Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies

Volume 23 Article 8

January 2010

A Report on the "Sri Iesu Sahasranama" of K. U. Chacko

Francis X. Clooney

A Report on the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma* of K.U. Chacko[1]

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.
Harvard Divinity School

IN 1987 K.U. Chacko, a Professor of Sanskrit at Nirmala College in Muvattupuzha in Kerala, published in a small booklet the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma*, a thousand names of Jesus in Sanskrit, written down in Malayalam script; in 1995 it was reprinted in Devanagari script. The cover indicates that it was edited by Professor M H Sastri.[2]

The *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma* has no prose introduction, and nowhere in the published pamphlet does Professor Chacko explain his purpose in composing it. But in his 2009 *Iesu Suprabhātam* ("morning prayer honoring Jesus"),[3] he offers a progressive, post-Vatican II theology that welcomes intercultural and interreligious exchange. He says that Christianity can flourish in any culture, and imbibes the energy of that culture; this phenomenon has nothing to do with propaganda or relativism. Given the supreme place of devotion in religious life, by implication Christians have much in common with people of other faiths, and the *Suprabhātam* exemplifies this spirit by translating Christian theology into Sanskrit." While God is beyond our names for God, "this is an attempt to respond to the aspiration of the Church in India to have Sanskrit poetry in prayer services." He concludes, "If anyone would promote this attempt in indigenization, he is in the spirit of the *Summa*, 'plures religiones verae et legitimatae esse possunt.' (S. T. L. 1.9 ['There can be multiple true and legitimate religions.'])[4] Hope this work shall be accepted as [was the] *Jesusahasranāma* and will promote the wholesome spiritual growth of seekers."

Congratulatory comments precede the *Suprabhātam*, and these shed light on the reception of the *Sahasranāma* and possibly on the mindset of its author too. In his letter approving the publication of the *Suprabhātam*, Daniel Acharaparambil, Archbishop of Verapoly, indicates that he sees the *Suprabhātam* as fulfilling Christ's exhortation that his disciples spread the Gospel to every creature. "Through this poetical effort Mr. Chacko rightly responds to Christ's exhortation," since "this collection of devotional hymns may fill the heart of everyone with the divine light of Christ." In another prefatory comment, a Dr. Shukla RN also praises the *Suprabhātam* as "correlating spiritual, religious outsprings of your mind, soul and consciousness, nay, even to superconscious uplift... [it] proves to be extremely adventurous,

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Francis X. Clooney, S.J. joined the Harvard Divinity School in 2005 as Parkman Professor of Divinity and Professor of Comparative Theology and has recently assumed directorship of the Center for the Study of World Religions. He earned his doctorate in South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. His primary areas of scholarship are theological commentarial writings in the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions of Hindu India, and the developing field of comparative theology, a discipline distinguished by attentiveness to the dynamics of theological learning deepened through the study of traditions other than one's own. Professor Clooney is the author of numerous articles and books, including most recently *The Truth, the Way, the Life: Christian Commentary on the Three Holy Mantras of the Srivaiṣṇava Hindus* (Peeters Publishing, 2008), and *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). He recently edited *The New Comparative Theology: Voices from the Next Generation* (Continuum, 2010). He is a Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Society of Jesus; in July 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

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fruitful outburst of a True Sanskrit-English, Global peace; Love, Brotherhood, propagating, heart-teaching God prayer, meant for each and every human soul." In his foreword, Heeraman Tiwari says that by choosing to compose in Sanskrit, Professor Chacko "has not only followed the great South Indian tradition of Bhakti, but has also widened the scope of devotional worship; he has successfully demonstrated his skills as a Sanskrit poet who is not only well-versed in Christian theology but has also inculcated South Indian Hindu philosophy. His application of the gentle meters and subtle language in these poems is a testimony to his command and expertise over Sanskrit poetics; an informed devotion to Lord Jesus can be experienced in these verses. These works to my mind bring about the best of Indian spirituality from a Christian perspective." While such comments are of a theological nature rather removed from the substance and style of a Christian Sanskrit text, they indicate how this *Sahasranāma* been received in the Catholic context. It is taken to be symbolic of a positive interreligious accommodation with grounding in Christian faith, and not constitutive of any new claim about the significance of Jesus.[5]

