

ISSAC THOTTUNKAL
(Editor)

**EMERGING TRENDS
IN
MALANKARA CATHOLIC
THEOLOGY**

**VISION AND CONTRIBUTIONS
OF
CYRIL MAR BASELIOS**



Rev. Casparius C. Chinnalil

MARTHOMA YOGAM
ROME

ISSAC THOTTUNKAL
(EDITOR)

EMERGING TRENDS
IN
MALANKARA CATHOLIC
THEOLOGY

VISION AND CONTRIBUTIONS
OF
CYRIL MAR BASELIOS



MAR THOMA YOGAM

ROME

MAR THOMA YOGAM PUBLICATIONS

1. C. PAYNGOT, (ed.) *Homage to Mar Cariattil, Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist*, Rome 1987.
2. P. YOUSIF, (ed.) *A Classified Bibliography on the East Syrian Liturgy*, Rome 1990.
3. C. GALLAGHER, (ed.) *The Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches: An Introduction*, Rome 1991.
4. P. KANNOOKADAN, *The East Syrian Lectionary, an Historico-Liturgical Study*, Rome 1991.
5. P. PALLATH, *The Synod of Bishops of Catholic Oriental Churches*, Rome 1994.
6. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, Rome 1994.
7. P. PALLATH, (ed.) *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994.
8. I. THOTTUNKAL, (ed.) *Emerging Trends in Malankara Catholic Theology: Vision and Contributions of Cyril Mar Baselios*, Rome, 1995.

ISSAC THOTTUNKAL
(Editor)

**EMERGING TRENDS
IN
MALANKARA CATHOLIC THEOLOGY**

Vision and Contributions
of
Cyril Mar Baselios

Published in Honour
of
Most Rev. Dr. Cyril Mar Baselios Metropolitan,
the Administrator of the Malankara Catholic Church
and the Bishop of Bathery,
on his Sixtieth Birthday



Mar Thoma Yagam
(St. Thomas Christian Fellowship)

Rome, 1995

EMERGING TRENDS IN MALANKARA CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Vision and Contributions of Cyril Mar Baselios

Editor: **Issac Thottunkal**

Published by: **Mar Thoma Yogam Publications**, Rome

© Issac Thottunkal

First published: 1995

Printed at: **Media House**, A 1/3 Suryanagar, Ghaziabad

U.P. 201011 INDIA Tel: 8-762212

ISBN 81-7495-018-4

Copies Available:

BETHANY BOOK CENTRE (Trivandrum, Bathery & Nedumangad)

St. Joseph's Buildings,

Tiruvalla-689101,

Kerala, INDIA.

LIBERIA LEONIANA,

Via dei Corridori, 16/28,

00193 Roma, ITALY.

Tel: (06) 6869113. Fax: (06) 6833854.

MEDIA HOUSE

P.B.No.5315, Delhi-110053 INDIA Tel:011-2266760



MALANKARA
LIBRARY

**This book is dedicated to the loving
memory
of
His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios
the late Metropolitan Archbishop
of
the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
(1916 - 1994)**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As this book is brought to its completion, a profound sense of gratitude overcomes me, first of all to the Almighty Lord for His manifold blessings and to those who in one way or other encouraged me to undertake this endeavour and assisted me in the completion of the same. This book is published in honour of Most Rev. Dr. Cyril Mar Baselios, Bishop of Bathery, whose 60th birthday we are celebrating this year and it is a humble attempt to present his person and vision. This book contains articles written by him and written in honour of him. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to him for his love and encouragement that I have enjoyed during the last 16 years of my acquaintance with him. His personal convictions and theological profundity have inspired me considerably.

I remain grateful to the authors of the various articles in this book for their generous contributions. My thanks are due in a special way to the editors and publishers of the already published articles of Mar Baselios for having granted me the permission to include them in this collection. I specially thank His Grace Most Rev. Mar Joseph Powathil, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, for writing a foreword highlighting the pastoral and theological depth in the personality of Mar Baselios. I sincerely thank His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Thimotheos, Bishop of Tiruvalla, and His Excellency Lawrence Mar Ephraem, Administrator of the Arch-diocese of Trivandrum and His Excellency Most Rev. Kuriakose Mar Kleemis, the Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Eparchy of Sulthan Bathery, for their messages and personal encouragement.

Msgr. Thomas Thannickakuzhy, my fellow priests, religious and lay leaders of the diocese of Bathery have rendered me their support and encouragement in this publication. Among them special mention must be made of Rev. Dr. George Kalayil who has helped me in many ways in this publication. To all of them I acknowledge my manifold indebtedness. I sincerely thank Rev. Sr. Columba Cleary OP., and Rev. Frs. Thomas Naickamparambil, Mammen Chackalapadickal and Jose Kondoor MST who did a careful reading of the text and made the necessary corrections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I specially thank Rev. Fr. Clemens Tribawasaksana OSC (Ordo Sanctae Crucis) for his solid help in preparing and setting the manuscript. The Rev. Fathers and Sisters of the Malankara Community in Rome deserve my special thanks for their help and encouragement in this publication. I am thankful to my dear and near ones in India and abroad for their constant love and support. Missio, Achen deserves my special thanks for their financial assistance in printing this book. I thank the officials of Mar Thoma Yogam for having undertaken the publication of this book. Thanks are also due to the Media House (Gaziabad) for its service in bringing out this volume.

Rome,

July 3, 1995,

Feast of St. Thomas, the Apostle

Issac Thottunkal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
Message	
Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Thimotheos	1
A Word of Appreciation	
Most Rev. Kuriakose Mar Kleemis	3
Greetings	
Most Rev. Lawrence Mar Ephraem	5
Foreword	
Most Rev. Mar Joseph Powathil	6
Introduction	
Issac Thottunkal (Editor)	10
Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios: A Profile	
George Kalayil	14
A Select List of Publications of Cyril Mar Baselios	20
Important Dates in the Life of Mar Baselios	24

PART ONE

THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF CYRIL MAR BASELIOS

The Holy Catholic Church as Communion of Churches	27
Post Vatican Renewal: A Malankara Perspective	55
Introduction of the Antiochene Rite into the Malankara Church	76
Ecclesial Pluralism and the Mission of the Church in India	111

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Malankara Catholic Church: Its Ecumenical Role	131
The Celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Malankara Church	150
Evangelisation and Pastoral Care: Concerns of the Malankara Catholic Church	160
Believing Communities and Theologizing	169
The Reunion Movement: Its Contribution to Christian Heritage	175
Ecumenism	185
Ecclesial Perspectives Emerging from the New Code of Canon Law for the Oriental Catholic Churches	199
Family: A Community of Faith	210
Priest in Church and Society	219
Social Apostolate: An Integral Part of Our Mission	229
First Message of Cyril Mar Baselios to the Malankara Church	233
The Event of Reunion and the Emerging Truths	235
An Interview with Cyril Mar Baselios	249

PART TWO

PASTORAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF CYRIL MAR BASELIOS IN THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

The Diocese of Bathery: Origin and Growth (1978-1995) Issac Thottunkal	257
Mar Baselios: A Social thinker and Activist Jose Palakattel	275

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cyril Mar Baselios: An Eminent Pastor Thomas Charivupurayidam	279
Mar Baselios: His Vision and Contribution in Priestly Formation Eldho Puthenkandathil	283
Cyril Mar Baselios Whom I have Seen Varghese Ottathengil	288
Cyril Mar Baselios: A Theologian loyal to the Church P.T.Thomas	292
Statistics of the Diocese of Bathery	297
Catechetical Apostolate in the Diocese of Bathery V.P.Thomas	299
Mar Baselios and the Youth in the Diocese of Bathery Philiph Puthenkandathil	304
Mar Baselios: A Man of Faith, Vision and Heart Elias Paul	308
Mar Baselios: Our Beloved Aboon Jacob Olickal	312
The Malankara Catholic Church Philiph Ninan	316
Diocese of Bathery: Important Events	330
Contributors	332

Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Thimotheos
Bishop of Tiruvalla.

Bishop's House,
Tiruvalla-689101,
Kerala, India.

MESSAGE

Shashtipoorthi. i.e. the completion of six decades of life, is an occasion for celebration in Indian tradition. I am delighted that Rev. Fr. Issac Thottunkal has taken the initiative to bring out a publication to mark this occasion in the illustrious life of His Excellency Most Rev. Cyril Mar Baselios Metropolitan, the Administrator of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy and the Bishop of Bathery. Bishop Mar Baselios is an accomplished scholar and an expert in various branches of ecclesiastic and secular disciplines. The Malankara Catholic Church is particularly fortunate that its hierarchy includes a person of such high stature. The series of published papers of Mar Baselios proposed for the inclusion in the souvenir volume is a clear proof of the author's extraordinary erudition and scholarship. It will also serve to elucidate certain aspects of the Eastern Churches, particularly, the Malankara Catholic Church. The contributions of the representatives of the diocese of Bathery will bring out the personality of their pastor and the esteem, reverence and affection of the people for him.

The Syro-Malankara Church is proud of her illustrious son Cyril Mar Baselios Metropolitan. From the very inception of the diocese of Bathery he launched multi-faced activities for the holistic growth of the diocese. When he took charge of the diocese as its ward nobody thought of the amazing and astounding growth and attainment that the diocese achieved during the last fifteen years. The great steward behind it was none other than the charismatic person of Cyril Mar Baselios. The unparalleled erudition and incomparable administrative ability of the Bishop is the talk of the town. Great indeed is his ecclesiological vision and spiritual intention, so too his pastoral view and commitment. The happy blend of these together with the mighty spiritual and religious formation that he received through the Bethany religious community (OIC) made him a great pastor and theologian. Clarity and distinctness

MESSAGE

are the hall mark of his thoughts and writings. His innumerable articles in vernacular and other modern languages bear ample proof for it.

He is a towering personality both in Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC). His historic speeches at Guwahati and Thiruchirappally CBCI gatherings were the main contributive factors for Rome to give guidance to all the Bishops in India regarding the individuality of the two Oriental Churches. It is he who highlighted the idea of the 'Individual Church' in the Catholic Church in India for the first time. The role Fr. Cyril OIC played, together with the Syro-Malankara Catholic delegates, in the national seminar on 'Church in India Today' at Bangalore in 1969 to uphold the individuality and uniqueness of the Syro-Malankara Church is unforgettable. But for him the course and recommendations of the national seminar could have been different.

He is noted for his democratic and participatory way of approach. The decentralization approach in the diocesan administration and the importance he gives to the opinions from various sections of the diocese is sufficient proof for his management skills. The sudden and steady growth of the diocese of Bathery in its manifold dimensions gives testimony for his administrative ability and management skills.

My earnest wish and fervent prayer is that the Lord may grant health, happiness and energy to His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios to continue to serve the people of God for many decades longer. I place on record, my personal regard, respect and love for His Excellency and offer my warm greetings. On the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (*Shashtipoorthy*) the Malankara Church wishes him all blessings, good health. AD MULTOS ANNOS.

3-2-1995.

✠ Geevarghese Mar Thimotheos.

Most Rev.Kuriakose Mar Kleemis
Metropolitan,
Malankara Orthodox Diocese of
Sulthan Bathery.

Nirmalgi,
Orthodox Bishop's House,
Sulthan Bathery 673592,
Kerala, INDIA.

A WORD OF APPRECIATION

The formation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Diocese of Bathery and the consecration of its founding Bishop, Most Rev.Cyril Mar Baselios Metropolitan, constitute an important chapter in the history of the Travancore immigrants of Northern Kerala. Bishop Cyril has by now demonstrated great leadership in ecclesiastical, civil, cultural, educational and agricultural areas. Above all, Bishop Cyril bears enduring witness to a life-style filled with the glorious vision of the Gospel and love for the Church and her children.

Several new and beautiful churches have been constructed in the Diocese of Bathery. However, nobler than these edifices are the spirit and hope of the people that Bishop Cyril has been helping to nurture. In the true spirit of the Malankara Tradition, His Excellency has gone out of the way to develop an exemplary tenacity of purpose, unity of heart and faith-filled courage in the people. He truly encourages independence and collaboration among his people.

Bishop Cyril is passionately involved in the ecumenical process in keeping with the spirit of the new era of faith and dialogue. His spirit of genuine dialogue and collaboration is a genuine inspiration to all those who come to know him. He is one of the delegates in the commissions for ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and Malankara Orthodox Church and Malankara Jacobite Church.

Bishop Cyril is a great scholar and educator. His deep conviction that education is indeed the future of a people has already produced brilliant results in the entire region. He has opened many a needed school in the most undeveloped areas of the diocese. The Educational Corporate Agency, which includes College, schools and technical institutes etc., under his management is a brilliant testimony to his foresight and leadership in the area of education.

APPRECIATION

The socio-economic development of the people is an urgent priority in the holistic plan Bishop Cyril has devised for the entire Diocese. Bishop Cyril has encouraged the development of a social work program that has become an example for every Diocese in the State. People are genuinely involved in this program with unprecedented enthusiasm and commitment.

In the true tradition of the Syro-Malankara Church, Bishop Cyril has fostered and developed a cultural milieu for the Diocese that is entirely consistent with the most precious aspects of the culture of our ancient civilization. The architecture, and the very names of the central institutions of the Diocese, such as Gurukulam, Dharmapeedham and Shreyas are only examples. His Excellency lives and works in genuine Indian Tradition with profound respect and love for every one, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged. He is genuinely identified with the people regardless of creed or socio-economic status.

On this auspicious occasion, when Bishop Cyril, together with all well wishers, is celebrating God's blessings on him for the past sixty years of his life, I congratulate him wholeheartedly and wish him the choicest blessings of Almighty God, Our Lord.

March 25, 1995.

✠ Kuriakose Mar Kleemis.

Rt.Rev. Lawrence Mar Ephraem
Administrator
Archdiocese of Trivandrum

Archbishop's House,
Trivandrum-695004,
Kerala, India.

GREETINGS

I am happy to share my sentiments and impressions about His Excellency Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios when he is celebrating his "Shashtiabda Poorthi." I had the opportunity of being associated with His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios rather intimately as priest and bishop.

As priests, we studied in the same University (Gregorian University, Rome) at the same time- he doing doctorate in Canon Law, and I doing Pastoral Course in Missiology. During that period we stayed together in Collegio Damasceno. Fr.Cyril O.I.C. was a very bright student securing cent percent points for almost all subjects and finally gold medal from the University. Though I was senior to him in age and priestly ordination, as he started his course in Rome one year earlier, he was a senior student in the University; and as such he was a great help and support to me in the University as well as in Rome in general. As a priest, he was very good not only to me, but to other priests and people as well; particularly to those who were in difficult circumstances. Whenever he was able to render any assistance, he was ready and happy to do so. As contemporary Bishops, again he was a constant guide and support to me; and I am grateful to him.

Mar Baselios loves the Malankara Catholic Church most intimately and defends its rights always. He upholds its apostolicity, and vehemently champions its individual character. He brought to the lime-light through his thesis prepared for doctorate, *The Juridical Status of the Malankara Catholic Church*. At the "Church In India Seminar" held in Bangalore in 1969, his defence of the principle of multiple jurisdiction against the proponents of "One territory-One Bishop" policy won him applause of all participants.

The Malankara Catholic Church is proud in having such a theologian Bishop with clear and correct thinking.
I wish him well. Ad Multos Annos.

23-4-1995.

† Lawrence Mar Ephraem.

Most Rev. Mar Joseph Powathil
President,
Catholic Bishops' Conference of India,
and Metropolitan Archbishop of Changanachery.

Archbishop's House,
Changanachery-686101
Kerala, India.

FOREWORD

A bishop, everything else, is a pastor. The Lord himself sent His apostles to feed His flock, to act in His stead as Pastors, till the end of the world. It is in this apostolic mission that a bishop participates in a permanent way. It is his duty to lead the pilgrim people entrusted to his care towards the Lord's Day. All his other functions are related to this one mission. And he, more than any other, is responsible to the Lord for the building up of the Church.

The bishop is the 'liturgist' par excellence in his community. It is in the liturgy that the faith of the Church is supremely manifested; it is there that the Lord makes the covenant with the people, recreating them as His own people, His own body. But our liturgy is no mere ritual act - it is the focus of the self offering of a people joined to the self offering of the Lord which alone is an acceptable sacrifice transmitting eternal life to the participants. It is for the pastor to bring the people to the covenant act - preparing them through the breaking of the Word and the sacrament of reconciliation. The pastor-bishop has thus to discharge his prophetic and leadership ministry in order to make his people ready for the real offering in the liturgy. Again, by the power of his example and the ministry of the Word he has to enable the people to live as adopted children of God. As the chief liturgist, he stands with the people in the act of offering in the liturgy and becomes an instrument of the Lord in the act of sealing the covenant.

The bishop is a prophet and a leader among his people in order to be a real liturgist with Christ the eternal High Priest. It is in this way that he lives as a shepherd, a pastor following the path of the Lord. Of course he does not stand alone. The Lord has provided him with a Presbyterium which shares in his rights and responsibilities and acts together with him. They are his immediate collaborators and team mates.

FOREWORD

The bishop may have a lot of administrative work to co-ordinate the various pastoral activities. He may have to make himself available for the teaching of his people, for contacts with other communities or for the needs of the college of bishops. But in all these he is a pastor, he is the shepherd of the people entrusted to him. He may have to announce the gospel to the non-believers or dialogue with people of other faiths. These are also responsibilities of the pastor who follows the good Shepherd in search of his lost sheep. The bishop has to be doing all these in order to be a true pastor.

Some people have the idea that only sacramental administration and parish governance are pastoral activities. They are pastoral work indeed. But whatever we are doing for the glory of God and service of His people is pastoral work. It is the building up of the Church, tending God's flock. Now a days we have to consult several bodies and contact various people in different ways for the planning and execution of diocesan polices. All these form part of the work of a true pastor. In fact the priest in the school, as well as in the various offices of the diocese and those who do any kind of work for the diocese are all sharing in the work of the pastor, sharing in the work of the bishop as Pastor.

Viewed from this angle, Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios stands out as a great pastor of our times. He may be considered as a spiritual guide, a theologian, a social work expert, or a good leader of his people in their various activities. However all these are but different dimensions of his pastoral ministry. It is as a pastor that he has to be evaluated and it is as a pastor that he stands out in our times.

Bishop Cyril has been the Spiritual guide of several people. While in the seminary and teaching in different places he remained a true religious. Therefore young people often sought his Spiritual guidance. In moments of difficulties even religious congregations turned to him for advice. A bishop has to be, in fact, a spiritual guide for his people. What people actually need is spiritual guidance from their pastors. In ancient times and in several Oriental Churches, monks were chosen as bishops. Monks were people who could give spiritual guidance to others. Bishop

FOREWORD

Cyril has always been a guide for those who met him - is spiritual leader for his people.

Many would remember him as a theologian. A bishop, as pastor, has to explain faith to guide his people in truth. In our own times of confusions and contradictions, a bishop has to be a serious teacher of the Word. Bishop Cyril has been doing this for his people; he has been doing it also for his confreres. Besides teaching in the Seminary as a priest-theologian, he has been one of the first bishops to explain the theology of the Individual Churches to his people as well to his brother bishops. Our catholic community today has to be well informed in faith if they are to face the challenges. Bishop Cyril has been trying to enable his people to justify this faith before others and to organize their lives as true believers. The importance of this dimension of pastoral work is sometimes not understood by all.

The diocese of Bathery has been ahead of many in the field of social work and action for the poor. This was in a way surprise for some, because from a theologian - religious as bishop they did not expect a great interest in social matters. But bishop Cyril knows that concern for the poor and work for them are an integral part of pastoral work. So much has been done in so short time in Bathery for the welfare of the poor and therefore people look at him for inspiration. In housing, agriculture, tribal development, employment, education-in all these fields Bathery has been forging ahead.

Work in the social field should be a preference for a bishop in the context of India and in the circumstances of our times. This is imperative if the preferential option for the poor, which the Church has declared to be her permanent attitude, is taken seriously. It is not easy to be active in the social field. But bishop Cyril has, in spite of his involvement in other fields has always strongly emphasised the social dimension of his pastoral policy. It is in the social work in a diocese that we can experience the real pastoral concern of a bishop for his people.

When all is said, we must say that Bishop Cyril has brought into the pastoral field an integrated approach. As we said before, the bishop is not a specialist, he has to be all things to all men. He has the supervisory role

FOREWORD

over the whole pastoral area. It is, therefore, necessary to understand first of all the multidimensional nature of pastoral work. Pastors have to be attentive to the traditional areas of work and also respond to new challenges that come up from time to time. People may blame or praise a pastor judging him from some particular or partial point of view. But a bishop cannot take a unidimensional approach to things.

Bishop Cyril has a holistic approach and that approach is the result of an ecclesial vision. And he knows that every pastoral activity should lead people to the heart of the Church in the covenantal offering and from there draw inspiration for the whole of Christian life and action. Every action, bishop Cyril knows, should help building up the Church in some way and should have some ecclesial character. And he knows that the Church is a communion of Churches. This would mean that pastoral activity under the aegis of a bishop will have the specificity of an Individual Church, with out forgetting the universal dimension. Catechetics and theological formation in a diocese should ensure the character of the Individual Church. The organization of a diocese should be such that it imbibes the ecclesial spirit. This is what perhaps Bishop Cyril has been doing - giving an ecclesial vision and a sense of direction to all his flock.

A pastor, following his Master, is to be a man for others. The Shepherd lives for his flock, and is ready to lay down his life for others. A bishop-pastor is one who lives only for God and His people. This is the final test of all pastoral attitudes. Bishop Cyril, I understand, lives for his flock who are also the Lord's flock. It is this pastoral dedication that makes his efforts successful.

I can only pray that Bishop Cyril lives long as a Pastor sharing his ecclesial vision with others, so that God's Kingdom may be built up fast in this part of the world!

January 25, 1995

✠ Archbishop Joseph Powathil.

INTRODUCTION

Historians, christians as well as non-christians, acknowledge that the christian community in India is as old as christianity itself. The St. Thomas Christians in India witness to the fact that St. Thomas the apostle came to India in 52 A.D. and established a christian community. This ancient apostolic christian community was autonomous in its administration, though they used the East Syrian liturgy and received bishops from the East Syrian Church. The community, which was in catholic communion, was flourishing as an indigenous apostolic church taking into account the cultural and religious values of ancient India. The arrival of the Latin Missionaries was a turning point in the history of this church. Their undue interventions in the internal administration and liturgical traditions of the Thomas Christians brought in 1653 a split in the church. One group among the Thomas Christians wanted, at any cost, to hold on to their liturgical traditions and autonomy. So they opted to remain outside the Latin rule. The sad result was that they lost Catholic communion. This group which tried to safeguard its autonomy and liturgical heritage, is known as the Malankara Church, which eventually adopted the Antiochene liturgical traditions and became part of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The other group is known as the Syro-Malabar Church, which remained under the Latin rule, thereby remaining in Catholic communion, though their liturgy was latinized and autonomy was mutilated.

The Malankara Church remains at present divided into many churches, namely the Malankara Catholic Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, the Mar Thoma Church, the Malabar Independent Church, the St. Thomas Evangelical Church and partly the Church of South India. There have been many attempts from the Malankara Church to regain Catholic communion ever since the division in 1653. But it was only in 1930 that the attempt to enter into Catholic communion succeeded as a movement. On 20th September 1930, a representative group of five people from the Malankara Orthodox Church under the leadership of Mar Ivanios, a prominent Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Church, entered into Catholic communion. This church is known as the Malankara

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Church or the Syro-Malankara Church. The initial demands of Mar Ivanios in 1926, as the representative of the Malankara Orthodox Church, clearly show that what he emphasized was a communion rather than a "return of few prodigal sons." The most important part of the memorandum is as follows: "The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church, themselves, (1) preserving the ancient rites and rituals (2) retaining for the Holy Synod and for the individual bishops their jurisdiction over all Jacobite Syrians that come into reunion and (3) accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope being the successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles of Our Lord" (cf. Copy of the first memorandum sent to Rome as quoted in Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church, Always*: 1973, 123). The Holy See established a particular hierarchy for the Malankara Catholics in 1932. At present it is a Metropolitan Church with about 300,000 faithful in three dioceses.

Those who do not know the history of the St. Thomas Christians misunderstand the Malankara Catholic Church as a new church, considering only its re-entry into the Catholic Church in 1930, forgetting that the Malankara Church is part and parcel of the apostolic church of St. Thomas Christians and had been in the Catholic communion till 1653. As part of the ancient apostolic church in India, the Malankara Catholic Church is deeply rooted in the spiritual traditions and cultural heritage of India. On the occasion of the Ad Limina visit in 1985, the Supreme Pontiff, His Holiness Pope John Paul II told the Oriental Catholic Bishops (Syro-Malankara and Syro-Malabar): "In your persons I greet and embrace two individual churches, unique in character: two churches witnessing to two ancient, distinct, yet complementary forms of Oriental Christianity; two churches rooted in the Indian soil and adapted to the Indian way of life, living in peace and harmony with their neighbours who are overwhelmingly of another religious tradition." (cf. Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Bishops on their Ad Limina visit on 19th Dec. 1985, AAS LXXVIII (1986) 614).

Many bishops, priests, religious and laity, Catholics as well as non-Catholics, have written numerous articles and books on the Malankara

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Church, analyzing it from different points of view. In recent years many have written articles on the ecclesial identity of the Malankara Catholic Church. Among them the Most Rev. Dr. Cyril Mar Baselios, Bishop of Bathery, stands first. His prolific writings discuss the ecclesial, ecumenical, liturgical and canonical nature of the Malankara Catholic Church. Realizing the ecclesial identity and significance of the Malankara Catholic Church, Cyril Mar Baselios is trying to share his vision of the church. His contributions to the Malankara Catholic Church, be it theological or pastoral, are numerous and are of great significance. He is well accepted as a genuine theologian, always supportive of the church.

There are two parts in this book. The first part, namely, "Theological Contributions of Cyril Mar Baselios," is the presentation of 17 articles which were written by him on various occasions and which have already appeared in some of the theological journals. His articles deal with the historical, ecclesial, canonical, ecumenical and social aspects of the Malankara Catholic Church. He substantiates the ecclesial nature and mission of the Catholic Church in India through its three individuations, namely, the Syro-Malabar, the Syro-Malankara and the Latin Churches.

The second part of the book, namely, "Pastoral Contributions of Cyril Mar Baselios in the Diocese of Bathery," consists of various articles written by a few close collaborators of Mar Baselios in the diocese of Bathery. The authors deal with the many pastoral contributions made by their beloved pastor. The diocese of Bathery has made tremendous growth in all spheres of life, be it ecclesial or social. The main source behind this growth is undoubtedly the sound pastoral vision of Cyril Mar Baselios. The articles are not mere descriptions of the activities of the different apostolate in the diocese but an attempt to analyze the pastoral vision of Mar Baselios, who always tries to instill an ecclesial vision in all his undertakings. The inclusion of an article on the Malankara Catholic Church along with its statistics is primarily meant for the readers who are not familiar with the history of the Malankara Church.

This book is published in honour of Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday in appreciation of the significant theological and pastoral contributions made by this great theologian and eminent pastor to the Church in India in general and to the Malankara

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Church in particular. Unity of Churches is an important area of attention for all the churches, especially for the Eastern Catholic Churches, since their Orthodox counterparts are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. For the success of any ecumenical dialogue the Churches need renewed vision, humility and the readiness to appreciate each other. Holy Father Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen* says:

“These Churches (Eastern Catholic Churches) carry a tragic wound, for they are still kept from full communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches despite sharing in the heritage of their fathers. A constant, shared conversion is indispensable for them to advance resolutely and energetically towards mutual understanding. And conversion is also required of the Latin Church, that she may respect and fully appreciate the dignity of Eastern Christians, and accept gratefully the spiritual treasures of which the Eastern Catholic Churches are the bearers, to the benefit of the entire catholic communion, that she may show concretely, far more than in the past, how much she esteems and admires the Christian East and how essential she considers its contribution to the full realization of the Church’s universality” (Pope John Paul II, *Oriente Lumen*, Vatican City, 1995, 44).

Like any other Eastern Catholic Churches, the Malankara Catholic Church also has to be at the service of bringing full communion between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. It is my sincere hope that this work will inspire many to learn more about the Eastern Catholic Churches and to promote the cause of holy communion of churches, especially the communion of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, in India and elsewhere.

Issac Thottunkal (Editor)

BISHOP CYRIL MAR BASELIOS A PROFILE

GEORGE KALAYIL

His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios was born on 16th August, 1935 to Mr. Mathai Malancharuvil and Mrs. Aleyamma at Pandalam in Pathanamthitta district, Kerala, and was given the name James. Mr. Mathai Malancharuvil—popularly known as Pandalam Mathai Sir—was a close and faithful collaborator of His Grace Mar Ivanios of venerable memory and one of the front line leaders of the Reunion Movement. Realizing his efficiency, social status and genuine loyalty towards the Malankara Church and its Bishops, Mar Ivanios found in him a close collaborator and appointed him *Mukthyaar* (a person who acts as an intermediary in arranging or negotiating agreements). He bought many properties for churches and institutions including that of the Bethany Hills, a campus now filled with various institutions such as schools, colleges, ashram, religious houses and malankara seminary etc., for the Archdiocese of Trivandrum as the wish and plan of his Metropolitan. After faithfully serving the Malankara Church, this lay leader passed away in 1977. Mrs. Aleyamma was called by the Lord in 1983, after seeing her son James raised to the Episcopate.

Right from his very childhood James was smart, intelligent, resolute and pious. Reciting the Rosary even from the early school days was a day by day spiritual exercise which he zealously practises even today despite his busy schedule as a bishop. James had his schooling in the locality itself. As a very young boy he had an ardent desire to embrace religious life and he prepared himself very earnestly to reach this destination. God was leading this young promising boy by the hand; through the renowned Archbishop Mar Ivanios, he found admittance in the Religious Community of the Imitation of Christ (OIC) in 1951. The zealous aspirant did make good progress as

expected under the strict and high-principled guidance of late Rev. Fr. Joshua OIC at Chengannoor, the then Generalate of Bethany Ashram. In conformity with the rules and regulations of the Congregation Bro. James was given a new name, Cyril. After making his temporary religious profession, Bro. Cyril was sent to the Papal Seminary, Pune where he obtained the degree of licentiate both in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest in 1960 at the Papal Seminary by His Eminence Cardinal Agagiani.

Soon after the ordination, Fr. Cyril devoted himself for active mission work in and around Trivandrum. After a short period of fruitful apostolate in the missions, he was sent to Rome in 1961 for higher studies. He secured a Doctor's Degree in Canon Law with university medal from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome in 1965. The subject of his thesis was "Malankara Church", which was rightly extolled for its quality of being the first authentic study on the Syro-Malankara Church, substantiated by original sources. Fr. Cyril also attained a Diploma in Practical Canon Law for Religious from the Law School under the auspices of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, Rome. On his return to India, he was appointed Professor of dogmatic theology in St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam. His quest for knowledge, however, tempted him for another Master's Degree in psychology; in order to attain this aim he sought admission in St. John's University, New York in 1970, from there he took a Master's Degree in Psychology with first Rank.

Having returned from the United States in 1972, he pursued his career of teaching theology both in the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam and in the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Alwaye. He was Consultor to the Pontifical Commission for the revision of the Oriental Code of Canon Law since 1973. Serving in the "Commissio Technica" for the formation of the Indian priests set up by the CBCI (Catholic Bishops' Conference of India), Fr. Cyril also actively engaged in several regional and national consultations of the Church in India. On very many times he has been the official delegate appointed by the Holy See to run its mission on special occasions. As well-experienced and informed in ecclesial as well

as in civil matters, it is not at all tedious for him to find out amicable solutions for various problems with different natures. His special aptitude to avoid precipitations with a clear mind and logic while confronting challenges, is just one among many of his God-given talents.

In 1974 Fr. Cyril was elected Superior General of his Congregation, to which he was serving as a General Council Member since 1966. He did remarkably well for the benefit and growth of his Order. In the light of the Second Vatican Council he led the Congregation to renewal. Under his leadership Bethany moved into the educational field. The English Schools Girideepam in Kottayam and Mount Bethany at Mylapra are one among the many educational institutions he started. *Thapovanam*, the novitiate house of Bethany at Alwaye, remains a symbol of his vision of religious life. During this period he also served as the President of the Kerala Region (KCMS) of the Conference of the Religious of India. He always found time to preach Retreats for Priests, Seminarians and Religious in many of the Dioceses, Seminaries and Religious Houses in Kerala and outside despite his busy schedule. Still he gladly continues this mission.

In response to God's ways and designs Fr. Cyril gave an unconditional "accipio" to his call to be a Bishop in the Malankara Church and he was nominated a Bishop by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on 28th October, 1978. Fr. Cyril was consecrated a Bishop with the name Mar Baselios along with His Excellency Isaac Mar Youhanon of Tiruvalla, on 28th December, 1978 at Mar Theophilos Nagar, Thirumoolapuram, Tiruvalla, by His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Arch-bishop Metropolitan of Trivandrum. The Malankara Catholic Church has begun a new page in its life and history with the erection of the new diocese of Bathery under the leadership of His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios. To be a Bishop in the Church, says Mar Baselios in his first message, "is nothing but a deeper dimension of an answer to God to lead the faithful in faith, hope and love". From the existing situation and with a perspective of achieving an integral growth, bishop Cyril did silhouette the future build-up of his mission diocese from the very inception itself. A total

PROFILE

application of his well-coined vision and action is thoroughly reflected in the end results of these sixteen years of dedicated service to the Church and to his people. Conjoining the various dimensions of human life, Mar Baselios sought to underline the apostolic mission of both the laity and the clergy with regard to announcing the reality of the Kingdom of God in a very specific and tangible manner. He envisioned a strategy that could grapple with particular circumstances of human life and thus was able to visualize the complex reality of human action into a unified endeavour to state the message of divine salvation.

A well-meant catch word in his emblem, "Trust in Love", is the basic thrust of all his activities. Sustained by this motto in life and action, all his ecclesial and non-ecclesial undertakings are to be seen as means to enable the people of God to respond to the designs of our heavenly Father. Ramification of the entire administrative mechanism without compartmentalization is a well acclaimed open system to foster co-operation, co-ordination and self-reliance. Pertinacious to lead the diocese towards an integral growth, it is beyond doubt, a well framed infrastructure was given shape within this short period of time. A combination of high intellectual calibre and a profound sense of service enabled bishop Cyril to sort out the immediate and essential needs and thereby expediting the diocese to a high profile. A retrospective mode of operation, however, helps him to identify and categorize issues of prime importance for due action and thereby catering to the needs of the time. Evidently, bishop Cyril maintains a high sense of individual freedom and human respect which are notably very essential for any sort of collective enterprise.

Magnanimous in approach, Mar Baselios could easily welcome anyone at any time irrespective of their identity and social standing. A melting heart making inroads into the real situation and problems of the people is an outstanding characteristic of his dealings. Apart from being a patron to his flock, Mar Baselios, is also extremely sensitive to the needs of others. A conspicuous indication in this regard is nothing but the various developmental projects of diverse nature and welfare activities undertaken in different parts of the diocese with the aim of

PROFILE

attenuating the clutches of economic and social burdens. His desire to be with the "Adivasis" to share with them his "Agape" is another expression for his concern and love for the marginalized. Many other things could be mentioned, but suffice to say Cyril Mar Baselios is "Christ oriented" and "humane".

An ardent proponent of Eastern Catholic Traditions, Mar Baselios sets out a well balanced ecumenical perspective in his thoughts and activities. He is one of the founding Fathers of the Oriental Study Forum in India, which makes serious efforts in promoting Eastern Catholic Churches. In 1989 the Holy See appointed him a member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Since 1988 he is a member of the International Dialogue Commission appointed by the Holy See. Very often his interventions are meant to be concise attempts to supply more clear vision and accurate historical data that should go into modern ecumenical discussions. Hopefully, this may enable the different churches to overcome the peril of unnecessary prejudices and apprehensions and thereby bring to fruition a perfect unity among the various sections of the Malankara Tradition in India. He participated in the special meeting of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference at Bandung, Indonesia in 1990 as one of the official delegates of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. Mar Baselios is an active member of the Indian Theological Association and a member of the Bishops-Theologians Dialogue Committee appointed by the CBCI. He is not only a well-known theologian and teacher but also a prolific writer. He has written numerous articles on ecumenism, ecclesiology, liturgy, etc, in leading periodicals and magazines.

His commitment to the Malankara Church is well known to those who know him. The selection of "Malankara Church" for his doctoral dissertation is only an indication to this line. As Seminary Professor he used to conduct seminars and study classes for priests and lay leaders throughout the Malankara Church. During the time of Second Vatican Council the non-catholic delegates from Kerala could experience the hospitality of Fr.Cyril in Rome. Mar Baselios keeps a wonderful relationship with the neighbouring dioceses both catholic

PROFILE

and non-catholic. His ability to have friendship with any one despite the social standing brought him many friends in the national and international circles. The individuality and growth of Malankara Catholic Church is his deep concern. After his appointment as the Chairmen of the Malankara Episcopal Commissions for Seminary, Youth and Catechism, the Church has considerably grown in these areas. He is a visiting Professor in the Malankara Seminary. The Seminary is fast growing, Malankara Youth has become a well established youth forum of the Church, Catechetical texts are getting shaped by a team of experts etc; all of these are signs of the growth.

Malancharuvil family is blessed with priestly and religious vocations; bishop, two priests and four sisters. The late Rev.Fr. Mathai Malancharuvil served the Archdiocese of Trivandrum as the Director of Catechesis and the Manager of St.Mary's Press, Pattom. Rev.Fr.George Malancharuvil served the Archdiocese as Principal of Mar Ivanios College at Trivandrum and St.John's College at Anchal. He was actively involved in the formation of the Seminarians as their Spiritual Director at St.Mary's Malankara Seminary till he was called by the Lord on 22nd December, 1994. Rev.Srs.Helena (Bathery) Eugenia (Trivandrum) Berchmans (Trivandrum) and Felicia (Bathery) render their meritorious services through the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (SIC) in the Malankara Church in different capacities. His brothers include Mr.M.Abraham (Retd.Head Master),Dr.Jose Mathew (USA) and Mr.John Mathai IAS (Member, Revenue Board, Kerala).

With the demise of His Grace Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, who passed away on 10th October, 1994, Mar Baselios has taken charge of the Malankara Catholic Church as its Administrator. The entire Malankara Catholic Church and especially the diocese of Bathery are profoundly in debt to His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios for his commendable services and laudable leadership of the Church.



A SELECT LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF CYRIL MAR BASELIOS*

BOOKS

1. *The Syro-Malankara Church, Always*: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, 1973.
2. *Shimo Namaskaram* (Translation), Tiruvalla: Bethany Ashram, 1975.

LEAFLETS

1. *Punaraikya Suvarana Jubiliyum Malankara Sabhayum* (Mal.)- Reunion Golden Jubilee and the Malankara Church- Kottayam: Publicity Committee, Malankara Sabha Reunion Golden Jubilee Celebrations, 1980.
2. *Ecclesial Perspectives Emerging from the New Code of Canon Law for the Oriental Catholic Churches*, Tiruvalla, 1991.
3. *Suviseshavum Suviseshavalkaranavum* (M)- The Gospel and Evangelization- Bathery: Dharmapeedham, 1991.
4. *The Holy Catholic Church as the Communion of Churches: The End of a Controversy*, Cochin: National Assembly of the CRI, January, 1993.
5. "The Concept of God and the Vision of Life in Christian Thinking" (M): Paper presented as the Christian representative at the Inter-Religious Conference on 1st May, 1995 at Municipal Town Hall, Always.

*This select list of articles is compiled by Fr. Thomas Poykamannil (Editor).

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES

1. "Ecumenism", Paper presented in Priests' Seminar at St.Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, April, 1969.
2. "Unity of the Church in Kerala, One Rite and Indian Rite," All India Seminar, Bangalore, 1969.
3. "Introduction of the Antiochene Rite into the Malankara Church", in George Menachery (ed.), *The St.Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol.2, Trichur,1973, 79-87.
4. "The Nature of Christian Unity We Seek", Paper presented in the Ecumenical Dialogue Meeting, NCC, Bangalore, 1974.
5. "Anthiokyan Reeth" (M)-The Antiochene Rite- in N.V.Krishnavarier (ed.), *Christu Darsanam* (M), Trivandrum, 1975, 765-790.
6. "Malankara Sabha Saarvathrika Sabhayil" (M)- Malankara Church in the Universal Church- in Malankara Sabha Reunion Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Kottayam, 1980, 39-42.
7. "The Reunion Movement: Its Contribution to Christian Heritage", in K.J.John (ed.), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, Cochin: L.M.Pylee Felicitation Committee, 1981, 308-315.
8. "Evangelization and Pastoral Care: Concerns of the Malankara Catholic Church", C.B.C.I. General Meeting, Tiruchirappally, 1982.

This Article is published also in *Christian Orient*, Vol.3, No.1-2, 1982, 25-33.

Part of this article is published as "Ecumenism in Danger", in Geevarghese Chediath and Thomas Vellilamthadam (eds.), *Ecumenism in Danger*, Kottayam: Denaha Service, 1986, 95-96.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

9. "Holy Eucharist: Christian call to sacrificial life along with the sacrifice of the Altar", Paper presented in the Ecumenical Dialogue, Sophia Centre, Kottayam, 1982.
10. "Believing Communities and Theologizing", in Felix Wilfred (ed.), *Theological Education in India Today*, Bangalore: ATC, 1985, 87-92.
11. "Lokamanasakhiku Roopam Kodukkunnayan" (M)-The One who forms the Conscience of the world- in *Manasakshiyude Sabdam*(M)- Voice of the Conscience-Bharananganam: Jeevan Books, 1987, 1-6.
12. Forword to *Malankara Katholikka Sabhayude Vyakthithvam* (M)- The Identity of the Malankara Catholic Church- by Sylvester Kanjiramukalil, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1988.
13. "Ecclesial Pluralism and the Mission of the Church in India", in Kuncheria Pathil(ed.), *Mission in India: The Task of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1988, 249-268.
14. "The Malankara Catholic Church: Its Ecumenical Role", Paper presented at the International Conference of Eastern Churches, Kottayam, 1987.
This Article is published also in *Christian Orient*, Vol.8, No.4, December, 1987, 157-168.
15. "Towards a solution of certain Inter-Ecclesial Problems", Standing Committee Report, CBCI, 1990.
16. "Purohitan Sabhayilum Samoohathilum" (M)-Priest in Church and Society- in Assisi, November, 1990.
17. "Malankara Sabha" (M)-Malankara Church- in *Malayala Manorama Daily*, (Calicut Edition), 20th September, 1990.
18. "Social Apostolate: An Integral Part of Our Mission", in *A Decade of Service*, Published by Fr. Jose Palakattel, Bathery: Shreyas, 1990, 1-2.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

19. Foreword to Mother Salga SIC, *Punraikyathinte Aadya Kalangal* (M)-Early Stages of the Reunion-edited by Tharakan Anniyil, Trivandrum, 1990, XI-XIV.
20. Foreword to *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, by Sr.Serena SIC, Kottayam, 1991.
21. "Post Vatican Renewal: A Malankara Perspective", in Fr.Paul Puthenangady (ed.), *Church in India: Institution or Movement?*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1991, 36-54.
22. "Punaraikyathil Pularunna Sathyangal" (M)- The Event of Reunion and the Emerging Truths - in *Aikyadeepam*, Vol.17, No.9-10, September-October, 1993, 9-14, 29-30.
23. "The Celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Malankara Church", Paper presented at the Indian Liturgical Association Meeting, Goa, March, 1994.
This article is published also in *Word and Worship*, Vol.27, No.3, April, 1994, 102-111.
24. "Family: A Community of Faith", Paper presented at the Decennial Celebrations of the Malankara Catholic Missions in North America, August 4-6, 1994.
25. "Malankara Sabhayil Bethaniyude Sthaanavum Dauthyavum"(M)-The Status and Role of Bethany in the Malankara Church-in *Bethany Congregation's Platinum Jubilee Souvenir*, Kottayam: Bethany Publications, 1994, 3-6.
26. "Christmas Celebration" (M), in *Aikyadeepam*, Vol.18, No.12, December, 1994, 8-10.
27. Message in P.I.Paul(ed.) *Shreyas 15 Years*, Bathery: Shreyas, 1994, 3.

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF MAR BASELIOS

Born	▪ August 16, 1935
Joined Bethany Ashram	▪ June 15, 1950
First Religious Profession	▪ March 18, 1953
Seminary Studies in Poona	▪ 1953-1960
Priestly Ordination	▪ October 4, 1960
Studies in Rome	▪ 1961-1965
Teaching at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam	▪ 1966-1970
Studies in USA	▪ 1970-1972
Consultor, Pontifical Commission for the Revision of Oriental Code of Canon Law	▪ September 15, 1973
Teaching at Kottayam & Pont.Seminary, Alwaye	▪ 1973-1977
Superior General(OIC)	▪ 1974-1978
Episcopal Nomination	▪ October 28, 1978
Episcopal Ordination	▪ December 28, 1978
Enthronement	▪ February 2, 1979
Member, Pont. Commission for Dialogue with Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church	▪ May 27, 1988
Member, Congregation for the Oriental Churches	▪ February 25, 1989
Member, Pont. Commission for Dialogue with Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	▪ 1989
Administrator of the Malankara Catholic Church	▪ October 10, 1994

PART ONE

THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS
OF
CYRIL MAR BASELIOS

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH AS COMMUNION OF CHURCHES THE END OF A CONTROVERSY*

INTRODUCTION

In the light of the Ecclesiology expounded by the Second Vatican Council and that of the canonical provisions of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) for the Latin Church and of the new Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), the Latin and the Oriental Churches in India are undergoing considerable changes in their ecclesial vision and life. These changes are all the more conspicuous in the Religious Institutes of these churches and have given rise to new patterns of their thinking and modes of life. This, in turn, has provoked some questions, especially in their apostolic works and inter-ecclesial relationships. Due to the limitations of a paper, which itself has to be presented here within a short definite time, we cannot list all of them in view of a discussion. Hence we shall have to confine ourselves to the exposition of a few relevant questions.

One of the most important areas of discussion is the relationship of the Religious Institutes to their own church of origin or of activities, especially in the context of their inter-ecclesial relations in India. Often we are referring to them as "Rite Conflicts" or 'jurisdictional controversies. But before entering into any concrete question or even controversy, we shall have to get some correct notions and clarifications of the terms we are using, and concepts we are cherishing, so that we are assured of a

* Talk given by Cyril Mar Baselios to the Catholic Religious of India at their National Assembly at Renewal Centre, Cochin, January, 1993 (Editor).

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

common ground to locate our discussions and consequently our conclusions.

I have been asked to deal with the following as subject matter of this paper:

1. The Notion of "Rite" and that of an "Ecclesia Sui Iuris" (Autonomous Church)
2. The Sui iuris Churches in the Catholic Communion
3. The History of the Sui iuris Churches in India
4. The "Rite controversy" and the letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II sent to the Bishops of India on 28.5.1987.

As is evident, each of these topics, deserves to be discussed separately with one or more papers in several sessions. But here we can only introduce these topics in view of providing a background for our further discussions.

1. THE NOTION OF RITE AND ECCLESIA SUI IURIS

A. THE NOTION OF RITE

Any student of church history will agree that inadequate understanding or misunderstanding of the terms and concepts used in discussions were causes of divisions and severe conflicts in the ecclesiastical circles in the past. The Nestorian, Monophysitic, Byzantine controversies are only clear examples.

The term "Rite" too had and still has its share in adding confusion to commotion in the canonical and ecclesiastical controversies. The term "Rite" has never been univocal both in its meaning and use.

It should be noted right at the beginning that the term "Rite" has been a misnomer in its application to the Oriental Churches. The notion has never been oriental, nor has it ever gained pride of place in the Orthodox or Oriental literature. It was introduced in the middle ages by the Latin Church to denote the patrimony of the Oriental Churches, especially their liturgy and canonical discipline. This itself was in the context of the efforts made by the Latin Church to re-unite with it the

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Oriental Churches that had cut off their communion with it. The Latin Church tried to accommodate these churches within it as "Rites" and promised and guaranteed to respect and preserve the liturgical traditions and sacramental disciplines of the Oriental Churches in the eventual reunion then envisaged. The promises of Pope Leo IX, of Celestin III and the declaration made in the Councils of Lyons II, Florence, etc. are good instances to clarify the point.

At any rate, the notion of Rite has assumed a variety of meanings in its use in the past. In its application to the Oriental Churches it was often taken identical with the notion of an Oriental Church with the sad result that the Oriental Churches, deprived of their ecclesial identity and role as churches of their own right, were reduced to the level of rare patrimonial specimens to be preserved and protected under the patronage of the Latin Church.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches in its Can. 28. § 1,2 has determined the meaning of the term "Rite" and described its nature in relation with the various churches in the Catholic Communion. But to understand it better against a wider background we shall make a brief survey of the evolution of the meaning of the notion of Rite. (Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973, 100-102).

Among the Romans the term "Rite" (Ritus) denoted customs and approved traditions followed in sacred functions. In the ecclesiastical circles too this gained acceptance. Later we find that terms like "Mos", consuetudo, Paterna traditio, etc. are used interchangeably for the term "Rite", and frequently they were in reference to liturgy and matters intimately connected with it. The notion of "Rite" assumed a broader meaning as it came to be used to denote a particular system of canonical and ecclesiastical discipline, including also non-liturgical traditions and customs.

During the time of First Vatican Council, attempts were made to maintain a clear distinctions between ecclesiastical discipline and liturgy, reserving the word "Rite" only for liturgy and matters liturgical. The context was the efforts to keep the oriental rites (liturgy) intact, while

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

trying to unify the disciplinary system for the whole church. But this attempt was not successful since the schema could not be presented and approved as the Council was abruptly concluded. Hence the word continued to be used especially among the canonists to mean not only liturgy and liturgical matters, but also a particular ecclesiastical discipline regulating the constitution of hierarchy and church-government. In the former Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church (1917), "Rite" was used in a variety of meanings that were prevailing till then. The use of the term as a canonical concept having the signification of a juridical entity was clear from the description given by the learned canonist E. Hermann. He defined Rite as..."A group of faithful which is governed by its own laws and traditional customs in matters liturgical and canonical discipline and which is acknowledged by the Holy See as if autonomous and distinct from other groups".

The *Motu Proprio Postquam Apostolicis Litteris* of Pius XII, (1958) Can. 303 § 1 adopted this concept of Rite and, applying it to the existing Catholic Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion, described them as "Sui Iuris" and stipulated that a "Rite" should be acknowledged as such expressly or actively by the church.

The use of the term "Rite" in the Documents of Vatican II is also with varied meanings. In the constitutions on liturgy (SC) and the Church (LG) and the Decrees on Bishops (CD) and Ecumenism (UR), it appears with its different meanings of liturgy, liturgical ceremonies, signs and rubrics and also that of a canonical rite. We can also find that it has been used with different meanings in one and the same document. For example, in SC nos. 3, 4, 24, 36, 38, 87, 101, 123 and in OE nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16 etc. the term "Rite" assumes different meanings.

The most striking instance of the use of the term, "Rite" is its use in the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches (OE.2,10) to mean "Particular Churches". Here "Rite" seems to be understood as a synonym of "Particular Church". That Church, Holy and Catholic, which is the mystical body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same faith, the same Sacraments, and the same government and who, combining into various groups held

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

together by a Hierarchy, form particular Churches or Rites (OE.2). The subtitle "On the particular churches or Rites", is also to be noted. The term "Rite" obtains the same meaning in OE.10.

The new Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church, promulgated in 1983 (CIC) seems to have followed the same trends using the term "Rite" with all its varied meanings, and the instances are too many to be listed here. In addition, the CIC has used terms like "Catholic Rite" (CC.923) and 1248 § 1). Latin rite (c.1109), Oriental rite (CC.1015 § 2 and 1127 § 1) Ritual Church (CC. 111 and 112) etc. with the result that each time its meaning has to be interpreted to avoid confusion.

It is against this background that we have to understand the meaning of Can. 28 of CCEO and appreciate the usefulness of its formulation. The CCEO has taken up the problem of confusion ensuing by using the term "Rite" with varied meaning and solved it once for all.

The canonical precision given to the meaning of the term "Rite" and the determination of its use are valuable for yet another important reason. This will help to understand the meaning of the term "Ecclesia Sui iuris" introduced in CCEO. (Sui iuris Church is the term used for describing the nature and status of the Catholic Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion. We shall discuss this concept soon in the following pages).

Concluding our discussion on the evolution of meaning of the term "Rite" we can safely affirm that Can. 28 of CCEO is a landmark in the process of understanding the meaning of it with precision.

We shall now straight away start discussing the meaning of the term "Rite" has received in Can. 28 § 1, of the CCEO.

The Canon reads thus Can. 28:

§1: "A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, distinct by the culture and circumstances of history of a people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each church sui iuris:

§2: The rites treated in this code, unless otherwise stated, are

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

those which arise from the Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan traditions”

From the description of the Can. 28 § 1, 2 we are given to understand the following:

1. Rite is a patrimony of a Sui iuris Church;
2. Rite is a complex whole, comprising the liturgical, spiritual, and disciplinary patrimony distinct by the culture and the vicissitudes of the history of a people;
3. Rite is the means by which a Sui iuris Church expresses its own manner of living the faith. Hence it is no more to be treated as a juridical person, but a patrimony of a Sui iuris Church, a means by which it manifests its ecclesial life.
4. The notion of “Rite” is distinct from that of a Sui iuris Church;
5. From Can.28 § 2, it follows that the CCEO acknowledges the origin of a rite only from any of the traditions which are taxatively enumerated and indicated as Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan.
6. From the time of the publication of CCEO onwards and within the purview of CCEO, the term “Rite” should be used and understood only in the meaning given to it by Can. 28 § 1,2, (with the only exception in Can. 828, where “Sacred Rite” is used in a special meaning).
7. Hence a Sui iuris Church should not be called any more “a Rite” as we used to do hitherto, since the notion of “Rite” is not identical with that of a Sui iuris Church. This correction would help us to understand better the nature and mission of the Sui iuris Churches of the Orient and spare us from a lot of confusions and controversies.

But it has to be immediately stated that the precision and the determination of the meaning of the term “Rite” given in Canon 28 § 1,2 of CCEO may not by itself avoid the terminological problem. The confusion of meanings is likely to be continued since the term “Rite” is

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

still found in the canons of the CIC with all its varied meanings. If they are not interpreted in the light of the Canon 28 § 1,2 of the CCEO (which is a later canonical legislation), the difficulties will still be there. Similarly the uncritical and indiscriminate use of the term in the Latin Church to mean an autonomous-Sui iuris- Eastern Church, as was hitherto used, if not checked, would perpetuate the confusion prevailing in the past, and consequently the understanding of the nature of the Eastern Churches as Sui iuris (autonomous) Churches in their ecclesial identity and juridical status in the Catholic communion would be blurred.

B. THE NOTION OF A SUI IURIS CHURCH (ECCLESIA SUI IURIS)

The new CCEO has introduced the term “Sui iuris” church (Ecclesia Sui iuris) in the Can. 27, to describe the juridical nature of the Oriental Churches. It is literally the latin translation of the Greek term “autonomos” meaning autonomous. The CCEO preferred the latin term “sui iuris” to the original “autonomos”, to avoid the danger of confusing its meaning with the meaning it obtains in the Orthodox Canonical literature under the terms autonomy or autocephaly which is different from that of the catholic usage.

The description “Sui iuris” given to the Catholic Eastern Churches would solve a good many problems, even though it has its own limitations and difficulties. The term “Sui iuris” is indicative of the God-given right of the Eastern Churches to be of their own right, with their inviolable rights to govern themselves and to fulfil their God-given duties. In fact, it refers to their status as juridical persons.

The autonomy of the Catholic Eastern Churches referred to in the Canon is a relative autonomy, as all the Churches in the Catholic communion, whether of the East or West, are subject to the jurisdictional primacy of the Pope, the Supreme Pastor of the Church, the Successor of Peter, the Head of the College of the Apostles. Hence the “Sui iuris” nature of the Eastern Catholic Churches, while safeguarding the autonomy specific to them, does not contradict the sovereignty and autonomy of the Universal Church. It is to be noted that the CCEO has not all of a sudden introduced the new concept of “sui iuris”, but it has the background of the Motu Proprio Postquam Apostolicis Litteris of

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pope Pius XII, in its Canon 303 § 1, which, in turn, was the result of the canonical deliberation of the time.

We shall now briefly explain the main points contained in the Canon 27 of CCEO. (Cf. A recent good study on this question: *The Notion of a Sui iuris Church*, Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, Rome, (Doctoral Thesis to be published). Can. 27, reads thus: "A group of christian faithful united by a hierarchy according to the norm of law which the supreme authority of the church expressly or tacitly recognizes as sui iuris is called in the Code a church sui iuris".

This Canon is the canonical formulation of the ecclesiological perspective of the Vatican II explained in its document on the Eastern Catholic Churches, (OE 2) and proposes to describe the juridical nature of a Sui iuris church. In the light of the Second Vatican Council's Ecclesiology that gave shape to it, we shall sum up the following salient points contained in Can. 27 of the CCEO:

1. The Sui Iuris Church consists of a group of Christian faithful;
2. It must be held together in Communion by a Hierarchy;
3. This communion-unification-should be established according to the norms of law;
4. The supreme authority of the Church shall have acknowledged or recognized it as "Sui iuris";
5. The recognition can be either expressed or tacit;
6. This recognition refers to the Sui iuris character of:
 - a. the group of Christian faithful
 - b. the hierarchy
 - c. the level of communion.
7. It is to be noted that Can. 27, proposes not so much the Rite of a Church - patrimony of a church - as the hierarchical constitution specific to it, as the basis of the Sui iuris character of a church.

The norms of law referred to in the Can. 27 are the norms given in CC. 55, 151, 155, 174 (more fully from CC. 55 to 176). Thus CCEO recognises four forms of Sui iuris Hierarchy corresponding to the four

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

kinds of grouping of the Christian faithful in their ecclesiastical Communion, and, therefore, 4 kinds of Sui iuris Churches:

1. Patriarchal Churches
2. Major Archiepiscopal Churches
3. Metropolitan Churches
4. Other Sui iuris Churches (headed by a Hierarchy of lesser grade)

Hence we see that the Sui iuris character itself is graded in accordance to the hierarchical level recognised or established by the norms of law. Thus, for example, the level of autonomy of the Patriarchal Churches, in terms of their self-sufficiency and powers of self-government, is higher than that of the other Sui iuris Churches.

2. SUI IURIS CHURCHES IN THE CATHOLIC COMMUNION:

To discuss the real nature and position of the Sui iuris Churches in the Catholic communion, a clear insight into the ecclesiology of communion expounded by Vatican II is a pre-requisite. But here we cannot elaborate on this theological theme. It suffices to state that while the constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium*, explains the church as a mystery and universal sacrament of salvation, the decree on the Oriental Churches brings out the nature of the church as a communion of particular churches. In Canon 27 of CCEO, it is the juridical nature and status of these particular churches that is described.

Leaving out the theological discussion on the church as a sacramental mystery, we shall focus our attention here on the visible and canonical aspect of its organisation as a communion and community of the People of God. Vatican II describes the Universal Church as a communion of all the baptised with the Sacred Hierarchy, the Supreme Head of which is the Bishop of Rome. Further, it proposes that the Universal Church is a communion of churches both of the East and of the West that are united in the same faith and sacraments, under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff (OE.2). "The holy Catholic church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

sacraments and the same government. They combine into different groups, which are held together by their hierarchy, and so form particular churches or rites”.

From the text it is clear that there are three levels of ecclesial communion;

1. The christian faithful in communion with their own hierarchy realised normally on a local level (Diocese);
2. The groups of faithful held united together by their hierarchy establishing communion with each other under a hierarchical Head (Sui iuris Church);
3. The Sui iuris Churches in communion with each other and in communion with the Roman Pontiff under his supreme ecclesiastical governance (Universal Church). (Cf. *The code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: A pastoral Council overview*, John D. Faris, J.C.O.D.)

The Council clearly teaches that these particular churches, while remaining in communion under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, retain their own ecclesial identity and status as particular churches, with their right and duty to govern themselves of their own right. “For that reason this Council solemnly declares that the churches of the East like those of the West have the right and duty to govern themselves according to their own special disciplines. For these are guaranteed by ancient tradition, and seem to be better suited to the customs of their faithful and to the good of their souls” (OE.5).

They are also equal as particular churches (OE.3). “Therefore these churches are of equal rank, so that none of them is superior to the others because of its rite. They have the same rights and obligations, even with regard to the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world (cf. Mk. 16:15), under the direction of the Roman Pontiff”.

This, in short, is the juridical status of the Sui iuris churches in the Catholic communion, and it is this ecclesiological perspective of Vatican II that is described in the canonical formulation of Can. 27 of CCEO.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Hence, as the Council teaches, the existence of the particular churches in the Universal Church is not an anomaly, but it is the very nature of the church as a communion realised a different levels with a corresponding hierarchy specific to each of these levels.

THE PRESENT SUI IURIS EASTERN CHURCHES IN THE CATHOLIC COMMUNION

At present there are 21 Sui Iuris Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion under the jurisdictional primacy of the Roman Pontiff. They are classified according to the grade of their autonomous character. All of them (except the Maronites and the Italo-Albanians) have Orthodox counterparts.

A. The Patriarchal Churches

1. The Maronite Catholic Church
2. The Chaldean Catholic Church
3. The Coptic Catholic Church
4. The Syrian Catholic Church
5. The Melkite Catholic Church
6. The Armenian Catholic Church

B. The Archiepiscopal Churches

1. The Ukranian Catholic Church
2. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church**

C. The Metropolitan Churches

1. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
2. The Ethiopian Catholic Church

** His Holiness Pope John Paul II raised the Syro-Malabar Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church with His Eminence Antony Cardinal Padiyara as its first Major Archbishop on 29 January, 1993 (Editor).

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

3. The Ruthenian Catholic Church

4. The Romanian Catholic Church

D. The Other Sui iuris Churches

1. The Italo-Albanian Catholic Church

2. The Yugoslavian Catholic Church

3. The Bulgarian Catholic Church

4. The Slovak Catholic Church

5. The Hungarian Catholic Church

6. The Russian Catholic Church

7. The Greek Catholic Church

8. The Albanian Catholic Church

9. The Belorussian Catholic Church

(Cf. For statistics, Background outline, see Ronald G. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, Rome, 1990; Cf. also John Madey, "Churches of Oriental Apostolic Tradition in Ecclesial Communion with Rome (Eastern Catholic Churches) 1992" in *Christian Orient*, Vol. XIII, No.4, (1992), 231-242).

The nature of the Latin Church is that of a particular church as envisaged in Vatican II Documents especially LG. 13, 23, CD, 23, OE, 2, 3, 5, UR. 16 and CIC (Can. 1). Similarly communion as envisaged in the Catholic Oriental ecclesiology, especially that of Vatican Council II even though the CCEO does not include the Latin Church in the purview of Can. 27, or Can. 28 § 1,2.

3. THE SUI IURIS CHURCHES IN INDIA

The christian community in India is as old as Christianity itself and it was one. But today the christians in India remain divided in several christian communities. Here we deal only with the Indian Catholic community which consists of three particular churches or Ecclesia Sui

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

iuris, namely (1) The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, (2) The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church (3) The Latin Catholic Church.

A brief report on them in terms of their beginning, development and hierarchical configuration in India may be useful to understand and evaluate the nature and role of them as Sui iuris Churches in the Catholic Communion.

A. THE SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church traces its origin to the apostolate of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. It is believed that St. Thomas arrived in India around 52 A.D. and formed small communities of believers in several places. There are reliable accounts, both local and foreign, already from the 2nd Century A.D. that testify to the existence and life of this ancient christian community, the details of which we leave aside.

There is a strong tradition that there were immigrations of christians from the Persian Empire, both in the 4th C. and in the 9th C. to South India. Their arrival had strengthened the local community of christians and it paved the way for closer ecclesial communion with the churches in the East. This relationship was all the more cordial and deeper as some churches in the Persian Empire were also founded by St. Thomas or by his immediate disciples. There is evidence that the Indian Church in the 7th cent. A.D. was listed as a Metropolice among the ecclesial communities of the East Syrian Church. It is also testified that the Metropolitan of the Indian Church had pastoral supervision all over India, enjoying the title "Metropolitan of all India"-the Gate of India.

