

**A CASE STUDY ON “INDEPENDENT BAPTIST  
MINISTRIES OF INDIA”- A CHURCH PLANTING  
ORGANIZATION IN KERALA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Independent Baptist Ministries of India is Church planting Organization. One of the objectives of mission is the transformation and multiplication of the Church. The mission of a visionary is to make known the gospel of Christ in word and deed. The gospel is always transforming, it sometimes appears in new forms and shape. India becomes the largest mission field; thousands of Indian missionaries have done tremendous missionary work for the past few decades. The activities of the IBMI are projected in the research through the eyes of an interviewee for a case study from the formation till the present state of transformation through stages of reformation.

## THE KERALA STATE

### Geographical Position

Kerala has been through the ages an integral part of the Indian Subcontinent. Its history is the general history of India, and its culture is one of the major streams that have enriched the composite culture of the country. The land of Kerala comprises the narrow coastal strip bounded by the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west in the southern part of the Indian peninsula.

Kerala is a State in south-western India. Most of Kerala's 3.18 crore (31.8 million) people are of Malayali ethnicity. Malayalees in turn number among southern India's Dravidian community. Additional ancestries derive from several centuries of contact with non-Indian lands, whereby thousands of people of Arab, Jewish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, and other non-Dravidian ethnicities settled in Kerala. Many of these immigrants intermarried with native Malayalees.<sup>1</sup>

The geographical position of Kerala has its own uniqueness and its landscape its own beauty. In the poetic language of a Poet called Mahakavi Vallathol, Mother Kerala

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/13th> November,2008

sleep with her head on the lap of the sahyadri, clad in green and her feet pillowed on the crystal ocean sand, kumari at one end and the lord of Gokarna on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Eastern Kerala consists of land encroached upon by the Western Ghats; the region thus includes high mountains, gorges, and deep-cut valleys. The wildest lands are covered with dense forests, while other regions lie under tea and coffee plantations (established mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries) or other forms of cultivation. Forty-one of Kerala's forty-four rivers originate in this region, and the Cauvery River descends from there and drains eastwards into neighboring states. Here, the Western Ghats form a wall of mountains penetrated near Palakkad; here, a natural mountain pass known as the Palakkad Gap breaks through to give access to inner India. The Western Ghats rise on an average to 1500 m elevation above sea level. Certain peaks may reach to 2500 m. Just west of the mountains lie the midland plains, comprising a swathe of land running along central Kerala. Here, rolling hills and shallow valleys fill a gentler landscape than the highlands. In the lowest lands, the midlands region hosts paddy fields; meanwhile, elevated land slopes play host to groves of rubber and fruit trees, in addition to other crops such as black pepper, tapioca, and others.<sup>3</sup> Kerala is also an important center for spices and this has drawn merchants of spices to stop here.

Kerala lies between north latitudes 8°18' and 12°48' and east longitudes 74°52' and 72°22'. Kerala's climate is mainly wet and maritime tropical, heavily influenced by the seasonal heavy rains brought by the monsoon.<sup>4</sup> It has a total area of 15,002 sq. Miles (38,855sq.Km) and a coast line which is nearly 360 miles long. The territory of the State may be broadly divided into three natural divisions, viz, the highland, the midland and the lowland.<sup>5</sup>

The climate of Kerala is different from that of the other Indian states. According to meteorological data, Kerala receives rain around 286 days in a year. Kerala's average annual rainfall is about 300CM.<sup>6</sup> The nature has pressed Kerala with a green thumb with

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<sup>2</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, A Survey of Kerala History (Kottayam: DC Books, 1967), 13

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Kerala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Kerala). 13th November, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, Op, Cit., P. 13

<sup>6</sup> Government of Kerala, Department of Education, Kerala Reader social science-II, 70

lush green vegetation. Numerous backwaters and three fresh water lakes, rubber plantations and vernacular printing boom with a nearcent percent literacy. So the state is also libeled “land of lagoons, latex and letters”.

### Origin of the name Kerala

The coastal belt, lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea in peninsular India, was designated “Kerala” in Sanskrit literature, even from very ancient times. The words Kerala and chera have been used almost as synonymous by all early writers on Kerala. An attempt is made by some scholars to derive the name Kerala from the word kera, (coconut) and alam (land or location), which is one of the characteristic products of the west coast. But this view is not shared by all writers. Dr. Gundert, the author of the monumental Malayalam dictionary, observes that the word ‘keram’ is the Canarese pronunciation of the word ‘cheram’ and he describes “keralam” as “ cheram” – the country between Gokarnam and Cumar. The word Charal in Tamil means the declivity of a hill or a mountain slope and according to some writers the word must have got itself corrupted in course of time into cheral, giving its name to the Kerala or chera country. This theory emphasizes the mountainous character of Kerala as the basis of the origin of its name. However, the derivation of the name ‘chera or Kerala’ from charal is a little far-fetched. In ancient works the land is invariably referred to as the chera country and the ruler of the land as the chera or cheral. There is also a view that the word Kerala (cheralam) is made of the two words cher (sand) and alam (region) and that it literally means the slushy land.

### Origin of Malayalam

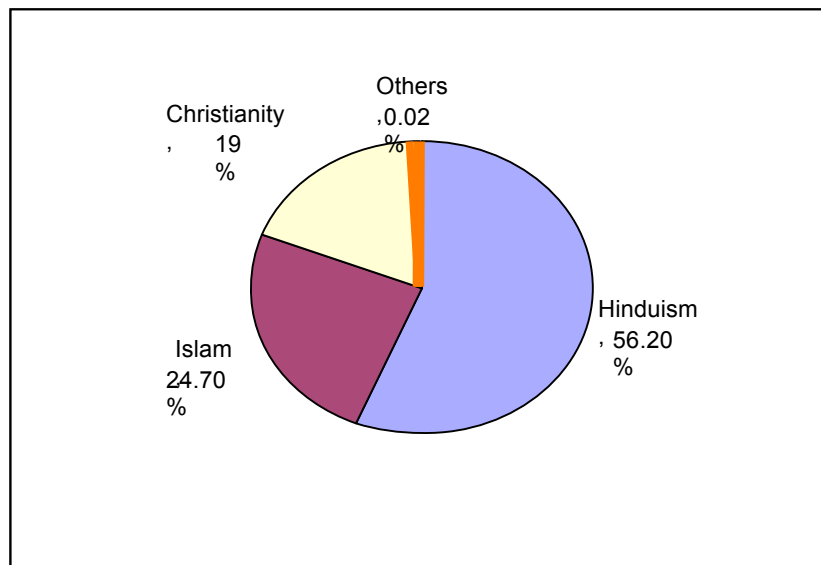
Until about 800 A.D., Kerala was almost a part of Tamilakam and the language of the region was Tamil, with its own peculiar local characteristics. The origin of Malayalam as a distinct language may be traced to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In fact, Malayalam was the last of the four Dravidian languages to take distinct shape, the other three being Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu. It had its origin in the primitive Tamil spoken in Kerala, but its gradual evolution to its present form was influenced by the circumstances that prevailed in Kerala during the various phases of its history. Having originated as an offshoot of Tamil, it came under the influence of Sanskrit and Prakrit when the Brahmins became an

important element in the population of Kerala, and in due course it came to have a literature of its own.<sup>7</sup>

### Religion in Kerala

The major religions followed in Kerala are Hinduism (predominantly Ezhavas and Nairs), Islam (Keralite Muslims from the northern part of the State are also known as Mappilas), and Christianity. Kerala also had a tiny Jewish population until recently, said to date from 587 BC when they fled the occupation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The 2001 Indian census recorded only 51 Jews in Kerala. The synagogue in Kochi is the oldest in the Commonwealth of Nations. The state has many famous Temples, Mosques, and Churches.

**Kerala's religious population as per census 2001**



As per census 2001 Hindus constitute 56.20% Christians 24.7% and Muslims 19% of the total population of 3, 18, 41,374 of the State.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p,324.

<sup>8</sup><http://www.prokerala.com/Kerala/religions.htm> 22<sup>nd</sup> January,2009.

## Origin of Christianity in Kerala

There are two views among scholars about the origin of Christianity in India. One is that the foundations of Christianity in India were laid by St. Thomas, the apostle, or even by two apostles, St Thomas and St. Bartholomew. The other is related to the enterprise of merchants and missionaries of the East Syrian or Persian churches.