We can step back and take a longer perspective. There is of course a long history of Christian Sanskrit in India back at least to the 17th century. Think for instance of the writings collected in the *Indian Christiad*,[6] by Jean Calmette, WH Mill, John Muir, and Brahmabandhav Upadhyay. As the excellent introductory essay by Anand Amaladass and Richard Fox Young shows, there was a long-standing commitment among Christians in India to expressing Christian ideas in Sanskrit, and enabling Christian worship to take its rightful place in India, by composing Christian prayers and songs in Sanskrit. The New Testament was translated in Sanskrit at least by the beginning of the 19th century, and the entire Bible soon thereafter. The *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma* is an honorable addition to that history.

A (Partial) Christian Precedent:

There is a still more precise precedent to the *Sahasranāma* than Christian Sanskrit in general. After I was well into the writing of this report and thus too late for full consideration here, I came across what has been described a Christian *sahasranāma*, a Sanskrit composition by an I.C. Chacko in the early 20th century. At first I thought it might be an example of the same genre, but it is interestingly different.[7]

Here are the opening six verses of that *Khristastavam*, containing by my count the first 40 of the names of Jesus:

I reverence Christ, son of the virgin, who died, conquered death, is the highest,
whose blood is made our drink, whose body is made our bread, imperishable,
His side was injured, his body injured, on his head he bore a crown of thorns,
his feet were injured, his hands injured, he bore the heavy weight of the world's sins.
His hands pierced, his two feet ripped by a nail,
his heart split by a spear, lord of the three worlds, imperishable
Sacrificer, the thing sacrificed, permanent, recipient of sacrifice — of him I partake;
destroyer of sin, without sin, bearer of the sin of the world, highest,
Solid, subtle, and without beginning, creator, giver of heaven,
enduring all, cause of all, pervading all, unperishing.
Easy to find by those whose minds are quieted, hard to find by those craving poison,
sole refuge of sinners, enabling them to cross over the ocean of sin. (vss. 1-6)[8]

There is no relationship between these two texts by two Chackos, but it is interesting to consider them together. The difference in the organization of content is most interesting. I.C. Chacko's text is distinguished by a tighter thematic order, very minimal use of Upaniṣadic and Hindu terminology, and the appearance in the text of verbs indicative of worship. Perhaps we can say that I.C. Chacko's text constitutes an explicit and intentional Christian theology, while K.U. Chacko's text, fully in the *sahasranāma* style and thus a simple concatenation of names, is more daring, yet too less able to be linked to any particular Christian theological or Christological position. It is a still open question whether or not stylistic differences between the *Khristastavam* and the *Sahasranāma* indicate

different Christian theological perspectives on the use of Sanskrit in Christian prayer and theology.

The *Sahasranāma* in its immediate literary context

Although Chacko does not offer a rationale for his work, he does provide for it a number of traditional markers that give it its location as a proper *sahasranāma*.[9] The details of the list testify primarily to the author's firm intention to make his work a proper Sanskrit work composed in the proper style and thus possessed of the efficacy expected of a *sahasranāma*.

- *chandaḥ* (meter): *anuṣṭubh* (the *anuṣṭubh* meter, used for solemn pronouncements)
- *devatā* (presiding deity): *Śrī Yesudeva mahācārya* (the auspicious divine Jesus, the great teacher)
- *akṣara* (syllable, imperishable): *avyaya* (not liable to change)
- *bījam* (seed word): *Śrīśa* (the auspicious lord; the name whence all other names arise)[10]
- *śakti* (power): *Mariyavatsalaḥ paviḥ* (tender child of Mary, yet a thunderbolt)[11]
- *paramaṃ mantram* (highest mantra): *saccidānandavigrahaḥ* (in form, being, consciousness and bliss)
- *kīlakam* (anchor): *triṃśadrūpyaka-vikrīta* (sold for 30 pieces of silver)
- *astram* (weapon): *meṣapāṇir dayārūpa* (in his arms is a lamb, his form is compassion)
- *netram* (eye, what captures the eye): *krūśayūpa-nibaddha* (fixed to the sacrificial post)
- *kavacam* (armor): *trimūrtir ekamūrtir* (three in form, one in form)
- *hṛdayam* (core, heart): *akhaṇḍa-ānanda-sandoha* (abundance of unbroken bliss)