The special feature of this early church in India was that it remained under the care and governance of an Archdeacon (who should not be taken for the chief of the Deacons!) who was also the social leader of the community. With definite historical evidence, we find that late in the 15th century, the East Syrian Bishops were presiding over the church in India as its spiritual heads.

At the time when the Portuguese arrived in India (1498) there was a considerably organised Christian church in India, with its own

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

autonomy and ecclesiastical patrimony. The contacts with the Portuguese, though cordial in the beginning, turned out to be unpleasant as they tried to intervene both in the internal affairs and in the external administration of the Indian Church. This became worse as the Portuguese missionaries started making efforts to introduce their own ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions into the Church of Thomas Christians. The apex of this intervention was the attempt of the Archbishop of Goa, Alexis Menezis, to convoke a Synod at Diamper in 1599, for the purpose of latinising the church of Thomas Christians and curtailing the powers of the Archdeacon of the Indian community. Serious conflicts ensued and finally they ended up in a pronounced separation from the then ruling Portuguese Latin Bishop Garzia in 1653, which in history is known as "Coonan Cross Oath". The community of Thomas Christians was then divided into two groups, one professing allegiance to the local ecclesiastical authority and the other refusing it. Since then, the ancient christian community of Thomas Christians in India moved into two directions, one under the jurisdiction of the foreign Latin Prelates and the other independent of them. The former is today known as the "The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church" and the latter "The Malankara Church." We shall here follow up the development of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, leaving the Malankara Church to be discussed in connection with the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Immediately after the Synod of Diamper (1599) the Thomas Christians were placed under the Latin Prelates. The first Latin Bishop was Francis Roz, S.J, who was consecrated on 20th December 1599. Under the rule of the Latin jurisdiction namely the Padroado and the Propaganda rule, the church of Thomas Christians was gradually latinised, practically in all aspects of its ecclesial life, including the training of the Clergy and Religious. This process was going on for a period of three centuries, until recently when efforts started for reversing the process.

Closely watching the changes that took place in the hierarchical configuration of the ancient Indian Church of St. Thomas, we can learn how the ecclesial autonomy of this church has been diminished during the Latin rule.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

The capital city of Crangannore (Kodungalloor in Malayalam) was "the See of Thomas the Apostle", "the Holy See" or "the Apostolic See of Thomas" as testified by some ancient writings. Quilon, Angamaly, Udayamperor, etc. were also important ecclesiastical centres. As the city of Crangannoor was destroyed in war by fire in 1524, the East Syrian Metropolitan Mar Abraham was forced to transfer his residence to Angamaly in 1570. As Bishop Francis Roz succeeded him in 1599 as the first Latin Bishop of the Thomas Christians, the Padroado rights of the Portugal King were extended over the See of Angamaly. Soon in 1600, its Archiepiscopal title having been suppressed, it was reduced to the status of a simple Bishopric and made suffragan to the Archdiocese of Goa. Due to the protests the See of Angamaly was restored to the Status quo ante, "as if the suppression had never taken place" by the Apostolic Brief Romanus Pontifex of 22nd Sept. 1608. Thus it continued to enjoy its all-India Metropolitan jurisdiction as before. Earlier Bishop Roz had requested Rome to transfer the See and title to Crangannore and his request was granted in 1607. Hence the subsequent Padroado Prelates continued to use the title "Archbishop of Crangannore or Angamaly-Crangannore".

The Padroado jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians was suppressed in 1886 and the honorary title of "Archbishop of Crangannore" was given to the Bishop of Damao, until Damao was united to Goa in 1928. Thus the Archbishop of Goa, who had already from 1886 been honoured with the title of Patriarch of the East Indies received also the title of the Archbishop of Crangannore from 1928. Thus the autonomous status of the church of Thomas Christians was lost and they were taken care of by the latin Prelates of the Vicariate of Malabar and later of Verapoly under the Propaganda rule. But Pope Leo XIII had created 1887 two Vicariates, Trichur and Kottayam, for the Thomas Christians, and separated them. Only in 1896 they were given Bishops from their own community as 3 new Vicariates were formed out of the former two. They were Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanachery. In 1911 Pope St. Pius X established a special Vicariate for the Suddist ethnic group with head-quarters at Kottayam. The Syro-Malabar Church has received a definite juridical configuration with a proper Hierarchy that was established for them in 1923, when Ernakulam was raised to a

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Metropolitan See with Trichur. Kottayam and Changanacherry as its suffragan Sees; but its jurisdiction was confined between the two rivers of South India, viz. Bharatapuzha in the North and Pambayar in the South. Later in 1953 extending the jurisdictional boundary, the diocese of Tellicherry was formed in the North. In 1956 Changanacherry was raised to a Metropolitan See and another ecclesiastical province was formed, extending also its jurisdiction to the South of Kerala. Since the year 1962 the Holy See has been granting ecclesiastical units to the Syro-Malabar Church in North India in view of Apostolic work in its own Rite and in its own exclusive jurisdiction. Thus the dioceses of Chanda, Sagar, Santna, Ujjain, Bijnor, Jagadapur, Rajkot and Gorakhpur were created even though these dioceses have been placed under the latin Metropolitan Sees concerned. The latest development in its ecclesiastical organisation is the erection of the Syro-Malabar diocese of Kalyan as coexisting with the Latin jurisdiction of Bombay and Pune.

The Syro-Malabar Church has at present 21 Dioceses and 23 Bishops (apart from the Missionary Bishops), 2842 Priests, 35083 Religious men and women, (apart from its Missionaries who constitute 60% of the missionary personnel in India), and about 3 million christian faithful. It has also a considerable number of Christian Faithful outside its present jurisdiction both in India and abroad.

The Syro-Malabar Church, in spite of all the jurisdictional restrictions, liturgical and canonical impoverishment, and creeping influences alien to its ecclesial life and spirit, has grown up as a particular church in the Catholic communion, and is in the process of restoring its ecclesial identity as a Sui iuris Eastern Catholic Church.

The Holy See is well aware of the history of the Syro-Malabar Church and the loss of its ecclesial identity and autonomy. It is guiding the process of its restoration to its pristine status of an ancient Eastern Apostolic Church in terms of its hierarchical autonomy and ecclesial patrimony, in spite of the hurdles that are being placed in the way out of ignorance and defective ecclesial formation especially of the Clergy and Religious.

B. THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

The fact that the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is an Apostolic Church forming part of the ancient christian community of Thomas Christians, is a knowledge still to be diffused even among the Catholics of India. From the time of the division of the ancient christian community of Thomas Christians in 1653, the group that took an independent stand, was specifically known as the Malankara Church, which at present remains divided into several ecclesial communities. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is one of these Malankara ecclesial communities, that is in the Catholic communion. Many take the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church for a young church, considering its rather recent re-entry into the Catholic communion, forgetting that the Malankara Church is part of the ancient apostolic church of the Thomas Christian and had been for 16 centuries in the Catholic communion. Even during the period of the last 3 centuries of its separation from the Roman Catholic communion, the Malankara Church was growing as a Christian community with its ecclesial identity and reality. In fact, it is this ecclesial basis that prompted the Holy See to recognise the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church as a *Sui iuris* church.

The resistance put up by the Thomas christians against the Portuguese authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, who intervened in their church-life and traditions, was in fact a defence of their ecclesial identity and autonomy. It is also to be noted that their refusal to submit to the local ecclesiastical leadership in their unjust demands did not at this phase reach to the point of a separation from the Catholic communion as they still maintained their relationship with the Holy See of Rome. This is proved from their appeal submitted to Rome and the consequent Enquiry-Commission sent by the Holy See in 1657.

Unfortunately the enquiry process did not take the form of a Dialogue, with the sad effect these christian faithful under the leadership of the Archdeacon, their native ecclesiastical Head sought ecclesial communion with other ancient churches, especially with those who were earlier known to them. Thus in 1665 a Metropolitan from the Syrian Jacobite Church of Antioch arrived in India and helped the Malankara christian community to organise themselves along their ancient ways of

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

church life. The intermittent arrivals of Bishops from Antioch strengthened their ecclesial status especially by the introduction and acceptance of the ancient Antiochene Rite in the Malankara Church. This was all the more acceptable and accelerated as the East Syrian liturgical traditions, with which they were formerly familiar, were closely linked with that of the Antiochene. During the course of time, Malankara church fully adopted the Antiochene Rite. The hierarchical structure too was established as the Archdeacon Mar Thomas VI was validly consecrated Bishop under the name Dionysius I in 1772 by a Metropolitan from the Jacobite Church of Antioch. Since then, the Malankara Church had grown more steadily, though its communion with the church of Antioch had been a source of anxiety and trouble in terms of its ecclesial autonomy and identity, the details of which we leave aside here.

Even after the failure of reconciliatory talks with the Apostolic Delegation in 1657, the Malankara Christians under the leadership of their ecclesiastical Heads, continued dialogue with the Holy See of Rome for a reconciliation down through the Centuries. It was only in 1930 that this dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Holy See of Rome has borne fruit. The Memorandum submitted by Mar Ivanios, representing the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, makes the proposal thus: "The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church themselves,

1. preserving the ancient rites and rituals
2. retaining for the Holy Synod and for the individual Bishops their jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians that come into reunion and
3. accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope being the Successor of St. Peter, the Chief of the Apostles of Our Lord.

The Holy Synod does not want to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Beyrout. For the Holy Synod itself exercises Patriarchal jurisdiction within the Archdiocese of the Catholicate in South India" (Cf. Cyril, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 123).

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Acknowledging the existence and nature of the Malankara Church as part of the ancient Apostolic community of the Thomas Christians, that has defended and retained its ecclesial autonomy and identity for the last three centuries, the Holy See has accepted its apostolicity and ecclesial nature and recognised the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church as *Sui iuris* church in the Catholic communion.

Today it is one of the *Sui iuris* Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion under the category of a *Sui iuris* Metropolitan Church with an autonomy specific to it. It has a membership of about 300.000 faithful with 3 Dioceses, 5 Bishops, 400 Priests 1200 Religious men and women.

The special feature of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is that it is the Catholic counterpart of the Non-Catholic Churches, namely, Orthodox, Jacobite, Marthoma and partially CSI which all together have a population of about 3 Million, almost equal to the Syro-Malabar community of Thomas Christians.

The ecclesial position and juridical status of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in its communion with the Universal Church is a symbol and mark of the catholicity of the church critically observed by the non-catholic Churches that are making their progress towards or regress from their efforts for communion with the Holy See of Rome. This is a point of interest for effective ecumenism.

In conclusion we may state that the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is an autonomous church *Sui iuris* in the Catholic communion which has its own ecclesial identity and apostolic status vested with its own God-given right to fulfil the mission of the church of Christ.

C. THE LATIN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Though the ancient Indian Church had stray contacts with the Christian West, it was only by the arrival of Portuguese that closer relationship were established with it. Under the patronage of the King of Portugal, along with the trade enterprises, missionary works were also carried out in the past.

The first missionaries from Lisbon settled in Cochin in the year 1500, and soon after in 1514 the first Episcopal See for the Latin Church

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

was established in Funchel. Then in 1534 the diocese of Goa was erected, which became the most important ecclesiastical centre for the missionaries. Apostolic activities of all kinds were earnestly carried out with considerable success and within a short time the Latin Catholic Church had several ecclesiastical units looked after mainly by various Religious Orders. The diocese of Cochin was established in the year 1557 under the Padroado. After the "Coonan Cross Oath", the vicariate of Malabar was also started in 1657, under the Propaganda jurisdiction. In 1709 the Vicariate of Verapoly was erected which gradually comprised the whole of Malabar under its jurisdiction. After the suppression of the Padroado, the Latin hierarchy was established in India on 1st Sept. 1886 and all the ecclesiastical units of the Latin Church have been brought under the exclusive jurisdiction of Propaganda. Besides, the whole of India was divided into several ecclesiastical provinces of the Latin Church. Today the Latin Church has about 100 ecclesiastical units with about 100 Bishops, 5250 Priests, 23500 men and women Religious and a population of about 8 Millions Christian faithful.

The Latin Church in India is a regional or national unit of the widely expanded Latin Church of the West. Like all other units of the Latin Church, whatever be their size and power, the Latin Church in India too enjoys a hierarchical or jurisdictional autonomy as that is specific to them. The juridical autonomy and configuration of the hierarchy of the Latin Church in India, as else where, is that of the National Episcopal Conferences, obtained within the Patriarchal Church of Rome as specified and determined by its Code of Canon Law (CIC) promulgated in 1983.

Though the Latin Catholic Church has spread all over the world, because of its strong sense of uniform regime, no other church could grow under it as a particular church with an ecclesial autonomy and patrimony of its own. Hence with many autonomous and particular churches were through divine providence (Vat II) formed in the East, the Latin Church has remained as the only particular church in the West.

The Oriental autonomous-Sui iuris-churches are not to be considered as part or units of the Latin Catholic Church, whatever be its organisational strength gained by its global extension. But they are in

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

communion with it as they are autonomous and having ecclesial power to be of their own right under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, the Head of the College of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. This, in fact, is the ecclesiological insight that has been highlighted by the Vatican II teaching that all the particular churches in the Catholic communion, whether of the East or of the West, are equal in their ecclesial reality and status in reference to the divine commission they have received from Christ.

It is clear that the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches, as autonomous churches in the catholic communion, have their own ecclesial identity and patrimony. Consequently they have also the obligation and duty to be the church of Christ fulfilling the redemptive mission, continuing the saving act of God in His Spirit given by Jesus Christ.

4. THE APOSTOLIC LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

A. BACKGROUND

Every one who has carefully read the points explained in the foregoing pages would find that the intervention of His Holiness Pope John Paul II in the "Rite controversy" (as it was wrongly publicised) was one of the best of its kind in the pastoral ministry of the Supreme Pontiff.

It is not clear if the Catholic community in India as a whole was capable or equipped to enter into a discussion over the "Rites" or "Rights" of the churches. For, even many years after of the conclusion of the Vatican II, the ecclesiological perspectives that the Catholic church in concrete exists in the particular churches that are in ecclesial communion with each other and with the supreme Pastor of the Universal Church, and that it is this Holy communion protected and cherished by them which is the basic reality of the Catholic Church, are not very well understood and accepted by many. To describe the situation very mildly, building up the church community or communities within one's jurisdiction seems to have been the focus everywhere and in everything, forgetting or neglecting the communion it purported to cherish.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

After the establishment of the Latin Church in India, especially after the creation of its common hierarchical structure a hundred years ago, the ancient apostolic church of Thomas Christians continued to be kept within the boundaries of its former Vicariate, deprived of its all-India jurisdiction and worse still its right and capabilities to fulfil its God-given task of Evangelization. By the division in 1653, already one part of this ancient apostolic church of India was heavily wounded, especially because of the loss of communion with the Holy See of Rome. Lacking in its own hierarchical leadership for long, emptied of the inner genuine sources of its own ecclesial life, mutilated in its ecclesial structures, the other section of the apostolic church-the Syro Malabar Church-also seemed to have survived only to lend its missionary personnel to the ecclesiastical units the Latin Church has been establishing in India. The christian faithful of these churches moving out to the other parts of India were accommodated or tolerated in the ecclesiastical units of the Latin Church. Leaving the details of the problematic situation, we briefly describe it as deplorable and shocking, demanding solution and remedy.

By the emergence of a new consciousness of the ecclesial nature and identity of this ancient apostolic church, which has already been formed by now into two autonomous churches, closer study of their role in the evangelisation of India has been made. It has also been realised that the restoration and growth of these churches in terms of their ecclesial and juridical status along with their ecclesial life shall have to be effectively promoted, especially against the background of the long and imperceptible process of latinisation, mainly in the case of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The two Oriental Churches invited the attention of the Latin Hierarchy, especially in India, to some of the basic questions such as the need of organising the Evangelisation work, providing pastoral care for the faithful of the Oriental Churches, remoulding the structure of the common conferences of the Catholic Hierarchy, etc. In the given position and conditions of the Latin Church in India the Latin Hierarchy in India by itself could not find an adequate solution of these problems in spite of the directives of the Vatican II and of the CIC. On the other hand the Oriental Churches continued to insist on a proper solution of the problems.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

B. DIRECTIVES FROM THE HOLY FATHER POPE JOHN PAUL II

Intervening in the discussion, Holy Father Pope John Paul II sent an apostolic letter to all the Bishops of India on 28.5.1987.

In his letter the Holy Father first acknowledged the existence of an ancient apostolic community in India mentioning also of the arrival of the missionaries of the Latin Church from the West and their good works of Evangelisation, with the collaboration of the church of Thomas Christians. Following the teachings of Vatican Council II, he explained the role of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the task of Evangelisation and of pastoral care, retaining their own ecclesial identity and autonomy. He made it clear that he was well aware of the situation in which the Oriental Churches in India had been placed.

Hence the Holy Father, keeping his promise “that I myself would do everything possible to ensure a just and fair settlement of the issues, one that would take into account all the pastoral exigencies of unity and truth” (Address to the Bishops of India, 1st February 1986), has given the following directives in his said letter:

a. Regarding the Hierarchical Communion

1. The three particular churches have the right to establish their own Episcopal bodies in accordance with their own ecclesiastical legislation.

Hence the Latin Church, in India shall have a National Episcopal Conference (and Regional Conference) according to the provisions of Cans. 447-459 of CIC, with given juridical authority.

The Syro-Malabar Church, if not raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal or Patriarchal Church, can have only as interim common Episcopal conference, more or less in the latin model, but practically with no juridical status or authority, as it has at present two Metropolitan provinces of equal rank and authority without being united under a supra-Metropolitan authority under the Supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, as befits an autonomous Oriental

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Church. (Cf. for more details: The Syro-Malabar Church under the new Oriental Code, George Nedungatt, S.J.).

The Syro-Malankara Church, if it remains as a Metropolitan Sui iuris Church without being raised to a supra-Metropolitan juridical status, can have an Episcopal body in the form of a Council of Hierarchs according to the provisions of Cans. 155-171 of CCEO.

But, in the future, if both of these churches regain their, pristine status of an Oriental Apostolic autonomous church with a corresponding hierarchical Head, they are entitled to have an Episcopal Synod as the supreme ecclesiastical authority of these churches, capable of regulating both their internal and external life as autonomous churches under the supreme governance of the Roman Pontiff.

2. To cherish ecclesial communion among these churches and to safeguard unity and collaboration of these churches "The National Conference of all the Catholic Bishops of India is to continue for questions of common concern and of a national and supra-ritual character". It is also envisaged that this National conference will have new statutes of its own approved by the Holy See, to determine the areas of interaction and to regulate its activities, according to the Vatican Council's Document. (CD. 24, 37, 38).

It is to be noted that this National conference is not to be confused with the National Conference of the Latin Church constituted in virtue of Can. 447-459 of CIC, or with any National conference of any other church.

b. Regarding the divine commission of Evangelisation

1. "All the church under the pastoral governance of the Roman Pontiff have the same rights and obligations, including what concerns the preaching of the Gospel, always under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff".

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Quoting the Second Vatican Council's Document OE.3, the Holy Father definitively affirms that all the three particular churches in India should engage themselves in the task of Evangelisation and this with their own God-given right and responsibility. But the three churches shall do it faithfully and effectively, with organisation and co-ordination, communion and collaboration, -not confusion and rivalry. It could be organised and promoted even by forming a special commission of the National Conference of India.

2. Hence the juridical bond and restrictions imposed on the Indian Oriental Churches regarding the work of Evangelisation all over India are once for all removed. Some of the criteria for undertaking the task are regard for mutual communion, safeguards for unity of action, assurance of effectiveness, avoidance of all dangers of confusion and rivalry, and above all "under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff"
3. With these safeguards each church can engage itself in the work of evangelisation in India and all over India. Thus, apart from the considerations of mutual assistance and collaboration in the life and work of another particular church, the need for changing over to another church or adopting its life-style, as an unavoidable pre-requisite for the work of evangelisation in India is unwarranted, putting an end to an era of confusion and controversy over the selection and formation of the missionary personnel.

c. Regarding the Pastoral Care of the Oriental Faithful

1. "Regarding the pastoral care of the faithful of the Eastern Rites who are living in Latin Rite dioceses, in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Conciliar Decrees of *Christus Dominus*, 23,3 and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 4, the Latin Ordinaries of such dioceses are to provide as soon as possible for an adequate pastoral care of the faithful of these Eastern Rites, through the ministry of the priests, or through parishes

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

of the Rite, where this would be indicated, or through an Episcopal Vicar endowed with the necessary faculties, where circumstances would so indicate (cf. *Christus Dominus*, 23;; Code of Canon Law, Canons 383, 82: 476; 518”.

2. These provisions are within the competence and authority of the local Latin Ordinary, and they are obliged to make such arrangements in virtue of the directive personally given by the Roman Pontiff. (“the Latin Ordinaries of such dioceses are to provide as soon as possible for adequate pastoral care of the faithful of these Eastern Rites”).
3. The Holy See is the competent authority to establish a special Eparchy for them if it judges it opportune (C.D. n.23). The local Latin Ordinaries are invited to indicate and recommend, of their own, such circumstances.
4. The Holy See has decided it fitting and necessary, considering the given number of the Catholics of the Syro-Malabar Church, to erect an Eparchy for the Syro-Malabar Church with the title of Kalyan, due to “the situation presently existing there (which) can be considered mature enough for the establishment now”, in the Bombay-Pune region of India. This is a pre-eminent gesture and sign of the pastoral concern and solicitude of the Holy See for the Oriental Churches.

d. Regarding the implementation of these directives:

The Holy Father invites all Bishops of India:

- to give full support in the implementation of his directives;
- to do everything possible educate and form priests, religious and faithful to accept and cooperate fully in (its) implementation;
- to continue to reflect on “the marvellous mystery of the Universal Church and all the churches or Rites which make up her variety in unity”, and to make the centre of all pastoral solicitude the church’s unity and communion.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

- to focus on the need of reconciliation where unity has been impaired or damaged, through the “closest possible communion and collaboration” between the different churches.

The letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II is a landmark in the history of the Catholic Church in India, which clearly recognises its basic reality as the essential ecclesial communion of the three particular churches existing in India. In unambiguous terms, he firmly points out that the growth of the Catholic Church in India is the growth of this holy communion of Christ's faithful protected, promoted and cherished by their ecclesial unity and communion, surpassing their ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed in this paper the notion of Rite and that of an autonomous church which helped us to distinguish the two concepts not taking one for the other. While in the Second Vatican Council's Document and CIC they are still found in their equivocal meanings the CCEO as a later legislative Document (promulgated in 1991) has clarified and determined their meaning for further ecclesiastical usage. Hence the Oriental Catholic Churches, for that matter the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches in India, shall not be considered at mere Rites to be used and preserved, but as autonomous apostolic churches endowed with their own ecclesial identity and dignity called to be the church of Christ and to fulfil His redemptive mission. In India, its own land of origin and development, each of these churches, originally constituted as the apostolic church of Thomas Christians, retains and holds their right and obligation to be of their own right in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and taking care of the christian faithful formed into christian communities. In this God-given task of theirs, they are not to be relegated back by any other particular church in the Catholic communion, as all the particular churches in the catholic communion both of the East and of the West, are equal in their ecclesial nature and vocation, whatever be their organisational power and global size of expansion.

In concrete, the presence of the widely extended Latin Church in India is no reason to ignore or minimise the potentialities and capabilities

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

of the Oriental Churches of India in the task of Evangelisation and pastoral activities, especially in the light of their apostolic antiquity, religious heritage and deeply rooted cultural values of the land.

The Holy Father Pope John Paul II has clearly recognized this truth and in his apostolic concern and pastoral obligation made provisions to assist these churches to fulfil their God-given ecclesial vocation, removing the age old restrictions and obstacles. He insisted on the need of promoting and cherishing the Holy communion of God's love at the level of the individual christians and that of the churches as the reflection of the reality of the Catholic communion of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. This will help us to surpass our human weakness, to avoid controversies, and to promote unity to cherish communion in the divine life of the Holy Triune God for which alone exists His Church.



POST VATICAN RENEWAL: A MALANKARA PERSPECTIVE*

INTRODUCTION

One of the factors that keeps the memory of the Late Father Amalorpavadas happy and blessed among us, is his clear image as one who had made relentless efforts for the renewal of the Catholic Church in India. But it is common place to state that those efforts have struck different notes in the various areas of the life of the church in India. Apart from other reasons, this is because the Catholic Church in India assumes different statures and different roles in different parts of the country. The church in India is ancient and young, Eastern and Western both in its existential reality and operational modalities. This would give us also a clue to understand and interpret the pace of progress and growth in the Spirit of Vatican II, obtained in the different local and individual churches in India that are in the Catholic Communion.

In this article we are trying to note down some reflections made on the process of renewal proposed by the Vatican II, from the perspective of the Malankara Catholic Church. It must, however, be clearly stated that these reflections are not to be taken as officially representative but as factually indicative. While it is clear that Vatican II is giving us a new vision of the whole church and of its mission touching almost all the areas of ecclesial life, we shall have to restrict ourselves to a few areas that are most relevant and significant to the life of the church in India, in terms of the process of its renewal. The following topics are specifically dealt with:

* This article of Cyril Mar Baselios was published in the Commemorative Volume in honour of the Late Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadas. See Fr. Paul Puthenangady (ed.), *Church in India: Institution or Movement?*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1991, 36-54 (Editor).

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

1. Ecclesiology: restoration and renewal of a vision;
2. Liturgical celebration: core of ecclesial spirituality
3. In the service of the Kingdom of God: priestly formation.

In dealing with these topics we shall point out what is the level of achievement, progress or stagnancy, at least in our general awareness, obtained in the ecclesial communities of India, measuring it against the background of the teachings of Vatican II and of the spirit it has generated in the modern ecclesial milieu and this according to the understanding and approaches prevailing in the Malankara Catholic Church.¹

1. ECCLESIOLOGY: RESTORATION AND RENEWAL OF A VISION

The image of the church that loomed large in and out of the Second Vatican Council has been strikingly different from that of the Pre-Vatican era. Consequently the Council has given rise to an ecclesiology that had been, at least in the middle ages, less attended to or emphasised upon. Not trying to summarise here the discussions on the various aspects of the nature and mission of the church that are in vogue among the Theologians of various schools of thought, we shall directly and briefly explain the impact of the Vatican II ecclesiology on the renewal process in the ecclesial communities in India.²

If we are searching for a valid basis of our new understanding of the nature and mission of the church, the two basic documents of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, can assuredly provide it. It is well-known by now that these two documents summarise the constitutive reality of the church and its mission to the world, the two dimensions of the church, which the Council Fathers referred to as 'Ecclesia ad Intra'

¹ Since these are personal reflections, I have not tried in this article to refer our readers to other authors. Hence, except for occasional brief references, elaborate foot notes are not provided by way of a bibliography.

² Here we are not dealing with the actual renewal programmes, of each Church, but with the difference of ecclesiological visions obtained in the Malankara Church and other Churches.

and 'Ecclesia ad Extra'.³ Here we are dealing mainly with the internal reality of the church.

A. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Explaining the nature of the church, the Vatican II described it in various images⁴ and very specially brought to the fore the biblical concept of 'people of God', a concept that has been ever since extensively discussed all through out the church. This is all the more true in the Indian Context.

It is, however, to be noted that the image of the church as a Mystery, is a very significant dimension of the church, which should have gained greater impact on the religious India. In fact, this is what is discussed in the first chapter of L.G.⁵ But it seems that this aspect of the church has not sufficiently been dealt with, though sporadically discussed in some ecclesiastical circles or contemplated among some elite groups, without giving any effective attention to it as a theme for the education of the common people.

Interestingly the 'Mystery' aspect of the church is the basic tenet of the ecclesiology developed in the Eastern or Oriental Churches, and for that matter in the Malankara Church.

The church, though it assumes its social and human reality as a people of God, is basically the economy of salvation of mankind designed by God the Father, inaugurated and decisively made manifest in His Only begotten Son and completed by the Holy Spirit given in and through Him.⁶ Hence the understanding of the church, as the continuation of the salvific work of the Holy Triune God is basic to the ecclesiology of the

³ We are referring to the famous intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Suenens in the Council, during the discussion on the draft of the Constitution on the Church.

⁴ L.G.Ch.1, n.6, Ch. 2.

⁵ L.G.Ch.1.

⁶ L.G. Ch. 1, n. 2-4.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

Malankara Church. This would imply that the mystery of Christ Himself is continued in the church. The church is similarly the abode of the Holy Spirit where He is pre-eminently present in the world to continue and perfect the works of redemption effected and founded on Christ. This constant awareness of its linkage to the Trinitarian source generates in us a disposition to approach the church as a sacred mystery. In other words, the church is to be consciously accepted and acknowledged as a gift of God. This is not to deny that it is constituted in history as a "people of God" nor to neglect our obligation and God-given right to shape it in our midst, nor to forget that it is being evolved in our human existential conditions.⁷ What is pointed out is that the church in India cannot afford to get lost in the debates that have emerged from a philosophy of life or a theology of work originating from societies or cultures that are already crumbling under the heavy burden of secularism built on liberalistic individualism and rationalistic existentialism. In spite of all our efforts to locate the church amidst the world, we cannot lose sight of the truth even by way of an abstraction, that it remains the mystery-sacrament - of salvation of the world, the underlying reality of which is still and always the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the post-Vatican period of 25 years, this dimension of the reality of the church has not been adequately discussed nor effectively manifested in the life of the church in India, though much has been said and done in its organisational aspects, very often under the pretext of dealing with the concept of 'the people of God' in its social aspect. This again is one of the reasons why the process of the renewal of the church in India did not assume deeper meaning of recapturing its spiritual power similar to that of the pentecostal event where people of all nations were gathered together to become one people of God by the power of the Spirit who descended upon them from above.

⁷ Cf. Joseph A. Komanchak, 'The Church: God's Gift and our task' in *Origins*, N.C. Documentary Service, Washington D.C., April 1987, 731-741. Cf. An elaborate discussion on the theme in the FABC Paper no. 576, pp. 10-13, by C.G. Arevalo, "The Church in Asia and Mission in the 1990's".

In short, for us in the Malankara Church, the church remains above all, pre-eminently, a gift of God as the fruit of the redemptive work of the Most Holy Triune God, who is still effectively the author and Lord of it. We do not create it; but receive it, we do not give its destiny but contribute to its shape; we do not put meaning into it, but discover it; we are not independent and indifferent to it, but we are dependent and responsible to it; we are building it up being built into it.⁸

B. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

It is commonly accepted that the Second Vatican Council had upheld the unity of the church giving a special thrust on the subject of christian unity and took significant steps towards restoring and maintaining it, inviting all the churches and ecclesial communities effectively and sincerely to render their cooperation. We shall briefly explain how this call for church unity both inside and outside the Catholic communion has been received in India and what theological perceptions guided or misguided the efforts in this regard.

The unity of the church is a theme that is very important for the Malankara Church, especially because the Catholic Malankara Church has a particular ecumenical role in witnessing to the unity of the church of Christ. As is known, the ancient Malankara Church remains today divided into several christian denominations. Apart from the Malabar and Malankara Catholic Churches, the other Malankara Churches are not fully in the Catholic communion. The juridical recognition of the present Malankara Catholic Church is itself the fruit of a long and tiresome dialogue between a section of the people of the ancient Malankara Church with the Apostolic See of Rome. Retaining the apostolic ecclesial character of their own church and accepting the jurisdictional primacy of the Roman Pontiff as the Supreme Universal Pastor of Christ's church, he being the legitimate successor of St. Peter, the first and Head of the College of Apostles, in the Holy Apostolic See of Rome, a section of the people of the ancient apostolic Malankara Church again entered into communion with the Apostolic See of Rome in 1930, after a breach of

⁸ Eph. 2: 19-22.

three hundred years. The entry of this ecclesial community into the Catholic Communion and the juridical recognition of it by the Apostolic See of Rome as an individual local church reestablished the existence of the Malankara Church in the full Catholic communion, paving the way also for the full communion between the Catholic Church and the ancient Malankara Church as a whole. Hence the bond of communion of the Malankara Catholic Church with the Apostolic See of Rome is a reality and the symbol of communion among the various churches in the Catholic communion. Thus the Malankara Catholic Church, for that matter any Oriental Catholic Church, has to play a double role, in the ecumenical field witnessing to the unity and the catholicity of the church. That is to say, they have to witness to the need for Catholic communion among the various local and individual churches and yet to retain their individuality, safeguarding their apostolic tradition and ecclesial life as local and autonomous churches in the Catholic communion.⁹

C. THE NATURE OF THE UNITY WE SEEK

Though the theme of unity or disunity of the church is often discussed, the meaning of it is seldom properly understood, may often misunderstood, especially because the term 'one' is not a univocal concept. We may note that the meaning of 'one' depends on the reality that has to be one. For example, the 'oneness' assumes a special meaning when we attribute it to God. It is not the same as the 'oneness' of man or that of any other created being. Similarly the 'oneness' of the church is related to the unity it obtains in terms of its origin, destiny and its actual existence.

The church in its origin as designed by God, redeemed and founded in Christ and born of the Holy Spirit is one. Similarly, the church in its destiny as the heavenly Jerusalem, sharing the divine life in the glory of heaven, is one. But, when we speak of the unity, it actually obtains in its pilgrimage as a people of God on earth, it is lacking in the church. Hence the restoration of this unity remains the task of the pilgrim

⁹ E.R.Hamby, "Problems and Prospects of Ecumenism in the Eastern Catholic Churches", *Christian Orient*, Vol. IX (1988) 35. Dr.C.A. Abraham, *Fifty years in the Bond of Catholic Unity*, Trivandrum, 1980, 7.

church, if it is to work out its mission remaining true to itself in terms of its origin and destiny.

D. UNITY OF COMMUNION

The Second Vatican Council, having taken stock of the past and present realities of the various peoples that have formed themselves into several local and individual churches, down through the centuries, clearly stated that the unity of the church cannot and should not be sought in the line of uniformity, but should be understood and experienced as a unity of communion.¹⁰ This unity of communion is a 'Communio in Sacris', in all the good and real effects of redemption, above all a union in the Holy Spirit sharing the gifts He is bestowing on all those who receive Him through Faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

Needless to say, this ecclesial communion has different levels of meaning in its ontological constitution and organisational expressions. Since the time of the Council, much has been discussed and written in this regard, an elaboration of which is unwarranted here.¹¹

What is interesting to us here is to point out that it is in this vein that the Malankara Church has conceived the nature of the Catholic Church and of its unity. While it has been and is even today, quite challenging to many, even after the Vatican II, to accept and acknowledge that all churches in the Catholic Communion are equal in their ecclesial reality and God-given rights and duties, the Malankara Church, right from its inception, held fast to this ecclesiological position. The resistance it showed against the latinisation policy of the Portuguese Missionaries in the 17th century and the defence it maintained all throughout in its

¹⁰ O.E. n.2, Edmund Schлинд, *The coming Christ and the coming Church*, London, 1987.

¹¹ There is a huge bibliography on the theme 'Church as a Communion', Cf. Yves Congar, *Diversity and communion*, London, SCM Press Ltd. 1984. *Church and the Churches* by the same author; Peter Chirico, SS "One Church, What does it mean?" in *Theological Studies*, 1967, 659-682.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

dialogue with the Apostolic church of Rome for regaining communion, are only clear evidence of this fact.¹²

On a close look at the ecclesiastical arena, especially in India one can find out that even after 25 years of Vatican II, the idea that the Catholic Church is to be understood in its actual ecclesial life as a communion of churches, has yet to gain momentum. In India, it is not only a mere statement and defence of an ecclesiological principle, but also the acceptance of a concrete ecclesial reality basic to the life and growth of the church, in as much as there do really exist in India in different apostolic individual churches, the presence and life which render the unity and catholicity of the church real. The recent disputes and arguments on the Rites and rights of the churches of different ecclesial traditions are only one expression of those pre-Vatican attitudes still prevalent in many ecclesiastical circles.

In the context of post-Vatican renewal, the influence is clear: no serious attention was paid towards developing a fuller and deeper understanding of the nature and mission of the church in accordance with the progressive ecclesiological vision of Vatican II. This holds true in the case of both the Latin and Oriental Churches in India. The Latin church in India, being part of the universally extended Western Church, found itself too strong and big to count itself as one among many admitting its ecclesial equality with others, while the Oriental Churches felt themselves too weak to rise to their stature asserting their ecclesial equality and the incumbent obligations. The sad result was that the church-renewal efforts, lacking in a solid ecclesiological basis provided by Vatican II, remained at the peripheral level touching at the most the modalities of the religious and moral life of individual christians, leaving the core of ecclesial life untouched and the churches themselves basically unaffected. This kept them notably behind and increasingly weak to give their response in terms of their insertion in the redemptive work of God in His Son through the Holy Spirit.

¹² Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973.

E. 'UNIATISM': THE IMAGE OF THE CHURCH BLURRED

There is yet another factor that contributes to the stagnancy in the march towards church unity and inter-ecclesial relationship as expected by the Vatican II viz. the supposedly 'uniate' existence of the Oriental Churches in the Catholic Communion. Without entering into an elaborate discussion on this theme, we shall point out how the attitude of 'uniatism' both in the Oriental Catholic Churches and in the Western Latin Church, affects the progressive understanding of the church and thus the process of the renewal of the life and mission of the church as inspired by the Vatican II.¹³

After the long years of separation of the Western and Eastern Churches, from almost all the Eastern Churches, big or small communities restored ecclesial communion with the Roman Catholic Church, leaving a smaller or bigger community still as their Orthodox counterpart.

This reunion with Rome has not been accepted by the Orthodox Churches as legitimate and they condemn it either as a betrayal by their own folk or as a violent intrusion of the Roman Catholic Church into them. On the other hand, the ecclesial communities that have regained the Catholic communion seem to have achieved only a bare minimum of their ecclesial status in the Catholic Church, never going beyond the realm of 'uniates'. For the Orthodox they are an ecclesiastical anomaly, while for the Roman Church they are the object of a generous and gracious patronage. The fact remains, even when we find reasons to justify it.¹⁴ "In the Roman communion, with its new world wide dimension, the old Eastern churches hardly had their place. Thus, most of the Eastern churches distanced themselves, and the schism became lastingly

¹³ Cf. Joseph Kallarangat, "Theology of Sister Churches or Uniate Churches?" (The author of the article discusses the question elaborately bringing in also the opinion of several other authors.) *Christian Orient*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 7-19.

¹⁴ Cf. Yves Congar, "1054-1954. Eglise et Les eglises, Neuf Siecles de douloureuse separation entre L'Orient et L'Occident", *Irenikon*, 1 (1926) 42, quoted by Kallarangat, *ibid.*, 13.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

established. In the communion with Rome there remained frequently nothing but the promises of the Eastern dignitaries. While one part of the church unites itself with Rome, the majority of the same church remains outside this communion with Rome. In this way the Orthodox part proclaims itself as a church vis-a-vis the Roman Communion, while the uniate part loses its ecclesial consciousness and becomes a rite. The Eucharistic ecclesiology disappears and gives way to a mere sociological and juridical ecclesiology".¹⁵

The actual ecclesial position of the Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion can be learned from the special decree of Vatican II on the Oriental Churches. It assumes a meaning of its own against the background of the absence of a special decree on the Western Latin Church. The Ecumenical Council of the Universal Catholic Church did not feel the need of specifically treating the questions that cover the needs and problems of the Western Church or Churches. The inference is clear: the Oriental Churches do need special treatment and protection for several reasons. The real question, therefore, will be posed on the nature of the relationship among the various churches in the Catholic communion, and on the ecclesiological perspective that shapes it. While we do not deny the possibility of finding out a Mother-Daughter relationship between many churches according to the genesis of each of them, we can certainly affirm that it is not applicable to the relationship between the Western and Eastern Churches each with its own specific apostolicity. It cannot but be understood as a relationship between Sister Churches as it has several times been expressed in the recent Papal documents.¹⁶ Hence an ecclesiology developed in terms of 'Uniatism' can scarcely do justice to the Oriental Catholic or Orthodox Churches. A unity of communion expressed in an ecclesiology of Sister-Churches,

¹⁵ Cf. Lanne, 'The connection between the Post-tridentine concept of primacy and the emerging of the uniate Churches': *Pro-oriente*, Vienna, 1978, 104, quoted by Kallarangat, *ibid.* 15.

¹⁶ Cf. The Letter of Pope Paul VI to Patriarch Athanagoras on 25th July 1967. The Joint communique of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Ignatius Zaka I, during their meeting in Rome, 1984.

where equality of ecclesial status, in terms of rights and obligations of divine right, is an unquestionable basis for developing an understanding of the Catholic Church. "The choice between the uniate church and Sister Churches is so important that the future of Catholic ecclesiology will depend on the choice".¹⁷ Without a convergence of this basic understanding, there cannot be any effective process for promoting the church-renewal programme of Vatican II. In fact, the lack of a right ecclesiological perspective regarding the right relationship between the churches, and worse still, the propagation of a defective ecclesiology has been a serious obstacle in the process of the renewal of the church in India, not to speak of the church in other parts of the world. Here again one should note that both the Latin Church and the Oriental Churches in India should bear the burden of not playing their respective roles of response.

2. LITURGICAL CELEBRATION: CORE OF ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY

There is perhaps no other field that has been so drastically affected, for good or bad, than that of liturgy in the post-Vatican period. While the changes are very conspicuous in the Latin Church, they are little noticed in many of the Oriental Churches. Excepting the controversy over the liturgy that has erupted in the Malabar Church, it seems that Vatican II has not touched the inner core or the main structure of the Oriental liturgies. Even though the Council has invited all churches to look for ways and means to render more effective the liturgical celebrations, in terms of the active participation of the faithful and consequently of the spiritual fruit they should gain, it has not touched the genius and characteristic features as such of the liturgies of the Oriental Churches. A study of the very Constitution on Liturgy of Vatican II would reveal it. It is also clear that the constitution for the most part and in its overt focus deals with the liturgy of the Latin Church. Our task here is not to make a comparative study of liturgies, affected by Vatican II, but to point out why the liturgy of the Malankara Church remained

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph Kallarangat, *ibid*, 19.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

substantially unaffected in reference to the waves appearing in the Latin Church based on the Vatican document.

It is the ancient Antiochene Liturgy that is in use in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. This is used also in the Syrian and Maronite Churches. Studying the genius enshrined in the texts and the structure of the divine Liturgy, especially the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, one can identify the main focus and accent obtained in this liturgy.

In the Divine Liturgy as a whole, especially in the Holy Eucharistic sacrifice, it is the saving act of God that is symbolically expressed and ritually elaborated. Each of the prayer-services, symbolic actions, gestures and other particular elements of the celebration are intended to manifest the deeds and interventions of God in His act of saving mankind. It is in this economy of salvation which is designed by God the Father that His only begotten Son is sent to the world in order to redeem it by bestowing His Spirit on mankind. This is wrought by the Nativity, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Son who sitteth at the right Hand of God is to come again in the fullness of time to judge the whole world as it is designed by His Father. It is this economy of salvation already effected through Our Lord Jesus Christ and being perfected with the power of the Holy Spirit given in the church, that is remembered, celebrated and rendered present in the assembly of God's children who are called together as a redeemed people, living still in the valley of tears and marching towards their Father in heaven with firm faith and full hope to see Him in His Glory. To maintain and develop a vision of this kind in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is bound to create in a community of people attitudes, mental dispositions, prayers and forms of active participation other than those formed in the communities which have been taught to take part in merely the offering of a sacrifice, whatever be the nature and intent of that sacrifice and however sublime the motivation behind it.

It is well-known that the defence of the sacrificial nature of the Holy Mass, as against the Reformers at the time of the Council of Trent and the shift of emphasis later, particularly in recent times, to the aspect of

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

the common (sacrificial) meal, as some sort of a reparation for the former emphasis, led the Western Latin Church to a certain amount of liturgical reductionism. By divine providence the Oriental Churches were not involved in the controversy and, therefore, were spared from this particular situation of overemphasis and extremes. However it is to be noted that later, many of the Oriental Catholic Churches, got affected by these debates, through the mediation of their latinised Clergy and Religious, who have done their part to bring into the Oriental Churches the waves of liturgical reductionism, which has to a great extent damaged the original liturgical vision of the Oriental Churches of the totality of the saving act of God setting serious obstacles in the process of a genuine liturgical renewal in terms of organic growth.

This is certainly against the original spirit of Vatican II and the clear mandate given through its various documents, especially the constitution on Liturgy. Turning specifically to the Indian scene, though there were sporadic efforts to make the liturgical celebrations more meaningful and relevant to the participants, a systematic and calculated move was started only by the late Fr. Amalorpavadas, of happy memory, through the NBCLC, Bangalore. It is also to be mentioned that under the leadership of Fr. Amalor, painstaking efforts were made for inculturation. Inculturation has been one of the themes that attracted attention in the process of the renewal of the church every where, almost at every phase, especially in the young churches. But in India, inculturation attempts appeared mostly in the field of liturgy and the renewal of liturgy as a systematic effort has been mainly thought of in terms of cultural adaptations and inculturation.

The process of inculturation, which in itself is inseparable from and inevitable for a true and genuine evangelisation, has been understood or misunderstood in different ways in India and consequently there has been resistance and this is still a frequent phenomena.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

Without entering into a discussion on the theological implications and historical details of the process of inculturation in India,¹⁸ one may record here a remark that still deserves our attention, it is hoped, in this regard.

As Evangelisation is an ecclesial act, inculturation, as the understanding of the Council and teachings of the church, is also an ecclesial act, to the extent that the latter remains an aspect of the former. Hence the process of inculturation cannot be separated or thought of in isolation from the church that is involved in it. Considering in concrete the reality and the nature of the Catholic Church in India, one has to study closely how the missionary task of evangelisation, and for that matter the process of inculturation, is carried out in India. It would be unwise and detrimental to the future of the church to forget in the process of Inculturation the ecclesial reality and the historical rootedness of the different individual churches of India in the Catholic communion. For their existential reality will certainly measure their power and ability for evangelisation and inculturation in India.

In addition, one has to point out that, unfortunately, most of these efforts for inculturation remained within the framework of the liturgy of the Latin Church in India and inevitably under the heavy burden of a Latin ecclesiology, and often enough were strangled by the theological positions firmly rooted and strongly protected by the Western Latin Church.

On the other hand, the understanding of Liturgy as the celebration of the economy of salvation and the saving act of the Holy triune God in and by the community as stipulated and prevalent in the Oriental Churches in India, remained unnoticed, or conveniently neglected as remnants of a ruined church as an old story worth not mentioning and contributing nothing for the new church in India invaded by liberal and existentialistic waves of Western culture,

¹⁸ Cf. An elaborate treatment of the subject by D.S. Amalorpavadas, "Theological Reflections on inculturation", in *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. XXVII 3/4, 213-273.

compatible not even with the genuine catholic ecclesial traditions of the West.

Aware of the urgency and maintaining the possibility of working out a plan for an organic development and renewal of the liturgy of the Malankara Church, as envisaged by the Vatican II, one can assuredly state that a genuine liturgical renewal should be based on a total vision of the economy of salvation designed by God the Father, inaugurated and decisively worked out by Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour, by his Life, Death and Resurrection, and to be perfected by the Holy Spirit given to the people of God in and through his Church, One, Catholic, Apostolic and Holy. A study of the liturgical texts and the forms of celebration of the whole liturgy, especially the divine liturgy, the supreme and most solemn central celebration of which is the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice, would express and enhance this vision. It is this vision that is to be structured and, in fact, enshrined in the daily and yearly liturgical cycle of the Malankara Church. A faithful observance and even elaborate celebrations of the salvation history in terms of events and feasts according to the liturgical cycle are bound to create an ecclesial spirituality, the genuine and authentic source of which would remain the liturgy of the church and its fruitful celebration.

It is no wonder that the relentless efforts at the renewal of Liturgy, in India, made at various levels, met with meager results, judging from the perspective of an ecclesial spirituality, if we discover the root-cause of it in the alienation of the Clergy and Religious of India from the liturgy of their own churches, be it Latin or Oriental. The active participation in the celebration of divine liturgy is not merely the momentary involvement of one or the other congregation in the ceremonies held, but it is mainly the insertion of the individual and the whole community in the divine economy of salvation as designed by God and revealed to the church to celebrate it for and by the generations of mankind, not merely of the basis of fleeting inspirations but also on a permanent structure that would give testimony to the historical continuity of the saving act of God graciously and always operative in the church that is formed and being formed as His people.

3. IN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD: PRIESTLY FORMATION

After the Vatican II, much has been said and written on and about priestly formation. Besides the document on priestly life and ministry there is also the document on formation of candidates for Priesthood. There was also a Bishops' Synod on this particular theme.

In the light of all these a Charter for priestly formation has been codified by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, which has been given to all the Major Seminaries of India as a guide.¹⁹

In the Charter, different aspects of the formation and the process involved have been described. Even though it has been casually mentioned that the priests should be given a formation in view of their ministry in the church according to the particular ecclesial tradition of their own local church, nothing worth mentioning has so far been said or done in this regard. In spite of the instruction given by the Congregation for Catholic Education, stressing the need of a common effort to get to know the different traditions of the church and of getting rooted in one's own ecclesial life, the matter in question is still on the level of some sporadic attempts to give some optional courses in the Seminary.

PRIMACY OF MYSTERY-SENSE: AN IMPERATIVE OF FORMATION

It is generally accepted that the formation of the candidates for priesthood should be an integral one, even though it is distinguished as intellectual, spiritual, moral etc. In fact, they are unduly differentiated and even separated, especially the aspect of the intellectual formation. Courses of study in the Seminary are seen only from an academic point of view to the extent of reducing the Seminary to the nature of a college hostel. Even the offering of the academic courses seldom goes beyond the academic standards and the requirements of a study centre, to the detriment of the personal formation in ecclesial life and spirituality.

¹⁹ *The CBCI Document 'Charter of Priestly Formation in India'*, CBCI, 1988.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

In the view of the Oriental Churches a programme of studies purely for intellectual formation is inadmissible and a theology without its mystical and contemplative dimension is futile. This is all the more true of the Indian understanding of priestly formation. Hence, in the perspective of the Malankara Catholic Church the present programme of studies and the 'Ratio Studiorum' prescribed and prevalent in the Indian Seminaries are inadequate. We may mention here that the infiltration of secularism and rationalism among our Seminarians is accentuated to a great extent by the curriculum proposed and constructed in our Seminaries without paying sufficient attention to the requirements of priestly spirituality attained by ecclesial formation. The invasive influence of modern waves of Western thought and culture carried to the churches in India through innumerable ways is too strong to resist both for the young churches in the mission areas and for the old apostolic churches still staggering under the heavy burden of their own historical past.

One way out of the predicament is to have one's own seminaries and formation houses in each local church or at least in individual autonomous churches, a thinking that is still suspected by many clerical groups and ecclesiastical dignitaries.

The renewal in the process of priestly formation is often thought of as an updating of the curriculum and syllabi of the Seminary studies, which in turn, is identified with the pursuit of academic Degrees. A correct focus on the priorities of values in formation is lacking, as there is no convergence among Theologians or Theologies in the very concept of priesthood. While on the one hand the New Testament priesthood is falsely conceived as the continuation of the Old Testament priesthood, on the other hand it is reduced to one or the other form of an apostolate of the church. It is also to be noted that the confusion regarding the identity of priesthood in the church is the result of the confusion prevailing among many about the identity of the church itself. As the models of the church vary, so the models of priesthood also differ.²⁰ This divergence of

²⁰ Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1987; Avery Dulles, *Models for Ministerial Priesthood*, N.J. July 24, 1987 FABC Reprint, 1990.

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

theological opinions that are very much entertained in the lecture halls of our Seminaries and Faculties, directly and vastly influence the process of priestly formation.

A deeper understanding of the nature and mission of the church and consequently of priestly ministry in the church is very much needed as a strong basis of the formation envisaged in our seminaries.

Taking into consideration all the theological discussions and developments of thinking in this regard, we still strongly maintain the understanding of the church as the continuation of the economy of salvation which God the Father has designed through His Son in His Holy Spirit, a vision we have described at the beginning of this article as basic to our ecclesiology. The mystery aspect of the church, though brought to light by the Vatican II is still being relegated back in our efforts to project it as a human institution under the pretext of making it relevant to the modern world, without seeking to identify the meaning of relevance we are looking for. Once the church is placed as the mystery of God's salvific act and His dispensation among us, the priestly ministry in the church will be clearly defined and understood in terms of ministering to this divine dispensation. This would provide a clear background as a condition that is essential for chartering a formation programme for our priests. Thus a full and unconditional insertion into this salvific plan of God, designed by the Father, worked out by the Son and perfected by the Holy Spirit in His church to build up a people gathered together as His own is required of any one who responds to priestly vocation. This sort of a vision is basic to the very understanding and implementation of the process of formation to priesthood in the church. In other words, in the process of formation to priestly ministry we are learning to experience the mystery of God's saving act, to understand it more and more and freely to insert into it as a conscious response to a gift given to us specially. This vision, and a curriculum of studies along with a programme of training based on this vision, should be re-established in the charter for the renewal of priestly formation. This would pave way for an ecclesial formation generating an ecclesial spirituality the core of which would always remain the celebration of the liturgy of the church. For the Oriental Churches in India, there seems no other option than maintaining and promoting this

vision to recapture the spirit of priestly ministry envisaged as cooperation in the redemptive work of God in His church. This again should be the underlying idea and the dynamic force that shape the programme for priestly formation.

But as every one knows, this is not the pattern proposed or followed in the Major Seminaries or Theological Faculties of India, the havens pre-eminently set up for priestly formation. On the contrary, most of them are neutral or 'universal'; owned by no church, to the detriment of their ecclesial formation which has to be concrete and effective to sustain and promote them in their ministry in the church as a concrete reality. This is more or less the sad lot of the majority of the Religious of India, where too the seeds for renewal in the spirit of Vatican II fell on rocky ground lacking in depth of soil of an ecclesial formation with the result that they could not grow into an ecclesial or liturgical spirituality, an elaboration of which cannot be made here.²¹

We may conclude, therefore, that not only the priestly formation suffered in India, but a lack of renewal of the life of the Clergy and Religious has adversely affected the progress of the church-renewal programmes as envisaged by the Vatican II.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the Renewal programme for the church proposed by the Vatican II had wide horizons. The Council's Documents have stirred up deep theological reflections and given shape to concrete pastoral considerations. But it is felt that the dynamic of renewal were at times unpredictable and did take directions that were not always faithful and true to the original spirit enshrined in the Documents. The numerous directives and guidelines given from the Vatican, starting with '*Ecclesiam Suam*' immediately after the Council and several other Documents issued later, show that in many areas further clarifications and instructions were

²¹ Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, "Believing Communities and Theologising", in Felix Wilfred (ed.), *Theological Education In India Today*, ATC: Bangalore, 1985, 87-92, where the author deals with the anomalous situation of Clergy and Religious in India that adversely affects their ecclesial formation.

necessary and useful. At any rate, indications were there of the problems arising and difficulties faced in the efforts for renewal.

Focusing on the Indian ecclesiastical scene, there has been a general awareness that the church was moving towards its goal and objectives more effectively and better equipped. It is also acknowledged with satisfaction that there were, right from the Vatican II, many renewal courses intended for the clergy, religious and laity along with different kinds of programmes of action for improving the quality of christian life in the catechetical, pastoral and social life. But, by way of a self criticism, one may point out that real and permanent sources of internal change and renewal, in the church in terms of a transforming force and spiritual power, have not been clearly discovered and adequately fortified in proportion to the expectations of Vatican II.

One of the main reasons was the lack of proper attention to develop a correct ecclesiology on the basis of the ecclesial vision given by the Vatican II, vis-a-vis the concrete existence of the Catholic Church in India, as the local realisation of the ecclesial communion of three individual churches. This has hampered to some extent the possibility of finding out new ways and means of inter-ecclesial relationship and united action for church-renewal in terms of both responding to the saving act of God and in the building up of a people of God in and for the world. Bypassing the reality of the existing individual churches in India the theological reflections remained on the level of speculations without foundation on ecclesial life which, in turn, left the pastoral plans and work on the peripheral level of sentimental piety and transitory religiosity. Similarly, the liturgical renewal and inculturation programmes, though vastly carried out for groups and individuals and creating novelty among many, seem to have less influence on the churches as such, because, for the most part, these efforts remained isolated from the mainstream of the actual ecclesial life of the common people. As for the Latin Church, the innovations seemed to have no strong basis while for the Oriental Churches they were formulated on many presuppositions that were questionable, or at least inconsistent with their own ecclesial traditions. The Indian ecclesial Communities especially that are in Catholic communion, having been heavily under the influence of the Western

POST VATICAN RENEWAL

cultural patterns, and teachings of Western Christian Churches too had suffered distortion in the priestly or religious formation according to the requirements of the church in India and could not adequately respond to the call of renewal given by Vatican II. The rise of secularism, along with the modern trends of irreligiosity and atheistic views of life had their own impact even on the Religious India, leave alone the church in India. These are some of the factors that adversely affected the efforts of the church in India for a renewal of its life and work. Being aware of this situation, we shall have to plan for the future well-equipped and better coordinated as a people of God redeemed and destined to glorify God for all eternity.



INTRODUCTION OF THE ANTIOCHENE RITE INTO THE MALANKARA CHURCH*

INTRODUCTION

It is admitted by historians both Catholic and non-Catholic that the ancient Malankara Church was of one faith and one rite. They do not, however, agree on determining what faith and rite they were. There are, among the Jacobites, some who are of the view that the Malankara Church had a time-old jurisdictional relationship with the Jacobite Church of Antioch and that it had a faith and a rite akin to those of the Antiochene Church. We do not, however, find any solid basis for such an assumption. On the other hand we have clear evidence to support the view that the Malankara Church entered into a relationship with the Antiochene Jacobite Church only late in the 17th century and that the introduction of the Antiochene rite into this Church came still later.

In this article I shall try to explain when and how the Antiochene liturgy and discipline was introduced into the Malankara Church.

1. RESTORATION OF THE SYRIAN TRADITIONS AND THE NEW INTRODUCTIONS

The whole of the Antiochene rite was evidently not introduced into the Malankara Church at once. It took a sufficiently long period to substitute it for the Chaldean rite. As both Chaldean and Antiochene rites were ramifications of the tree of the Syrian Church,

* This article was contributed by Fr. Cyril (Cyril Mar Baselios) to George Menachery (ed.), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol.2, Trichur, 1973, 79-87 (Editor).

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

though each had a particular liturgy, the influence of the Antiochene disciplinary system in the formation of the Chaldean was considerably great and there was a striking similarity between the two.¹ This material identity of the two disciplinary systems, in fact, played an important role in bringing the separated group of Malabar Syrians closer to the Antiochene liturgy and Jacobite faith, though these were quite new to them. For, the Antiochene prelates turned their attention first to restoring the neglected early Syrian traditions—thanks to their identity with the Antiochene—and thus prepared the ground. It was, therefore, through a restoration that they paved the way for new introductions.

A. INITIAL RESTORATIONS

When Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem arrived in Malabar in 1665, the Archdeacon and party were still using the Chaldean rite which as Catholics they had followed and accepted after the innovations made in the Synod of Diamper. Mar Gregorius, therefore, did not succeed in introducing the Antiochene rite at once, especially the liturgy.² On the other hand he had to accommodate himself in certain things to the local customs.³

¹ Cf. *Codificazione Canonica Orientale, Fonti Serie II, Fasc. VIII; De Fontibus Juris Ecclesiastici Syro-Malankarensium*, Typografia polyglottis Vaticana, 1937 (henceforth quoted as *Fonti II, VIII*), p.27, n. 51.

² Cf. Raulin J.F., *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaticae cum Diamperitana Synodo apud Indos Nestorianos...* Romae, 1745, 444; Paulinus S. Bartolomeo, O.C.D., *India Orientalis Christiana*, Romae, 1794, 98-99.

³ Fr. Bras de Azvedo, S.J., writing from Ambalacatta to Fr. Antonio Baradas, Jesuit provincial of Portugal, on 28 July 1666, explained the reaction of the Malankara people to the novelties they found in the newly arrived Bishop. It is reported that the people did not like the new form of the Mass and were scandalised at the brevity of the whole ceremony. It was also different from what they used to see among their own clergy. Thus they were confirmed in their suspicion that the new Bishop was not sent by the Pope—the people were still under the impression that they were getting Bishops of their own rite through the efforts of their leaders. Therefore the new Bishop had to adopt certain local customs at the instigation of the Archdeacon to make them believe that his rite was the same as theirs. However

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

In this situation it is highly improbable that Mar Gregorios openly propagated the doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism. The Malankara community was never preoccupied with the subtle distinctions in Christology, contained in the faith of the new prelate. However, he successfully created a general antipathy against Catholics and tried to extol the See of Antioch.⁴ He showed himself particularly anxious to restore the Syrian discipline that was long in disuse. The Jacobite historians even consider him as a restorer-not an introducer-of Jacobitism and the Antiochene rite which, according to them, died out under the latinization imposed by the Synod of Diamper. This is because they presuppose the existence of Jacobitism in Malabar from the beginning, a supposition that is groundless. They argue that if it were not so, it would have been impossible to introduce so quickly a new rite among such a vast number of people.⁵ But this is not so surprising as it seems.

The readiness of the people to listen to Mar Gregorios and his successors can be given a more satisfying explanation-an explanation which seems to be the only historically correct one.

In point of fact, Mar Gregorios did not do anything new except that he said Holy Mass in the Antiochene liturgy. Neither the doctrine of Jacobitism nor the Antiochene liturgy were openly propagated by him. Nor were the people disposed to accept them. But he persuaded them to restore and maintain the Syrian traditions that had suffered through

he did not comply with their wish that the Holy Mass be said with unleavened bread. Cf. the letter partially reproduced by Fr. Heras, S.J. "The Syrian Christians of Malabar" in *The Examiner*, Bombay, 14 May 1938, 294. The full report of Fr. Azvedo written in Portuguese is to be found in *Archivium Romanum Societatis Jesu* (henceforth quoted as ARSI), God 49, ff. 178-209.

⁴ Cf. Tisserant, Cardinal Eugene, *Eastern Christianity in India* (authorised adaptation from the French E.R. Hambye, S.J.) Calcutta, 1957, 142.

⁵ See the observation of the Jacobite historian E.M. Philip, on the restoration of the Antiochene rite in his book, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas* (2nd ed.) Kottayam 1951, 165-166. In fact some Catholic historians too show their surprise at the sudden transition of the separated group from one rite to the other. Cf. Tisserant-Hambye, *op.cit.*, p.141.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

latinization. He cautiously abstained from speaking of anything in particular except a few things commonly acceptable to the Syrians. The disciplinary institutes or the oriental traditions of which Mar Gregorios spoke were not so exclusively Antiochene as to make them entirely new to the people of the Malankara Church. Furthermore, a people that was discontented with the Latin rule and offended by the imposition of the Latin rite would naturally welcome what was more oriental and closer to their traditional notions. A Syrian Bishop who would protect their oriental customs and consecrate their Archdeacon as Bishop was just what they wanted. It was this circumstance that persuaded Mar Gregorios to propose only what was more common and general. This is clear from his letter to the parish priests of Mulanthuruthy, Kandanad and Parur.⁶

Speaking of the changes made in the Synod of Diamper, he declared in his letter: "...We are aware of the tribulations you suffer from those who, having left the true and orthodox canons of the Syrian Church, had joined the idolatrous Romans. They were once true Syrians who jealously kept our faith; now they were made heretics by the undue influence of the wicked Kings and Queens of Portugal. They convoked an illegitimate synod and changed our Apostolic faith; upset the canons of the holy Synod of Nicea, mutilated the valuable and ancient traditions and rituals, while placing in their stead unworthy rubrics..."⁷

It is to be noted here that Mar Gregorios refers only to the "Syrian rite", changed in the Synod of Diamper, giving the people an impression that it was this Syrian rite that he proposed to revive, exploiting the ill-feeling of the Syrians against the latinizers. Such enthusiasm was enough to create among them a spontaneous aversion to the Catholics. We have still another example of this cunning method by which he induced the people to believe that he followed the same rite,

⁶ He wrote this letter in Syriac. It is reported that this has been preserved by E.M. Philip. The latter has reproduced its Malayalam translation in his op. cit., pp. 160-164. The English translation which we give here is ours. The Arabic translation of the same letter is given by Mar Severios Jacob Thoma, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in his book, *History of the Syrian in India*, Mosul 1951, p.81.

