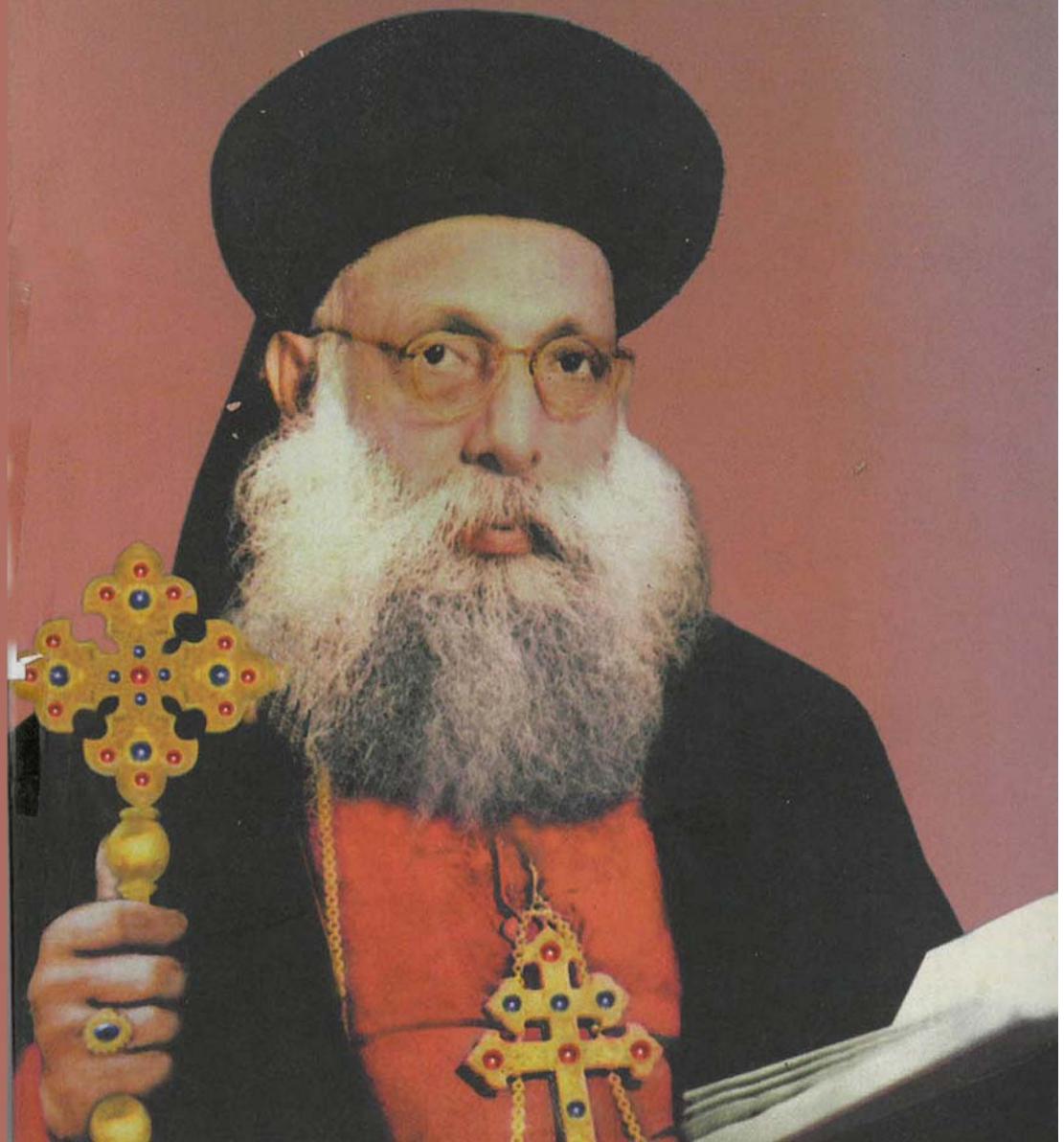


Archbishop
MAR IVANIOS
in his
Thoughts



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Editors
G. Chediath
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**Trivandrum
2004**

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Lovingly dedicated to
Pater Fridolin Außersdorfer OFM
on the occasion of
his 95th birthday
on 19th April, 2004.

Introduction

Archbishop Mar Ivanios, the Malankara Catholic Metropolitan of Trivandrum was a man of diverse talents. He was exceptionally spiritual with a well-planned ascetical life suitable for the age-old tradition of India. He was an extraordinary ecclesiastic with a clear vision of the Church which finally led him to seek full, visible and canonical communion with the Church of Rome. His was an exceptionally attractive and commanding personality that he brought a vast number of faithful to the Catholic Church. He attracted to him a wide range of friends from different walks of life. He was also a learned thinker and theologian, who wrote many books on spiritual and theological subjects. This rare assemblage of diverse abilities is the one thing that makes him different from all others of his time. Of this multifarious excellence of Mar Ivanios, many an aspect that is immediately associated with the leadership he gave for resuming full communion with Rome has been properly highlighted by many writers in different manners. But Mar Ivanios, the theologian, has not been properly studied and evaluated. This small book is an attempt to bridge the gap created by the lack of attention given to his contributions especially in the fields of theology and spirituality.

One is wonderstruck at the depth of theological knowledge Archbishop Mar Ivanios acquired in comparison with the minimum formal education he received in that field. He received only the ordinary training in theology and priestly ministry in the Seminary of the then Jacobite Church. That training consisted of a good knowledge of the Syriac language and the formation of Christian faith. But he received higher education in History and Economics with Master's Degree in these subjects and was appointed in Serampore College as Professor. But in later life he distinguished himself not in the secular field with his knowledge of Economics and History but in the religious field with his deep knowledge of the Sacred Sciences. Where did he acquire such knowledge? His life history points to three directions.

First as a student of history in Madras Christian College, he expended his time not so much in secular history, but in the history of the Church, especially the Church of St. Thomas in Kerala. In his search for the dark and hidden areas of the past of his Church, he combined history and theology. In other words, his search brought him to the realization that the history of his Church was inseparably intertwined with matters

related to faith and the scientific exposition of it, which is theology. Therefore he was forced to find out the theological reasons behind the existence of his Church as an independent entity, not in communion with the majority of St. Thomas Christians who share the same ecclesial Apostolicity as his own Church. Thus he was led to the study of theology as a consequence of his search for the past history of his Church. It is worth mentioning here that the dissertation he presented at the Madras Christian College for his Master's Degree was entitled *Were the St. Thomas Christians Nestorians?* He proves in the thesis that the whole Indian Church of St. Thomas was Catholic in faith till the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653.

A second reason for Mar Ivanios' acquisition of deep knowledge in theology was his expertise in the Syriac language, combined with his character marked with exceptional concentration and deep thirst for knowledge. His mastery of the Syriac and Hebrew helped him delve deep into the theological treasures buried under the letters of the liturgical texts of his Church. His power of concentration helped him in this attempt. His concentration was so strong that nothing could distract him from the work he was engaged in. Combined with the character of concentration was his thirst for knowledge.

A third source of Mar Ivanios' theological knowledge was his contact with Western Christianity through his friends in Serampore where he was Professor of Economics. Serampore was a window to the Western world. Through this he came in close contact with Protestantism and also Catholicism, which preserved the original Western Christian tradition. There he found the roots of Christian faith and realized that they are identical with the genuine traditions of his own Church though the later theological expressions traveled in divergent paths. It is reported of him that in Serampore he spent more time as a student of theology than as a Professor of Economics. When he resigned the job and returned to his native land, he was a well-trained theologian and an experienced spiritual director. His deep knowledge of the sacred sciences found expression in the few books he penned on the subject and the many preaching he did on diverse occasions. In this book these contributions are scientifically examined and systematically evaluated and orderly arranged so as to give out a comprehensive view on Mar Ivanios' ideas on these subjects.

It is attempted, in this book, to give expression to certain the aspects of Mar Ivanios' thoughts especially those related to the Church and spiritual life. But his vision on society and education also has been studied

and evaluated in this book. The three articles on *Sannyasa*, *Marian Devotion* and Prayer directly enquire into the spiritual thoughts of the Archbishop and his personal life formed according to these convictions. The two articles on *Education* and *Social Contributions* touch on the vision of the Archbishop on these matters and the great contribution he made to the society in these fields. There is an article on the *Background of the Reunion Movement*. It discusses the crisis in the Jacobite Church to which Mar Ivanios belonged and the social and ecclesiastical situation which led him to seek full communion with Rome. One article is on his *Eucharistic Theology* and another on his *Vision of Cosmic Communion*. Yet another is on *Ecumenism*. All these are evaluations of the theological contributions of Archbishop Mar Ivanios.

This book is the first of its kind on this subject. It is a humble attempt to bring to light the great mind that was Mar Ivanios'. More studies and researches are needed. It is hoped that new generations of the followers of this great prophet of Church Union will take up the challenge to bring him to the knowledge of the public.

We are indebted to many people. Our thanks are due first and foremost to the writers who have contributed their valuable studies to be published here. We are immensely happy to dedicate this work to *Pater Fridolin Außersdorfer OFM* on the occasion of his 95th birthday on 19th April 2004. Pater Fridolin was a source of encouragement, inspiration and help in diverse ways to us. Ad Multos Annos. We thank Mr. Milen Jacob together with his helpers who designed the cover page and the final stage of the DTP work and Bro. Gracious O.I.C., the Manager of the Bethany Press, Kottayam. It is hoped that this small book will be helpful for all to know Archbishop Mar Ivanios better and to follow his footsteps.

Trivandrum
16th July 2004.

The Editors

1

Sannyāsa Yaaga and Snēha Mārga – Mar Ivanios' Vision of Religious Life

Jose Mariadas OIC

Introduction

One of the great contributions of Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios (+1953) to the Malankara Church and to the Christian community at large is his vision of *Sannyāsa* (*monasticism*). Single-handedly he established a way of life namely, *Bethanian Sannyāsa* (*Bethany monastic establishment*) which is in perfect harmony, both with the tradition of the Christian Church and with the spirituality of India. His vision of *Sannyāsa* (*monasticism*) enriched the tradition of the ancient Church in India and it also rejuvenated the church-life, which was thirsting for a spiritual revival. Therefore, today, any account or history of the Church in India would be incomplete without the history of the religious communities, he founded.

In his historic attempt to revitalize the faction of the ancient Malankara Church, the founding of *Sannyāsa* (*monastic*) way of life is a milestone. He belonged in the beginning to the Malankara Jacobite/Orthodox Church, having its ties with the Jacobite Syrian Church of Antioch. The Malankara Jacobite Church was in a state of decay because of the factionalism within the community. Eventually he founded the Bethany *Sannyāsa* and it led to his full and visible communion with the Catholic Church.

Why and how did he turn to monasticism for the spiritual renewal of his Church? The answer to this question reveals the depth of Mar Ivanios' theological vision and spiritual conviction. In the trajectory of the development of his idea of *Sannyāsa* we can observe that Mar Ivanios, as a priest in the Orthodox faction, realized a two-fold function of *Sannyāsa*, i.e., personal and communitarian. According to Mar Ivanios, *Sannyāsa* not only helps the individual to achieve his personal goal, but also the community, in which the *sannyāsi* (*monk*) lives, to purify itself from the influence of the undesired elements by which it suffers¹. In fact he visualized *Sannyāsa* as the only means or even as a last resort to save his Church from the fathoms of spiritual death into which it had succumbed. The whole story of his vision of *Sannyāsa* begins with his life and stay in Serampore College as a Professor.