Second to last in the list of the introductory markers is the meditation (*dhyāna*), in which *īśvara śarva īśāna* (lord, ruler of all) is addressed with this prayer,

Having meditated on Mother Mary, and bowed respectfully to the heavenly Son, I recite softly the thousand names of Christ that give heaven. Christ, Your cross is most sweet to me — destroying sin, removing it, giving auspiciousness to the host of humans, giving liberation. O You who are of peaceful form, You ever abide in the hearts of Your devotees, ever softening human minds, You are divine in form, my Lord. My sorrows eradicated, may my path be always auspicious, because You are wholly auspicious.

- *Viniyogam* (order, intention): *śrīyeśu-miśihā-prītyartha-sahasranāma-japa* (soft recitation of the thousand names for the sake of pleasing the messiah, the beneficent Jesus)

After the 1000 names, the final two traditional markers are introduced:

- the *phalaśruti* (mention of result) includes this prayer:

People who learn this praise of Christ with devotion will receive the highest bliss, and the qualities of his disciples. Those who read this hymn desiring secure possession will achieve all goals and attain the highest destination. The singer of this gains all desires and all joy. Hearers of it who are steadfast in listening to it are blessed.

- the *vilayam* (a final prayer of worship and petition) ends in these words, "Who knows and believes, may the Father dwell in him:" this word, oh Lord, is my refuge; O God, be gracious on this one who desires your kingdom; I am like the thief, now remember me, O great Lord.

By stating all these supporting markers common to Hindu *sahasranāmas*, Chacko confirms the status of his text by a fixity that is all the more important given the lack of a theological narrative about the text. These markers in a way also make clear his Christocentric commitment and piety, along with his claim upon the goods of Hindu tradition, bliss and liberation, and the grace of the true *ācārya*.

Deciphering the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma*

We are still at risk of making too much theologically of a text that has primarily a performative meaning, that of simple recitation.[12] But we can analyze the *Sahasranāma* from several angles. First, we can sort out *the kinds of names* in the text:

- 1. generic divine titles: *sarvajña* (omniscient), *nitya* (eternal), *avyaya* (immutable)…
- 2. specifically Upaniṣadic or brahminical names: *prajāpati* (lord of creatures), *saccidānanda* (being, consciousness, bliss), *puruṣa* (Person)…
- 3. titles, even proper names, with clear Hindu resonance and meaning: *śrīdhara, śrīpati, śiva, nārāyaṇa…*
- 4. Biblical names in reference to Mary and the birth of Jesus, to Bethlehem and the three kings, to the miracles and teachings of Jesus, and to his death on the cross;
- 5. more technical theological names, for example, "founder of the church" (*eklesyā sthāpaka*; line 65a), "greater than Moses" (*Mosasāc chreṣṭa*, line 87), "best of the kings of the Jews," (*Yahūdarājapravara*) and "sage from Nazareth" (*Nāsarettīyako muni*) line 111a).

All such names, in any of these kinds, appear without further ado, and are inscribed in a text replete with the kinds of names just mentioned. For examples, see the 108 names, and final names, appended to this report.

Second, we might ask about *the ordering of the names*, whether there is a logic to the order in which we find them. But it seems that there is no order to the names, even if at points in the texts pairs of names seem to go together. This is so even if it is not impossible that a *sahasranāma* arranges its list of names in a particular order. In commenting on the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, for instance, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar argued that the names there are arranged in accord with the *para, vyūha, vibhava (avatāra), arcā*, and *antaryāmin*[13] forms of divine presence. But here in this *Iesu Sahasranāma*, it is hard to discern an order to the names, such as would help define the meaning of the several names.