According to the Syrian Christian tradition, St Thomas after visiting Socotra, an Island in the Arabian sea of the north-east coast of Africa, landed at Cranganore, (kodungaloor) on the Periyar estuary north of Kochi in about 52 A.D, and preached to the Jewish colony settled there. Travelling in the coastal region southwards he founded churches in seven places – Maliankara, Palayur, Parur, Gokamangalam, Niranam ,Chayal and Quilon, in four of which places Syrian churches still exist.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the well-documented St.Thomas tradition that he was a builder by trade and built 7½ churches, the Christian population is a microscopic minority in India.

## Formation of Kerala State

The State of Kerala formally came into existence on November 1, 1956, with a Governor as the head of the State. The last vestiges of princely rule in Kerala also disappeared with the end of the institution of Rajapramukh consequent upon the formation of the new State. The first general elections to the Kerala State legislature were held in February and March 1957. The communist party of India and a few independents supported by it secured 65 of the 126 seats in the legislature. President's rule came to an end on April 5, 1957 and a communist ministry under the Chief Ministership of E.M.S Namboothiripad came to power.<sup>10</sup>It was the first ever elected communist regime in the world.

## THE KOLLAM DISTRICT

Kollam, known to the Portuguese as Quilon, pronounced Koy-lon, is a city and a municipal corporation in Kollam district in the India State of Kerala. It lies 71 Kilometers north of the state capital Thiruvananthapuram. The town is very famous for cashew processing and coir manufacturing. It is the southern gateway to the backwaters of kerala, and thus, a prominent tourist destination.

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<sup>9</sup>George K.M , Development of Christianity, Through the centuries, ( christava sahitya samithi, Thiruvalla 2005),255-256

<sup>10</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, Op.Cit, P.301.

Kollam shares fame with Kodungallur as an ancient sea port on the Malabar Coast of India from early centuries of the Christian era. Kollam had a sustained commercial reputation from the days of the Phoenicians and the Romans. Pliny (23-79 AD) mentions about Greek ships anchored at Musiris and Nelkanda. Musiris is identified with Kodungallur (then ruled by the Chera Kingdom) and Nelkanda (Nelcyndis) with Quilon or Kollam (then under the Pandyan rule).

The Malayalam Era named after Quilon began in 824 AD. Malayalam Era is called 'Kolla Varsham' after Kollam, because of the importance of Kollam in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. The rulers of Kollam then, also had trade relations with China and exchanged embassies. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler, who was in Chinese service under Kublai Khan visited Kollam in 1293 AD on his return trip to China to Venice. He found Christians and Jews living in Coilum (Kollam). He also found merchants from China and Arabia. Chinnakada, (China-kada), the city center, was so named after Chinese merchants.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish a trading center at Kollam in 1502. In 1661 the Dutch took possession of the town. The remnants of the Dutch forts can be found at Thangasseri. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Travancore conquered Kollam, followed by the British in 1795. Velu Thampi Dalawa of Travancore, worked toward the improvement of the Kollam town.

As of 2001 India census, Kollam had a population of 361,441. The density of population being 1037 persons per square kilometer. The sex ratio (the number of females per 1000 males) was 1070 during the census year of 2001. The district ranks sixth with respect to the population in the state. Males constitute 49% of the population and females 51%. Kollam has an average literacy rate of 82%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 84%. In Kollam, 11% of the population is under 6 years of age.<sup>11</sup>

## THE LOCATION

Chathannoor is a town in Kerala situated at the Kollam District on the banks of river "Ittikarayar". Chathannoor is around 50 km north of the State capital Thiruvananthapuram on the National Highway (NH 47), which stretching from Salem, is

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<sup>11</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kollam> 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2009.

going via Chathannoor to Kanyakumari. The nearest Airport is Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. The district map given below shows the location of Chathannoor.

This junction will be busy with traffic and pedestrians all the time. The panchayath office and more than a dozen of Government offices, police station. Government High schools, NSS High school, public library, and YMCA, are located in the town center. There are a number of cashew factories located within the Chathannoor panchayath.

It is one of the fastest developing towns in Kerala. It is also famous for its religious aspects as well. Some of the famous temples and churches in-and-around Chathannoor includes Sree Bhoothanadha Temple, Chnamathu Shiva Temple, St. George Orthodox Church, Christos Marthoma church, Marakkulam St. Thomas Marthoma Church, Bethel Baptist Church and several Pentecostal churches. Chenamathu Shiva Temple gives the aura of a typical Kerala temple, with a vast paddy field near it. The temple is unique in its construction as it is sculptured out of stone. The temple was described in the “Unni Neeli Sandesham”. The temple is known to have been reconstructed in the year 1268 A.D. So it is under the control of the Archeological survey of India. Sree Bhoothanadha Temple’s festival during March attracts a lot of crowds because of the huge number of elephants and the unique feature of having “eduppukuthira”. Polachira (4km south) is a favorite haunt of migratory birds. Now it is a developing zone in tourist concept.

## THE FOUNDER

As in the case of the beginning of the movements recorded in the Bible, with the initial step of God working in the mind of an individual to start, the Spirit moved a particular man, namely K.C. Thomas, Chathannoor based Independent Baptist ministry. His home town was at Kumbanad, 75 km North of Chathannoor, which is known as a home of revival movements in Kerala. He was a member of the Brethren Assembly. He did his theological studies in Hindustan Bible Institute, Madras, and graduated with B.M. in 1959.

Thereafter, he left for the United States of America and did B.A. from Garland Bible College and Bachelor of Theology from Baptist Bible College, Springfield,

Missouri. After a break, K.C. Thomas did Th.D. from Bible Christian University, Ph.D. from North Carolina Christian University and later he was honored with D.D. from Baptist Bible College, Springfield. God has blessed him with four children, two sons and two daughters.

## THE BEGINNING

Mrs. Thankamma Thomas, wife of Dr. K.C. Thomas, narrates my husband had begun his ministry on the personal level at Kottayam. While we were staying in Kottayam in a rented house he had an opportunity to go to America. However, one prominent servant of God intervened in this matter and said Bro.Baby (K.C Thomas) is not efficient, and cannot speak the English language. Thus that opportunity was given to that man's close relative. It was a painful experience in Thomas' life. Later one of his relatives gave an address of a Bible College in America; he applied and received admission. But he did not have money to buy a plane ticket. He borrowed money from his brothers for the ticket, but there was nobody to give money for the Visa. Finally I sold my wrist watch; that money paid for his Visa.<sup>12</sup> After we reached America, we had days on which we had financial struggles. Our two children collected empty bottles, thrown away on the street after drinking Coca Cola and sold them for a meager amount; with that amount they used to buy candies. Once I went with them to the shop; that day the money they got for collected bottles was used to buy food for that night.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the land of all sufficiency, we lived frugally. So Dr.K.C. Thomas and his family paid the price for which they were rewarded by God later.

The Independent Baptists', based in the U.S.A, recognized Dr. Thomas as their missionary to India. After returning to India on August 22, 1968, Dr.K.C. Thomas shifted his residence to Chathannoor, on which site he was briefed by some relatives of his wife whose native place was nearby, with his wife Thankamma Thomas, two children and two other co-workers, P.A. John and V.C. Mathew. He translated his vision into a mission by forming **Independent Baptist Ministries of India**. The same year the first Baptist church under IBMI namely Bethel Baptist church was also started.

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<sup>12</sup> Baby K.T, interview with Mrs. Thanakamma Thomas "Vedakahalam" Vol.23, No.10, P.14, 15. ( July 2002) Translated from Malayalam by the author.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Vol.23 , No.11 ,p.23 ,August,2202

Dr.K.C. Thomas also took K.S. Mathew, son of his wife's sister, along with him at the very beginning of the ministries and gave him training. He was the first who took water Baptism in the IBMI family. Later he gave him a reputed post as the secretary of IBMI.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June Dr.K.C. Thomas established a Baptist Bible Institute, with 12 students and 4 teachers, in a rented building on a small scale at Chathannoor. The four rooms in the rented facility were used as a class room, office, teacher's quarters and the family quarters for Dr.K.C.Thomas. The students used a garage as their dormitory.<sup>14</sup>Dr.K.C. Thomas did not have enough funds to run a Bible School; the seed money he used was from the gifts he received from the friends from overseas.

