision to resign from the priesthood is a wise and mature choice.\*\*

Celibacy is essential to the realization of the full potential of the priesthood.\*

Celibacy should be a matter of personal choice for the diocesan priests.\*\*

The relationship between the clergy and the laity was much better before the Second Vatican Council.\*

Today's Christian must emphasize openness to the Spirit than dependence on tradition.\*\*

To doubt one article of faith that is "de fide" is to question the whole revealed truth.\*

There are times when a person has put his conscience above the Church's teaching.\*\*

Deliberate masturbation, in most cases, is not a sin.\*\*

In certain well defined circumstances, direct abortion can be morally permissible.\*\*

Given adequate reasons for avoiding children, artificial contraception is morally acceptable.\*\*

\* agreement coded in the negative direction.

\*\* agreement coded in the positive direction.

Index of Traditional Spirituality Orientation

The index of "Traditional Spirituality Orientation" was constructed to measure the extent to which the respondent is oriented to traditional spirituality. This index was created by aggregating the frequency with which the respondents performed the following spiritual exercises: reciting the rosary, saying the breviary, praying or meditating privately, reading the Bible privately. The response categories were: daily, several times a week, once a month, once in a while, never. Those engaged in these spiritual exercises more frequently were considered more traditional spirituality oriented than those who engaged in them less frequently.

The Smith Scale of Work-satisfaction

The instructions for the scale asked the respondent to 'Y' beside an item if the item described his work, and 'N' if the item did describe his work.

The response given beside each item is the one scored in the "satisfied" direction of the scale.

Y	Fascinating	N	Tiresome
N	Routine	Y	Healthful
Y	Satisfying	Y	Challenging
N	Boring	N	Running around
Y	Good	N	Frustrating
Y	Creative	N	Simple
Y	Respected	N	Endless
Y	Pleasant	Y	Gives sense of
Y	Useful		accomplishment



Functional Relevance of Celibacy Index

The index of the functional relevance of celibacy was constructed to measure the usefulness of celibacy for priestly ministry in the perception of the respondent. This index was created by aggregating the responses of the following items:

1. Individual priests evaluate celibacy for themselves in different ways. Please indicate how you feel about the following aspects of celibacy yourself: a) for doing my work better; b) personal growth and holiness; c) for relating more fully to other people. (These items had five response categories ranging from "very much an advantage" to "very much a disadvantage.")
2. You have probably heard many of the statements listed below. Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each. (These items had five response categories ranging from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly.")
  - a) A married clergy would better understand the problems of married people.
  - b) The celibate life allows more time for the priest to be available for people.
  - c) Today's deeper understanding of the person is helping us realize that celibacy is in fact harmful for some priests.

Crisis of Credibility Index

The index of the perception of a crisis of credibility in Kerala Church was constructed by aggregating the responses on the following five items, each of which had five response categories ranging from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly":

The vast majority of lay people in Kerala still respect and abide by the directives of their priests and bishops.\*\*

The Church in Kerala is widely perceived as the supporter of the rich and the powerful. \*

There is growing dissatisfaction among Catholics about the way the Church functions in Kerala. \*

Every Catholic in Kerala can be proud of the high standards of honesty, fairness and integrity that are maintained in the administration of the Catholic institutions like schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. \*\*

The Church's failure over the years to support the cause of the poor and the oppressed is one of the major reasons of the rise and growth of Communism in Kerala. \*

\* agreement coded in the positive direction

\*\* agreement coded in the negative direction

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Paul V. Parathazham has been read and approved by the following committee:

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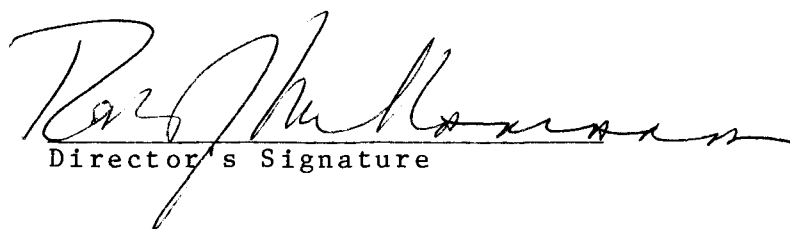
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

9/17/82  
Date

  
Director's Signature