⁷ Cf. E. M. Philip, op. cit., p.160.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

when he focused their attention more on the common elements of both the Syrian rites than on their differences. He wrote: "...Again our usual fast of Ninive, the Romans do not have. They do not have the fifteen days' fast in August nor the fast for Advent in December, as we have them. Even in Lent they eat fish and drink alcohol, which the Syrians never do. There is a lot of difference between us and the Romans..."⁸ Manifestly he was making a contrast between the Latins and Syrians, disposing the Syrians to get rid of the Latin innovations and to accept the things that he proposed and taught. Of things that are exclusively Jacobite he had very little to say. It would, therefore, be more correct to say that the people followed him not so much for his "new" teachings, as for his being a Syrian Bishop who seemed to be anxious to protect their own traditions and customs against all change and mutilation.

Mar Gregorios, then, pointed out a particular instance: "...Till this day the priests were allowed to marry according to the canons. But the Romans have prohibited marriages of priests and deacons, to the effect that they may fall into the sin of adultery...These impious people condemn holy marriage and love adultery, on account of which God's chastisement is at hand. Know that marriage is holy and God punishes the adulterous and debauchees..."⁹

Mar Gregorios was trying to create a general impression that the regulations given in the Synod of Diamper could be disregarded one after another and thus the people could, slowly glide into the Syrian customs. We must note that he makes no distinction in his letter between the Chaldean and Antiochene rites; but he speaks always of Syrian as against Roman.¹⁰ He does not ask people to make any change but he insists on their sticking to the Syrian customs and recovering what was lost in latinization. It was by this restoration that he succeeded in labelling the earlier customs "Antiochene" and his successors in introducing the

⁸ Cf. E. M. Philip, op. cit., p.161.

⁹ Cf. E. M. Philip, op. cit., p.161.

¹⁰ Cf. Notes 7 and 8 referred to above.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Antiochene liturgy and discipline proper under the pretext of their being Syrian and oriental.

Thus the attention of the Malankara people was focused rather on their traditions than on the sect by which this was effected. Besides, the Apostolic See of Antioch and all that was associated with that name, were not unknown to the people of the Malankara Church. Even the Chaldean Church was held in esteem by them on account of its connection with Antioch.¹¹ A communion with the Antiochene prelates was thought necessary not only because the Archdeacon and party hoped to regain valid episcopate for their Church but also because they appeared to be enthusiastic watchmen of the Syrian traditions. The Antiochenes could easily play their game as the Catholic Syrians had lost much of their genuine oriental traditions. This made the separated community adhere closer to what the new Syrian Bishops taught and practised. In other words, while the Latin Bishops in their zeal to eradicate the so-called Nestorian practices and to unify the rites, damaged the old Syro-Chaldean rite by imposing the Latin rite, the Jacobites consoled them by restoring to them their oriental traditions and exploited the situation to bring them close to the Antiochene Jacobite Church. Hence it is not surprising that the people of Malankara listened to the voice of Mar Gregorios.

According to the testimony of Paulinus, Mar Gregorios restored the use of a leavened host in the celebration of Holy Mass, the traditional vestments of liturgical functions and the old calendar.¹²

¹¹ Cf. E. M. Philip, *op. cit.*, p.152.

¹² "...the Mass shall be celebrated with the leavened bread; "pluviali" not "casula" shall be used for celebration; Lent, according to the old custom, shall be begun 10 days after the Catholics begin..." Paulinus, *op. cit.*, pp.99-100. Paulinus enumerated a few doctrinal tenets also which were supposed to have been introduced by Mar Gregorios "hatred towards the Roman Pontiff and Nestorius, whom he (Gregorios) publicly proclaimed to have been heretics; (he taught): the Antiochene Church is the head and mother of all churches; there is only one nature in Christ; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and not from the Son; the souls are purified by a peculiar fire after death..." Cf. *ibid.* pp. 99-100. Paulinus seems to have narrated the main doctrinal tenets held by the Jacobites in general. It is highly

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

B. FURTHER RESTORATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS

With the arrival of Maphrian Mar Basilius and Bishop Mar John in 1685 the restoration of the early traditions known as "Antiochene" was considerably fostered, though their further introduction did not have a wider acceptance. Mar Basilius did not live long in Malabar but Mar John stayed for eight years.¹³ Hence he had the opportunity to revive more Syrian practices. It is reported that they did not say Mass in Lent except on Sundays, which were not fast-days nor did they wish others to do so. They taught that prayers should be said standing and not kneeling and added that people should abstain from the flesh of strangled animals. They encouraged the marriage of priests, and deemed it necessary for statues and crucifixes to be removed from churches, keeping only the pictures therein.¹⁴

Mar John did not enjoy full freedom in the Malankara Church as the Archdeacon (Mar Thomas IV) opposed him, fearing that the Archdeacon's authority over the people would be diminished or lost on

improbable that they were introduced by Mar Gregorios; for even at the time of Mar John in 1685, the introduction of the doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism was at a slow pace and was a source of dispute among them (Cf. note 16 of this article). They might have been existing in Malabar during the time of Paulinus.

¹³ Cf. L. W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, Cambridge 1956, 112; Whitehouse, T. *Lingerings of light in a dark land*, London, 1873, 307.

¹⁴ "...in Lent till the Easter, they were not celebrating Mass nor were they allowing others to celebrate, except on Sunday on which day there was no fasting; they denied beatific vision immediately after death; they taught that one should pray standing and not kneeling; priests were encouraged to marry, hence many of the Malabar priests got married. They were celibate before. One should abstain from suffocated etc. Which were all reported by Fr. Bartolomew Hanna of Aleppo in his letter mentioned earlier. John took away all the statues and crucifixes from the churches but allowed pictures to be venerated..... Paulinus, op.cit; P.106. The English translation is ours. Cf. also Germann, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*, Gutersloh 1877, 528-529; Bernard of St. Thomas T.O.C.D., *St. Thomas Christians*, Vol. II, Mannanam, 1921, 171-172; Whitehouse, op. cit., pp.199-200.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

account of the increasing influence of the foreigner.¹⁵ The Archdeacon also opposed the introduction of the doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism and we are told that the Antiochene prelate provoked the Malankara people to disputation.¹⁶

F.Nau is of the opinion that a complete switch-over to the Antiochene rite was effected through the efforts of these prelates.¹⁷ By the time of the death of Mar John in 1693, the Malankara Bishops appear to have taken definite steps towards accepting the doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism. For we find Mar Thomas IV at the beginning of the 18th century clearly adhering to the teachings of the Antiochene Church and rejecting the doctrinal tenets of Mar Gabriel who arrived in Malabar in 1705 to claim jurisdiction over the people of Malabar. Mar Thomas IV wrote to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in 1709: "...Then came one who said that he was Metropolitan of Ninive and that Mar Elias the Catholicos had sent him. His name was Gabriel and his faith in Christ was this-there are two natures and two persons: scandal. He spoke much against Mary, the Mother of God, wherefore we believe him not..."¹⁸ Again in 1720 he wrote.¹⁹

¹⁵ Paulinus says: "...This Thomas de campo a lay-intruder, who lived till the year 1686, opposed the newly arrived Jacobites, Basilios and John, lest he fall off from his dignity..." op. cit., p.104. He seems to have gathered his information from a letter of the same year; "...as it is reported by Fr. Bartholomew Hanna, a Syrian from Aleppo, in his letter written to Rome on Dec. 2nd in this year..." Paulinus, op. cit., p.104; Germann, op. cit., p.528.

¹⁶ "...John was a true Jacobite Bishop, who provoked the schismatics for disputation and thus was spreading his erroneous teachings. He was opposed by Fr. Hanna and Thomas de Campo, the intruder, on account of which, he started towards Borea; John died a little later in Mulanthuruthy..." Paulinus, op. cit., p.106; Bernard, op. cit., p.172.

¹⁷ Cf. Nau, F., "Deux notices relatives au Malabar" in *Orient Chretien*, 17 (1912) 77-81.

¹⁸ The letter of Mar Thomas IV to the Antiochene Patriarch in 1709, was published by Charles Schaaf in 1714; Cf. *Relatio historica*, Leiden 1714; it has been translated into English by Thomas Yeats, in his book, *Indian Church History*, London 1818, 152-154: "...Thomas the infirm, bishop of the ancient and

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

It was indeed because of the claims of Mar Gabriel that such a hasty step was taken. We must not forget that in these letters Mar Thomas IV repeatedly asked for bishops and books as he found it necessary to adhere more closely to the Antiochene Church in order to prevent the people from following Mar Gabriel. Thus the difference between the Chaldean and Antiochene Churches was accentuated sharply.

Though such an adherence to the doctrines of Jacobitism was visible by this time, the view of Nau that a complete transition to the Antiochene rite took place at this period seems untenable, for we find the

Orthodox Syrian Christians of Hindu to the Primate of the Royal Syrian priesthood... Mar Ignatius Patriarch triumphing with the triumph of Apostles...president of the illustrious throne of Antioch, the fourth patriarchate by the decree of 318 Fathers assembled in the city of Nice... My Lord I implore thy benediction with thy right hand full of cordial love; professing obedience and submission to your high authority; wherefore God bless Thee on thy throne... I am utterly unworthy to write this letter becoming Your Eminence but I wrote solely on account of the great stress of the Syrian believers, well worthy of praise now dwelling in Hindu; and that you would be pleased to send unto us a patriarch and a metropolitan and two elders, such as are learned and qualified in the reading of the holy Scriptures..." Cf. Germann, op. cit., pp.534-536.

¹⁹ Cf. Assemani, J.S., *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, Vol. 4, Romae, 1728, 466-467. The English translation of it is given by Mackensie, G.T., *Christianity in Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1901 (reproduced in the *Travancore State Manual*, ed., Nagam Ayia V., Vol II, Trivandrum, 1906) 86-87. Cf. the observations of Germann on this matter in his op. cit., pp. 545: "Schaaf, the son, on 12 Dec. 1720 replied in his father's name that five letters had already been sent and that he was ready still for further mediation in correspondence with Antioch. Thus he must have further received letters and sent them to the Patriarch. But it seems that the letters sent from Holland did not reach their destination, but were taken away by the Catholics. Otherwise it is inexplicable that while the original of that letter is not found in Holland till to-day, Assemani has found it in the Archives of Propaganda in Rome and having translated it from Syriac into Latin he could publish it..." Paulinus too speaks of Mar Thoma's letter: "This Thomas in 1720 Sept. 25th, wrote a letter to Ignatius Patriarch of Antioch, from the town of Parur..." op. cit., p.109. These and other letters were sent through the Dutch Authorities from Malabar.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Malankara community later still keeping many practices of the Chaldean rite.

Mar Thomas V explaining the differences between his group and that of Mar Gabriel wrote a letter to the Dutch Governor on 8 June, 1729. He declared: "...We acknowledge the Church of Antioch for our head, that the Messiah has but one nature and one person and that the Holy Ghost goes out only from the Father; and in the Holy Sacrament, we distribute fresh bread which is baked that same day. Also in fasting there is a difference between us and them. "Mar Gabriel with the Christians in the south, kept the fasts and holy days according to the rule of Antioch", but the Mass and the Lord's Supper with wafers he causes to be administered after the Romish way..."²⁰

Indeed Mar Thomas V clearly professes here the Jacobite faith. But it is to be noted how he considers the nature of the host used in celebrating Holy Mass and the way of fasting of the separated community. If they had already adopted the Antiochene liturgy, he would have mentioned it as a considerable difference from the Catholic group who used the reformed Chaldean Liturgy of Bishop Roz.

His statement that Mar Gabriel too followed the Antiochene custom of keeping fasts and holy days is of some interest. As we have already noted, they were the early Syrian traditions that they possessed at this time, restored at the instigation of the Antiochene Jacobite prelates. The statement of Mar Thomas V is a confirmation of our explanation that the Malankara people recognised these restored practices as Antiochene and held to them on account of the influence of the Antiochene Jacobite prelates who restored them. For we find Mar Thomas V identifying the custom of observing fasts and holy days, which Mar Gabriel followed, with that of his people which he took for Antiochene. But Mar Gabriel was a Chaldean Bishop and a Catholic,²¹

²⁰ Cf. Hough J., *History of Christianity in India*, London, 1839, Vol.2, 393-396; Brown, op.cit., p.118; German, op. cit., p.558.

²¹ "...after the year 1704, Gabriel introduced himself into Malabar converting those people and sowing among them venomous doctrines and segregating them

who followed the Chaldean rite. Even in the celebration of Mass Mar Thomas V finds fault with him only because Mar Gabriel celebrated it with wafers according to the Roman style. We may, therefore, conclude that the Malankara community still continued the old Syrian customs which they had restored, and continued to celebrate Mass according to the Chaldean liturgy but used leavened bread for it.

C. CHALDEAN RITE STILL KEPT

The gradual return to the early Syrian traditions which were understood as "Antiochene" could be gathered also from a manuscript extant in Malabar.²² It is narrated therein: "...In the year 740 (Malayalam era, i.e. A.D. 1563) Mar Abraham, the Metropolitan, came. After his death the Portuguese heretics changed the tradition of the Syrians, the fasts, Mass and the feasts. After these in the year 861 (i.e., A.D. 1686) during the time of the Metropolitan Mar Ivanios (Mar John) the traditions of the Orthodox Syrians were resumed as they were before: Mass, fasts and feasts..."²³

A close examination of this testimony would corroborate the explanation given above on the attitude of the Malankara people towards

from the obedience of the Vicar Apostolic..." Archivium S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide (henceforth quoted as APF) Acta anni 1728, vol.98. f.97; relatio Card. Dellia, on 23 Feb. 1728. "...In the year 1705 came Dom. Gabriel a Syrian Metropolitan by the order of the Catholicos of the Orient..." J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, Leiden, 1862, I. p.27 Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.534, footnote, I. Mar Gabriel professed the Catholic faith at least in 1704. His profession of faith both in Syriac and in Arabic together with their translations, is found in APFSO, anno 1706, Vol.549, ff.325-340.

²² This is a manuscript written partly in Chaldean Syriac and partly in Malayalam transliterated in Syriac. It is now kept in the Scholasticate library of the Carmelites (C.M.I.) in Bangalore. Fr. Placid has made a study of this valuable document and published his observations in 1951. Cf. Placid of St. Joseph, T.O.C.D., *Our Rite*, Mannanam, 1951, 201-208. It is found in the manuscript itself that it was written by Deacon Abraham from the Church of Mulanthuruthy in the year 1734 after the birth of Christ, i.e., in 2045 of the Greek year in the month of Hasiran".

²³ Cf. The manuscript referred to above, pp. 813-815. It is reproduced in Malayalam in Placid, op. cit., p.206. The English translation is ours.

the "Jacobite introductions". Mar Abraham was the last Syrian Bishop who ruled the Malabar Church. He was a Chaldean bishop and according to many historians, especially Portuguese, even a Nestorian! In his time, therefore, the Malabar Christians were naturally following the Chaldean rite. It was this Chaldean rite that was changed by the Portuguese. Mar Ivanios (Mar John) was a Jacobite Bishop, who, according to his testimony, came to Malabar in 1686 and restored the traditions of the Syrians which were changed by the Portuguese. The author of the manuscript, therefore, acknowledges that the customs restored by Mar Ivanios and practised by the Malankara community in his time are those that were in use at the time of Mar Abraham. We may conclude then, that Mar John was not introducing anything new but only restoring those neglected practices, of course, under the pretext of their being Antiochene. The author of the manuscript too, might have held them as Antiochene, thanks to their Antiochene nature and to the influence they received from the Antiochene Jacobite prelates. As he declares that the Mass, fasts and feasts are the same as those of the time of the Chaldean Bishop Mar Abraham, we understand that they were following the Chaldean rite.

But here arises another question: could the assumption of the old practices be understood as a complete return to the pure Chaldean rite of the pre-Diamper period? I would answer it negatively. For, the author of the manuscript states that it was Mar Ivanios (John), the Antiochene Jacobite prelate who arrived in Malabar in 1686, who restored to them "the Mass, fasts and feasts". But how could a Jacobite prelate restore "the Mass, fasts and feasts" that were in use at the time of Mar Abraham, and therefore of the Chaldean rite? As for many disciplinary elements such a restoration could be deemed possible, on account of their material identity with the Antiochene. And in fact there is clear evidence to prove that it did really happen, as we have noted above. But it is unlikely that Mar Ivanios (John) would have restored the pure Chaldean liturgy of the Mass of the pre-Diamper period or introduced the Antiochene. Nor do we have any evidence to prove that he did it. On the other hand we find the Malankara community clearly having the same Chaldean liturgy as that of the Catholic community as late as 1750, as we shall see soon. Similarly we are told that it was Mar Basilius, and Mar John arriving in 1751 in

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Malabar who introduced the Antiochene liturgy of St. James, the more commonly used one, into the Malankara Church. Therefore it is clear that the Malankara community was having the same Chaldean Liturgy as that of the Catholic group, i.e., the reformed liturgy of Bishop Roz.²⁴

What then are we to think of the report in the manuscript that Mar Ivanios did restore the "Mass"? The answer seems to be simple: the author is speaking of the restoration of the practice of using leavened bread in celebrating Mass. In fact the use of unleavened bread was the most intolerable change that was effected in the council of Diamper and the change from this would have definitely meant to them the restoration of the early Mass. This restoration was already suggested by Mar Gregorios, the Antiochene prelate who arrived first in Malankara, and now Mar Ivanios (John) might have completed it.

This is still clearer if we further examine the testimony. In the manuscript referred to above, even though the author spoke of a return to the old customs already in 1686, the ecclesiastical calendar found therein was the same as that which was latinized by the Portuguese except for ten feasts restored or newly introduced, of which only three were properly Jacobite.²⁵ Therefore the author might have taken the restoration of a few significant customs, for example the celebration of Mass with leavened bread and on a wooden altar, ways of keeping fasts and abstinence, restoration of a few important Syrian feasts, etc. for a complete return to the old system without giving much importance to the minor practices. In fact the customs referred to above were those to which the Syrians were most attached and it was on them that the Antiochene prelates focused their attention. The author therefore seems to be interested chiefly in the restoration of the most significant Syrian practices in their oriental form.

²⁴ It was Fr. Francis Roz S.J., who became later Archbishop of Cranganor for the Syrian Christians of Malabar, who was entrusted with the preparatory work of the reformation of the Chaldean rite in the Synod of Diamper, on account of his knowledge of Syriac and Malayalam. During his episcopate he had also made considerable changes in the Chaldean rite.

²⁵ Cf. Placid, *op.cit.*, pp.205-206.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

As for the rest both the Catholic and the Malankara communities possessed the same traditions without notable differences.

That the restoration of the early Syrian customs, and still less the introduction of the Antiochene Jacobite practices, was not complete at this stage is well testified by the Dutch Chaplain Jacob Canter Visscher. Writing from Malabar about the year 1723, he reported that the Liturgy and other practices of the Malankara community were a complex of different elements of Latin, Chaldean and Antiochene rites.²⁶

This is testified also by Fr. Bonifacius a Bambino Gesù, O.C.D., a Carmelite missionary in Malabar, who having studied the state of affairs, of the Syrian Churches in Malabar, both Catholic and Jacobite, sent his report to the S.C. Propaganda Fide to be studied by the Cardinals in the Particular Congregation of 16 Aug. 1750, when they discussed the possibility of the reunion of Mar Thoma V with the Catholic Church.²⁷ Detailed information on the rites of both the communities could be gathered from it.

D. MORE EVIDENCE

We must not forget that in 1750, the schismatics were called "heretics of the Chaldean rite" by the secretary of the S.C. Propaganda Fide, -a clear indication that the Malankara Church was not characteristically "Antiochene" though many a Syrian tradition was

²⁶ "...These days nobody can give a correct report on the belief (of the Thomas Christians), for their liturgical service (Mass) is a confusion; partly it is from the pagans among whom they live and from whom they stem; partly it is from the "papists" to whom many of them have gone and with whom they share many churches; and partly it is from the Syrian Christians, by whose bishops they are governed and whose opinions they adopt..."; from the letter of Canter Visscher, quoted in Germann, op. cit., p.551. The English translation is mine.

²⁷ Cf. Report of the Card.Secretary Nicolaus Zacarius presented in the particular meeting of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide on 16 Aug. 1750. This is a paper based on the letter of Fr. Bonifacius Cf. AFP, SOCP., (1750) vol. 109. ff.3-14; the original letter of Fr. Bonifacius a Bambino Gesù, O.C.D., is to be found, *ibid.* ff.90-92.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

restored to it.²⁸ In the "Relatio" of the Cardinal Secretary in the Particular Congregation of 16th Aug. 1750, he exposed first the points that were common to both Catholic and schismatic groups and then also the differences. The common points were five in number and most of them pertained to the administration and government of the diocese.²⁹ On the other hand the differentiating elements all concerned the rite, "...The heretics differ from the Catholics in the following points:(1) the heretics follow the old calendar, (2) they abstain from eating meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, (3) for the ecclesiastical fasting they count the (natural) day from sunset to evening of the following day; but for the fasting, in preparation for the celebration of the holy Mass and communion they begin from midnight onwards as do the Catholics, (4) the heretics retain the breviary, the Missal and the ritual reformed by Bishop Francis Roz, but mention the name of the heretic Patriarch and of the then ruling Archdeacon, in the dyptics and (5) the Catholics of the Chaldean rite celebrate Mass with unleavened bread and the heretics after having fallen into schism and heresy have resumed the use of leavened bread. They however celebrate the mass on the altar made of wood not on one of stone..."³⁰

If we examine these points of difference, we see that none of these was a new introduction. As we remarked earlier they only restored what they had lost by the latinization. However these Syrian traditions might have been forgotten later by the people especially when they were following the latinized rite for more than 50 years.³¹ But a close

²⁸ "...after the death of the Nestorian Bishop Gabriel in the year 1730, the Christians of his party were divided into three groups, being from the Malabar heretics of the Chaldean rite, they returned to the obedience of the Archdeacon, their leader Thomas de Campo... APF., SOCP. (1750) vol.109, f.3.

²⁹ Cf. APF., SOCP, (1750) vol.109, ff. 3-8.

³⁰ Cf. APF., SOCP, (1750) vol. 109; f.9r. The English translation is mine.

³¹ The Synod of Diamper which effected the latinization was in 1599, and the whole Syrian community accepted it until they refused obedience to the Latin bishop in 1653. Only later in 1665 they came in contact with the Jacobite bishop who encouraged them to follow again the Syrian traditions.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

examination of them shows that they were already followed by the people as Chaldean until they were removed in the synod of Diamper.³²

The doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism were really innovations both formally and materially. In fact the report of Fr. Bonifacius gave them as errors then held by the Jacobites. He was careful to specify that the errors of Jacobites were newly added to those of Nestorians. He said: "...In ancient days they had the Nestorian bishops and professed the heresy of Nestorians and to these the Jacobite Bishops were joined and thus they followed the tenets of monophysitism..."³³

It is, however, strange to note that many points which were said to have been introduced by the Antiochene prelates were not mentioned in the report of Fr. Bonifacius either as erroneous or as differentiating elements;³⁴ for example, abstaining from celebrating Mass on week-days during Lent, standing during public prayers, allowing marriage for priests, etc.³⁵ Would it be because the report of Fr. Bonifacius was not exhaustive or because these customs were not followed at his time in the Malankara Church?

We find from the report referred to above that the traditions encouraged by the Antiochene and immediately resumed by the people were those that were changed in the Synod of Diamper. However, as we have noted, all that were changed were not restored even at the instigation of the Jacobite prelates. For example, the marriage of priests was not looked upon at all favourably, and it was only late during the time of the Protestant missions that such a practice was, at least to some extent, followed.³⁶ Similarly the custom of standing during public prayers, even

³² Cf. *Fonti*, II, VIII., 68, nn.130-133. *Fonti* II, IX, nn.433-439; 742-745.

³³ Cf. *APF.*, SOCP, (16 Aug. 1750) vol. 109, f.9v.

³⁴ Cf. notes 14,30 ,33 of this article.

³⁵ Cf. Our discussion earlier in this article on the restoration or introduction of the customs by the Antiochene prelates.

³⁶ Cf. Milne Rae, *The Syrian Church in India*, Edinburgh, 1892, 286: "...on the question of celibacy of the clergy however a more positive action seemed practicable. The *Metran* and his *Malpans* were secretly of the opinion that the

if it was encouraged by the Antiochene prelates, seems not to have been restored immediately. For, Canter Visscher, wrote, about 1723, that the Jacobites were receiving communion kneeling.³⁷ Similarly, as late as 1816, Middleton reported that the Syrians of the Malankara Church were kneeling during the Holy Mass on certain occasions.³⁸

On the other hand the customs which Paulinus reported to have been restored or introduced by the Antiochene prelates should have existed among the Malankara people as he, who was himself on the spot a little later, would not have mentioned them if they were not existing among them at least in his time.

It may therefore be concluded that these innovations were not universally practised. Only a few of them had universal acceptance, the others being introduced in certain localities alone. In the case of the teachings of Mar John there was still another reason why they were not widely spread. We saw that he was not on good terms with the local head Mar Thoma IV, who was to take the lead in spreading them.³⁹ Thus his counsels were, perhaps confined to certain places where Paulinus and others who reported other customs might have gathered their information. Hence they were not the universal practices of the

single life was the highest and the holiest; nevertheless they admitted that matrimony was lawful to the clergy according to the ancient rule and practice of the church and moreover that it seemed to them the only cure for the dissolute habits of many of their order. To encourage the movement of restoring to the Syrian clergy the right to marry, the Metran published that he himself would gladly perform the nuptial ceremony in the case of any Cassanar willing to enter the "holy state"; and Col.Munro offered a reward of four hundred rupees to the first Cassanar who should come forward to be married, so that by the year of 1820, 40 Cassanars out of 150, have become married men..."

³⁷ Cf. Germann, op.cit., p.551.

³⁸ Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.632.

³⁹ Cf. n.15 of this article.

Malankara Church.⁴⁰ It is also important to remember that the report made by Fr. Bonifacius was prepared with the knowledge of Mar Thoma V, whose case was to be discussed by the S.C. Propaganda Fide with a view to reunion with the Catholic Church.⁴¹ Therefore the report as it was, should have been official and based on the universal practices of the reuniting group. At any rate the report gives an adequate description of the state of this group with regard to its Liturgy and discipline.

Concluding therefore the observations on this period we may say regarding the ecclesiastical practices and traditions, that it was rather a period of restoration of the traditions that were lost and neglected by the latinization than a period of new introductions. However, as it was the work of Antiochene Jacobite prelates and they were formally held as Antiochene disciplinary institutes, the process could be thought of also as an introduction. The doctrinal tenets of Jacobitism which were new to the people of the Malankara Church were both formally and materially an introduction. Similarly the Antiochene Liturgy had been a novelty to them. This too was soon to be propagated among the people of the Malankara Church.

2. THE STABILIZATION AND ADOPTION OF THE ANTIOCHENE RITE

We shall now discuss how the Malankara Church became more and more familiar with the Antiochene rite and how this was adopted by the Malankara Church as its own rite.

The coming to the Malankara Church of Mar Basilius, Mar John and their companion in 1751 was the beginning of a significant period in the history of the Malankara Church, both historically and juridically. Their influence in the liturgical and disciplinary system of the Malankara Church too was not insignificant. For it was they who brought to the

⁴⁰ However all those that were reported by Paulinus even if not commonly spread then, had universally been accepted, after the establishment of the juridical power of the Antiochene Patriarch.

⁴¹ Cf. APP., SOCP, (16 Aug. 1750) vol. 109. f.10r.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Malankara Church the different "Anaphoras" of the Antiochene liturgy including that of St. James and propagated them among its people.⁴² From this time therefore the Antiochene liturgy began to be widely used, even though not exclusively. At any rate we find Fr. Thomas Paremmakel, who was a companion of Dr. Joseph Cariattil, a native of Malabar and later appointed Archbishop of Cranganor, in his journey to Rome to advance the reunion efforts of Mar Thoma VI, testifying in 1778 that the Jacobites of the Malankara Church used the same liturgy as that of the Catholic Syrians in Antioch.⁴³

But some other contemporaneous reports seem to complicate the situation. Fr. Jos Soledado, O.C.D., then ecclesiastical Governor of Cochin and Cranganor in his report sent on 16 January 1782 to the S.C. Propaganda Fide in connection with the proposed reunion of Mar Dionysius I made a distinction between "Soriani Latini" and "Soriani Chaldei" among the Syrians of Malabar, adding to them also "Christiani Latini".⁴⁴ He also pointed out that unless the "Soriani Chaldei" change their rite into "Soriani Latini" in case of a reunion, the whole project would be meaningless.⁴⁵

⁴² "...The liturgy which he (Basilus) brought to Malabar was of St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, written at Mardin where the Antiochene Patriarch was residing who sent Basil and his friends to Malabar..." Paulinus, op. cit., p.112. Paulinus speaks also of his personal visits to them. Cf. *ibid.*, p.111. Anquetil du Peron, a French traveller, also visited Mar Basilus on 12 Jan, 1758 and assisted at the liturgy celebrated by him. Cf. *Germann, op.cit.*, pp.573-574.

⁴³ Cf. Thomas Paremmakel, *Varthammanapusthakam* (1875), ed. by Luke Mathai, Athirampuzha, 1936, 239. The spreading of this liturgy should have taken place at least by 1778. We point out 1778 because the journey of the deputation to Rome started from Malabar in June 1778. Thus making a statement from abroad on the conditions of the Malankara Jacobites, Fr. Paremmakel must have witnessed it before his departure from Malabar.

⁴⁴ Cf. The report of Fr. Soledado OCD., in APF, SOCG, (17 May, 1784) vol. 867, ff. 140v. 139v. The full report is to be found, *ibid.*, ff. 133-143.

⁴⁵ Cf. The report of Fr. Soledado OCD, in APF, SOCG., (17 May, 1784) vol. 867, f. 139r.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

A few years later Bishop Aloysius, the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, writing to the S.C. Propaganda Fide on 24 March, 1786, asked for directions concerning the course of action to be adopted with regard to the schismatics' claim to retain the Syro-Chaldean rite in preference to the reformed Syrian rite of the Catholic group.⁴⁶

From these it would seem that these missionaries reported that the Malankara community held the Chaldean rite of the pre-Diamper period while the Catholic group kept the reformed one. We have to remember here also the report of Fr. Bonifacius a Bambino Gesù, O.C.D. in 1748, in which he had stated that the schismatics were retaining the reformed liturgy of Bishop Roz. Would it be possible then to have a return to the pure Chaldean rite after the year 1748, just at the time when the Antiochenes had introduced the Antiochene liturgy of St. James? If the Malankara group did return to the Chaldean rite of the pre-Diamper period, what are we to make of the report of Fr. Paremmakel who finds a similarity between the liturgies of Syrian Catholics of Antioch and that of the Jacobites of Malankara?

From the conflicting reports we have, we have to draw a picture of the situation and answer these questions. No report denies that the newly arrived Antiochene bishops brought with them the liturgy of St. James to the Malankara Church. Du Perron, Paulinus, etc. are all witnesses to it. And Fr. Paremmakel, a native Syrian, speaks of it as the liturgy of the Malankara Jacobites. All the reporters agree that the Jacobites were using leavened bread in celebrating Holy Mass. Thus Fr. Bonifacius' report that up to 1748 the schismatics retained the reformed liturgy should make us believe that they used leavened bread in the reformed liturgy. The reports of Fr. Soledado and Bishop Aloysius seem to have made the distinction between "Soriano Chaldeo" and "Soriano Latino" on the basis of their use of fermented hosts in Holy Mass. What they disapprove of is the use of a leavened host in Holy Mass for fear of a recurrence of schism, as it was this factor, according to the spirit of the time, that decided one's adherence to a particular rite. Thus they could

⁴⁶ The letter of Bishop Aloysius in APF., SOCG., (1786) vol. 868, f.106v.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

reasonably call the schismatics "Soriani Chaldei" who used a leavened host in the Holy Mass retaining however the reformed missal of Bishop Roz, in spite of its other minor changes in contradistinction to "Soriani Latini" who used unleavened bread in the holy Mass,⁴⁷ it is interesting to note the phrase used by Fr. Soledado "proprio rito chaldaico del fermentato" in the report referred to above.

We may conclude that the Jacobites of the Malankara Church, at least up to 1748, were celebrating the holy mass with leavened bread according to the liturgy reformed by Bishop Roz S.J. After the arrival of the Antiochene Bishops in 1751 they began to use the Antiochene liturgy which had a considerable following at the time of Fr. Paremmakel as to be called by him the "Jacobite liturgy". This, however, did not completely displace the Chaldean liturgy which they had been using up to that time. If we follow the subsequent events we shall see that they did not want to change it soon, as they still cherished the hope of reunion with Rome. We must here remember the enquiry made by the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly to decide what policy he should adopt in discussing with the schismatics their claim to retain their rite in case of an eventual reunion. This liturgy, of which all of them spoke, was the reformed Chaldean liturgy in which they used leavened bread.⁴⁸ Thus the missionaries could consider them still having "Soriano Chaldeo" rite as against "Soriano Latino". The existence of some manuscripts of the Syro-Chaldean missal of the pre-Diamper period, of which Du Perron speaks,⁴⁹ can in no way argue for a

⁴⁷ This is confirmed by the letter of Mar Thomas V who wrote in 1748 to Rome that the use of leavened bread be conceded to them. This seems to have been the main thing they wanted to retain. Cf. Fonti, II, VIII, 60, n.113.

⁴⁸ From the folksongs of the time it is found that Mar Dionysius I when returned to the Catholic Church in 1799 had to accept only unleavened bread as a change of rite. Cf. Fonti, II, VIII, p.61, footnote 3. See also the petition of the Malankara Bishops submitted to Rome during their efforts for reunion, in which they asked for the favour of using leavened bread in holy Mass, as though that was the main difference in their liturgy from that of their Catholic brethren.

⁴⁹ Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.574.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

practice of celebrating holy Mass using such a Missal as a custom of their Church.

A. THE ROLE OF MAR DIONYSIUS I:

From the letters of the Catholic missionaries in Malabar at that time we learn that Mar Dionysius I convoked two meetings or synods to discuss the affairs of their Church especially in view of a reform. The activities of Mar Dionysius with regard to these things during this period shed much light on the situation, and the state of his Church justifies his proceedings.

In a letter of Carlo di S. Conrado, Bishop of Calamina (Mylapore) on 20th Feb. 1782, it is stated: "...on 18th Dec. of the past year 1781 Mar Dionysius I convoked a gathering of the leaders and priests of his party and after having given orders to extirpate the vices among them tried to introduce the customs of fasting according to the Synod of Diamper... Furthermore it was proposed to that assembly to elect a successor to him. But a decision on this and on fasting is deferred to the coming March or April, and it is believed that this delay is made in view of the return of the two Malabar priests from Rome of whom it was reported that they had started long ago for Lisbon from Rome..."⁵⁰

We shall see now what the purpose of this gathering of 1781 was. As pointed out earlier both the reformed liturgy of Roz and the newly introduced Jacobite liturgy were in use among the Jacobites at this time. It was in this situation that Mar Dionysius I made his efforts for reunion, which took a definite form as Dr. Joseph Cariattil came on the scene. A deputation was sent to Rome under the leadership of Dr. Cariattil, to present this matter to the Holy See in 1778. But one of the difficult problems that puzzled the Catholic theologians of that time was the reluctance of the Schismatic group to accept the Synod of Diamper with its reforms. This was sure to stand in the way of a proposed reunion. Bishop Carlo writing to the S.C. Propaganda on 14 May 1781 wondered

⁵⁰ Cf. The letter of D. Carlo on 20 Feb. 1782, in APF., SOCG., 17 May, 1784) vol. 867, f.174v. The same news was given in his letter on 8th April 1782, Cf. *ibid.*, f.163rv.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

why the Catholic deputation before leaving for Rome to discuss the matter of reunion failed to induce Mar Dionysius I to accept the Synod of Diamper. He wrote: "...The two priests from Malabar, who are now in Rome, cannot ignore this difficulty, and hence I do not know why they had not persuaded Mar Thoma, before starting for Rome, to accept the council of Diamper".⁵¹

It was necessary for their Church, in Mar Dionysius' view, that they be disposed to make such a sacrifice. Hence he proposed to the assembly that a few of the ancient customs as determined by the Synod of Diamper be followed. The postponement of a final decision till the arrival of the deputation is significant, for it indicates the attitude they took towards such a proposal. Bishop Carlo wrote on 8th April, 1782 to S. C. Propaganda Fide: "The very same meeting was asked by Mar Thomas to observe the fast and feasts prescribed by the Council of Diamper; but this was neither approved nor disapproved for the decision of it was deferred till the coming April..."⁵²

From this it is clear that they were waiting to hear the final decision of the Holy See with regard to their reunion. In case it was unfavourable there was no use, they thought, of making a change in their ancient customs. And in fact they did not change them even in the proposed meeting since Bishop Cariattil's commission had not as yet reached them.⁵³

⁵¹ Cf. APF., SOCG., (17 May, 1784) vol. 867, f. 171v; Cf. also Fr. Soledado's report of 16th Jan. 1782, in which he expressed his conviction that the whole success of reunion depended on their decision to accept or not to accept the Synod of Diamper. Cf. Ibid., vol.867, f. 138v.

⁵² Cf. APF., SOCG (17 May, 1784), vol. 867, f. 163v.

⁵³ Bishop Carlo again writing to the S. Congregation of Propaganda on 8th Sept. 1782 expressed:..."As I have written at other times, Mar Thomas or Dionysius was to gather a second time the leaders of his clergy and people last April to determine the two other points which were left undecided in the first meeting, that is to say, the observance of fast and feasts prescribed in the council of Diamper and the election of his successor. This meeting of the clergy and people is not to be held

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

During this period of indeterminacy the spread of the Antiochene rite was naturally arrested. But when the reunion attempts failed, Mar Dionysius and his people seem to have devoted themselves again to the spreading of the Antiochene rite, perhaps after discussing it at a meeting of the church leaders. Here we have a clue to the report of the four missionaries who wrote to the S.C. Propaganda Fide on 25th April 1788 dismissing the possibility of a reunion of the schismatic group. They wrote: "... Not only does he not convert, but he has reformed his Jacobite rite and is still more obstinate in his schismatic attitude..."⁵⁴

B. ANTI-PROTESTANTISM

HELPS THE STABILISATION OF THE ANTIOCHENE RITE

This fact was the condition of the Antiochene rite in the Malankara Church and their attitude towards it until the end of the 18th century. The following period is marked by a paradoxical feature. On the one hand it was at this time that the Antiochene influence was strongly discouraged by the growing influence of the British and the Protestant missionaries. On the other hand it was at this time that the Malankara Church took a definite attitude of adhesion to the Antiochene rite.

We get a glimpse into this relationship from a statement of Mar Thomas VIII, who had explained in 1812 the situation of his Church to the Madras Government in answer to a questionnaire sent to him.⁵⁵ To the question, what modes of worship did the Syrians of Malankara follow, he answered that they were following the directions contained in the books sent them by the Antiochene Patriarch.⁵⁶ Nothing was mentioned specifically about the other ecclesiastical laws or customs even though their

now, and as far as I know, it is postponed until the arrival of the two Malabar priests..." Ibid., f.182.

⁵⁴ Cf. APF., SOCG., (11 Sept., 1789) vol.884, f.122r.

⁵⁵ Cf. Fonti, II, VIII, 61, n.118; E.M. Philip, op. cit., p.119. Here we discuss only those points that pertain to rite.

⁵⁶ Cf. Travancore Royal Court Judgment (translated and edited by E.M. Philip) Kottayam 1890 (henceforth quoted as RCJ), p.126.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

subjection to the Patriarch was clearly stated.⁵⁷ However, he explained in the same reply that there were 55 churches 167 priests and 30,000 christians under his jurisdiction; that the obligations of the priests were to celebrate holy Mass on Sundays and feast days, to administer the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Marriage and Extreme Unction, to lead the morning and evening prayers in the church, etc., that the priests got a "stipendium" for these priestly works especially for saying holy Mass for the dead; that the pastors were chosen from among the more learned clergy.⁵⁸

From this reply it is clear that the church administration was more or less organised. We may enquire with what laws and customs this administration was regulated. With regard to the liturgical functions we are told that the Antiochene books were followed. As for the other things they seem to have followed the existing customs of the Malankara Church, that is to say, the customs they were following right from the beginning of their separation from the Catholic group. These in fact were taken by this time definitely for "Antiochene" discipline despite their existence as Chaldean in the early Malabar Church, though restored by the Antiochene prelates after the latinization. Hence many of the disciplinary customs were the same as those of the Catholic group excepting a few which they cared to restore and so preserve from the pre-Diamper period. This similarity of the church government was noted down in 1748 by Fr. Bonifacius in his report to the S.C. Propaganda Fide mentioned above.⁵⁹ It is confirmed by the letter of the Antiochene

⁵⁷ The circumstances of this declaration have to be studied in its historical context.

⁵⁸ Cf. E. M. Philip, *op. cit.*, pp.199-200.

⁵⁹ "...The Chaldeans, both Catholics and the heretics, continue to discuss their ecclesiastical matters in giunta composed of clerics and people; and this not only for the building and reparation of churches, but also for promoting someone to minor and major Orders, or for absolving someone from censure; the giunta being consulted, the petitioner presents the request to the prelate. As for more important matters they invite also the people of the neighbouring parishes and for affairs still graver they seek the counsel of all the chiefs of the people of that diocese..." Cf. APF., SOCG, (16 Aug. 1750), vol. 109 f.7v.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Patriarch in 1751 in which he reported that the Malankara Metropolitan kept many customs alien to their church.⁶⁰ On the other hand we see that no attempt for changing these customs had taken place later. The reformation programme of Mar Dionysius I in 1781-which was never realised-was evidently in the opposite direction while the confirmation process of 1788 was nothing but an abandonment of the reformation proposals. Nor do we have any documentary evidence to affirm that the Antiochene bishops brought about much change in the existing discipline or administration of the Malankara Church except for the stabilisation of the Antiochene liturgy. We may, therefore, conclude that in matters of discipline and government the Malankara Church continued to be in the same state in which it was before.⁶¹

At this time it seems that the Antiochene liturgy was not universally practised. We have evidence that the Chaldean liturgy was also in use among the Jacobites.

In 1820 the English chaplain, Rev. Hough, had visited the Metropolitan of Malankara and it is reported that he was displeased with the "Catholic form" of the liturgy which the Jacobites were using. Besides, he took great pains to convince the Metropolitan of the advantages of having it in the form of an "English liturgy".⁶²

From this it would seem that the Jacobites were still having at least partially the Chaldean liturgy which the Catholics were following. This however, is not as certain as it looks, since Hough could have meant the sacrificial character of the Mass which the Jacobites held as a matter of faith, as the "Catholic form". His comparison was between the English liturgy and the actual liturgy used by the Jacobites. Our former conclusion

⁶⁰ Cf. The letter of the Antiochene Patriarch on 25th Jan. 1751 to Mar Thomas V. in RCJ., n.99.

⁶¹ Cf. Howard, G.B., *Christians of St. Thomas and their Liturgies*, London, 1864, 103-104; Germann has quoted the description of Paulinus on the customs and tradition of the Syrians of Malabar, both of Catholics and of the Jacobites, op. cit., pp. 602-607.

⁶² Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.654.

seems to be more probable since in his conversation with the Metropolitan he was stressing the necessity of celebrating the liturgy in the vernacular and in a form more intelligible to the people in contrast to the Mass of the Catholics rather than the need to change the actual faith of the people.

At any rate, the struggle against the anglicanization policy of the English missionaries during the time of Mar Dionysius IV helped considerably the stabilization of the Syrian customs and the Antiochene liturgy. In fact the Antiochene Bishop Mar Athanasius was sent at the request of Mar Dionysius IV in 1825 by the Antiochene Patriarch chiefly to strengthen the Syrian traditions in the Malankara church, although he took it as an opportunity to stabilise the Antiochene authority over the Malankara Church. On the other hand there was a strong under-current created by the Protestant missionaries among the Syrians to adopt the Protestant ways of worship. This is not, however, of special importance to us except in that it explains how a group of Syrian Jacobites turned out to be Protestants or Protestant sympathisers, while others, as a reaction towards this were more thoroughly confirmed in the Syrian traditions and the Jacobite faith.⁶³

The Orthodox Syrians had proclaimed their allegiance to the Antiochene rite officially and publicly in the synod of Mavelikara in 1836 in which it was decided that the Syrian traditions and liturgy were not at

⁶³ This attitude of the Malankara people was explained by Howard: "...They (the Protestant missionaries) believed them sunk in ignorance and superstition and directed their efforts, not so much to restore that which might be wanting, as to persuade them to abolish, "en masse" all that was offensive to their own prejudices and this comprehended apparently the entire Syrian ritual... The Syrians on the other hand, with few exceptions, were strongly attached to the forms of worship and the customs which they had received from their ancestors and complained that "What the missionaries said about the Bible was partly good, but that they wished to overturn Mass-service altogether...is highly improper, and therefore the people ought not to listen..." op. cit., pp.94-95. It is also interesting to note the words of Mar Dionysius IV in 1835 to Bishop Wilson: our liturgies, he said, have been formed by great persons; we are weak ones, what we can do?" Cf. Ibid., p.102.

all to be changed or modified.⁶⁴ In the "Padiola" (a public document) enacted therein they declared: "...We the Syrian Jacobites, who are subject to the supreme power of the Antiochene Patriarch and who use the liturgy and rites instituted by the prelates sent by his authority, cannot deviate from such liturgies and rites and adopt a discipline contrary to them..."⁶⁵

We may take this as the official declaration by which the Antiochene liturgy and discipline were formally accepted by the Malankara Church. This, however, does not mean that the other liturgies which were till then in use among them, were rejected outright. We have reason to believe that they continued to keep them, though with little attachment. Germann, commenting on the liturgy of St. James, remarked that it was only "almost universally" used among the Jacobites of the Malankara Church, leaving therefore the possibility of other liturgies existing among them.⁶⁶ Describing the different currents of reformation in their liturgy, Germann spoke also of a translation of the Chaldean missal by Neale, which, he said, was used-though without official recognition-at least in eight churches under Mathews Mar Athanasius. The original from which the translation was made is reported to have been the Chaldean missal of the pre-Diamper period.⁶⁷

We may, however infer that by that period the Antiochene was taken to be the official liturgy of the Malankara Church. This is confirmed by the reports of Howard, who having visited Malabar in 1862, wrote a description of his visit among the Syrians. He had the opportunity to visit many Syrian churches and to assist at the celebration

⁶⁴ Cf. Milne Rae, op. cit., pp. 281-303; Tisserant-Hambye, op. cit., p.147.

⁶⁵ Cf. P. Cherian; *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society* (1816-1840), Kottayam, 1935, 390; Fonti, II, IX, p.26. n.28.

⁶⁶ Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.755.

⁶⁷ Cf. Germann, op. cit., p.755.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

of the liturgy. From his narrative it is clear that it was at the Antiochene liturgy that he had assisted.⁶⁸

We get some interesting information from him concerning the "Trisagion" which he heard sung by two Jacobite deacons, who accompanied him on his visits in Malabar in 1862. From the report we know that the formula of the "Trisagion" was that of the Jacobite Church. But from the same report it can be seen that it was sung by the deacons and written by Howard in Chaldean Syriac.⁶⁹ As the Antiochene liturgy was in Western Syriac the use of Chaldean Syriac to sing the hymn of Trisagion looks strange. The probable explanation would be that the clergy of the Malankara Church was more familiar with the Chaldean Syriac-which was the ancient liturgical language they had than with the Antiochene. It is corroborated by the fact that both the Catholic Syrians and the Jacobites had in common many of the ecclesiastical usages in Chaldean Syriac.⁷⁰

But even this last trait of the Chaldean liturgy was removed by Cyril who came to Malankara in 1847 and stayed on till 1874.⁷¹ He replaced the Chaldean script by the Antiochene in their ecclesiastical literature. His presence among them considerably helped the Malankara Jacobites in this new effort.⁷²

⁶⁸ See the explanation of the Holy Mass he has given, after having assisted at the Malankara church. Cf. Howard, *op.cit.*, pp. 119-122.

⁶⁹ Cf. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp.157-158.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bernard, *op.cit.*, p.370, where he enumerates many Chaldean words which are used by the Jacobites even today in their liturgy. Cf. also Germann, *op.cit.*, p. 600, where he tries to prove his thesis that a good part of the Thomas Christians are originally from Chaldea, from the fact that they-both Catholics and Jacobites-use many Chaldeo-Syriac forms in their liturgical language. Even today this same usage is kept by the Jacobites of Malankara.

⁷¹ Cf. Germann, *op. cit.*, p.730; Whitehouse, *op. cit.*, p.100; Fr. Bernard gives the date of the arrival of Mar Cyril as 1846. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 383.

⁷² That the substitution of the Chaldean rite especially of the liturgy, with the Antiochene was effected during the time of Mar Cyril, is proved from testimonies

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

Thus even though we cannot point out the exact date on which the complete transition to the Antiochene liturgy was made, we may consider this period as the final stage of the introduction of the Antiochene liturgy and discipline among the Jacobites of the Malankara Church. From now on the Antiochene liturgy seems to have been entirely accepted as the liturgy of the Malankara Church.

Thus with the declaration of 1836 the Antiochene liturgy was adopted as the liturgy of the Malankara Church and its ecclesiastical discipline too became officially and formally Antiochene, although for the most part a material transition was not needed. This adoption was facilitated by a complete separation between the Catholic Syrians and the Jacobites by the division of the churches which they had commonly owned.⁷³ The separation became still more marked as the two communities were better organised under their own hierarchies. The Catholics were granted the Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam on 20 May 1886, while the Antiochene Patriarch Peter III, having convoked the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876, established the Malankara Jacobite Church on firm grounds of legal administration under his supervision and supremacy.

Patriarch Peter III, also introduced some elements of the Antiochene discipline. He strictly forbade the veneration of statues, though the Malankara people had kept the practice until his time, in spite

both local and others. Cf. Germann, *op. cit.*, p.741; Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 385; *Fonti*, II, VII, n.122.

⁷³ "...relying on the report of Du Perron, Whitehouse (*op.cit.*, p.288) affirmed that there were 20 churches in the middle of the 18th c. common to both the Syrian Communities. But after 100 years, i.e. in the middle of the 19th c. there was not even one church possessed in common. Being separated one from the other, each group obtained its own churches. Most of the churches possessed in common, fell to the lot of the Puthenkoottukar (Malankara community), Cf. Bernard, *op. cit.*, p.392. He gives also a list of names of the churches till then possessed in common by both parties. Cf. *ibid.*, p.391.

of the opposition of the Protestant missionaries.⁷⁴ Similarly the law of clerical celibacy was removed by him. He made marriage compulsory for the clerics in charge of the parishes and abolished tonsure. He introduced the custom of having the clerical habit in the black colour and ordered that the clerics should wear it always. Similarly it was he who allowed eating fish during the time of Advent and during abstinence days before the Assumption and the Ninivite fast days.⁷⁵

By this time the Malankara Church had evolved into a stable ecclesiastical community with a settled liturgy and disciplinary system.⁷⁶

C. A CODE OF CANON LAW INTRODUCED

It may be noted here that in spite of all their declarations of adherence to the Antiochene rite, up to the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876 there was no mention of a particular Code of Canon Law according to which the Malankara Church was to be governed. This fact is confirmed by the decree of the same synod: "It is ordered to state the numbers of parishes, which shall serve also to collect the Cathedraticum". The Synod stated that it was very good for the stability of Orthodox faith to print the book of Canons and laws and all that pertain to them, with the authority and seal of the Patriarch and to distribute them to each church informing them not to do anything but according to the directions contained in the book.⁷⁷ It was, therefore, deemed necessary "to safeguard the Orthodox faith" that a book of canons be printed, used by the churches and full freedom was given to them to codify such canons but under the supervision of the Patriarch. The reference, however, seems to have been to the "Nomo-canon of Bar Hebreus"-the code accepted by the Jacobite Church of Antioch-though it was not explicitly stated in the

⁷⁴ Cf. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp.97-98 where he describes several instances of violent conflicts between the two.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Fonti*, II, IX, pp.91-92, ns. 195-196.

⁷⁶ We leave out a discussion on the reformation of the Antiochene liturgy under the influence of Protestantism during the time of Mathews Mar Athanasius.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Fonti*, II, IX, p. 20, n.33.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

decree of the synod mentioned above.⁷⁸ Furthermore it was decided by the synod that only those laws or regulations that were accepted by the "Council" of the Malankara Church, would bind them, though a certain supremacy of the Antiochene Apostolic See -not of the diocese of Antioch-was acknowledged, at least implicitly, in the decision.⁷⁹ We should also remember that there is no evidence that the Antiochene Patriarch had ever spoken of the necessity of governing the Malankara Church in conformity with the laws contained in a code except for occasional references to the canons of the general councils.

But, after the Synod of Mulanthuruthy the "Nomo-Canon" (Hoodaya Canon) of Bar Hebreus was to assume a special importance in the Malankara Church. The reasons for it were particular and accidental.

After Mathews Mar Athanasius, the rival Metropolitan of Mar Dionysius V, was excommunicated and deposed by the Patriarch of Antioch, Mar Dionysius V tried to recover the churches and the church properties from the possession of the deposed Metropolitan. As the matter had to be divided by the civil courts, the legitimacy of the juridical act of the Antiochene Patriarch in deposing the Malankara Metropolitan had to be contested as a preliminary question. Thus the power of the Patriarch over the Malankara Metropolitan was also to be defined. Mathews Mar Athanasius and his party argued that the Malankara Church depended on the Antiochene See only for receiving ordinations and that in all other respects it was independent, leaving no power for the Antiochene Patriarch over the Malankara Metropolitan. Further, they questioned the validity of his act of excommunicating Mathews Mar Athanasius, referring to the code of canon law of the Antiochene Church which he, as the Patriarch of the said Church, was bound to observe and according to which only a synod can excommunicate a Metropolitan. From the context it is clear that the Nomo-canon was used to demonstrate the illegality and

⁷⁸ The Nomo canon (Hoodya Canon) of Bar Hebreus is the official code of canon law in the Jacobite church.

⁷⁹ Cf. Fonti, II, IX, .29, n.34.

invalidity of the act of the Patriarch, and not upheld as a code of canon law that had been accepted and followed by the Malankara Church.

Mar Dionysius V and his party, who were opponents of Mathews Mar Athanasius, and anxious to see him deposed by the Patriarch, produced a different recension of the same code before the Court, in which extraordinary powers were attributed to the Patriarch over the Metropolitan. They argued that the Patriarch alone without the intervention of a Synod, could excommunicate a Metropolitan, and therefore the excommunication and deposition made by the Patriarch were valid.⁸⁰ Before this event there had been no instance in which either the Antiochene prelates or the Malankara Metropolitan had ever made a reference to this code in the government of the Malankara Church.⁸¹

However, as both the parties in the Malankara Church repeatedly had recourse to this code of law, without making any further investigation on its nature or questioning its binding force over them, it seems that they had implicitly accepted the legal force of the code over them, even though they disputed the genuineness of a particular recension of it.⁸² It was the acceptance of the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch and the adhesion to the Antiochene liturgy and rituals that made them spontaneously believe that their code of canon law was the same as that of the Antiochene Church, even though they did not expressly declare it. It is interesting also to note that none who remained under the jurisdiction of the Antiochene Patriarch had ever afterwards questioned its binding force over them. This is significant when we find that the Marthomites, who denied obedience to the Antiochene Patriarch do not have the "Nomo-Canon" of Bar Hebraeus or any other Antiochene disciplinary code for

⁸⁰ The story behind these two recensions of the "Nomo canon" in the Malankara Church is sadly complicated. Cf. *Fonti*, II, VIII, pp.67-72.

⁸¹ It is certain that these laws had absolutely no significance to the Malankara Church at that time. Cf. *Placid*, op.cit., p.207.

⁸² Long discussions did take place to find out which of the two recensions represented the code of the Malankara Church. This was a preliminary question discussed in the court. Cf. *Fonti*, II, VIII, n.127-128.

their church government, even though they retain a reformed Antiochene liturgy.

It may be said that by accepting the Antiochene Patriarch as its supreme spiritual head and declaring itself a particular Church in communion with the Jacobite Church of Antioch, the Malankara Church was driven to accept at least implicitly the "Nomo Canon" of Bar-Hebreus, appropriated by the Jacobite Church.

In practice this code of laws had no practical bearing on the Jacobite Church of Malankara (on the internal government). Nor can we point out any particular period when the Malankara Church was ruled according to these laws. This is confirmed by the fact that right from the beginning of its appearance in Malankara there had always been two recensions of it, considerably different from each other.⁸³ That it served chiefly as a legal instrument before the civil courts to prove or disprove the power of the Patriarch over the Malankara Metropolitan, is clear from the history of the lawsuit between the two parties of the Malankara Church. On the other hand we see that the government of the Malankara Church was always in accordance with the tradition and regulations that had taken shape all through its history.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we may say that the introduction of the Antiochene rite into the Malankara Church was a gradual process. Examining this process closely we see that the Antiochene liturgy with its rituals was fully adopted, though gradually, and declared officially in 1836 to be the liturgy of the Malankara Church. Later the Antiochene prelate Mar Cyril

⁸³ Cf. Fonti, II, VIII, 66-67, nn.127-128. It is also to be noted that when the "Catholicos Party" completely withdrew itself from the jurisdictional power of the Patriarch of Antioch in 1934, in the attempt to liberate the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, they declared officially that only their recension of the "Nomo-Canon" was acceptable to the Malankara Church, leaving the other unbinding, while the other party declared otherwise.

Some information on this article may be obtained from the articles on Liturgy and Rites in this book by Jacob Vellian and Mathew Vattakuzhy.

INTRODUCTION OF ANTIOCHENE RITE

completed the evolution, leaving no room for other liturgical elements to exist in it. As for the disciplinary system, very few innovations were made, though a few elements that were properly Antiochene and intimately connected with liturgy and rituals were introduced at various stages. However, the discipline of the Malankara Church was declared formally and “de jure” Antiochene and the transition was complete as it had adopted the “Nomo-Canon” of Bar Hebraeus as the code of laws for it, although the church-government was left to be regulated, for the most part, by the traditions and customs of the Malankara Church, drawn from different sources and developed through the various stages of its history.



MALANKARA
LIBRARY

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA*

INTRODUCTION

The church in India is as old as christianity itself. As in all parts of the world where christianity spread, in India too the church of Christ had its share in shaping the face of India be it in the socio-cultural, religious, political or economic fields. Covering the span of about 2000 years, the church had grown up in India exerting its influence and impact of its presence at different levels in varying degree and in changing patterns. The church is still continuing to have its share and role in the development and growth of India as a Nation and a People.

It is in fulfilment of its God-given mission that the church is rendering this service to the Nation and this service originates from its service to the Kingdom of God, which God planned for man, announced and decisively and definitively inaugurated in His Son Jesus Christ. Hence the mission of the church in India, for that matter the mission of the church anywhere in the world, cannot be identified and adequately studied, if we distort or forget the nature and mission of the church.

* Paper presented by Cyril Mar Baselios at the Seminar on "The Mission of St. Thomas Christians in India", in Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1988. This Seminar was organised by the Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram in order to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the extension of the Syro-Malabar Missions to North India. This article was published in K.Pathil (ed.), *Mission in India: The Task of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1988, 249-268(Editor).

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

Ever since the promulgation of the Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council, the nature and mission of the church have been the subject of deeper reflection and closer study, not to mention of the controversial discussions and disputations in this regard. It is true that a fair discussion of the topic of the mission of the church in India can be done only in the light of a correct understanding of the nature and mission of the church of Christ in general. It is beyond the scope and limit of this paper to establish this point first to start with our discussion, even though we may touch this topic during the course of this paper as and when required for further clarification.

The subject of this paper has still to be specified. We are not discussing the mission of the church in India in general, in terms of the areas of human life where this mission should actually be fulfilled, be it religious, socio-political, cultural, economic or any other field that might be important for the life of individuals or of the people as a whole. The topic of our discussion is the mission of the church in India in its actual context of being present in three ecclesial communities that are constituted in the full communion of the Catholic Church each of which is entitled and capable, at least theologically, of rendering present the whole church of Christ in India. In other words, we dwell on the mission of the church in India in its pluralistic existence and differentiated forms in the context of the concrete Indian reality.

The question would soon turn out to be a problem for those who cannot afford to admit a pluralism in the church, either in terms of its nature or its existence. The problem is all the more accentuated, when it is found that ecclesial pluralism, though badly conceived and falsely expressed, be it on social, cultural, religious, theological, doctrinal, canonical or organisational levels, has created problems for the church and tended to distort and disrupt its mission. Hence it would appear that ecclesial pluralism is at best a 'suspect' against which caution is necessary. In fact, many well-intentioned churchmen both in India and outside consider it as the worst thing that can happen to the church, especially in India, to the detriment of its God-

given mission. The desire to get a clarification on this point must be one of the basic reasons why the topic of ecclesial pluralism has been included in the discussions of our seminar on "The Mission of St. Thomas Christians in India".

We intend to discuss the topic in three parts:

1. A brief discussion on ecclesial pluralism;
2. The presence of the Catholic Church in India: The Three Individual Catholic Churches in India;
3. The Mission of the Church in this actual Context.

1. ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

Ecclesial pluralism, has its foundation in the very nature of the church which God has designed in Christ and instituted through Him on earth for mankind. This can be, as a human reality, better understood in the wider context of religious pluralism, which, in turn, is closely connected with the pluralistic nature of the human society. We are becoming more and more aware of the pluralistic nature of our society, where conformity and uniformity are no more considered to be the highest ideal or the mark of meaningful unity. "It could even be said that the index of a society's maturity is its pluralism, its capacity not only to tolerate but to maintain and even to encourage the coexistence within its bosom of diverse groups of people".¹ It is well-known that in the world-religions there are within them several denominations, even mutually exclusive social groups and differing Schools of thought, each entertaining its own world-vision and ideals of life. Once the freedom of man and the uniqueness of his individuality are granted and his limitations, both physical and metaphysical, acknowledged before the stupendous mysteries of the natural and supernatural order, this is an inevitable consequence, which has expressed itself in concrete forms of human history.

1 John Macquarie, *Christian Unity and Diversity*, Philadelphia, 1974, 10.

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

Drawing on the reflections of the past, Second Vatican Council acknowledges that ecclesial pluralism within the one church-community is a legitimate feature of ecclesial life. But its meaning is still ambiguous to the extent of causing confusions and confrontations.

In Congar's words "Pluralism connotes diversity in unity. It is an intrinsic value of unity. In expressing a diversity, 'Pluralism' also refers to something held in common. It is not cacophony, it is not sheer dispersion, but rather the differentiation of something held in common".² While pointing out our tendency to have a uniform and hierarchical conception of unity, of a military kind, he warns us of the danger of seeing unity in terms of identity, and quotes the words of R. de Montvalon: "What everyone called unity was perhaps a desperate attempt to absorb the other, to make him like us or dependent on us, to obliterate our differences".³

The argument that diversity is as essential as unity in the church is not a plea for entertaining division or denominational separation. For diversity is distinct from division and in maintaining diversity, division has to be overcome.⁴

A. ECCLESIAL PLURALISM VERSUS THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Pluralism is not a reason nor a justification for the divisions in the church caused in the past or sustained at present by motives that are alien to the nature and mission of the church. But, as has already been stated, it rests on the strong basis of the economy of salvation that God has deigned to work out in and through the history of man. The significance and the legitimacy of ecclesial pluralism is often overlooked in the wave of an exaggerated or false defence of the unity of the church.

2 Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, SCM Press Ltd., 1984, 40.

3 *Ibid.*, 41.

4 John Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, 2.

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

The meaning of the phrase 'One Church' depends mainly upon our conception of the church. For the meaning of the word 'One' depends upon the meaning of that which is one, and the quality of oneness varies according to the reality that must be one. Hence the kind of unity we envisage for the church is predetermined by the kind of concept of the church we have. That is to say, the hermeneutic principle of the unity of the church to be achieved or expressed is the concept of the church we explicitly or implicitly have. The hermeneutic principle of the concept of the church, however, is determined by the particular outlook of the church or of the denomination we happen to belong to. This is all the more clear in the light of the philosophical principle that the concrete man of history as he lives his life is the hermeneutic principle of all human understanding.