She further shared; when we left the U.S.A to India with the intention of starting a Bible School, some ladies of the church gave me a refrigerator, Washing Machine, Stove, Coffeemaker, Ice cream maker and several other vessels as a token of their love. When we were struggling financially to run the Bible School at the infancy stage, we sold all of them to feed the students. Later, Raymond Tracy, the pastor of the church where we were attending, came to India, saw the work and situations, and started supporting the ministry regularly.<sup>15</sup> The seed planted by then has grown into a big banyan tree.

Mrs.Thankamma Thomas is not only a house wife but also a mother to all the Bible College students at Chathannoor; she created a homely atmosphere in the first Bible school, she also treated them as her own children, cooking for and feeding the big number of people was not an easy thing. However, she had no role in the administrative affairs and she didn't aspire for it either. No accusation over any petticoat- government in IBMI has come up from any quarters since the formation of IBMI. She says wherever I go for any special program there will be always some one who received training from Chathannoor used to meet me and exchange their pleasantries. My heart is filled with great joy when I see our alumni. Though her hands are weak today in her heart she is still feeding God's servants.

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<sup>14</sup> Cited from, Souvenir (Malayalam), Independent Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee Year, P.53, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Cited from, Vedakahalam (Malayalam), Vol.24, No.3, P.19, December, 2002.

The course taught was Graduate in Theology in the vernacular medium. The first Independent Baptist Church in India, namely “Chathannoor Bethel Baptist Church”, also started to function in this rented building.

In 1970, they bought two acres of land near the National Highway 47. By 1972, the new double-storied building with a plinth area of 7,250 sq. feet, was complete with space for dormitory, classrooms, office, library, chapel, dining hall and Faculty rooms. In 1990, the institute was upgraded to a college with the introduction of Bachelor of Theology course in the English medium. That was a milestone, for thereafter students came from different states of India and a multi-cultural, multi-language scenario emerged.

In 1997, it was further upgraded as a Seminary with the introduction of the Bachelor of Divinity course. By 2008 the B.D. course is re-named as Master of Divinity. B.D is practically the level of M.Div. At present there are 108 students enrolled for B.Th. and M.Div. together. The numerical strength is in spite of the fact that the Seminary caters only to male students. Due to lack of facilities they admit only 15 to 20 new students every year. The Faculty members are nine Paul Thomas asserts, the IBC Trust prefers to appoint the faculty from Baptist persuasion or those who respect Baptist distinctives to avoid disunity and clash. The authorities are careful of appointing the faculty from other church denominations as well as Serampore College affiliated Degree holders fearing the crept of liberalism and to protect Baptist landmarks.

Prakash Mathew, Academic Dean of the Seminary reports, “By 2009 there are 396 students have graduated from the Seminary. They are all in key positions in various corners of India. Several of them are doing higher studies. Number of churches is established in Kerala as well as in the neighboring States, such as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, by the graduates of the Seminary. This is in tune with the original purpose for which seminary was established namely planting of churches by the graduates”.<sup>16</sup>

The institution is rightly proud of its ever-increasing alumni. It is in the fitness of things to say that the kingdom of heaven is has a small beginning like that of a mustard seed. The Baptist Bible Institute did not begin with a big-bang.

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<sup>16</sup> Telephone Conversation with Prakash Mathew, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2008.

## MINISTRY METHODS ADOPTED

The motivation of Dr.K.C. Thomas was First Timothy 2: 3, 4 “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”, on the one hand, his motivation was to ensure the growth of the believers in the knowledge of the Scripture. Thus his perspective was of evangelism, church planting and equipping of the saints. Both preaching and discipling were combined in his program of taking his students streets in the afternoons for street preaching. Later, Dr.K.C. Thomas bought mini buses for a preaching tour to every nook and corner of Kerala State. In due course of time he organized ‘Baptist Mobile Crusade ‘to conduct mini conventions and camps in different places in Kerala.

Dr. K.C. Thomas authored 12 varieties of tracts, out of which the booklet titled “Veenupoya manushanum veendeduppukaranaya daivavum” (Fallen man and the Redeemer God) was reprinted fifteen times. By now they have distributed more than 5 lacks of its copies. Even now its distribution is going on. Through this booklet, thousands of enquiries were elicited and the response through the post and through visits resulted in the formation of churches. This book is the most popular and most widely circulated among his books.

K.S. Mathew, the IBMI Trust secretary acknowledged, “The ministry had been growing steadily and very fast at the beginning. The major reason for the growth was the regular fund and the active involvement of the Seminary students in the ministry. They used to go every week-end to establish and maintain Sunday schools, youth fellowships, door to door evangelism, and gospel tract distribution, Christian movie shows, conducting mobile crusades, mini conventions and follow-up program. These means were instrumental in the establishment of Baptist churches. The Independent Baptist churches numbering 90 bear witness to the long-standing effect of the methods adopted. Many independent churches also began to join and register themselves with IBMI since 1972”.

The magazine named Vedakahalam (Bible Trumpet) helped thousands of believers and evangelists, irrespective of the church denomination, to go deeper into Scripture and to improve their ministries. Dr. K.C Thomas used to regularly make use of this medium to educate the believers in the doctrines. He was an expert in two topics (a) Security of salvation and (b) Tongue speaking. He published three volumes on the former

and two books on the latter. This had two-pronged impacts, a positive impact on the like-minded churches and strong opposition from various other churches. His writings are logical and they do not leave any room for refutation by those holding variant views. It must be noted that Dr. K.C. Thomas did not allow the IBMI to change the message to be changed in the name of updating the method of evangelism to suit the times, and he circumvent the pitfall of mistaken broadmindedness in the name of tolerance in the pluralistic context. He stuck to the I am when it came to the doctrine and did not compromise fearing an allegation of narrow-mindedness. This has been a feature all through the ministry of Dr. Thomas.

## THE CRISES

### Birth-pangs and Teething Troubles

With Baptist distinctives and with teachers from Brethren Church background, conflicts naturally sprang up, in Chathannoor Baptist Bible Institute. The Baptists calls the head of the local church a Pastor, whereas the Brethren churches have a plurality of Elders. The students who joined the Institute in the early days were mostly from Brethren background. Those days the Brethren Churches were not having theological institutions in Kerala except one at Kumbanad. The conflicts came into the open when the Baptist Bible Institute began to send the graduates who eventually established Baptist churches in various parts of Kerala. In the early period of the ministry, personality conflicts, leadership conflicts, allegations and Polemic writings popped up between Dr.K.C.Thomas and Brethren enthusiasts. Owing to these developments, the Brethren churches warned their teachers against their association with Baptist Institute and ministries at Chathannoor. This resulted in an exodus of the Brethren teachers one by one from the Institute

### Growth Hazards

The mainline Christians of the area objected to others selling land for the new group which came to Chathannoor with a “strange” name “Baptist”. Some mainline church leaders warned their people not to entertain the Baptists in their houses. Two notable incidents of opposition from the mainline Christians, Mrs. Thankamma Thomas narrated: 1) the mainline Christians accused the Baptist teachings as a cult as they were

ignorant of this new movement and the new doctrine. One night, after an evangelistic meeting in the courtyard of a house, opponents shouted but, calling for physically assaulting Dr. K.C.Thomas. They shouted “catch him; kill him; finish him”, but the Lord intervened miraculously and made them immobile .2) On another day, some religious fanatics hid behind trees at night, intending to pounce upon Dr.K.C. Thomas on his way out from a mini convention in front of a house. Because some one came from his home town to the other side of that house in a car to take him for an important matter, he could not be caught by those hooligans who were hiding to murder him. Later, the very same opponents came to faith through his ministry and became members of the Baptist Church.<sup>17</sup> Thus, he was protected like a lamb rescued from the wolves. Hence, the first opposition was from the so-called Christians. We faced many a trouble and turbulence.

It was surprising that one Muslim came forward to sell his land for Dr. K.C. Thomas. This is a bright spot in the pluralistic context of the area.

### Crucial Periods

K.S. Mathew asserts, the issues problematic started after the purchase of land for the Seminary and the church. A village officer named Thomas Chacko<sup>18</sup> who is from a mainline church had been a great help in the process of acquiring and registering the land. As Thomas Chacko had been a village officer who is familiar with the legal procedures, he could contribute his expertise to Dr. K.C.Thomas very well. Because he was a Government officer, he gave all the help from Government side. Thus, Thomas Chacko was a blessing to IBMI in the beginning.