The Trajectory of a Great Vision and its Realization

The historical details of Mar Ivanios' life are already discussed by several writers and therefore details regarding the dates and events may not be repeated here². Here the focus of attention is mainly on the *darśana* (*vision*) of this great visionary.

How did Mar Ivanios come to the idea of *Sannyāsa* (*monasticism*)? In his autobiographical book, *Girideepam*, he mentions that he had a liking for the life of *Sannyāsa* from the very childhood³. But he also adds that this desire took shape into a definite conviction and programme only when he was in Serampore⁴. His life at Serampore, which is the watershed of his ideological growth, provided him a chance to look at his own Church and its pathetic situation, from a distance. It was a Church whose spiritual

¹ See the very first sentence of Mar Ivanios' (and also Bethany's) autobiographical book, *Girideepam*, Kottayam, 1980⁵. Here onwards this will be referred to as *Girideepam*.

² For the biographical details refer the following books: T. Inchackalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 2 vols. Trivandrum, 1957.1971; L. Moolaveetil, *Beauty of the House*, Trivandrum, 1984; G. Chediath, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, Kottayam, 2003.

³ *Girideepam*, p.1

⁴ His Serampore life is the watershed in the history of the development of his vision. For a detailed analysis of this argument, see my article, *The Unseen Side of the Vision of Mar Ivanios*: in *Chraistava Kahalam*, Vol. 61/6(2002,July) 4 - 9.

life was hampered with civil litigation and hatred, power politics and internal fights. In order to save the Church from these decaying trends, he planned out a programme. The trajectory of the development of his reflections, which led him to *Sannyāsa* (*monasticism*) consists of three phases.

First, he thought that if there were enough well educated people, especially a group of well-educated clergy in the Church, they could change the fate of the Church⁵. In order to achieve this goal, he brought many young people to Calcutta. He spent his salary from the University for their education. Gradually the number of these young people increased and some of them were sent to Allahabad and Madras Universities. Out of the fifty young people who were directly under his training at Serampore University, thirteen became *Malpāns* (*teachers in the Seminary*) and six students, Bishops in his Church. He also sent some girls to Barisole for higher education and the first members of Bethany Convent were from this group. Though this attempt had made its own impact on the church-life, the desired goal still remained as a distant dream.

Mar Ivanios later came to the conviction that Malankara Church has forgotten and forsaken its God given mission. It was like the salt in Jesus' parable, the salt that lost its saltiness and was thrown out and trampled under foot, and like the lamp, which was kept under the bushel basket (Mt. 5/13-14). He realized that though the Christians of Kerala and India at large received the Good News from St. Thomas, the Apostle in the first century itself, they utterly failed in preaching this Good News to the people in their motherland, whereas the European missionaries came all the way from Europe after the 16th century and they started doing what the Christians of the land could not do during the previous centuries⁶. He considered that the missionary activity is the very life of the Church and its foremost duty. A Church, which forgets this mandate, is no more a living Church⁷. Thus he recognized that education alone is not sufficient to revitalize the Church. This is the second phase of his search into the causes of the problems in his Church. He thought

⁵ Archbishop Mar Ivanios, *Bethany Yōgam Report*, Tiruvalla, 1930, p.70.

⁶ *Girideepam* p.55

⁷ *Ibid.*p.56-57

that perhaps a Missionary Congregation is the answer and the need of the time in his Church. He even decided where exactly he must start his missionary endeavours. He thought of choosing Punjab as his mission field⁸. He speaks about this in detail, in *Bethany Yōgam Report*, which is a short historical account of Bethany, published from Ranni-Perunad Ashram in 1930. However, one of the prominent lay leaders of the Malankara Church and a close friend of Mar Ivanios, Advocate Mr. E.J.John, discouraged him from going to North India⁹, when his presence and services were much needed in Kerala for his Church.

Moreover, Mar Ivanios realized that unless and until an ever-burning God experience is not acquired, the missionaries themselves might go after worldly pleasures and values in the course of time. "Saintly deeds come from saintly people. Therefore saintly life is more important than charitable works"¹⁰. This thinking gave him the conviction that "Having God is better than serving God"¹¹. It means that unless and until one does not have real God-experience one's works cannot be from God or for God. He gradually arrived at the conviction that only a *Sannyāsi* (monk) can become a good missionary in the true sense. The life of *Sannyāsa* (monasticism) itself is the proclamation and witnessing of Gospel values¹². This third and last phase of his search for the solutions to the problems that gripped the Church gave birth to a new life in the Malankara Church. The founding of the Bethany Ashram at Ranni-Perunad thus added a new chapter in the history of Malankara Orthodox-Jacobite Church. Now let us see the salient features of his vision of *Sannyāsa* (monasticism).

The Concept of *Sannyāsa* as *Yaaga* (sacrifice)

Mar Ivanios always compares the concept and values of *Sannyāsa* (monasticism) with those of *Yaaga* (sacrifice). When we go through the writings of Mar Ivanios, this striking feature of his vision of *Sannyāsa* easily captures our attention. The homily given

⁸ *Bethany Yōgam Report*, p.71

⁹ *Ibid*.p.71

¹⁰ *Girideepam*, p.60

¹¹ *Ibid*.p.61

¹² *Ibid*. p.61-62

by him on the occasion of the religious profession of the first batch of the members of Bethany Ashram is the best example:¹³

Sannyāsi is a sacrificial animal. It has to pass through four stages before it is sacrificed. First the animal is selected and separated from the herd. Secondly, it is brought to the entrance of the temple and tied up there. Thirdly, on the day of sacrifice the devotee comes to the temple and slaughters and flays the sacrificial animal and cuts it into different pieces. The blood is collected separately and the devotee hands them over to the priest and the priest takes them to the altar of the Lord. Lastly, the priest burns the flesh on the altar of the Lord and dashes the blood on the altar. Jews had different types of sacrifices but *Sarvāṅga Hōma Yaaga* (holocaust) in which the whole animal is offered is considered better than any other offering. As far as the other offerings are concerned, some share is kept apart for the priests and devotee and only one portion is burned on the altar. But holocaust is not like that, everything is completely offered to the Lord. *Sannyāsa* is nothing but this, a complete offering.

Sannyāsi (monk), who is similar to the sacrificial animal, is set apart by himself. He comes to the Ashram, which can be compared to the premises of the temple, on his own will. He remains there, expecting the day of sacrifice (day of religious profession), the *Sannyāsi* beheads himself. The knife is the triadic vows; then he submits himself to his superior who receives him in the name of God. A *Sannyāsi* must be flayed and cut into pieces and be purified. The mere observation of the vows alone will not make one a *Sannyāsi*. He must be offered as a sacrifice on the altar of the Lord. He is laid on the altar along with Jesus Christ and His sacrifice is an ongoing process till the end of his life¹⁴.

The concept of sacrifice is Mar Ivanios' favorite example when he speaks about the fundamental values of religious life. In his *Guidelines to Religious Life* (*Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*) he repeats the same insight: “*Sannyāsi* offers his life to God as a sacrifice.

¹³ Cfr. Lev.1/1ff.

¹⁴ *Girideepam*, p.138-139

Sacrificial animal must be slaughtered by the triadic vows. It must be consumed in the fire of the Practice of Obedience”¹⁵.

He believes that the Holy Spirit of our Lord is revealed in the Holy Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, through the people who opt for a life of sacrifice¹⁶. Therefore, Mar Ivanios reminds us the Pauline invitation: “I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12/1)¹⁷. He considers that the religious or *Sannyāsi* who live accordingly are the “genuine children of the holy Church and its authentic representatives”¹⁸, Jesus who offered himself, as a pleasing sacrifice to his heavenly Father is the sole model of a *Sannyāsi*¹⁹. He points out again that “Jesus offered himself as a burnt-offering. In that complete sacrifice our personal offerings are strengthened by its virtues”²⁰. Mar Ivanios affirms:

“The foundation of Christian *Sannyāsa* is the Incarnation of Christ, the Son of God, and His sacrifice on the cross. A *Sannyāsi* lives his life by imitating and obeying Christ. A *Sannyāsi*’s religious oaths and offerings are nothing but the essence of his sacrificial obedience”²¹. Unambiguously he teaches: “For a *Sannyāsi* (religious), to be offered as a complete burnt-offering is an essential aspect of his religious life (*Sannyāsa*). His religious vows reveal what is this *Sannyāsa Yaaga* (Religious Sacrifice) and how this is to be offered”²².

He also points out that the function or role of Holy Rule of a religious congregation in the life of its members is nothing else: “The Holy Rule trains and helps us to offer ourselves as a complete burnt-offering along with Christ himself”²³. According to Mar

¹⁵ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, Kottayam, 2003³, p.104.

¹⁶ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

¹⁷ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

¹⁸ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

¹⁹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.19

²⁰ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.19

²¹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.14

²² *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.132

²³ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.117

Ivanios, "The offering of oneself by religious vows is the most complete and perfect *Yaaga* that can be offered by a creature before God".²⁴

All these passages from his writings reveal that for Mar Ivanios *Sannyāsa* (monasticism) is nothing but a burnt-offering for which Christ himself is the model because "Jesus is the first *Sannyāsi* lived on this earth who gave Himself as a complete and perfect offering to the Heavenly Father....Therefore, He is the source, foundation and ideal model of *Sannyāsa*".²⁵ A *Sannyāsi* must accept Christ as his model and this will remind him of his commitment and surrender to the will of God. A *Sannyāsi* is not for himself and therefore he must sacrifice his self-interests for the sake of God and His people.

Sannyāsa is the Snēha Mārga (way of love)

Mar Ivanios who felt and touched the heart of Indian *Sannyāsa* envisages it as a *Mārga* (*way*) in addition to the threefold traditional *Mārgas* of *Bhagavat Gita*, namely, *Karma Mārga* (way of good deeds), *Bhakti Mārga* (way of devotion), and *Jñāna Mārga* (way of knowledge). He calls *Sannyāsa* as the *Snēha Mārga* (way of Love). This is another example for his great vision, which makes him a pioneer of Indian Theology.

In the opening passage of *Sannyāsa Jeevithā Sahāyi* he declares:

"God is love". God created man out of love. God alone, whose essential form is love, is the absolute end of man. Man achieves this end only when he becomes perfect in his love towards God and in his love towards his fellow-men for the sake of God. God calls man in order to achieve this noble end. God provides the necessary grace to those who accept this call and are ready to submit themselves, in order that they may attain this end. Man attains this absolute end through the *Snēha Mārga* (way of Love)²⁶.

According to Mar Ivanios, love of God alone is the sole purpose of monastic life²⁷. Therefore, community life has the

²⁴ *Sannyāsa Jeevithā Sahāyi*, p.136

²⁵ *Sannyāsa Jeevithā Sahāyi*, p.18

²⁶ *Sannyāsa Jeevithā Sahāyi*, p.9

²⁷ *Sannyāsa Jeevithā Sahāyi*, p.10

advantage of practising this virtue, namely love. "The advantage of community life over solitary life is that life in community helps religious towards perfection in love and other virtues"²⁸. The Canons and Holy Rules are to be obeyed in the spirit of one's love towards God²⁹. He says, "Love is the law of life for the *Sannyāsi*"³⁰.