Hindu Parallels

I have thus far postponed an obvious interpretive framework, that of Hindu parallels,[14] and that of the Hindu *sahasranāmas* which are the paradigm for Professor Chacko's Christian *sahasranāma*. There are of course obvious parallels with the *Viṣṇu* and *Lalitā Sahasranāmas* which presumably served directly or indirectly as the model for Chacko's text. It is clear that he takes seriously the claim that there is cultural and religious power in *sahasranāmas* in the Hindu tradition, and his composition implicitly testifies to the fact that there is power in making a *sahasranāma* for Jesus too, finding his place in Sanskrit.

One could of course do a much more elaborate comparison, listing fully all names which appear in both *sahasranāmas*. But smaller scale comparisons will also be useful, as we notice the likely broader significance of names, popular and evident in Hindu contexts, that appear in the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma* too. Thus, the names I gave by way of example above in category 3 — *śrīdhara, śrīpati, śiva, nārāyaṇa* — are amply explained in Hindu tradition, but thus far there is no parallel commentary on Professor Chacko's text. We might try for interpretation by way of noticing parallels and their place in compared texts, as this example[15] shows:

Names in verse 43 of Chacko's *Śri Iesu Sahasranāma*	*Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* 601-612[16]
śrīkara (maker of auspiciousness) *śrīdharaḥ* (the auspicious bearer) *sattā* (state of being) *tuṣṭa* (well-pleased) *kuṣṭhavināśana* (destroyer of leprosy) *śrīpati* (the auspicious lord) *śrīvibhāvajña* (knower of fluctuations in auspiciousness) *bhaktimān* (possessed of devotion)[17] *bhaktavatsala* (tender toward devotees)	*śivāya* (the auspicious one) *śrīvatavakṣase* (bearing the *śrīvatsa* mark on his chest) *śrīvāsāya* (abode of Śrī) *śripataye* (lord of Śrī) *śrīmatāṃ varāya* (foremost among those with auspiciousness) *śrīdāya* (giver of auspiciousness) *śrīśāya* (lord of Śrī) *śrīnivāsāya* (support of Śrī) *śrīnidhaye* (abode of Śrī) *śrīvibhāvanāya* (he whose glory is Śrī) *śrīdharāya* (he who bears Śrī [on his chest]

It is clear here that the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* has gathered in one place names incorporating

"*śrī,*" and in that context "lord of Śrī" (*śrīpati*) and "bearer of Śrī" (*śrīdhara*) — well-known Vaiṣṇava names of God, have a natural place. Is Professor Chacko likewise seeking to claim properly Christian meanings for words such as *śrīdhara* and *śrīpati*? There is no evident pattern to the names listed above, as before and after *śrīdhara* and *śrīpati* in the *Iesu Sahasranāma.* Since we do not have commentaries on Chacko's text, and would in effect have to write one to bring fixity to such matters, we must allow for the fact that as of now his meanings remain open. It is important to avoid making too much or too little of what he has given us in this text.[18]

On the theology of the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma*

But still, if we consider *the result of placing together* all these names — philosophical, theological, Sanskrit, Hindu, and Christian — we can wonder whether this rendering of Jesus in Sanskrit in a thousand names is in itself adds up not just to a literary and recitative accomplishment, but also to a philosophical and theological achievement. If we hear together the Biblical, Upaniṣadic, and Hindu names, all recited now in praise of Christ, we might argue that this is a leveling of their meanings; all of them matter in just the same way, serially evocative of the same Jesus. Or, one might argue that since the Biblical names are those that are really new to the *sahasranāma* genre, Professor Chacko's work "biblicizes" the genre. In this case the traditional list, though seemingly random in theme yet powerful in its aurality, would become a kind of Biblical template, into which Sanskrit vocabulary is woven. But if so inclined we might also say that it is actually the Biblical terms that are de-biblicized, since the Biblical narrative of which they were normally part has now been stripped away and those names are inserted into a genre that is Hindu, alongside a preponderance of names that are Hindu and Vedic. In a way, it is pleasing that both biblicization or de-biblicization are possible: the *Sahasranāma* is concise in its genre, but open-ended in the meanings that are made to fit in the genre's framework.[19]