This fact led them to a close personal association and Dr.K.C Thomas made regular visits to Thomas Chacko. That closeness led naturally to the sharing of the gospel with Thomas Chacko, though Thomas Chacko had been an alcoholic. Dr. K.C. Thomas made all the efforts to convince him about the gospel and ultimately succeeded in bringing him to Christ. From then on, he and his family became regular members of the Chathannoor Bethel Baptist Church. The church also was happy because of the family of Thomas Chacko as the family consisted of nine members.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.Vol.23, No.4, P.15, January, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> To protect the person, the name used is a pseudonym.

At this time, Thomas Chacko got retired from his Government job and he expected a role in the administrative body of IBMI. Dr.K.C. Thomas did not take the expectation seriously because Thomas Chacko was just a church member. That caused grief to Thomas Chacko and from then on, the relation between them began to get cold. Thomas Chacko started to spread allegations against Dr.K.C. Thomas that he is registering the property of the churches as his family property. He also began to question the morality of Dr.K.C. Thomas. By 1980, the crisis came to a climax. The allegations and leadership were the burning issues in the Church, thus the situations became uncontrollable.

Mrs. Thankamma Thomas states, “The problem started when Dr. K.C. Thomas bought a little land in Chathannoor as his own with the share he received from his father. The co-workers misunderstood it and spread rumors that he was buying the land for himself with the money received for the ministry. One time a co- worker took a knife in to the Church and said that blood will be shed here today, but the lord whom we serve did not allow it to happen.<sup>19</sup>

One of the pastors who left IBMI was interviewed, now he is an Evangelist in a Church; a fictitious name is used here as he wishes to remain anonymous. He shall be referred to as “Mr. A” in this write-up. He states that Dr. K.C. Thomas was a people-oriented person. He regularly visited many of his pastors and their believers conducting night meeting, monthly meetings and fellowships. His opponents have interpreted it and taken it in a negative sense. They went on spreading this news to other IBMI churches as well.

Dr.K.C.Thomas responded all allegations through preaching and polemic writings. As a result Thomas Chacko and his company broke away from the church and took away six families from Chathannoor Bethel Baptist Church and one from a neighboring church, thus weaning away seven families of IBMI.

Though the allegations against Dr.K.C.Thomas were serious, everyone was spreading the news from hearsay evidences instead of substantiating it with tangible

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.Vol.24, No.7, P.18, April, 2003.

proof. The allegations were spreading through gossip. Therefore; the researcher is unable to pinpoint convincing evidence.

K.S. Mathew narrates, that P.A. John, the co-founder of IBMI, has been a multitalented personality. He came to Christian faith from a Hindu Ezhava community. It was at this time that C.V. John, the founder president of Trivandrum Bible College, Kerala, had been pioneering his own ministries. He wanted somebody like P.A. John to take the foreign missionaries to different places and translate their messages as well. It was also Dr. K.C. Thomas who arranged the opportunities for the foreign missionaries in IBMI churches, as he himself had several churches. C.V. George, the father of C.V. John from the Brethren church was a senior most and well qualified teacher in the Bible Institute and that caused C.V. John to have a close relation with Dr. K.C. Thomas and his associates. In this context C.V. John asked Dr. K.C. Thomas to allow P.A. John to take care of the foreign missionaries and do the necessary ministry assistance to them. From then on P.A. John began to assist C.V. John and he was paid a high allowance.

Dr. K.C. Thomas had been a great blessing to P.A. John. He had bought land and built a house for him before his settlement and had been giving him monthly financial support. At this juncture, Dr. K.C. Thomas wondered whether C.V. John was taking P.A. John away from him. Therefore Dr. K.C. Thomas instructed P.A. John that he must not do any more ministry assistance for C.V. John. This made P.A. John develop negative feelings against Dr. K.C. Thomas. Hereafter; the relationship between both of them began to get worse. Thus, P.A. John influenced some of the pastors in IBMI ministries; they formed a group and broke away from the IBMI ministries. This group consisted of C.V. George, Abraham Thomas, Thomas Chacko, P.A. John, some pastors and Laymen. Hereafter, both parties started spreading allegations and polemic writings against each other. It continued for a period of time.

One of the pastors who left IBMI was interviewed. Now he is pastor in a Church, a fictitious name is used here as he wishes to remain anonymous. He shall be referred to as “Mr.B” in this write-up. He has confidentially shared the following with the researcher: “In the beginning there was phenomenal growth for the IBMI. Those days all who were associating with Dr. K.C. Thomas called him Principal. The principal could have ignored allegations against him, but justified himself. It only served to keep the

allegations in the air by giving it more publicity which otherwise would have subsided and they could have avoided the publicity. He made use of the official magazine named Vedakahalam published by IBMI headquarters to refute the allegations. This served only to let the outside world know about the problems. It was like pouring oil into the simmering fire. Instead of reacting vehemently to the allegations, he should have used the opportunity for self examination and to overcome the situation through prayer. Some of the critics did not deserve a reply. Keeping matters on a low key would have resolved the problem. Answering every piece of criticism was self-defeating and cutting below the branch he was perched on. This personality trait created a bad impression in Christian circles. Hence some of his associates and several believers left IBMI unwillingly and hesitantly. “Mr.B” concludes that this further proves the fact that all Christian workers should bear in mind, i.e.” All camels have hunched back”.

K.S. Mathew points out, the issues turned to be a blessing for Dr. K.C. Thomas as they began to make all the procedures and legal- related items systematic. They made the registration, money transfer, and auditing, correspondence etc. faultless. This also resulted in implementing a well- organized clerical work. Dr K.C. Thomas made sure that the organization complied with all the legal requirements of the government.

The researcher advanced an argument in his personal conversation with Dr. K.C. Thomas, in the 90’s, when the allegations and counter allegations were in the air. He suggested that replying profusely and unendingly to the allegations would only give more publicity to the allegations. Therefore the researcher suggested to call it a day regarding the publication of denials of the allegation and communication through letter to vindicate the stand of the central leadership. To this argument Dr. K.C. Thomas responded saying that “if the allegations are not refuted, the general public would come to the conclusion that the allegations are truthful”, so he held that the policy of “tit for tat” had to be adopted. Dr. K.C. Thomas was probably thinking that offence was the best defense.

Evangelist T.G. Nelson is one of the senior most leaders and also a member of the IBC Trust, believes that the polemic writings by Dr. K.C. Thomas and his critics brought bad testimony and have affected about 25% of the growth of IBMI adversely, it will take years to come back to the former state.

Dr.K.C.Thomas had a little hearing impairment; many people misused this disability. They misguided him by giving partial information, with an objective of getting his favor and money. He had a nature of believing the first report of any event without inquiring much about it. He also had a short tempered nature. He used to express his opinions and feelings by writing in his magazine. His opponents responded to this in the same means by printing and publishing booklets. These issues resulted in furthering the problems and affected the growth of IBMI adversely. This brought a bad reputation from the other Christian and non Christian circles against Dr.K.C. Thomas and his ministries as well. Though all these issues were breaking the relationship between Dr.K.C.Thomas and others, before he got his home call, they all came and reconciled with him. Dr.K.C. Thomas after reconciling with all these people, died peacefully.

K.S.Mathew says, Dr.K.C. Thomas was lacking mentoring in his life and it reflected in the ministry.

Stanley&Clinton states,

Mentoring can reduce the probability of leadership failure, provide needed accountability and empower a responsible leader.<sup>20</sup>He further points out: All mature believers will continue at periods throughout life to need spiritual guides. In fact, leaders in positions of wide influence have a special need for spiritual guides to enhance vital accountability in areas of integrity and to face the temptations that usually accompany such positions. And the wise will search out coaches' who can help them develop and sharpen their ministry skills and become more effective.<sup>21</sup>

Sam Thomas president of IBMI says, "The crisis ministry encountered in the late 80's was the first one since the founding of the ministry, therefore the leadership did not know how to handle the situation. It started out as a micro problem, which could have been solved at the beginning but escalated to a macro situation".<sup>22</sup>

IBMI has lost some of the local churches. Though the pastors of the church were paid from the coffers of IBMI, what they were paid was quite below their needs. On the plea that IBMI is officially supported the pastors; the local congregations slackened their moral duty to support the pastors financially. Therefore, when other mission organizations offered a higher salary, the pastors had no option other than to leave IBMI and go to the greener shore. When the pastors left, the sheep also strayed to other

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<sup>20</sup> Paul D. Stanley & J.Robert Clinton, *Connecting* (Colorado Springs: Nav press, 1992), 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*,84.