It was very clear for Mar Ivanios that the ultimate end and sole purpose of *Sannyāsa* is the union with God and the *Mārga* (way) for it was that of love. Therefore, in the Holy Rule of Bethany Ashram (Order of the Imitation of Christ), which he founded, it is clearly stated (3b):

The realization of the charism of Indian *Sannyāsa* is by imbibing and safeguarding the inner spirit and lifestyle of Indian spiritual tradition in order that the rich Indian culture and *Sannyāsa*, which tends to *union with God, might be made perfect in Christ*. The simple life of Jesus who lived always united with the Eternal Father in prayer and went about doing good to all, is imitated with the detachment and simplicity of Indian asceticism. The members of our Congregation should always remember that it is the essential nature of our inherited spirituality and religious life to strive to attain *union with God*, the Lord of all and foundation of all goodness and try our best to live constantly in Him and with Him. They must, as much as possible, realize that glorious ideal in their lives.

The soul of Christian *Sannyāsa*, according to Mar Ivanios, is love. The commitment and service, which a *Sannyāsi* undertakes in his life, is out of love- a love towards God and his fellowmen. His inspiration is nothing but the eternal love, which is expressed by our Heavenly Father in His only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom the whole world is united to Him. Mar Ivanios teaches, "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of unlimited love (1Jn.15/13). Love towards God and His loving people are the activity of this spirit. This spirit has only one desire, that is to do the will of God (Jn.14/23-24)"³¹.

Today the relevance of *Sannyāsa*, according to Mar Ivanios, lies only in giving a meaningful witness to the love of God in this world.

²⁸ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.11

²⁹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.12

³⁰ *Girideepam*, p.137

³¹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.16

The world needs to see the spirit of true Christianity. The world must be brought closer to God by revealing the true love of Christ in each generation of mankind. In order to reveal his love, which culminated in His self-sacrifice who else shall Jesus depend on other than the *Sannyāsis*? Whom shall He choose other than *Sannyāsis*? Where else can Jesus reveal the wholeness of life, which can be lived according to His will other than in the lives of these *Sannyāsis*? Whom has He regarded worthy, in order to reveal his own love-the love, which He has towards His Father and to the whole humanity? Whom can Jesus depend on to realize His love in each generation of mankind? Are they not His own *Sannyāsis* who are filled with His Spirit, grace and power, i.e., the *Sannyāsis* who have no one else other than Jesus to rely upon?³²

Mar Ivanios understands the meaning of the three vows, namely, poverty, chastity and obedience, as the meaningful expression of Christian love- a love for the true treasure of eternal life-a love for God. The vows help the *Sannyāsi* to liberate himself from the bondage of selfishness and the love for the values of this world to the values of the kingdom of God. Regarding the vow of poverty he says: The practice of the vow of poverty must be for the sake of the love for Christ. If you have something in abundance you must be afraid of that abundance. *God's love*, heavenly blessings and religious virtues are the only things, which you can have in abundance³³.

Speaking on the vow of chastity, Mar Ivanios observes that in practicing the vow of chastity a *Sannyāsi* is practicing the love towards Christ and experiencing the love of Christ. He refers to the love of John, the forerunner of all-Christian “*Brhamachārees*”, who reclined next to Him at the Last Supper (Jn.13/23-25), the one whom Jesus loved (Jn.13/23; 19/26) and to whom Jesus entrusted His mother (Jn.19/27). Mar Ivanios highlights the love between Jesus and John as the model for the love into which a *Sannyāsi* must be liberated and he compares their love with the love that should be maintained between a *Sannyāsi* and the Church.

He says: Just like John who reposed on the chest of Jesus, a *Sannyāsi* *reposes* in Jesus in his holy contemplation; and just like John took care of mother Mary, a *Sannyāsi* is supposed to take care

³² *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17-18

³³ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.92.

of his mother Church³⁴. The life of chastity is nothing else but elevating to God all one's abilities to love³⁵.

The vow of obedience also is viewed in the same spirit of Christian love. Mar Ivanios points out that unless and until the spirit of love resides in the heart of a *Sannyāsi* he cannot keep this vow. The obedience of a *Sannyāsi* is a hearty self-surrender in trustful love³⁶. The disciple who wants to *reside in the love of Jesus* does not follow his own will. But he finds happiness in following the will of God and in following the will of his superior in the name of God³⁷.

The *Sannyāsi* who keeps the vow of obedience has that love which transforms the will of the superior into his own will. This type of love must instinctively evolve in a *Sannyāsi*. It is possible only by the abundance of grace. A *Sannyāsi* is supposed always to co-operate with the will of his superior in the spirit of love³⁸.

In short Mar Ivanios considered *Sannyāsa* as a *Snēha Mārga* (way of Love), which takes one to his absolute end of life, namely, the union with God. It is very interesting to observe how beautifully he explains the spirit of the three religious vows in the light of love. According to him love is the essential form of all three vows. This understanding gives a positive dimension to the sacrifice one makes in the observance of these vows. Therefore, the one who observes these three vows is not loosing anything but grows in this Christian love. He points out that religious life is the best possible way to live the Christian love and therefore, of course, it is a *Snēha Mārga* (way of Love).

Sannyāsi and his Relation to God, World and the Church

One of the often quoted aphorisms of Mar Ivanios may cause some misunderstanding that he undermined the charitable activities of the church and reduced *Sannyāsa* to a fleeing away from the world. But it is not true. What he said could be translated in different ways. For instance: (i) Having God is better than serving

³⁴ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.96

³⁵ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.124

³⁶ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.104

³⁷ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.105-106

³⁸ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.106-7

God (ii) Attaining God is more important than the works of God
(iii) Attaining God is more noble than the good works. If we take all his writings together in the light of his life, it will be very clear that Mar Ivanios never advocated any anti-world or any otherworldly theory. For Mar Ivanios *Sannyāsa* is never a fleeing away from the world but a meaningful commitment and involvement in this world in the spirit of the love of God and without selfishness. It is true that he advocated a detachment from the fruits of work but he was concerned with the well being of his fellowmen and of the whole world. This concern for the humanity stems from his deep relation to God. He exhorts: God alone is a *Sannyāsi*’s law of life and enabling power to observe the law³⁹. God alone must be a *Sannyāsi*’s beloved and joy⁴⁰. God alone must be the asset and the treasure of a *Sannyāsi*⁴¹. We perform all our religious duties, together with our God⁴². Just like a fish, which remains always in the water, a *Sannyāsi* must always be in the presence of God⁴³. If a *Sannyāsi* has an asset of a penny, he is not worthy of a penny⁴⁴. When one has God as his asset and at the same time if he longs for other assets, he is greedy⁴⁵.

All the above-mentioned aphorisms and similar ones of Mar Ivanios reveal his ardent relationship with God. But this relationship with God does not take him away neither from this world nor from his fellowmen. On the contrary it leads him to them in a more meaningful way with more responsibility and commitment. Love and commitment to one’s own fellowmen is part and parcel of Mar Ivanios’ *Sannyāsa Darśana*, for he writes: The overflowing love towards God and one’s own fellowmen is deeply inherent in the religious vows⁴⁶.

Searching God in *Sannyāsa* only for one’s own sake and not for the sake of the neighbour is one of the temptations a *Sannyāsi* faces in

³⁹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p. 10-11

⁴⁰ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.11

⁴¹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.11

⁴² *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.117

⁴³ *Girideepam*, p.137

⁴⁴ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.86

⁴⁵ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.91

⁴⁶ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.21

his life. We may mistakenly think that we love God because we experience happiness in our prayer and meditation. But we have received the commandment from God that one who loves God must love his neighbour as well. A *Sannyāsi* is a co-worker in God's work of salvation of the world. Therefore, we must examine ourselves and see how much time we spend in praying for our brethren and in serving them. We must think how far we sincerely spend our time in the service of our brethren just like Jesus served them, and we must truly love them⁴⁷.

Son of God gave himself completely for the service of God. This includes serving men for the sake of God. So also a *Sannyāsi*'s service for God includes service for men⁴⁸.

All these exhortations very clearly reveal how seriously Mar Ivanios took this world and his fellowmen and conceived the service towards them as a Christian responsibility. He has proved this through his life. When the first Bethany Ashram started at Ranni-Perunad, the very first day all the arrangements were made to start an orphanage in the same premises of the Ashram⁴⁹. Whenever they had nothing to eat the normal practice was to give whatever remains to the orphans and the *Sannyāsas* to observe a fasting⁵⁰. When Mar Ivanios wrote the Holy Rule of his order he proposed six fields of apostolic works. Charitable works and educational works were given due priority among them (see H.R.202-216). The educational institutions he started give witness to this great vision. He dares even to hold the "extreme" position that the relevance of *Sannyāsa* lies in bringing this world "...closer to God by revealing the true love of Christ in each generation of mankind".⁵¹

The ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios is that the Church is the salvific presence of God in this world. His *Sannyāsa Darśana* is enriched by this ecclesiology. We must keep in mind that the historical fact of the whole question of founding a religious congregation Archbishop Mar Ivanios emerged because of just one reason, that is, to save the Church from its deteriorating situation.

⁴⁷ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.115

⁴⁸ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.130

⁴⁹ *Girideepam*, p.114

⁵⁰ *Girideepam*, p.102-103

⁵¹ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

Mar Ivanios never envisaged his religious order as another Church within the Church, but as a source of its spiritual life. After the reunion he even asked the members of Bethany Ashram to suspend its own activities to a certain extent and to take up the responsibilities of the parishes, till enough priests are available for the work. For him, outside the Church there is no relevance for a religious congregation. This is very clear from his teaching:

Sannyāsis are the true children and the real representatives of the Holy Church.⁵² Cross is the recognized end of Christian religion. The Holy Church takes up the cross and follows Jesus solely because of the absolute love. Religious Congregation is the heart of this Holy Church⁵³. Just like John on the chest of Jesus, a *Sannyāsi* reposes in Jesus, in his holy contemplation and just like John took care of mother Mary, a *Sannyāsi* is supposed to take care of his mother Church.⁵⁴

In his allegory to explain *Sannyāsi*’s love towards the Church, he compares it with the love between Jesus and John, Mary and John. Here both his theological insights and poetical imagination reach their sublime point, which is typical to Oriental Fathers like Mar Aprem and Mar Jacob of Serugh. The explanation is with such an ease so that the initial awe of the reader gives way to the spiritual insight of Mar Ivanios which is really transformative in its nature.

According to Mar Ivanios, the asceticism of a *Sannyāsi* finds its fullness in his involvement in divine things and in his witness to God in this world. The ideal form of this involvement can be exercised in the Holy Church.

Conclusion

The *Sannyāsa Darśana* (*vision of monasticism*) of Mar Ivanios is not analyzed exhaustively here in this short article. For instance, his concept of “Thauna” reveals a lot of theological insights; his analysis and teachings of the religious vows deserve a separate study. Here we have tried to highlight a few salient features of his vision of religious/monastic life, which have a lot of originality and

⁵² *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

⁵³ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.17

⁵⁴ *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.96

Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios

Geevarghese Panicker

Introduction

Ecclesiology in the modern understanding of the word is a theological discipline having the Church as the object of its study and investigation, aiming at the elaboration of a full and consistent doctrine of the Church. Archbishop Mar Ivanios has not written any such work on ecclesiology. His ecclesiological approach is that of the West Syrian Church, (the Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite Church). This Church, like all pre-Chalcedonian Churches, has not developed any ecclesiology in the modern sense of the word. Ecclesiology in the modern sense appeared late in the Christian thought. It began in the West with scholastic theology and that towards the Middle Ages.