Hence a common and correct understanding of the church and of its unity is basic to the understanding of its pluralism. Assessing the inner reality of the church and placing it existentially in the wider context of the redemptive plan of God, we find that the church is the people of God constituted in Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit. Hence the unity of the church is not primarily based on the work of its members, nor is it the product of the members it joins together; rather the members are product of it and it makes them one. The members of the church are one because they have been chosen and called to be a people of one God; because they are all baptised and incorporated into the same Spirit. Hence the underlying invisible principle of the unity of the church is the Holy spirit, who is sent to His people by the Father through His only begotten son. That is to say, the unity of the church is springing forth from the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity and it is based on the intentionality of the single saving act of God.⁵ This is, therefore, a sacred, supernatural unity, a fellowship given as a grace to be cherished and enjoyed by the people of God.

⁵ Peter Chirico, "One Church, What does it mean?" in *Theological Studies*, 1967, 659-682.

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

Though the source and principle of Christian unity is the unifying and vivifying Spirit given by the Father in His Son, the expression of it is in and by the people that is called together by God. This unity, God has given His church is to be expressed in terms of a response realised through the course of salvation history. Since we are created one, we ought to be one; since we are redeemed as a people of God by the Father in His Son through the Spirit, we have to remain and appear as such. In other words, ours is not the task of creating the unity of the church in Christ, but the church must give expression to it in the actual life and mission. This is the great task confronting the church on earth.⁶

B. EXPRESSING UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The unity of the people of God is effected in accordance with the dispositions of God's salvific will. It is along the same lines of the redemptive plan and work that it is expressed, enriched and completed. Hence it follows the law of incarnation. The church, being the continuation of the mystery of Christ, dynamically present in the world, through the members united to Him, in His Spirit, the unity it expresses is effected in the diversity of its people.

Thus the unity that God has created in us through His Spirit is to be expressed in our human existential conditions and human realities of our life on earth which are diverse in terms of people, their socio-cultural, religious, political and economic conditions. This conception of the church and of its unity, while safeguarding the continuity of the single saving intentionality of Christ, brings into relief the reality of the saving act here and now, and consequently with the changes needed in the visible elements that constitute the church's expressiveness. This gives room, as Peter Chirico argues, for arriving at a better, more relevant visible unity of the church prayerfully hoped for by all. "Consistent with the features of the saving act of God", he continues, "the one church then becomes all-embracing (being the

6 Cf. Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, London, 1967, 5.

expression of the saving intentionality of Christ), necessarily unfulfilled (being situated in between the resurrection and parousia), demanding (being composed of the people of God entrusted with the duty of building up the Body of Christ to its mature measure) and destined for inevitable fulfilment (being assured by Christ)".⁷

This sort of church unity "does not imply simple uniformity organisation, rite, or expression" as the W.C.C. feared,⁸ but there will be enough theological space for legitimate pluralism contributing to the fullest expression of the life of the Spirit in and among the people of God.

Ecclesial pluralism, then, as has already been stated, is not only not detrimental to the unity of the church, but it is the only way to bring about a true and meaningful expression of the unity of the church, as it has been amply testified to by the documents of Vatican Council II.

C. PLURALISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Already from the time of the apostolic communities, ecclesial pluralism was an accepted fact. It was manifested in several forms. Many of the apostolic churches developed their own liturgy and forms of worship, against the background of their cultural heritage and religious patrimony. A theological pluralism was also prevalent as it was cherished by the different theological schools like that of Antioch and Alexandria. They had also given shape to their own administrative system based on a canonical discipline evolved in ecumenical councils or particular synods. In the area of spirituality too, different approaches were considered legitimate and several forms were adopted according to the nature of the charism received and apostolic need felt.

The most important basic aspect of ecclesial pluralism, is found reflected in the configuration and formation of individual churches constituted in the full communion of the Catholic Church.

7 Peter Chirico, *op. cit.* pp. 681-682.

8 New Delhi Report, SCM Press, London, 1962, 117.

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

As the Apostles preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, going to all nations and to different peoples, communities of believers were formed as local churches in their own cultural patterns and social set up. They grew up as distinctive local communities maintaining, of course, the common bond of 'Koinonja' among themselves and with the Bishop of the Holy See of Rome. Though they were distinctively and individually formed, all of them were united in professing one faith and sharing in the life of the Risen Lord through the Holy Spirit given by the Father.

The church of Christ is rendered present in these individual churches in their own ways and place and the unity they manifest expresses the communion they enjoy, that is to say, their common sharing in the life of the Holy Spirit and in the mission of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of mankind.

The expression that the Catholic Church is a communion of various individual and particular churches is not to be understood in the sense that the church of Christ is the sum total of all the local churches, but it means that it is the one and the same church that is incarnated and is present in the local individual churches, whose inner life of communion in the Holy Spirit remains their basic reality. This communion is manifested in their visible unity maintained by the various structural forms in the church.

In the present economy of salvation this communion of all the believers in the life of the Spirit is historically effected and expressed in and by the individual local churches that are in communion among themselves through the communion with the Bishop of the Holy See of Rome, successor to Peter, Head of the Apostles, appointed by Christ to 'Feed his sheep and lambs and to lead and confirm his brethren'.

Hence ecclesial pluralism, as manifested in the communion of the individual local churches with the diversity of their own liturgy, theology, discipline, religious practices, spirituality etc., is rooted in the very nature of the church of Christ, that is always one, catholic, holy and apostolic.

In the light of these reflections on ecclesial pluralism, let us discuss the nature and mission of the Catholic Church in India that is represented by the three individual churches in India constituted in full Catholic Communion.

2. THE PRESENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIA

Without entering into the historical details of the formation of these churches in India, we do well to start with the given situation that there are three catholic communities with their hierarchies that are constituted under the supreme apostolic authority of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed pastor of the Universal Church. These three ecclesial communities enjoy the theological and canonical status of Individual churches in the Catholic communion as described by the Vatican II.⁹ Before the Second Vatican Council such ecclesial communities were described as 'Rites', mainly because of their liturgical, canonical, theological and spiritual traditions that are proper to them.¹⁰ But in the Council document the terms 'Rites' and 'Churches' are used as synonyms.¹¹ But as the word 'Rite' is still used to denote the liturgical traditions or canonical discipline of a CHURCH, confusion is possible. Hence it is now a matter of discussion among the theologians and the canonists whether the term 'Rite' should be reserved to signify only the liturgy or canonical discipline of a particular or individual church.

Three individual catholic churches in India are at present known as '**Syro-Malabar Church**', '**Syro-Malankara Church**' and the '**Latin Church**'. The first two trace their origin back to the ancient apostolic church in India, which was formed by the preaching of St. Thomas, an apostle of Jesus Christ. The Latin Church in India

9 *Christian Orient*, (Eccl.) n. 2,3.

10 Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Pontifical Institute, Alwaye, 1973, 99-102.

11 *Christian Orient*, (Eccle.) n. 2.

owes its origin to the apostolate of the missionaries of the Latin Church of Europe, which was organised around the ancient apostolic church in Rome.

To assess the ecclesial position of the Latin Church in India we should know the position of the Latin Church both in the past and at present among other individual apostolic churches. The Church in Rome, besides having been formed by the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, had obtained the rare privilege of being the Holy See of Peter, the first of the Apostles and the Vicar of Christ. Thus the prominence of the Roman Church was incontestable and the roles played by the Bishop of Rome, successor of Peter, though distinct in their nature, were inseparable in his person. Many fail to understand that the spreading of christianity both in the West and the East by the missionaries of the Roman Church was practically the expansion of the Roman Church, and all the new local churches were, juridically at least, part of the Roman Church. But the apostolic communities that were formed by the preaching of the apostles in other countries and regions, were independent, not forming part of the Roman Church, but keeping communion with the Holy See of Peter in Rome. They grew up in their own way with the religious values and in the cultural heritage of the people they comprised and were 'catholic' keeping their bond of communion among themselves and with Rome. Most of them though they flourished in their early stages as strong autonomous churches, were eroded by internal rifts and external persecutions and above all by separation from the communion with the Holy See of Peter in Rome, losing, therefore, the Catholic communion and ceasing to be Catholic. By the early middle ages the Bishop of Rome, which was the Holy See of Peter and the principal See of the Universal Church, could exercise his supreme jurisdictional power only on the Latin Church of Rome and the churches of its extension formed by its missionaries. It is true that the Malabar and Maronite Churches had been under the supreme apostolic authority of the Pope, but they were utterly latinised and were considered missionary products of the Latin missionaries and therefore insignificant as autonomous churches. Hence in those days the one,

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

holy, apostolic and catholic church that was governed and presided over by the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter in Rome, was practically only the Latin Roman Catholic Church. This situation continued to exist till the emergence of the Catholic Oriental churches, which regained their Catholic communion through their reunion and communion with the Holy See of Peter in Rome. Thus the true face and splendour of catholicity of the church of Christ started shining again and the nature of the Universal Church as a communion of individual apostolic churches became more intelligible. This, in fact, was articulated in the constitution on the church promulgated by Vatican II. Thus the Latin Church, which was once taken to be the only catholic church, is begun to be understood just as one individual apostolic church in the catholic communion, equal to any other individual Catholic Church, in spite of its expansion both to the West and to the East. Thus the Latin Church in India and for that matter, any where in the world, remains part of the Latin Catholic Church of Rome, which is an individual apostolic church in the communion of the Catholic Church.

But there are those, both in and outside the Latin Church, church-men included, who unaware of the existence of the apostolic Oriental Churches in the Catholic communion, still continue to consider the Latin Church as the Universal Church and attribute to it a position which it held in the medieval ages, giving the false impression that no other church is Catholic.

The Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches in India have a different story to account for. Both of them claim to have an apostolic origin in as much as they are part of the ancient apostolic church of India. It is true that the Syro-Malankara Church had lost the visible unity of the Catholic communion because of its separation from the Holy See of Peter in Rome for a considerable period of its history; but it is equally true that it has regained this Catholic communion through the historic Re-Union in 1930 with the Holy See of Peter and by its subjection to the Roman Pontiff. Thus this was a restoration, though partially effected in terms of members, of the ancient apostolic church of India to its pristine ecclesial status and

autonomy, by which the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has emerged as an individual church in the Catholic communion presided over by the Roman Pontiff, the supreme pastor of the Universal Church and successor of Peter in Rome.¹²

The ramification of the ancient apostolic church of India into the present Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches is the result of an historic- juridical evolution and process, the grounds and roots of which are the subject of a further deeper study. We may note in passing, that if one is tempted to lament over it, he may have to do the same, perhaps more so, as he studies the story of the other apostolic churches, especially in the Orient. If in the West, the Latin Church appears to be undivided, it is because the members divided from its communion were never joined together again in that communion. The unity of the Latin Catholic Church has been externally maintained by its rigid uniformity and the price it paid was freedom and legitimate pluralism, be it in terms of theology, liturgy or discipline.

Coming back to the Indian Church, the fact is that both the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches are enjoying an ecclesial individuality of their own in terms of their liturgical, canonical, theological and spiritual heritage and patrimony, though they have been built on a common basis. As is clear to any student of church history, the common heritage of an ancient Christianity was taken to two different directions to evolve into new styles of ecclesial life which were supported and nourished by two ecclesial communities, which were, in due course, constituted and protected by legitimate ecclesiastical authority of their own hierarchy.

From these considerations it would become clear that the historical, theological and canonical positions of the three individual churches in India, constituted in the full communion of the Catholic Church are not the same.

¹² Cyril Malancharuvil, *op. cit.* pp. 102-117.

While the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches find a basis for their ecclesial authenticity from the apostolicity on an ancient apostolic church in India, the Latin Church in India traces its ecclesial roots in the apostolic church of Rome. Further, if juridical autonomy matters in ecclesial life - and it does in Catholic Theology - the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches claim to be individual churches and thus juridically autonomous in the Catholic communion under the supreme apostolic power of the Roman Pontiff, the Universal Pastor of the Church, while the Latin Church in India inevitably remains a part of the Latin church of Rome, juridically subject to the Patriarch of the West or Rome, juridically, therefore, the autonomy or independence of the Indian Latin Church cannot go beyond the autonomy or independence of a church with a mere socio-cultural configuration, that is, that of a national church, the juridical power of which is clearly defined in the new Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church. The ecclesial autonomy or juridical independence of a national church is different from that of an individual church in the Catholic communion, be it big or small in terms of its size and power. For a student of ecclesiology, it makes a big difference.

We should not be surprised if we discover that the Latin Church or the Latin dioceses in India are particular churches that form the individual Latin Church of Rome. It does not mean that these particular churches cannot render the church of Christ present here; they can and they do, but they do render it present as the church of Christ is, and as much as it is, present in the individual Latin Church of Rome.

3. THE MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIA TODAY

Once we acknowledge that the Catholic Church is present in India in three of its individuation, we should in no way try to hide this truth under any pretext. On the other hand, this underlying truth should be reflected in the life and mission of the church in India; not only within the boundaries of Kerala, but in the whole of India. It is

often argued that the pluralistic presentation of the Catholic Church should be restricted to Kerala, on the plea that multiple jurisdiction is a matter of confusion and quarrels, rivalry and duplication. The first point to be noted in this regard is the falsity of the assumption that there obtains in the church multiple jurisdiction. The truth is that there is only one jurisdiction in the church but this jurisdiction is defined and designated on multiple grounds. If territorial boundaries were found both in the past and in the present a convenient criterion for grouping and deciding the communities of people on whom jurisdiction is exercised, already in the past this was found inadequate and other criteria were sought after to define jurisdiction, as was done in the case of the Roman citizens.

The other point that needs a critical study is the assumption that in Kerala, where the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction is not based on territorial limits, there obtains a deplorable state of affairs in the church. Leaving the validity of this presumption as a matter to be still proved, we can safely state that even when there are incidents of lack of understanding and undesirable competitions, the duty and obligation of the church to the masses of India is imperative and perhaps the first of its religious agenda in terms of its mission. Taking into consideration the complex reality of the Indian situation, the people, their religious and cultural pluralism, linguistic and social configurations, political and ideological differences, it would be more than necessary to highlight the catholicity of the church in its true oneness. As the sacrament of unity of mankind, understood not as uniformity, the church can fulfil its mission in India only by setting the ground and means for a meaningful and lasting unity of the human race that will ever retain its diversity. Attempts to present the church in ways, other than those conformable to its fundamental nature, are bound to fail, as the history of the church in India, and for that matter anywhere in the world, amply shows. As we have already stated earlier in this paper, understanding and expressing the unity of the church as communion in and among the communities or believers, is the only way to defend effectively the truth of the reality

of its ecclesial unity. Nothing short of it will serve the cause of the church, especially in India.

A. COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

On the organised level of ecclesial life, the Catholic communion of the believing community is to be most vividly and visibly manifested in the life and mission of the dioceses and parishes. Hence they are to be constantly and consistently educated and reminded of the essential aspect of their ecclesial life, which is their common sharing - communion - in the Holy Spirit, gift of God-the Father in His Son, effected and made available in the instituted visibility of the church. They must be aware that by themselves they are many, rooted in the reality of the diversity of their human existential conditions and grown up and shaped through their own history, but in Christ they are one. Their oneness as human beings created by God (unity of origin) and their oneness in the redemption they received through Jesus Christ (unity of redemption) should be visibly and consciously expressed in their sojourn to the heavenly Jerusalem (visible unity of the community of the church).¹³ Concretely expressing this communion in their diversity is their ecclesial unity, and there cannot be any true Christian and ecclesial life without this expression. Forging, therefore, uniformity for the sake of unity and thus disrupting communion is detrimental both to unity and communion itself.

Hence this communion aspect should be the essential feature of the church everywhere in India. To restrict it within the boundaries of Kerala is unecclesial, not to say illogical. "To permit a plurality of different autonomous christian communities only on geographical grounds is needlessly restrictive of legitimate freedom and counter to the principles of a mature pluralistic society".¹⁴ Worse still is to describe the diversity of the church as a threat to the life and mission of the church in India. It is worth noting here that the advocates of

13 John Macquarrie, *op. cit.* p. 3.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

one Rite in India are unwittingly proposing that the Catholicity of the church should remain hidden and inoperative as though irrelevant and superfluous for the mission of the church in India, and this under the pretext of a defence of the unity of the church.

In a situation where Christian life is reduced to mere religious practices, to mere uniform expressions of pious sentimentality, the meaning of communion is likely to be disregarded unless a process of education is started to change or correct the perspective we have of ecclesial life.

B. COMMUNION OF THE HIERARCHY

It is this communion-aspect that should be reflected also on the level of the hierarchy of the Indian Church. Without entering into the theological and spiritual aspects of this hierarchical communion, let us discuss the juridical nature of it. Each individual church should have its own hierarchical structure, according to its own canonical discipline. Hence the two Oriental Churches must have their permanent episcopal synod presided over by the super-episcopal juridical figure, like a Major Archbishop, Maphrian, Catholicos or Patriarch, as the case may be. It is this synod that is the supreme ecclesiastical authority of that church, under the jurisdictional primacy of the Holy Father of the Holy See of Peter in Rome.

The Latin Church in India being constituted of several regional ecclesiastical provinces presided over by Metropolitans, can have a national conference of its own as a juridical super-episcopal body. Such national conferences, so far only voluntary conferences, are now vested with certain juridical authority according to the provisions of the new Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church. In this connection it is interesting to refer to the controversy that was going on over the restructuring of the CBCI.

The CBCI was started as a voluntary association of all Catholic Bishops of India. It was functioning in this capacity until the new Latin Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983, when the Latin Church in India was required to follow these new canonical provisions. Many of the Latin-prelates preferred to keep the erstwhile

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

CBCI as the Latin National Conference as envisaged in the new latin Code. But they have been generous enough to express their willingness to accommodate the Bishops of the Oriental Churches in this conference, even changing the statutes of the CBCI. The Oriental Bishops, however, rejected this proposal and insisted that all the three Churches should form their own individual episcopal conferences, without undermining the need and usefulness of a super-ritual conference on the national level, which might conveniently be continued in the present CBCI. It is consoling to state that the Holy Father in his letter dated 28th May 1987, accepted this position, in spite of the arguments raised by some of the prelates of the Latin Church. Hence the three churches are to form their own episcopal synod or Conference, while keeping the CBCI as a super-ritual episcopal conference to deal with questions of national interest.

It is also to be noted that at present the CBCI is a conference of all the Catholic Bishops of India taken individually as hierarchs of each diocese. But we may point out that the CBCI as a super-ritual national body needs only to be constituted of representatives from each church, since each single bishop is to be guided directly and immediately by the directives of his own church through the individual episcopal conference. It is to co-ordinate the working of these individual conferences safeguarding their autonomy and without interfering in their life and mission, that the CBCI is proposed to continue as a super-ritual episcopal conference. This will be an effective sign of the unity that exists among these churches as one church and will promote the communion of love and solidarity of its people.

C. THE TASK OF EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA

The two questions that attract special attention in the discussion of the mission of the church in India in its pluralistic existence are that of the possibility and feasibility of evangelization by the three churches and that of the pastoral care to be given by each of them to its own faithful all over India.

ECCLESIAL PLURALISM

Without entering into a discussion on the concept of evangelization, we are focusing on the duty of the church to proclaim the Gospel message in India in its triple form of existence.

Evangelization is the task of the church, and it is to this task that its members are commissioned. The ministers of the Word are therefore sent by the church to fulfil its task and they are primarily responsible and accountable to church itself. In India the task of evangelization is carried out by the church in its Latin tradition and the church in its Oriental traditions has been confined to certain boundaries set up a few centuries ago on grounds that were questionable for their validity and utility. This situation is changed by the historic intervention of Pope John Paul II through his letter on 28th May 1987. He has lifted the restrictions on the Oriental Churches in this regard and clearly stated that all the individual churches in India have the same rights and obligation to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence the two Oriental Churches too along with the Latin Church can and should take up the task of evangelization with necessary co-ordination among themselves and under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff. The practical steps should be chalked out by a special commission of the CBCI, and further questions could be discussed only after gaining experience from the implementation of the directive.

D. PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAITHFUL OF EACH CHURCH

The provisions for the pastoral care of the faithful of the Latin Church in India are sufficiently made as the whole territory of India is divided into dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces of the Latin Church. As for the Oriental Churches, this is done in Kerala and in some parts of country, leaving the oriental emigrants in other parts of India to be under the jurisdiction of the Latin hierarchy in the Latin dioceses. This has created many pastoral problems, and in the inadequacy of provisions for their pastoral care the orientals are being neglected day by day to the detriment of thousands of them. In spite of the fact that the church has shown great interest in giving pastoral care to the migrants of several countries in many ways, this question was left

untouched in India. It is a well known fact that several of the Oriental Churches have already set up many dioceses and other ecclesiastical units in other countries for their faithful who have migrated there.¹⁵ The Latin Church too has followed the same procedure for the faithful of the Latin Rite, who are settled in the age-old territories of the Oriental Churches.¹⁶ But in India, this was the subject of unpleasant and unfruitful discussions until recently when the Holy Father himself has intervened and settled the question, paving the way for future adequate arrangements. The arrangements at present consist of directing the Latin Ordinaries to provide adequate pastoral care to the faithful of the Oriental Churches residing in their Latin dioceses through the priests and parishes of their own Rite and in places, where it is necessary, through the establishment of a separate diocese.

This provision is not alien to the policy of the Catholic Church, nor is it a threat to the unity of the church as many of the Latin prelates fear. On the other hand, apart from the innumerable benefits that it will bring to the Catholic Church in India, it will, and should, bring into relief the Catholicity of the church, providing a chance to the millions of India to share the communion with the Holy Spirit in the life of the church in more than one way. The very idea that the church of Christ is neither meant for any one people, country or nation nor restricted to any one culture or set of religious practices is to be defended and spread as an important step in the advancement of the process of evangelization in India.

The great harm that the church in India suffered in the absence of the ancient apostolic church of India in the nation as a whole can be measured only with the loss that the church in the West suffered in its separation from the East. To put it positively, the gain of the church in India in terms of its growth and vitality that could have been obtained in the free growth and spreading of the original apostolic church in India, can be assessed and well understood only in

15 *Latin Oriental Relationships in India*, CBCI, 1983, 39-41.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44.

the light of the enrichment the Latin Church in West has received from its close contact and communion with the Oriental Churches. But before this can turn out to be a source of more intense Catholic communion and sharing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, every section of the Indian Church should have learned of the nature and mission of the church of Christ on earth.

CONCLUSION

The church is the mystery of God's saving act. As God's salvific will is manifested in Jesus Christ, it continues to be unfolded in the mystery of church. Even though the mystery of salvation is rooted in God Himself, it is effected in and through the history of mankind. Hence it is divine and human, and both these aspects are reflected in the reality of the church.

Eccliesial pluralism is the direct outcome of the human reality of the church and it is an essential feature of its concrete existence in the pluralistic society of man. Hence it is not only theologically defensible, but also basic to the very understanding of its nature and mission. Eccliesial pluralism is not against the unity of the church, if unity is understood as unity in diversity or as reconciled diversity as against uniformity and identity.

In the Indian context, this pluralistic reality of the church is reflected in the existence of the three individual churches in India. They are constituted in the full catholic communion and this communion should be reflected in their life and mission.

Each of these is capable of rendering the church of Christ present in India amidst its people and, therefore, has equal rights and obligation to fulfil the mission God has entrusted with them. Thus the Catholic Church, as it is present in India, will serve the masses of India and remain the sacrament of their salvation and unity in the Holy Spirit given by God the Father in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.



THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH: ITS ECUMENICAL ROLE*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking points in the Ecclesiology propounded by Second Vatican Council, is its affirmation that the church is a communion.¹ It is on the basis of this sound ecclesiological vision that the various individual apostolic churches are getting more and more aware of their own individuality and autonomy, without losing sight of their essential communion and intimate union with the Holy Apostolic See of Rome.

In the past, especially after the great divisions in the church, when the Catholic Church was practically consisting only of the Western Latin Church, this essential feature of Catholicity of the church was but dimly visible, though theologically defensible. Once the Movements of Reunion with the Apostolic See of Rome started, especially from the 16th and 17th centuries, and as the Apostolic Oriental Churches regained their ecclesial communion with the Apostolic Church of Rome, the Catholic face of the church was once again shining forth, which has highlighted the universality of the redeeming function of the church.

In fact, it is the actual presence of the Western and Eastern Catholic Churches in the big Catholic communion, presided over by the Bishop of the Apostolic See of Rome, that made this truth of catholicity a real ecclesial experience. Against the background of this ecclesial

* Paper presented by Cyril Mar Baselios at the International Conference of Eastern Churches, Kottayam, 1987. This article is published also in *Christian Orient*, Vol. 8, no. 4, December, 1987, 157-168 (Editor).

¹ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*: 23, 26, 28.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

experience articulated in the proclamations and teachings of the Second Vatican Council, it is easy to study and evaluate the ecclesial position and mission of the various individual churches in the Catholic communion.

We focus our attention on the Malankara Catholic Church and its ecumenical role within the wider context of its ecclesial mission as an individual apostolic church in the Catholic communion.

The Malankara Catholic Church, is to be understood as part of the ancient Malankara Church, that traces its origin to the preaching of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Retaining its apostolicity and identity as an ecclesial community and regaining its communion with the Holy See of Rome, after its rupture in the 17th century, it has established itself as an individual church in the Catholic communion. During the past fiftyseven years of its communion in the Catholic Church, the Malankara Catholic Church could grow up considerably and establish its position as an individual church, regaining its vitality and spiritual strength. Growing as a vigorous christian community, the Malankara Catholic Church at present consists of 3 Dioceses, about 300,000 faithful, 800 parishes and mission centres, 400 priests and about 900 Religious. As part of an ancient christian community of India, it is deeply rooted in the spiritual traditions and cultural values of India. The Holy See of Rome has recognised it and acknowledged it as such and the present Holy Father has confirmed it: "In your persons I greet and embrace two individual churches, unique in character, two churches witnessing to two ancient, distinct, yet complementary forms of oriental christianity; two churches rooted in the Indian soil and adapted to the Indian way of life, living in peace and harmony with their neighbours who are overwhelmingly of another religious tradition. It has been solemnly affirmed that the oriental churches, 'distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, are bright with that tradition which comes from the Apostles through the Fathers' (OE. 1). And we know that you are linked to the Apostles through the living tradition of your churches and through ecclesial reality that embodies it, notably, your liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and whole

spiritual heritage. At the same time your ecclesial tradition forms part of the Indian reality and is inseparable from it".²

1. MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ECUMENISM

The spirit of ecumenism that is pervading now all christian churches and communities, can be regarded as a special gift of God, bestowed on the divided christianity. For it is this spirit that has already become a forceful movement in the church, that remedies at least in a small degree the scandal of division in the people of God.

To assess the role of the Malankara Catholic Church in ecumenism as its God-given task and special vocation, we need to have a deeper understanding of the nature and aim of the ecumenical movement and the goals of ecumenical activities.

Ecumenism is often mistaken for a complacent co-existence of different christian churches in their state of division and disunity or in their present positions that contradict each other. It is neither a discreet method of unification and absorption of local churches on the basis of might and power, nor a risky method of dilution and compromise of one's faith. Some are suspicious of it as involving secret methods of proselytism and 'sheep-stealing'. At any rate, prejudices and apprehensions are so prevalent that the goal of ecumenism is vaguely grasped and the real ecumenical problems seldom discovered and discussed. In this context, therefore, a correct understanding of the nature and goal of the ecumenical movement is imperative and the need of a basic agreement called for, for further discussion on the role of the Malankara Catholic Church, for that matter of any Oriental Catholic Church, in the ecumenical movement of the church.

A. THE NATURE AND GOAL OF ECUMENISM

That christianity remains divided today is a painful fact, and even a most scandalous one, contradictory and detrimental to the very message of it. Efforts for reconciliation have unfortunately turned out to be causes

² Cf. The Address of Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the 'Ad limina' visit of the Oriental Bishops of India, Dec. 16, 1985.

for further division and estrangement. Closer study of the situation reveals that, apart from the doctrinal differences, prejudices and misunderstandings play a great role in keeping the communities away from one another preventing them from closer contact and mutual acceptance. Finding themselves in this state of alienation and division, the churches are getting more and more aware of the need for coming together, to understand each other, to share with each other the riches they possess as christian communities. This quest for universality is urging them to grow in the mystery of Christ, healing and restoring their traditions that might have been mutilated and damaged in the course of history, by way of sharing and dialogue. It is this common search for integrity and wholeness, that gave birth to the modern Ecumenical Movement. It is the mutual encounter between ecclesial traditions that have suffered distortion, the drawing together of separated brethren, the healing of communities that have been injured, the integration of all christians in the 'Una Sancta'.³ Ecumenism, therefore, is a movement to restore unity among churches and achieve universality of their heritage through dialogue, mutual enrichment, acceptance of each other in each one's unique ecclesial reality and individuality. Ecumenism primarily envisages ecclesial communities and spiritual traditions and not individuals and immediate situations. Promotion of christian unity takes place on both levels, but the two aspects are clearly distinct, though not opposed. Vat. II places both of them in the same movement worked out and guided by the Holy Spirit.⁴

B. A BASIC AGREEMENT

All of us know what the ecumenical movement has in recent years brought about within the church of Christ. It has helped us to come closer, dispel prejudices, understanding each other deeper and better. It has provided us with opportunities to worship and pray together experiencing at least in a small degree the underlying unity that keeps us together. We have learned to help each other out of love for Christ,

³ Cf. Bernard Lambert, *Ecumenism*, Herder, 1962, 32.

⁴ U.R. no 4.

discovering our common social responsibility. With ever more enthusiasm and seriousness we have engaged in common and ecumenical studies to equip ourselves to find solutions of problems confronting the church. Above all, amidst our growing experience of unity, we have learnt to identify our real disagreements and differences which keep us in a constant awareness that we have yet to go a long way, towards the unity we are all praying and craving for with great hope.

While we are willing to acknowledge the good results that have been brought about by the ecumenical movements, we have to admit that our ecumenical involvements are still limited and they are yet to be directed to the goal they ought to aim at or reach in due course.

It is common knowledge that even the most prominent organisations of the ecumenical movement are labouring under the pressure of inconsistencies and contradictions. Professor Zander speaks for the Orthodox Church; "The ecumenical problem thus paradoxically combines mutually exclusive principles and there seems to be no way out of it". Professor Edmund Schlink of the Evangelical Church in Germany has no hesitation in describing the W.C.C. as the most paradoxical organisation. While the W.C.C., he points out, is the fellowship of churches which recognises our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour and sets unity of all christians and communion among the churches as its goal, it has neither the power nor the machinery to make the member-churches effectively attain it; while it suggests brotherly assistance to each other, it shrinks under its inability to call upon the member-churches to lift the anathemas they have imposed upon each other".⁵

In other words, W.C.C. or any other organisation is justified in existing or living with these contradictions only if it tends to make progress towards the unity of its member churches in which they can enjoy full communion in the Lord whose will it is that they should meet Him as one church and not divided.

⁵ Cf. Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, London, 1967, 5.

The success and effectiveness of these organisations shall, therefore, be evaluated in terms of the goal of unity they purport to facilitate and promote. We do well if we keep on reminding ourselves that the goal of ecumenism is complete, full, unity of the people of God, bringing the Mystical Body of Christ to its perfect fulfilment by means of dialogue, co-operation, integration and by drawing christians and their ecclesial communities together, reconciling them and healing their damaged traditions.

C. UNITY: GOD'S GRACE AND OUR TASK

Assessing the inner reality of the church and placing it existentially in the wider context of the redemptive plan of God, we find that the unity of the church is not based on the work of its members. It is not the product of the members it joins together; rather the members are product of it, and it makes them one in itself and they cannot live as such unless they are all united to Him. Thus the church exists more truly in Christ than it exists in the multiplicity of His members. The members of the church are one because they have been chosen and called to be a people of one God; because they are all baptized and incorporated into the same Spirit; the underlying invisible principle of the unity of the church is the Holy Spirit who is sent to His people by the Father through His only begotten Son. That is to say, the church unity is springing forth from the inner life of the most Holy Trinity and it is based on the intentionality of the single saving act of God. This ultimate unity and nothing less is what Christ desired for His followers: "That they may be one, as we also are one" (Jn. 17:21).

This is, therefore, a sacred, supernatural unity, a fellowship given as a grace to be cherished and enjoyed by the people of God. That the source and principle of christian unity is the unifying and vivifying spirit given by the Father in His Son, does not leave those who are called upon to be His church, free from their obligation to respond to the call of God. For, the unity God has given His church is to be expressed in terms of a response realised through the cause of salvation history. Since we are created one, we ought to be one; since we are redeemed as a people of God by the Father in His Son through the Spirit, we have to remain and

appear as such. In other words, ours is not the task of creating the unity of the church in Christ, but the church must give expression to it in its actual life and mission. This is the great task confronting the church on earth.

D. AIMING AT A VISIBLE UNITY

Fixing our starting point in our task of giving expression to our unity as the people of God constituted in Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit, we cannot forget to direct our ecumenical activities towards attaining a visible unity of the church. For if we stop at the unity of the church as verified and realised in our incorporation into Christ only, without laying sufficient stress on the need of expressing it in the concrete reality and life situations of the church in the form of a visible unity, there is always the danger of ecclesiastical docetism and spiritualism.

The unity of the people of God is effected in accordance with the dispositions of God's salvific will and it is along the same lines of the redemptive plan and work that it is expressed, enriched and completed. Hence it follows the law of incarnation. The church is the continuation of the mystery of Christ, dynamically present in the world, through the members united to Him, in His Spirit. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit has to take visible forms. The Spirit being one impels us to be one not only invisibly and anonymously but also visibly and in recognisable forms. Hence, the people of God as the body of Christ is constituted as a visible fellowship in the Word, Sacraments and Orders. In fact this body of Christ is formed in its basic expression by the participation in the body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which has to be further manifested in the concrete forms of christian life in the day today life situation. A fellowship that is not recognisably both divine and human is no ecclesial fellowship at all. It follows that although the divine element is primary and creative in the church the human element may not be left to chance.

Hence, all christian churches tend to defend a visible unity as essential for the church if it has to have any meaning as an effective sign and symbol of unity for the world.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

The W.C.C. in its third general assembly held at New Delhi in 1961, explained this theme in its statement on unity: "we believe that the unity which is both God's Will and His gift to His church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one Apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls His people. It is for such unity that we believe we must pray and work".⁶

Taking a step further, in the fifth general assembly at Nairobi in 1975, the W.C.C. declared: "We believe that we are called to the goal of visible unity and have, therefore, struggled as previous assemblies have done, to describe more fully that goal....."⁷

A definite expression of the quest for visible unity can be seen in the 'Ten propositions for visible unity' advanced by the churches' unity commission in England. The first two of the propositions run as follows: "1. We reaffirm our belief that the visible unity in life and mission of all Christ's people is the Will of God. 2. We, therefore, declare our willingness to join in a covenant actively to seek that visible unity".⁸

Already in the first preparatory meeting of this commission the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury pointed out why they insisted on the goal of visible unity: "We seek visible unity because only a united body of people

⁶ Cf. *The New Delhi Report*, London, 1962, 116.

⁷ Cf. D.S. Amalorpavadas (ed.), *Nairobi Assembly of the W.C.C.*, Bangalore, 1976, 72.

⁸ Cf. 'Churches' Unity Commission': The propositions, in *One in Christ*, Vol. XII, 1976, 209.

realising their interdependence on each other and their dependence on Christ can so act ...”⁹

It is, therefore, clear that all churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, do really affirm and seek organic and visible church-unity as the goal of all our ecumenical endeavours and encounters.

E. TWO TRENDS OF CONCEIVING THIS CHURCH-UNITY

It may be asked if this unity be conceived as a unity achieved along the lines of a fulfilment and completion of the existing visible reality and unity of the church (the classical view-point of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, each identifying, of course, the existing visible unity as that of its own church) or as a creation of an external unity for the invisible church that exists above all the present christian communions (the general protestant view). This very difference of opinion itself is an ecumenical problem and, in fact, the most fundamental of all, which we cannot afford to be unaware of in our discussions.

2. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

PROMOTED BY MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Ecumenism being understood thus as a movement to promote church unity, we are in a position to assess the role of the Malankara Catholic Church in this regard. Starting from the very Reunion event in 1930, the Malankara Catholic Church has responded to the divine call to unity and has vigorously continued this process of promoting christian unity both on the individual level and on the ecumenical level and according to the correct Catholic principles. Here we deal only with its ecumenical aspect. If we study closely the great Reunion event that took place in the Malankara Church in 1930 and the efforts for unity that preceded it and all that it has contributed to the ecclesial life and mission of the church in general and Malankara Church in particular, one cannot fail to understand that the Reunion event in 1930 and the Movement it has given birth were significant contributions to the ecumenical movement in our day.

⁹ Cf. *ibid*, p.199.

A. THE ENCOUNTER AND THE MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE

Anyone who seriously studies the Reunion in 1930 in the Malankara Church will discover that the event was the crowning point of a continuous and active dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Apostolic See of Rome. Ever since the separation of the Malankara Church from the Catholic communion, the former was making strenuous efforts to reestablish that communion and accept the primacy of the Roman Pontiff safeguarding its individuality. During the course of this dialogue and discussions, the Holy See of Rome was gradually led to approve and accept the ecclesial identity of the Malankara Church having acknowledged its spiritual traditions and religious heritage. But only after three centuries of strenuous efforts for dialogue, all of which met with various degrees of failure, could this mutual acceptance be effected at least in principle.¹⁰

Sometimes the Reunion Event is badly understood or inadequately described as a return of repentant individuals to their paternal home. The Non-Catholics, especially those of the Malankara Church look down upon it as a betrayal and desertion of their mother church perpetuated in favour of the Roman Church. But the Reunion Movement led by the late Mar Ivanios of Happy Memory, was neither a mere refuge to the paternal household nor a desertion of the maternal home surrendering it to any alien domination. That it was an ecclesial event and an ecclesial act, is clear from the history of the Reunion Movement.

In fact, the revolt in 1653, against the Portuguese Missionaries was an attempt to protect the ecclesial status, the rights, privileges and the autonomy of the apostolic church in Malabar. In all the negotiations for a reconciliation after the rift, it was again these demands and claims for autonomy that came up for discussion which, unfortunately could not be settled amicably in the beginning.¹¹ The leaders of the Malankara church

¹⁰ Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973, 102-117.

¹¹ Cf. Giuseppe S. Maria, *Prima Speditione alla India Orientali*, Romae, 1666, 125-126.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

insistently continued to claim their autonomy and submitted that the Holy See of Rome should acknowledge the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church as one having inviolable rights based on their apostolic origin and traditions.¹² In the successful reunion in 1930, while the reuniting prelates of the Malankara Church accepted the primacy of the Pope, Bishop of Rome, he being the successor of St. Peter in the Holy See of Rome, the Holy See readily acknowledged the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church and accepted its legitimate traditions and spiritual legacy as authentically christian and apostolic.¹³

This was therefore, an historic encounter between two apostolic churches in which both were reconciled, healed and perfected in terms of fullness of communion and catholicity. The ecclesial unity achieved by the Malankara Catholic Church through the Reunion event and Movement remains, perhaps, the only event of this century, in which ecumenism, or an ecumenical movement, has reached the goal it purports to achieve.

Accepting that the success of this ecumenical movement is partial as several ecclesial communities of the Malankara Church are still reluctant to commit themselves to this mutual encounter and acceptance, we regret to note that the significance of this is still disregarded and it is not appreciated as a glorious stage of the achievement of the goal of ecumenism understood as the promotion of church unity in Malankara. In fact, this sad situation itself is one of the ecumenical problems that confronts us.

B. DIALOGUE AND SHARING CONTINUES

By the emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church and its existence in the big Catholic communion, the possibility of setting an ecclesial ground for real sharing and dialogue between the Catholic and Non-Catholic Churches was looming large. The Malankara Catholic Church provides a common forum for the Catholic faith and the Malankara traditions to meet. Rooted in the spiritual traditions of the

¹² Cf. Cyril Malancharuvil, *op. cit.* pp. 102-117.

¹³ Cf. *ibid* pp. 122-131.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

ancient Malankara Church and at the same time enjoying the Catholic communion, the Malankara Catholic Church paves the way for a deeper understanding between the Catholic and Non-Catholic communities. Through the reunited families, who are still closely related and acquainted with their non-catholic brethren, the latter gain ample possibilities to learn more about the Catholic Church giving them good opportunities to remove prejudices and expel misunderstandings. Similarly through the Malankara Catholic Church, the other churches in the Catholic communion, get a deeper knowledge and closer contact with the life and spiritual heritage of the Apostolic Malankara Church. Thus placed within the Universal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church has to witness to the truth of diversity in unity among the Catholics, and being related to the Non-Catholic Malankara communities it has to be before them a persuasive testimonial and witness to the need of unity in diversity.¹⁴ This role is most significant to the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding and acceptance among the churches envisaged in the ecumenical movement and its activities.

C. A PROCESS OF HEALING AND RESTORATION OF AN ANCIENT CHURCH

If ecumenism is understood as a quest for universality and wholeness, as well as a process of healing and restoration, the churches that have been alienated from other churches and got impoverished by their division, shall have to be reconciled and healed by their entry in to communion with each other.

The Church in Malankara because of its origin from the Apostle St. Thomas has been claiming the rights and privileges of an apostolic church. In fact, the revolt in 1653, as we have already noted, was the result of a defence of this autonomy against the interference of the missionaries. But, unfortunately this ended up in the loss of the communion with the Holy see of Rome and consequently the Catholic communion. Thus the Malankara Church, in its state of being cut off

¹⁴ Cf. C.A.Abraham, *Fifty years in the Bond of Catholic Unity*, Trivandrum, 1980, 7.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

from the full Catholic communion, could not claim to be fully authentic in terms of its individuality as an apostolic church and of its Catholicity as the church of Christ. Hence its entry into the full communion with the Universal Church through its communion with the Holy See of Rome was necessary to regain its role and position as an authentic, individual and apostolic church in the one church of Christ. This was regained, at least in partial fulfilment, when the Malankara community has accepted communion with the Catholic Church through the See of Rome, retaining its legitimate traditions and spiritual heritage and emerged as the Malankara Catholic Church. The existence of the Malankara Catholic Church in the Catholic communion and the acceptance of it in that communion is the symbolic reality of the restoration of the ancient Malankara Church to its authentic ecclesial dignity and status of an apostolic local church. This then is also a strong affirmation of the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology, which in fact was loudly proclaimed in anticipation in the reunion event in 1930, that each individual church has its own right of being individual and autonomous as long as it remains in the Catholic communion through its communion with the Roman Pontiff.

This, in turn, is a strong plea and a sure indication as to which direction the ecumenical movement should advance among the ecclesial communities of the Malankara Apostolic Church.

D. THE TASK AHEAD

As has been said earlier, the Malankara Catholic Church considers the promotion of church unity as its special vocation and does involve itself in fulfilling this obligation. Evidently the teachings and directions given by the Second Vatican Council in its Decree on Ecumenism remain the basic guidelines for this task.¹⁵ A commentary on them is not attempted here. However, a particular point that may be more relevant in this regard may be mentioned.

¹⁵ Cf. U.R. ns. III-VI.

3. THE HERMENEUTIC PRINCIPLE OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The churches though agreed upon the need of unity, have not come to an agreement on what this unity should be and how it should be attained. This agreement, however, cannot be expected unless there should be an agreement on the concept of the church itself. The meaning of the phrase 'One Church' depends mainly upon our conception of the church. For the meaning of the word 'One' depends upon the meaning of that which is one, and the quality of oneness varies according to the reality that must be one. Hence the kind of unity we envisage of the church is predetermined by the kind of concept of the church we have. That is to say, the hermeneutic principle of the unity of the church to be achieved or expressed is the concept of the church we explicitly or implicitly have. The hermeneutic principle of the concept of the church, however, is determined by the particular outlook of the church or the denomination we happen to belong to. A step further, on the philosophical plane, the concrete man of history as he lives his life is the hermeneutic principle of all human understanding. Thus our disagreement in the interpretation of the concept and unity of the church may partly be remedied by our awareness of the manifold levels of this hermeneutical problem.

Each church and denomination as well as the members belonging to that church or denomination consciously or unconsciously entertain concepts of the church that in various degree differ from one another. Here is the hermeneutic problem of the ecumenical movement. This problem is acute not merely in a theoretical understanding of the church. As the current notion of the interdependence of theory and practice well shows, the hermeneutic problem in ecumenical movement is both theoretical and practical. As a result of this interdependence the problem of understanding, especially in the case of the quest for church unity is multidimensional.

4. COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH NEEDED

The solution to this impasse cannot be merely theoretical, nor can it be merely practical. Hence it should be sought along the lines of a

gradual and painful reappraisal and renewal of christian life by all churches and ecclesial groups. Only a converted man can work for unity. This is also true of the churches. A renewed church will have a concept of the church that is more representative of the reality of the church of Christ.

Along with this, a common understanding of the concept of the church has to be sought after, not only in ecumenical study groups but also in the concrete life situation of the churches. Only through the interaction between these two process of arriving at a common understanding of the church and living in it constantly renewed and reformed, will the concrete forms of church unity will be shaped and rendered relevant. Since both theory and practice are necessary to realize our goal, the local church, where the day to day life of the faithful is lived, is not merely a field of experiment for our theories. Our theories become genuine and effective only in the practice of day to day living of the vision enshrined in the theories. As a consequence of such practice the theory itself is tested, enlivened, proved and enriched, whereby a new vision and a new theory come to hand. Now progress is possible. Our goal becomes clearer and is tied to practice and living. Thus a new understanding of the church and of its unity as something to be achieved becomes clearer and credible.

This is a responsible task to be undertaken by the faithful under the guidance and direction of the Hierarchy as pointed out by the Second Vatican Council.¹⁶ This is the 'Responsible risk' cautiously recommended by the W.C.C. that has to be taken by the individual churches with the necessity of 'Exerting Pressure on the limits of their own inherited traditions'.¹⁷

5. TRADITIONS OPEN TO EACH OTHER

Every christian has received the Gospel message through the tradition of a particular church and is incorporated by Baptism into the one church within that particular tradition. These traditions, therefore,

¹⁶ Cf. U.R. 1, 7, 10-12.

¹⁷ Cf. *New Delhi Report*, 12.

have their force and underlying influences as sources of confessional formulae and doctrinal tenets. Accepting, however, the fact of a divided christendom the understanding of our traditions can be broadened. A broadened understanding of our traditions naturally exerts pressure on the life situations we live in the church. As soon as these traditions are brought to life by making them relevant in actual conflict situations of christian life, we lose much of their power as reactionary forces in striving after unity. These traditions, therefore, can serve the cause of unity only to the extent of their ability to be open to each other and to be enriched in terms of fulfilment and perfection. Hence in a true and genuine involvement in our quest for a visible unity of the church of Christ we have to exert pressure on our own inherited traditions in exchange for the greater values and gifts received in our pursuit after unity.

6. DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED

It is obvious that the taking of such steps can hardly leave our concepts and beliefs and existing church structure untouched, a salutary change and evolution that should be well received and accelerated.

It is against this background that both the Vat.II and the W.C.C. called for a change of heart as the basic condition for ecumenical dialogue worthy of its name insisting on the need of being open to the Spirit who leads us into this unity and who makes us capable of expressing it, in concrete forms of a true ecclesial life.

This alone will help us to examine and evaluate our unconscious and conscious presuppositions, be they dogmatic, philosophical or anthropological.

The W.C.C. has already foreseen the cost of this involvement in the pursuit of unity. "The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice".¹⁸

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid* p. 117.

7. CHURCH UNITY: UNITY OF REDEMPTION

The unity of christianity is the unity of a redemption which though worked out and inaugurated in Jesus Christ, has to be fully achieved by the people of God step by step through the death-resurrection pattern of life that Christ Himself has willingly accepted from His Father.

Understanding church unity in relation to the saving act of God manifest in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ has deep ecumenical significance. For this will enable us to interpret the picture of unity visualised for the church more in keeping with a concept of the church, that would be more acceptable to many of the christian churches and communities. There is a growing tendency to understand the church as the dynamic presence of the Risen Lord in relationship with man or as the expression of Christ's continued unifying saving activity.¹⁹ This conception of the church, while safeguarding the continuity of the single saving intentionality of Christ brings into relief the reality of the saving act here and now, and consequently with the changes needed in the visible elements that constitute the church's expressiveness. This gives room for arriving at a better, more relevant visible unity of the church prayerfully hoped for by all. Consistent with the features of the saving act of God, the one church then becomes all-embracing, (being the expression of the saving intentionality of Christ), necessarily unfulfilled (being situated in between the resurrection and parousia), demanding (being composed of the people of God entrusted with the duty of building up the body of Christ to its mature measure) and destined for inevitable fulfilment (being assured by Christ).²⁰

This sort of church-unity does not imply simple uniformity of organisation, rite or expression, as the W.C.C. feared,²¹ but there will be

¹⁹ Cf. Peter Chirico, "One Church: What does it mean?" in *Theological Studies*, 1967, 659-682.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 681-682.

²¹ Cf. *New Delhi Report*, 117.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

enough theological space for legitimate pluralism contributing to the fullest expression of the life of the Spirit.

An understanding of the church and of its unity along these lines will cut a middle way between the two positions one holding on to a once-for-all well-established church and the other gropingly waiting for the emergence of an ideal super church.

CONCLUSION

If the ecumenical movement has as its goal the promotion of the unity of churches by healing their mutilated traditions and enriching their impoverished spiritual patrimony through dialogue, encounter, reconciliation and mutual acceptance, with the emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church a new chapter in the history of the ecumenical movement has been written. For through the Reunion event in 1930, a wing of the old christian community in Malankara has regained the communion of the Catholic Church safeguarding its ecclesial identity. If it was the restoration of apostolic heritage and dignity of an apostolic church on the part of the Malankara Church, it was a new encounter and dialogue with an apostolic church on the part of the other individual churches in communion with the Holy See of Rome. That the unity of the Catholic Church is expressed in the communion of individual churches united with the Roman Pontiff and with the Holy See of Rome is strongly and clearly brought into relief in the event of the reunion and continues to be affirmed by the Malankara Catholic Church. The existence of three catholic churches in India promoting different ways of liturgical worship, theological thinking and pastoral practices, is a loud proclamation of this ecclesial vision. While the Malankara Catholic Church strongly defended that the ecclesial identity of every individual church, based on its own individuality in terms of its liturgy, discipline, spiritual patrimony and cultural heritage, is to be safeguarded as an ecclesial treasure, it has clearly proved that the authenticity of these individual churches is rooted in their communion with the supreme pastor in the Holy See of Rome, he being the successor of Peter, the Head of the Apostles and Vicar of Christ in His Church.

ECUMENICAL ROLE

Within the Catholic communion the Malankara Catholic Church has to witness to the truth of the Catholicity of the Church of Christ and in its relationship with the non-Catholic Malankara communities it has to affirm the need of communion among the churches. In other words, making it possible for the churches, especially the different ecclesial communities of the Malankara Church, to agree on the concept and reality of the church, not only in theory but also in practice, is the great ecumenical task of the Malankara Catholic Church. The overcoming of the theoretical and practical difficulties involved in this task is itself the ecumenical problem that confronts us. And yet we should remember that the solution of this problem and the achievement of the unity of the churches will effectively proclaim the truth that God has redeemed His people in Jesus Christ uniting them in His Holy Spirit. Looking forward to our ecumenical role, we should be aware that the search for a visible organic unity of the church of Christ that remains divided in the world by the sinfulness of man, can be made fruitful and effective only by genuine ecumenical dialogue among the churches fully open to the guidance of the Spirit, the source of our unity. As we visualise the unity of the church in accordance with our concept of the church, our discussions on church unity will bear no fruit if we don't and cannot agree on a common concept of the church. The common understanding of the church is not the result of a mere theoretical reasoning nor of mere compromising practices. It should be formed both in ecumenical studies and in authentic ecclesial life to have any ecumenical significance.

The authenticity of the emerging new concept of the church and of its unity will be based on the reality of the christian life, constantly renewed and reformed in the ecclesial community. The pattern followed in this process must be the 'Death-Resurrection' pattern of the redemptive work of Christ. The achievement of **unity** then becomes the appropriation of the grace of salvation and the gift of redemption we have been granted by God in Christ through His Spirit.



THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY IN THE MALANKARA CHURCH*

INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the divine liturgy is the most sacred act in the church and it remains the best expression of the life of the church. In the life of the church, the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy has been holding a central place right from the beginning of the church. As the one church of Christ spread throughout the world among the peoples, it has given rise to several apostolic communities and the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy also received different forms. Though the basic elements of the Eucharistic liturgy remained the same in all traditions, the organisation and structural forms varied. The symbols used and the rituals followed were also different according to the genius of the Local churches.

The Eucharistic celebration based on the liturgy of the Church of Antioch is one of the most ancient of all liturgical traditions in the church. It is this Antiochene liturgy that is now being used in the Malankara Church both Catholic and non-Catholic.

1. THE ANTIOCHENE LITURGY IN THE MALANKARA CHURCH

The Church of Thomas Christians in India is one of the ancient apostolic churches. That it had entertained ecclesial communion and hierarchical relationship with the East Syrian Churches from the 4th century to the end of the 16th century, is an historically accepted fact, though the nature and extent of this relationship is not clearly identified.

* Paper presented by Cyril Mar Basaelios at the Fifth General Body Meeting of the Indian Liturgical Association at St. Pius X Pastoral Centre, Goa on March 23-25, 1994 (Editor).

EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

The most important result of this ecclesiastical relationship was the adoption of the East Syrian or Chaldean liturgical tradition in the ancient Indian Church. It was this liturgy that was in use among the Thomas Christians when the missionaries from the Western Church, especially the Portuguese, arrived in Malabar in the 15th century. It was again this liturgical tradition that was subjected to scrutiny and mutilation in the Synod of Diamper in 1599. The ensuing discontent along with the jurisdictional conflict ended up in the 'Coonan Cross Oath' of 1653 causing the division of the ancient Church of Thomas Christians into two groups, one under the Latin Jurisdiction exercised simultaneously by the Padroado and the Propaganda Missionaries, and the other independent, later known as the Malankara community of the Thomas Christians.

The Independent Malankara Community started to entertain an ecclesiastical relationship with the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Church of Antioch from the middle of the 17th century which paved the way for the gradual introduction of the Antiochene liturgy in the Malankara Church. This process was more or less completed by the time of the public declaration of 1834, in which the ecclesial communion and the ecclesiastical relationship of the Malankara Church with the Antiochene Patriarch was officially acknowledged. Thus, the Antiochene liturgical tradition was officially accepted and regularly followed in the Malankara Church from the first part of the 19th century. This liturgical tradition is in use in all the ecclesial communities that have emerged from the original Malankara Church by subsequent conflicts and divisions. In the place of its origin, this liturgy is now being used by the Maronite Church and the Syrian Church of Antioch both Catholic and Orthodox. In spite of its use both in Syria and in India, the remark of Adrian Fortesque made in 1913 with a certain sense of regret is to be noted: "This liturgy is one of the most beautiful in Christendom. Strange that an insignificant little sect should possess so splendid a liturgical tradition" (Adrian Fortesque, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, London, 1913, 350).

2. THE MALANKARA EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

Oriental Churches have developed a unique approach both in their concept and practice of liturgy. For them christian life is nothing other than ecclesial life, which, in its turn, is predominantly liturgical. True to the genius of the Oriental perspective, the Malankara Church deems the divine liturgy and the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice as the centre of ecclesial life, for that matter, of the whole christian life. This understanding has had great bearing in the very historical shaping of the Malankara Church. The reason why the people of the Malankara Church considered the imposition of the Latin liturgical traditions on them as an intervention in their christian and church life is none other than this conviction.

The Eucharist and the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice constitute the centre of christian life, because it is the presence of the Risen Lord with the total reality of His redemptive mission in His church and the world that we celebrate in the Eucharistic liturgy. The presence of the Risen Lord in His church is the basis of the gift of His Holy Spirit, who is the source of all spiritual life.

The Eucharistic liturgy, then, is the commemoration and celebration of the whole saving act of God fully manifested and definitively executed in Jesus Christ looking forward to its fulfilment through the working of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore, the celebration of the whole paschal mystery, which includes the mystery of incarnation: the birth, life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ leading to the gift of the Holy Spirit as the pledge of our redemption and eternal life. The Malankara Church thus understands its divine liturgy as a priestly ministry and service of the whole church militant, purified, glorified, in which the totality of the saving act of God and the ensuing gift of divine life is remembered and celebrated, and rendered present amidst the worshipping community of the redeemed. This explains well the fact that all the prayers in the Eucharistic liturgy except one at the end, are, then, the epitome of the redemptive act of God in His Son Jesus Christ through the power of His Holy Spirit. It reflects the whole christian life to which we are called by God's mercy. It is against this background that the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is organised and structured.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE MALANKARA EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

As already been mentioned, it is the Antiochene liturgical traditions that have been followed in the Malankara Church. The celebration of the divine liturgy of the Eucharist is divided into four parts:

1. *Thuyobo* (Preparation Service)
2. *Thulmodo* (Liturgy of the Word)
3. *Anaphora* (Sacrificial Service)
4. *Mesthouso* (Communion Service)

(cf. Fr. Geevarghese Panicker, *Malankara Qurbana in the Pilgrim Church*, Trivandrum, 1988, Vol.I, 94-95).

1. THUYOBO: (PREPARATION SERVICE)

In this preparation service the obligation of mankind to offer sacrifice to the Lord and Creator of the universe, is recalled. During the time of the Old Testament its true practice and expression are found in the worship of Israel, as against the idol worship and superstitions of the Gentiles. The worship of Israel, however, had taken its final form in the sacrificial worship in the temple of Jerusalem with all its ritualistic and cultic details under the leadership of the High Priest and Levites. It goes without saying, that the Old Testament ritual sacrifices were shadows of the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ who offered Himself on the cross as the most acceptable and fragrant sacrifice.

This preparatory service, in which bread and wine “fruits of our hands” are offered as symbols and signs of our own offering to the Lord, includes two stages of the Old Testament sacrifices, represented by two leading figures, Melchizedek and Aaron. Correspondingly, there are two services in this part: the service of Melchizedek and that of Aaron. The symbolism of the sacrifice of Melchizedek is well brought out by the prayers of this service. Similarly, the ritualistic features of the priestly service of Aaron and his successors in the Old Testament are expressed in the symbolic gestures and prayers of this service. The incense, the liturgical dress, the ritualistic actions and gestures, all are indicative of the

'Aaronic priesthood' of the Old Testament which, in fact, was a foreshadow of the priestly ministry instituted in and by Christ in the New Testament. This preparatory service in which the Old Testament sacrifices are remembered as a foreshadow is conducted in the sanctuary, closed by the sanctuary veil. The idea that both the celebration of the Eucharist in the church and that the sacrificial worship of the people of God have a history starting from the Old Testament is expressed here.

2. THULMODO : (LITURGY OF THE WORD)

The public service (the Liturgy of the Word: instruction) of the Eucharistic service focuses on the 'Epiphany' of the Son of God. The incarnation of the Son of God is acknowledged and accepted as the full revelation of God, to whom full and deep adoration is due. Hence, attention is directed to the Word of God revealed, accepted and adored. The appearance of Jesus Christ through His birth from the Virgin Mary and His baptism by John the Baptist is recalled, leading the congregation to remember the public ministry of Christ. The 'Trisagion' is recited as a christological hymn. The special invocation 'who was crucified for us' was added by Peter Casora, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, in the 5th century (cf. Geevarghese Panicker, *Kurbanabhasiam*, Quilon, 1981, 14). In the Liturgy of the Word or instruction service, the lessons from the Holy Scripture are read. The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles or from the Catholic Epistles; the second is invariably from among the Epistles of St. Paul; and the third is from one of the four Gospels.

The readings of the Holy Scripture are the revelation communicated to us in Jesus Christ and evoke our acceptance of the Word of God as our real guide of life. The homily, therefore, is nothing but the reflection and explanation of the Word of God, given by the celebrant, and shared by the participants.

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word of God ends with the prayers known as *Prumion* and *Sedro* intersected by a propitiatory prayer-*Housoyo*. *Prumion* is a prayer of praise, thanksgiving and adoration, while *Sedro* consists mainly of supplications for the Blessings of God in reference to the particular occasion or festal celebration. The prayer of *Housoyo* is propitiatory in character which imparts absolution of sins for

the living and departed. Hence, at the conclusion of these prayers a general absolution is imparted by the celebrant, and the people are incensed symbolising that they are purified by the Holy Spirit from their sins. The blessing of the thurible is a solemn ceremony in which each Person of the Most Holy Trinity is invoked. According to the patristic interpretations, this ceremony is also a remembrance of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ at which He began his public ministry when, the first *Theophany* of all the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity occurred. Hence, each of the three Persons is invoked and praised separately.

The Liturgy of the Word is concluded with the solemn recitation of the Nicene Creed after which the celebrant ascends to the sacred step of the *Thronos* (Throne of the Most High) to start the offering of the holy sacrifice. This is also a symbol of Jesus' entry into the cenacle to celebrate the Last Supper. Since the offering of the sacrifice of Christ is the privilege and given right of the community of the faithful, those who do not profess the faith of the church or share in the ecclesial communion are excluded from participating in it. In the early times five groups of people are asked to go out of the church before starting the sacrificial offering: (i) Catechumens, (ii) those possessed by the devil, (iii) those heavily tempted by evil spirits, (iv) those undergoing heavy penance, and (v) those not fully purified from sins (cf. Dionysius Bar Slibi, (+1171), *Interpretation of the Liturgy* (Translated into Malayalam) by Geevarghese Chediath, Kottayam, 1990, 32-33). This practice, however, has long ceased to be in use.

3. ANAPHORA : (THE OFFERING OF THE SACRIFICE)

The sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest in which Christ himself is the offerer and victim of the sacrifice, is sacramentally celebrated here. The religious duty of supplication is exercised and the redemptive fruit of reconciliation is achieved by the sacrifice of Christ. Hence, the need of reconciliation among the faithful is indicated by the exchange of the kiss of peace, already now at the very beginning of the offering of the reconciliatory sacrifice. The following prayer and symbolic action of lifting and fluttering of the white veil that

hitherto covered the holy mysteries are indicative of the transition of the salvation history from the Old Testament time to that of the New Testament. The white veil stands for the clouds that were the symbol of the presence of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The eternal Word of God, hidden in the Old Testament, is revealed in the New Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the lifting of the veil is a symbolic act of removing the stone placed over the tomb of Jesus in the event of His Resurrection, which is the basis of the new order of life inaugurated by the Risen Lord, thus reminding the faithful that the christian life is sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ, who is rendered present on the altar. In the *Anaphora*, the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ is specially remembered and acknowledged by announcing His passion, death, resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, recalling also His second coming to reap in full the fruit of His redemption. In the oriental perspective, it is understood that even though God's saving act is effected by His incarnate Son, it is pursued and perfected in the Holy Spirit. Hence, the *anamnesis* of the paschal mystery is rightly followed by the rite of *epiclesis*, in which the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Mysteries is symbolised. In short, in the *Anaphora*, the central mysteries of redemption in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit are remembered and announced.

The last part of the *Anaphora* is the rite of fraction. In the liturgical ceremony of fraction, the consecrated bread is divided and sealed with the consecrated wine and then they are once again joined together, which symbolises the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, this is an elaboration and powerful affirmation of faith in the Incarnate Son of God, who through His sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection redeemed and transformed the created world. The new status of the divine Sonship received by mankind as the gift and fruit of this redemption is affirmed and expressed by the solemn and common recital of the 'Our Father' that follows the rite of fraction. The earthly mission of Jesus Christ is completed by His ascension into heaven, which is symbolically presented by the elevation of the Holy Mysteries at the conclusion of the *Anaphora*, after which the sanctuary veil is closed. The

EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

symbolism is that the Son of God, while invisible to us, after His ascension into heaven, is, however, awaited in His second coming.