<sup>22</sup> Online interview with Sam Thomas, 24<sup>th</sup> November,2008.

churches. Naturally, outwardly it amounted to a failure on the part of the pastors to hold the flock united. Some pastors faced charges against their conduct. This strengthened the stand of the central office to put the onus squarely on the pastors for the disintegration of the local churches.

## THE HOME CALL

Dr. K.C. Thomas had been a great personality. He started all the ministries from a humble beginning. A life God chose had been spent for the cause of God's kingdom. He saw the steady growth of the ministry. He could train many youngsters and bring many souls to the kingdom of God. He celebrated his silver jubilee in the ministry and had received home call and went to be with the Lord subsequent to an open heart surgery on 6th October 1994.

Quinton Hogg, founder of the London polytechnic institute, devoted fortune to the enterprise. Asked how much it had cost to build the great institution, Hogg replied, "Not very much, simply one man's life blood."<sup>23</sup>

The same day of his funeral, in the presence of a huge crowd who came to pay homage to Dr. K.C. Thomas, Ev. T.G. Nelson declared Dr. Thomas' younger son, Sam Thomas as the General President of IBMI and the elder, son Paul Thomas as the Vice President of IBMI as well as the President of the Institutions. Since then the entire responsibility came up on their shoulders. They both had their theological training at Baptist Bible College at Springfield, Missouri, in the United States of America.

On his maiden address to IBMI family before the body of Dr. Thomas was taken for burial Sam Thomas said to the mob, 'the leaders will come and go but the ministry will continue, if you are with me we will straighten out what was left unfinished'. At the same time the main foreign supporters of IBMI Dr. William E. Fortson and Pastor Terry Unruh assured the IBMI family that they would continue their support. It was a comforting word to the entire IBMI family especially to the workers when they were in mixed emotions on questions, 'who is next and what is next'.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Speer, *Marks of a Man* (New York; Revell, 1907), 109, cited by J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Seconderabad: OM Books, 2000), 115.

## ADMINISTRATION

Independent Baptist Ministries of India is registered, as a Trust namely, **Independent Baptist Church Trust**, by the Government of India. IBMI Churches and the IBMI Institutions go hand- in- hand under the umbrella of IBC Trust. Its central office is at Chathannoor. The appellate body of IBC Trust consists of nine members. Rev. Sam Thomas is the General President. Rev. Paul Thomas is in charge of all the Institutions under the Trust and Rev. K.S. Mathew is the General Secretary, with additional responsibility over the finance and the portfolio of legal matters. In practice, Messrs Paul Thomas, Sam Thomas and K.S. Mathew are permanent members of IBC Trust. Whether they are permanent with a statutory basis or not is to be ascertained. So far the IBC had cohesion to large extent as there was a family unity among the top brass. The successors of Dr.K.C. Thomas include his own sons.

The IBC Trust members handle various issues that arise in the Churches of IBMI. The Trust meets thrice a year and discusses several issues including transfer of Pastors, disciplinary measures, developmental matters and Church creeds. The Pastors of the IBMI meets twice a year; two major features of the Pastors conference are fasting prayers and the mission challenge. They have the freedom to air their concerns and their opinions. They deliberate on annual general convention, annual youth camp and annual women's conference. They also deal with contemporary theological issues.

## DISCIPLINE

In the early days, the leadership team insisted that all the believers must abstain from keeping moustache. Keeping moustache was considered to be a sign of worldliness. Anybody who kept moustache was not allowed to take part in the Lord's Table. This teaching was offensive to the youths in the churches and they protested it by non-cooperation in church activities and their attendance in the churches were slackening. Later, the leadership team realized that they were too rigid in making these extreme measures of discipline and it is not having any connotation of unspirituality; hence, they revoked it. Pastors, seminary Lecturers and students were supposed to be clean shaved and that continues till today. However, full beard is permitted these days.

K. Jacob Kurian, alumni of Dallas Theological Seminary notified, that it was faced by DTS in 1960's and 70's, beard was associated with hippy culture; therefore, they prohibited growing of beards. But in 1980's they withdrew this restriction and permitted beards because by then the association of beards with the idea of hippy culture had died out.

Pastor C.O. Cherian, one of the senior most pastors and a member of IBMI Trust observes; "this rule was inappropriate and baseless. The youths from other faiths and churches were hesitant to attend Baptist churches and youths gatherings as well. But later on as we have revoked it, we began to attract many more youngsters. Their involvement in the churches is always live. He continued saying, as the times are changing we need to revoke certain traditional practices that crept in to the churches which has no Biblical basis, without affecting the fundamental teachings of the scripture"<sup>24</sup>.

Believers are not permitted to wear ornaments. It is also counted as a sign of worldliness. Baptism and Lord's Table are prohibited for those who wear ornaments. This is also a traditional practice among some likeminded churches in Kerala showing separation from the world. This rule is however applied only in Kerala. This rule does not apply for the visitors who are born again and baptized members of likeminded churches.

Regarding the disciplinary action on workers of IBMI, K.S.Mathew comments; if any unethical behavior is observed among any of the workers, the leadership team will make an inquiry into it and if the mistake is proven, the person will have to undergo disciplinary process. He will be given time for correction and if necessary, he will be terminated from the ministry. The disciplinary actions are always expected to be a warning and lesson for the betterment of others.

John C. Maxwell acknowledged,

If you keep non-productive people, the productive ones become frustrated and leave. If you remove the people who don't add value, then the whole team gets better. It's just like trimming trees: If you don't cut the deadwood, eventually the whole tree falls. But if you remove the deadwood, the tree becomes healthier, the healthy branches produce more, and there's room for productive new branches on the tree. ... A team will always have gains and losses. People are constantly coming into an organization while others leave it. The key to its future success is gaining a more effective person with each loss.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Telephone Conversation with C.O Cherian, 18th December,2008.

<sup>25</sup> John C. Maxwell, Op.Cit.P.170-171.

Ordway Tead opines that the occasion for discipline is ideally the opportunity for a valuable learning experience to go forward for the offender, for the group and for the leader.<sup>26</sup>

## CURRENT WORK STRATEGY

The local churches in various places conduct several programs such as monthly meetings, conventions, Baptismal services, and vacation Bible school. Upon the special invitation, the leadership team visits them and encourages them in faith. It is a motivation for believers. The leadership team show special interest to visit the bereaved homes and to visits the other special functions like marriages, housewarmings etc. It strengthens the relationship between leaders and local churches and it bridge gap between leaders and local believers.

The present leadership visits churches, conducts discussions and tries all the possible efforts to solve any problem before it becomes an uncontrollable issue Pastor Thomas Philip, one of the senior most pastors in IBMI says, “we have talented spiritual lay people in the church. They meet every month and share and pray about the general matters of the entire ministry. The prayer changes the situations”.

Lyndon Johnson comments, “There are no problems we cannot solve and very few that we can solve by ourselves”.<sup>27</sup>

According to Paul Thomas, the president of the Institutions, “As Solomon the wise says, there is safety in the counsel of many. At present we have a committed leadership team. They meet time to time and discuss matters of church and institution issues and the growth of the ministry as well. Along with that, the Seminary Faculty meets regularly and their contribution to the growth of the IBMI is also taken seriously. He continued saying that a monthly fasting prayer was introduced recently in the Seminary, where the entire student body, Faculty and their families meet once in a month to share concerns and pray over them. Among the faculty members there is a sense of

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<sup>26</sup> Ordway Tead, *The Art of Leadership* (Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1935), 180.

<sup>27</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Team Work* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers,2001) ,4

community spirit. They maintain a healthy friendship. These are the motivating factors to face the challenges and to make right decisions.