The Fathers and the theologians of the Church up to the Middle Ages never composed any treatise on the Church. The reality of the Church is presupposed in the proclamation of the Gospel and cannot be separated from the whole dogmatic structure of which it forms the existential foundation. In other words, their theology was ecclesial in dimension. The Church was a reality in the life of the faithful and not merely an optional institution to which occasionally people paid homage to or which people, in their spare moments, discussed. Because of this, the experience of the Church, given as a gift of the Father through the Son, regenerated

by the Spirit, conditions the whole of Christian reflection. This essential connection and inter-dependence between Patristic theology and the experience of the Church is often ignored, because the Fathers do not "theologize" about the Church. But the reason for this is, that the Church for the Fathers is precisely not the "object" but always the "subject" of theology, the reality which makes it possible to know God and in Him, Man and the World, the Life and consequently the truth about all reality. The appearance of ecclesiology as a separate discipline is the fruit of *doubt*, of that need for justification which is inevitable and indeed "normal" in a theology which is itself conceived as "justification" – rational or philosophical, legal or practical – of the Christian faith and which as we know it only too well today leads to confusion because it is rooted in the evaluation of the Church in terms of the world, of its philosophy, of its trends and needs, and thus ultimately to a surrender to the world and consequently to an "alienation" of theology from the real Church and her real life.

Even from the beginning of Christianity, the Church was presented to the world as the proclamation and the presence of salvation brought by Jesus Christ. In Ephesians (3/4) the Church is seen as the "mystery of Christ" because in it is realized the eternal plan of the Father, inaugurating on the Cross the union of humanity, Jews and Gentiles, in the Church and leading it to the consummation where "God will be everything to every one (1 Cor. 15/28). The mystery implies that the saving Incarnation takes effect in the Church through the preaching of the *Word* and through the Sacraments thus leading it to the glory of heaven.

For the early Fathers the whole Scripture spoke of Christ and his Church; they saw the Church through the imageries of the Bible (people, body, temple, spouse, flock, vineyard, kingdom, field and net) and the typological interpretation of the Old Testament. We see that the Christianity of the Fathers was essentially ecclesial, of the Church. Man works out his salvation in the Church with the help of her "mysteries"; personal faith itself received through adhesion to the Church's tradition, is saving only through the effective participation in her communitarian and liturgical life. Keeping these general remarks which are common to all the traditions of the early

Church, we shall now proceed to deal briefly with the concept of the Church in the thought of Archbishop Mar Ivanios which is in the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church, to which he belonged and which he preserved in the Malankara Catholic Church.

Since Mar Ivanios belonged to the West Syrian (Syrian Orthodox) patrimony, we shall first deal briefly with the West Syrian patrimony and then with the ecclesiological vision of Mar Ivanios.

The West Syrian Ecclesial Patrimony

As we have remarked above, for the early Syriac Fathers, as for all the other Fathers of the Church, the whole of Scripture spoke of Christ and his Church. In the Old Testament the revelation of the Kingdom had been conveyed by figures of speech. In the same way, the inner nature of the Church was now to be made known to us through various images. Since the Church is a mystery, it cannot be exhaustively defined, but its nature is communicated by studying the various biblical metaphors. Four groups of images may be noted viz. the Church as the flock of Christ, the Church as the vineyard of God, the Church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit and above all the Church as the Spouse of the Immaculate Lamb. These images taken from the different spheres of human life (pastoral life, agriculture, building and matrimony) magnificently supplement one another and indicate in different ways Christ's tender love for, and intimate union with the Church. The Syriac Churches preserve a sense of awesome and inexpressible mystery, which surrounds and connotes the celebrative aspect of the liturgy. They have a spirituality drawn directly from the sacred Scripture and liturgy and consequently a theology less subjected to strictly rational categories. The early Syriac Fathers and theologians did not compose any treatise on the Church, as we understand about the present day ecclesiology. The reality of the Church is presupposed in the proclamation of the Gospel and cannot be separated from the whole dogmatic structure of which it forms the existential foundation. In other words their theology was ecclesial. It is not possible to find any systematic treatise on the Church among the early Syrian Fathers. One can find only occasional assertions and numerous scattered remarks of theologians, historians and comments and passages in their liturgical

books. The Syriac liturgy is in fact a monument of love and enthusiasm of the people of the Syriac tradition for the Holy Church, the Spouse of Christ and the Mother of the children of God. One can find there, often in poetic form, most abundant materials on the manner in which the Syrians conceived the intimate essence of the Church. This is found, especially, in the *Book of Common Prayers (Shi'mo)*, in the Office of the Dedication of the Church, of Epiphany, of the Apostles, in the liturgy of Baptism, Ordination and Marriage. One or two examples may be cited:

He (The Lord God Messiah) dwells in heaven, in the Church which is His house in the throne, in the Church building, in the Chariot of the Cherubim and in the Sanctuary. He has made the Church His abode and His dwelling place. Her beauty is beyond description. The heavenly powers have surrounded her. Isaiah has compared her to a tabernacle.... She is an attractive fortress, she is the ship of the Gospel, she is the stable city, she is the established town, strong tower, Holy Mountain; she is progressively engaged in sublime things.¹

We remember Moses the fountain-head of prophecy and Simon head of the Apostles. Moses is the head of the Old, Simon of the New, both resemble one another and God dwelt in them. Moses brought down the tablets of the law, Simon received the keys of the kingdom; Moses built the earthly tabernacle, Simon built the Church, for the Old and for the New. Glory to you, O! Lord, hallelujah. May their prayers assist us.²

Simon Peter was catching fish in the sea, when his Lord called him and said to him: Come Simon, and I will give you a catch of the Spirit and you will draw men from death to life; and on you, Simon, I will build the Holy Church and the bars of Sheol shall not be able to prevail against it.³

The architect (King) of heaven and earth built the Church and made it His dwelling place, He entered into it and lives there. Let all those who want to converse with Him enter inside it, for He dwells there... O! Lord, who gives growth to the Church, have mercy on us. The Holy Church who is the spouse of the Messiah is full of blessings, like the Paradise. In it are Baptism, the holy bones of the Martyrs and Altar of Sacrifice. The priests who give the Medicine of Life are also there.⁴

¹ From the *Sedro'* of the *Ramso'* of the Consecration of the Church.

² From the *Lilio'* on Monday, in the Book of Common Prayer.

³ *Lilio'* on Thursday.

⁴ *Lilio'* Sunday, first Qaumo'.

The Syriac liturgy presents the union of Christ and the Church through an Oriental imagery of courtship and marriage when it speaks of the feast of the nuptial and of leading the bride to the nuptial chamber, by which the conjugal union was sealed. The nuptial chamber is heaven; the bridegroom prepares it and causes his spouse to enter there. The nuptial feast is the image of eternal happiness; all men are called to its delights, which never end.

From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them and gave them a share in His mission, joy and sufferings. Christ provides for growth; He makes us grow towards him as our head (cf. Col. 2/19; Eph 4/11-16); He provides in his Body the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation.

The Syriac word *Rozo'/Raza'* for the Church and the Sacraments corresponds to the Greek word *Mysterion* (Sacrament).

The study of symbolic names, such as people, body, temple, spouse, flock, vineyard etc. applied to the Church and the titles such as apostles, ambassadors, heralds, fishermen, shepherds, etc. applied to bishops and priests give us nothing that can be called an ecclesiology (in the modern sense) of the early Syriac tradition. The use of symbolisms is without doubt liturgical, and consequently can be called theological in the sense of *theologia prima*; if we are to look for implicit ecclesiology in the writings of the early Syriac Fathers much of what is relevant is contained in these images. The one great truth they express is certainly a truth about the Church. It is Christ who shared some of these functions with men and they are exercised still in the Church. The only begotten Son of God, the second Adam, "Life-Giver" – these He could not share. But the apostolic ministry in Christ's function as Head of the Body, as Spouse of the bride, as Apostle sent forth, as Priest and Key bearer, Shepherd, Steward, Farmer, Physician He could share. The symbolism expressed in the titles 'Rock'/ Kepha, the Building on the Rock, the Temple, etc. expresses the idea that Christ's work as Witness, Healer, Guide and Helper is continued in the sacramental society of the Church. The early Syriac authors have a high sense of the Episcopal office and its continuity with the apostolic college. Likewise, they have striking passages on Peter's primacy, but

nothing much on this being handed on to the bishops of Rome. As independent Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch gained standing, the members of the Jacobite Church tended to apply the Petrine texts to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. Recently even autocephaly is attributed to some of the Churches with Syriac heritage⁵. If the Church is the bride of Christ she is the mother of those to whom Christ has, by his death, procured eternal life.

The ecclesiology of the West Syrian Church is very similar to that of the Catholic Church. The liturgical prayers reveal that for them Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. Church is a sacramental communion and the sacraments of the Church are the means of Christian life.

The Concept of the Church according to Mar Ivanios

Archbishop Mar Ivanios has not written any systematic treatise on the Church. But it is clear from some of his letters, speeches and sermons that he accepted the West Syrian ecclesial patrimony as described above. In a letter written by him on 21st July 1928 to Archbishop Edward Moony, who was the Apostolic Delegate to India, he says that the Jacobite Church is not a Church, which has fallen into heresy but a separated Church. The Archbishop writes:

The reasons for the separation of the Jacobite Church from the one Church of Christ do not have any relation with any heresy; the primacy of Peter is distinctly and very clearly stated in our documents, thus for example: 'The net of St. Peter, the catcher of fish, draws souls from death to life. He is the Rock on which the Church is built. He carries the key of the kingdom of heaven. He is the Prince of the Apostles and the Teacher of the bishops in matters of faith'.⁶

In the same letter he refers to a prayer in the *Book of the Common Prayer* expressing the Primacy of Peter⁷. He goes on to say in his letter that the bishops of Rome are the real successors of Peter. Peter died in Rome, crucified upside down. The fact is repeated in many documents of the Syriac Church. The Archbishop quotes from the canon of the Jacobite Church the following passage:

⁵ Thus for example the faction of the Syrian Orthodox Church which calls itself now Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

⁶ Cf. T. Inchackalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I, p.320.

⁷ See above footnote nr.2.