4. MESHTHOUSO: (COMMUNION: SACRIFICIAL MEAL)

The Eucharistic sacrifice is the sacramental offering of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As in the Last Supper, in which Jesus Christ offered Himself sacramentally and invited His disciples to take part in His sacrificial and paschal meal, so too communion and sharing in the sacrificial meal is integral to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. By taking part in the sacrificial meal of the Eucharist, the congregation is expressing its thanksgiving to God, who, through the paschal mystery of His Incarnate Son, made it worthy of regaining communion with Him. The Eucharistic communion, our sharing in the Body and Blood of our sacrificial victim, who is the Risen Lord, is the pledge of our full communion in the divine life which we are destined to receive in our eternal heavenly life. The reception of Eucharist, therefore, affirms on the one hand our entry into the divine communion and on the other our expectation and hope of its fullness in our eternal life of glory, which will be given to us as a divine gift at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is well-symbolised by the opening of the sanctuary veil and the following solemn procession, in which the Holy Mysteries are carried towards the people. The prayers recited and blessings invoked therein are all reminders of the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ about His second coming which would be the conclusion of His redemptive Mission.

The rite of Eucharistic communion, our sharing in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial lamb, therefore, is expressive of our communion with our heavenly Father who imparted to us His life in His Son through His Holy Spirit. It is fitting, then, that this part of the liturgy is a public thanksgiving service for the whole redemptive act of the Most Holy Trinity. It is in this spirit that the congregation is blessed in the name of the Most Holy Trinity and dismissed.

CONCLUSION

Hence, it is clear that the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy in the Malankara Church is meant not merely to satisfy the natural obligation of mankind of offering a sacrifice in terms of a Creature-

Creator relationship. Nor is it purely a sacrificial banquet in which our cultural and social bonds are celebrated. Even the efforts to confine the Eucharistic liturgy to the 'memory' of the Last Supper will not do justice to the full meaning of Eucharistic liturgy as envisaged in the Antiochene Eucharistic tradition, and for that matter, in the Malankara Church. The stress given on the relationship of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross with the Eucharistic celebration, detaching and isolating it from the whole economy of salvation as designed by the Father and manifested in the total paschal mystery of His Son and fulfilled in His Holy Spirit, should not blur the true significance of the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy among and by the redeemed people of God, as an act of thanksgiving and praise offered to God for what He has done in and through His incarnate Son.

Following the Oriental perspective, the Malankara Church understands the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy as an offering of praise and thanksgiving-*Eucharistein*-to God who has done great things for mankind, which found its noblest and most merciful expression in the divine economy of salvation designed for the human race in His beloved Son, who through His sacrificial death in loving obedience to His Father, redeemed mankind. Having been raised by His Father and sitting at His right as the Lord of glory He has called and constituted His church as a people of God living in the Holy Spirit given by Him, to sing His praise and to adore Him for ever, starting on earth and continuing in the heavenly Jerusalem with all the saints and angels.

Hence, to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy in the church is to render present everywhere and amidst all peoples the divine saving act of God, the central mystery of which is the Christ-event, the Person of Jesus Christ-in the reality of His pre-existence, incarnate existence and glorious existence along with His mission as designed and executed in the paschal mystery of His birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, gift of the Holy Spirit and the constitution of the redeemed as the people of God.

In fact, the great Fathers of the church, took pains to design and construct the ritual forms of the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy to

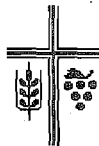
EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

render present these realities and make them operative and significant in the church and at all times, until 'He comes'.

The command of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper 'to do this in memory of me' -the *Anamnesis*-has a much wider meaning and content as understood in the tradition of the Malankara Church. The *Anamnesis* is to remember, celebrate and announce what God has done to us in Jesus Christ, i.e. the eternal design, temporal execution and the eschatological fulfilment of His merciful economy or salvation through His Son in His Holy Spirit. It is this saving act of God that is presented, enacted and announced in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy so that all may share and grow in the divine life communicated to them. It is, again, this comprehensiveness of the celebration that makes this liturgy more relevant and fruitful to the faithful.

In short, the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is the epitome of the economy of salvation designed by God in Jesus Christ. It is continued in the church, to render God's saving act in Jesus Christ through His Spirit present amidst the worshipping community and to make the people of God aware of his presence as the Redeemer and Risen Lord, with his redemptive act and its salutary effects all over the earth until He comes at the end of time.

Hence, the Malankara Church believes that the whole christian life is built up on the basis of the Holy Eucharist and oriented towards its celebration, which is not purely one devotional practice among many. In other words, christian life in the Malankara perspective, can be none other than the ecclesial life, which, in its turn, is centred around the Eucharist and its celebration.



EVANGELISATION AND PASTORAL CARE: CONCERNS OF THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH*

INTRODUCTION

The problems and concerns faced by the Oriental Churches of India in the matter of Evangelisation and Pastoral Care are to a great extent of the same nature and arising from similar situations. Most of them have been listed and briefly explained in the report presented by the Malabar Church. Hence I have no intention of repeating them. I do agree with the content of the paper and subscribe to the statements and opinions expressed. The Malankara Catholic Church in India is more or less in the same situation. That the paper on the Malabar Church preceded mine, helps to do my work easier and to present my paper briefer; clarification are welcome and questions may be answered.

Before entering into a discussion on the pastoral problems connected with the two questions of Evangelisation and Pastoral Care of the emigrants of the Malankara Church, some remarks regarding the clarification of terms used in this paper seem to be necessary.

TERMS:

1. Malankara Church:

It generally stands for the ancient christian community, which, while claiming its ecclesial origin from the preaching of the Apostle St.

* This paper was presented by Cyril Mar Baselios in the General Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (C.B.C.I.), Tiruchirappally, 1982, representing the Malankara Catholic Hierarchy. This article was also published in *Christian Orient*, Vol.3, No.1-2, 1982, 25-33 (Editor).

Thomas, separated itself of the Holy See of Rome as a result of its revolt against the latinisation tendency of the Portuguese missionaries in 1653. This Malankara community remains today further divided as the Malankara Orthodox, Jacobite, Marthomite and partly C.S.I. Churches. Through the tireless efforts of this church for communions with the Holy See of Peter in Rome, a section of this community has regained communion with the Holy See of Rome, accepting the primacy of the Pope. Thus this ecclesial community, as it had legitimately grown up with its apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions, was canonically acknowledged and established in 1930. This community has about 300,000 faithful today and is known as the Malankara Catholic Church, leaving more than 2.5 million people in the non- catholic section.

2. Rite:

This term, though originally meant the complex of canonical and liturgical rites, by the time of Vatican II, assumed the meaning of a particular or individual church, (cf. the paper on the Malabar Church and the Documentation ns. 8,18).

3. Malankara Rite:

Hence 'Malankara Rite' can denote either the Malankara Church as an individual church or can mean merely its liturgy or rituals. In the discussions, especially on inculturation, adaptation or liturgical renewal, there is often confusion taking one for the other.

4. Inter-Ritual Relationship:

In our discussions, we do not mean to deal with relationship between the liturgical rite, but relationship or communion among several individual churches, especially in India. Nor are we concerned here with personal relationships, which for the most part is very cordial; but we are discussing the relationship of the individual churches in terms of their role and unique vocation in the redemptive mission of Christ.

5. Catholic Church:

Here we particularly stress on the understanding of the church as a 'communion', especially of particular and individual churches as

proposed and explained by the Vat. II (cf. Documentation, ns. 8,9, Agenda booklet p.78,87).

N.B.

1. At present there are about 21 particular and individual churches including the Latin Church in the Catholic communion, and in every one of them the Catholic Church is rendered present. All the individual churches, except the Maronite Church, have counterparts in the non-catholic churches and ecclesial communities.
2. It is estimated that about 7 million Oriental Catholics are in the Catholic Oriental Churches, leaving about more than 100 million Orientals outside the full Catholic Communion.
3. The apprehension and the preoccupations we show in the coexistence or even the possibility of coexistence of three, out of twenty, individual churches of the Catholic communion in India, betray either our ignorance of the actual situation of the Catholic Church, for that matter of the whole Christianity, or our unwillingness and inability to live together.

1. EVANGELISATION

The Malankara Catholic Church gratefully acknowledges its apostolic origin and is thankful to divine providence for the grace: regaining communion with the Holy See of Rome and thereby communion with all the churches that are in communion with Rome. In terms of its apostolic identity and individuality it is equal to other churches of apostolic origin.

In principle all agree that it is the right and duty of every church to proclaim and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (cf. Documentation, n.9). But this ancient christian community is today severely restricted to its present juridical position and it is due entirely to the vicissitudes of history over which it had practically no control. It is also to be noted that the present division and arrangements of ecclesiastical jurisdictions in India were made without giving any chance to any of the two Oriental Churches to express effectively its own legitimate wishes and desires in terms of its vocation. Taking into consideration the actual situation of our

country, especially the apostolic needs and vivid responsiveness of our people on the one hand, and the great potential of the Oriental Churches on the other, we should reconsider the situation in all fairness and justice solely looking for the good of the church as a whole.

In proclaiming the word of God in India, a country with such spiritual sensitivity, we often suffer feelings of frustration and disappointment, as it has been several times reported here. This cannot be attributed merely to lack of methods and techniques. There may be some serious defects in our basic disposition and attitudes and in our understanding of the church and its mission.

Evangelisation in this country is presently being carried on under forced and artificial conditions. An original, authentic and apostolic Indian community is practically, as a church, kept out of this field, while its members are recruited as missionaries setting the situation for them to give up their ecclesial identity as a pre-condition. The danger of isolating them from the spiritual patrimony and liturgical traditions of their own church has already been referred to in the report of the Malabar Church. Evangelisation is a grace and vocation proper to the 'church'(EN), the meaning of which has still to be explored.

The fact that the Oriental Churches are vibrant with numerous vocations to priesthood and religious life is not, I believe, an accident, especially taking the world situation as regards the life of faith today. It is merely the Spirit of God speaking to the Church in India, which had the privilege of being one of the first apostolic communities in Christianity. Our decision to listen to the Spirit or quench the Spirit will dictate the course of action we take at this moment.

The rights and obligation of every church to commit itself to evangelisation, the need and possibility of it in India, the ecclesial character of the work of evangelisation, etc. have already been referred to in the former paper, which I place before you once more for your deeper reflection.

I should like to elaborate on our duty and right to take up the work of evangelisation in India from another point of view, namely, the

uniqueness of the Oriental Churches in India in terms of their direct apostolic origin.

The need of apostolic works or evangelisation in North India has been brought up already in our discussions. Very often it is referred to on the basis of the responsiveness of these areas, the surplus vocations, availability of the personnel, possibility of economic support, etc. I wonder if that is or should be the main ecclesial basis for our action. I would propose that it has to be seen in the light of the fact this ancient christian community of India is one of the first apostolic Churches of Christ. To say that our church is founded by the preaching of St. Thomas, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, hence of apostolic origin, has deep theological, ecclesial, implications for evangelisation in our country.

Apostolicity is usually understood in its dimension of uninterrupted succession of hierarchy, or Bishops. Certainly it is the sign of the continuity of the church. But what actually is uninterruptedly, with assured continuity, handed over? The message of Gospel, as commissioned to the Apostles, as ministered unto, as taught and interpreted by the Apostles. In other words, the word of God, Christ Himself as encountered, experienced and professed by the Apostles. Each of the Apostles encountered, experienced, professed and confessed Christ in a unique way, but always had totally with the faith of the twelve, especially of Peter, the Head of the College of Apostles.

Every apostle, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and evoking faith in people or in a community of people to accept Christ, founded one or many christian communities, which are directly apostolic communities or apostolic churches. As the Apostle himself, this community which was gathered in the Spirit of Christ, also was given the grace of experiencing, encountering, professing and confessing Christ. Their Christ-experience to be authentic, genuine and orthodox has to tally with that of the Apostle, which in turn has to tally with that of the twelve, hence 'apostolic'.

In the event of the formation of a new community by the proclamation of the Gospel by that community or by a missionary in the name of that church and for that church-the Christ-experience, faith of

that community has to be tallied with that of that apostolic church, community, which in its turn is in communion with the other apostolic communities. In other words, the norm from the deposit of faith handed over, is to be had from those first apostolic communities. Hence the apostolic church-the first apostolic communities in communion with each other presided over by St.Peter and his successor-was constitutive or normative of faith. This is the unique privilege of the apostolic church or the communities directly founded by the Apostles which no other communities can ever enjoy. By the death of the last apostle, the possibility of an apostolic community directly apostolic is closed.

If the early christian community of India-I leave it to you to identify which that community is- founded by St. Thomas, an Apostle, it is certainly an apostolic community with that unique privilege of being normative for other christian communities newly founded in India by the proclamation of the Gospel. The presence of this apostolic community to them and amidst them-through its missionaries, nurtured and enriched by the faith of their own community-is not a luxury, not a leisurely act to be motivated merely by practical and pragmatistical considerations of secondary importance, but is basically an ecclesiological need to be satisfied as and in the way God willed through His Son Jesus Christ. We don't make a redemptive plan for God, we are called upon to insert ourselves into the mission of the Lord; we should not refuse to listen to His call, much less, we are not to hinder and stand in His way. That God works in and through human history should not be forgotten.

In the providence of God the Church of St. Thomas in India has received the unique grace, duty and role to be one of the first apostolic communities of the church, and therefore, to be normative, constitutive of christian life and life of faith for the emerging christian communities in India.

It is ours to decide if the apostolic church in India should be given a chance and opportunity to realise its God-given vocation and to effectively discharge its duties even if it would mean that we shall have to correct our mistakes and face new challenges.

2. PASTORAL CARE

Taking it for granted that the Malankara Catholic Church is an individual church, its duty and obligation to cater to the spiritual needs and growth of its faithful, not only as individuals but as a church, is obvious. Vat. II documents are so clear that we are labouring the obvious to explain them (cf. Documentation, ns. 10,11,13).

In fact this is done to some extent in other continents by most of the Oriental Churches (cf. The Report of the Malabar Church p.15).

In the case of the Malankara Church in India, we may also consider another serious circumstance....The Non-Catholic Malankara churches, many members of which are highly placed in the Government of India are today established all over India with well-knit congregations, parishes, priests and bishops. In many important cities they have numerous churches and institutions. Above all they are making a serious and concerted effort to make themselves accepted and acknowledged as the authentic original, national christian community in India. Most of us especially the Latin Bishops and Priests-are getting closer to them, especially through the awakening of ecumenism. We sincerely appreciate the christian sentiment of the Bishops concerned in extending to them the hand of christian fellowship. We are unable to identify the reason behind the persuasion to deny the legitimate facilities for evangelisation and pastoral care to the apostolic churches which are in communion with the Holy See of Rome. We wonder if it would be punishment for their catholicity and communion, and would be tantamount to helping the non-catholics in their claim to be the authentic Indian Church.

The need of adequate pastoral care of the emigrants of the Malankara Church is much greater and urgent yet for another reason, apart from all the points enumerated in the report of the Malabar Church. Malankara Catholic Church has its non-catholic counter parts which have parishes and ecclesiastical institutions all over India and abroad. Besides the persuasion they may receive from these communities to abandon catholic communion and join them, lack of proper pastoral care and protection from their own church, leave them helpless and defenceless and they are likely to lose their catholic faith, and unfortunately it happens

often. Since the liturgy has always been the centre of worship and the very source of the spiritual sustenance for our people, lack of provisions to have our own liturgy celebrated and lived would leave them to be tempted to go to the non-catholic churches which may end up with joining them as members. This is not a secret unknown to many of the bishops present here, especially from big cities like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, etc. I should like to put on record our great appreciation for His Grace Arulappa, the Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, who, shunning aside all the imaginary difficulties that are often raised, has given encouragement to put up a Malankara Parish at Pady, one of the fast-developing industrial centres in Madras, and has made all the arrangements necessary to get a Malankara Priest appointed. To the satisfaction of all concerned, the parish community is growing fast and functions well. That the good of the church is to be identified in terms of the good of the people of God is eloquently manifested in this example.

3. AN ECUMENICAL CONCERN

Ours is an ecumenical era and there is no church that escapes the penetrating influence of the ecumenical movement. Craving for Christ and unity is everywhere felt and is acknowledged as a clear sign of the Holy Spirit working among us to fulfil a specific need of the church of Christ.

Students of church history know that in almost all the ancient apostolic churches division and schismatic separation took place and everyone of them succeeded to restore communion with the Holy See of Rome, at least through a small section of them. These communities, restoring and retaining their ecclesial identity, are known as the Catholic Eastern Churches. Now that they have regained communion with the Holy See of Peter, they are eager to point out that they represent the true, orthodox and ancient apostolic churches. They have their own spiritual patrimony and liturgical heritage and have their hierarchies restored to their fullness, even with proper Patriarchates. Yet these orthodox counterparts, which are still the bulk of their church-communities, are entertaining fear and apprehensions that they would, in the event of regaining communion with Rome, lose their autonomy, freedom and individuality. Carefully they are observing what happens to the so-called

'Reunited Churches'. Undoubtedly they remain a 'test-dose' for the treatment they would expect from the Roman Church. As everywhere in the world, the treatment meted out to the Oriental Churches in India is not going to be left un-observed.

In the face of the actual freedom the Malankara Orthodox, Jacobite and Mar Thomite Churches enjoy as autonomous individual churches, the juridical restrictions and chains that tie down the Malankara Catholic Church would loom large and the credibility of the ecumenical movement, and for that matter, even the possibility of a united christian church can only be considerably dim.

CONCLUSION

Hence the relationship of the Latin-Oriental Churches in India is not a matter of secret talks for the ecclesiastics of India alone, but a matter of supreme importance for the Universal Church affecting the whole of christianity and its meaning for mankind.

Because of some said results of the misguided activities, misunderstanding and false course of apparent apostolic activities of a few ecclesiastics, which we condemn as 'Rite rivalries', we cannot pull down the true image of the church, destroying its identity and mission, as a Universal Church, truly catholic, both extensively and intensively, capable of being present in every individual church as it is built up on the foundation of the Apostles whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ Himself.



BELIEVING COMMUNITIES AND THEOLOGIZING*

We feel that theological education in India is one of our basic and urgent needs, especially in the context of our struggle for building up a society on solid grounds of the values of the Kingdom of God. The three position papers discuss the process of theological education evaluating it from three different angles.

To present a few general remarks, I find that the authors are using in some cases the same terms with different meanings. For example, Faith, Theology, Culture, Faith-commitment, Religious experience, etc., seem to be interpreted conventionally. At times evangelization and theologizing seem to be confused for one another and the levels of theologizing itself are not properly distinguished. In one paper Theological education is identified with priestly formation and the latter is discussed without sufficiently taking into account the actual reality and the existential situation of the church. One cannot fail to realise that the understanding of the nature of the church and that of the priestly ministry at present, the ecclesiastical structures that support the church are all factors that influence priestly formation as a programme of action. Besides, theological education or priestly formation cannot be isolated from the actual involvement of building up ecclesial communities, be it at the parish or diocesan level.

Taking a closer look into the content of the papers, I may indicate a few points that need further clarification and explanation.

* This Paper was presented by Cyril Mar Baselios in the Indian Theological Association Meeting. Later it was published in Felix Wilfred (ed.), *Theological Education in India*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1985, 87-92 (Editor).

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE DEFINITION OF THEOLOGY

It is agreed that Theology is reflection on experience in the context or light of Faith. In this reflection, life acts the context and Faith provides the horizon of understanding. Hence, the starting point of theology-*locus theologicus*-is life experience and the other pole of reflection is faith. It is also to be noted that this process of reflection is a community enterprise and the professionals are at the service of it. Before theology can ask its own proper questions, the reality-experiential-data should be analyzed and understood with the help of other sciences. Even at the properly theological stage, one needs adequate tools of reflection. Hence setting out to understand and find meaning in life, theology cannot discard the contributions of other sciences. Only in this interdisciplinary effort, theology can maintain its own specificity and relevance.

Accepting the definition and description of theology given in the papers as a starting point, one can lead the discussion further posing a few questions. What are the tools of theological reflection? Can the categories and thought patterns be used in vacuum? Will not the experiential data itself determine and condition the nature of the tools to be used?

Regarding the experiential data, one wonders if it is to be the individual or communitarian experience. If the experiential data is to be understood as communitarian, then can it be taken as that of a particular community, of the church, or that of the human community at large?

The understanding of faith in this context needs clarification. Faith may be understood as the '*depositum fidei*' or as the commitment of man to God or as the celebration of one's religious life.

Hence it is a multidimensional reality. When it is described as a living tradition in a believing community, its communitarian aspect is further emphasized. In this context, the question whether the theological reflection is done in the light of the faith of the individual or of the community, can legitimately be asked. This question is all the more

BELIEVING COMMUNITIES

relevant, when we find that the possibility of a divergence between the two is not altogether excluded, as evidenced in history.

Hence a clarification of these points is necessary for establishing a common base for further reflection, especially in evolving an approach and method of theologizing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

After having raised a few questions that need further answers, I propose a few points for our closer study, by way of concluding remarks.

1. Theology must have its own proper questions to ask and have the answers formulated in a systematic whole. Questions and answers not systematically articulated can leave the questions either at the level of faith affirmation-Creed-or at the level of unscientific discussions, discrediting theology as a science.
2. Life-experience in all its dimensions and at all its levels is the data of theological reflection in so far as, only in so far as, they are related and referred to the faith-affirmation and seen and interpreted in its light, the content of which is the reality of God coming to our life and into our (His) world, relating to us in the way it pleases Him.
3. Hence by describing the life-experience as the primary locus of Theology. God's work and presence amidst us and in our world is only rendered more real and relevant and it should not give the impression that theology keeps man at its centre, leaving God as a referral reality.
4. If faith is to be understood as a living tradition in a believing community, the individual's faith cannot but, take the faith of the community as normative.
5. Whereas the faith of the believing community is the other pole of theological reflection, life experience-also of the community of mankind at large-is the data of that reflection, calling for the need of a dialogue and interaction. It is also to be asked if the religious experience and faith of the human community at large should be taken into consideration at the stage of the process of

BELIEVING COMMUNITIES

forming the data of reflection or at the level of providing a norm for theological reflection.

6. In spite of deep theological reflection, even with the best tools of reflection available, along with all the assistance of natural and human sciences, human life-experience including the experience of God coming into our life, shaping our destiny and relating himself to the history of mankind, would escape our human categories of reflection and would remain as realities of faith-affirmation at the level of divine mysteries.
7. Since the faith of the community-the living tradition of a believing community-is regarded as the other pole of theological reflection, the nature of this community and that of its faith are significant factors in our discussion.
8. We should then make sure of the existence of a believing community before we start theologizing. We should ask how is it constituted and what is its nature? Where and how do we find this community today?
9. Where do we find the basic reality of this community; in the elements that constitute the community or further in the communion which underlines this community?
10. What is the nature of its faith, i.e. the living tradition of this believing community, which, on the one hand falls back on its foundational experience (with God) and on the other is enshrined *in traditions* of living, believing, communities?
11. Can we find to admit and acknowledge the existence of such communities which can claim authentically that they are "believing communities" and do possess a "living tradition" which falls back on foundational experience which is "apostolic" in theological parlance and at the same time today enshrined in several traditions, symbols and forms of worship?
12. Can this living tradition enshrined in living traditions serve as a pole of theological reflection and give rise to a theology? Will it be acknowledged as valid?

BELIEVING COMMUNITIES

13. Now, applying this to our context, is there an ecclesial community in India-that has the strength and spiritual calibre to get involved in this effort, to render this service?
14. Can we ever build up a believing community without building up a living tradition of faith that is authentic and pure or vice versa?
15. Are we aware that theological reflection in India is rendered difficult not only on account of the several reasons usually pointed out, but also by:
 - i) the discarding of an authentic ecclesial community that can identify and pose proper theological questions on the data of life-experience.
 - ii) the understanding of a communitarian faith profoundly professed, liturgically celebrated and morally lived, in the light of which theological reflection should take place.
16. In India the problem is all the more aggravated, since the possibility of ecclesial communities, remaining intact, with their own living traditions is practically denied, let alone their growth as genuine ecclesial communities.
17. A christian community can never be authentic without being ecclesial. Now in India, (what is the nature of the church? How is it understood?) which are the ecclesial communities? Who are their spokesmen? What is the state of affairs?
 - i) In the Latin Church: a good majority of its Clergy and Religious personnel are born and brought up in an ecclesial tradition other than that of the Latin Church.
 - ii) In the Malabar Church: majority of its Clergy and Religious personnel are educated and trained in the Latin tradition.
 - iii) In the Malankara Church: though the Non-Catholic section remains in their own tradition, the Catholic section is to

BELIEVING COMMUNITIES

a great extent subject to the influences of the Latin and Malabar traditions.

18. Now, which community, in what way, can provide the experiential data, identify proper theological questions, and form a '*Guru Sishya*' group to follow up a 'theological *Sadhana*' as the authors of the papers would desire it remaining faithful to an ecclesial living tradition which would provide the other pole of theological reflection?
19. Taking the Religious communities in India, in particular, which are-ex professo-the schools of spirituality and privileged sanctuaries of God-experience, which of the communities can set the context of theological reflection on a genuine, pure, authentic ecclesial tradition, rooted in its faith-affirmation and expressed in its life-style especially when deliberate efforts are made to ignore and set aside the ecclesial tradition in which the members of these communities have been brought up?
20. In other words, can we ever imagine that a valid and solid theological reflection would take place without the support of an authentic, genuine ecclesial tradition, in which both the individuals and the community to cherish their faith-life and articulate their faith affirmation? We should feel disturbed not so much by our inability to answer these questions at present as by the lack of awareness to pose these questions. The meeting of a Theological Association of this sort would give us a chance!



THE REUNION MOVEMENT: ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIAN HERITAGE*

The existence of a christian community in India, especially in Malabar, from very early times is today generally admitted by historians, though there is difference of opinion among them on the exact date and nature of its origin.¹ That this ancient Christian community owes its beginning to the preaching of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, is a solid tradition firmly believed and strongly adhered to by many, especially the Thomas Christians of India.² The Thomas Christians formed one church with one faith and religious traditions till the advent of the Portuguese in India. Their encounter with the Portuguese missionaries, though pleasant and agreeable in the beginning, ended up in disagreement and quarrels with far reaching results.

The sad effect of this dissension was not only that the Christians in Malabar were divided, but also that a part of them were alienated from the communion of the Catholic Church. The group of the Thomas Christians, separated from the Catholic section, got into ecclesiastical

* This article of Cyril Mar Baselios was contributed to K.J. John (ed.), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, Grand Chevalier Prof.L.M.Pylee Felicitation Volume, Published by Fr.George Veliparambil, Cochin, 1981, 308-315 (Editor).

¹ Tisserant, E.R. Hambye, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Calcutta, 1957, 11-17; Brown, L.W., *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, Cambridge, 1956, 287-288; George, V.C., *The Syro-Chaldean Church in Malabar*, Tiruvalla, 1957.

² Bernard of St. Thomas, *A Brief Sketch of the History of the St. Thomas Christians*, Trichinapoly, 1924; Placidus S. Joseph, T.O.C.D., *De Fontibus Juris ecclesiastici Syro-Malankararensium*, Codificazione Canonica Orientale. Fonti Serie II fase. VIII, Typis Polyglottis, Vaticanis, 1937; Koodapuzha Xavier, (ed.), *The History of the Indian Church*, Kottayam, 1980, 42-103.

communion with the Antiochene Jacobite Patriarch and formed themselves an autonomous church.³ Ever since this rift took place, there were efforts to restore the original harmony and communion with the Catholic Church.⁴ But only after three centuries of strenuous efforts at reunion, all of which met with varying degrees of failure, could this community regain Catholic communion. This was in 1930 when a representative group of the community, under the heroic leadership of the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios, got reunited with the Catholic Church paving the way for an organised reunion movements.⁵ It is this event that is known in history as “the Reunion Movement” of the Malankara Church in India.

With the Reunion Movement, the Malankara Church, through the reunited community, entered again into the Catholic communion. This paved the way for the canonical emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church. Hence the reunion movement is usually identified with the Malankara Catholic Church.

1. THE GROWTH OF THE REUNION MOVEMENT

During the past fifty years of its communion with the Universal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church could grow up considerably and establish its position as an individual church, regaining its vitality and spiritual strength. Growing as a vigorous christian community, the Malankara Catholic Church at present consists of 3 dioceses, about 250,000 laymen, 710 churches and mission centres, 385 priests and about 800 religious.⁶ As part of an ancient christian community of India, it is deeply rooted in the spiritual traditions and cultural values of India.

³ Malancharuvil Cyril, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1974, 3-72.

⁴ Malancharuvil Cyril, *op. cit.*, pp.102-120.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.121-134.

⁶ Abraham C.A., *Fifty years in the Bond of Catholic Unity*, Trivandrum, 1980, 7. For the present statistics of the Malankara Catholic Church see the article “Malankara Catholic Church” by Ninan Philip in this book (Editor).

Hence the Malankara Catholic Church, while keeping its christian antiquity, enjoys the creative force of a renewed church in the emerging culture of India.

In assessing the contribution of the reunion movement, attention could easily be directed to several of its achievements, especially in terms of the number of institutions and other gains in the field of missionary activities and developments works.

It is true that the missionary perspective of the Malankara Catholic Church has been revolutionary and innovating against the background of the age-old vision the community of Thomas Christians had entertained. The starting of the missionary apostolate of the Malankara Catholic Church among the low caste Hindus and scheduled castes especially in South Travancore was really a break-through in the history of their organised apostolic works. We cannot forget either that the Malankara Catholic Church has contributed its own share in several areas of concerted efforts for human development. The three university colleges, a number of technical training centres, several primary and high schools, are all effective signs of its service in the educational field. Through its various industrial and agricultural projects and model schemes, the Malankara Catholic Church has shown its keen interest in the integral human development of the people and thus remains a source of inspiration. With other voluntary agencies, it has also earned praise and appreciation for its medical service and community health programmes. But these are not the most significant and unique contribution that the reunion movement has made for christianity in India.

2. REUNION MOVEMENT: ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The Reunion movement in the Malankara Church has great importance for the Catholic Church in general and for the Indian Church in particular. Its meaning and significance have yet to the unfolded. Sometimes this event is understood and described as a return of some erring souls to their paternal home. On the other hand the non-catholic sections of the Malankara Church look down upon it as a betrayal and desertion of their mother church perpetrated in favour of the Roman Church. But the reunion movement led by Mar Ivanios was neither a

mere refuge to the paternal household nor a desertion of the maternal fold. It was an ecclesial event full of historical importance and spiritual significance.

A. THE REUNION: RESTORATION OF AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The Church in Malabar, because of its origin from the apostolate of St. Thomas, has been claiming the rights and privileges of an apostolic church down through the centuries.⁷ The revolt of the people of the Malabar Church in 1653 was the result of the interference of the Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities in the affairs of this ancient church of Malabar. The Malabar Church strongly resented any attempt to belittle its status or deny its rights as an apostolic church. In fact, the revolt in 1653 was an attempt to protect these rights and defend this autonomy.⁸ In all the negotiations for a reconciliation after the rift, it was again these demands and claims for autonomy that came up for discussion and which unfortunately could not be settled amicably.⁹ If we study closely the history of the attempts for reunion with the Catholic Church made by the leaders of the Malankara Church, we could learn that they had been insisting that the Holy See of Rome should acknowledge the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church as one having inviolable rights based on apostolic faith and traditions.¹⁰ In the successful reunion of 1930, while the prelates of the Malankara Church accepted the primacy of the Pope, he being the successor of St. Peter in the Holy See of Rome, the Holy See readily acknowledged the status of the Malankara Church accepting its legitimate traditions and spiritual legacies.¹¹ In fact, it is by this

⁷ Kollaparambil Jacob, *The Arch-deacon of all-India*, Kottayam, 1972.

⁸ Malancharuvil Cyril, *op. cit.*, pp.19-24.

⁹ Giuseppe S. Maria, *Prima spedizione alle Indie Orientali*, Romae, 1666, 125-126.

¹⁰ Malancharuvil Cyril, *op. cit.*, pp.102-117.

¹¹ Kanjiramukalil Sylvester, *Documents of Reunion*, Kottayam, 1979- The first Memorandum sent to Rome by Mar Ivanios, 68-75; Reply of the Holy See, *Ibid.*, pp.98-103.

acceptance and acknowledgement of the Holy See of Rome that the reunited Malankara community has received its canonical existence in the Catholic communion. In other words, the Malankara community that has regained communion with the Universal Church through the Holy See of Rome is the Malankara Catholic Church. By the canonical emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church through the reunion in 1930, therefore, the ancient Malankara Church, with its apostolic traditions and spiritual heritage, was restored to its authentic ecclesial dignity and status as an apostolic church.¹² If the original image of an ancient christianity was blurred by the taints of a division, it was redeemed and reinstated by the reconciliation and reunion effected in the Malankara Church.

B. THE MALANKARA LITURGY :

TREASURE OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The Malankara Catholic Church is blessed with the Antiochene liturgical rite, one of the most ancient liturgies of Christendom. The Antiochene liturgy was introduced in the Malankara Church by the prelates from the Antiochene Church who had come to Malabar after the Malankara Church entered into a communion with the Antiochene Patriarch.¹³ Though this introduction was gradual, by the second half of the 19th century the process was completed and the Malankara Church formally declared that its liturgy was of the Antiochene Tradition.¹⁴ It was the Antiochene liturgical rites that were allowed to be retained and practised by the reunited community of the Malankara Catholic Church. Even though the Antiochene rite originally belonged to the liturgical treasure of the Catholic Church, in India it had been possessed and

¹² Malancharuvil Cyril, *op. cit.*, pp.131-140.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.73-95.

¹⁴ Germann, W., *Die Kirche der Thomaaschristen*, Gutersloh 1877, 741; Berand S. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.385; Milne Rae., *The Syrian Church in India*, Edinburg, 1892, 281-303; Cherian, P., *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society 1816-1840*, Kottayam, 1935, 390; Howard, G.B., *Christians of St. Thomas and their Liturgies*, London, 1864, 119-122.

enjoyed only by the non-catholic Malankara Church. It was by the reunion of 1930 that this liturgical treasure has been regained in the Catholic Church, and as practised in the Malankara Catholic Church it has become an asset to the Catholic Church, especially in India.

The liturgy has always been the centre of worship in the Malankara Church and the source of the spiritual life of the people. In the context of the “aggiornamento” of the Church proposed by the Vatican II along the path of a liturgical renewal, this accent on the liturgical spirituality in the Malankara Church is highly significant and remains a source of inspiration for christian communities at large.

C. THE REUNION MOVEMENT:

AFFIRMATION OF AN ECCLESIOLOGY

One of the most striking points in the ecclesiology propounded by the Second Vatican Council, was its affirmation that the Catholic Church is a communion of particular churches.¹⁵ It is on the basis of this sound ecclesiological vision that the various apostolic individual churches are becoming more and more aware of their own individuality and autonomy without losing sight of the need of their intimate union and deep communion with the Holy See of Rome.

In the event of the “Coonan Cross Oath”, which had later brought about undesirable and unwanted results, it was this individuality and autonomy that were claimed and affirmed by the Malankara Church, on the basis of its apostolic origin and antiquity. Unfortunately, as already referred to, this legitimate claim met with opposition even from the ecclesiastical quarters to the detriment of an ancient church which was forced to keep itself aloof from the centre of Catholic communion.

Thus the Malankara Church, in its state of being cut off from full communion with the Catholic Church could not claim to be authentic in terms of its apostolicity and orthodoxy. Hence its entry into full communion with the Catholic Church through its link with the Holy See

¹⁵ *Decrees of Vatican Council*, O.E. 2, A.A.S. LVII (1965)76; L.G. 13.

of Rome was necessary to regain its role and position as an authentic, individual, apostolic church.

In the reunion of 1930, therefore, through the reunited Malankara community, the Malankara Church regained its status of an apostolic individual Church in the Universal Church. But in the process of regaining communion with the Holy see of Rome, the Malankara Church defended its own spiritual heritage and patrimony maintaining its individuality and autonomy. The agreement arrived at in the reunion event between the Holy See of Rome and the Malankara community was a loud and anticipated proclamation of the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology that each individual church has its own right of being individual and autonomous as long as it remains in communion with the Universal Church through its communion with the Holy See of Rome.

D. THE REUNION:

AN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

That Christianity remains divided today is a painful fact, and even a most scandalous one, contradictory and detrimental to its very message. Efforts for reconciliation have unfortunately turned out to be causes for further division and estrangement. Closer study of the situation reveals that, apart from the doctrinal differences, prejudices and misunderstandings play a great role in keeping the communities away from one another, preventing them from a closer contact and mutual acceptance. Finding themselves in this state of alienation and division the churches are getting more and more aware of the need for coming together, to understand each other, to share with each other the riches they possess as Christian communities. This quest for universality is urging them to grow in the mystery of Christ, healing and restoring their traditions that might have been mutilated and damaged in the course of history, by way of sharing and dialogue. It is this common search for integrity and wholeness that gave birth to the modern ecumenical movement. The goal of ecumenism, therefore, is to restore unity among churches and achieve universality of their heritage through dialogue,

mutual enrichment, acceptance of each other in each one's unique reality and individuality.

Understanding ecumenism in this way, one cannot fail to realize that the Reunion Movement of 1930 was a significant event of ecumenism in our day. For the event was the crowning point of a continuous and active dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Apostolic See of Rome. Ever since the separation of the Malankara Church from the Catholic Communion, the former was making strenuous efforts to reestablish that communion, safeguarding its individuality while accepting the primacy of the Holy See of Rome. During the course of these discussions and dialogue the Holy See of Rome was gradually led to approve and accept the ecclesial identity of the Malankara Church having acknowledged its spiritual traditions and Christian heritage.¹⁶ This was, therefore, an encounter between two apostolic churches in which both were enriched, healed and perfected in terms of fullness of communion and catholicity. The reunion movement of the Malankara Church remains, perhaps, the only event of this century, in which ecumenism has reached the goal it purports to achieve.

By the entry of the Malankara community into the Catholic Communion, the Catholic Church and the non-catholic churches, were brought closer together setting an ecclesial ground for real sharing and dialogue. The reunited Malankara Church provides a common forum for the catholic beliefs and the Malankara traditions to meet. Rooted in the spiritual tradition of the Malankara Church and enjoying the Catholic communion, the Malankara Catholic Church paves the way for a deeper understanding between the Catholic and non-catholic communities. Through the reunited group, who are still closely related and acquainted with their non-catholic brethren, the latter have good opportunity and ample possibility to learn more about the Catholic Church helping them to remove prejudices and misunderstandings. Similarly through the Malankara Catholic Church, the other churches in the Catholic communion, get a closer contact with the life and spiritual heritage of the

¹⁶ Malancharuvil Cyril, *op. cit.*, pp.99-140.

Malankara Church. Hence the process of the restoration of Christian unity through dialogue, mutual understanding and acceptance has been considerably promoted and accelerated by the reunion movement. Hence placed within the Universal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church, while witnessing to the individuality and autonomy of the particular churches, loudly proclaims the truth of the catholicity of the church. It remains a persuasive testimonial to the non-catholic churches that to be in communion with the Universal Church does not destroy their autonomy as individual churches. This is most significant for the promotion of dialogue and mutual acceptance among the churches as envisaged in the ecumenical movement and its activities.

CONCLUSION

With the historic reunion movement and the emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church a new chapter in the history of Indian Christianity has been written. Through the reunion a wing of the old christian community has reentered into the communion of the Catholic Church safeguarding its own spiritual patrimony and particular traditions. If it was a restoration of its apostolic heritage and dignity on the part of Malankara Church, it was the beginning of a new encounter and dialogue with an apostolic church on the part of the other individual churches in communion with the Holy See of Rome. That the Catholic Church is a communion of individual churches united with the Holy See of Rome is strongly and clearly brought into relief in the event of the reunion. The existence of three catholic churches in India promoting different ways of liturgical worship, theological thinking and pastoral practices, is a loud proclamation of this ecclesial vision. While the reunion movement strongly asserted that the ecclesial identity of every individual church, based on its own individuality in terms of liturgy, discipline, spiritual patrimony and cultural heritage, is to be safeguarded as an ecclesial treasure, it has clearly proved that the authenticity of these individual churches is rooted in their communion with the Supreme Pastor in the Holy See of Rome, he being the successor of Peter, the Head of the Apostles and Vicar of Christ in His church. Placed within the Catholic communion the Malankara Church has to witness to the truth of diversity

in unity among the Catholics, and being related to the non-Catholic Malankara communities it has to be before them a witness to the need of unity in diversity.

Hence Reunion Movement, apart from all its other achievements and contributions, remains a most significant source and factor for the promotion of christian unity among the various churches of India, which being divided among themselves, keep the christian heritage divided. The reunion movement can rightly be called a movement for the restoration of the Indian christian heritage which has deep roots in christian antiquity.



ECUMENISM*

INTRODUCTION

The Ecumenical spirit has emerged as a powerful force exerting its influence on all the christian churches today. No christian church can keep apart from this movement because ecumenism is essentially connected with the mission that the Lord has given to the church. The church of Christ is one and He wills that it should remain one. A divided christianity is as meaningless as an estranged community is self-contradictory.

The real mission and task of the church is to render Christ present in our world, to bear witness to Him. The whole world is to find its unity and meaning in Christ. The church, being the sacrament of Christ, has the mission to be the sacrament of unity, an effective symbol of unity, in and for the world. But alas! the church of Christ, instead of being a symbol of unity, shows signs of division, being broken up into a number of denominational groups. It is the keen awareness of this situation that has given rise to the ecumenical movement of our day.

However, we find that the people of Kerala react towards it differently. Some are visibly disturbed at this new spirit, a good many are cautious about it; a few others seem to be even opposed to it. In some circles ecumenism is understood only in terms of conversion. Some identify it with efforts for conversion while some others feel that any conversion is against ecumenism. Needless to say, such confusion is caused by ignorance and prejudice that can be removed only by a clear understanding of the nature and goal (s) of ecumenism. All christians are to be prepared for an interior renewal and conversion of heart without

* Paper presented by Fr. Cyril (Cyril Mar Baselios) in a Seminar for Priests at the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, April, 1969 (Editor).

which there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name (Cf. Decree on Ecumenism, 7).

Questions for Reflection:

Do we understand that ecumenism is really connected with the nature and mission of the church?

Can we be indifferent towards ecumenism understood against this background?

Are we interested in, opposed to, disturbed by or indifferent towards it?

How can we be more interested in this movement of the church?

What is the Biblical basis for the Unity of the church?

A HISTORICAL NOTE ON ECUMENICAL MOVEMENTS

The craving for christian unity was evidently there ever since the division of Christendom. However only recently it emerged as a powerful movement promoting dialogue among the various christian churches.

Initial steps:

It is to be noted that ecumenism as a movement first took shape in the non-catholic churches. The missionary world conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 can be pointed out as the first clear step towards ecumenism as understood today. For it was the Missionary Conference at Edinburgh that provided the impetus for three main organisations in the ecumenical field.

1. International Missionary Council:

As a result of the discussions at Edinburgh on the necessity of a united missionary front, such a council was founded in 1921 to regulate and help missionary enterprises.

2. Life and Work Movement:

A common concern for social justice gave rise to this movement which held its first world conference in Stockholm in 1925 and the second in Oxford in 1937 and the third in Geneva in 1966.

3. Faith and Order Movement:

Even though many thought that common enterprises in service would be a promising approach to christian unity there were those who felt that true unity could never be achieved without coming to an agreement in doctrine. This opinion found its institutional expression in the international conference held at Edinburgh in 1937.

4. WCC (The World Council of Churches):

In 1938 at Utrecht the two organisations of 'Life and Work' and 'the Faith and Order' movements met together to form a provisional committee for a world council of churches. The second world war interrupted its work and it was only in 1948 that the WCC was able to hold its first constitutive assembly. This was in Amsterdam. This assembly actually gave a definite shape to the organisation and since then it has held its general assemblies regularly at intervals of six years. In 1954 it had its general assembly in Evanston and in 1961 in New Delhi.

During the New Delhi assembly in 1961, the International Missionary Council (founded in 1921) was integrated with the WCC and thus all three initial movements were incorporated into the WCC. The last general assembly of the WCC was held at Uppsala in 1968.

The Catholic Church and the WCC:

Though such organised enterprises were going on in other churches, the Catholic church did not enter into active and positive co-operation with them until recently. After the Second Vatican Council, however, the Catholic church showed genuine interest in the ecumenical movement. It has explained the catholic principles of ecumenism mainly in its Decree on Ecumenism. Though not a member of the WCC, the Catholic church now participates in all the discussions of the WCC that promote christian unity. Such contacts are bound to bring far reaching results.

1. THE MEANING OF ECUMENISM

The word 'ecumenism' is by now known to all though many do not have a clear idea of what ecumenism is. 'Ecumenism' is derived from the word 'Oikumene' which has received various meanings in the course of history.

Geographically it denoted the entire surface of the inhabited world and it is in this sense that the word is found in Acts 17:31. Politically it meant the Roman Empire as a unity. It is in connection with this meaning that 'ecumenical' is used to denote what has universal ecclesiastical validity: since what concerns the whole of the Roman Empire was ecumenical so what concerns the entire church is ecumenical. It could, therefore, mean the integral content of truth which concerns the whole church or binds the whole church. In modern times, however, relations between two or more churches or denominations are termed ecumenical even though the entire church is not involved therein. Further, the word is used to convey the idea of a christian fellowship and to indicate a desire for union among christians. Hence the emphasis on what concerns the entire church or some christian churches has been shifted to what concerns all christians. Thus a growing awareness of the solidarity of all christians is a characteristic feature of ecumenism today.

At present, therefore, the ecumenical movement is generally understood as a christian interchange and a quest for christian universality. All seem to have the keen awareness that the discord among the christian communions "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature" (U.R.1). As a movement, therefore, it is 'an immense activity undertaken by every christian communion, which by means of dialogue, co-operation, integration, and individual and institutional union, aims at drawing christians together and reconciling them, healing their damaged traditions, and in short, bringing the Mystical Body of Christ to its perfect fulfilment'. The second Vatican Council has expressed this briefly: 'The ecumenical movement' means those activities and enterprises which according to various needs of the

church and opportune occasions, are started and organised for the fostering of unity among christians (U.R.4).

It is, therefore, a quest for integrity and unity, for reconciliation and healing by dialogue, mutual encounter, co-operation and integration. Thus all may agree that ecumenism proclaims unity as its goal. But all may not agree as to how this unity ought to be expressed and what concrete means should be taken to achieve it. For it may be asked if it is to be conceived as a unity achieved along the lines of a fulfilment and completion of the existing visible reality and unity of the church (the view-point of the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, each identifying, of course, the existing visible unity with that of its own church) or as a creation of an external unity for the invisible church that exists above all the present christian communions (the Protestant Churches). This difference of opinion is itself an ecumenical problem, the solution of which, in fact, is inherent in the ecumenical movement.

It is too clear to be emphasised that ecumenism cannot be a movement of spiritual coercion or pressure as it has to be at the service of authentic faith. Often enough, but wrongly, the ecumenical problem is considered in terms of conversion only, which in turn is confused with proselytism. There is no need here to show that proselytism is directly opposed to ecumenism. Ecumenism, while proclaiming the unity of the christian churches as its ultimate goal, has corporate bodies and existing legitimate traditions as its object. For it aims at a mutual encounter between authentic traditions that have suffered distortion. In other words it aims at an integration of christian Communities that need a healing. It should, however, be made clear that change of communion arising from genuine convictions does not stand in the way of ecumenism. For such change aims at answering the immediate and individual needs of souls in concrete situations, the reality or the urgency of which cannot be ignored under the pressure of the efforts for unity made at a different level.

Questions for Reflection:

- What, in your opinion, is the goal of the ecumenical movement?
- Is there agreement on this point?
- What is agreed upon and what is not?

How do the different churches conceive of the unity of the christian churches?

Does this difference of opinions raise any problems in practical life?

Is the change of communion made by christians opposed to ecumenism?

an obstacle to ecumenical activities?

2. SITUATION IN KERALA

A. THE DIVIDED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

Except for a few Protestant denominations, all other christian churches in India have their stronghold in Kerala. Thus the role of the christian churches in Kerala in promoting ecumenism in India is too obvious to be stressed.

As the majority of the churches in Kerala claim an apostolic origin and historical unity for their community, enjoyed for centuries in time past, it would not be wholly useless to examine together the historical events and reasons that led to divisions and disagreements. Against this background then one can ask if those historical reasons are still valid and sufficient to justify the actual division among those churches. Thus one may also be led to evaluate other fundamental reasons-if any-that would support or justify the present divided state of the community.

The main historical divisions in the christian community of Kerala are the following:

In 1653: the division caused by the 'Coonan Cross oath' when the Syrian community of Malabar protested against the then ruling Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities. One may even trace back to the synod of Diamper (1599) the real reason of the conflict.

In 1772: the rivalry between two native Bishops, Mar Dionysius I and Mar Cyril I-both of whom were validly consecrated by the Syrian Metropolitan Mar Gregorios-caused a further division in the Malankara Church. As the civil Government recognised

ECUMENISM

Mar Dionysius I as the Malankara Metropolitan, Mar Cyril I had to withdraw to Thozhiyoor with his followers.

In 1836: the breach of the Orthodox Church with the C.M.S.(Church Missionary Society) was officially confirmed by the declarations of the Synod at Mavelikara.

In 1866: a similar conflict found its institutional expression in the Malankara Church when the people were divided into two parties, under the leadership of Mar Dionysius V and Mathews Mar Athanasius each of whom claimed to be the Malankara Metropolitan. The division continued even after the former had been recognised as the Malankara Metropolitan by the civil Government.

In 1874: another division occurred in the Syrian Church of Malabar when a few Syrian Christians of Malabar, having receded from the Latin rule, joined the Syrian Bishop Mellus. The division was confirmed when they officially accepted allegiance with the Nestorian Church in 1908.

Questions for Reflection:

Which were the main reasons for these divisions in the ancient Christian Community of Malabar?

- differences in the articles of faith
- political factors
- resistance to foreign ecclesiastical domination
- protection of liturgical rites and traditions
- discontent with local leaders
- (any other)

Why do the christian churches in Kerala remain divided? which of the reasons stated above are still valid to justify the present division? What other reasons can be added?

- Caste, community
- differences in social life, customs
- allegiance to foreign, ecclesiastical heads, communities

ECUMENISM

- desire for autonomy and independence
- fear of losing the individuality of the particular church concerned
- denial of equality of status
- difficulties in temporal and ecclesiastical administration
- (any other)

B. EFFORTS FOR ACHIEVING ECCLESIAL COMMUNION IN KERALA

Ecumenical dialogue in the sense of efforts of the Churches to achieve union and mutual communion is not something new to the christian communities of Kerala. Historically the first serious division in the church in Kerala happened in the second half of the 17th century. Soon after the rift, attempts were made to regain the ancient unity of the Church. Such efforts were seriously continued at least by some Churches in Kerala down through the centuries. We shall only mention a few of these attempts. This would give us an idea of the different stages through which the dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Catholic Church progressed and took shape. This would also help us in understanding the claims of the Malankara Church for recognition of its identity and individuality in the Universal Church and the readiness of the Catholic Church to continue its dialogue along these lines.

Immediately after the division of the Kerala christian community in 1653, efforts for reconciliation were started by Mgr. Sebastiani with the Archdeacon Mar Thoma I. At this stage, however, the Catholic Church was more anxious to get the Syrians back to ecclesiastical obedience while the separated community kept insisting that a reconciliation would be effected only on condition that they would have their own native bishop to rule over their Church. Hence no further step was taken by either of the parties.

Mar Thoma IV and Mar Thoma V also made efforts for reconciliation. But they, too, put forward the same claims as those of their predecessors as is clear from their letters of 1704 and 1748 respectively. The Catholic Church, however, still remained hesitant to admit or

acknowledge the claims of the Malankara community to be a particular local Church in the Universal Church.

The dialogue made during the time of Mar Thoma VI (Mar Dionysius I) under the leadership of Mar Joseph Cariattil in 1778 did really bring the Catholic and the Malankara churches closer together. For at this stage both churches were ready to accept mutual communion and union keeping the true Catholic faith alone as the sole criterion and basis. The success was, however, very short-lived owing to unfavourable circumstances.

Efforts for union between the two Churches were still not abandoned. Mar Dionysius V and Rev. Fr. Nidhirickal continued the dialogue and in 1888 the Catholic Church expressed its readiness to establish mutual communion between the two Churches explicitly acknowledging the jurisdictional status of the hierarchy and the legitimacy of the rites and discipline of the Malankara Church. This time again the efforts were in vain.

A real step forward was taken along these lines when the late Mar Ivanios, with the consent of the Orthodox Bishops of Kerala, started a dialogue with the Catholic Church in 1927 ("At a meeting of the Bishop's Synod held at Parumala, Thiruvalla, on November 1926, at which (1) His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios, Catholicos, (2) The most Rev. Mar Gregorios (titular) Metropolitan, Kundara and (3) The Right Rev. Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Bethany, were present, it was decided that the Bishop of Bethany be authorised to make enquiries with the Authorities of the Roman Catholic Church with a view to reunion... (Memorandum sent by Mar Ivanios to Rome on 22 Jan. 1927).

It will be seen that in all their negotiations the Orthodox Bishops had always wanted a union in which the preservation of their ancient rites and rituals and the retention for the Holy Synod and for the individual Bishops their jurisdiction over their flock.

These efforts bore some fruit in 1930, when the Catholic Church was prepared to acknowledge and approve these claims of the Malankara Church. This, in fact, was a real encounter and mutual recognition between two important churches in Kerala. A serious discussion on this

ECUMENISM

would show that the ecumenical movement in Kerala has reached a rather advanced stage at least in certain circles. It may be asked if the true significance and meaning of such a mutual recognition and communion already achieved has been fully brought out or acknowledged as a successful phase of ecumenism.

An awareness of this situation would also help us to find out true means and methods that are to be adopted to advance ecumenical dialogue among the Churches in Kerala.

Questions for Reflection:

Can you recall some efforts made towards establishing christian unity in Kerala?

What, in your opinion, did they achieve?

Are all sufficiently aware of those achievements?

If not, why?

What can you do in this respect?

Can you explain the nature of the dialogue and the content of the discussions that were going on in the past between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Church of Kerala?

At present what is the nature of the dialogue?

Do the Syrian Orthodox Churches of Kerala fear they will lose their individuality in an eventual communion with the Catholic church?

Is there any ground for such a fear? if so, what?

3. FOSTERING BETTER RELATIONS

Obstacles impede progress towards ecumenism. But they are to be faced with genuine desire for christian unity and communion. While it is important to be aware of the differences in the articles of faith, modes of worship, and spiritual traditions that separate the churches, it is good to know what all have in common that impels them to be united. It may be pointed out that we should not wait to come together until an absolute doctrinal agreement is arrived at. Idea and action must go together as they would assist and control each other.

Questions for Reflection:

What are the chief obstacles to ecumenical activities in Kerala?

- lack of intellectual preparation, mutual understanding
- lack of leadership, ecclesiastical approbation
- lack of experts, literature, centres
- lack of authentic christian faith
- fear of conversion
- fear of indifferentism
- reluctance to change and reform
- (any other)

What can be done to foster better relations among the various churches in Kerala? on the level of: individuals, parishes, Churches. In your opinion, do the following items help towards establishing unity among the churches in Kerala; family gatherings, a common bible, common publications, sharing the common historical pilgrim centres, ecumenical study groups, an ecumenical centre, inviting experts from other denominations to give lectures in the training centres including seminaries, theological centers, liturgical centers, etc. Which of these would be more useful and better suited to your concrete situation, place and Church?

4. ECUMENICAL ACTION

A. IMMEDIATE ECUMENICAL ACTION NECESSARY

Ecumenical action can be practised on various levels and in various ways. It can be expediently left to the local bodies to fix up priorities. Dialogue on the theological level, promotion of historical studies, co-operation in educational fields and socio-economic schemes, cherishing ecclesiastical communion in liturgical and spiritual life, joint efforts in dialogue with non-christians, etc., are all demanding immediate attention and action. It would be good to examine closely how these are being worked out in Kerala and how they can be better promoted. Promoting ecclesiastical communion, in varying degrees and levels may be of immediate concern.

Questions for Reflection:

What, in your opinion, can be achieved by dialogue on a theological level?

What importance do you attach to joint social actions as a means for the furtherance of ecumenism?

B. SHARING IN WORSHIP*

"Fraternal charity in the relations of daily life is not enough to foster the restoration of unity among all christians. It is right and proper that there should also be allowed a certain 'communicatio in spiritualibus', i.e., that christians should be able to share the spiritual heritage they have in common, in a manner and to a degree permissible and appropriate in their present divided state" (Ecumenical Directory, May, 1967, No. 25. See also U.R.15: 'given suitable circumstance and the approval of church authority, some worship in common is not merely possible but is recommended'; and Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, nos. 27-29).

"The term 'communicatio in spiritualibus' is used to cover all prayer offered in common, common use of sacred places and objects, as well as all sharing in liturgical worship (communicatio in sacris) in the strict sense" (Ecum. Directory, n.29).

"By 'liturgical worship' is meant worship carried out according to the books, prescriptions or customs of a church or community celebrated

* This paper was written in 1969 in order to present the thrust of the Ecumenical Movement and to explain the ecumenical concern of the Second Vatican Council. After the Council, the Catholic Church has considerably grown in its relationship with other Churches. Now official dialogue is going on between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. Cyril Mar Baselios is an official member of the Catholic Delegation, appointed by the Holy See, in these two Dialogue Commissions. The new Ecumenical Directory, published in 1993, gives new approaches to *Communicatio in Sacris* and further other possible collaboration (Editor).

by a minister or delegate of such church or community, in his capacity as minister of that community" (Ecumenical Directory n.31).

The Ecumenical Directory goes on to treat of two things separately: prayer in common (nos. 32-37) and sharing in liturgical worship (nos. 38-63); the latter subdivided into sharing with our separated Eastern brethren (nos. 38-54), and sharing with other separated brethren (53-63). Strictly speaking, there is no sharing of sacramental worship with the 'other separated brethren', but there is in the case of our separated Eastern brethren and the recommendations of the Directory would seem to be relevant in the context of Kerala. (N.B. The Directory notes, n.41, that in the matter of sharing in liturgical worship, 'the norms which apply to Oriental Catholics apply equally to the faithful of any rite, including the Latin').

The norms of the Directory in the matter of liturgical sharing may be summarized as follows:

1. The Sacraments in question are Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Anointing of the Sick. (But note a regulation concerning marriage in the Oriental Churches decree, no.18): "By way of preventing invalid marriages between Eastern Catholics and baptised Eastern non-Catholics, and in the interests of the permanence and sanctity of marriage and of domestic harmony, this sacred Synod decrees that the canonical form for the celebration of such marriages obliges only lawfulness. For their validity, the presence of a sacred minister suffices, as long as the other requirements of law are honoured".
2. The sacramental communication should take place only after satisfactory consultations with the competent authorities (at least local ones) of the separated Oriental Church.
3. As great a degree of reciprocity as possible should be aimed at. (If Catholics agree to give the sacraments to Orientals, in similar circumstances Catholics may be allowed to ask them from the separated Eastern brethren).

ECUMENISM

4. Apart from cases of 'necessity' (treated for in general Moral Theology), a reasonable ground for encouraging sacramental sharing would be if special circumstances make it materially or morally impossible over a long period for one of the faithful to receive the sacraments in his own church.
5. In the matter of Penance, an Eastern separated brother, in the absence of sufficient confessors in his own church (*difficiente copia*, in the Latin text, n.46), if he spontaneously desires, may go to a Catholic confessor. And reciprocally, in the same circumstances, a Catholic may go to a confessor of a separated Eastern Church.
6. If a Catholic goes on a Sunday or Holy day to an Orthodox Liturgy (Mass) for any of the reasons given in no.50 of the Directory (public office, blood relationships, friendship, desire to be better informed, etc.) he is not further bound to assist at Mass in his own church.
7. Whenever a Catholic is thus present at an Orthodox Liturgy (Mass) he may take part in the common responses, hymns, actions, etc (Receiving Holy Communion in such circumstances is governed by the norms already stated above: if it has been materially or morally impossible over a long period to receive Communion in his own Church etc.).

N.B. In all this, both sides should take care not to arouse any suspicion of proselytizing; the danger of indifferentism should also be avoided.



ECCLESIAL PERSPECTIVES EMERGING FROM THE NEW CODE OF CANON LAW FOR THE ORIENTAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES*

INTRODUCTION

The Post-Vatican years have been specially significant for the various efforts made at different levels to renew the life of the Church, especially in terms of its God-given mission. Regarding the Oriental Catholic Churches, one of their immediate concerns was the need of the codification of a Common Code of Canon Law to coordinate and regulate their life and ministry. Thus after relatively long period of formal preparation for about 17 years, through the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of Canon Law for the Oriental Churches, a common code of Canon Law for the Oriental Catholic Churches was published on 18th October 1990, which will come into force from the 1st of October 1991. From that time onwards the Oriental Catholic Churches are expected to enter into a new phase of their growth as autonomous churches- (*Ecclesia sui iuris*) or ecclesial Communities.

The entire Malankara Catholic Church -Laity, Religious, Clergy, Hierarchs, and the Episcopal Council- is to be aware of this new ecclesial phase and has to be prepared for giving an adequate response to the divine call it entails, strengthening itself to meet the challenges that would emerge from that situation.

In this brief paper, we are confining ourselves to dealing with some of the juridical effects of the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law for the Oriental Catholic Churches. While understand

* This was a paper presented by Cyril Mar Baselios in a seminar in 1991, organized by the Diocese of Tiruvalla at Santhimilayam, Tiruvalla (Editor).

the Code has direct bearing on our pastoral ministry and practice in the Malankara Catholic Church, we shall have to be aware also of the ecclesial vision the Code gives us, with which we have to be equipped to respond to our ecclesial vocation.

THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE NEW CODE

1. THE JURIDICAL STATUS AND AUTONOMY: A METROPOLITAN CHURCH

The new Code of Canon Law binds all the churches in the Catholic Communion, Orientals as well as Latins, in matters specifically indicated. The Malankara Catholic Church, therefore, as an autonomous Church (*Ecclesia sui iuris*) in the Catholic communion, is to be governed by this new code according to the laws and legal provisions contained therein.

In the new Code the Malankara Catholic Church obtains the juridical status of an autonomous Metropolitan Church (can. 155. § 1,2). It implies that, at present, it is a Metropolitan who is the president and the highest ecclesiastical Head, under the supreme power of the Roman Pontiff, of the Malankara Catholic Church (can.159). There is also a Council of Hierarchs, members of which are all the Bishops of the autonomous Church (can.164. § 1). In this Episcopal Council only the residential Hierarchs and Coadjutors have a deliberative vote; others may have it if the particular law provides it (can. 164. § 2).

The Metropolitan, who is the president of the Metropolitan Church, can issue administrative orders, in accordance with the common law and with the consent of the Episcopal Council (can.167. § 4). But the highest ecclesiastical legislative authority in and for the whole Malankara Catholic Church is the Council of Hierarchs, whose president is the Metropolitan (can.159; 167 § 1-3). The Metropolitan has to send to the Holy See information on the acts of the Episcopal Council; and he must wait for an acknowledgement of receipt of the

same from the Holy See before he can validly promulgate the laws and norms enacted by the Episcopal Council (can.167. § 2).

A Question Not Answered

The questions whether or not the juridical autonomy of a Metropolitan Church is sufficient or adequate for the government of the Malankara Catholic Church is not discussed here though we are aware of the significance and relevance of it. The issue that is directly dealt with here is the juridical status and autonomy the Malankara Catholic Church actually holds in the new Code. This point is mentioned here to avoid confusing the actual situation with the ideal one. It is, however, noted that the process of the restoration of the Malankara Apostolic Church in its Catholicity, Unity and Holiness is a matter that should have a priority of its own and should attract the serious attention of every one who believes that the Malankara Church has a God-given mission which alone justifies its individual existence as an autonomous local Church. Only a clear understanding and an awareness of our mission, of its meaning and scope, will provide us with the necessary criteria to judge the adequacy, effectiveness and feasibility of the juridical structures we need in the Malankara Catholic Church. How the present juridical structures and provisions can actually promote or hinder the implementation of its mission according to its ecclesial vocation is a question that needs further study.

2. JURIDICAL PROVISIONS: COMMON AND PARTICULAR

Like any other Oriental Catholic Church, the Malankara Catholic Church too is bound by the new Code of Canon Law in its ecclesial life and ministry. From the time the new Code comes into force (1st of October, 1991) there will be the following juridical effects in the Malankara Catholic Church:

1. The Canons of the new Code constitute the ecclesiastical laws of the Malankara Catholic Church with regard to all matters that are referred to in the Code.

ECCLESIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEW CODE

2. In the Canons where provisions have been made for the autonomous churches (*Ecclesia sui iuris*) to follow their own particular laws and norms, the Malankara Catholic Church shall follow its own laws and norms.

3. The following provisions are retained:

1. Liturgical norms (that are not contrary to the Canons of the Code) are to be diligently followed as they are in the approved liturgical books (can.3).
2. Concordats or Pacts of the Holy See are retained intact (can.4).
3. Acquired rights or privileges granted by the Holy See that are presently in use, unless expressly revoked by the Canons of the Code, are retained (can.5).

4. The following are abrogated:

1. All common or particular laws, which are contrary to the Canons of this Code or which pertain to matters comprehensively in the Code, are abrogated (can.6. § 1).
2. All customs, which are reprobated by the Canons of this Code or which are contrary to them and not centenary or immemorial, are revoked (can.6. § 2).

3. AREAS OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN

In order to maintain and promote the unity of the ecclesial tradition and life of the Malankara Catholic Church, which, in turn, will considerably strengthen in its mission, it is necessary to coordinate the life and activities of the various eparchies and ecclesiastical units of the Malankara Catholic Church, on the basis of unified and systematic Juridical Structures, to the extent they are needed (can.169). Hence:

1. The Episcopal Council under the presidentship of the Metropolitan shall have to be strengthened on a firm ecclesiastical basis with adequate juridical norms (can. 164, 170, 171).

ECCLESIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEW CODE

2. In the light of the provision made in the Code to leave the autonomous churches to follow their own particular juridical norms, the Malankara Catholic Church has to identify its own existing laws and customs for practical application in such cases. We have to make a study of the Code to find out where provisions have been made to follow the particular law. (In fact, such a study is being done).

3. Further, the Malankara Catholic Church, through the Episcopal Council, has to decide on the legal provisions, even, enacting laws and norms anew, in cases where canonical provisions are lacking in actual practice (can.167. § 1,2,3).

In the process of deciding on the particular juridical provisions, and of enacting new laws and norms, we shall have to take into account the juridical sources of the Malankara Catholic Church, namely:

- ♦ the traditions of the ancient Apostolic Church of India
- ♦ the liturgical and canonical discipline of the Antiochene Church
- ♦ traditions both of the undivided Malankara Church and the divided Churches
- ♦ legitimate laws and norms hitherto given by the Hierarchs of the Malankara Catholic Church and its legitimate customs.
- ♦ exigencies of ecclesial life in our modern times.

4. The priests and others who are involved in the ministry should be instructed to follow the canonical provisions of the Malankara Catholic Church, which include both the common and particular laws along with legitimate customs.

5. The entire church, especially the laity, shall be informed of and educated in the system of the administration of the church, to avoid confusion and controversial situations.

4. THE NEED OF AN ECCLESIAL VISION

It is common place to state that the Second Vatican Council has given us a new understanding of the mystery of the Church, leading us to a new, or rather, a long forgotten vision of the Church. It has thus given rise to a new ecclesiology which is strikingly different from that of the Pre-Vatican era. The relevance of this vision and the content of this ecclesiology have been in recent years themes for elaborate discussions and long disputes among the Theologians of different schools of thought.

Without entering into the details of these discussions, we can briefly state that the council has restored the image of the Church as a mystery. The Church is the mystery of God's saving act definitively instituted in His Son Jesus Christ in and through whom His Holy Spirit is given to mankind to constitute them as a people of God on earth in their history and yet destined to be the heavenly Jerusalem. The people of God thus constituted is the Church whose basic reality is their communion in the Holy Spirit given to them through their faith in Jesus Christ through whom they are united to God the Father. This communion in the divine life of the Holy Triune God is again the basis of their communion among themselves as individuals or peoples, in which they share the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to them. The various groups of people thus organically united to the Holy Spirit and sharing in His gifts form the various churches in whom the Holy, One, Catholic and Apostolic Church exists and is constituted in its concrete existential reality (OE. 2).

It is this unity of communion, envisaged by the Second Vatican Council, that has to flourish among the various autonomous local churches (*Ecclesia sui iuris*) in the Catholic Communion. An ecclesial vision of this sort has been enshrined in the juridical formulation of the Canons of the new Code.

The Theological and juridical implications of an ecclesiology of this sort would be of immediate concern for the Malankara Catholic Church. Rooted in its apostolic individuality and autonomy, the Malankara Catholic Church has to grow in the unity of

Communion with other Apostolic Churches to remain the holy economy of salvation to the world. We do not in any way mean that these tasks are mutually exclusive or contrary, but we insist that all these are to be safeguarded equally and that one or the other aspect is not to be taken care of at the expense of others. In fact, no Church can be the One Church of God without being Apostolic or Catholic, nor any can be Holy without being the Apostolic, Catholic, and One Church of Christ.

The inference is clear: the Malankara Catholic Church has to be rooted and growing in its ecclesial individuality as an autonomous church-Ecclesia sui iuris-in the Catholic Communion, to fulfil its mission as the mystery of God's saving act revealed in Christ and perfected by the Holy Spirit. This, however, entails problems that are sociological, juridical, ecclesiological or other.

Problems Actual

First of all we should realise that the Malankara Catholic Church, though acknowledged as an autonomous Church in the Catholic Communion, remains in fact one of the fractions of the Malankara Community. The majority of the Malankara Community, which again is divided among themselves, is still not in the full Catholic Communion. This being the factual situation, the affirmation of the ecclesial identity and the individuality of the Malankara Catholic Church would appear often only as a claim and that itself at a theological level. In fact, the juridical and structural debility felt at present by the Malankara Catholic Church, and for that matter by many of the Oriental Catholic Churches, is rooted in this internal division and the actual estrangement it suffers from its own community. Can the Catholic Oriental Churches ever establish their specific ecclesial individuality independent of and unrelated to their Orthodox counterparts, especially when they constitute a majority? This is a question posed not only to the Oriental Catholic Churches, but also to the Western Latin Church. In other words, the unity of the Church has direct bearing on its catholicity, which, in turn, would be understood only in terms of the authenticity and integrity of the

ECCLESIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEW CODE

apostolic individual churches. It is this truth that has persuaded Vatican II to produce the Document on Ecumenism (UR) adding it to the Document on the Oriental Catholic Churches (OE). The two documents put together can generate a certain theological strain which can be treated only by a comprehensive understanding of the whole situation.

For, on a closer look, we can learn that the present existence of the Oriental Catholic Churches itself is under an ecclesial tension. On the one hand, their specific ecclesial identity is denied to them by the Orthodox Churches and on the other hand they seem to be not powerful enough to make their presence effective in the Catholic Communion. Hence it goes without saying that this tension is rooted in the very existential condition of these churches, namely in their vocation and task to hold together their apostolic individuality and Catholic unity.

The division and estrangement of the Malankara Catholic community from the non-catholic counter parts are aggravated by the attempts to impoverish the ecclesial patrimony common to both communities, be it spiritual, theological, liturgical or other, carried out through many channels and under various pretexts. This would adversely affect not only the process of promoting the unity we seek among the various Malankara communities but also the very individuality of the Malankara Church making it difficult to affirm the Catholicity of the Church as an experiential reality in the actual life of the Church. Hence Vat. II has already directed us not only to safeguard our legitimate ecclesial patrimony but also to build up our ecclesial life on it not forgetting the exigencies of life in our modern times. (OE. 5,6).

While it is an obligation incumbent on the whole Malankara Catholic Church, the Hierarchy, Clergy, Religious and those who are engaged in apostolic ministry are duty-bound to fulfil it (can. 39, 40, 41). But, for several reasons, the tendency and the attempts for impoverishing our genuine ecclesial vision and deviating from the valid forms of our ecclesial life are unfortunately appearing mainly

ECCLESIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEW CODE

among them. This is, at least, an indication of the level of our Church-consciousness, in terms of our involvement either in the constitutive reality or in the real ministry of our Church.

Another factor that prevents us from getting rooted in our ecclesial consciousness is the prevalence of a defective ecclesiology, in spite of the ecclesiological vision given to us by Vat.II. Both within and without the Catholic Church the unity of the Church can only be seen as a unity of communion. Among the churches within the Catholic communion this unity should be fostered in actual practice and among the churches that are not yet in the full Catholic communion, means and ways should be found to attain to it. This, however, demands from the churches, especially those that are blessed with an apostolic identity and individuality of their own, the willingness and readiness to accept and acknowledge ecclesial equality among themselves which could find its expression in the model of "Sister Churches" united in the Holy Communion under the supreme pastoral care and apostolic protection of the Bishop of Rome, the legitimate successor of St. Peter, the Head of the Apostles in the Holy See of Rome. But it is known that the restoration of the Catholic Communion in the past centuries has given rise only to a peculiar juridical status for the Oriental Catholic Churches vis-a-vis their non-Catholic counterparts. For, the existence of these Oriental Catholic Churches in the Catholic communion is generally seen as a "uniate" existence both by their Non-Catholic counterparts and by the universally extended Western Latin Church. Thus their ecclesial reality and equality in the Catholic communion become less perceptible to many to the detriment of losing their ecclesial consciousness unless correct ecclesiological perspectives are consciously maintained through effective and timely formation. The danger could be aggravated by the situation in which the prominence of the Western Latin Church looms large in every sphere of ecclesiastical life, especially because of its power and presence through global extension and expansion. The situation would be worse still, if the Catholic Oriental Churches are, in fact, diminished in their stature in terms of

their individuality or specific spiritual vitality, lacking in the infra-structures that are needed to protect and promote them.

Solutions to be Found

These and other problems may be solved only when we achieve our internal unity so that we may be able to contribute our specific spiritual riches to the Universal Church in the full Catholic communion. Thus the restoration of the unity of the original Malankara Church is basic to the establishment of the identity and individuality of the Malankara Catholic Church and to the affirmation of its active presence within the Catholic communion. This would imply that we have to make all efforts to restore the full Catholic communion of the whole Malankara Church in which ecumenical dialogue and reunion apostolates are imperatives.

Ecumenical Dialogue for Church-unity is not merely a matter of academic exercise, but it is vitally important for the Malankara Catholic Church. On the one hand, we should be well informed of the goal and dynamics of ecumenical dialogue among churches; and on the other hand we should not be ignorant of the logistics and relevance of the Re-union apostolate in the Malankara Catholic Church. At times there is attempt to place ecumenism and reunion as mutually exclusive. Vatican II does not find any contradiction between the two; on the contrary, it encourages both the movements, as inspired by the Holy Spirit (UR. 4).

The Ecumenical Movement, correctly understood, is a movement that promotes the meeting together of churches among themselves in which their ecclesial traditions, be it spiritual, theological, juridical or liturgical, are encountering each other. It is a dialogue in which the churches seek together to regain and re-establish their holy communion by way of mutual healing, if damaged or mutilated, and the complementarity of their ecclesial traditions in view of discovering the divine and Apostolic tradition on which alone an ecclesial life can be validly and permanently built up.

The gaining or re-gaining of catholic ecclesial communion by an individual or groups is the result of a pursuit after the perfection of

ecclesial spiritual life in view of sharing more and more in the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesial community. Hence, as Vat.II clearly teaches, the two movements are on two levels, though the source is the same. In fact, it is through the individuals who come to share the same divine gifts, that the churches, mutually isolated, are brought together. Hence the apostolate of Reunion, is a strong means, we maintain, for bringing together the Malankara Catholic and non-catholic communities in unity, preparing a wider ground for true dialogue between them. This, however, presupposes a genuine desire for attaining the unity of the Malankara Church which can be effective only by a change of attitudes, dispelling prejudices, mistrust and mutual antagonism.

CONCLUSION

The Malankara Catholic Church is entering into a new phase of its ecclesial existence, especially because of the new Code of Canon Law, by which its ecclesiastical life and activities are to be regulated and protected. Though it obtains at present only the juridical status of a Metropolitan Church in the new code, it has the right and obligations to grow and fulfil its mission as an autonomous Church in the Catholic communion, recapturing its authenticity in terms of its apostolic individuality. Accordingly, it has to prepare and equip itself to be the mystery of Salvation in the world, true to its name and vocation as the Church of God founded on His Son in His Holy Spirit.



FAMILY : A COMMUNITY OF FAITH*

INTRODUCTION

In the light of the declaration of the year 1994 as the International year of the Family made by the United Nations Organization (UNO) and the Catholic Church, it is fitting that the National Convention of the Malankara Catholic Mission in America has chosen "Family" as the main theme of this convention. While appreciating the concern and efforts of the organisers in this regard, I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the whole Malankara Community in the U.S.A. for having invited me to take part in the convention, especially for giving me the opportunity to present a paper on the theme "Family: A Community of Faith". The theme is indeed very important and significant, especially in our life in modern society where Faith-life is on the decline.

It is because of the concern of the Church for the human family that the Church along with the United Nations Organization declared 1994 as the International Year of the Family inviting the attention of the whole world to the human family.

It was on June 6th 1993 that Pope John Paul II announced in St. Peter's, Rome, the news of the Family Year. Later, a special Delegate of His Holiness celebrating the Holy Eucharist in the Basilica of Our Lady at Nazareth on 26th December, 1993 solemnly inaugurated the International Year of the Family. The period of the celebration is fixed for the entire period of 1994, ending on the Sunday following Christmas in 1994. Special programmes in terms of conventions, seminars, conferences, renewal retreats, action plans, family counselling, reconciliation talks, dialogue meetings, etc. are arranged in the whole church in view of

* Paper presented by Cyril Mar Baselios at the National Convention of the Malankara Catholic Missions in N. America, New York on Aug, 4-6, 1994 (Editor).

strengthening families in their struggle for achieving happiness and prosperity, especially against the challenges they face in the modern world.

The theme "Family: A Community of Faith", includes two points: (1) Family is a community and (2) Family is a community of faith. Hence a discussion on the very nature of the family in terms of its constitutive role as the basic community in the society is necessary and useful.

1. FAMILY: A COMMUNITY

It is universally admitted that the human family is the basic social unit of the human society and for that matter of the church. But the inner meaning and the underlying truth of this statement are not always fully understood, nor developed.

Our social life is built and sustained by a series of relationships, with living and non- living beings, and they have great influence in shaping us and our life. Of these, relationships among human beings are the most important and decisive. But such human relations originate in the human family, based on the relationship of man and woman as husband and wife; of father and mother, as parents of children. The family is the oldest form of human relationship that is universally practised and sustained. It is the family that is the cradle of life, the source of the future and of future generations. It is through the relationships of the members of the family that the basic values of life, like love, truth, goodness, justice, honesty, etc. are learned and experienced. Hence it is in family that we start learning our life in the human society. Again it is the quality of this experience and learning that is decisive in shaping the future of any individual. Since the individuals make up the society, the formation of individuals through their primordial relationships in the family is crucial to the building up of the society. And thus the family is the basic cell of the society and the cradle of its culture. As the sanctuary of life and transmitter of values, the family stands out supreme. No wonder that the attention of the whole world is directed to the family, to see if the family is still capable of playing its role as the bosom for the birth and growth of healthy human beings, against the background of the serious challenges the family faces in the modern world.

In spite of the fact that the family is the oldest form of human relationships, its foundations are shaken by the force of the modern waves ruthlessly and continuously rolling over it. While it is true that the individuals make up the society, it is equally true that the society shapes and conditions the individuals. Similarly while the families are the basic units of the society, the society does exert its influence on the families, as the family is a living organism and evolving institution in the society. Hence the real situations of the society and the changes in it are bound to affect the families for good or bad. Hence the socio-cultural changes, scientific and technological progress, growth of industry, spread of ideologies, shifts in the value systems, growing consciousness of political autonomy, economic conditions of affluence and poverty, misery and slavery, unemployment, war and persecution, migration and cultural alienation, etc. can affect the family and can even seriously threaten the very foundation of it. In fact they do disfigure the nature of the human family and often destroy the purpose of it. The situation and the extent of the dangers may vary from place to place and people to people. But the fact that the family tends to lose its power as the basic institution of human life and loving relationships is generally admitted. At this juncture, it is the bounden duty of all concerned to re-instate the family in its proper place rendering it capable of re-capturing its dignity and role as the basic unit of our human society and, for that matter, of the church.

In an effort to restore the family to its proper place as the basic unit of human society, the teaching of the church on the nature and goals of the family is supremely important.

Always concerned about the welfare and good of the entire human race, the church has been carefully giving her guidance to individual families. In our modern times, the Second Vatican Council elaborately treated the subject of family in "*Lumen Gentium*" (the constitution on the Church) and in "*Gaudium et Spes*" (pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Of late, in 1981, Pope John Paul II published his apostolic letter "*Familiaris Consortio*" as the most authentic recent teaching on the family. In this International Year of the Family Pope John Paul II has issued an apostolic letter to families once again explaining the nature, goal and function of the family.

The community of the family is built on the communion of the members of the family, of which the communion of the husband and wife, father and mother is basic. That is why Vat. II described the human family as originating from "a covenant" in which man and woman give themselves to each other and accept each other (G.S.48). This conjugal covenant of marriage leads the spouses to be open to a lasting communion of love and life. This communion of the spouses gives rise to the community of the family. Hence family, in its real sense and basic reality, is understood as a community of human life, a community of persons united in love (*Letter to Families from Pope John Paul II*, p.13). It goes without saying that this communion should pervade the entire life of the members of the family especially of the spouses. It is indeed a communion with God in His life, which is shared with others, immediately and intimately with members of the family, especially between the spouses. It is clear that only human persons are capable of a 'communion of love'. And in the conjugal communion of love, the husband and wife preserve their personalities with integrity and equality. Much more than that, they enrich themselves by their act of mutual self-giving and surrender, made in full freedom and consciousness.

The community of the family thus originating from the irrevocable communion of conjugal love between a man and a woman is expanded and prolonged in the children born to them (*Letter to Families*, p.19). Hence the most significant characteristic of the human family is that it is a community which, in fact, is the basic unit of the human society at large.

2. FAMILY: A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Family is understood as a community of faith from two perspectives: (1) the family community as an object of faith; (2) the family community as the subject and transmitter of faith. Both these aspects are to be studied in depth to have an adequate understanding of the family which only will ultimately equip us to face the crisis we experience in our faith-life in the modern world.

A. FAMILY AS OBJECT OF FAITH

Acknowledging that the family originates from the free and conscious choice of a man and a woman to offer themselves to each other in the communion of love constituting a community, we should understand that the inner solidity of this conjugal commitment rests on the dignity and capacity of human persons created in the image and likeness of God. The love that is vested in the human person, the human love, is nothing but the likeness and image of God, the Father, who offers himself totally to his Son and His Holy Spirit, in the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity and in the paternal love shown in and towards the world He created. The most sublime of the truths revealed to us and accepted by us in faith is that God is love, a diffusing and creative love. It is after this creative love of God that 'all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named'(Eph.3.14-16). The communion of love underlying the community of the family is ultimately the mystery of the love of God. The fatherhood, the motherhood, the childhood and the dynamism of their communion of love pervading the community of the family reflect nothing but the powerful love of God creating the whole universe and man on earth to share His life-giving love. It is to this truth that the holy scriptures testify (Gen.1.24-28; 19.6-8).

Situating the conjugal union of man and woman in any context other than that of the communion of love received and accepted by them from God, would be depriving the human family of its very foundation and sustaining source. Affirming the natural foundation of this conjugal covenant of love, our Lord Jesus Christ has raised the commitment of communion of the spouses made in the marriage to the dignity of a sacrament in the church. But this is a matter of faith and only the faithful accept and receive this sacrament of marriage, as a source of spiritual strength and divine life. That is why the covenant of Matrimony of a christian couple cannot but be a sacrament, both for them and for the community of the faithful. It is again this sacramentality of the matrimonial bond of love, wherein originates the community of the family, that keeps it in its dignity and status boldly withstanding the snares of the world and its allurements. In short, it is only in our faith that we can understand, protect, cherish our family and enjoy our life in the

family. The belief, that God created mankind, male and female, and that He willed their equality among themselves and their mutual complementarity in life uniting them as husband and wife to be parents of their children, is no small support for the family to be together and to face the challenges of the modern world. Similarly the conviction of the couples received from their faith that their matrimonial bond is a holy sacrament by which their communion and life in the Holy Spirit is continued and stabilised, is not an insignificant source of strength and courage to protect their family in its life and dignity from the degrading and divisive forces blowing against it. Finally, the clear teaching and the continued exhortation of the Church that the human family, especially the christian family, should remain the cradle of "the civilisation of love" (Cf. *Letter to Families*, pp.12-70) that has been brought about by the redemptive mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his life, passion, death, resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit, is an unfailing treasury of inspiration and enlightenment to identify the role of the family in our society and to take up the obligations it has in the great mission of cooperating with God in establishing His Kingdom on earth. Hence family, in its real meaning and destiny, gains greater significance and wider responsibilities in the light of christian faith.

B. FAMILY AS THE SUBJECT AND TRANSMITTER OF FAITH

The subject of faith, understood as a personal commitment to God in terms of our response to God who reveals Himself to us in His self-communication, is always the human person. But this person, as His Holiness Pope John Paul II says in his *Letter to Families* (p.20), has a genealogy that is bound up with the family. It is in the family that a person is born, specifically to a mother and father. It is again in the environment and primordial relationships of the family that one learns one's habits, shapes one's character and forms one's values, in short, grows to one's personhood. This is true also of one's regeneration and re-birth into the Kingdom of God "through water and spirit" (Jn. 3,3-7), which takes place through baptism in the church. It is, therefore, through and from one's birth in the church that one grows and matures into one's christian personality. The faith of the church, of the community of the faithful, is the basic factor in the process of this growth. But the faith of

the church and the communion of the church is learned and experienced in the faith-life of the family that is rooted in the Church. Thus the Family is described as the 'Domestic Church' (*Letter to Families*, p.62) which fulfils in its own way the mission of the Church.

It should be remembered that the parents are the first educators of their children, which is all the more true in the field of religious education. Thus the faith of the church is transmitted to the younger generation, to the future generation, by and through the family by means of living examples of daily life and through formal and informal education. For this, the family has to be sharing in the faith of the church through the actual practice of it by the members of the family, of whom the parents are to be in the front as examples and models of faith-life. Hence when we describe the family as a community of faith, and for that matter, as the subject and transmitter of faith, we are pointing out the fundamental role of the family as the basic unit of the church to receive, to cherish and to transmit the faith. In fact, the family is the first and most important path of the church and it constitutes 'the way of the church' (*Letter to Families*, pp.3,5). Hence in and together with the church, family remains the subject of faith.

It is our experience that we have learned the first lessons of our faith in our families. This learning elaborated and continued in the catechetical instructions of the church is again confirmed and experienced in our daily life in the families. Whenever and wherever this process is lacking, neglected or denied, the faith-formation of the members of the family suffers and consequently the faith-life of the family is in danger of decline and defection. It is, therefore imperative that we keep our family a community of faith and make it grow in the life of faith in and through the salvific mediation of the church, which continues the redeeming mission of Christ.

3. A REFERENCE TO THE FAITH-LIFE OF THE MALANKARA FAMILIES

In this connection a reference to our Malankara families is in order. Having highlighted the constitutive reality and the actual role of the

family in the society and in the church, it is easier to note that the Malankara families are in a vantage position. Our cultural patrimony and religious heritage place our families in a milieu that is specially helpful to fulfil their God-given tasks and responsibilities. Some of the elements of our traditional family life, like the respect and attachment we cherish towards parents and elders, the collective interest and concern shown in arranging and instituting a marriage bond, the solemnities, both social and religious, of the celebration of the wedding, the impact of the traditional practices of marital morality and religiosity, the festivities and rites connected with the birth of a child, its baptism and initiation to school-learning, marriage customs, funeral rituals, memorial services of the deceased, are indications of the sacredness and attitudes we cherish within the communitarian bonds and relationships of our family. In addition to these religious and cultural values, our families are also blessed with the gift of catholic apostolic faith which we are called to live and practise according to the traditions of the Apostolic Malankara Catholic Church. We are all aware that the Malankara Community, is firmly determined to preserve its own ecclesial patrimony, as it has always done in the past. But one has to note that it is mainly through the faith-life of our families that the patrimony of our ecclesial faith is preserved and passed on the generations. We acknowledge in a personal relationship our communion with the Most Holy Trinity, worshipping the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Similarly our celebrations to remember specially the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ brought through his birth (25 days of abstinence before Christmas), Baptism and public ministry (Feast of *Denaha*), Passion and death (Fast of the lenten season, Holy Week Services), Resurrection and Ascension (Easter season), Gift of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), etc. are all special features of our liturgical life that keep our families in the mainstream of our faith-life. Our understanding of the church as the continuation of the divine economy of salvation in which God is present through his saving act, is still prominent in our approaches and relationships with the church.

The great importance we give to the canonical and private prayers recited in common by all the members together in our families, the ecclesiastical fast and abstinence we observe strictly in our families, etc. are

FAMILY

indicative of the nature and quality of our spiritual and ascetical life which we should like to cherish in accordance with our religious heritage. In short, our common understanding that we are pilgrims and yet members of a redeemed church in which the Risen Lord is always present and active, is reflected in and through our spiritual life. The unfailing devotion we express through our traditional practices to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the supreme model of our family-life, in terms of faith, hope and charity, is a particular mark of our christian life. The recollective prayer and fasting observed for 8 days before the feast of the nativity of our Lady and the fifteen days of fast and abstinence in preparation for the feast of the assumption of Mary, the Mother of God, are our unique contribution to the devotional life of the Universal Church.

Hence our families, wherever they are, are to be kept in the value system of our religious heritage and culture, above all of the spiritual patrimony of our Apostolic faith as handed down to us through our Malankara Catholic Church. This is certainly the most effective means of promoting our families in their pursuit of happiness and prosperity, protecting them from the snares of a valueless civilisation and Godless world.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the celebration of the International Year of the Family, we shall try to understand more about the mystery of the human family in its reality and God-given dignity and role as a basic community, following the teachings of Holy Mother Church which remain the most authentic and valuable guide for us. Understanding the family-community as a community of faith, we are led to realise the great responsibilities and obligations of christian families to preserve the spirit of faith and direct human society in the path of goodness and truth transforming it into a family of God's people. This is the process of evangelisation, of transforming the world with the values of the Kingdom of God, which is the specific task of the church fulfilled through families rooted and growing in the faith of the church.



PRIEST IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY*

Question : *Can the mission of the catholic priest in today's society be recounted briefly?*

Answer: While speaking about the priestly mission in today's context, three things must be kept in mind: First of all, the great shift in the perspective of the church in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. There has been phenomenal changes in the understanding of the relationship between man and God, between man and man, and between man and the world. Very specially the awareness that the church is consciously committed to protect and promote human values deserves special mention among those. Unfortunately a good many of the priests fail in receiving this vision. But it should be on the basis of this vision that the priestly mission is evaluated. The crisis of today is more about the mission of the church than that of the priest himself.

Secondly there is a mistaken notion that the NT priesthood is a continuation of the OT priesthood. The OT priesthood was a right and duty of a particular tribe. When the land was divided among the other eleven tribes, the Levi tribe got service at the temple as its lot. Thus temple worship and service became the profession and means of sustenance for Levi. It is not this ritualistic priesthood that we notice in Christ, the Eternal Priest. Thirdly it is this priesthood of Christ which stands as the foundation for the priesthood in the Church. The only way to understand properly priesthood and priestly mission is by getting to know more fully

* This is an interview with Cyril Mar Basaelios by the Editor of the *Assisi* Magazine, conducted in 1990. This interview was conducted in the context of the Bishops' Synod on Priestly Formation. It was originally published in Malayalam in *Assisi*, November, 1990, 6-10. The present one is the English translation of the same by Fr. Mammen Chackalapadickal of the diocese of Tiruvalla (Editor).

the priesthood of Christ. When the NT teaches that it is not according to the order of Levi or Aaron, but that of Melchizedek that Christ is the priest, we have to observe the essential change in the very understanding of priesthood itself. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews (7, 16.26) that it is not by bodily descent but by a spiritual descent that Christ is constituted eternal priest by God and that this priesthood remains ever immutable. Moreover the author of Hebrews teaches that Christ fulfilled his intercessory role as priest through shedding his own blood and not through the ritual sacrifice.

NT recounts the process by which Christ becomes priest in the following way: First of all Christ did not glorify himself, but the Father glorified him. Secondly Christ offered his entreaties to the Father with great tears. That is, though he was son, he learned obedience through suffering. Through that Christ was appointed the cause of eternal life (Heb 5, 6-10). In short, the sacrifice of Christ for human redemption was never a mere ritual sacrifice. Rather it was his very own self-sacrifice. This was the only sacrifice that was acceptable to the Father. If the sacrifice that we offer were to be acceptable to the Father, it has to be akin to the self-sacrifice of Christ.

The Eucharist, in its integral and holistic sense is the centre of christian life. The Eucharist reminds, instructs and enables us to partake in the covenantal relationship between God and man. Such a eucharistic celebration can be reckoned as the mission of the priest.

Question: *If so, does the activity or ministry of the priest limit itself to the four walls of the church?*

Answer: Certainly not. Our mistake is that we take the Eucharist in a very narrow sense. The eucharist is with the people. The eucharist begins already from the moment in which the people are gone in search of. Preparing them for the eucharist is also a part of the eucharist. Unfortunately, our worship often begins at the sacristy and ends at the altar. It should be from amidst the people and with the people that we should approach the altar.

Question: Where should the priest begin his ministry?

Answer: Where the people are, there the priest begins his ministry. The needs and genuine desires of the people determine the priestly ministry. It can be social work, education, health-care, and so on. The scope of activity of a priest in North India need not be the relevant ministry of his counterpart in Kerala. The activity of a priest at the city of Trivandrum may not be appropriate among the villagers or *adivasis* of Bathery. The essential thing is to understand that the formation of the people of God is the purpose of priestly ministry. This is the work of the priest. There is no contradiction here between the spiritual and the terrain. In fulfilling this task, the priest must be aware of the need of making himself obedient to the plan of God, and of his obligation towards the people. A priest is not appointed in order to initiate some projects, but to continue the work of Christ. Certainly it would be dangerous if the intent of his priestly ministry were to make himself a messiah.

Question: To fulfill such type of a priestly ministry, is today's seminary training adequate?

Answer: Not really. It is mainly because, the seminarians do not get the realization that they are being commissioned by God for the consummation of the divine plan. In stead of concentrating more on the training which will enable the students to fulfill their priestly ministry, seminaries often limit themselves in imparting mere techniques for personality development. Though the instruction given by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India for priestly formation insists that "The Mystery of Salvation" must be taught from the early years, it has remained only as one among the many subjects. The consciousness, that as future priests they are chosen by God and that they offer themselves willingly to the people must start growing in them. For this, those who train them should have a clear vision and should follow a holistic curriculum and pedagogy. Not enough that they study philosophy and other scientific subjects, but that they should have a clear apprehension as to why they should learn these. They learn them in order to strengthen a life of sacrifice and dedication. If this life of dedication and sacrifice were to

come true, there should be an overall change in the formation programme of the seminaries.

Question: Because of its universal presence, the Latin Church may find a bit difficult to make alterations in its formation programme. Whereas, what hindrance is there for the Oriental Catholic Churches in India to bring about these changes?

Answer: Though acknowledged in principle and granted in the official documents, even today the non-latin catholic churches have not been able to create an identity and individuality. Just as politically and economically underdeveloped nations act according to the dictations of the developed nations, Eastern Catholic Churches are still today live under the shadow of the Western Catholic Church. In their principles and practices they are very often constrained to imitate the trends of the western Church. Knowingly and unknowingly this process continues.

Especially in the Syro-Malabar Church, because of historical reasons a semi (second?) Latin theology and institutional set up have come into existence. In the formation of fundamental predispositions, life style has a great role to play. With this in mind, and basing pastoral ministry on one's own tradition, when theology builds up and nurtures a society, then alone can Church become universal-catholic. It has become crucial today to be faithful on the one hand to the rich traditions and on the other hand to respond honestly to the challenges of the present-day-society. It should be in this background that the priestly formation be evaluated.

Because of the numerical strength, the Syro-Malabar Church is considered as the Oriental Church in India. But it is regretful that the individuality of the Eastern Churches and their spiritual patrimony are not being sufficiently brought out through it.

In the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, sometimes eastern thinking patterns and organization of ecclesial life are not sufficiently taken care of. These things hinder the universal character of the church. Therefore, only in the struggle to protect and promote the ecclesial identity that the Eastern Churches in India, namely, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches can possibly achieve changes in the formation of the future priests.

Question: Our society today is very much politically susceptible and regards everything critically. In this state to act ingenuously and successfully should we not include more social work and other similar schemes geared to get in touch with the people ("Contact programmes") in the formation?

Answer: It is essential to have "contact programmes" during the seminary formation. But if it were to be fruitful the students should have certain preparations and techniques. Moreover these "contact programmes" and other social activities have to be gradual, balanced and proportional with other domains of formation. For example, in the first stage (years) of seminary formation it is not at all sound for the psychological growth of the students to be involved with so many people and to be absorbed in their innumerable problems. A high emphasis should be given for seeking information regarding the techniques for social analysis. They should be made aware of the purpose of social contacts, and the need of growing into maturity, etc. As the consciousness of purpose in life and integrity in intention grow in them, their sense of duty shall assume prime importance.

In order to acquire a mature personality and to develop perennial values, sufficient means and scope should be provided for during this stage of seminary formation. It should be on the basis of a well-formed conviction, obtained through disciplined life pattern and through a balanced curriculum that we have to plan the "contact programmes". Our presence should definitely inspire christian principles and guarantee spiritual values.

Question: Most often our pastoral ministry is centered on one individual, the parish priest. A priest is primarily a servant of the Christian society. What role does the christian society, the laity, have in the formation of priests?

Answer: In the priestly formation the christian society has a great role to play. In the case of a secular (diocesan) priest, his relationships with his family, parish, society, etc. should remain strong. During the days of formation too he should keep up an intimate bond with his parish. However, in the present set up, there is a gulf due to various reasons, such

as the seminary curriculum, life pattern in the seminary and the economic order.

A seminary curriculum which is in no way related to the particular ecclesiastical and social life situation of the students, and the tendency of taking all precautions to assure the well-being of the students - even for the economically well off people-- cause to break the link with their families and societies.

If it is about a religious society, the students of this institute form members of a new family, having taken leave from their own natural families. But most often between these two societies (families), the students find themselves lost.

Explicitly or implicitly the laity perform their part in the formation of the priestly students. The laity have sufficient opportunities to express their expectations regarding their future pastors in the different forums of the Church. The duty of the bishops, priests and other formators is to take seriously these recommendations and translate them into the formation programme of the students. This does not mean that lay people must be appointed as trainers in the seminary. However, it is highly endorsed that lay people who excel in knowledge and experience are included in the committees which have to draw common norms regarding the seminary curriculum, pedagogy, the general life pattern of the students, etc.

Question: The Second Vatican Council has spoken concretely much about the relationship with other religious groups. Whereas in our parishes, except in the field of social work they are being kept aloof. What about common prayer services with them and seminary formation towards such a goal?

Answer: Our problem is that we lack a clear idea about our relationship with other religious groups. Even such a theology is in the process of development only. Even today, many, including bishops and priests have not taken seriously the teachings of Vatican Council. The formation in the seminaries have been reduced to imparting certain courses. We are reluctant to acknowledge and accept the possibility of some manifestations of divine grace taking place through holy men - even outside the Church.

God created all human beings as His children, and He devised the necessary means to persist such a situation.

All human endeavours which try to perpetuate goodness and value have a place and share in the divinely sanctioned situation in which God invites the human race to share His life. The guideline for our daily life and activity is to accept this truth and accordingly respect human relationships and religious values. The whole human race is at different stages in the realization of that divine manifestation culminated in Christ. In this wholistic vision the christians should be able to deepen the relationship with other brethren and the other religious people should have a special place in our hearts.

This issue becomes problematic because of the unrestrictive separation of human life into spiritual and temporal. We have to lead our life on the basis of the invitation of God to be His children. We cannot live distant from the presence of God. Everything that we do shows forth in some measure our response to God's invitation itself: either positive or negative; yes or no. Therefore there is a great need to comprehend our life fully and integrally according to the designs of God. If our seminarians were to cultivate and maintain such an attitude, then I sincerely hope that such an attitude shall provide substantial encouragements for religious harmony, mutual respect and common spiritual maturation.

Question: In the Indian tradition, for spiritual formation great importance is attached to the "master-disciple" relationship and to the Gurukulam (it is the Indian system of students staying with their teacher in his residence till they complete their studies). Even in the Kerala Church till the Middle Ages such a system did prevail. Is there any relevance now for such a system?

Answer: In education the master-disciple relationship has a noble place, especially when it concerns with spiritual discernment. However, it is not possible to affirm that the *gurukula* system has much relevance today. A lot of change has taken place in the understanding about the *gurukula* system of education. Because, the concept about the master and his social significance have varied much. Socially so many other elements exert their strong influence in the field of education. Moreover, in this age of

specialization, it is impossible for a single individual to handle more than one subject in depth. To the extent that is possible, we have to adapt the positive and pertinent elements of this early *gurukula* system in our seminary formation so as to counter the present "mass production" system in the seminaries.

Question: There is an allegation that a lion's share of the time of a parish priest is spent in administering the sacraments and in overseeing construction projects. Comparing the life and activity of Christ, the eternal Priest, these allegations do not seem to be out of place...

Answer: The crucial issue here is how the administering of the sacraments is looked at. It is that ritualistic celebration of the eucharist, which without enquiring where the faithful are and how their life is, beginning at the sacristy and ending at the altar itself, makes the sacrament irrelevant. Whereas if the sacraments were to be taken as the meeting point of God and man, and were to be taken beyond the spiritual and temporal dichotomy, and were to be used for the building up of the faithful, then the priest would be always involved in the *administering* of the sacrament. That is relevant. Thus any such activity aimed towards this is part of the service and obligation of a priest.

Question: In response to a survey conducted last year at Poona regarding the most essential attribute that a catholic priest should own, the bishops held that it was obedience, and the laity retained it as chastity and priests voiced that it was service-mindedness/availability. Though all the priests should have these qualities, will not these diverse expectations hinder the peaceful execution of the priestly ministry?

Answer: It is true that there exist these diverse expectations. But in these dissimilar expectations is disseminated a certain distorted picture about the priestly ministry and duty. All these become indispensable when obedience is understood as resignation to the will of God, celibacy as complete consecration of oneself, and social commitment as part of the formation of the people of God itself. Even then, it would be pastorally imprudent to disregard the expectation of the people. For example, it is not enough that a priest becomes aware of himself as a praying person. He has to be accepted as a praying person by the community. If the

community were to believe that it is necessary to fast before the celebration of the holy eucharist, the priest will have to comply with it. To be accepted as a pastor and to function in an effective manner these become imperative.

Question: It is alleged that in certain parts of the world the religious take on a stand and modus operandi in pastoral programme, distinct from that of the diocese. What is the situation in India? Even the history of the Church itself testifies that often the religious had followed a different course of action from that of the official church pattern. Is there anything wrong?

Answer: That there happen frictions between the hierarchy and the religious is really bad. These are rooted in the deformed image about the church. Church is a community with the spirit of Christ. The charisma of each member of this community must be discerned and promoted. Hierarchy itself is a charisma. Only that it has been formally bestowed in the church. But it cannot be forgotten that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are granted to the members of the church according to the exigencies of the time. The saints and prophets who emerge in the church from time to time fulfill exactly this task. The group of faithful who were inspired by these heroic souls came to be formed themselves as religious institutions in the church. It is contrary to the very nature of these institutes to be organized parallel with the church. That is what makes discord in the relationship.

Charisms have been given for the good of the ecclesial community. Hierarchy is the backbone of the church. Only in dependence on this backbone that the church can be nurtured. Any religious institute which tries to substitute this foundational principle of the church shall not contribute towards the good of the church.

Now practically many religious communities have become like multinational organizations. Often in the projects and praxis there are many irrelevant elements, be it of the time, place or the particular church in which they are. In stead of being in a small parish somewhere in Kerala, and involving themselves with the local issues and concerns, if they were

to be concerned only with organizing national and international projects, it is natural that they come to be neglected in the pastoral field.

At this stage, it may be useful to know the oriental perspective regarding religious life and activity. In the oriental tradition religious life is regarded as the heart-beat of the church itself. Religious communities are appraised as the manifestations of intense christian life and religious practices. Religious communities have to be the centre of christian fellowship and holiness. The manifold growth of the church should remain as the dream and goal of their prayer and committed activity.

Translated by Mammen Chackalapadickal.



SOCIAL APOSTOLATE: AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR MISSION*

“What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has no works? Can his faith save him? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works....” (James 2: 14-22).

The diocese of Bathery is crossing over to the second decade of its existence. Entering into a new phase of its pilgrimage to the riches and fullness of life given us by God and shared by all of us, we praise God for all His goodness showered on us and look forward to Him for His future guidance and protection.

Accepting the God-given mission and responding to the serious challenges it involves, the diocese has placed itself for the service of the Kingdom of God hidden in His Will and revealed decisively in the fullness of time in His Son Jesus Christ. Praying for the ‘coming of this Kingdom’ fully amidst us and trying to do what is within our power to get ‘His will done on earth as it is in heaven’, we have been for the last ten years struggling for making the Kingdom a reality for humanity, especially for the poor and the marginalised among us.

Organising the activities of the diocese in various fields, the diocese has given shape to several departments with their own structures and programmes of action. The department of the Social Apostolate of the diocese is one of the best of our organised and concerted efforts to promote the welfare of our people as a human society. We have been fortunate enough to avail ourselves of the

* This article of Cyril Mar Baselios was published in Fr. Jose Palakattel(ed.), *Shreyas: A Decade of Service 1979-1989*, Bathery, 1990. This Souvenir was published on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Diocesan Social Service Department (Editor).

experience of others working in the field and to get to know the differences of different models of development already at work. It was easy for us then to start our social apostolate in a better perspective than that was hitherto available and accepted and to move out of the framework of almsgiving and occasional charities, though the need and merit of them in the practice of christian life, are never called into question. We have also been aware of the snare of focusing on projects solely meant for mere economic development isolated from the actual need and life-situations of the people concerned. For the temptation to identify development with modernisation-technological and cultural-compromising with the real values and valid visions of life jealously preserved and dearly cherished as the treasure of the common wisdom of human race, is too subtle to resist.

Thus we have been gradually led to learn that development is ultimately the growth of man himself to his full stature and he himself is primarily responsible for this process as its author and subject. This, in turn, implies that everyone has one's inner ability and capacity to grow, provided the conditions of growth are available without obstruction and hindrance from anything or anyone. This is nothing but to state that every human being must be able to give and receive one's due. This is justice. Hence it is justice that is fundamental to man's development and the denial of justice is the basic obstruction to development.

Social concern, therefore, is a concern for justice, both in its fundamental aspect and in its supra-structural aspects of common life. Social Service then is a service to justice, to redress it when violated, to make it available where denied. In its wider aspect, it is a struggle to construct a just human society in which man can live with dignity and in accordance with his God-given destiny.

That there are several social maladies that destroy the meaning of human life, both of individuals and of the society, is a sad common experience. Hence, the eradication of these maladies and its causes is an absolute condition for promoting human development. It is almost a truism to say that these maladies are taking shape and are

perpetuated in their various and fierce forms by the social structures and operational systems prevalent in our society. Hence a change in them, in view of a reconstruction of our society, is inevitable in an effective process of development. But the question as to how this structural change has to be brought about and which means have to be adopted to that effect, is a matter of divergent opinions, depending on the ideology and beliefs one has accepted and adhered to in one's life.

In fact very few realise that the evils of the world and of our life on the individual and social planes have their origin in the mind and heart of man that are distorted and perverted. Hence our problem is basically much more spiritual and religious than economical and social. Consequently, a change for better in the inner core of man is what is needed primarily and basically and only when we have the means available to that effect, along with other conditions of development, the prospects for a better human society and peaceful life will shine forth. The social apostolate of the church, in which the centrality and priority of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus Christ, calling for a change of heart and metanoia, are emphasised, has then, a rightful place, if not the unique chance, in our struggle for constructing or reconstructing a new human society. The 'new Heaven and new Earth' will then usher in its full glory and splendour. History proves that all attempts to construct a human society with the reign of justice and peace, forgetting and discarding this fundamental truth, have invariably failed miserably.

The social apostolate of the church, then, constitutes an integral part of its mission. It is in this spirit that the diocese of Bathery is engaged in this apostolate and I am happy to state that we have not deviated from our conviction and only remained truthful to our call. The hundreds of development projects-the enumeration of which is left out here-that were formulated and executed by our people and for our people in the last ten years, were nothing but our efforts to organise our people into a human community, destined to be the people of God, by effecting a real change in them in terms of their life-style towards growth into the image as children of God.

SOCIAL APOSTOLATE

I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Rev.Fr.Jose Palakkattel the Executive Director of our Social Service Department, for his total application and selfless dedication to our work and for having given leadership to our social apostolate to make it a real source of life and growth for hundreds of thousands of people around us for the last ten years. I do appreciate also the whole team of our collaborators in the social service who are arduously working at various levels, in this' great apostolate. God bless them all for offering their life to establish His kingdom on earth which He deigned to design for us.



FIRST MESSAGE OF CYRIL MAR BASELIOS TO THE MALANKARA CHURCH*

In the providence of God a new Eparchy is born in the Malankara Church. It is from the existing part of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla that the Holy See has erected the Eparchy of Bathery. To remain as the symbol of the people of God, and to manifest the life and dynamism of the Church locally, that portion of the people of God -called-Eparchy of Bathery- is being officially commissioned. This community of the faithful dedicates itself to bringing to completion the divine mandate given to it.

It is a divine call, a response in faith. It aims at a dedication in love and a life in hope. In order to respond to this call of christian living as a dedicated community, I believe and recognize that I am chosen and being commissioned by God to lead this people of God in the Eparchy of Bathery.

On this occasion I earnestly pray God that I be granted gratuitously the determination and openness to experience and to concretize the divine design for priestly ministry and apostolic duty in the church. I hope that the call to this priestly ministry may never be considered as a status symbol and as a means to gain worldly greatness. On the contrary I earnestly and ardently desire to manifest the presence of Jesus the Lord and the redemption of Christ the Saviour in the world and to become the means and ways to activate this in the world.

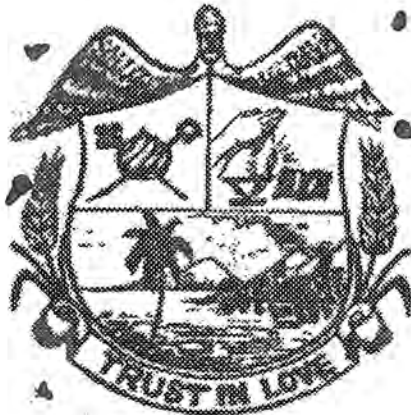
* Message given by Cyril Mar Baselios after his Episcopal Nomination on 28 October, 1978. The text was published in *Metrabhisheka Souvenir* (Episcopal Consecration Souvenir), Tiruvalla, 1978, 2. It was translated into English from the original by Fr.Mammen Varghese Chackalapadickal.

MESSAGE

I don't think or propose to carry out this divine commission solely by me. This divine call given to the people of God as a community can become a reality only through joint endeavour and with unconditional and limitless self-dedication. Hence only through that divine manifestation fulfilled in and through the community of the people of God-with the bishop, priests, religious and laity- can the church live and act. It is this love and unity of the people of God which is the strength and vitality of the church. May God the Father create those in us the Malankara Children and may the Son of God maintain this in us and may the Holy Spirit of God fulfil those in us.



THE EMBLEM OF CYRIL MAR BASELIOS



THE EVENT OF REUNION AND THE EMERGING TRUTHS*

The 'Church Union' which was held on 20 and 21 September, 1930 at Kollam under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios of Great Memory was a very decisive forward step taken by the Malankara Church. The historical relevance and the ecclesial character of that event is still being disclosed to us. It is in this context that the objectives of regularly celebrating the anniversary of that great event become clear.

Though it is the Malankara Catholic Church that gives the leadership to these anniversary celebrations, the concrete celebration takes place in any of the dioceses of this individual church. Consequently, the 63rd Reunion Anniversary Celebrations are conducted in the diocese of Bathery on 20 and 21 September, 1993. We take this occasion to express our sentiments of joy and satisfaction over the same.

REUNION DAY CELEBRATION - A COMMON DUTY.

The Reunion Anniversary Celebration, conducted under the initiative of the Malankara Catholic Church has turned out to be the historical duty of the whole Malankara christian community. But the truth is that this fact still remains to be acknowledged by all of us. It is needless to say that the historical facts of the division occurred in

* This article of Cyril Mar Baselios was originally published in Malayalam as *Punaraikyathil Pularunna Sathyangal* in *Aikyadeepam*, Vol.17, No.9,10, September-October, 1993, 9-14, 29-30. It was written on the occasion of the 63rd Reunion day Celebrations at Pulpally, Bathery on 20, 21, September, 1993. This article was translated by Fr.Thomas Naickamparambil of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum (Editor).

THE EVENT OF REUNION

the hitherto one, holy, catholic and apostolic Malankara church and of its reunion and the continuation of the same are realities concerning the whole Malankara christian community. It is beyond doubts that the unity or disunity within the church has a direct impact on its ecclesial existence and on the carrying out of its God-given mission. In fact the experiences of intense disunity and its consequent disruption of the church communities bring home to us the urgent need for unity.

In this context, the 'Reunion Event' of the Malankara Church held in 1930 and the 'Reunion Movement' and the Malankara Catholic Church born out of that event need to be viewed with interest by the Universal Church, especially by the whole Malankara christian community. Though it is not possible to undertake a detailed study of all these factors here, we would try to underline certain important truths.

1. THE GREAT REUNION EVENT

The inner meanings and the objectives of the Reunion Event of 1930 held under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios of Happy Memory are still being unveiled to us. Since this event was instrumental in determining the course of the history of the Malankara Church itself, it is important that we are in the know of the historical details of this event. It remains a historical document that His Grace Mar Ivanios and a few of his followers entered the communion of the Catholic Church on Saturday, 20 September, 1930 by swearing in, in the presence of Bishop Benziger of Happy Memory. But of late there has arisen certain doubts about the exact time of this event (see Fr. Pachomios O.I.C., "Punaraihya Sambhavam", *Aikyadeepam*, No.7, July, 1993, 29-33). Whatever be the exact time, it is beyond all doubts that on Saturday, 20 September itself His Grace Mar Ivanios and his friends swore in, in order to enter the Catholic Church communion. So also it is a documented historical fact that they offered their first Holy Mass in the Catholic communion according to the Malankara Catholic rite in the morning of Sunday, 21 September, 1993 in the Bishop's House Chapel at Kollam. If we had taken sufficient note of the ecclesial dimensions of

THE EVENT OF REUNION

the Great Reunion Event we would not concentrate our attention only on the swearing in ceremony held on Saturday. In fact, the swearing in ceremony of Saturday has its true completion in the Holy Mass of Sunday, 21. The reason for the same is that it is the Holy Eucharist that provides the strong foundation of the communion of the Catholic Church. It is in the Holy Eucharist that we attain the fullest participation in the church which is the mystical body of the Risen Lord. It is in the same Eucharist that we obtain the basis and the inner vitality of our ecclesial life and of our sacramental communion. His Grace Mar Ivanios and his friends obtained this eucharistic communion in all its dimensions and fullness only in the Holy Mass they celebrated on 21 September. It was then that their union with the Lord Jesus and with His Church was fully realized and the Great Reunion Event attained its fulfilment. Therefore the Great Reunion Event includes both the events held on 20 and 21 respectively. Moreover, His Grace Mar Ivanios himself confesses that for him the most relevant and deeply touching factor of the Great Reunion Event was the Holy Mass that he offered for the first time in the Catholic Church on 21 September, 1930 (also, his 48th birthday) (see Pachomios, *ibid.*, p.32). Besides, it is witnessed that His Grace Mar Ivanios received as in a vision a very profound insight into the ecclesial dimension of the reunion event. "There His Grace Mar Ivanios obtained an 'infusion'." The metropolitan, the bishop, the priest, the deacon and the layman together suffice to constitute the church! Immediately this insight was shared to Bishop Benziger. ... Soon everybody returned to the Bishop's House, entered the chapel and Bishop Benziger received the three of them also into the Catholic Church (see Pachomios, *ibid.*, p.32).

FIRST HOLY MASS: SIGN OF FULL COMMUNION

Allow me to state here something in a digression. We have already hinted at the prevalence of certain doubts regarding the exact moment of the reunion of Saturday, September 20, 1930. In the autobiography of His Grace Mar Ivanios it is stated that the swearing in ceremony for entering the church was held at 7.30 am. on Saturday, 20, whereas according to certain other documents, this

THE EVENT OF REUNION

event took place at 3.00 pm. on the same day. It is this fact that has given rise to the above said doubts and controversies. If what Fr. Pachomios has said above is correct, there seems to be a way out of the controversy. There are two groups of people that reunited on Saturday, 20 and their swearing in must have taken place at two different times. The reception of the bishops is a special ceremony and moreover Bishop Benziger acted as one specially authorized by the Holy See to carry out this ceremony. And afterwards it might have been under the special request inspired by His Grace Mar Ivanios, viz., 'Bishop Benziger himself' should receive the priest, the deacon and the layman into the Catholic Church, that the swearing in ceremony of the afternoon was conducted. All the reunions in the following days were conducted by His Grace Mar Ivanios himself. It is only natural that His Grace Mar Ivanios specially mentions in his autobiography his own reunion and experiences. It is also understandable that the other documents give special reference to the swearing in conducted under the influence and leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios and also to the reunions that followed. The reference to the formula of the swearing in carried out by the others is to be noted specially (see Pachomios, *ibid.*, p.32). That is all about the discussion regarding the exact moment of the Reunion.

It was after 1952 that the solemn celebration of the Reunion Anniversary was introduced. The reason why then September 20 was chosen for the celebrations could be the fact that those who gave the leadership to the celebrations concentrated mostly on the swearing in ceremony of Saturday, 20 September, 1930. But recently due to certain circumstantial pressures, the Reunion Anniversary celebrations came to include both the dates, viz., 20 and 21 September. At first sight this may look to be merely incidental. But the fact is that the exact commemoration and celebration of a historically and ecclesially great event are being reestablished in God's providence. The statement of Fr. Pachomios directs our thoughts in this line. "The dates September 20 and 21, when the Malankara church regularly celebrates the anniversary of the Reunion Great Event, signify the commemoration of the Reunion and of the first Holy Eucharist. The

THE EVENT OF REUNION

Holy Eucharist on that day which the bishops, priests, deacons, the religious and the faithful of the church together celebrate is a unique characteristic of the Malankara Catholic Church. This besides aiding the growth of the church, the unity among the faithful and above all, her spiritual nourishment, also witnesses strongly to church unity. The reunion incidents prove that all these are carried out in the wonderful plan and providence of God." (Pachomios, *ibid.*, p.32). It is the ecclesial nature of the Reunion Event that becomes clear here. The ecclesial relevance of the Reunion anniversary celebration is also the same. And the same reason justifies why this event continues to be celebrated solemnly.

2. THE ECCLESIAL CHARACTER OF REUNION

Surely, the Reunion that took place under the initiative of His Grace Mar Ivanios is a milestone in the history of the church. The truths that this event contains are extremely relevant as far as the life and mission of the Malankara Church are concerned. The Reunion of 1930 was the fundamental fruition and response of the reunion efforts of 300 years led by the fathers of the Malankara Church, begun after the division of the church in 1653. On a theoretic basis, with the reunion the ecclesial existence and identity of the ancient Malankara Apostolic Church was recognized within the communion of the Universal Catholic Church. Communion was reestablished with the Pope who is the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the successor of St. Peter and the Bishop of Rome. On account of the same reason, the Malankara Church could also regain its communion with all the individual apostolic churches of which the Pope is the Supreme Head. As a result of the dialogue held between the Holy See of St. Peter and His Grace Mar Ivanios who represented the Malankara Church with the approval of the Holy Synod, the other churches recognized that the ancient Malankara Church is apostolic and for the same reason that she has an ecclesial identity of her own. It was as a symbol of this reality that His Grace Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos were received into the Catholic communion of the Holy Church with the recognized heritages and the administrative rights of the Malankara Church. And the Holy Mass that they celebrated for the first time in

THE EVENT OF REUNION

the Catholic Church through which they regained their eucharistic communion, also had this symbolic significance.

As the ecclesial nature of the Reunion Event of 1930 becomes clearer, one gains deeper insights into the inner significance of the event. The truth that the divided Malankara Church community has been reestablished within the catholic communion through the Reunion of 1930 has not yet been largely known or recognized. So also only a small community of the Malankara Church is enjoying the catholic communion which has been opened to the whole Malankara Church. The other Malankara Church communities which form the larger majority are still hesitating to recognize the need and usefulness of this universal communion, on account of various reasons. It is here that the Reunion Movement and the unity efforts in Malankara gain greater relevance.

The 'Reunion Movement' which is continuously growing in the Malankara Catholic Church has its basis, especially in the Reunion Event of 1930. That historical event contained all the strength and inspiration needed to give rise to a church Unity Movement. The Reunion Movement has grown out to be a most important apostolate of the Malankara Catholic Church.

3. THE REUNION MOVEMENT AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

In the history of the church, the controversies, pressures and confrontations which arose at different times on the various realms of the christian church have caused the separation of many individual churches from the Catholic communion. At the same time, there have been attempts within these churches to overcome this separation and to reunite with the Catholic communion of the church. Though there have been such attempts all through, in the beginning of this century, such attempts attained a definite form and a certain ideological clarity and consequently, these attempts took the shape of a movement. This movement is known as 'Ecumenical Movement' or 'Church Unity Movement'. The Vatican II describes this movement as follows: " the term 'ecumenical movement' indicates the initiatives

THE EVENT OF REUNION

and activities encouraged and organized, according to various needs of the church and as opportunities offer, to promote christian unity" (UR.4). Thus the Ecumenical Movement visualizes a programme of action for maintaining the unity between the individual churches, for regaining the lost communion and for reestablishing, as the foundation of the life of the faithful, the church heritages which were created by God the Father in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Its mode of action consists in the mutual recognition of the churches and in the sharing of the church heritage which includes the unique divine teachings and the apostolic tradition of each church. In this process, there emerges the possibility for realizing and invigorating from time to time the above said heritage and apostolic tradition which in the course of history have suffered set backs. Thus this movement has the unity of the churches, the sharing of the church traditions and universal communion as its desired objectives. It is needless to say that this 'Church Unity Movement' has extreme importance in the context where the disunited christian church has deviated from its foundational goal and by remaining mutually exclusive local churches, weakens its own efficacy in fulfilling its God-given mission.

One can see that the 'Ecumenical Movement' is the same as the 'Reunion Movement' in so far as the former also consists of the attempts to enter into the Universal communion springing from the Supreme Authority of the Holy Church and also to regain this communion wherever it is lost. But sometimes the 'Reunion Movement' is understood in a limited and sometimes even in a mistaken sense. While the Ecumenical Movement remains essentially a dialogue between the churches, the reunion activities aim mainly at individuals. The reunion activities are those which give to those faithful who live their christian life but by staying away from the Universal Communion of the church, the needed information and inspiration in order to enter this communion of the Universal Church and to live that life of communion. When these activities are carried out unitedly and continuously with clear objectives they take the shape of a movement. It could include both individuals and

THE EVENT OF REUNION

communities. Thus individuals, groups and communities could enter the Catholic communion of the church and be reestablished there. This is a fact. There are those who understand the Reunion Movement in this limited sense, i.e., by including only individual reunions. There are also those who propagate that such reunions and the attempts for the same are against the 'Ecumenical' Movement. But such unity attempts and dialogues carried out on a church basis by the diverse and mutually distanced individual churches in order to maintain the unity between them by regaining the Catholic communion of the church need not be opposed to the knowledge and experience that the individual is to have in one's church life and also to the consequent renewal. Moreover, the process of spiritual renewal which is effected within the church and in each of its members is mutually complementary. In this regard the teaching of Second Vatican Council is very clear: " However it is evident that the work of preparing and reconciling those individuals who wish full communion is of its nature distinct from ecumenical action. But there is no opposition between the two, since both proceed from the marvellous ways of God "(UR.4).

There are occasions when the reunion activities are wrongly carried out both in the individual and church realms. The Vat.II points to certain factors which we must essentially bear in mind in our church unity attempts: viz., " every effort to avoid expressions, judgements and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult. Then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different churches and communities; in their meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features " (UR.4).

4. THE MALANKARA REUNION MOVEMENT.

Today various dialogues are being carried out on a church basis for regaining unity between the various local churches of the universal christian community, and also various activities in connection with them are held. In this context it is imperative that we

THE EVENT OF REUNION

specially evaluate the Reunion Event of 1930, the consequent Reunion Movement, the Malankara Catholic Church which was born of that event and also the reunion activities of that church.

The ancient Malankara Apostolic Church has suffered divisions in the course of time and it exists today as various small church communities. The today's Malabar Catholic Church, East Syrian Church, Malankara Orthodox Church, Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Malankara Catholic Church, Thozhiyur Syrian Independent Church, Malankara Marthoma Church, etc. are all parts of the ancient Malankara Church. Even in today's C.S.I. Church and in some other christian communities one can see the faithful of the ancient Malankara Church and its heritages.

Of all these churches, only the Malabar Catholic Church has ever remained within the Universal communion of the Holy Church. The Malankara community has lost the fullness of the Universal Church communion. It was the attempts to regain this lost communion, carried out under the leadership of the fathers of the Malankara Church for about 300 years, that became victorious in the Reunion of 1930 held under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios. That event witnessed first of all the declaration of the communion with the Pope of Rome, the successor of St. Peter and the Supreme Head of the Universal Church communion and also of the allegiance to his supreme authority. It was not a move carried out personally by His Grace Mar Ivanios. Rather it was the resultant fruit of the dialogue of around 300 years which the fathers of the Malankara Church as the representatives of the church had been continuously carrying out with the Holy See of St. Peter in Rome. The ecclesial nature of the Reunion Event of 1930 has already been mentioned about in this article.

But it is a sorry fact that this Reunion Event could bring the unity attempts of the Malankara Church only to a partial success. On the one side, the Pope of Rome who is the Supreme Head of the Universal Church and all the other apostolic churches of which he is the Supreme Head recognize and declare the apostolic foundation and

THE EVENT OF REUNION

heritages of the Malankara Church and all her ecclesial rights and privileges for her mission fulfilment as an individual church. But on the other side, only a small community of the Malankara Church under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios is responding to this gesture positively. Only when the whole Malankara Church together so responds, does the Reunion of 1930 become a real success and begin to bear fruits.

The necessity and the urgency of continuing the unity activities and attempts in the Malankara Church are clear from this. All the faithful who are convinced that entering into the universal communion of the church is the will and intention of Jesus Christ, should pray, work and dedicate their lives for the same. The Vat. II gives very clear instructions in this regard: "today in many parts of the world, under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The Sacred Council exhorts, therefore, all the catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism "(UR.4).

The 'Reunion Movement' which includes the attempts to regain the unity and communion between the different church communities of the Malankara, precisely because all are parts of an ancient individual apostolic church, is of a specific nature and it functions on a specific realm. Its style and procedure belong to the Malankara Church communities. It functions on a different realm from that of the Ecumenical Movement which is carried out on a universal basis between different local churches which include diverse people and cultures. This is because the Reunion dialogues are held not between different individual churches, but between the different communities of the same individual church, and it is here that the Reunion activities are fulfilled. These Reunion attempts should proceed to its specific goal with a suitable style of action.

The divisions that took place in the history of the ancient Malankara Church have not only pieced her into different church

THE EVENT OF REUNION

communities, but also created occasions on account of which these communities become part of alien individual churches. This fact makes it more difficult for the Malankara Catholic Church to attain the goal of the reunion of the Malankara Church through her reunion activities.