Woodrow Wilson suggest, “We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow”.<sup>28</sup>

Chuck Swindoll wrote,

“Nobody is a whole team--- we need each other. You need someone and someone needs you isolated islands we’re not. To make this thing called life work, we gotta lean and support. And relate and respond. And give and take. And confess and forgive. And reach out and embrace and rely--- Since none of us is a whole, independent, self-sufficient, super-capable, all-powerful hotshot, let’s quit acting like we are. Life’s lonely enough without our playing that silly role. The game is over. Let’s link up”.<sup>29</sup>

NFI Champion Coach Vince Lombardi observed,” The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual”.<sup>30</sup>

Sam Thomas President of IBMI says, “Our leadership consists of various people from different background and experiences, which helps me to glean from their input and corroborate the ideas to come to the final decisions”.<sup>31</sup>

A Chinese proverb states,” Behind an able man there are always other able men”<sup>32</sup>

John C. Maxwell points out, if you do everything alone and never partner with other people, you create huge barriers to your own potential-----For a person trying to do everything alone, the game really is over. If you want to do something big, you must link up with others. One is too small a number to achieve greatness<sup>33</sup>

## OPPORTUNITIES

The workers do get plenty of opportunities to exercise their talents in diverse areas of the ministry thus they grow and bloom in IBMI. The powerful preachers and writers are the recipients of this opportunity. The leadership team stands at the side of their workers in the times of crisis and extend financial help, though it is little.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.,7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>31</sup> Online interview with Sam Thomas, 24<sup>th</sup> November,2008.

<sup>32</sup> John C. Maxwell ,Op.Cit.,P.4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,8.

Paul Thomas says, “The Seminary professors and Pastors sometimes assigned a special task; a special remuneration also will be paid to them, so that they never feel overburdened. Their contribution is commendable”.

John C. Maxwell affirms,

Once a team becomes successful, some members will want to leave to try to find greater success on their own. That’s a critical time for a team. If you can give people intriguing challenges and share both responsibilities and rewards with them, you may be able to persuade them to stay.<sup>34</sup>“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”. “You love people without leading them, but you cannot lead people without loving them.” “Becoming a better team leader publicly honor team play and give rewards to people who sacrifice for the good of the team”.<sup>35</sup>

## TRAINING

Pastor L. Thomas is one of the senior most ministers in the IBMI; though he has retired he is still involving in the IBMI ministries he recollects, “In the beginning IBMI gave an orientation to the workers for one week after theological studies, now a day it doesn’t appear to practice. In the quality of the ministry and its effectiveness there is noticeable difference between those workers who underwent the orientation and those who did not get the benefit of the orientation. The formers are found to be more effective and disciplined in their pastoral ministry than the later”<sup>36</sup>.

Ev.T.G. Nelson opines, the workers should have stint of working assistant to a pastor in the first phase of their ministry after being trained in seminary.

## MILESTONES

- 1968 - Independent Baptist ministry was began with Chathannoor as the Pivotal point
- 1969 - Baptist Bible Institute was established at Chathannoor
- 1970 - Printing press was started
- 1971 - Planting of local churches in Kottarakara area was launched
- 1972 - Local churches were planted in south Kerala and bordering Tamil Nadu
- 1973 - Local churches were started in Kottayam and Thiruvalla area
- 1974 - Baptist Bible Movement for the youth was instituted
- 1975 - Began to publish Christian literature

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid,Op.C it.P.172

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Op.Cit.P.41.

<sup>36</sup> Telephone Conversation with L.Thomas, 20th December, 2008.

- 1976 - Baptist children's ministry was launched
- 1977 - The work was extended to Nedumangad area
- 1980 - Social work such as construction of homes for the poor was initiated
- 1981 - Evangelistic camps were arranged for the first time by IBMI
- 1982 - Baptist Bible Institute was founded at Kannumamudu \*
- 1983 - Began to send gospel teams to villages where gospel hasn't not yet reached under the scheme ' Reaching the Unreached '
- 1984- Baptist Mobile Crusades began to be conducted \*
- 1987- General convention of Baptist churches began to be arranged
- 1988- Baptist Youth Movement came into existence
- 1989- Baptist Youth Movement camps began to be organized
- 1990- Baptist Sisters Fellowship was started. The same year The Baptist Bible Institute at Chathannoor was upgraded as Baptist Bible College.
- 1991- Baptist Theological College was founded at Cherupuzha in Kannoor and evangelistic work was extended to Andhra Pradesh
- 1992 Baptist Women's Bible Institute was founded at Kannumamudu
- 1993- Silver Jubilee of IBMI was celebrated
- 1994- The founder president, Dr. K.C Thomas, received the home call. The same year Andhra Baptist Bible College was founded
- 1995- Local churches were formed in Andhra Pradesh by IBMI
- 1997- The Baptist Bible College at Chathannoor was upgraded as Baptist Bible College and Seminary
- 1999- Children's Home was founded in Kannumamoodu for children from poor families\* and publication and distribution of gospel tracts began on a large scale
- 2001 Baptist School of correspondence launched from Chathannoor and Plus-Two course was introduced in Baptist Theological college at Cherupuzha <sup>37</sup>

**\* Ministries wound up subsequently**

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<sup>37</sup> Cited from, Oru uthamakudumbasahai, Translated by the author from Malayalam.

## OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

Obstacles for growth listed by Pastor D. Samuel who ministers in the local church at Odanavattom under the IBMI:

1) People are distracted by the tall claims of charismatic churches on wonders and miracles wrought among them. The general public has started feeling boredom over the traditional teachings of IBMI on the context of Christian movements which cater to the emotion of man rather than doctrinal purity. This results in bewilderment among the sheep.

2) The members are apprehensive over the teaching elsewhere that tongue-speaking is the only evidence of spirit baptism. Baptists are on this score labeled by others as people without the Holy Spirit.

3) Disagreement to the traditional stand of the IBMI on not wearing ornaments.

4) Unfaithfulness, insincerity and disinterest on the part of the workers and lack of testimony among the workers.

5) The dereliction of the duty to teach the congregation in depth on the doctrinal matters.

6) Other denominations influence the members with promises of material support.

7) Financial crunch among the workers who try hard to make both ends meet.

The following are obstacles observed by Pastor K. Oommachan, Ex. Pastor of IBMI:

1) Members of mainline churches hesitate to join IBMI fearing ostracisation by their families and the society and the fear of the unknown (marriage, burial etc.) when people from mainline churches join the IBMI.

2) Disunity among the believers expressed by allegations and counter allegations.

3) Keeping Bible study in the rear and placing the material goals on the pedestal.

4) The leadership does not work with a long term goal; instead they plan only for the immediate future and with temporary motives.

5) Low level of education among the workers in the present context of knowledge boom.

6) The economic disabilities the workers suffer from.

Pastor L. Thomas affirms, the workers ought to be dedicated and must be working without income motive. The Money will come after them those who love God's work and God's people. Unless there is mutual love and respect between the pastor and the flock it will result in stunted growth.

K.S. Mathew holds the view that an obstacle worth mentioning is lack of dedicated workers which is partly resulting of the lack of incentive due to financial insufficiency. The fact that they are not sufficiently dedicated is evident in the lack growth of the local churches they are pastoring. It is a vicious circle. Because of financial crunch they are not able to concentrate on the work free from the financial burden in the home front. Because of this situation new converts are seldom found in their local church .Because the church is not growing the tithing by the members is minimal. He continued saying another obstacle for growth is the continuation of racial discrimination within the church, which is a remnant of centuries of caste system in Hindu India. IBMI is not an exception to its repercussions.

Though Dr.K.C.Thomas did not have enough resources, because of his mission-mindedness and helping nature, he used to borrow money and help pastors in purchasing land and building churches. His foreign sponsors did not like this method; nevertheless, he was optimistic that God would provide him with the resources by some means. Eventually he mounted a considerable amount of debt.

K.S. Mathew reports, after the sudden demise of Dr.K.C. Thomas, the ministry suffered financially. The support was reduced by 30% as there was support coming through his personal contact with people mainly from overseas. The sponsors were actually supporting the missionary, not the ministry. There was no Indian representative for him overseas and his two sons were not personally attached to the sponsors. Later on some of the contacts were renewed by the new leadership team and started raising new sponsors.

There was also a considerable debt left over at the departing of Dr.K.C. Thomas. Owing to a financial crunch, IBMI was left with no option other than closing down some of the institutions under IBMI. In the public eye, some of the limbs of IBMI were severed, whereas the administrative body felt that it was like ushering in a compact organization, instead of continuing the unwieldy setup. So they saw it as a successful

withdrawal for regrouping. This was the reason that compelled the later leadership to sell the rubber estate of IBMI to clear the debt. At present the new leadership has a projected budget and has cut short the expenses in accordance with it.