"There should be four Patriarchs in the four parts of the world. The Patriarch of Rome should be the head and Chief among them."⁸ Again he says: "Our canons and prayers clearly articulate that Peter died a martyr in Rome and that the Pope of Rome is the head of the Patriarchs".⁹ While answering the enquiries of the representative of "Fides", a News Agency, Archbishop says: "It is the Catholic Church which in practice manifests the doctrine of faith that the Church is the living body of Christ; it is also the Catholic Church which labours in the world for the sole purpose of the salvation of individuals and community."¹⁰

In a letter dated 31st January 1931 addressed to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Archbishop writes:

Our Lord Jesus Christ has established only one Church and that on St. Peter. The keys of that kingdom He entrusted with St. Peter. He also gave him authority to confirm his brethren in the true faith. The authority to govern the Universal Church was also given to St. Peter. The true successor of St. Peter is the Pope of Rome, who is the Supreme Pontiff (High priest) of the Kingdom of Christ and through God's inspiration the *centre of unity of the Church* in the world, and the guardian of the Apostles' Catholic faith Our Lord established the Church on a rock and that rock is Peter. And since the Pope is the true successor of St. Peter, anyone who attempts to accomplish anything regarding the salvation of people, independently of the Pope is getting separated from Jesus Christ.¹¹

In the same letter the Archbishop reminds the Patriarch of the Canon of the Jacobite Church in the first *Pasoka* (section) of the 7th chapter of the *Hūdaya Canon* of Bar Ebraya: "that there should be four Patriarchs in the four corners of the world and their head and leader should be the Patriarch of Rome".¹² He also entreats the Patriarch to think deeply on the primacy of St. Peter and his successors in Rome, and on the fact that the primacy has been recorded in the authoritative documents and books of the Jacobite Church. He requests him to take steps to heal the wounds in the body of Christ caused by separation.¹³

⁸ T. Inchackalody, *op.cit.*p.321.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.391.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* vol.2. p.6.

¹¹ *Ibid.* vol.2. p.15-16.

¹² *Ibid.* vol.2.p.15.

¹³ *Ibid.* vol.2.p.16.

In a letter addressed to Apollinarius, the Archbishop of the Russian Church in the United States of America, Mar Ivánios wrote about the circumstances, which led him to the Reunion with the Catholic Church. In this letter he goes on to say that Our Divine Lord established in this world only one Church. It is one and indefectible. Since unity is an essential quality required for the Church, indivisibility is an essential requirement. In the history of the Church one finds that only after the separation, some of the leaders tried to justify their separated position from the Catholic Church. But we all know that Jesus Christ in His high-priestly prayer (Jn. 17) prayed for the unity of the Church. The Pope of Rome is the successor of St. Peter and the leader of Christians in this world and the Supreme Head of the Universal Church. The papacy is the foundation of the existence of the Church and the Pope is the centre of unity of the Church. The Universal Church is a communion of different Individual Churches, which have autonomy, but not autocephaly. Mar Ivanios reminded the bishop that it is high time for the separated Oriental Churches to reestablish communion with the Holy See and thus enable the Church of Christ to carry on its heavenly mission fruitfully and with courage.¹⁴

Again he wrote about this to Fr. Barnabas, a Russian Orthodox priest in New York in 1931 as follows:

Our divine Redeemer has established only one visible Church in this world. That Church is the one indivisible, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The individuals, which make up the Universal Church should be one in faith, in the sacraments and governance. She shines in the world as the Kingdom of God unified in faith and in the sacraments and consequently as the One Spouse of Jesus Christ. In order to be unified with this Church neither you nor I, who are the children of Oriental Churches, need reject our ecclesial traditions, liturgy and our spiritual patrimony. The foundation stone of the Church, namely Peter and the architect of the Church Paul have their resting place in Rome. Holy Father Pope represents these apostles as the founding Fathers of the Church of Christ. So for you and me and for our Churches, it is necessary to remain in communion with the Church of Rome.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 2, p.19-20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 2, p. 23-24.

Archbishop Mar Ivanios was quite convinced that Our Divine Saviour established only one Church. The Jacobite Church contended itself to be that one Church. But Archbishop Mar Ivanios had some hesitations about the claim that Jacobite Church is the one Church established by Christ. Even from the period of his professorship at Serampore College he manifested his hesitation. In his Church history classes at Serampore College during the years 1913-1919, he expressed his mental reservation on this subject. One day a Jacobite deacon asked him in the class: "What is the Church instituted by Jesus Christ?" Is it the Jacobite Church or is it the Catholic Church?" The Professor Rev. P.T. Geevarghese (later Mar Ivanios) gave the following answer:

We see very many proofs from the Holy Bible and the Church History to show that the true Church must be only one; but it is not possible to say that it is the Jacobite Church. To answer the question whether the Catholic Church is the real Church of Christ one needs to study further about the question.¹⁶

But it is evident from what we have shown about the conviction of Mar Ivanios about the unity of the Church that he came to the conclusion that the Catholic Church is the one and only Church of Christ. He was also convinced that the Pope of Rome is the Supreme head of the Catholic Church.

From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great diversity, which comes from both the variety of God's gifts, and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the people of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions and ways of life. Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church, there are also Particular/Individual Churches that retain their own traditions. The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. And so the Apostle Paul exhorts Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4/3).

Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God and the Church is the sacrament of Christ. This truth was well known to the Fathers of the

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 1.p.134.

Church. Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father to give salvation to the world, in order that men are united with the life of God. Jesus accomplished this task through his life, especially through his passion, death and resurrection. The Church is where people participate in the paschal mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the sacrament of God and the Church is the sacrament of Christ.

Archbishop Mar Ivanios does not use the word sacrament to Jesus Christ, but he says that Jesus unites human beings in his life, through His work of salvation. In order to enable man, a composite of soul and body, to unite with God, the **Word** of God became a man with soul and body. Jesus Christ is perfect man and perfect God; this is the fundamental principle of Christianity. No one has ever seen God, but God, the only the Son of God, made him known. He is the "one who is in and with the Father" (John 1/18). Through the incarnate God we can enter into His divinity, his human nature being the only way to do it. Instead of our natural relationship with the first Adam, God bestowed on us a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, who is the Way, the Truth and Life. For us in order to have communion with God, God the Word became man. Thus we can unite with God in our body and soul. For this we unite ourselves with the risen Lord with His glorious Body. Thus, Jesus Christ becomes the Sacrament of our salvation.¹⁷

After his death, Jesus Christ rose from the dead and with his glorious body he ascended to his heavenly Father. "I shall be with you till the end of the world," he said. Accordingly he lives in his Church with his glorious body, and thus makes us his body, which is the Church. We unite with Jesus Christ through the Church, which is his body, and there we grow into Jesus Christ, and thus we become mature in accordance with the measure of his perfection. Spiritually and bodily, i.e. visibly and invisibly we receive Jesus Christ into us. For this he has established the Church, which is the locus of the mysteries, which are called sacraments. The Church is a

¹⁷ Cf. His teaching on the sacraments when he was a deacon: T. Inchackalody *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* Vol. I, p. 51-58.

mystery: that is to say that she is also the sacrament. She is the total locus of the Christian sacraments and she is herself the great sacrament, which contains and vitalizes all the others. In this world she is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ himself, in his humanity, is for us the sacrament of God.

The Church is the sacrament of Christ; which means, to put it in another way, that there is between the Church and Him a certain relation of mystical identity. Here again we encounter the Pauline metaphors and the rest of the biblical images, which the Christian tradition (especially the Syriac tradition propounded by Syriac Fathers like Mar Aphrahat, Mar Aprem, Mar Jacob of Serugh, etc.) has continually explored. One and the same intuition of faith expressed throughout Head and members make one single body, one single Christ; bridegroom and the bride are one flesh. Although he is the head of the Church, Christ does not rule us from without; the Church should awaken in us the life of Christ. The Church is his fulfillment and "fullness" (Eph. 1/23). She is the tabernacle of his presence, the building of which He is both Architect and Corner Stone; she is the ship and He the Pilot, she the deep ark and He the central Mast. She is the Paradise and He its Tree and Well of Life. He who is not, in one way or another, a member of the body does not receive the influx from the Head.

Practically speaking, for each one of us, Christ is thus His Church. We may think of her particularly under the aspect of the hierarchy, remembering Christ's words: "He that hears you hears me; and he that despises you despises me". The words of St. John Chrysostom help us not to separate ourselves from the Church of Christ: "Do not separate yourself from the Church! No power is as powerful as she. The Church is your hope; the Church is your salvation; the Church is your refuge. She is other than heaven and bigger than earth. She never ages and her vitality is eternal¹⁸".

These words, I am sure echo the conviction of Archbishop Mar Ivanios who took the name Ivanios because of his conformity with the theological conviction of St. John Chrysostom.

¹⁸ P.G 52:402

God has willed that the Word of God who has become man to be the mediator between God and human kind (Tim.1/5). In other words, the human nature of the Messiah is the way willed by God for men to have communion with the Triune God. The human nature of the Messiah is the way willed by God to be united with the divinity. The way willed by God for us sinners composed of body and soul to be united with divinity is the sinless Messiah composed of body soul.¹⁹

The risen Saviour is with us till the end of the world. He is in the Church, which is His Body, of which He is the head. We unite with Jesus by being in the Church of Christ. We should receive Jesus into our body and soul, thus becoming the dwelling place of the Triune God. In order to do that he has established the divine mysteries called sacraments. These sacraments are the means by which we unite with the mystery of Christ or the sacrament of Christ. In the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist and in the celebration of the feasts of our Lord, we are given a living relationship to certain events in the life of Christ: the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ, His ascension to heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the “last and great day of Pentecost” -a relationship which makes the Church a constant witness and participant of these events, of their saving, redeeming, life-giving and life-transfiguring reality. The Church (with each one of us as its member) has no other experience but the experience of these events; no other life but the “new life” which they always generate and communicate. The faith, thus, is not only not detachable from her experience, but is indeed that experience itself – the experience of that which “we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands” (1Jn 1/1). For none of these events can be known in the rational meaning of that word, nor even believed in outside the experience which reveals their reality and makes us “witnesses to these things”. The Church’s faith as teaching and theology is rooted in faith as experience. Her *lex credendi* is revealed in her life (liturgy): her norm of faith is stated in her liturgy.

¹⁹ Cf. Inchackalody, *op. cit.* 1.57.

The ecclesial fruitfulness of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist, can be better understood if we ponder on the inmost nature of the Church herself. The Church is variously described as the Body of the Christ, the sacrament of unity and the communion of believers in Christ. The image of the Church as the Body of Christ²⁰, referred to by Archbishop Mar Ivanios originates with St. Paul, who declares that all the members of the body, though many are one Body in Christ (1 Cor. 12 /12). St. Paul clearly understands that the unity of the ecclesial body has its source in the Eucharistic body of Christ. “The bread which we break” he asks, “is it not the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10/16-17). The statements about the sacraments and the Church in the speech of Mar Ivanios about the sacraments and their relation to the Church implies that the Eucharist in which the Lord gives us his body and makes us one body, forever remains the place where the Church is generated, where the Lord himself never ceases to be found anew; in the Eucharist the Church is most compactly herself – in all places, yet one only, just as He is only one.

Unity is of the essence of the Church. Christ bestowed unity on His Church from the beginning. This unity subsists in the Catholic Church. Christ always gives His Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his passion and does not cease praying to the Father, for the unity of his disciples: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us”. The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit. The highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity in the Trinity of persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. As St. Cyprian says, the Universal Church is seen to be “a people brought into unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ *Ibid.* 1.61-62.