The reunion activities and attempts of the Malankara Catholic Church point to the aim of helping those Malankara Church communities which have not yet attained the fullness of the Universal communion of the church, to recognize and receive this communion. The objectives of being within the Universal communion of the church and of remaining in unity with all the individual churches are realized in the process of regaining the communion with the Pope of Rome who is the Supreme Head of the Universal communion of the church. For all individual churches and their faithful this is the way to be within the Universal communion of the church. For the same reason, it is fundamental to the ecclesial life of the Malankara Church communities and all their faithful that they come within the communion with the Pope of Rome and declare their allegiance to his Supremacy. The chief objective of the reunion activities of the Malankara Catholic Church is none other than this. And there is a special advantage which results when the Malankara Church communities receive the Universal communion, viz, the reunion of all the Malankara Church communities. Therefore the reunion activities and dialogues which the Malankara Catholic Church conducts among the other Malankara Church communities which share the heritage of the Malankara apostolic church, amount to instilling in individuals and communities the thirst of the Malankara Church for reunion and in fact help the realization of the same. Thus the reunion activities of the Malankara Catholic Church within the Malankara Church are meant to regain and reestablish the identity, individuality and heritage of the ancient, individual Malankara Church. This will in no way cause any damage to that individual apostolic church; on the contrary, augments its possibility and efficacy to confirm its own individual identity and apostolic foundation and to achieve Universal communion.

THE EVENT OF REUNION

If with the Great Reunion Event of 1930 the vocation of the Malankara Church to Universal communion was realized, the resultant Reunion Movement and activities which emerged in the Malankara Catholic Church are destined to reestablish the ancient Malankara apostolic church as an individual church and accordingly to regain its identity and individuality. Thus the historic Reunion Event of 1930 and the consequent Reunion Movement witness to the two dimensions of the ecclesial life of the Malankara Catholic Church.

But sometimes the Reunion Movement and activities of the Malankara Catholic Church are misunderstood as the attempts to merge or attach the Malankara apostolic individual church to some other individual church. So also the same are pictured as the attempts to unify and include the Malankara faithful within some other individual church. The main reason for this is that sometimes attitudes, customs and programmes which would do harm to the individual identity and the unique heritage of the Malankara Church infiltrate into the reunion attempts. For example, the attempts under the shade of Catholic communion to make the Malankara Church-members or communities, members or parts of the Latin Individual church or some other individual churches; the endeavours to infuse into the Malankara ecclesial life, ceremonies and customs which are not conducive to the heritage of the Malankara Church; certain accommodations which would weaken the spiritual vision of the Malankara Church, etc.. The other Malankara Church communities have also adopted projects which are alien to the identity of the Malankara Church. For example, the tendency and arrangements in the name of church tradition to keep the Malankara faithful as members of the Antiochene Church and as a local unit of that church; the moves in the name of evangelization to bring the Malankara faithful under the banner of the Anglican Church or the Protestant Church. These and other such modes of functioning could damage the apostolic nature and heritage of the Malankara Church and weaken its individual identity.

But the church unity attempts of the Malankara Catholic Church should not take this direction. By standing firm on the

THE EVENT OF REUNION

apostolic foundations and the unique heritage of the Malankara Church and by rectifying all the damages that it suffered in the course of history, the Malankara Catholic Church should undertake to reunite all the different communities of the Malankara Church within the Catholic communion of the church and under the Supremacy of the Universal Church which protects and maintains that communion. What must be accomplished in the Reunion Movement and activities of the Malankara Church is the carrying out of "prayers, preaching and activities" (UR.4) on the basis of individuals, community and church with the above said task in view. And that is a praiseworthy exercise of an ecclesial duty. As far as the division-torn, disintegrated Malankara apostolic individual church is concerned, the success of the Reunion Movement is a serious challenge which demands to be responded to urgently. If the leadership of the Malankara Church communities does not commit itself to face this challenge, there is only one way left, viz., the faithful, inspired by the Holy Spirit come forward as individuals and groups to respond to this challenge.

5. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

AND THE MALANKARA CHURCH FOR MISSION WORK.

The 'Ecumenical Movement' or the 'Church Unity Movement' carried out universally among the individual churches is aimed at renewing and sustaining the unity and the Universal communion of the Catholic Church. The Malankara reunion attempts and activities are aimed at reestablishing the Malankara apostolic church in its identity and local individuality by reuniting all the Malankara Church communities, besides trying to reestablish the Malankara Church in the communion of the Universal Church. This very process is fulfilled in relation to the fundamental nature and structures of the church. But we should not forget the truth that the church can be renewed and reconstructed in its basis and in its nature, only by fulfilling its God-given mission. And this God-given mission of the Holy Church is to preach to the whole creation the Gospel of Salvation which God the Father has gifted us through our Lord Jesus Christ and make this salvation present in the world and available to the people. It is the call and readiness to fulfil this mission that are to

THE EVENT OF REUNION

be explicitly realized in the Universal Church and in the Malankara Church. The Holy Apostolic Church has to attain its full reunion and reestablishment and only in this way can it be the sacrament of salvation and serve the humanity.

CONCLUSION

The erection of the diocese of Bathery from the diocese of Tiruvalla is a visible fruition of the mission works carried out laboriously through the Reunion Movement. We would joyfully recount that the diocese of Bathery is growing as a people of God in the wonderful providence of God, by the painstaking apostolate of the mission groups including priests, religious and sisters and by the strong ecclesial life of the believing community. And in the past years this people of God has attained considerable progress in its ecclesial life. At this juncture we pray to the Almighty and Merciful God that the Reunion anniversary celebrations participated in a special way by the Malankara Church faithful may prove to be an impetus in the continued life journey of the Malankara Church and of the diocese of Bathery.

Translated by Thomas Naickamparambil.



AN INTERVIEW WITH CYRIL MAR BASELIOS*

ISSAC THOTTUNKAL

Your Excellency, the diocese of Bathery has made a tremendous growth during these fifteen years. And there is no doubt that it is the result of untiring efforts and dynamism of your devoted leadership. Now, would you mind sharing the challenges you had to face in bringing up the diocese to this stage? what is the secret behind this wonderful growth of the diocese of Bathery?

Mar Baselios: When we observe that the diocese of Bathery has made considerable progress since its inception in 1979, our first thoughts go to the words of St. Paul, the Apostle (1Cor. 15:10): "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me". But we can not undermine the co-operation, collaboration and collective work of our priests, sisters and the laity. Since the diocese of Bathery was in its early stages of its organization almost everything had to be started from scratch. Nevertheless, through the grace of God, assistance of all sorts was given to us from many quarters, from individuals and from charitable organizations. In particular our benefactors from Germany were extremely generous in rendering their help especially to meet with the initial needs of the diocese. Our work was rendered difficult because of poverty, illiteracy and economic backwardness of our

* This interview was conducted on January 1st, 1995(Editor).

INTERVIEW

people, both Christians and non-Christians. We had to fight hard to instill the spirit of co-operation and common action against our legacy of individualism and indiscipline. And yet, we were successful to a certain extent to create a unity of vision and action among our missionary personnel and to help and guide our people to appropriate this mode of operation. It is beyond doubt that inexperience and insufficient technical formation of our personnel could be overcome only by strengthening their motivation and enhancing their good will. Right from the beginning we have given priority for planning and due action especially through the diocesan departments of various apostolates which reduced the burden of meeting all our initial needs simultaneously that are bound to emerge in the early stages of a new diocese.

Let me bring your attention to the Malankara Catholic Church. There are a good number of Catholic Major Seminaries in India. You are the Chairman of the Malankara Catholic Episcopal Commission for Seminary and you are closely associated with the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary in Trivandrum from its very beginning. Your Excellency, do you think that the Malankara Seminary has something special to offer to the Church in India in general and the Malankara Catholic Church in particular with regard to the formation of priests?

Mar Baselios: Of course, the decision taken for establishing a seminary of the Malankara Catholic Church of its own is itself a sufficient proof for the enormous need of this sort felt by the whole Malankara Church. It was to cater to the special needs in the formation of our priests. The very idea that the clergy should be formed to serve the community to which they are committed is itself a contribution to the process of renewing the priestly formation in India as against the present custom of sending seminarians to any seminary for their formation. This long standing practice betrays our sheer ignorance of the nature and goal of priestly formation through and in the seminary. The Malankara Seminary should develop a life-style and a curriculum for the seminarians suited to cater for the immediate as well as the long term needs of the community as against the present

way of getting the clergy and the missionary personnel trained in alienated circumstances and sophisticated ideologies which are very often unproductive, if not harmful. This is worse still if they are taught a philosophy and theology developed in cultures alien and of bygone days. Being a Seminary of an individual apostolic Church originated in India and enjoying communion with other ancient apostolic Churches especially of the Orient, it can and must develop an oriental and indigenous theology suited to the Indian culture and religious heritage.

You are also the Chairman of Malankara Catholic Youth Commission. With your initiative a national Malankara Catholic Youth Movement has taken shape. How do you visualize the role of youth in the Church?

Mar Baselios: It is common knowledge that our youth is the future of the church. Their faith-life is the strength of our Church. The progress in the life and work of the Church vastly depends on the formation that we impart to our youth. The success of our youth movement-MCYM-is that it has roots in the parish level. Its organization both at the grassroots level of the parish and of the diocese, reaching up to the ecclesial level is somewhat unique and a great achievement of the Malankara Church. Our youth grows in the awareness that they are not only an organization but also the young Church growing with specific vision and action. Thus their active involvement in the faith life sustains and nourishes them to take up the challenges of Christian faith actually lived in the modern world.

You are an ardent supporter of Ecumenism. Since 1988 you are a member of the International Dialogue Commission appointed by the Holy See. What are the pressing hurdles for unity between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches in India?

Mar Baselios: I am grateful to the Holy See for giving me the opportunity to exercise an official role in the ecumenical dialogue of the Catholic Church with other Churches which I have been personally exercising throughout my priestly life. The real difficulty in the ecumenical dialogue generally is the different understanding of the

INTERVIEW

meaning of ecumenism and its goal. This itself is an ecumenical problem. This holds good also in the ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches in India. The real problem in this regard seems to be the identification of the nature of the unity we seek to achieve. Only against this background can the important questions of the primacy of the Pope and the actual exercise of the global power of the Roman Catholic Church be usefully discussed. Lack of mutual respect, long standing prejudices and apprehensions, rightly or wrongly sustained, political and racial differences etc. are factors that can play serious roles in promoting or hindering human and Christian unity.

Do you propose any solution?

Mar Baselios: Well, an immediate solution may be a day-dream. Understanding and accepting the unity of mankind is a prerequisite for achieving Christian unity, because this universal outlook of the oneness of human family has a direct bearing on human and ecclesial unity. Our efforts to create universal brotherhood can take us far ahead to the realization of Christian unity. Hence, our efforts to promote human brotherhood, effective equality and social justice will certainly help us to bring about the Christian unity that we cherish and seek.

You were the Superior General of the Bethany Ashram before you became the Bishop of Bathery. Could you please high light your vision of Sanyasa (religious life) in the Malankara Church? What is the role of Bethany in the Malankara Church?

Mar Baselios: My understanding is that "sanyasa" in the Malankara Church can be successful only along the lines of the Oriental traditions in which the ascetic life-style of the ancient monks of India, Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia is prominent. This is all the more significant against the background of Indian "sanyasa" cherished in the Indian cultural and religious patrimony. Bethany was shaped by the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios of venerable memory with this conviction. The supremacy of the Absolute and the Divine that reigned among the monks of Bethany at Perunad only created in them

the spiritual strength that was needed to face the challenges that came up in renouncing everything, and of fighting against the hurdles that stood in the way of regaining the holy communion with the Universal Church. In this way, Bethany played an historic role in and for the Malankara Church. The monks of Bethany, if they remain honest to their original ideals and truthful to their divine vocation and following their monastic life-style can still undertake specific roles in the life and work of the Malankara Church.

The Inter ecclesial "tensions" disfigure the Indian Church. You are a member of the Inter ritual Committee of the CBCI. Do you have any solution to propose to overcome these tensions?

Mar Baselios: There do exist inter-ecclesial tensions. But these, ultimately, are not created by the Churches as Churches as such but as peoples of different sub-cultures, languages, traditions and history. Some of the conflicts or tensions are due to a lack of understanding, but most of them are due to a lack of mutual respect and acceptance, a phenomenon that is not specific to the Indian Church alone. This malady can be eradicated on the Indian scene when all Indian catholics turn out to be "Christian", and on the global level when the human race would be fully redeemed in Christ.

As a theologian you are deeply involved in the discussions regarding the Church. In your opinion what is the most important area to be attended by the Indian Church in this period of Evangelization 2000?

Mar Baselios: It seems that a lot of talk is going on about evangelization without understanding what is the true "evangelion". Hence, it is better to study and experience more closely the Good News brought by Jesus Christ who himself has to be known as Good News, which only will help us to present Him to the world at large. The whole truth of the mystery of God's saving act, sending His Son to give us His Holy Spirit to make us His children has to be fully presented to the people of India in an experiential way without getting entangled in the riddles of speculations of bygone times and ages.



PART TWO

PASTORAL CONTRIBUTIONS
OF
CYRIL MAR BASELIOS
IN THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

DIOCESE OF BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH (1978-1995)

ISSAC THOTTUNKAL

The Diocese of Bathery-the first missionary diocese of the Malankara Catholic Church-was established on 28th October, 1978. It had a humble beginning but by the providence of God, it has attained considerable growth in various aspects of life such as ecclesial, spiritual, social, educational, economic, etc., The growth is achieved through an integral vision and its application. This article is a humble attempt to analyze the diocese of Bathery in its various facets led by different committed persons.

1. THE WAY TO BATHERY.

His Holiness Pope Pius XI of happy memory, erected the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy by the Apostolic Constitution "Christo Pastorum Principi", dated 11th June, 1932, for those faithful reunited to the Catholic Church under Mar Ivanios the Great, of Bethany.¹ The Hierarchy consisted of the Arch-diocese of Trivandrum and the diocese of Tiruvalla. On 12th March, 1933, His Grace Mar Ivanios, the Archbishop-Metropolitan officially took charge of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum which extended from the river Pampa to the south up to the Cape of Comorin. His Excellency Jacob Mar Theophilos was enthroned as the bishop of Tiruvalla on 6th November, 1933. The diocese of Tiruvalla was extended from the river Pampa in the south to the river Ponnani in the north. It was on February 14, 1958 that the Holy See by the decree Prot.534\43, further extended the jurisdiction of the diocese of Tiruvalla to the whole of Malabar region of Kerala, the civil districts of

¹ The Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XI, "Christo Pastorum Principi", *Acta Aposolicae Sedis*, XXIV (1932) 289-292.

Coimbatore, Nilgris and Karur Taluk in Tiruchirappally districts of Tamilnadu and the districts of Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Coorg, Chickmangalore, Shimoga and South Kanara in Karnataka.²

After the extension of the diocese, a few priests were sent to the new regions by His Excellency late Zacharias Mar Athanasios, the third bishop of Tiruvalla. Here the service of Fr. Michael Manjanamkuzhy OIC in Malabar is to be specially remembered. These pioneers of the Malabar Mission began to work zealously among the Malankara faithful, concentrating on a few centres like Bathery, Mananthawady, Nilambur, Edakkara, Karuvarakundu and Maikavu.³ In 1963 Mar Athanasios sent two Priests to South Kanara (Karnataka) to work among the Malankara Faithful who had migrated from Kerala. Eventually all the parishes and mission stations of Malabar and South Kanara regions came under the newly constituted ecclesiastical districts of Bathery and Nilambur.

2. A NEW MOMENTUM

Desiring to establish the identity of the Malankara Catholic Church and to accelerate the reunion movement in the newly organized territories, Mar Athanasios requested the Holy See to bifurcate the diocese of Tiruvalla and to erect a new diocese with Sulthan Bathery as its headquarters. The diocese of Bathery should always be grateful to His Excellency Zacharias Mar Athanasios for his initial works and paternal support to the new diocese.⁴ His Holiness Pope John Paul II responded to the request and erected the new diocese of Bathery on 28th October,

² The Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Prot.no.534\43 (1958).

³ Cf. Msgr. Thomas Thannickakuzhy, "Bathery Diocese Today" (Malayalam) in *Aikyadeepam*, Vol.17, No.9,10, September-October, 1993, 21-23. Msgr. Thomas Thannickakuzhy was the first parish priest in the South Kanara Region. As one of the pioneer missionaries he has done praiseworthy mission work through out Malabar Region. Presently he is the Vicar General of the diocese and uses his wide missionary experience to give guidance and service in various ways.

⁴ His Excellency Zacharias Mar Athanasios was called to his eternal reward on September 28, 1977, one year before the establishment of the Diocese of Bathery.

1978. His Holiness appointed Very Rev. Dr. Cyril Malancharuvil OIC, the then Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ, as its first Bishop.⁵ The new diocese comprises the then civil districts of Malappuram, Calicut and Cannanore of Kerala and the Nilgris of Tamil Nadu and Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Coorg, Chickmangalore, Shimoga and South Kanara of Karnataka. Fr. Cyril was consecrated on 28th December, 1978 at 'Mar Theophilos Nagar' (St. Thomas Malankara Catholic Church Campus, Thirumoolapuram) Tiruvalla, by His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church.

It was on 2nd February, 1979, that His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios, the first bishop of Bathery, officially took charge of the diocese.⁶ The Enthronement (*Sunthroniso*) ceremony took place at the St. Thomas Pro-Cathedral at Sulthan Bathery with His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios and His Excellency Issac Mar Youhanon, Bishop of Tiruvalla, and His Excellency Paulose Mar Philoxinos, the Titular Bishop of Chayal, as main celebrant and concelebrants respectively. A large number of Priests, Religious and faithful of the Malankara Catholic Church from far and near witnessed this historic moment. Many Bishops, Priests, Religious and a good number of the faithful of the neighbouring Catholic dioceses and of our Sister Churches apart from the leaders from all strata of life, participated in the ceremony.

3. NEW CHALLENGES

The total area of the diocese is about 75000 sq. kilometres, with a total population about 15 million people including the Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Jains, Tribals etc. live under the pastoral care of the diocese. The languages spoken by these people are Malayalam, Tamil, English, Kannada, Thulu, Urdu and Tribal languages. Because of the establishment of the new civil districts by the Government of Kerala after 1979, the diocese of Bathery has at present jurisdiction in the civil districts

⁵ The Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II, "Constat Paulum", in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, LXXI (1979) 5-6.

⁶ Cf. *Bathery Roopatha Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.1, 1979.

of Malappuaram, Calicut, Wayanad, Cannanore and Kasargode of Kerala, the Nilgris of Tamil Nadu and Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Chickmangalore, Shimoga and South Kanara of Karnataka.⁷

The overall situation of the people in this area at the time of the establishment of the diocese was really pathetic. The great majority of the people are poor farmers. Only very minimum religious, educational, social and economic facilities were available. Among the people Christians in general and the Malankara Catholics in particular, the majority of whom migrated from the Central part of Kerala, were not getting proper leadership and enough pastoral care and support. Besides, the long distance between this area and the diocesan headquarters at Tiruvalla, lack of priests, financial problems and many other factors contributed to this situation. Still the 8500 Malankara Catholics were organized in 43 Parishes and Mission Stations by zealous and committed priests of whom 18 belonged to the diocese of Tiruvalla and 2 belonged to the Bethany Ashram. 13 Bethany Sisters and 17 Sisters of the Deena Sevana Sabha also gave valuable services in different parts of the diocese.⁸

4. FUTURE PLANS FOR THE DIOCESE

The birth of the new diocese and its young, learned and enthusiastic bishop with his small team of dedicated priests gave hope to the whole Malankara Church in general and to the faithful of Bathery in particular. The bishop began his episcopal ministry from "San Jose Villa", the simple presbytery which was used by the priests till the inauguration of the diocese. It is against this historical background that we must understand the initiatives that the diocese of Bathery has taken, marking a new chapter in the history of the Malankara Church by its reunion apostolate and social upliftment of the poor. The challenges were many to the diocese and to the new bishop who was rather new to the place and people. With a clear ecclesial vision and deep sensitivity towards the needs of the society, Mar Baselios began to face those challenges by initiating

⁷ Cf. *The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Directory*, 1991, 2.

⁸ Cf. Msgr. Thannickakuzhy, *op.cit.*, 22,23.

and organizing several ventures. First a scientific survey was done. Visiting Parishes, meeting Priests, Religious and lay leaders of the diocese on various levels were the main concerns of the bishop in those days. These meetings were the forums where the future programmes of the diocese were chalked out. The initiatives were mainly centred on ecclesial, social and educational spheres of life.

A. PASTORAL INITIATIVES

After serious thought and prayerful reflection, it was concluded that the most urgent need in the diocese was nothing but proper community formation both in its ecclesial and social sense. The formation of believers in the theology, spirituality and tradition of the Malankara Catholic Church was found to be most important. The Archdiocese of Trivandrum and the diocese of Tiruvalla had generously given the services of some of their zealous and active priests. The incorporation of these priests into the new diocese gave further boost in the growth of the diocese as they took up various apostolates. The then existing Malankara Parishes were given more attention. The message of the Reunion apostolate was propagated throughout the breadth and length of the diocese. Thousands of families, besides some prominent priests came into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Many Parishes and Mission Stations were opened. In fact many people from the Sister Churches requested the diocese to start the Malankara Catholic Mission Stations in their locality. In most of the places the reunited faithful through their ecclesial life and witnessing brought more reunions. Still people come with the same request. This shows that many of the separated brethren desire to come into the full communion of the Catholic Church, provided we hold on to the ecclesiological and ecumenical visions. This communion is a diversity of ecclesial Traditions (*Ecclesia sui iuris*), having their own unique identity, autonomy and special role to play under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Rome who is the legitimate successor of St. Peter, the head of the Apostolic College. This is precisely what the Malankara Catholic Church is aiming at.

In the beginning of the diocese itself, with the existing ecclesiastical districts of Bathery and Nilambur, three more ecclesiastical

districts, namely, Calicut, Cannanore and South Kanara, were established. The district of South Kanara was entrusted to the members of the Order of the Imitation of Christ (Bethany Ashram) for pastoral work. The Bethany Fathers and Brothers undertook this new endeavour and are selflessly working for the Church in that region.⁹ In 1989 active mission works started in the region of Shimoga and presently there are 8 parishes and mission stations looked after by a team of three dedicated and zealous priests.¹⁰ A parish was established in the city of Bangalore in 1986 and the newly built church was blessed in 1991.¹¹ After a serious and committed pastoral work during the last sixteen years the number of the parishes and mission stations rose from 43 to 107 and the number of Catholic faithful from 8500 to 22507.¹² Sixty new churches and chapels and 19 new presbyteries have been built since the beginning of the diocese. Still we have to go further in this respect. Apart from these arrangements, the bishop instituted a few departments for the effective realization of the goals set by the diocese. These were the departments of Catechetics, Youth, Family and Bible which were instituted in view of forming and uniting the whole people, namely, Children, Youth, Men and Women, of the diocese.

a. The Department of Catechetics

Evangelization is interpreted as the inculcation of faith in human hearts. Catechesis helps to grow and to preserve this initial faith. Realizing that in the building up of the Kingdom of God, Catechesis plays an important role, Mar Baselios established a special department for

⁹ Cf. Fr. John Palavilayil, "Uthishtatha! Jagratha!" (Malayalam) in *Bethany Platinum Jubilee Smaranika*, Kottayam, 1994, 119-122.

¹⁰ Mission work in this region is successfully carried out under the pastoral guidance of Rev. Fr. Koshy Kackanatt, a zealous missionary of the diocese.

¹¹ Cf. Fr. Issac Thottunkal (ed.), *St. Joseph's Malankara Catholic Church Directory*, Bangalore, 1991. The Parish has a committed and active parish priest in the person of Rev. Fr. Zacharias Kottayil.

¹² Cf. *The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Directory*, 1992-1993.

Catechetics in 1979 with the motto "Seek the Kingdom of God".¹³ Catechetical instruction is given in a well organized manner in all the parishes and mission stations. Training programmes for teachers, camps and summer courses for the students on the diocesan, district and parish levels are a regular feature. The department conducts special Seminars on several occasions for priests, Religious and Sunday School Head Masters with a view to revitalizing the Catechetical apostolate in the diocese. Special scholarships, awards and prizes are awarded to students on merit. The department of Catechetics functions through the Central Office situated at the diocesan head quarters and the sub-centre named *Srothas* at Nilambur, which was inaugurated in 1989. The department consists of around 600 dedicated and qualified teachers and animators, imparting the faith-education to 6000 children.¹⁴ It is gratifying to see that some families in the diocese co-operated to institute Awards and Scholarships to promote the Catechetical activities.

b. The Department of Youth

A young bishop! Surrounded by very young priests! Naturally these young leaders began to think of their young brothers and sisters in the length and breadth of the diocese, who were scattered and had no proper leadership. It was the vision of Mar Baselios that brought the Malankara Youth of the diocese together under the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (MCYM), which was instituted with a clear ecclesial vision.¹⁵ The youth apostolate in the diocese envisages the formation of the young catholics to maturity, to live as committed members in the Church and dedicated citizens in the country. The youth ministry also tries to sensitize the youth to the presence of God in their midst, so that they stand for the cause of justice, freedom and fellowship. Ongoing

¹³ Cf. Pastoral Letter of the Bishop. PL No.11\84. The Emblem of the Catechetical Department manifests the motto. See *Vedopadesa Prasthanam of Bathery Bhadrasanam: Dasavalsara Smaranika* (Malayalam), Bathery, 1989.

¹⁴ The Catechetical Department is efficiently led by Rev.Dr.Chacko Narimattathil.

¹⁵ Cf. *Bathery Roopatha Youth Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.1, 1981.

regular programmes are conducted on diocesan, regional and parish levels. His decision to build a centre for the youth shows the bishop's deep concern to give youth an ecclesial identity in the Church. The youth centre, named "Pratheeksha", situated at the diocesan head quarters remains a symbol of the care and concern of the diocese for the youth and the presence of the dedicated youth throughout the diocese.¹⁶

The Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, Bathery, was never considered as a youth group like any other youth movements in the society. It is a forum of young Malankara Catholics.¹⁷ The diocesan youth wing is an official member of the National Malankara Catholic Youth Movement and is closely associated with the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement. It is heartening to see that from among the 6000 young Malankara Catholics of the diocese, a few have become leaders of the National Malankara Catholic Youth Movement as well as Kerala Catholic Youth Movement.

c. The Department of Family

Through the ministry of family apostolate, the diocese is imparting formation to the parents in leading genuine christian family life. This department has two organizations, namely, Fathers Association (Pithru Sangham) and Mothers Association (Mathru Sangham). Seminars, Awareness programmes, Camps, Exposure programmes, health camps and get-togethers bring substantial changes in their spiritual and social life. Both the organizations have a diocesan, regional and parish committee and programmes are conducted on those levels. Renewal retreats in the parishes and regional centres have become a regular feature.

¹⁶ The activities of the Youth Department is directed by a young and dynamic priest in the person of Rev.Fr.Mathew Kandathil and by Mr.Jose Manackathottam, its dedicated President, and a team of committed young leaders.

¹⁷ Cf.Fr.Issac Thottunkal, "The Place and Role of Youth in the Malankara Catholic Church" (Malayalam) in *Bathery Roopatha Youth Bulletin*, Vol.10, No.4, October, 1989, 1-4.

BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The diocesan get-together of the representative from each parish is really an occasion for exchanging the diverse experiences of families.¹⁸

d. Bible Apostolate

The department of Bible Apostolate conducts Bible Orientation Classes and Seminars for the laity on parish, district and diocesan levels. Special courses on Bible are conducted by the diocesan director in many parishes.¹⁹ Apart from Bible Conventions, which are regular, Renewal Programmes based on Bible, Bible retreats etc. are conducted on various occasions. "Reach Bible Every Home" programme has been a great success.

B. SOCIAL CONCERN

It is true that the diocese gave priority to the formation of the Malankara Catholics. But also due importance was given to its social commitment, taking seriously the life situation of the people around. The diocese chalked out a social programme aimed at promoting the integral growth of men and women. The Social Service Centre, named *Shreyas*, which is the official organ of the diocese for promoting justice and fellowship, is committed to creating a more human and just society, based on Gospel values, through a scientific programme of mass education, mass mobilization and mass action.²⁰ Its basic thinking is that development is not only a matter of people having more, but also of people being more,

¹⁸ The Central team is led by its very pastoral minded director in the person of Rev. Fr. Joseph Kannamkulam, with a well qualified team of Rev. Sisters and some dedicated parents.

¹⁹ The Present director is Rev. Dr. Eldho Puthenkandathil, who has recently taken the responsibility of the department and is seriously chalking out many programmes for an effective presentation of the biblical messages. Rev. Bro. Thomas Christumandiram is assisting the department.

²⁰ *Shreyas* is officially registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 with Reg. No. 56\86. For the details about the initial activities of *Shreyas* see Fr. Jose Palakattel (ed.), *Shreyas: A Decade of Service 1979-1989*, Bathery, 1990. For a more elaborated and recent report see P. I. Paul (ed.), *Shreyas 15 Years*, Bathery: *Shreyas*, 1994.

BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

more just, more concerned, more co-operative, more sharing and thus more human. The eightfold approach of *Shreyas* viz, training, education, community health, community development, productive relief, evaluation and research is carried out by 267 full time staff, by 4474 leaders of various associations and through 243 different peoples' organizations irrespective of cast and creed.²¹

C. EDUCATIONAL APOSTOLATE

Realizing the backward situation of the people in the diocese, from the very beginning itself the diocese gave proper attention to provide facilities for education. An educational trust, namely, "The Corporate Educational Agency of the Diocese of Bathery" was formed.²²

Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, who was well educated both in India and abroad, firmly believes that only through education can the society form persons to maturity both on spiritual and social levels. The diocese had only five schools in 1979. Presently it has one College, 5 High Schools, 26 Lower and Upper primary Schools, 27 Nursery Schools and 2 Technical Institutes. The Corporate Management is seriously engaged in imparting better and value based education to the students. Annual Seminars for the teachers, special awareness programmes for the Catholic teachers are regularly conducted and care is taken to ensure that religion and moral sciences are taught with a certain standard. The Malankara Catholic Teachers Association, Bathery,²³ is a forum for the catholic

²¹ It is worth mentioning here that the Government of Kerala honoured *Shreyas*, by giving the Literacy Award of 1993, for its dedicated work among the Tribals in eradicating illiteracy. The present Executive Body of *Shreyas* consists of young and dynamic priests in the persons of Rev.Fr.Joseph Charivupurayidathil (Director), Rev.Fr.Varghese Mattamana (Asst.Director) and a team of committed lay people.

²² The Educational Agency of Bathery under the dedicated and efficient leadership of Rev.Fr.Varghese Malieckal, a member of the Senate of the University of Calicut, Kerala, is contributing solid support in the growth of the diocese as well as the nation.

²³ The Malankara Catholic Teachers Association, Bathery was formed on October 22, 1991. For more details see *Bathery Roopatha Bulletin*, Vol.12, No.11, 1991, 23-24.

BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

teachers to meet together and to reflect on their moral responsibility in imparting faith and morals to the young.

D. VIKAS COMMUNICATIONS

Taking into account the impact and importance of the mass media in the modern world, the department conducts Seminars and Camps on many subjects, for example film appreciation courses, conscientization programmes etc. and has produced Slides, Charts, Cassettes and Video programmes. A new programme to find out the best artists in the diocese has been drawn up. This programme was inaugurated in 1994.²⁴

5. FORMATION OF PERSONNEL

The Bishop, after studying the pressing challenges and immediate needs, began to face those challenges on various levels. The formation of clergy and faithful was well planned and is satisfactorily being carried out.

A. FORMATION OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

The formation of Clergy was given due priority. In 1979 a minor seminary was opened for the new diocese. The diocese remains grateful to the Capuchin Fathers of Alverana Ashram, Bathery, for their generosity in providing their Ashram for the use of the Seminarians. The Seminary was shifted to the Bishop's House Campus in the following year. St. Thomas Minor Seminary, named *Gurukulam*, was blessed on September 21, 1984.²⁵ At the time of the erection of the diocese, some of the Seminarians from the diocese of Tiruvalla and from the Arch diocese of Trivandrum readily joined the new mission diocese. Many students of the diocese itself had shown aspiration to priesthood and joined the Seminary. In addition to this the Arch-diocese of Trivandrum and the diocese of Tiruvalla gladly permitted some students to join the minor

²⁴ For more details about this new programme see *Bathery Roopatha Bulletin*, Vol.15, No.6, 1994, 9-10. The department has a new director in the person of Rev.Fr.Sebastian Keepallil, who has special training in Communication Media.

²⁵ Cf.Pastoral Letter of the Bishop. CL No. 14\84. See also *Bathery Roopatha Bulletin*, Vol.6, No.10, 1984.

seminary in Bathery. The number of vocation from the diocese itself has been steadily growing. Now every year *Gurukulam* has an average of 18 new students from the diocese itself. Presently the diocese has 45 Minor Seminarians in Gurukulam and 47 Major Seminarians studying in St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum.²⁶ Formerly the students of the diocese were sent to different Major Seminaries as the Malankara Catholic Church had no Major Seminary of its own.²⁷ With the emergence of the Malankara Seminary at Trivandrum all the Students receive their philosophical and theological formation there. The Bishop's personal attention in the formation, his inspiring classes, his personal contact with the Seminarians and their parents etc. make a great impact in the formation of the future priests.²⁸ The gathering of the Parents of the Seminarians, once in three years, has by now become a family gathering which contributes much to the involment of the Parents in the formation of the Seminarians.

The ongoing formation of the Clergy is also seriously attended to. From the very beginning of the diocese itself, the Bishop initiated the programme "Meet, Reflect and United in Vision" for all the priests and religious in the diocese. They meet every three months to reflect on and discuss some relevant topics. In recent years topics dealt with have included evangelization, ecumenism, reunion apostolate of the Malankara

²⁶ Very Rev. Dr. Varghese Ottathengil, the present Rector of St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum since 1990, belongs to the diocese of Bathery. Under his efficient leadership the Seminary has achieved tremendous growth.

²⁷ For more details See Fr. Issac Thottunkal (ed.), *Welcome to the Diocese of Bathery*, Published by the Vicar General, Bathery, 1990. This was published on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Reunion Movement, held at Bathery on 20, 21, September, 1990.

²⁸ As the former Rector of the Seminary in Bathery, the author can very well share about the genuine interest of the Bishop in the formation of the Seminarians. His insistence on the aspect of personal care is something laudable. His frequent visits, talks, praying together, etc. always encouraged the students. The Seminary is presently administered by a team of four dedicated and qualified priests under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Eldho Puthenkandathil (Rector) and Rev. Fr. John Jacob Peroorparambil (Spiritual Director).

Church, Vatican Council documents, social apostolate, youth ministry, parish administration, etc. Apart from this the different departments also organize various exposure programmes for the priests and religious.²⁹ The Bishop takes a personal interest in promoting priests for higher Studies in ecclesiastical as well as secular studies and encourages them with his constant care and support. So far five priests have acquired doctorate from the different Pontifical Universities in Rome and are engaged in different apostolates in the diocese. Presently two priests are doing doctoral studies, one in Rome and the other in Bangalore. Many priests have taken post graduate degrees as well as other degrees.

B. FORMATION OF LAITY

In the vision and practice of Mar Baselios, the laity have an important place in the Church. He always insists that the laity should be given due ecclesial dignity and their role must be properly recognized. In 1981, two years after the inauguration of the diocese, the Diocesan Pastoral Council was inaugurated by His Eminence Wladyslavo Cardinal Rubin, the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.³⁰ There are also regional pastoral councils which concentrate on the growth of each region. Apart from the numerous formation programmes, undertaken by the various departments, the Diocesan Pastoral Council itself organizes various Seminars, Camps, Awareness programmes, leadership programmes etc. on diocesan and regional levels. A good number of formation programmes were planned and executed exclusively for the young Catholics.

²⁹ The Bethany Ashram has a formation house in South Kanara. The Bathery Province of the Bethany Sisters gives the whole formation to their candidates in Bathery except the formation for final Profession for which the Sisters of various provinces come together under their Generalate. Two Rev. Sisters of the Province make their higher studies in Catechetics in Rome. The Daughters of Mary Congregation has a formation house in Bathery for Aspirants. The *Dhyana Ashram* also gives formation to its new candidates.

³⁰ Cf. Pastoral Letter of the Bishop. PL No. 5\81. Also see *Bathery Roopatha Bulletin*, Vol.3, No.1, 1981.

6. THE STALWARTS OF BATHERY

The diocese of Bathery as it is today is the fruit of the hard labour of so many of its members and their deep loyalty towards the Church. Here we acknowledge the work of these people with a deep sense of gratitude and respect.

A. LAY LEADERS

The "foundation stones" of the diocese are those families who remained loyal to the Malankara Catholic Church and thereby to the Catholic Church, in spite of their economic problems, social alienation, lack of educational facilities, lack of parishes in the vicinity. They deserve the praise and appreciation for their adherence to the Church. After the erection of the diocese in 1979, a new outlook and approach on the part of the laity have been very evident in their enthusiastic participation in the apostolates of the diocese. In the opening of the new mission stations the initiative and dedication of the laity is highly encouraging. It is a fact that the diocese of Bathery has promoted a good number of lay leaders in the former as well as the new parishes and mission stations and it is heartening to see that they are seriously involved in the execution of the diocesan policies. In this regard the role of the young Malankara Catholics commends special attention.

B. RELIGIOUS

With the emergence of the diocese of Bathery, a new vision and role of the religious in the diocese has evolved. In his first message Mar Baselios clarified that the diocese consists of Bishop, Priests, Religious and Faithful.³¹ This vision is held both by the diocesan officials and the religious. The committed mission work of the members of the Order of the Imitation of Christ in the ecclesiastical district of South Kanara can be observed by the growth of those parishes in ecclesial, social and educational spheres. The Bethany Junior College, High Schools, Technical Institutes etc. render great services to the people of that region.

³¹ Cf. Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, "First Message to the Malankara Church" (Malayalam) in *Metrabhisheka Souvenir*, Tiruvalla, 1978, 2.

BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The Bethanians are engaged in pastoral activities in other parts of the diocese too. The *Dhyana Ashram*³² extends their generous service in conducting retreats, yoga courses and in giving pastoral assistance. Bethany Sisters had been working in Bathery long before the erection of the diocese. Now they continue to render their valuable services, as a Province, in the fields of Catechesis, Family apostolate, Renewal programmes, Health care, and Educational apostolate with a profound sense of loyalty to the Church. The members of the *Deena Sevana Sabha* started their services in South Kanara region from its beginning and continue to help those parishes. They are rendering laudable pastoral assistance in other parishes too. The Daughters of Mary Sisters extend their services in the fields of education, parish assistance, family apostolate, old age homes, social service etc. as committed co-workers. The Holy Spirit Sisters began their work two years ago in the diocese and are happily giving their services in education and pastoral assistance. The diocese of Bathery is also grateful to the Rev.Fathers of the Order of St.Benedict (O.S.B.) Congregation of St.Theresa (C.S.T.), Society of Jesus (S.J.) and Order of St.Augustine (O.S.A.) Congregations who rendered their valuable services in different parishes of the diocese in its initial stage.

C. PRIESTS.

Among this category special mention should be made of those missionaries from the diocese of Tiruvalla who began to work from 1958 onwards in the present territory of Bathery. The diocese of Bathery is very grateful to these great pioneers for their dedicated work, especially to the late Metropolitan Issac Mar Youhanon of Tiruvalla, who, as a parish priest and mission superior contributed much to the growth of the Malabar region.³³ There were 18 diocesan priests at the time of the

³² *Dhyana Ashram* is an attempt to combine Indian Spirituality and Malankara Spirituality. It is situated at Nambiarkunnu, near Bathery. The Superior of *Dhyana Ashram* is Rev.Fr.Sylvester Kozhimannil. His *Sishyan* (disciple) Swami Devaprasad is a well known scholar in Yoga.

³³ The Late Metropolitan Isaac Mar Youhanon was a very dedicated missionary. He worked as the Protopresbyter and parish priest of many parishes and mission stations of the present territory of the diocese of Bathery. His personal contact

BATHERY: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

erection of the diocese working in 43 parishes and mission stations of the present territory. In chalking out the future plans for the diocese, these "pioneers" whole heartedly co-operated with the bishop and rendered their committed services in different apostolate. The arrival of many zealous priests from the Arch diocese of Trivandrum and the diocese of Tiruvalla, who were incardinated in the new missionary diocese, added boost to the mission works.

At present, the diocese has 61 priests, 20 of whom are the former students of *Gurukulam* and they are seriously committed to the priestly ministry. Along with the Religious and lay missionaries, it was through the Priests of the diocese and through their sincere sacrifices, solid unity, readiness to take pastoral initiatives and challenges, solid support to the Bishop, that the ecclesial, social, educational, and pastoral vision of the Bishop could get materialized locally in an edifying manner. No doubt that these services will be not only an encouragement but also a challenge for the coming generations. Here is to be remembered the meritorious services rendered by the departed priests of the diocese, especially, Msgr.Mathew Nedungatt who served as the first Vicar General, Rector and the Vicar of the Cathedral in the early period of the diocese.³⁴

with the migrants and their families and his readiness to serve them made him their beloved Pastor. He was nominated as the bishop of Tiruvalla when he was serving as the parish priest of Cherukara and Karimba. For more details about his missionary work in Malabar, see Thamban Kalakudy, "Issac Mar Youhanon Thirumeni" (Malayalam) in *Mettrabhisheka Souvenir*, 1978, 7-8. Also see Fr. Madathiramban, "Sevananirathanaya Idayan" (Malayalam) in *Mettrabhisheka Souvenir*, 1978, 89-93.

³⁴ Msgr.Mathew Nedungatt, the former Vicar General of the dioceses of Tiruvalla and Bathery, who belonged to the Syro-Malabar Church, joined the Diocese of Tiruvalla as a student in the minor Seminary and became a priest in 1942. He had selflessly served the Diocese of Tiruvalla in various capacities. He helped very much the new diocese of Bathery, by serving as its first Vicar General bringing to this Office the benefit of his experience and wisdom. He served the diocese for three years. He died on September 16, 1991. For more details about this great missionary see Fr.Kuriakose Padinjaremannil, "Rt.Rev.Msgr.Mathew Nedungatt: A Memorial", *Aikyadeepam*, Vol.17, No.9,10, September, 1993, 36-37.

D. BISHOP

Here we speak of a true shepherd and the master brain of the diocese, His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios. As soon as Mar Baselios took charge of the new diocese of Bathery, a new vigour and vitality was brought to the region and solid confidence through out the diocese. Mar Baselios is a man of deep conviction that he is called by God to shepherd the people of God in the diocese of Bathery. The author is certain that what ever he has been doing in the diocese has been done with this conviction. His deep love for the Malankara Church both its Catholic as well as Orthodox sections is explicit in his words and deeds. Under his efficient leadership, the diocese has attained tremendous growth in all aspects of life and still it is on the march to achieve more. It is true to say of him that he has unshakable faith in the providence of God and at the same time he has deep confidence in those who work with him. If the number of mission stations has increased, the various departments have achieved considerable growth, if the parishes have become more dynamic, it was mainly because of the personal approach of Mar Baselios who always extended full freedom and support to the initiatives of his co-workers. His motto "*Trust In Love*" reveals his dependence on God and his attitude towards others. His deep spirituality, great concern for the Church, his readiness to listen to others with a kind heart, his readiness to accept healthy suggestions for the growth of the Church, his great capacity to analyze situations scientifically, his well known hospitality, his wonderful ability to have a very cordial relationship with leaders of other Churches and other religious faiths, have made him the Pastor of Bathery, who is well recognized and appreciated by all regardless of caste and creed. Words fail to express adequately what this great *Aboon*³⁵ is for the diocese of Bathery.

The Malankara Catholic Church in general and the diocese of Bathery in particular should be ever grateful to this great visionary, zealous pastor, solid theologian and man of heart. His noble efforts to promote the Oriental Catholic Churches of India and to place them in their

³⁵ *Aboon* is a syriac term means Father.

pristine status among the national and international circles are well known.³⁶ I wish and pray on the occasion of his *Shashtipurthy*,³⁷ that his dream of an autonomous "*Malankara Orthodox Catholic Church*", namely the whole Malankara Church in the Catholic Communion, which is the communion of different autonomous Churches capable of governing themselves, under the Pastoral care and guidance of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, the head of the Apostolic College, may be realized soon!

7. MILES TO GO.....

The diocese of Bathery is grateful for the providence and innumerable blessings of the Almighty. The diocese of Bathery is indebted to the Bishops, Priests, Religious and the Faithful of the Malankara Catholic Church for their support and in a special way to its friends, benefactors and well wishers, in India and abroad who have contributed and are contributing so much to the growth of the diocese by their generous assistance and encouragement.

Sixteen years is not a great span of time in the history of a diocese. But viewing it against the background of the diocese of Bathery, it is beyond doubt that it has achieved tremendous growth in many areas. Still it has miles to go.....Trusting in His love, may the diocese of Bathery grow more and more in carrying out its God-given mission in its manifold ways with deep faith in Him and deep concern for His people!



³⁶ Cf. Prof. K. T. Sebastian, "Mar Joseph Powathil for the Service of Communion" (Malayalam) in *Deepika* (Kottayam Edition) April 19, 1994, 7.

³⁷ *Shashtipurthy* is a term used to designate the 60 completed years of age in a person's life.

MAR BASELIOS: A SOCIAL THINKER AND ACTIVIST

JOSE PALAKKATTEL

All the pangs of waiting came to a sudden stop! Hundreds and hundreds of hearts pulsed in glowing expectations at the marvellous dawning of that glorious day, 2nd February 1979, a day inscribed in golden letters in the history of the diocese of Bathery, a day that heralded the beginning of an era of the rejuvenation and excitement in our minds. A long cherished dream became a reality. The diocese of Bathery was born. Cyril Mar Baselios was enthroned as its first bishop. The atmosphere was filled with vibrant hopes but a little anxiety also was there...Every thing revolved round this young charismatic sage. Would he be able to give colour to the dreams of Bathery? Would he be able to lead it to prosperity? Would he be able to give it new dreams? These questions loomed large in our minds. All our apprehensions gradually melted away as we came to know our bishop. He discovered the soul of Bathery among the poor and steadily anchored the diocese through troubles and tribulations, from success to success, from prosperity to prosperity. The diocese has been experiencing the force of a true leadership.

I have the rare privilege of working with the bishop as the chief functionary of *Shreyas** the social works department of the diocese. I value it as golden opportunity to feel at first hand his magnetic and inspiring

* *Shreyas* is the official organization of the diocese to promote justice and fellowship among the people of its territory without caste and creed. The author, Rev.Fr.Jose Palakattel, is the founding director of *Shreyas* and has directed it with clear vision, deep dedication and genuine love for the marginalized people for the last fifteen years (Editor).

personality and to imbibe or internalize its essence. Shreyas has been constituted to further the humanitarian mission of the diocese among the poor. It was a simple but a definitely well calculated beginning, the commencement of a true pilgrimage. Years passed! *Shreyas* grew tremendously; even much beyond our expectations. Its name transcended the verges of time and space and reached lands far off.

The strength of *Shreyas* is its people.. 23,195 families: what motives them to join hands with *Shreyas* in making a bigger family-- the Shreyas family? Is it money that matters? No! Is it power that matters? Never! Then what else? One need not search deep to find an answer. It is apparent that Shreyas is built on a strong foundation-- a foundation of values and vision.

The man behind this enviable growth of Shreyas was nobody other than Cyril Mar Baselios. His lively presence has always been with it. The word presence here refers not merely to physical presence but to a living influence to its ideology and vision. He is not just a mere leader. He is a leader with clear social vision. And it is his steadfast determination to bring his ideologies into action that has become the secret of the success. The advances made by the diocese in different fields during recent years alone would be sufficient to assess this great personality. Cyril Mar Baselios, who assumed office as the first Bishop of Bathery, devoted all his time and energy for the betterment of the entire population of the area. He never allowed himself to be a factional leader of Malankara Catholics. Irrespective of their caste colour and creed he considered people as the sons and daughters of the same heavenly Father. So, he believed it to be his moral obligation to love them and to live for them disregarding their divisions and differences. And he succeeded in this. I wonder whether he ever felt any difficulty in appreciating the oneness of his people. He has a universal vision. According to him the paternity of our heavenly Father is the cord of our fraternity. It is on this basis that we arrive at the universal brotherhood of all human beings.

The noble vision of *Shreyas* is to create a more human and just society based on gospel values. It has internalized a development-Philosophy which is people-led and people based. Man should be the sole

purpose and goal of development; not its means. In short, the philosophy of *Shreyas* is, that development is not only people having more, but people being more; i.e. more just, more conscious, more concerned, more sharing, more co-operative, and hence it is a process of human- becoming. Upholding this philosophy, *Shreyas* has been functioning as a catalyst in the integral development of the people of Bathery.

Integral development is ultimately the growth of man to his fullest stature possible. Primarily, it is he who is responsible for this as its author and subject. This in turn implies that everyone possesses an inner ability and capacity to grow. But a conducive environment- an environment where every human being gives and takes his due--is essential to realize the same. This is justice. Mar Baselios holds a transparent vision about social justice and he takes every effort to see that social justice is upheld in all spheres of the diocesan activities. He believed that justice is fundamental to development and the denial of justice is the basic obstruction to it. Thus both in its fundamental and supra-structural aspects, social concern is a concern for justice. This approach automatically transforms social service to a service to justice- to redress when violated and to make it available where denied. Ultimately, social action becomes a real struggle to build up a just society where every man lives with dignity and in accordance with his God- given destiny. This struggle has become all the more tough as evils like poverty, malnutrition, injustice, violence, exploitation, etc. are mounting up in the society moment by moment. Eradication of these maladies forms its core. But we must be aware of the paradox that these maladies are sprouted and propagated in the very struggle of the mankind to create a better society. The prevailing social structure and the operational system too have turned out to be the real promoters of these evils. Thus a change is inevitable. And, we should not content ourselves with anything short of a total restructuring.

Mar Baselios is well aware of the snare of developmental projects designed to satisfy only the materialistic aspects of life, ignoring values and human nature. Experience also proves the futility of the attempts to build up a better human society while disregarding these corner stones. Why does he hold some reservations? Because he knows human nature well. He knows well the inner dynamics of human minds too! Most of us are

so casual about the fact that the evils of the world germinate in minds which are distorted and perverted. This implies that our problems have a more spiritual and religious dimension than economic and social. Therefore, what is needed today is a positive change in our inner core. Development programs should be viewed as a means to this end. Mar Baselios always insisted in maintaining a perfect equilibrium between the spiritual and materialistic aspects while framing development projects.

Ever since its conception, *Shreyas*, under the patronage of Most Rev. Dr. Cyril Mar Baselios, has been engaged in a search for its relevance and identity in the existential context. This social institution simply is an embodiment of our determination to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. What this redemptive work aims at is the integral development of human society.

In this short write up, I have attempted to unveil the social concern of Mar Baselios in an 'at a glance' fashion, taking the social apostolate of the diocese of Bathery as the background. But I am not certain how far I have succeeded in my effort. Anyway, I am fully confident that he is the person Bathery needs as its leader. Today, if the diocese is respected everywhere as an exemplary model of humanization, the credit goes to Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios. Lastly I would like to utter in full confidence that we have no hesitation in placing this man-who has been the brain, blood and spirit of the diocese of Bathery- in a rare group of leaders who live for their people. Does it sound like a praise? The answer is...he deserves it.



CYRIL MAR BASELIOS: AN EMINENT PASTOR

THOMAS CHARIVUPURAIMOM

As I have been serving the diocese of Bathery from its very beginning and that I had the opportunity to work in different areas of its building up, for the last 16 years, I feel proud to write these few lines about His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios, the first Bishop of Bathery.

PASTOR

It is an all inclusive term. The Bishop of Bathery is no doubt an eminent and outstanding Pastor. A true Pastor “lays down his life for the sheep”. (St. John 10.11). This is what His Excellency Mar Baselios has been doing for the last 16 years. The priestly, prophetic and regal functions of a true Minister are extraordinarily discharged in his Episcopal ministry.

To understand the nature and quantum of the marvellous and magnificent episcopal and pastoral activities of His Excellency, we have to go back to the humble beginning of the diocese, and consider the then existing overall situation of the Malankara Catholics in Malabar. The diocese had only 43 missions stations spread all over the Malabar region, Nilgiris of Tamilnadu and South Kanara of the Karnataka State. The Malankara faithful looked absolutely a withered away community, backward in every respect, with no claims to its credit and credibility. Here started Bishop Mar Baselios his Episcopal ministry. It was a challenge to him; and he welcomed the challenge.

Pastoral Vision

He was with a well proven and crystal clear pastoral vision. The dimension of his pastoral vision is quite clear from the very definition he gives to Diocese. "Our Diocese" he says, "has a population of millions. All those who inhabit in the area of our diocese, indiscriminate of cast and creed, and all those who approach us for any help whatsoever, belong to our diocese, and therefore have the right to get and enjoy the benefits of our priestly ministry".

This pastoral vision is something new and its realization is genuine. In fact, we-the people in India-need such a broader outlook in our religious affairs which can bring fellowship among religions. This is the need of the hour! This pastoral vision has made him a good friend not only of Christians but also many Hindus, Muslims and other people.

His radical concept of God itself is tied to the love of his neighbours, prompting him to commit himself to relieving them from their sufferings and positively uplifting them. The family background he was brought in and brought up necessarily must have very much influenced in shaping his vision.

MODUS OPERANDI

The exercise of ones pastoral duty, ie., the building up of ones community or diocese, he asserts, is neither an individual's work nor a compartmentalised one. So he organises the corporate power of the community. At the same time it is not his policy to prescribe everything leaving nothing to personal initiative. Mar Baselios supports and encourages very much the personal initiatives of his coworkers. This is one of the reasons that the diocese has achieved a considerable growth in various aspects.

Another aspect of his pastoral vision is that he inculcates tremendous self confidence in the parish communities and the people. These small parish communities initiate a lot of developmental works in their own localities. These initiatives are the result of this self confidence given by the Bishop and his co-workers. Another example

EMINENT PASTOR

would be the role played by the National Malankara Catholic Youth Movement. As the one who ardently promoted the youth in the Malankara Church and encourages them constantly with his personal guidance, Mar Baselios can rightly claim the credit of having given shape to a self confident and active Malankara Youth Movement.

The periodical assessment both ab intra and ab extra, and the extensive periodical surveys of the situations etc. are used in the fruitful and efficient building up of the community. "Assess and proceed" is the method he uses and he prescribes the same to all those who are involved in the building up of the diocese.

A good farmer always sees that the tools he uses for his cultivation are always in good condition and of top quality. In the building up of the community his first target was to fully equip the Clergy because he was fully aware that only with a team of dedicated and hard working priests, a solid foundation for a new diocese could be laid. He also tried to inculcate in the clergy and the faithful alike, the deep meaning of being a Malankara re-united Catholic and also the various ecclesial aspects of the re-union movement and its momentum. He wants his Clergy to be of their own proven calibre and thus be great enough to accept readily both success and failure.

He formulated plans of action and brings them to extensive discussion of priests and also to the members of the Pastoral Council, and thus the deliberations taken there become more clarified and also acceptable to all.

GOOD SHEPHERD: OPEN DOOR

Christ said "I am the Good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me". (St. John 10.14). The Diocese has got now 107 parishes. Each parish and its particularities are well known to the Bishop. The door of the bishop's room is always open. Anybody can approach him at any time, and that with any need. Here we see the eminence of Apostle of Christ, the supreme Pastor. Parishes are divided into different categories in respect of their ecclesial and temporal standards. More concern is given to those who need special attention.

EMINENT PASTOR

Many a social, educational and catechetical institutions are established in the diocese to gear up the multifaceted growth and development of our people and also to make them more loyal to the Malankara Church and its age long holy traditions. These institutions do certainly tell upon the farsightedness of an eminent pastor. In his long vision he always sees the future Church, a model of which is already framed in his mind, and therefore the present is so ordained that on it, the future will be safely built.

A good pastor is a good administrator also. It is due to the efficient administration of Mar Baselios, no doubt, that the Diocese has reached the present stage of development. All the provisions of the parish and diocesan administration, envisaged in the canon law, are fully executed and promptly followed in the Diocese.

An eminent pastor is a genuine follower of Jesus Christ and a dedicated servant of the people of God. This is what his motto "Trust in Love" witnesses; and this is what exactly Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios is!



MAR BASELIOS: HIS VISION AND CONTRIBUTION IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

ELDHO PUTHENKANDATHIL

“Pastores Dabo Vobis” (I will give you shepherds ..., Jer 3,15), the post-synodal Apostolic exhortation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the formation of priests in modern times published in 1992 extrapolates the biblical and theological basis of priestly formation visualized by the Church. Priestly vocation and formation are biblically and theologically sound practices in the tradition of the Church, especially in the field of her faith formation. Each bishop, being the head of the local Church, should hold clear theological vision regarding the promotion of priestly vocation and seminary formation, and should adopt possible ways and means to this end. In this regard one finds the theological perspective and pastoral concern of Cyril Mar Baselios, the bishop of Bathery, as something outstanding.

In this article, it is the author's humble attempt to portray Mar Baselios, a theologian and pastor, by presenting his genuine vision with regard to seminary formation in the context of the Malankara Catholic Church to which he belongs. First of all, we will deal with the theological principles which he puts forward concerning the issue. Then we search for the concretization of such thoughts in the context of the Syro- Malankara Church.

According to Mar Baselios, the essential factors which should be taken into account for priestly formation are the nature of the Church, the priestly ministry at present and the ecclesiastical structures.¹ The

¹ Cf. Cyril Mar Baselios, “Believing Communities and theologizing”, in Felix Wilfred (ed.), *Theological Education in India Today*, Bangalore, 1985, 87.

biblical basis of such a thought is substantiated by the following words of the Papal exhortation: "God always calls His priests from specific human ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel".² Priestly formation cannot be isolated from the involvement of building up ecclesial communities.³ Seminary training should respect the tradition of the particular ecclesial Traditions.

Mar Baselios is aware of the fact that in the particular ecclesial context of India, i.e. the co-existence of different particular ecclesial traditions, special care should be taken in the theological formation according to the particular Church tradition. Bishop Baselios is convinced of such a clear ecclesial vision behind the formation of the clergy.

The formation of the candidates for priesthood should be an integral one despite its compartmentalization as intellectual, spiritual and moral. According to Cyril Mar Baselios, many a time the training is reduced to mere academic performance, forgetting other important aspects of ecclesial life and spirituality.⁴ He writes: "in view of the Oriental Churches a programme of studies purely for intellectual formation is inadmissible and a theology without its mystical and contemplative dimension is futile".⁵ This view goes hand in hand with the Indian understanding of priestly formation. Accordingly he criticizes the present "Ratio Studiorum", prescribed and prevalent in the Indian seminaries. The infiltration of secularism and rationalism among our seminarians is accentuated to a great extent by the curriculum prepared in our seminaries without sufficient attention to the priestly spirituality aimed at in ecclesial formation. Modern trends of western thought have

² John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, Vatican City, 1992, 11.

³ Cf. Cyril Mar Baselios, *Believing Communities*, 87.

⁴ Cf. Cyril Mar Baselios, "Post Vatican Renewal: A Malankara Perspective", in Paul Puthanangady (ed.), *Church in India: Institution or Movement?*, Bangalore, 1991, 49.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.49.

PRIESTLY FORMATION

an adverse effect on the Indian seminary curriculam. In this respect Mar Baselios insists on having programmes of studies unique to the Malankara Seminary; for him the seminary of a particular Church should not be a replica of other seminaries under other Churches.

A correct focus on the priorities of values in the formation is lacking due to a misconception of the biblical and ecclesiological understanding of priesthood. The NT priesthood is not a mere continuation of the OT priesthood, neither is priesthood merely one form of the apostolate of the Church. "A deeper understanding of the nature and mission of the Church and consequently of priestly ministry in the Church is very much needed as a strong basis of the formation envisaged in our seminaries".⁶

Theologically speaking, one should understand the Church as a continuation of the economy of salvation which God the Father has designed through His Son in the Holy Spirit. Such a great task of the Church is being dispensed among the people by means of priestly ministry. Therefore it is the duty of the Church to charter a formation programme for priests to fulfil this task. In this regard Mar Baselios writes aptly: "In the process of formation to priestly ministry, we are learning to experience the mystery of God's saving act, to understand it more and more, and freely insert into it as a conscious response to a gift given to us specially".⁷

Against the background of such a profound ecclesial formation the bishop sees the relevance of the liturgical formation in the seminaries. According to him the liturgical celebration is the core of ecclesial spirituality.⁸ In the divine liturgy, especially in the Holy Eucharistic sacrifice the saving act of God is symbolically expressed and ritually elaborated. Since the priests are considered as the ministers of the dispensation of the divine saving act in and through the liturgical service,

⁶ Ibid, p.50.

⁷ Ibid, p.50.

⁸ Cf.Ibid, p.44.

PRIESTLY FORMATION

the formation for priesthood should be liturgy oriented. Liturgy is the supreme faith expression of a living community. Faith is to be understood as the commitment of man to God or as the celebration of one's religious life. Biblically speaking faith is not merely a concept but a living reality. It is to be considered as a living tradition in a believing community. The communitarian faith should be profoundly professed, liturgically celebrated and morally lived. Faith should be celebrated in the context of a liturgical community. Priests being the leaders of the liturgical communities should be equipped with deep faith in the divine mysteries and they should be well trained in the liturgical life of the Church. In other words the ecclesial formation of the seminarians generates an ecclesial spirituality, the core of which would always remain the celebration of the liturgy of the Church.⁹

Mar Baselios considers the priestly ministry as a co-operation in the redemptive work of God in His Church. Such an idea should function as the underlying one and the dynamic force behind the programme for priestly formation. Mar Baselios' vision on the renewal in the seminary formation is in line with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰

Coming to the practical application of Mar Baselios' solid ecclesial vision on priestly formation one finds the establishment of the minor seminary, "Gurukulam", in the very year of the inauguration of the diocese of Bathery, is something praiseworthy. His personal concern towards the seminary in general and each seminarian in particular is praiseworthy. The formators' personal rapport with the students is very much insisted by His Excellency. More over those who are in the field of training should be fully dedicated to their task. The need of having a Major seminary for the Syro-Malankara Church in India as an immediate concern was felt by the Malankara hierarchy. The involvement of Mar Baselios in the execution of this project was to be highly esteemed. Being the Chairman and the professor of the Malankara Seminary he is

⁹ Cf. Ibid, p.50.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid, p.51.

PRIESTLY FORMATION

concretizing his vision in the priestly formation in the particular context of the Malankara Church.

So far we had been trying to understand and evaluate the vision of Mar Baselios, the bishop of Batherly in the formation of the candidates to priesthood. Our investigation could prove the fact that his vision regarding priestly formation is clear, based on sound ecclesiology. His clear theological outlook, long term teaching career in different seminaries and practical experience especially as a bishop are the elements which make him an outstanding personality in the field under consideration. A faithful evaluation of his vision and contribution in the priestly formation is a great homage which I can pay on the occasion of his 60th Birthday. May God bless Mar Baselios more abundantly and through him the Malankara Church in particular and the Universal Church at large!



BISHOP CYRIL MAR BASELIOS WHOM I HAVE SEEN

VARGHESE OTTATHENGIL

Man's encounter with others influences him either positively or negatively. If the persons whom he encounters are great, the influence will be positive. Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios is one of the very few great personalities whom I have met in my life. My acquaintance with him started late. I met him for the first time immediately after his election as the bishop of Bathery, in 1978. Throughout these seventeen years my appreciation for him has been growing. The following are some of the reasons why I am impressed by Mar Baselios.

Mar Baselios is a man of sharp intellect. His grasping power is marvellous. He is known for his clarity of mind. His memory is incredible. One feels enriched after a dialogue with him.

Mar Baselios is known for his systematic approach. Not only in official matters, but also in personal affairs, he is very accurate and systematic. He attends to persons and things according to the hierarchy of value or importance. Hence people feel understood and respected.

Mar Baselios is a very careful man. His attention goes even to the smallest detail. I have seen him attending to the minutest things during celebrations. I have wondered, how he knows many of the members of the diocese so personally.

An Efficient Administrator: He appoints the most suitable persons to each post. The person is given enough and more work, so that he feels always occupied. He is an efficient co-ordinator. His planning, attention to the minutest details, follow up, evaluation of programmes, etc. are parts

of his administrative skills. Each member of the parish is involved in church affairs. For this he insists that the units of four departments are obligatory in each parish; viz. Catechism, Youth Movement, Mothers' Association and Fathers' Association. Thus all members of the family are actively involved in the parish as well as the diocesan activities. There is co-ordination at the parish, zonal and diocesan levels.