We can also ask whether there is a Christology inherent in the *Iesu Sahasranāma.* That Christ can be meaningfully praised in a genre most closely identified with Hindu religiosity, and that Jesus can be expressed in religious terms of great importance in Hindu tradition suggests a universal, inclusive Christology: Christ for the world, Christ accessible in many languages and within genres inscribed within those languages. It is possible to see in Chacko's composition some optimism and hope regarding cultural adaptation and accommodation, as was explicitly stated in the comments prefatory to his *Suprabātam.* He is at least implicitly distancing himself from anti-Brahminical and Dalit movements that want nothing to do with Sanskrit modes of discourse. His choice to place Upaniṣadic and even *bhakti* terms alongside Biblical statements about Christ show that he is comfortable with such juxtapositions. He creates and enables meanings by way of these juxtapositions, but by virtue of this genre does not have to explain them further. He also rejects, implicitly, the sharp cultural and linguistic boundaries that would be put in place by religious and political conservatives aligned with Hindutva, who wish to preserve Sanskrit as a domain purely of Hindu learning and devotion. Chacko opens the door, and seeks to breathe some fresh life into Sanskrit religious composition. Sanskrit is proposed as a common ground, and Jesus-in-Sanskrit proposed as able to be heard by all.

In closing, we may ask how far it is from a Sanskrit Jesus to a Hindu Jesus. The panel whence this report originated was entitled "Hindu Views of Jesus" and not "Jesus in Sanskrit," and it may seem that in writing about a Christian *sahasranāma* I have not contributed significantly to the panel's topic. But choosing to proceed by this (poetic) literary strategy rather than by (prose) theological claims about Jesus, Chacko opens new meanings for the name/s of Jesus. This is not far, I suggest, from articulating a "Hindu Jesus." Indeed, Chacko may have made it easier, in a deep and substantive way, to think of Jesus precisely as a figure in Sanskrit discourse, and thus as a Jesus also more at home in Hindu discourse.

The first 108 names of the *Śrī Iesu Sahasranāma* (* marks the end of a verse):[20]