3

The Eucharist in the Teachings of Mar Ivanios

Philip Chempakassery

Mar Ivanios who was a Bishop of the Malankara Orthodox Church of India and the Founder Superior of the Bethany Congregation for men and women of the Imitation of Christ and the Founder of the Reunion Movement and the First Metropolitan Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church was deeply devoted to the Eucharistic Lord. In all essentials, the Orthodox Church has the same faith in the Eucharist as the Catholic Church though the development of Eucharistic Theology branched out into two diverging families through the writings of the later theologians of the Churches. One of the reasons, which encouraged reunion, was that he found the Eucharistic faith strongly guarded and devoutly practiced in the Catholic Church. In the face of so many political reasons within the Church and the tug of war for power and authority among the leaders, Orthodox Church was not able to build up a spirituality based on its faith in the Eucharist in daily life. This situation impoverished the spiritual life of both the priests and the lay people. This situation saddened the heart of Mar Ivanios who was an ardent lover of the Church and the Community. On the other hand, he found a growing community deeply rooted in Eucharistic

faith and devotion in the Catholic Church. In particular, the spiritual progress of the Roman Catholics of Kerala (a name which the ancient Christians of St. Thomas who preserved the Catholic faith in spite of the in-fights in the Church for themselves, i.e., the Pazhayakūr Syrian Christians) whom Mar Ivanios qualified as “bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh” of the Orthodox Church was always an attraction to him. During the time of correspondences with Rome, the Orthodox Bishops had not made up their mind about the Church to which they were to establish communion. They wanted only to have a visible communion with one of the ancient Churches.¹ It was Mar Ivanios’ personal interest and particular attraction for the Catholic Church, which led the correspondences with Rome. There also the main factor of attraction was the Eucharistic life of the Catholics.

Mar Ivanios has not written many books on the Eucharist. Therefore it is difficult to come to any certain knowledge of his Eucharistic faith and vision. But as his contemporaries bear witness about him, he made many sermons on the Eucharist. But only a few have been put into writing. Therefore, the sources for knowing the Eucharistic vision of Archbishop are scanty and imperfect. Yet the little that has been recorded bear witness to the deep faith and devotion of the Archbishop towards the Eucharistic Lord.

What is the Eucharist?

Interconnecting the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist, Mar Ivanios used to say that they are like a shower bath and sumptuous meal after the bath (*kuliyum unum*). The Archbishop believed that the Eucharist is the divine meal prepared for the bride of Christ. This is one of his main ideas about the Eucharist. He also gives some sort of definition to the Eucharist. In his book *Dhyānakusumangal* he says, “The Eucharist is the source of graces, divine mercies, goodness and holiness...It is divine medicine and the means of much merit”.² In another place he says, the Eucharist is what Christ gave us for the union of our body and soul with the

¹ T. Inchakkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I. Trivandrum, 1957, pp.266-270.

² Mar Ivanios, *Dhyānakusumangal*, Kottayam, 1981, p.156.

body and soul of Christ... It is the sacrament by which we are united with Christ in a visible and an invisible way.³

Eucharist in his Personal Life

It was a very critical period in the history of the Malankara Syrian Church and this saddened the heart of Mar Ivanios. The source of consolation, encouragement and strength for him was the long hours he spent in prayer before the Eucharistic Lord. About the Eucharistic devotion of Mar Ivanios Fr. Louis Moolaveetil says, "following the example of our Lord whose whole life, beginning from His incarnation up to His death on the Cross, was a continuous life of prayer, Mar Ivanios arranged his life of prayer in the wilderness of Perunad. He spent long hours of prayer in that forest".⁴ In his Autobiography the Archbishop himself opens a window to his spiritual practices. He says, "by means of prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, confession, holy Mass and communion, practice of the presence of God, mortification, good intentions and practice of Christian virtues I myself and the other monks lived in Jesus Christ".⁵

Archbishop Mar Ivanios was not a theologian in the sense in which "Theologian" is understood today. He was basically a spiritual man who loved everything that is part of his spiritual vision and did everything that helped his growth in spiritual life. All the wonderful achievements in his life are to be seen in association with his spiritual vision and practical life in accordance with that vision. He was himself deeply spiritual and guided others to attain to spiritual heights in their own lives. The congregations for men and women, which he started in the Malankara Orthodox Church to which he belonged, proclaim in unequivocal terms that his primary and basic vision in life was spiritual. He not only founded the congregations but also remained the spiritual guide and father for

³ These are the ideas expressed in a sermon he preached as a deacon in the Annual Meeting of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Community at Tiruvalla in 1912; Cf. Inchackalody, *op.cit.*, p.62.

⁴ L. Moolaveetil, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, Kottayam, 1977, p.73.

⁵ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, Tiruvalla, 1929, p.126.

the monastics till the end of his life. In guiding the monastics in spiritual life, he directed them to the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is in these thoughts and insights he shared with the monastics that one can find Mar Ivanios' theology on the Eucharist. Later he published these thoughts in the form of a book *Viśuddha Qurbana: oru Dhyānapathanam* (the Holy Eucharist: A Meditative Study). This is the most important book for a proper understanding of Mar Ivanios' views on the Eucharist. Since the main orientation was spiritual direction and assistance for making meditations before the Eucharist effective and fruitful, he gives more importance to the spiritual side of the Eucharist than to the ontological aspect. Yet he has not completely discarded the ontological question of what the Eucharist is. Therefore, it is possible for a researcher to find out the salient points in Mar Ivanios' theology of the Eucharist from the views expressed in this book. Over and above this book, there are hundreds of letters, which he wrote as a priest and later as a bishop for guiding those who were under his charge. He has made innumerable sermons on the Eucharist. Some of them are recorded in his biographies. From all these we can collect the main view Mar Ivanios had about the Eucharist.

The names of the Eucharist⁶

One of the sources for knowing the views of Mar Ivanios on the Eucharist is the list of names by which he used to call the Eucharist. The following are the important names.

1. *Qurbana (Offering)*

The reasons for calling the Eucharist as Qurbana are: 1. We offer food (bread and wine), which are most essential for the maintenance of life. Therefore is an essential offering 2. We offer all that God has given us for satisfying our needs. These are spiritually brought before God and offered to Him. 3. We also offer ourselves with our body and soul, all our senses and faculties and the whole life. 4. We offer also Jesus Christ, who makes himself

⁶ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana oru Dhyānapathanam*, Kottayam, 1980, pp 1-16.

present in the Eucharist. We take this Jesus and offer him to God for the remission of the sins of the whole world. 5. We offer to God in the Eucharist all the human beings - both dead and alive-who are His children. From all these considerations the Eucharist can justly be called an Offering.

2. Divine Communion or Divine fellowship

It is Divine Communion because the Eucharist preserves and enhances our communion with God, which we have started at our baptism. It is communion also because there is a bond of union among all the humans-both living and dead -and with the angels of heaven.

3. Mystery (Raza')

It is Raza' because Jesus offered to the disciples on the night of the Passover a great mystery, which was his own body and blood. It is called mystery, also because in a mysterious way the body and blood of Jesus are hidden in the bread and wine. It is called mystery because it is the new mystery by means of which the New Law given by Jesus replaced the Mosaic Law of worship and communion with God.

4. Qūdāša

It is another name of the Eucharist because it purifies not only the sinners but also the most holy saints. The word meaning of Qudasa is 'that which purifies'.

5. The mystery of life. This name comes from the fact that Jesus who is the eternal life, is mysteriously present in the Eucharist.

6. Lamb

The Eucharist is Lamb because Jesus the Lamb of God is present in the Eucharist. This Lamb who was once sacrificed on the cross is eternally being sacrificed on the altar of heaven and the Church which comes together to offer the Eucharist is enabled to participate in the eternal heavenly sacrifice of the Lamb. This same

sacrifice of the Lamb is continued in the Church through the Eucharist.

7. Great Passover

As the Israelites passed over from the Egyptian slavery to the freedom of the Land of Canaan, the New Testament people of God pass over from the slavery of sin to the freedom of eternal life. As the Israelite ate the flesh of the paschal lamb the New Testament people of God eat the flesh of the great and holy Paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ. The Eucharist was instituted on the day on which the Old Testament people celebrated the Passover. This is another reason for calling the Eucharist as the Great Passover

8. *The Bread of offering.* The many offerings of the Old Testament especially the offering of the bread of the presence were prefigurations of the Eucharist. Therefore the Eucharist can be called the Bread of Offering.

9. *Emmanuel.* The word means 'God with us'. Since the Eucharist makes the presence of God with us, it is called Emmanuel.

10. *Heavenly Manna.* Manna, which the Israelite ate in the wilderness, was a pretaste of the Eucharist. So the Eucharist is known as the heavenly Manna.

11. The Heavenly table or Eternal Banquet

Three explanations are given for this name of the Eucharist. First of all, the Eucharist is heavenly table because the Eucharist is the means for receiving from God heavenly blessings and power for eternal life. Secondly, the Eucharist gives loving union and communion with the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is heavenly table also because it is the foretaste in this world of the eternal heavenly banquet, which is eternal beatific vision.

12. Bread of Life

This name is given because Jesus has told us (Jn. 6/35, 33, 48, 50, 51) that he is the bread of life and that the one who eats from

this bread will live for ever. The Eucharist gives us this Jesus who is the bread of life.

13. Sweet Fruit or Fruit of Life

This name is given to the Eucharist because the fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden which Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat was a prefiguration of the Eucharist.

14. The Supper of the Lord

This name is explained in the following manner. In the Eucharist the Lord gives us his Body and Blood as food. So it is the Supper of the Lord.

*15. Water-drinking (*Tannirkudi*) and Food for journey*

This name of the Eucharist is explained in the following way. The life of Christians is a journey towards heaven. They have to be strengthened in this journey by imbibing and intaking the life of Jesus. The Eucharist provides the life of Jesus to the heavenward travellers. Therefore, the Eucharist is water drinking and food for journey.

16. Chalice of Salvation. Because the Eucharist provides heavenly salvation to the faithful.

17. The Bread we break and the Cup of blessing we bless. Jesus took the bread, broke it and distributed to the disciples. He also blessed the cup and passed it to the disciples. He also commanded the disciples to do likewise. Therefore, the Eucharist is the Bread we break and the Cup of blessing we bless.

18. First Fruit. Food is the foremost among the things we need to maintain ourselves. In the Eucharist we offer this food, which is foremost of our needs. It is first fruit also because the power of our soul, which is our first fruit as persons and the first hours of the day are all offered to God in the Eucharist. It is presupposed that the Eucharist is the first holy thing a person does in a day.

19. The First Born. The Eucharist is known also as the first born because the second person of the Most Holy Trinity, the first born of the Father is present and is given in the Eucharist. It is

called first born also because we become the children of God through communion with Jesus the first born of God. It is also because the first adoration of the day that rises from us is the adoration in the Eucharist. This adoration is the first born of our relationship with God. So the Eucharist can be called First Born.

20. *Eucharist*. It is another name and it means thanksgiving and this name is justified by the fact that Eucharist is the service through which we give the most acceptable and holy thanks to the Father. We thank God for the fact that our sins are forgiven and Christ has redeemed us. We thank God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ who became man, lived in this world, suffered, died, rose again, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father. This Christ gave us His Holy Spirit. For these also we thank God. We thank Him also for the gift of the so many saints of the Church.

21. *Live Coal of Purification*. This name of the Eucharist has reference to Isaiah's vision of God in which his unholy tongue was purified by the touch of a live coal from the heavenly altar (16:1-10). The same way the Eucharist acts as a powerful means of purifying the sinful man.

22. *Sin offering*. Jesus reconciled God and man by His self-sacrifice on the cross. Since it is through the remission of sins of man that this reconciliation is realized, Jesus' self-sacrifice is known as sin offering parallel to the sin offerings of the Old Testament but far above these in value. The Eucharist makes us participants of the affects of this sin offering.