Sam Thomas says, “I believe one of the greatest challenges would be the lack of faithful assiduous laborers to propagate the Gospel”. India being the 7<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world and as 15% of the world population lives in India. As per the foreign Act of 1956, citizens of other countries visiting on a tourist/business visa are prohibited from engaging in religious preaching which leave the nationals to fulfill the great commission. The desire of becoming prosperous instantaneously and lack of willingness to encounter hardship and difficulties, many are reluctant to be in the ministry. “The task is so great to fall on the shoulders of a few.”

Secondly, monetary and prayer supports are needed more than ever before. The ones who are financially equipped are not doing the work and the ones who are doing the work are not having sufficient fund. Unless the finances are found or provided through our own churches and ministries, the future looks very gloom.<sup>38</sup>

Sam Thomas says, “Independent Baptist Ministries of India is not just a ministry but it is a family consisting of 93 pastors, 15 lecturers, 25 members of staff and 120 students. The pastors and seminary lecturers receive nominal financial support from the IBMI Trust. The need of laborers for God’s work is higher than the financial capacity of the Trust. The students are given free education. The time is at hand for the churches to become indigenous and pastor-loving. My prayer is as George Verwer, the founder of Operation Mobilization, “Lord, please take care of them. I want to sleep”.<sup>39</sup>

## THE GOAL

Sam Thomas shares, “My vision is to expand the ministry to various fields within and out of India. Planting churches, training young men to carry on the ministry and propagate the Gospel through various modes and methods. How will it be done? I cannot

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<sup>38</sup> Online interview with Sam Thomas, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 15/11/2008.

give a straight answer for it but to borrow the words of William Carey “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.”<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

These issues raised a lot of challenges and gave motivation to the ministry and the lessons the leadership team learned from the crises help them to handle things effectively. They learned to find the root of the problems and attempt to solve it with much prayer and Godly wisdom. At present there is a collective stand among the members of the leadership team which is reflected in the administration today.

The vision is crucial to any ministry. Failure to articulate the vision will result in ineffectiveness. The ministry may have tremendous growth at the beginning but without vision they are destined to plateau and eventually die. The members of a ministry team deserve respect and recognition. A genuine care and concern for the team members is essential. Prior to sending the workers in to the field for pastoral ministry an intensive training must be given on the respective field. For a successful team the players are important, unless team gets the right people; they are not going to get anywhere.

When all is said and done, one fact becomes crystal clear ,i.e., the IBMI has justified its existence lighting a candle of gospel light in this pagan land without simply cursing the darkness, especially because many have embraced the Christian faith through its work and because the winning of a single soul is more valuable than gaining the whole world

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Demographics of Kerala

<b>Population</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
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<sup>40</sup> Online interview with Sam Thomas, 24<sup>th</sup> November,2008.

<b>Persons</b>	<b>31,841,374</b>	<b>23,574,449</b>	<b>8,266,925</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>15,468,614</b>	<b>11,451,282</b>	<b>4,017,332</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>16,372,760</b>	<b>12,123,167</b>	<b>4,249,593</b>
<b>Sex Ratio</b>	<b>1058</b>	<b>1059</b>	<b>1058</b>
<b>Literacy Rate</b>			
<b>Persons</b>	<b>90.9</b>	<b>90.1</b>	<b>93.4</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>94.2</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>96.1</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>87.9</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>90.9</b>
<b>Decadal Population Growth 1991-2001</b>	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
	<b>2,742,856</b>	<b>9.4</b>	
<b>Workers and Non-workers *</b>		<b>Absolute</b>	<b>Percentage to total population</b>
<b>Total Workers (Main and Marginal)</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>10,291,258</b>	<b>32.3</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>7,790,522</b>	<b>50.4</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>2,500,736</b>	<b>15.3</b>
<b>Main Workers</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>8,236,741</b>	<b>25.9</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>6,479,350</b>	<b>41.9</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>1,757,391</b>	<b>10.8</b>
<b>Marginal workers</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>2,054,517</b>	<b>6.4</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>1,311,172</b>	<b>8.5</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>743,345</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Non-workers</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>21,547,361</b>	<b>67.7</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>7,678,142</b>	<b>49.6</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>13,869,219</b>	<b>84.7</b>

<b>Category of workers (Main and Marginal)</b>			
<b>Cultivators</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>740,403</b>	<b>7.2</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>622,724</b>	<b>8.0</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>117,679</b>	<b>4.7</b>
<b>Agricultural Labourers</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>1,653,601</b>	<b>16.1</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>1,103,317</b>	<b>14.2</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>550,284</b>	<b>22.0</b>
<b>Workers in Household Industry</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>364,770</b>	<b>3.5</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>181,935</b>	<b>2.3</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>182,835</b>	<b>7.3</b>
<b>Other Workers</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>7,532,484</b>	<b>73.2</b>
	<b>Males</b>	<b>5,882,546</b>	<b>75.5</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>1,649,938</b>	<b>66.0</b> <sup>41</sup>

\* Provisional figures. (Updated in March 2004).

## Appendix 2

### Case Study Interview Questionnaire

1. Please brief me on the major reasons for Dr. K.C Thomas to choose Chathannoor as the mission station for IBMI?
2. Where all did Dr. K.C Thomas do his theological studies?
3. Please tell when Dr. K.C Thomas was leave for USA and narrates his experiences there that stand out, especially in raising funds and contact with Independent Baptist in USA?

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<sup>41</sup> <http://org.in/census/census.html> 13<sup>th</sup> November,2008

4. Who were his co-workers in the initial stages and how did he enlist them?
5. Could you give a brief account of the birth-pangs and teething troubles of IBMI?
6. When were the Bible Institute and first Baptist Church established at Chathannoor?
7. What were the challenges in your opinion which Dr. K.C Thomas faced at the beginning?
8. What were the methods Dr. K.C Thomas adopted in spreading gospel?
9. How did Dr. K.C Thomas influence the society and what was the impact?
10. Did Dr. K.C Thomas ever face isolation, threat or persecution from outside?
11. What were the problems he faced internally in the IBMI?
12. In your opinion what are the causes behind the problems?
13. How did he overcome the difficulties?
14. What about the first converts?
15. Did Sunday school, youth meetings, ladies meetings, Christian publications helps in church planting?
16. Do you know if Dr. K.C Thomas any time came to the verge of winding up the ministry?
17. How was the reaction from the American Independent Baptist' when they came to know of the problems in IBMI?
18. How did Dr. K.C Thomas fare in the interpersonal relationship?
19. What were the pet doctrines of Dr. K.C Thomas?
20. How was Dr. Thomas temperamentally?
21. Have you ever noticed any lose testimony on the part of IBMI?
22. Have you ever felt a change in the old leadership?
23. Did Dr. K.C Thomas train anyone to take up the reins after him?
24. How was his family life?
25. Did he ever share any concern over any difficulty with his team mates?
26. Did he receive full co-operation from the members of his team?

27. How do you evaluate the polemic writings by Dr. K.C Thomas defending his positions and refuting allegations? Were the allegations right?
28. Did polemic writings result in further lose of testimony and friendship?
29. Was there any pitfalls in the life of Dr. K.C Thomas, if so specify?
30. Was he accessible for being corrected by his team mates?
31. How do you weigh the new leadership?
32. Were the IBMI workers paid remuneration regularly and sufficiently?
33. Were the workers paid extra remuneration for extra service and were given increments annually?
34. Does IBMI give opportunities to the workers to grow and bloom?
35. Have you felt a change in the attitude of new leadership?
36. Has any one left IBMI due to financial struggle or due to internal problems?
37. Have you felt that IBMI is a ministry of single extended family and not peoples' movement?
38. What were the reasons behind selling rubber estate of IBMI and for cutting down the extant of the ministry?
39. What do you say about desirability of giving free education without charging fee by BBCSS? Do you think that BBCSS is poised to continue the policy of not charging fees?
40. Do the local churches of IBMI support the pastors and the central office?
41. Is the IBMI facing any hindrances now after the growth?
42. What are the gifts new leaders' posses?
43. Do you raise the local support?
44. Do you share your concerns and financial position with your workers?
45. What are the projected ideas to promote the ministry in large?
46. Do you think that the strict restrictions on wearing ornaments will be an obstacle in the growth of the ministry?