1. OM — *aum*
2. The Living One — *jīva* [Chacko: "Life"]
3. The Way — *panthā*
4. Highest — *param*
5. Truth — *satyam* [Chacko: *paraṃ satyam*, "Ultimate Truth"]
6. Without Form — *arūpa*
7. Having a Human Form — *nararūpavān**
8. Died on the Throne of the Cross — dārupīthe mṛta
9. Christ — *kristus*
10. Conceived in accord with the Word of God's Messenger — *devadūtavacobhava**
11. The Anointed — *abhiṣiktaśca*
12. Lord of existent beings — *bhūteśa*
13. In Form, Being, Consciousness and Bliss — *saccidānandavigraha**[21]
14. God without Beginning — *anādideva*
15. Omniscient — *sarvajña*
16. Detached — *virakta*
17. Born of Mary's own self — *mariyātmaja**
18. Word of the Father — *pitṛvāk*
19. The one who assumed a Body — *dhṛtadeha*
20. Born of the Holy Self — *pavitrātmaja* [Chacko: "Born of the Holy Spirit"]
21. Mighty — *ūrjita**
22. Calming Nature — *prapañcopaśama* [Chacko: "Cheer (or Upset) of the universe"]
23. Eternal — *nitya*
24. Everlasting — *sanātana*
25. Offered as Sacrifice — *upāhṛta**
26. Self-existent — *svayaṃbhū*
27. Dressed in white — *śvetavastrāṅga*
28. Abiding in All Beings — *sarvāsu nilaya*
29. Without Abode — *agṛha**
30. Born in a Stable — *goṣṭhakoṇe prasūta*
31. Wrapped in Swaddling Clothes — *karpaṭāveṣṭita*
32. King — *nṛpa**
33. Unperishing — *akṣara*
34. Immutable — *avyaya*
35. Auspicious Lord (Lord of Śrī) — *śrīśa*
36. Honored by the Group of Shepherds — *meṣapālaughapūjita**
37. Honored by the Gifts of the Three Wise Men from the East — *tribhiśca prācya-vidvadbhir upadārpaṇa-satkṛta**
38. Nursing at the Breast of Mary — *mariyāstanyapāyī*
39. Come to Give Witness to the Truth — *satyasākṣya-artham āgata**
40. Child — *śiśu*
41. Protector of Parents — *śiśumatāṃ goptā*
42. Cutting through the Schemes of Herod — *herodātantrakartana**
43. Desire — *kāma* [Chacko: "Heavenly Spouse"]
44. Giver of Desire — *kāmaprada*
45. Lovely — *kānta*
46. Abiding in the Heart of Her Who Desires — *kāminī-hṛdayasthita** [Chacko: "Abiding in the Heart of the Virgin"]
47. Not Reached by Those Whose Desire is Foolish — *mūḍhakāmini-asaṃprāpta* [Chacko: "Not Reached by Foolish Virgins"]
48. Best — *vara*
49. Whose Understanding is Not Contrary to Dharma — *dharmāviruddhadhī**
50. Without Birth — *ājanmā*
51. Finding Bliss in Good People — *sujanānanda*
52. The One Who Will Come to Be — *bhaviṣṇur*
53. Leader of men — *naranāyaka**
54. Without ambition — *nirīha*
55. One Who Has the Sign of the Star — *tāralakṣmā*
56. Unborn — *aja*
57. Born — *jāta*
58. Lord of People — *janeśvara**
59. With Universal Form — *viśvarūpa*
60. With Great Form — *mahārūpa*
61. Shepherd — *meṣapāla*
62. Lord of creatures — *prajāpati**
63. Beloved to those protecting animals — *paśupālapriya*
64. Most Beloved — *preṣṭha*
65. In the Form of a Child — *śiśurūpa*
66. Beloved of children — *śiśupriya**
67. Without Death — *amṛtyu*
68. Giver of Liberation — *muktida*
69. Liberated — *mukta*
70. The Sacrifice of Death — *mṛtyuyajña*
71. Victorious — *jina*
72. Lord — *prabhu**
73. Abode of humans — *nārāyāṇa*
74. Unfallen — *acyuta*

75. Truth — *satya*
76. Warrior of Truth and Righteousness — *satya-dharma-parākrama**
77. Son of God — *devaputra*
78. Word — *vacah*
79. Yogi — *yogī*
80. Living in Galilee — *galīloṣita*
81. Ruler — *īśitā**
82. Foreseen by prophets — *pravaktṛbhiḥ purādṛṣṭa*
83. Born in the holy place, Bethlehem — *kṛtabesleha-tīrthabhū** [Chacko: "Who consecrated Bethlehem"]
84. Sacrifice — *yajña*
85. Offering — *ijya*
86. Pure in Himself — *svayaṃpūta*
87. Born for Sacrifice — *jāto yajñāya*
88. Sacrificer — *yājñika**
89. Whose Body is Bread — *kāyāpūpa*
90. Bound to the Cross — *kruśe baddha*
91. Bearer of the Torah scroll — *paṭitorā* [Chacko: "Whose Side Was Pierced"][22]
92. Self-offering — *svayaṃhuta**
93. The Beginning — *ādi*
94. The last — *antya*
95. The Middle — *madhya*
96. Lord of the Stars — *tārānātha*
97. Lord of the Good — *satāṃ pati**
98. Suffering Thirst — *tṛṣārta*
99. Not Overcome by Hunger — *kṣuddhayā akranta*
100. Purifying — *pāvana*
101. Destroying Sin — *pāpanāśana**
102. Debts — *ṛṇahīna*
103. First among Humans — *nṛṇām ādya*
104. Praised by the Lame — *paṅgunā parikīrtita**
105. Unmanifest — *avyakta*
106. Manifest in Form — *vyaktarūpa*
107. Lord of Life — *prāṇeśa*
108. Giver of Life — *prāṇadāyaka**