23. *Free-will offering*. The Eucharist is free will offering of the New Testament fulfilling such offerings of the Old Testament, the shadow of the New Testament. This name refers to the fact that the Eucharist is offered deliberately, by the Church and individual believers in the freedom of their will.

24. *The Memorial of our Lord* is yet another name of the Eucharist because it was instituted by Jesus with the words, "Do it in memory of me" (1Cor. 11/24, 25).

25. *The Liturgy.* Since the Eucharist is the most important item of the liturgy of the Church, the common name "liturgy" is applied to it specifically to refer to it.

26. *Fullness of Fullness.* All the other sacraments are administered with the Eucharist and the Eucharistic communion is received together with the reception of other sacraments. Therefore the Eucharist is fullness of fullness. It takes even the holy saints to greater heights of saintliness and brings every man to the fullness of humanity. For these reasons the Eucharist is fullness of fullness.

In these 26 names of the Eucharist and their explanations the main teachings of Mar Ivanios are contained. Some of these names were already in use in the Church and some others he found out from Syriac documents he examined for this purpose. Anyway Mar Ivanios' attempt at giving a complete list of the names of the Eucharist clearly shows how he was devoted to this sacrament of the Church and how he wanted to disseminate Eucharistic devotion to his faithful and religious.

Other contributions to Eucharistic Theology

As the many names point to his theology of the Eucharist, there are other mentions and clear teachings, which give out his insight into the subject. The salient features of his thought on the subject can be summarized as follows.

The Eucharist as Sacrifice

Mar Ivanios shares and emphatically teaches the common conviction of the ancient Churches of the East and West on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. In this point he has almost the same idea as the teaching of the Council of Trent, which defined the Eucharist as a sacrifice because, according to the Council, it "represents the sacrifice on the Cross, it perpetuates its memory until the end of the world and it applies the salutary power of that sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins"⁷. Mar Ivanios gives four reasons for considering the Eucharist as sacrifice⁸. First of all it is

⁷ Council of Trent, DS 1740

⁸ Mar Ivanios, Visuddha Qurbana.... P. 26

the Sacrifice of praise and glorification of God. This idea he has derived from Phil. 5:2 and Heb 13:15. Secondly it is a sacrifice because the Church offers to God the Father the sacrifice, which the Son is offering before the Father. The death of Jesus on the Cross is a once and for all sacrifice on the plain of the material world and from the consideration of the humanity of Jesus. But when we look at it from the divine dimension, it is an eternal sacrifice, which is being offered in heaven. This eternal sacrifice is made its own by the Church through the celebration and is offered anew at every sacrifice of the Eucharist. In this sense the Eucharist is a real sacrifice. Thirdly, the Eucharist is not only the offering of Jesus; it is also a ritual through which we offer ourselves to God. This offering is a real offering. This is a living and holy sacrifice. This idea that we offer ourselves to God as sacrifice is derived from St. Paul's teaching in Rom 12/11 and from Peter's teaching in his First Epistle(2/5). There is a fourth consideration which also justifies the qualification of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. It is because we offer not only ourselves, but also all others who are related to us and all other things, which belong to us. Mar Ivanios is guided in this thought by the teaching of Paul in Phil 3/8.

Real Presence

In the history of the theology of the Eucharist of the Roman Catholic Church, three clear stages of development can be noticed. In the earliest period, which lasted for the first four or five centuries, there was a healthy association of symbolism and realism. Symbolic language was understood as the normal and adequate means of speaking about the reality of the non-temporal and the spiritual. Thus it was possible to say that the Eucharist was the symbol of the body and blood of Jesus. There was no question as to whether it was the real body and blood or only a symbol of the body and blood because symbol was never understood in isolation from and as contrast to the real. But the Medieval period in the Western Church saw a drastic change in the evaluation and appreciation of symbols. For the theologians of this period, the symbolic was the opposite of the real. Therefore to state the reality of the presence they rejected

the language of the symbols.⁹ The Tridentine definition of the Eucharistic presence is to be understood as the culmination of this unscientific dissociation of reality and symbol. The council said that in the Eucharist, "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. the whole Christ, is truly, really and substantially contained"¹⁰. This reality of the presence is understood as the presence in the fullest sense and as substantial presence i.e. presence realized through substantial change¹¹. Though the teaching of the Council is substantially in agreement with the ancient common tradition of the Christian Church, the insistence on reality at the expense of the symbolic has contributed to unnecessary controversy between the Catholics and the Protestants on the one hand and the Catholics and the Easterners on the other. Mar Ivanios draws a balance between the tradition of the Catholics and the Other Christians.

One of the ways in which the Western theology affirmed the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist was by stating that there was a change in the bread and wine, which are brought for offering in the Eucharist. The bread and wine undergo a change after the consecration. At least from the ninth century, the question of change was part of Western theology of the Eucharist. The first one who came out with a theology of change was Paschiasius in his book, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* published in 831¹². Though many of his points were rejected by the official Church on account of the physicality of his idea of presence, his insistence on change was accepted and continued in later theology.

But much earlier than Paschiasius, the Syriac Church was conscious of the change that happens in the bread and wine after the consecration. For example, Mar Aprem taught that there is a real change and he interpreted the Eucharistic words of Jesus in this

⁹ cf. W.R. Crockett, *Eucharist, Symbol of Transformation*, New York, 1989, p 106-128.

¹⁰ Council of Trent, DS 1651

¹¹ cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1374

¹² Cf. P. Chempakassery, *Memory and Presence: A Theology of the Eucharist*, Trivandrum, 2002, p. 123.

sense. "Do not now regard as bread that which I have given you, but take; eat this bread and do not scatter the crumbs; for what I have called my body, that it is in deed"¹³.

This idea of change, which is part of the genuine Eucharistic theology of the Syriac Church was inherited by Mar Ivanios and handed over to his faithful through preaching and writing. His terminology is peculiar to him. He uses expressions like "is formed", "becomes", and "makes" etc to bring out the idea of change. In one place as answer to a question how the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus, he answers by saying, "by the action of the Holy Spirit, the holy body and holy blood of Christ *are formed* in the bread and wine"¹⁴. The same idea he expresses by saying that "the bread and wine *become* the body and blood of the Christ"¹⁵. The real change in the bread and wine is indicated also by pointing to the prayer of Epiclesis used in his Church, which gives out the idea of real change. These prayers are from the Anaphora of St. James widely in use in the Syriac Church. The prayer of Epiclesis says, "May the Holy Spirit descend upon and *make* this bread the life-giving body- redeeming body- the true body of our God the Christ"¹⁶

The how of the real presence has always been a burning problem in Western theology. The answer given by many theologians before St. Thomas Aquinas was that the resurrected body of Jesus which is seated at the right hand of the Father travels through space and time and occupies the space of the bread and wine. This explanation is not only childish, but also self contradictory because the Eucharist in the genuine tradition of thee Church is not the memorial of the resurrection of the Lord but the of the death of the Lord. As Paul very clearly teaches us, as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim "the Lord's death until he comes" (1Cor 11/26). It is true that there is reference to the

¹³ Mar Aprem, Homilies 4,4, as given in W.A. Jürgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol.1, Minneapolis, 1970, p.311.

¹⁴ Mar Ivanios, *Viśudha Qurbana...* p. 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 31.

second coming of Jesus in Paul's teaching and that if second coming is included, resurrection cannot be ruled out. At the same time, direct reference is to the death. More over the Synoptic tradition presents the Eucharistic chalice as the blood that is poured out (Mt 26/20; Mk 14/24; Lk 22/20). All this means that the Eucharistic bread is the sacrificial body and blood, the body that suffered the crucifixion for the world. St. Thomas Aquinas answered the question of the how of the presence in a better way by pointing to what happens to the bread and wine themselves without speculating on the transfer of the body in heaven to the bread and wine on the altar. For him it is the substantial change that matters. In other words the substance of the body and blood is made available by a change of the substance of the bread and wine. Though this explanation avoids the question of the transfer of the body in heaven to the bread on the altar, it does not give us any idea about the sacrificial nature of the body. Perhaps the Western Church is still not aware of the insufficiency of this explanation. This Thomistic explanation of the presence as substantial presence effected through *transubstantiation* which was appropriated by the Council of Trent is almost wholly, without any change, is repeated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It says, 'by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called *transubstantiation*'¹⁷

Mar Ivanios' teaching on this point is more biblical and logical. He derives the question of the presence from the Scriptures. In Rom 8/34; Heb 9/22; 12/24; 1Jn2/2 Rev 5/6 and 12/11 Mar Ivanios finds the answer. The slain Lamb is a standing Lamb (Rev 5/6). This means the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is an eternal Sacrifice that does not come to an end. This eternal sacrifice is realized not through repetition but by the fact the sacrificial Lamb and the agent of the action of the sacrificial death are one and the same, the Son of God. Therefore this sacrifice has a reality that

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 1376.

transcends time and space. It becomes an eternal sacrifice. Mar Ivanios puts this idea very beautifully in the following words:

The sacrifice which Jesus offered through his death on the Cross and through his ascension into heaven is being offered perpetually before God the Father in heaven...The Church in the world unites herself with this sacrifice and offers it to the Father together with the Son. Through his body and blood Jesus comes to the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist the Church participates in the eternal sacrifice in heaven and offers the sacrifice of Jesus in union with him the High Priest. Thus the Eucharist is the means by which the Church is enabled to offer the heavenly sacrifice.¹⁸

The merit of this teaching is that it conceives the Eucharistic presence as one that is much more than a substantial presence. The substance of the body of Jesus is the same whatever be the experience he is going through. In other words, the theology of substantial presence is not able to bring out the sacrificial aspect of the presence of Jesus. That is why Mar Ivanios wisely remains silent about transubstantiation, though he was aware of this theory.

Conclusion

Mar Ivanios' theological teaching has an originality of its own. It is Scriptural and firmly rooted in the tradition of the East. It is comprehensive in the sense that it takes into account all the aspects of this great mystery. He believes in the real presence of the sacrificial lamb in the Eucharist. But he maintains his originality without giving in to the Western theological tradition. Mar Ivanios' teaching on the Eucharist in particular and the sacraments in general deserves more attention and careful investigation. It is possible to evolve an Ecumenical theology of the Eucharist from his teachings, a theology which will be acceptable to the Western Christians as well as the Easterners, the Catholics as well as the reformed Christian communities.

¹⁸ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*, p. 29

Mar Ivanios and the Background of the Reunion Movement

Geevarghese Chediath

Introduction

Ever since the Coonan Cross Oath (1653 January), the fake ordination to episcopacy of Archdeacon Thomas by twelve priests on the basis of a fabricated document by Ittithomman *Cathanar* (1653 May) and the acceptance of the Jacobite bishop Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem (1665), the *Puthenkūr* community of the Thomas Christians in Kerala was in crisis and turmoil. The separation of the Malankara Christians in 1653 from the rule of the Portuguese missionary bishops was intended for upholding the autonomy, individuality, and Oriental traditions of this ancient Apostolic Church. But unfortunately, it led one section to merge with the West Asian non-Chalcedonian Jacobite Syrian Church (today known in the ecumenical circles as the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch) and consequently to lose its own identity and age old East Syrian or Persian liturgical traditions and eventual alienation from the Catholic Church. The community came to be known as the *Puthenkūttukār* (people of the new allegiance) and thus lost its full visible Catholicity, one of the constituent elements for the ecclesiality of any Church. After this alienation, this community suffered several subsequent divisions.