47. Do you give pastoral training to the seminary graduates before they enter into ministry?
48. Have you ever caste discrimination in the ministry?
49. What are the obstacles and challenges before you?
50. What is your ministry goal?

## Appendix 3

### Statement of Faith

#### I. Of the True God

**We believe:** ■ That there is one, and only one, living and true God - an infinite, intelligent Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love. ■ That existing eternally in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Ghost, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious office in the great work of redemption.

#### II. Of the Holy Spirit

**We believe:** ■ That the Holy Spirit is a Divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and of the same nature. ■ That He was active in the creation. In His relationship to the unbelieving world, He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled. ■ That He convicts of sin, of judgment, and of righteousness. ■ That He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the indwelling agent in the new birth and He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer.

#### III. Of the Scriptures

We believe: ■ That the Holy Bible was written by men supernaturally inspired by the Holy Spirit. ■ That it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the ages, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed and options should be tried.

A. By "The Holy Bible" we mean that collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which as originally written does not only "contain and convey" the Word of God, but is the very Word of God.

B. By "inspiration" we mean that the books of the Bible were written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally and verbally inspired and is inerrant and infallible. No other writings have been or ever will be inspired.

#### **IV. Of the Devil or Satan**

**We believe:** ■ That Satan was once holy, and enjoyed heavenly honors; but through pride and ambition to be as the Almighty, fell and drew after him a host of angels. ■ That he is now the malignant prince of the power of air and the unholy god of this world. ■ That he is man's great tempter, the enemy of God and His Christ, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions, the chief power back of the present apostasy; the lord of the antichrist, and the author of all the powers of darkness - destined however to final defeat at the hands of God's own Son, and to the judgment of an eternal justice in Hell, a place prepared for him and his angels.

#### **V. Of Creation**

**We believe:** ■ The Genesis account of creation and that it is to be accepted literally, and not allegorically or figuratively. ■ That man was created directly in God's own image and after His own likeness. Man's creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary changes of species, or development through interminable periods of time from lower to higher forms. ■ That all animal and vegetable life was made directly, and that God's established law was that they should bring forth only ' after their kind

#### **VI. Of the Fall of Man**

**We believe** ■ That the man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but of choice; and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse.

## **VII. Of the Virgin Birth**

**We believe:** ■ That Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner; born of Mary, a virgin, as no other person was ever born or can ever be born of woman and that He is both Son of God and God the Son

## **VIII. Of the Atonement for Sin**

**We believe:** ■ That the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial office of God the Son, who by appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. ■ That His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was the voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ the Lord, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. ■ That having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven and uniting in His wonderful Person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is, in every way, qualified to be a suitable and compassionate and an all-sufficient Saviour

## **IX. Of the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ**

**We believe:** ■ That Jesus Christ died on the cross, and that three days later, He rose literally and bodily from the dead. ■ That He was first seen of Mary and other women, then of Peter and other disciples, then finally, of above 500 brethren. ■ That his resurrected body was changed, but could be felt and handled and that it still bore the nail-prints in his hands and the spear-print in His side. ■ That after walking for a time on this earth, Christ, in the presence of witnesses, ascended to Heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession for us

## **X. Of Grace in the New Birth**

**We believe:** ■ That in order to be saved, sinners must be born again. ■ That the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus. ■ That it is instantaneous not a process. ■ That in the new birth, the one dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and

receives eternal life, the free gift of God. ■ That the new creation is brought about in the manner above our comprehension, not by culture, not by character, nor by will of man, but wholly and solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel ■ That its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

#### **XI. Of the Freeness of Salvation**

**We believe:** ■ In God's infinite grace. ■ That the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel. ■ That those who believe are elected according to the foreknowledge of God. Nothing prevents the salvation of any sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and the voluntary rejection of the Gospel, which rejection condemns him to an eternity in Hell separate from God.

#### **XII. Of Justification**

**We believe:** ■ That the great Gospel blessing which Christ bestows on them who put their faith and trust in Him is Justification. ■ That it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness, which we have done, but that solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed unto us.

#### **XIII. Of Repentance and Faith**

**We believe:** ■ That repentance and faith are the essential elements to the new birth. ■ That they are produced in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger, and helplessness and the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God in contrition and supplication for mercy, at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour.

#### **XIV. Of the Church**

**We believe:** ■ That a New Testament Baptist church is a congregation of baptized believers, united together by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel. ■ Church being the organization instituted by God for the propagation of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His Word; exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges

specified therein. ■ That its officers will be a pastor and deacons, whose qualification and duties are clearly defined in the Scripture. ■ The true mission of the Church is found in the Great Commission:

A. To make individual disciples, and baptize them.

B. To Build up the believers.

C. To teach and instruct as He has commanded. ■ That the local Church has the absolute right of self-government, free from interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit.

■ That it is scriptural for churches of like faith and practice to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel. ■ That every church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; and that on all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline and of benevolence, the will of the local church is final.

#### **XV. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

**We believe:** ■ That the scriptural Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost performed only under the authority of the local Church; to show forth in solemn and beautiful symbol of our faith in the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of our Saviour; symbolic also of our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. ■ That it is pre-requisite to the privileges of church membership and to participation in the Lord's supper, in which the members of the local church, by the sacred use of unleavened bread and the unfermented fruit of vine commemorate together the death of our Lord; this ordinance always to be preceded by solemn self-examination

#### **XVI. Of the Eternal Security of Believers**

**We believe:** ■ That the saved are kept by the power of God. ■ That through the all-sufficiency of Christ's shed blood, and the "sealing" of the Holy Spirit, we are preserved and sealed to the day of redemption. ■ That we are seated and positioned in the "heavenlies" with Christ eternally. ■ That we are not kept by our own power, but are placed and kept in the hand of God by His power.

#### **XVII. Of The Eternal State of Believers**

**We believe:** ■ That God has prepared a place called Heaven for all those who have been born again. ■ That this is a place of such beauty that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man of its splendor; there we will be with our Lord and our loved ones for eternity. ■ God will wipe all tears from our eyes; there will be neither death nor sorrow; nor crying nor pain; there will be neither sin nor anything that defiles in this place.

#### **XVIII. Of The Eternal State of Unbelievers**

**We believe:** ■ That God has prepared a place called Hell for the devil and his angels. ■ That it is a place of unquenchable fire and eternal punishment and separation from God. ■ That its inhabitants will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ■ That Hell enlarges its self to make room for the souls of unrepentant. ■ That the inhabitants thereof are present there by personal choice and against the will of God, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

#### **XIX. Of The Rapture of the Church**

**We believe:** ■ Since God has not appointed us to wrath, that before the seven years of tribulation which will come upon this earth, we the believers will be taken up into Heaven. ■ That of that day and hour no man knoweth, but God only. ■ That day will so come as a thief in the night. ■ That at the last trump we shall all be changed, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. ■ That we are to watch and ready, for we know not what hour Lord doth come.

#### **XX. Of the Second Coming of Christ**

**We believe:** ■ In the literal, bodily, and visible return of Christ. ■ That He will come again in the like manner as he ascended into Heaven. ■ That we will rule and reign with Him for thousand years. ■ That after this time, Satan will be loosed for a season to deceive the nations, and then he will be finally defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. ■ That He will come to execute judgment on this wicked earth. ■ That He will make a new heaven and a new earth and we finally live with Christ forever in Heaven.

#### **XXI. Of Civil Government**

**We believe:** ■ We believe that civil government is of Divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society. ■ That magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, expect only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ; who is only Lord of the conscience and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth.

## **XXII. Of Tithing and Giving**

**We believe:** ■ That the tithe belongs to the Lord, and that we are commanded to bring all the tithes into the storehouse, which is the local church. ■ That the tithe along with offerings is God's only plan for financing the local church. ■ That the tithe represents one-tenth of everything a person earns, and the offering is an amount above, and given in addition to the tithe. ■ That Christ also taught that it is right to tithe. ■ That the tithe was instituted before the law when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. ■ That God blesses the tither financially by opening the windows of Heaven and pouring out blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. ■ Christ said, " give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over will men give into your bosom.

## **XXIII. Of Missions**

**We believe:** ■ That the command to give the Gospel to the world is clear and unmistakable, and that this Commission was given to the churches. ■ That in order for a church to be considered a real New Testament church, it must be active in mission giving.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.ibmi.org/Statement of Faith%20.htm> 18/11/2008.

### Appendix 4