The last of the names:

975. Higher than the Sun — *prabhottara*
976. Ascended to Heaven — *svarga-ārūḍha*
977. Maker of well-being — *svastikṛt*
978. Riding the Clouds — *jīmūtasyandana* [Chacko: "He Whose Chariot is the Clouds"]
979. Remover — *hari** [Chacko: "Remover of sins"]
980. Dead and Risen — *mṛtotthita*
981. Great in Glory — *bṛhattejaḥ*
982. Giver of Perfection — *siddhida*
983. Christ — *Kristu*
984. Exalted — *unnata**
985. Sharing the Throne with the Father — *saṃvibhāgāsanaḥ pitrā*
986. Having a Father — *pitṛmān*
987. Delighted in Mind — *prītamānasa**
988. Offered — *iṣṭa*
989. Yet Performer of Offerings — *api iṣṭakāra*
990. New — *navīna*
991. Eater of Passover — *pesahāśana**
992. Door of Liberation — *mokṣadvāra*
993. Seed of All Creatures — *prajābīja*
994. Bearing Joy for All the Worlds — *sarvalokasukhāvaha**
995. With a Smiling Face — *smitānana*
996. Well-Clothed — *suvāsa*
997. Cause of All Causes — *kāraṇānāṃ kāraṇam**
998. Worshipped by All Sadhus *sarvasādhu-samārādhya*
999. Very Well-defined *supariccheḍaka*
1000. Last (or "Near at Hand") — *antima**
[Chacko: *supariccheḍako 'ntimaḥ* = "The Last Judge"]

Notes

[1] All translations from the Sanskrit are tentative, and I welcome further corrections and suggestions. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of the manuscript of this report for helpful suggestions, and to Professor Chacko himself, who was kind enough to read the draft of the manuscript, and in a response sent on May 8, 2010, to offer many helpful comments and corrections.

[2] The English title page includes this information: *Jesus Sahasranama* by K.U. Chacko. Edited by Prof. M. H. Sastri. First published in 1987 in Malayalam Script with the title *Misiha sahasranamastotram.* In Nagari script in 1995. Published by Jeeva Jyoti Publications. In his note of May 8, Professor Chacko informed me that an English translation of the work is now in process.

[3] The *suprabhātam* is only one of the prayers in a small book that also includes 11 other prayers in Sanskrit, and several in Malayalam script.

[4] I have not been able to trace this reference. Translation is mine.

[5] In the single phone conversation I had with Professor Chacko himself in July 2009 (while I was

at Shantivanam), he was far less expansive in explaining his work or the theology behind it. He simply highlighted the aural, recitative power of the *Sahasranāma* genre, and the powerful value inherent in hearing the names, titles, and attributes, of Jesus proclaimed in this traditional Indian style. He is eager that we appreciate the names of Jesus, not him as author. Indeed, in a preface to his comments to me in the letter of May 8, 2010, Professor Chacko wrote with disarming candor, "You have done a glorious work in peeping through the grammatically boring windows of synonyms of 'Jesus' in Sanskrit."

[6] *The Indian Christiad: A Concise Anthology of Didactic and Devotional Literature in Early Church Sanskrit.* Ananda Amaladass and Richard Fox Young. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1995.