A Great Educator: The public educational institutions that Mar Baselios has started are bringing miraculous changes in the most under-developed district of Wayanad. The members of the tribal groups and backward communities received a lot of benefits from the educational institutions of the diocese, all of which were started by Mar Baselios.

The time and energy he has spent imparting religious education is worth mentioning. The programme of the Catechetical apostolate is a proof of this. Most of the members of the diocese of Bathery are well trained in catechism, especially in faith, morals and the history of the church. Hence they have a greater love for their christian faith and for the Malankara Catholic Church.

Further development in the field of education is seen in the formation of future priests. Immediately after the establishment of the diocese of Bathery, he started the Minor Seminary. His interest in the formation of seminarians is very special. Often he meets the students and chats with them and instructs them officially and personally. The direction he gives to the formators is very laudable. St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary, the most prestigious institution of the whole Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, is growing very fast. Mar Baselios is the chairman of the Seminary commission. His suggestions, directions and active involvement in the seminary affairs have contributed to a great extent in the growth of the Seminary.

A Man of Strong Faith: Mar Baselios is a man of strong faith. When he took charge of the diocese of Bathery, there was practically nothing. He had to build up everything. He had no worry of the future. He was always optimistic. It was his reliance on God and strong faith that made him peaceful.

Promoter of Priests: The success of a bishop depends very much on how he makes use of the ability and talents of his priests. Mar Baselios is very successful in this. He encourages his clergy. Many are sent for higher studies. He is not afraid of the young growing up. He knows for certain that they will not be a threat to him. He knows how to utilize their scholarship and initiatives for the growth of the church. He incorporates all of them.

Ever Hospitable: One who visits Mar Baselios keeps with him ever after the sweet memories of the hospitality of the bishop. When a guest comes to the Bishop's House, the bishop personally receives him and attends to his needs. This was very evident in 1979 during the first days after the start of the new diocese of Bathery. The bishop himself was bringing bed sheets and pillows and was enquiring whether the guests had eaten anything or not. This experience at this little house, where the bishop stayed eight years is unforgettable. Anyone can come to the bishop at any time and spend any amount of time with him. He is very approachable. He is not offended and never gets irritated.

A Lover of the Poor: The sympathy and love of Mar Baselios for the poor is expressed through the many social service schemes the diocese of Bathery is doing. Shreyas, the social service centre of the diocese has earned national fame through its people-oriented developmental programmes. The number of services done throughout the diocese among the most backward people through out the diocese, without cast and creed, is remarkable. Apart from the systematic social developmental programmes, the bishop contributes personally to the poor people who meet him.

A Great Psychologist and Counsellor: Mar Baselios is a great psychologist and counsellor. Any one who approaches him with a problem will go back with a feeling that he has found a solution to the problem. The solutions are solid and substantial.

One who respects freedom: Mar Baselios is one who respects the freedom of others. He is of the opinion that each one has to use his or her freedom in a responsible way. He doesn't interfere in unimportant

affairs of others nor cause problems. Hence one can make use of one's initiatives without fear and anxiety.

A Friend of All: Mar Baselios is a friend of all, one who respects even the views of those who hold a different opinion. He listens to his "adversaries" carefully and patiently. He never gets irritated at criticisms. He doesn't take revenge. He extends his helping hand to all even to those who "oppose" him.

Indeed Bishop Mar Baselios is one of the very few great men, whom I have seen. It is a great blessing and fortune to have the opportunity to work with him. My prayer on this occasion of his sixtieth birthday is that Almighty God may bless him more abundantly so that he can accomplish the task that HE has entrusted to him!



CYRIL MAR BASELIOS: A THEOLOGIAN LOYAL TO THE CHURCH

P. T. THOMAS

The Church is defined and expressed in different terms, such as *Ecclesia*, Congregation of faithful, People of God etc. All these terms and their subsequent visions add to the richness of the Church. Jesus said to his disciples "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you..."¹ We see in the Acts of the Apostles "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved".² We generally say that the Church is the mystical body of Christ. However the Oriental view of the Church is that it is the continuation of Incarnation. Our loving Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios holds this vision and holy truth of the Church. He is an apostle of this truth. I think that the life and teaching of Mar Baselios the great, the Metropolitan of Caesaria, enlightened his soul and mind to be with the Church and for the Church and of the Church. His mind and spirit are illumined by holy Scripture. His earnest study of Oriental Fathers leads him to acquire this deep knowledge.

Mar Baselios the great of Caesaria was the spokesman of the Church of his time. Cyril Mar Baselios is an Oriental Theologian and a spokesman of the Universal Church in general and the Malankara Church in particular. In his foreword to the book, *Malankara Sabha*, by Fr. P.T.Thomas, he writes: "The ancient and apostolic Indian Church is trying her best to progress with fresh vigour to foster the divine and christian ministry. She must be infused with strength from Almighty and should walk in His presence. Church is the divine mystery. It was begun

¹ St. John 15: 16.

² Acts of the Apostles 2: 47.

from the Holy Father and revealed in His Holy Son and still actuated among mankind by the strength of Holy Spirit".³

Even in a recently written commentary on the newly promulgated Eastern Canon law,⁴ the term "the Indian church" is concealed and referred to merely as St.Thomas Christians. Where as Bishop Mar Baselios took pains to assert and establish the fact that the Indian Malankara Church is an Individual Church- Ecclesia Sui iuris- and had its foundation in the glorious preaching of St.Thomas, the Apostle. It is not a new invention at all! The early Church in Jerusalem flourished. Soon after that St.Thomas, the Apostle, planted the Church in India in 52 A.D. It is to be noted that we received the Gospel in India much earlier than in Rome. Mar Baselios is ever proud to proclaim that we are so much blessed that our forefathers became christians in the very beginning of Christianity itself.

The doctoral thesis of Mar Baselios, which he had successfully done in Canon law at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, was on the Malankara Church.⁵ It is a well documented and scholarly book on Malankara Church. The very selection of this theme reveals his enthusiasm to unveil the hidden treasures of the Indian Church. He speaks about this apostolic church everywhere.

According to the Malankara tradition each diocesan bishop has the title of Metropolitan. But the Malankara Catholic Bishops were called *Episcopa* (Bishop) until 1979. Mar Baselios, after his enthronement as the bishop of Bathery, tried to establish this tradition and he used this title "Metropolitan" along with his name. The title "Metropolitan" should not be confused with the term "Archbishop". They are not the same in the Oriental thinking and its traditions. Realizing its ecclesial meaning and

³ Cf.P.T.Thomas, *Malankara Sabha* (Malayalam), Bathery: Malankara Publications,

⁴ See Victor J.Pospishil, *Eastern Catholic Church Law*, Brooklyn: St.Maron Publications, 1993.

⁵ Cyril Malancharuvil OIC, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, 1973.

effects, now all the Diocesan Bishops of the Malankara Catholic Church are using this title along with their name. Instances like these may sound silly and simple for those who don't seriously analyze the real ecclesial position of the Malankara Catholic Church and its actual history. It was heard that during his stay abroad, a bishop was asked about his succession. The particular bishop said that he is successor of an apostle. Suddenly Mar Baselios showed his *Masanapsa*⁶ and explained the theological meaning of *Masanapsa*. Each bishop according to this tradition is the successor of 12 Apostles. We believe in the collegiality of bishops as well as of the Apostles. The particular bishop whom we mentioned above was very much taken up by the profound theological vision of Malankara tradition and the clarity of expression of Mar Baselios.

Catholic Church is the communion of different individual (Ecclesia sui iuris) Churches. In the general sessions of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and in other national and International theological Conferences Mar Baselios speaks about this vision of the Church.⁷ Even after the Second Vatican Council and many significant Synods and Consultations, some seem to hold the pre-Vatican idea of uniformity and the subsequent administrative systems which were dominant in the Western Catholic Church. Mar Baselios is always against those ideas and ideologies which tarnish or isolate the Catholic Church from the real tradition of the Church which is the meeting place of western and eastern traditions. So one could very well say that Mar Baselios is a spokesman of the Catholic Church and protector of the Oriental tradition.

The meaning of incarnation is the deliverance of mankind. God became man and represented every man. We believe that He is true God and true man. Jesus proclaimed that his ministry is the ministry of

⁶ The Syriac word *Masanapsa* means the head-covering veil with 13 crosses embroidered on it; 12 small crosses denote the 12 Apostles and the one big cross in the middle denotes Jesus Christ. It is being used in the Antiochean and Malankara Churches by the Remban, Bishop, Metropolitan, Catholicose and Patriarch.

⁷ See the various speeches and interventions given by Mar Baselios in the meetings of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and on other occasions.

liberation.⁸ Deliverance from sin, fear, illness, starvation, and so on. He is the curer of body, mind and spirit. So also the Church is given the same ministry of liberating everybody, irrespective of caste and creed.

Soon after the erection of the diocese of Bathery, Mar Baselios scientifically studied the immediate needs of the new diocese. The under-developed area, lack of resources, want of educational facilities and health care were found the main problems to be tackled. Mar Baselios decided to face these problems and solve them in a systematic and scientific way. At first he made a survey to find out the pressing problems which needed his immediate attention. Different departments and programmes have been constituted in order to materialize the integral development of the people of the diocese, irrespective of caste and creed.

He also gave an equal importance to the liturgical and ecclesial life of his people. From the very beginning of the diocese he constituted four departments to give ecclesial orientation to the faithful at different stages of life. They are namely., Catechetical Department (Children), Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (Youth), Fathers Association (Men) and Mothers Association (Women). There are also some other departments like Social Service, Bible apostolate, Communication Media etc. rendering great services to the diocese and in the building up of our nation.

Every body in the Church is called to live a life of faith, hope and charity. According to Mar Baselios, Christian life is the participation in the life of Jesus and that should be expressed both in words and deeds. He possesses a clear vision of the Church and is capable of sharing it with every body and anybody.

Mar Baselios is deeply interested and involved in Ecumenism. He is a member of the Joint International Theological Commission appointed by the Holy See to dialogue with the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. Apart from this official dialogue, he personally conducts dialogue with Muslims and Hindus. He has a wide contact with the Prelates and

⁸ Cf. Luke 4: 18.

THEOLOGIAN LOYAL TO THE CHURCH

leaders of the different Churches, Catholic as well as non Catholic. One who meets him will be impressed by his clear ecclesial vision and his deep concern for the unity of the churches. As a priest who worked with him for many years in different capacities, I am totally convinced that Mar Baselios is a committed Metropolitan in exercising his episcopal ministry and a learned Oriental theologian who is living and thinking with the Church and working for the Church.



STATISTICS OF THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

	1979	1995
Catholics	8,500	22,507
Parishes & Missions	43	107
Total Priests	20	72
- Diocesan Priests	18	61
- OIC	2	9
- Dhyanaashram	-	2
Religious Sisters	30	185
- SIC	13	108
- DM	-	50
- DSS	17	23
- OSS	-	4
Minor Seminary	-	1
Seminarians	20	92
- Major	10	47
- Minor	10	45
College	-	1
Schools	5	58
- High School	-	5
- U.P.School	2	13
- L.P.School	2	13
- Nursery	1	27
Technical Institutions	-	2

STATISTICS

Clinics	-	16
Hostels	-	4
Tailoring Institutes	-	6
Homes for Aged	-	2
Printing Press	-	1
Publication	-	1

* The statistics of 1979 as on, 2 February 1979, the formal Inaguration of the diocese and the statistics of 1995 as on 1 May, 1995 (Editor).

CATECHETICAL APOSTOLATE IN THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

V.P.THOMAS

The establishment of the diocese of Bathery is a landmark in the history of the Malankara Catholic Church. The establishment of the new diocese has brought a new vigour and vitality to the whole territory of the diocese. In the very beginning of the diocese, few departments were established in view of promoting the ecclesial and social life of the people. Realising the need for catechesis, Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios established a department of catechesis immediately after the formal inauguration of the diocese on 2nd February, 1979.

Our diocese consists of men and women of different faiths, cultures and traditions. The Malankara Catholic faithful are living among them. They are mainly hardworking migrants who left their native places in view of attaining a new economic security in a new land. They left everything behind in view of a better life situation in terms of food, housing and standard of life. Their ardent desire was to build up a new "canaan" at any cost. Their pursuit of building up a new life milieu has caused loss of both physical and mental strength. They not only remained underdeveloped in their cultural formation but also sometimes deviated from their spiritual life. This is apparently clear in a generation who, once having attained financial security, sustains the thought: "let us live some way". We have extended our ministry to these people of God who sometimes had nothing else to offer than economic security to the coming generation. They had no peaceful family life, they had forgotten their faith and they lost their traditions and heritage as the cost for a better life. It is in the midst of these people that the diocese of Bathery started its different apostolates

sixteen years ago. Strengthened from the proclamation of Jesus at Nazareth, the diocese in a humble way began to instil this idea of integral liberation for all. Thus we have started to build up in their hearts the right relationship between God and man as well as man and man.

The Catechetical apostolate in the diocese of Bathery must be understood against this background. The motto of our catechetical apostolate, "Seek the Kingdom of God," reveals the goal of our apostolate. We have to revive the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its values in various spheres of the modern world. This is what the church aims at in her effort of evangelization. The Church continues the mission of Christ in the World. In her mission she does an important service to the world: uniting everything and everyone in Christ. This demands both the preaching of the Gospel and catechesis. Through catechesis we make christian values available to the world through the preaching of the Gospel. The knowledge of these values is deepened through catechesis and lived out in daily life.

If we succeed in the service of the Gospel then we have succeeded in the mission of the church. All the renewal programmes are aimed at the realisation of this reality. The Church attempts to diffuse christian values through renewal programmes in various circumstances and living conditions of modern man. They are not only presented but also lived out with full commitment. Seen from this perspective, the significance of catechesis becomes more evident.

At this juncture, the message of Pope Pius XII at the Catechetical Congress in Spain is very significant; "some serious evils have affected the present world. But none of these is so badly consequent as ignorance in religious matters. There are many things which need strong remedies. Among them catechesis demands our immediate attention and concern. Parents in families, teachers in class rooms, priests and religious in holy places are to hand over the treasures of catholic teaching and thus form the next generation." Following the teaching of the Fathers and that of the Councils, the Church undertakes the proclamation of the Gospel as her primary

CATECHETICAL APOSTOLATE

duty. Taking into consideration the needs of the time, she is committed to this evangelization.

The Catechetical apostolate becomes significant and lively when it is done in the context of a local church. Our intention is not to teach a few theological ideas in a vacuum but to live the faith-life in the church, the family and society. It is gratifying to see that we have a catechetical program in our diocese which takes into consideration the specific features of the apostolic traditions of the Malankara Church and its God-given mission. We have succeeded in including all, both young and old in our programs. This prepares us to be instruments of evangelization. Through various undertakings and programs, we are aiming at giving a true catechesis. Holy Qurbano, liturgical worship, sermons, feasts, bible conventions, retreats, youth associations, festivals, women's associations, prayer meetings, and catechetical lessons, etc. are all means of catechesis. Various activities of our parishes also promote catechesis. Our elders should teach and train our younger generation in the faith. We should be able to provide an adequate training in the path of christian life in the best possible way.

In the world of today catechesis is really important. The communications media are quite influential at present. Therefore it is our duty to lead the future generation in the right path. Both parents and elders of our church are to be teachers of our faith and tradition. This should start in our families. If we really do this, we will have good young catholics in our parishes and through them good families will be continued. The growth of each parish as well as of the diocese depends on these families. Our experience teaches us this. In such a situation we have to work hard aspiring to further growth in this regard.

The direct concern of our catechetical apostolate is the children who take part in the lessons of our religious instruction. Sixteen years of our work in this apostolate has provided us with different experiences and understanding. There is no doubt that all

CATECHETICAL APOSTOLATE

our apostolates have created an awareness of belonging to one family in terms of one shepherd and one flock.

While the diocesan catechetical centre gives leadership, encouragement and necessary guidelines for the effective functioning of the department, the real catechesis takes place in each parish. At present there are about 6000 students and about 600 teachers in 107 parishes of the diocese. The growth of our parishes is the outcome of our growth in religious training, which is the primary duty of each parish. We have given due attention to this matter.

There is no doubt that besides the religious instruction we give, seminars, camps, examinations, etc. have added to the faith formation, religious formation, prayer life and many vocations to priesthood and religious life. We conduct training programs, seminars and annual conventions for the catechists. These contribute to the faith-life of these teachers and enable them to give a more efficient religious training to the future generation. Hence it is true to say that our catechetical programs lay the foundation for the growth of our diocese.

Above all the growth of our catechetical programs is supported by the parents who prepare their children for it and by the catechists who teach them. Certainly the parish priests and religious of the diocese have contributed very much in this regard. The diocesan director of the catechetical department together with the central catechetical committee give leadership to all the catechetical activities of the diocese.

The bishop is the first catechist in every diocese. This is very true of Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios in the diocese of Bathery. Being an esteemed theologian, he realized the need for catechetical formation in the new diocese and he gave built up the department of Catechesis with a sufficient infra-structure. His personal care and supervision in this field have produced many fruits. He remains the "diocesan catechetical headmaster" who encourages, motivates, corrects and coordinates the whole faith-life formation programme.

CATECHETICAL APOSTOLATE

When we visualize catechesis as handing over the faith-life to the next generation, we will have to prepare many programmes accordingly. One of the immediate needs in the catechetical apostolate is to have a Malankara Catechetical Syllabus and programme to transmit the faith-life and apostolic traditions of the Malankara Catholic Church to our children who will be the backbone of the church tomorrow. The impact of such a programme will have far reaching effects in the next generations. In my opinion another pressing need is to have a special training programme for the catechists. A dedicated and well trained team of teachers can effectively form the children as the torch bearers of the faith-life tomorrow. Our teachers have to be always proud of our ecclesial identity. We are the members of an apostolic church in the catholic communion with a God-given mission. It is with this sense of identity that we continue to be the spokesmen and witness to the reunion apostolate. We must always speak about the need of unity between the Catholic and Malankara Orthodox and Jacobites Churches. This is what we have learned from our beloved bishop Mar Baselios. Let us imbibe his vision and continue to build up the church in this part of the world by becoming apostles of unity!



MAR BASELIOS AND THE YOUTH IN THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

PHILIP PUTHENKANDATHIL

The diocese of Bathery was formally inaugurated on 2nd February, 1979. Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, the first Bishop, continues to pasture the diocese since then. From the very start of the diocese Mar Baselios had a special concern for the youth and their formation. He firmly believes that the future of the Church, nay the nation, depends on the youth. So from the very beginning of his episcopate, he established a special department for the care and the formation of youth in the diocese, namely the Malankara Catholic Youth Department, and the Movement is known as the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, Bathery.

The first Director, Rev.Fr.Paul Vellakunnath, was directed by the Bishop to visit all the parishes and to start units of the M.C.Y.M. (Malankara Catholic Youth Movement) in each parish. Accordingly 40 Units were opened and registered under the diocesan youth department. Then the whole diocese was divided into Zones and each Zone under a Zonal Director (Priest) for the better functioning and co-ordination in the activities of the department. A Statute was codified for the department in the meantime.

In 1984 Rev.Fr.Philip Puthenkandathil was appointed the new diocesan Director of the Youth Apostolate. Slowly a special infrastructure was put up for the better functioning of the department. Elections were conducted at the unit, zonal and diocesan levels. A special Secretariat, Senate and Syndicate were formed with the youth leaders as their members. So the whole movement took a different shape when the youth leaders emerged to give leadership. A special awareness was created that the youth department belongs to the youth and consequently the whole functioning of the department would be the responsibility of the youth.

They had to come up and grow by themselves and the department would give proper guidelines and timely assistance.

The department focused its attention on the intellectual, spiritual, ecclesial and socio-cultural formation of the young people, for which the department organized seminars, camps, retreats, social actions etc. at regular and pre-planned intervals. Each year the director and the leaders would sit together to chalk out a yearly programme for the youth at all levels. Special subsidy was also given to promote its objectives.

Most of the young people of the diocese took part in all functions held at different occasions. Special camps were conducted to inculcate an awareness in them that the Church belonged to them and the youthfulness of the Church could be kept alive only through them. Special leadership courses and value education programmes were planned and organized with the formation of the youth. Many young people turned out to be good leaders and social workers assuming it as their role and call. Slowly a core group was formed with some selected youth to give leadership in the diocesan level for the promotion of the department in the unit levels. Now we see the tremendous growth of the Catholic young leaders and their leadership qualities. Thus we could bring forth leaders who are rendering their sincere services in the State and National levels. The important factor is that these young people are interested in the Church and they live and work for her.

The guiding force behind the youth apostolate in the diocese is the dynamic and devoted leadership of our Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios. He encouraged, supported and directed all his priests to take up youth ministry as the part and parcel of their priestly ministry. Since youth ministry is a relational ministry, the bishop instructed the priests to build up good relationship with each youth member of their respective parishes.

From this we can understand the great interest and vision the bishop has for the youth apostolate. Mar Baselios defines the youth ministry as the response of the community to the needs of the young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community. His emphasis on the dimension of the youth ministry is that

it is To, With, By, and For youth. He characterises the goals of youth apostolate as the following:

- 1.Youth apostolate aims at fostering total, personal, spiritual, ecclesial growth of each young person.
- 2.Youth apostolate seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life and work of the Church.
- 3.Youth apostolate enables young people to take an active part in the building up of a just society according to values of truth, love, justice and fellowship.

Thus the integral growth of the young person is envisaged by the bishop so that he or she becomes an active member of the Church and live for it as a fully human and fully active person.

In order to give an identity to the youth among the various youth groups, Mar Baselios founded a Youth Centre where the young people can come, stay and study, pray and live. This beautiful centre remains an ample proof for the deep ecclesial vision and genuine love of Mar Baselios towards the Malankara Catholic Youth. He has given them enormous strength and a clear ecclesial identity. Special courses are offered in the Centre for the development of the youth. Now the youth centre, PRATHEEKSHA, functions as the centre of guidance for the youth in and around the Diocese. Priests as the youth ministers in the diocesan, zonal and unit levels, and the youth leaders elected in this three levels put together their efforts to promote the youth apostolate and mission in the diocese of Bathery and this is a unique phenomenon.

Presently the department has about 6000 registered youth who have membership cards indicating that they are active in the movement. Many leaders have emerged from among them during these years. Good family set-up could be created through this in and around this diocese. Special programmes are organized to find out the talents of the young people in different fields. Rev.Fr.Mathew Kandathil is appointed as the new director in February, 1994. Mar Baselios is the Chairman of the Malankara Episcopal Youth Commission. In this capacity he was trying to co-ordinate all the youth activities of the three dioceses of the Malankara Catholic

MAR BASELIOS AND THE YOUTH

Church to form one Movement for the whole of Malankara Catholic Church. His untiring efforts resulted in the formation of the National Malankara Catholic Youth Movement; it comprises the three diocesan youth departments and units of all the *Bahya* (out side) Kerala Parishes and Mission Stations. The reasons behind the success of his youth ministry are his spiritual insights and sterling qualities. His deep commitment to the Youth is not merely social but ecclesial. When Mar Baselios became a Bishop in 1978 he was only 43 years old. But surprising is that even at his *Shashtipurthy* he remains youthful in mind and ever ready to accept new ventures which will strengthen the Church. He has proved himself that age is basically the attitude of the mind only!



MALANKARA
LIBRARY

MAR BASELIOS: A MAN OF FAITH, VISION AND HEART

ELIAS PAUL

I first made the acquaintance of His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios Metropolitan, Bishop of Bathery, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Reunion Movement of the Malankara Catholic Church, held in Bathery in September, 1990. I was then a member of the Orthodox Syrian Jacobite Church. I spent about half an hour with our beloved Bishop. Towards the end of our conversation he presented me with the book named *Syro-Malankara Church* written by himself and he encouraged me to read it at my convenience. It was a turning point in my life.

I went through the book *Syro-Malankara Church*. It resulted in shedding my prejudices against the Catholic Church and deciding to know more about the Malankara Catholic Church, which came in to communion with the Universal Catholic Church in 1930 retaining the traditions of the Malankara Apostolic Church and accepting the Pope as the Supreme Pontiff and the Successor of St. Peter the Apostle, the head of the Apostolic College.

When I was a member of the Orthodox Syrian Jacobite Church I had been working as an active Sunday School Teacher of St. Peter's Church at Meenangady. The book of Mar Baselios inspired me and helped me for a clear evaluation of the ecclesial situation in Malankara. I contacted many eminent Metropolitans and Priests in my Church. But their explanations did not satisfy me. In due course, I came to a correct understanding of the ecclesial position through Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios and the Malankara Catholic Church. The conflicts of Church and the open disputes between the Jacobite and Orthodox Churches over temporal things wounded my heart and I became convinced that the

differences were not a matter of faith but arose from the desire to exercise authority.

My parents and relatives, who are staunch followers of the Jacobite Church, strongly protested my decision to join the Malankara Catholic Church. I still tried to convince them of my stand. When all my efforts failed to convince them of the truth of the Catholic Church and of its history, I decided to say good bye to the Jacobite Church. It was really a painful decision because I knew for sure that if I took this step my family would definitely be isolated. But I decided to embrace the truth which I found out after deep study, reflection and prayer. Myself and my family, including my wife Beena and two children, approached Mar Baselios and we requested him to kindly admit us to the Malankara Catholic Church. The beloved Bishop Mar Baselios has strengthened us and blessed us and accepted us to the flock of the Malankara Catholic Church, with paternal love and concern.

Since 1990 I have been working as an active member of the Malankara Catholic Church and I too am fortunate to get ample occasions to have a closer relationship with our beloved Bishop. I could see that Mar Baselios is a true Pastor of the flock of Bathery, who carries out his episcopal ministry as a committed pastor with clear ecclesial vision. He is a well known theologian. The discussions with him, and his writings, reveal that he is really an authority in Theology.

I feel that Mar Baselios is a deeply devoted Shepherd, who is always keenly attentive to the protection of his sheep. Jesus Christ said that the good shepherd will die for his sheep. As the apex of his pastoral concern is the general welfare and integral growth of the society and particularly the upliftment of the economically backward and socially down trodden. He initiated the Charitable Institution at Sulthan Bathery namely *SHREYAS*, which is the official organ of the diocese to promote justice and fellowship. The enormous services rendered by *Shreyas* is well appreciated in local and national levels. The master brain of *Shreyas* is our beloved Bishop Mar Baselios who is enriched with deep spirituality and exemplary human concern. He brings out good things out of his treasure of good things.

A MAN OF FAITH

Mar Baselios started his episcopal ministry officially on 2nd February, 1979. Then there were only 43 parishes in the diocese of Bathery. In a span of sixteen years, the number of parishes and mission stations of the diocese grew into 107 in the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. This vital growth of the diocese shows that the Almighty God is always with the endeavour of the diocese and our beloved Bishop Mar Baselios. The proverb says that “when health is lost only something is lost, but when character is lost everything is lost”. Mar Baselios understood the need and value of educating the younger generations to bring out the best in them and to form them as responsible citizens of the nation. From the very beginning he has been giving top priority to the apostolate of education. He has special consideration for the Adivasis (Tribals) in rural areas, providing them education and health care. It is worth mentioning with pride that St. Joseph’s English High School in Bathery, one of the best leading schools in Malabar area, offers free education to any tribal children who wish to avail of it. The newly acquired Pazhassi Raja College at Pulpally is the new attempt of the diocese to provide value based higher education to the Students from the economically and socially neglected areas. The Diocesan Educational Society is rendering a wonderful service in this respect.

The simplicity and generous hospitality of Mar Baselios to all the people of any strata of life have really touched me. His availability to the learned and the illiterate, to the rich and the poor is something marvellous and ideal. Mar Baselios is least bothered about any publicity. When he gives something to a needy person, he doesn’t make a show of it. He submits everything in the name of God. When a poor or a needy person knocks at the door of *Dharmapeedham*, (the Bishop’s House) it will be always opened and he or she will not be disappointed.

During my college days I read “The Bishop’s Candle Sticks”, an English novel. The character “the bishop” in that novel has inspired me and I deeply admired him. However it was only a story. But now I have seen and experienced a person of that character in real life. Our Lord says “who ever gives even a drink of water to one of the least of my brothers, will certainly receive his reward”. Mar Baselios has been sowing good seeds in good soil and now reaps in hundred folds. The light-giving lamp placed

on the top of *Dharmapeedhom*, gives light not only to the Christians but to all those who are committed to co-operate in bringing out a *Dharmarajyam* (Kingdom of God) the fruit of which are truth, justice and fellowship.

Mar Baselios is always a person of joy. Once I enquired about the secret of his joy and one of his co-workers told me that he is free from anything which spoils the mental peace and that he is very good at relating to people. For a moment I remembered the assurance of Our Lord: "Happy are those who work for the peace among men, for they shall be called sons of God". His love for the Catholic Church in general and the Malankara Churches(both Catholic and Orthodox) in particular is very evident in all his conversations and dealings. He is deeply committed to the unity of Churches. His scholarly talks on ecclesial matters express his deep commitment to the Church. He is never tired of speaking about the Church. As the Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council I had the rare privilege of listening to him on many occasions and of sharing with him my humble thoughts about the Church. The diocese of Bathery is singularly privileged to have this great pastor as its first Bishop, the Malankara Catholic Church is really proud to have him as her spokesman in national and international circles, and the Indian Church is significantly blessed with this great theologian who always stands for the Communion of Churches. May the Almighty God continue to bless him with long life and good health so that he can lead the people of God in to the third millennium with more vigour and vitality!



MAR BASELIOS: OUR BELOVED ABOON

JACOB OLICKAL

It is a great privilege for me to share some of my thoughts about His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios. They are shared really out of my convictions and personal relationship with him which I have been experiencing throughout my seminary life. Now it is a moment of great pride and happiness for the diocese to celebrate his Sixtieth Birthday and to thank the Almighty Lord for all the blessings we have received through him. It is also an occasion to raise our hearts in gratitude for the gift of this great personality, a genuine shepherd and a great theologian, to the Malankara Church. On this auspicious occasion on behalf of all the Seminarians of the diocese, I extend to our beloved *Aboon*, our prayerful wishes and greetings. Certainly as his own children it is our right and obligation to convey our regards and prayers to our Bishop. We take this occasion to thank God the Almighty for His special gift given to us and pray that the good Lord may bless him with long life and good health so that he can guide the Malankara Church with greater vigour and vitality.

The tremendous growth of the diocese of Bathery reveals many things. The integral growth of the diocese is due to the efficient leadership of its Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios who is a man of great vision and dedication. For him it is not so difficult to penetrate into the social, cultural, economic and religious background of the people and thus to organize them accordingly. Being a man of total dedication for the Church and its apostolates, Mar Baselios loves and lives for the integral development of the people of God, regardless of caste and creed, in the diocese of Bathery. Therefore it is quite fitting

to say that what the diocese today is because of the great vision and its effective application of His Excellency Mar Baselios and the generosity of his co-workers in making them present locally.

Realizing the immediate need of priestly formation against the background of the new diocese, Mar Baselios, soon after his enthronement, took a very special initiative for the immediate establishment of a formation house *Gurukulam* for the students of priesthood. It is to be specially noted that the Minor Seminary was the first establishment of the new diocese. He is giving a very personal attention to the integral development of each and every Seminarian of the diocese. He is very much interested in being with the Seminarists in praying, eating, sharing, working and even cracking jokes. Mar Baselios wants all his Priests and Seminarists to acquire a solid self image. This is not only in preaching but also in practice. For example, he never forgets to bring his important guests to the Minor Seminary and introduces them to the Seminarists. This has in fact created in us a strong feeling that we are also an important part of the diocese. His ever joyful presence in the Seminary really makes all of us happy. His paternal considerations and love really serve as an inspiration and encouragement for the Seminarists' growth in priestly vocation. For us it is an unforgettable moment of happiness to be with him. He never forgets to accept each one as he is wherever he may be. It is a speciality that the boundaries of his hospitality is very wide and it transcends all racial, linguistic, cultural and economic discriminations. As a regent I have witnessed to his marvellous hospitality.

"A Christian is important not because who he is but whose he is". This profound words of Stantly Johns seem to be a very relevant and meaningful factor as regards the life of Mar Baselios. He is really conscious of his identity and missions. Hence his communion with God makes his life and activities successful. His relationship with God is in fact touching and inspiring to all especially to the Seminarists. I am proud to say that I got the golden opportunity of spending my regency period with him in the Bishop's house and thus I could come to closer appreciations of the way of life of Mar Baselios. His commitment to the spiritual duties is really a matter of wonder for me.

OUR BELOVED ABOON

For example, sometimes the meetings take long time at night. Even after those busy and tiring schedules, I have seen him saying the Holy Rosary even at the late hours of night. In short the source of all his actions indeed is his deep communion with God.

Our Aboon, Mar Baselios, has a very good contact with us. He knows each one of us, our families, our own life situations and takes care in our personal needs with great care and concern. His readiness to visit and console the brothers who are in sick bed is a striking experience for us. It is very special to him that we can approach him freely at any time and discuss our problems. His openness and acceptance of each individual as person is very helpful for us to be relaxed and consoled. He always tries to show us the truth of the matters and thus to guide us in the proper way.

Today in the theological sphere too Mar Baselios is very well appreciated for his theological thinking. His theological insights and visions attract many. We have got a number of opportunities to attend his scholarly classes and talks. For us, the Students of Theology at the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum, he took the subject "Introduction to Theology", which was really deep in its theological contents and very clear and systematic in its presentation. His rich knowledge and vast experience as a teacher in various Seminaries are very helpful to satiate the thirst of the students for knowledge. In fact his teaching method is very practical so much so the student can understand well what the professor teaches. In him I see a teacher who is very loyal to the Church.

He is really a good pastor. His zeal for souls is a decisive factor that caused the tremendous growth of the diocese. During his mission visits he used to take Seminarians with him so that the student can have a direct experience of the life pattern of the people in the mission stations. In the missions he carefully listens and adequately responds to the problems of the parish members and thus becomes a real father for them. His contact with the people, his pastoral concerns in their spiritual and material growth, his genuine commitments to that etc., are incentives for us to form ourselves according to the model of the

OUR BELOVED ABOON

Good Shepherd, who had laid his own life for the salvation of all. His systematic and disciplined life and hard working nature are something which all of us can imitate in our lives. His love for the people of God is the concrete foundation on which his genuine thoughts and actions are built up. That is why his life as a whole shines as a monument of dedication and commitment.

On this golden moments of his 60th Birth Anniversary, with one voice, we would like to acknowledge our deep indebtedness to him. Our beloved Aboon, we are proud of you! We are extremely grateful to you for your great, personal care and concern in our priestly formation. Together with all the Seminarians of the diocese and with our families, I thank the Lord for His wonderful gift of Mar Baselios among us. May the Almighty God continue to bless our beloved *Aboon!*



THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH: A GENERAL SURVEY

PHILIP NINAN

INTRODUCTION

The Malankara Catholic Church is marching forward to the third millennium carrying its God-given mission. Though the Malankara Catholic Church started with a humble beginning it has achieved considerable growth. It has made an impact on the ecclesial and social dimensions. In this short article my humble attempt is to make a general survey of this Church.

THE UNDIVIDED CHURCH OF THOMAS CHRISTIANS

The Church in India was founded by St. Thomas the Apostle. This fact is approved by the historians and by a living proof of the Christian Churches in India. Till the middle of 17th century, this Church was following the Syrian Liturgy and its members were called Syrian Christians or Thomas Christians. Though they received Bishops from The East Syrian Church, they flourished an autonomous character of the Church especially in its administration. They were in the Catholic Communion keeping its internal autonomy. The internal administration was handled by lay leaders. The arrival of the Portuguese missionaries created a new and strange situation in the Church. The relationship was cordial in the beginning. The missionaries who belonged to the Roman tradition couldn't understand the Syrian traditions and consequently they began to make the Syrian Christians more "catholics", by introducing the Latin liturgy and its practices. This latinization process came to its zenith in the Synod of Diamper in 1599 convened by Archbishop Dom Meneses of Goa. The Thomas Christians could not tolerate the ecclesial

domination of the missionaries. In protest the Thomas Christians took a public oath in 1653, which is known as *Coonan Cross Oath*, against the latin rule and domination.

MALANKARA CHURCH

After the *Coonan Cross Oath*, a section of the Thomas Christians broke away from the Undivided Church of Thomas Christians and became Jacobites under the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, by receiving the liturgy and practices of the Jacobite Church. The reason for accepting the Antiochene liturgy was its closeness to the East Syrian traditions. This community of Thomas Christians came to be known as *Malankara Church* or *Puthenkoottukar*. The Malankara Church kept the Thomas traditions (Mar Thoma Margam) and held its internal autonomy. However efforts were also being made to heal the wounds created by the separation. Due to many reasons those attempts couldn't bear fruit. But this effort got a new vigour and vitality and entered into a new phase when in 1926, the Holy Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Bishops held at Parumala, delegated His Grace Mar Ivanios, a prominent Metropolitan of this Church, to initiate the necessary steps for the reunion with the Catholic Church. He initiated this dialogue in view of promoting unity between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church, without sacrificing its autonomy.

THE REUNION MOVEMENT

On September 20th 1930, Mar Ivanios along with His Excellency Mar Theophilos, Rev. Fr. John OIC, Rev. Deacon Alexander OIC and Mr. Kilileth Chacko reunited with the Catholic Church. They were received into the Catholic Church by His Excellency Aloysius Maria Benziger, Bishop of Quilon, who was specially deputed by the Holy See for that, at his Bishop's House Chapel, Quilon. Though the other Orthodox Bishops withdrew from their earlier decision to enter into the communion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios took it as a challenge and led this heroic movement. Their reunion was a great triumph of ecumenism as this small community was received within the catholic communion as an individual church keeping intact her liturgy, customs and jurisdiction. On 11th June, 1932 by the Apostolic Decree "Christo

Pastorum Principi”, His Holiness Pope Pius XI of happy memory established the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy comprising the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and the Diocese of Tiruvalla and Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos were appointed the Archbishop of Trivandrum and the Bishop of Tiruvalla respectively.

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF TRIVANDRUM

On 12th March, 1933 Archbishop Mar Ivanios was enthroned as the head of the Hierarchy at St. Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, Palayam. The Malankara Hierarchy began to flourish under the efficient leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios. The Catholic population of the Malankara Hierarchy rose up to 76352 in 1952. It is true to say that Mar Ivanios started everything from scratches. But, being a pastor with great visions for the Malankara Church he initiated many pastoral activities. His attention was not only on the reunited catholics but also on the needs of the poor people around. The numerous educational institutions, he started, play an important role in realizing the values of the Kingdom of God. Mar Ivanios consecrated Fr. Benedict OIC as his Auxiliary Bishop on January 29th 1953 with the name Benedict Mar Gregorios. On 15th July, 1953 His Grace Mar Ivanios passed away and was buried at the St. Mary’s Cathedral, Pattom, Trivandrum.

On January 27, 1955 His Holiness Pope Pius XII appointed His Excellency Benedict Mar Gregorios as the Archbishop of Trivandrum and thereby the head of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy. His Grace Mar Gregorios represented the Malankara Catholic Church in all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. His Excellency Lawrence Mar Aprem was consecrated as the Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Trivandrum on 27th December, 1980. His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios was called for his eternal reward on October 10th 1994, thereby ending his 41 years of leadership to the Hierarchy. On 12th October 1994, he was buried at the St. Mary’s Cathedral, Pattom, with State Honour, in the presence of a large crowd of faithful and public. The funeral service was officiated by His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios, Bishop of Bathery, along with other Bishops of the Malankara Hierarchy, in the presence of His Grace George Zur, the Vatican Representative, numerous Bishops, catholic as well as

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

non-catholics, religious leaders, the state officials and thousands of priests, religious and faithful. With the demise of His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios not only the Malankara Catholic Church but also the whole country especially Kerala lost a great spokesman of secularism, religious tolerance and ecumenism, etc. After the demise of Mar Gregorios, the senior Eparchial Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, Bishop of Bathery, has taken charge as the Administrator of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy. His Excellency Lawrence Mar Aprem has been elected as the Administrator of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

THE DIOCESE OF TIRUVALLA

His Excellency Mar Theophilos took charge of the diocese of Tiruvalla on 6th November, 1933 and served the diocese till 1938. He was called for his eternal reward on 27th June, 1956 and was buried in the St. John's Cathedral, Tiruvalla. His Grace Joseph Mar Severios, one of the Metropolitans of the Orthodox Church who joined the Catholic Church on November 29, 1937, had been appointed by the Holy See as the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Tiruvalla on August 20, 1938. On May 5th 1950 he was appointed the Bishop of Tiruvalla. He consecrated Rev. Fr. Cherian Polachirackal as his Auxiliary Bishop on April 22, 1954, with the name Zacharias Mar Athanasios. Mar Severios passed away on January 18, 1955 and was buried in St. John's Cathedral. From 1955 to 1977 the diocese was shepherded by His Excellency Zacharias Mar Athanasios and it was during this period, that the diocese was extended to the North of Kerala and to Tamilnadu and Karnataka. His Excellency Zacharias Mar Athanasios requested the Holy See in 1977, for the division of the diocese and for the establishment of a new diocese with Sulthan Bathery as its headquarters. Mar Athanasios passed away on 28th September, 1977 and was buried near to his predecessors. The fourth Bishop of Tiruvalla in the person of His Excellency Isaac Mar Youhanon was consecrated on 28th December, 1978 and after serving the diocese for nine years he slept in the Lord on 28th April, 1987. His Excellency Geevarghese Mar Thimotheos was consecrated on August 6th, 1988 and is leading the diocese to spiritual and material growth.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE DIOCESE OF BATHERY

His Holiness Pope John Paul II by the bull dated October 28, 1978 bifurcated the diocese of Tiruvalla and established the new diocese of Bathery with Rev. Dr. Cyril Malancharuvil OIC, the then Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ, as its first Bishop. The Bishop-elect Fr. Cyril was consecrated on December 28, 1978 at Thirumoolapuram, Tiruvalla with the name Cyril Mar Baselios. The diocese was formally inaugurated on February 2, 1979 with the enthronement of the Bishop. The establishment of the diocese of Bathery marked a new era in the Malankara Church. The bifurcation of the diocese of Tiruvalla and the subsequent attention of the church in the new diocese have brought home to us many valuable lessons. This calls for the immediate attention of the Hierarchy to establish new dioceses and thus pave way for the growth of the Church. After sixteen years of the establishment of Bathery, the number of Parishes and Mission stations rose from 43 to 107 and the Catholic population from 8000 to 22507. The new diocese has achieved tremendous growth in many respects and continues to grow under the efficient leadership of His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios.

REUNION OF BISHOPS

His Grace Joseph Mar Severios Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Church entered into the full communion of the Catholic Church on 29th November, 1937. He got united with the Catholic Church while he was the Metropolitan of Niranam in the Malankara Orthodox Church. Mar Severios had been a staunch "enemy" of the Reunion Movement led by His Grace Mar Ivanios. But deep study and prayerful reflections made this "Saul" another "Paul". Mar Severios led the diocese of Tiruvalla from prosperity to prosperity in all its respects. His reunion was an additional boost to the Malankara Catholic Church and especially to the Reunion Movement. Mar Severios was given the personal title 'Arch-bishop' by the Holy See as a symbol of appreciation for the innumerable services he had done for the Church. The Lord called him for his eternal reward on 18th January, 1955 and he was buried in the St. John's Cathedral, Tiruvalla.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

His Excellency Thomas Mar Dioscoros, the Metropolitan of the Knanaya Jacobite community, reunited with the Catholic Church on November 12, 1939. Mar Dioscoros didn't have any active ministry in the Catholic Church as a Bishop. He resided at Thirumoolapuram and led a very prayerful life till he was called by the Lord on February 22, 1943. He was buried at St.Mary's Malankara Catholic Church, Thirumoolapuam, Thiruvalla.

His Grace Paulose Mar Philoxinos, the head of the Independent Church of Malabar (Thozhiyoor) came into the full communion of the Catholic Church on August 28, 1977. On October 11, 1977 His Holiness Pope Paul VI appointed Mar Philoxinos the Titular Bishop of Chayal. On August 16, 1977 Mar Philoxinos published a pamphlet describing the divided nature of the Malankara Church and the need for union with Bishop of Rome, the Successor of St. Peter the Apostle. The Holy See honoured him by granting him the personal title "Metropolitan". His Excellency Mar Philoxinos is residing in Thozhiyoor and rendering his Episcopal Services in different ways for the growth of the Malankara Church.

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS

The inauguration of the Malankara Catholic Hierarchy was held on March 12, 1933 at St.Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Palyam, Trivandrum. The Pontifical Mass was celebrated by His Grace Mar Ivanios along with His Excellency Mar Theophilos, served by Rt. Rev. Rembans Joseph Pulikott and Philiphose Chepatt. His Grace Mar Augustine Kandathil, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Ernakulam, received the profession of faith. Mar Theophilos made the profession of faith before Mar Ivanios, his Metropolitan. Then the *Sunthroniso* of His Grace Mar Ivanios was held. The Apostolic Constitution "Christo Pastorum Principi" was executed by His Excellency Aloysius Maria Benziger, the special deputy of the Apostolic Delegate. Apart from the dignitaries mentioned above, Msgr. Bernadine, the Administrator Apostolic of Quilon, Msgr. Lino, the Superior of Portuguese Mission, and many officials of the State, priests, religious and faithful of all the three Rites and of the Orthodox, Marthomites and other denominations were present on that occasion.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mar Ivanios, in his speech, on behalf on the Hierarchy, thanked everybody who laboured for the cause of reunion and for the establishment of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy. On behalf of the Clergy and Laity of the entire Malankara Catholic Church, Mr. T. K. Koshy read out an address to His Excellency Archbishop Benziger expressing the deep sense of gratitude (For more details see *THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION and the Papal Bulls Relating to the Establishment of the Ecclesiastical Province of Trivandrum of the Syro-Antiochene Rite*, Translated by Mr. I. C. Chacko, Printed and published by Mr. M. M. Varkey, Trivandrum, 1933, pp. 1-5).

The Silver jubilee of the establishment of the Malankara Catholic Hierarchy was celebrated at St. Mary's Church, Vakayar in the Arch diocese of Trivandrum on 11th February, 1958.

The Golden Jubilee of the Reunion Movement was celebrated on 26th, 27th and 28th of December, 1980, under the auspices of the whole Malankara Catholic Church. The venue was "Mar Ivanios Nagar", Kottayam, in the diocese of Thiruvalla. His Holiness Pope John Paul II sent His Eminence Wladyslavo Cardinal Rubin, the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, as his special delegate for the celebration. His Beatitude Maximos V. Hakim, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of Alexandria and Jerusalem, His Excellency Most Rev. Luciano Storero, the Apostolic Pronuncio to India and Mother Theresa of Calcutta etc., were the eminent participants. Episcopal Ordination, Priestly Ordinations, Religious Profession, Concelebrated Holy Qurbana, Popular Rally, Exhibitions, etc., were some of the important functions. The jubilee celebration really brought a collective ecclesial consciousness for the entire Malankara Catholic Church.

The Diamond Jubilee of the Reunion Movement was celebrated at Sulthan Bathery, in the Diocese of Bathery, on 20th and 21st September, 1990. The Eminent participants included His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Alphonsus Mathias, President of the Catholic bishops' conference of India, His Grace Most Rev. Joseph Mounayer, the Arch bishop of Damascus and the special delegate of His Beatitude the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, Mr. K. P. Unnikrishnan, Hon. Minister of

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

the Government of India, and His Grace Abraham Mar Kleemes, the Knanaya Metropolitan of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

THE VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

His Holiness Pope John Paul II made a historic visit to the St. Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral of the Malankara Catholic Church at Trivandrum on 8th February, 1986, during his visit in India. This was the first visit of a Supreme Pontiff to Kerala. The Malankara Catholic Church had the great privilege to receive its Supreme Head in its Metropolitan Cathedral. The Supreme Pontiff was accorded with a liturgical reception in the Cathedral by all the Bishops, representatives of the Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Malankara Catholic Church. On that occasion His Holiness blessed the foundation stone for the St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary, Trivandrum. In his major speech at Sankhumukham, the Holy Father praised His Grace the Late Mar Ivanios, the founder of the Reunion Movement, and expressed his esteem appreciation for the reunion apostolate of the Malankara Catholic Church.

MALANKARA MAJOR SEMINARY

The establishment of St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary is a clear sign of growth of the Malankara Church. It was formally inaugurated on 29th June, 1983. The Seminary began at Pattom. His Holiness Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of his visit to the Metropolitan Cathedral on 8th February, 1986, blessed the foundation stone for the Seminary building. The newly constructed building for Philosophy Section was blessed and inaugurated on 25th May, 1989. The whole Malankara Catholic Church is involved in the establishment of the Seminary due to the initiative of our Bishops. In this regard a special word is to be mentioned about His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios. Mar Baselios, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Malankara Episcopal Commission for the Seminary, convened about 25 meetings through out the three dioceses and explained the need and significance of the Malankara Seminary. The response from the whole Church was very much encouraging and gratifying. The Seminary started Theology Course on 29th June, 1992. At present there are about 160 Students studying

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Philosophy and Theology who are well taken care of by about 30 Teachers. Construction of the full fledged building is going on. The whole Malankara Church is looking at the Seminary with great expectation that it will serve the Church, with great vigour and vitality, as a theological centre, as a formation house for priests, religious and laity, and as a symbol of unity in the Malankara Church.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC YOUTH MOVEMENT

“Young people exert a very important influence in modern society”! These are the words of the Second Vatican Council (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, No. 12). Realizing this truth, the Malankara Catholic Church has taken serious efforts to help the youth in their formation. The Youth Movement as a diocesan movement was started in the diocese of Thiruvalla on 17th November, 1967. Later in 1970 it was started in the Arch diocese of Trivandrum and in 1979 in the diocese of Bathery. But these three were only diocesan movements. There were many attempts and consultations to form a common youth movement for the Church. It was with the appointment of His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios as the Chairman of the Malankara Episcopal Youth Commission in 1989 that the idea to have a common youth movement for the entire Malankara Catholic Church was strengthened. The joint meeting of the officials of the three dioceses under the leadership of Mar Baselios on 24th May, 1989 at Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum, gave further boost to the idea. Because of the genuine concern to promote the youth in the church Mar Baselios convened a meeting of the officials on 17th and 18th March, 1990 at St. John’s College, Thiruvalla and formed the Central Secretariat. Thus the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement became the Movement of the whole Malankara Church. Mr. Monson K. Mathew (Trivandrum), Mr. Lalu John (Thiruvalla) and Mr. Philip Ninan (Bathery) were elected President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Mr. Shibu Varghese and Mr. V. P. Thomas are the present president and secretary respectively. The involvement of the *Bahya Kerala* (Outside the present jurisdiction of the Malankara Catholic Church) youth in the M.C.Y.M. made a great impact not only in number but also in vision. The young people are seriously involved in the ecclesial life of the Malankara church.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC DIASPORA

A good number of people migrated to the different parts of the country and outside the country due to various reasons, mainly for employment opportunities. Though the Malankara Catholic Church was rather late to start mission work for these people, of late it has taken keen interest in these people. The parishes and mission stations in Bombay, Poona, Madras, Bangalore, Delhi, Bhopal, Bhilai, Calcutta etc. are very strong ecclesial communities. The North American Missions are really fast growing and there are many Missions in that area. The Rev. Fathers from the three dioceses and from Bethany Ashram are seriously involved in bringing up all these Diaspora communities. The Malankara Catholics in Germany have different centres though they are not yet provided with a full time Malankara Priest. The Malankara Communities in Hyderabad, Kaanpur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Jhansi, Jabalpur, Gandhinagar, Ahemmadbad, Baroda, Jaipur, Udayapur, Nasik, etc. really deserve the immediate attention of the Malankara Hierarchy.

APOSTOLATES OF THE CHURCH

The Malankara Catholic Church is rendering many commendable services in different areas such as ecclesial, social, educational and developmental. The reunion and ecumenical apostolate remain the top concern of the Church. The renewed vision of church unity brings the Malankara Church into the scene of dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This is evident in the presence and role of His Excellency Cyril Mar Baselios and Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Chediath in the Pontifical Dialogue Commission, appointed by the Holy See. In the formation and functioning of the *Nilackal Ecumenical Church* in 1984, the role played by His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, the late Archbishop-Metropolitan of the Malankara Catholic Church, will be ever remembered. Mar Gregorios led an ecumenical pilgrimage of a team of Bishops, Priests and laymen to Rome, Vienna, Geneva etc. The present Administrator of the Nilackal St. Thomas Church and Ecumenical Trust is Rev. Fr. Joshua Peedikayil from the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute at Kottayam, owned by the diocese of Tiruvalla, extends meritorious services in bringing together the

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

various St. Thomas Christian Churches of India to study more on their common liturgical heritage. Under the charismatic leadership of Rev. Dr. Jacob Theckeparambil the Institute is marching forward.

The numerous educational institutions including five Colleges, schools, industrial training centres, etc., managed by the Malankara Church reveal its dedicated service in imparting value based education to the coming generations. In this respect, *Mar Ivanios College* in Trivandrum, one of the leading colleges in Kerala, deserves special appreciation for its noble and great service to the nation. In the medical field Malankara Church extends numerous services to materialize the healing ministry of Jesus. There are many hospitals, rural clinics, leprosy centres, health centres, etc. *Pushpagiri Hospital* in Tiruvalla, which is well known for its medical care and facilities in Central Kerala, and the well planned *Health for a Million Programme* initiated by His Excellency Lawrence Mar Aprem are to be specially mentioned here. Attempts to materialize the values of the Kingdom of God is also evident in social service schemes and developmental programmes such as housing scheme, save a family plan, mother and child health care, self-employment projects, tribal developmental programmes, farmers' clubs, women organizations, etc. *Shreyas*, the Social Service department of the diocese of Bathery, which received the best award for literacy Action Program in 1993 from the Government of Kerala, renders excellent services in this field.

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

There are three Malankara Religious Congregations, namely; the Order of the Imitation of Christ (OIC), popularly known as Bethany Ashram, Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (SIC), generally known as Bethany Sisters and the Daughters of Mary (DM).

The Bethany Ashram, which was founded by Mar Ivanios in 1919 for renewal in the Malankara Church, wholeheartedly supported the Reunion Movement of their founder, as a congregation. God made use of them to be the pioneers of this great movement. The Malankara Church is ever grateful to Bethany for its dedicated services in the Church. In this Platinum Jubilee Year, Bethany has 182 members in 31

houses. The members are seriously engaged in the different apostolates in the Malankara Church such as reunion apostolate, parish administration, education, social service schemes, etc. There are about 27 institutions run by the congregation which include *Girideepam Bethany English School*, Kottayam and *Bethany Junior College* in Kadaba. *Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth*, Poona, the priestly formation centre of the Congregation, is affiliated to the Pontifical Athenaeum, Poona. The Platinum Jubilee of the Congregation was solemnly celebrated in November, 1994 at Kottayam.

Fr. P. T. Geevarghese (Mar Ivanios) founded a congregation for women in 1925 in the Malankara Orthodox Church. They are known as Sisters of the Imitation of Christ or Bethany Sisters. The Bethany Sisters have three provinces and are rendering their valuable services in various apostolates of the Malankara Church especially in the pastoral, catechetical and educational fields. There are 400 sisters in the congregation working in India and abroad. Recently the Bethany Sisters have opened a house in Bethlehem, Israel.

The Daughters of Mary Congregation was founded in the Malankara Church by Msgr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil in 1938 with the blessing and support of Mar Ivanios. There are about 1000 sisters in this congregation, within two provinces, and they are actively involved in the activities of the Malankara Church. The DM sisters render their service in other dioceses too. The great missionary activities carried out by the DM sisters in Marthandam missions are to be specially mentioned.

Krithiya Sanyasa Samaj (Kurisumala Ashram), an attempt to combine christian monasticism and ascetical and contemplative traditions of India, renders great services in liturgical publications. There are many other religious congregations namely, Franciscan Missionary Brothers, Order of the Friars Minor Capuchin, Salesians of Don Bosco, Holy Spirit Sisters, D.S.S. Sisters, Basilian Sisters, Sisters of St. Martha, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Sacred Heart Sisters, Snehagiri Sisters, Little sisters of Jesus and the Salesian Sisters extend their meritorious services in the Malankara Church. Malankara Church remains grateful to these congregations for their dedicated service.

MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

STATISTICS

Due to the wonderful providence of God the Malankara Catholic Church has achieved tremendous growth during these sixty five years. The following statistics reveal the same.

	1930	1993
Bishops	2	5
Priests(Diocesan)	-	362
Priests(Religious)	1	102
Sisters	-	1104
Seminarians	-	309
Minor Seminary	-	3
Major Seminary	-	1
Faithful	1	278719
Pastoral Centres	-	5
Parishes & Missions	-	878
Colleges	-	5
Schools	-	270
Hospitals	-	13
Publications	-	5
Archdiocese	-	1
Dioceses	-	2

(The statistics of 1930, as it was on the Re-union day. For more details see *The Syro-Malankara Catholic Directory, Trivandrum, 1992-1993*).

CONCLUSION

We have been analyzing the various aspects of the Malankara Catholic Church. As stated earlier, its growth is marvellous. The deep vision of Mar Ivanios, one of the greatest contributions of the St. Thomas Christians of India to the Universal Church, for an autonomous Malankara Church in the Catholic Communion, has still to be unfolded and realized. Being proud to be a son of this Church, I wish and pray that the Malankara Catholic Church may continue its noble services for the development of our beloved Country and engage itself in bringing together the various Churches in Malankara, with renewed vision and fraternal collaboration!



DIOCESE OF BATHERY: IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 1978 Oct. 28 ▪ Erection of the Diocese
by His Holiness Pope John Paul II.
- 1978 Dec. 28 ▪ Consecration of H. E. Cyril Mar Baselios,
the first bishop of Bathery.
- 1979 Feb. 2 ▪ Formal Inauguration of the Diocese.
- 1980 Aug. 29 ▪ First Ad Limina Visit of the Bishop.
- 1981 Jan. 9 ▪ Visit of His Eminence Wladyslavo Cardinal
Rubin, Prefect of the Congregation for the
Oriental Churches.
- Inauguration of the Pastoral Council and
Priests' Senate by His Eminence Wladyslavo
Cardinal Rubin.
- 1984 Jan. 26 ▪ Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Extension of
the Diocese of Tiruvalla to the Malabar, Nilgris
and South Kanara Regions, conducted at
Nilambur.
- 1984 Sept. 20 ▪ Blessing of *Gurukulam*, the St. Thomas Minor
Seminary, Bathery, by His Grace Agustino
Cacciavillan, Pronuncio in India.
- 1984 Sept. 21 ▪ 54th Reunion Day Celebrations at Bathery.
- 1985 Oct. 4 ▪ Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee Celebrations of
H. E. Cyril Mar Baselios.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 1986 Sept. 1 ▫ Inauguration of *Shreyas*, the Social Service Centre, Bathery, by Sri. Ravindran Thampi IAS, the Honourable District Collector of Wayanad.
- 1987 March 19 ▫ Blessing of *Dharmapitam*, the Bishop's House by His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Head of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy.
- 1987 Aug. 25 ▫ Visit of His Eminence Simon Cardinal Lourdasamy, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.
- 1987 Sept. 20-21 ▫ 57th Reunion Day Celebrations at Bathery.
- 1988 May 27 ▫ Mar Baselios is appointed by the Holy See as a member of the Pontifical Commission for Ecumenical Dialogue with the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.
- 1989 June 18 ▫ Inauguration of *Srothas*, the Catechetical sub-centre, Nilambur, by H. E. Cyril Mar Baselios.
- 1990 Sept. 20 ▫ Inauguration of *Pratheeksha*, the Youth Centre, Bathery.
- 1990 Sept. 20-21 ▫ Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Reunion Movement at Bathery.
- 1993 July 3 ▫ State Award for *Shreyas*.
- 1994 Sept. 20-21 ▫ 63rd Reunion Day Celebrations at Pulpally.
- 1994 Oct. 10 ▫ Appointment of H. E. Cyril Mar Baselios as the Administrator of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy.
- 1995 May 23-24 ▫ Sixtieth Birthday Celebrations of H. E. Cyril Mar Baselios at Bathery.

CONTRIBUTORS

Eldho Puthenkandathil is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He holds a doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome in 1992 with specialization in the New Testament Studies. He is the author of the book *Philos: A Designation for the Jesus-Disciple Relationship*. Now he is Rector of St. Thomas Minor Seminary at Bathery and a visiting professor at St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum.

Elias Paul is a married catholic lay leader of the diocese of Bathery and is an Advocate by profession. He is a member of the St. Thomas Malankara Catholic Parish at Kolagappara and is actively involved in the diocesan activities. He is the present Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

George Kalayil is a priest of the diocese of Bathery, Kerala. He served the diocese in different capacities as parish priest, secretary to the Bishop, etc. He acquired a doctorate in 1994 from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome with specialization in Dogmatic Theology. He is a resident Professor at St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary, Trivandrum.

Jacob Olickal is a Seminarian belonging to the diocese of Bathery. Having finished the initial priestly training at the St. Thomas Minor Seminary, Bathery, he entered St. Mary's Malankara Seminary at Trivandrum for philosophical studies which he finished in 1991. Presently he is doing theological studies at Malankara Seminary in Trivandrum.

Jose Palakattel is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He is the founding director of Shreyas, the social service centre of the diocese, and he directed this centre with people-oriented programmes during the past fifteen years. He has served the diocese as Parish Priest, Rector of the Minor Seminary, member of the Eparchial Council, etc. Since 1994 he is working at the Social Service Centre of the diocese of San Bernadin, USA.

CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Ninan is a catholic youth leader from the diocese of Bathery. Formerly he was the president of the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement and president of the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (Bathery). He continues his services in various apostolates of the diocese. He is married and is teaching at St. George's High School, Velamcode, Calicut.

Philip Puthenkandathil is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He served the diocese in different capacities as diocesan youth director (1984-1994), member of the Eparchial Council, Secretary of the Pastoral Council and Parish priest in different parishes. Presently he is the Protopresbyter of the Ecclesiastical District of Nilambur and a member of the Diocesan Administrative Council.

P. T. Thomas is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. Deeply involved in the Malankara Church, in its liturgy and history, he has written two books namely, *Malankara Sabha* and *Sovaarilekk* and numerous articles on liturgy and theology. He has served the diocese as Protopresbyter, Teacher in the Minor Seminary and Parish priest in different parishes. Presently he is the parish priest of St. Thomas Malankara Catholic Church, Kammana, Wayanad.

Thomas Charivupurayidam is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. With the inauguration of the new diocese, he was appointed the first procurator of the diocese. Being a pioneering pastor of the new diocese he served it in other capacities also such as Teacher in the Minor Seminary, Parish priest, etc. Currently he is the Protopresbyter of the Ecclesiastical District of Cannanore and a member of the Eparchial Council.

Thomas Poikamannil is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He has served the diocese in many capacities as Protopresbyter, member of the Eparchial Council, member of the Administrative Council, Parish Priest, etc. Currently he is the Procurator of the diocese.

Varghese Ottathengil is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He holds a doctorate in Spiritual Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. He served the diocese of Bathery as parish priest, Rector of the Minor Seminary and Vicar of the Cathedral, etc.

CONTRIBUTORS

Since 1990 he has been serving as Rector in St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum.

V. P. Thomas is one of the lay leaders of the diocese of Bathery. He has served the diocese as the President of MCYM (Bathery), Secretary of the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement and one of the Animators of the diocesan Catechetical department. He is presently the Secretary of the National Malankara Catholic Youth Movement. He is married and is teaching at St. George's School, Uppatty, Tamil Nadu.

EDITOR

Issac Thottunkal is a priest of the diocese of Bathery. He was born in 1959. Having finished the initial priestly formation at the Infant Mary's Minor Seminary, Tiruvalla, he was sent to St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye and Papal Seminary, Poona for Philosophical and Theological Studies respectively. He was ordained in 1986 and was appointed Parish Priest for the Malankara Catholics in Bangalore. He acquired a Licentiate from the Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore in 1988 with specialization in Comparative Religious Studies. He has served the diocese as the Rector of St. Thomas Minor Seminary, Parish Priest of St. Thomas Cathedral, Member of the Eparchial Council, etc. Presently he is a doctoral student in Ecumenism at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome.





MALANKARA
LIBRARY

