



Appendix
St. Pope Pius X and the Question of Caste

Although the question of caste in relation to the Eparchy of Kottayam has been briefly dealt with already (1. 2. 1-3), there is still a residue issue associated with it, which deserves to be mentioned at least in an appendix. For caste is sometimes mentioned as one of the objections raised against the beatification of Pope Pius X (1835-1914). Wishing to know more about this matter, I enquired about it from Rev. Father Jacob Vellian of the same eparchy and visiting professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome. He told me that he, too, had heard such talk that the pope's approval of caste was raised as an objection by the Promoter of Faith and that it had delayed the cause of Pius X, but that he did not know more about it.

One might take the view that the fact itself that Pius X was beatified (3 June 1951) and soon canonized (29 May 1954) has already resolved the whole question in favour of Pius and, indirectly, of Kottayam. However, another view could be that the objection was answered in the sense of the prudent choice of a lesser evil: the consequences of a refusal to give a vicariate apostolic to the Southists could have been worse than tolerating a new structure based on caste. Perhaps Pius had regarded it as a lesser evil that could be eradicated progressively through careful pastoral action. If so, although the cause of Pius was won, the case for Kottayam is lost. So it is of some importance to explore the role of the Kottayam-caste question in the cause of St. Pius X.

On 15 April 2003, I visited the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and examined its archives. The fact that I am a Consultor of the Congregation entitled me to consult its archives. I examined all the five relevant volumes of the cause of Pius X, which are all in Latin. Monsignor Salvatore Natucci, as the Promotor General of Faith, had done an excellent job of arraying the objections against the cause, so much so the *Positio* had to be reedited twice with a *Positio Nova* and a *Positio Novissima*. There were objections like telling lies, cheating, physical violence against persons (beating his sister, externs), as a priest boxing people who had blasphemed, as pope thumping on the table in outbursts of anger, etc. But the main burden of the *Positio Nova* and the *Positio Novissima* was modernism and the pope's harsh treatment of persons accused or suspected of it. As regards our subject, in spite of such detailed and repeated checking and expert sifting of the pope's vices and defects by the Promoter of Faith, the question of Kottayam or caste did not figure at all even once. Either it was never raised or it was not regarded as constituting an objection. The fact is that the caste basis of Kottayam was not one of the many hurdles which the cause of Pius X had to clear.

How then did the legend of the Kottayam-caste hurdle originate? We may never know. The people of Kerala had probably no way of knowing if and what objections were raised against the beatification of Pope Pius X, given the statutory secrecy surrounding the process. Still, some gossip about serious hurdles delaying the process and requiring fresh *Positios* may have reached Kerala as well, where the Northist-Southist animosity probably fancied Pius getting his deserts for having favoured the Southists. Traditionally weak in history, Kerala excels in fantasy, and often prefers easy fiction to hard facts.