[7] In the 1986 devanagari version I.C. Chacko's work is entitled *Khristastavam*; on the publication information page, the *mūlaracanā* (core, original text) is identified as "*Kristu Sahasranāma.*" It seems to mean that in Malayalam it had been entitled a *sahasranāma.* In a personal communication to me (January 10, 2010), K.U. Chacko wrote, "In *Khristastavam* the author salutes Christ in four hundred and sixty odd synonyms and all those epithets (nouns) of Jesus are in accusative (*dvitīya*)... [whereas the] nominative, being the most powerful form of a noun, all the traditional *sahasranāmas* in Sanskrit are composed in nominative case." (For this reason, professor K.U. Chacko's own work is comprised entirely of nominatives.) In the bibliography of *The Indian Christiad* (p. 368), it is called the *Kristu Sahasranāma* and described this way: "First published in local magazines of Kerala in 1914. Later it was published in Malayalam characters in Kottayam in 1980. Later it was published in devanagari characters with a simple Hindi explanation by Fr. Ignatius Vellaringat, SJ." Professor Chacko adds, regarding the I.C. Chacko work, "Yet some Christian fathers have treated *Khristastavam* as *sahasranāma* and Msgr. Thomas Kallen published the same in the title, *Kṛṣṭunāmasahasram* in Malayalam script."

[8] My translation.

[9] For analogue and terms, see *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa* I (New Delhi: Sri Visnu Sahasranama Satsangam, 2000), pp. 105 ff.; for example, according to Bhaṭṭar in the *BGD*, we have: the meter: *anuṣṭubh*; deity: Śrīman Nārayaṇa; *bījam*: the luminary of the lunar race; *śakti*: the creator who is son of Devakī; *kīlakam*: the bearer of the conch, sword, and discus.

[10] Professor Chacko suggests, "Lord of glory."

[11] Chacko: "Holy one"

[12] Professor Chacko added this marginal comment on my draft: "It is at the instigation of the Apostle Thomas that Jesus defined Himself, 'I am life, I am way, I am truth.' When chanting these subtle synonyms of 'Jesus,' the pious *bhakta* is led to the realms of super-consciousness or perhaps *samādhi* — which can only be attained at the state of formless mind, yet realisation of entity (in existence): *tadevārthamātranirbhāsāṃ svarūpaśūnyamiva samādhi."* (*Yoga Sūtras* III.3)

[13] See the useful summation of Bhaṭṭar's reading, pp. 6-11 of volume one of the *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpana.*

[14] For it would be a different matter to explore the context in which Professor Chacko composed the text in the context of Kerala Christian community.

[15] One could of course do a much more elaborate comparison, listing fully all names which appear in both *sahasranāmas*.

[16] The numbering of names in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* varies.) The names in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* are in the dative, because of the form, _____ *namaḥ* (obeisance to _____). See note 7 above, on Professor Chacko's claim that the nominative is "the most powerful form of a noun."

[17] Chacko: "devoted to the cause of the Father"

[18] "*śiva*", which appears also in this section of our *Sahasranāma*, presumably is likewise drawing on the meaning of *śiva* as "auspicious," yet echoing the meanings given to this name by Śaivas.

[19] Marginal comment by Professor Chacko: "Throughout ages, Sages have realized the *Supreme* in all the synonyms of 'Viṣṇu' — the all-pervading one — so also, every epithet of 'Jesus' used in the *Sahasranāma* can be assayed by the linguistic rules of syntax and etymology and scriptures both Indian and Christian. (This will be given in the book in process.)"

[20] Translations of the names are mine, though I have profited from suggestions by the anonymous reader of the manuscript and by Professor Chacko. I have however added in square brackets some of the more interesting alternatives offered by Chacko in his May 8, 2010 comments to me. In the original, the names are simply given in the nominative and serially, e.g., ślokas 1 and 2: auṃ jīvaḥ panthā paraṃ satyam arūpo nararūpavān । dārupīthe mṛtaḥ kristur devadūtavacobhavaḥ ॥ (1) abhiṣiktaśca bhūteśaḥ saccidānandavigraha । anādidevaḥ sarvajño virakto mariyātmajaḥ ॥ (2) My list therefore omits only several "and-s" (ca) and "for-s" (hi)

[21] Chacko: "Embodiment of Being, Bliss, and Consciousness"

[22] This name is particularly unclear.

DOI: 10.7825/2164-6279.1460