Divisions in the *Puthenkūr* Community

- 1) In 1772 a very small group was forced to separate from the main body of the *Puthenkūr* community and today they are known as the **Thozhiyur Church**.
- 2) In 1836, after the *Second Mavelikkara Synod*, another group left the *Puthenkūr* community and is today part of the **Madhya Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India**.
- 3) In 1889 a third group, called the *Reformed Jacobites*, had to leave the community and today they are known as the **Mar Thoma Church**.
- 4) In 1912 another group, after the excommunication of the Malankara Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Dionysius(recently he is declared a saint by the Orthodox Church), by the West Asian Jacobite Patriarch Mar Abdalla and the establishment of the Catholicate by the senior Patriarch Mar Abd-al Msiba, formed the *Metran Kakshy* and today they are known as the **Malankara Orthodox Church**.
- 5) One section of the *Puthenkūr* community even today continues as the Jacobites. In 2002 they formed a registered society with the name **Yakobaya Suriani Christiani Association Sabha (Jacobite Syrian Church)**. And since 1912 there were constant civil litigations, between the *Metran Kakshy* (Orthodox) and the *Bawa Kakshy or Kurillos Kakshy* (Jacobites)¹ in the name of the temporalities of the Church. The Jacobites consider themselves (since 1876) part of the Antiochene Jacobite Church, while the Orthodox faithful (since 1912) stand for the autonomy of the community.

Undue External Influence-Cause of the Divisions

Undue interference of the outsiders, factionalism within the community, and lay domination were the main reasons for these splits in the *Puthenkūr* community. The undue interference of the Western Portuguese missionaries in the daily life of the Thomas

¹ *Kakshy* in Malayalam means *group* or *party*. The group around the Malankara Metropolitan was called Metran's party (bishop's group). The one supporting the Patriarch was called *Bawa's party*. The Patriarch was called *Patriarcha Bawa*. Their local leader was Mar Kurillos. So they were also called *Kurillos' party* or *group*.

Christians resulted in the Coonan Cross Oath (1653). The undue interference of the Anglicans and other Protestants from the West resulted in the *Mavelikkara Synod*, (1836), separation of a group, and the eventual formation of the Reformed Jacobites (Marthomites). Its contribution is the **Trusty System**, by which the temporalities of the *Puthenkūr* community came under three trustees: the Malankara Metropolitan, a priest representative and a lay person. The undue interference of the Jacobite Patriarch Peter III, resulted in the **Malankara Association** and **Managing Committee**, formed at the Mulanthuruthy Synod (1876) and the alienation of the *Reformed Jacobites* (later called *Marthomites*).

Lay Domination- another reason

Lay participation in the affairs of the Church was in the genuine tradition of the Thomas Christians. But as it was established by the Patriarch in 1876, with the interference of the lay people in everything concerning the Church resulted in restricting and weakening the authority of the *Malankara Metropolitan*. The new establishments, namely the *Trusty System*, the *Malankara Association* and the *Managing Committee*, paved the way for the undue lay domination in the *Puthenkūr* community. The Jacobite Patriarch forced this community to be part of his Jacobite Church, which it was never before, and brought it under his authority.

Attempts for Regaining Unity

The Thomas Christians, both the *Puthenkuttukar* and the *Pazhayakuttukar* (*Syro-Malabar Church*), ever since the separation, were trying their level best to reunite into one Church as they were in the previous seventeen centuries. Down through the centuries the leaders of both groups attempted, in varying degrees, for this purpose. But as long as the Western missionary bishops ruled the *Pazhayakuttukar*, all the attempts were unsuccessful because of the manipulations of the missionaries in influential circles. During the colonial period, it is said that the colonial powers had great influence, under the name of *Padroado*, in the various Roman Decasteries.

Nineteenth Century Turmoil

After the separation from the *Pazhayakur* community, the separated group was in constant turmoil. Nineteenth and twentieth

centuries witnessed terrible factionalism. After the death of Mar Thoma VI, also called Mar Dionysius I, (d. 1808), there was utter confusion. And it continues even today. Mar Thoma VI desired earnestly the reunion of the two communities and in fact he entered into full, visible and canonical communion with the Church of Rome. But he could not continue in communion because of the intrigues of the Western missionaries. The validity of the ordinations of Mar Thoma VII, VIII and IX were questioned by one section of the community. Consequently the bishops sought the help of the Thozhiyur bishops for ordination and the Thozhiyur bishops ordained thus four successive bishops of the *Puthenkūr* faction.

Then followed a series of events, detrimental to the unity of the Church. Those given below are the most important ones. 1) The questioning of the validity of the Episcopal ordination of Cheppatt Mar Dionysius by a certain Jacobite bishop from West Asia. 2) The re-ordination of some of the priests under him and their interdict by Mar Dionysius. 3) The separation of the Anglicans and the Puthenkuttukar in 1836 and the joining of a group of faithful in the Anglican Church. 4) The intrigues of a group under Mathews Mar Athanasius against Cheppatt Mar Dionysius, the ruling Metropolitan. 5) The civil litigations between Cheppatt Mar Dionysius and Mathews Mar Athanasios. 6) Mathews Mar Athanasios becomes the Malankara Metropolitan and Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius was ordained bishop by the Patriarch. 7) The excommunication of the ruling bishop Mathews Mar Athanasius and his adherents by the Jacobite Patriarch Peter III and the ensuing civil litigations. 8) Eventual separation of the group and the formation of the Marthoma Church.

Boyhood of Mar Ivanios

When Mar Ivanios was born (1882), there was utter confusion in the Jacobite Church. He was baptized in the Jacobite Church and his baptismal name was Geevarghese (George). There were two definite groups at that time in the Jacobite Church in Kerala: Jacobites and the Reformed Jacobites (eventual Marthomites). They were having civil litigation since 1879. Each side tried to win over to their side as many parishes as possible. The Marthomites had just one bishop, Thomas Mar Athanasios, while the Jacobites had seven bishops, six of them ordained by Patriarch Peter III in 1876-7. It

was a scandalous situation. The mother of Geevarghese, knowing the actual story of the Malankara Christians, used to tell her child that they were all Catholics for centuries and the true Church of Christ is the Catholic Church. It went very deep into the mind of the child. Everybody knew about the falsification of the *Hudaya Canon* (the collection of canon laws of the Jacobite Church) in view of the civil litigation between the Jacobites and the Reformed Jacobites. Finally in 1889 the *Royal Court Verdict* went against the Reformed Jacobites and their bishops had to lay down all the Episcopal insignia and go empty handed from the Court. Eventually they organized into another faction, the Marthoma Church. Sad to say, they moved closer to the Protestants. Most of the people who joined the Marthoma Church were people who came under the influence of the *Revival Movement* of 1850 in Kerala. They kept the external form of the Antiochene liturgy, but adopted the Lutheran and Anglican theology. Even though the Reformed Jacobites were defeated in the litigations, there were strong groups in many of the parishes, which supported the *Revival Movement*.

Twentieth Century Conflicts

Even after the separation of the Marthomites from the *Puthenkür* community, those who remained were not all united, though they were all known as the Jacobites. There were those who supported unduly or enthusiastically the Jacobite Patriarch, willing to submit to him in all matters, and considering themselves as part of the Jacobite Church of Antioch. There were also those who were against the undue interference of the Jacobite Patriarch and stood for the local autonomy. The Jacobite Patriarch, on his part, demanded that all the temporalities of the Church should be brought under him. In 1909 Vattasseril Mar Dionysius succeeded Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius as the Malankara Metropolitan and in the same year Geevarghese was ordained a priest, and he was known as Fr.P.T. Geevarghese or *M.A.Achan*. The arrival of the Patriarch Mar Abdalla in 1909 and his excommunication of Mar Dionysius on the sole reason that he did not submit the temporalities of the Church to the Patriarch irritated many in the land. Then the group around Mar Dionysius installed a Catholicos in 1912 with the help of the senior Patriarch Mar Abd-al M̄siha, and it resulted in the formation

of the *Metran Kakshy* (1912), which was known eventually as the *Malankara Orthodox Church*. From 1909 till 1913 Fr.P.T. Geevarghese was very closely associated with the events in his Church. He was the main instrument in the establishment of the Catholicate and was fed up with the activities of the Patriarch and with the litigations. He wanted to keep away from the quarrel and lead a contemplative life.

Both the *Metran Kakshy* and the *Bawa Kakshy* were Jacobites in varying degrees. But even as a priest, Fr.P.T.Geevarghese wanted to break the ties with the Jacobite Patriarch Abdalla, because he knew that the Jacobite Patriarch was not the legitimate head of the Malankara Church. Mar Dionysius could not or did not repudiate the authority of the Patriarch, from whom he received the Episcopal ordination. In spite of the excommunication from the part of the Jacobite Patriarch, he adhered to the Patriarch, and till his death he was a Jacobite. That may be one of the reasons why he did not install another Catholicos in 1913, when the first Catholicos died. That may be one of the reasons why he went in 1923 to Mardin to get reconciled with the Jacobite Patriarch. That may be the reason why he included the name of the Patriarch in the Constitution. That may be the reason why he withdrew support to the ecumenical negotiations with Rome, when he won the civil litigation. He was not a committed ecumenist, but he was neither a committed Jacobite like his opponents (*the Bawa Kakshy*). He, in fact, stood for the autonomy. But he did not think that it was impossible under the Jacobite Patriarch.

Fr. P. T. Geevarghese, on the other hand, was a committed ecumenist, as is clear from the later events. He disliked civil litigations. He was very sorry about the scandal of division in Christianity. He realized that it is a serious wound in the body of Christ. He wanted to realize the will of Christ, "that all may be one". He sought peace and tranquility. So when an opportunity was presented to him, he chose it and left for Serampore as Professor in the Protestant University. There he committed himself for deep study, life of prayer, penance and contemplation. He prayed for his Church, did penance for its sake, and sought ways and means for the progress and peace of his Church.

Serampore (1913-1919)

The years in Serampore as Professor were decisive for Fr. P. T. Geevarghese. He read more and more books in Church History and had opportunity to evaluate objectively and impartially the history of Christianity in and outside India. He studied thoroughly the origin and development of the Jacobite Church in West Asia and its introduction in Kerala after 1665. He reflected over the relationship of the Thomas Christians to the Jacobite Church during the 19th century and the recent events under Patriarch Mar Abdalla. He realized that the West Asian Jacobite Church (Syrian Orthodox Church), living under the Ottoman Turks, had only a marginal and sectarian existence and that it was not at all mission-oriented at that time. He realized that it was the Jacobite prelates, who came here from West Asia and lived here during the second half of the 19th century, who partly alienated the *Puthenkūr* and *Pazhayakur* communities. He realized that the full and widespread introduction and use of the Antiochene liturgy in India was only very recent, namely with the Synod of Moolanthuruthy in 1876. He asked himself why the Malankara Apostolic Church should remain as part of a sectarian Church, which separated itself from other ancient Churches with the Council of Chalcedon. Why can't it join the main body of Christianity, namely the Catholic Church, with which it was in communion till 1653. Finally he realized that as long as the *Puthenkūr* community remained under the Jacobite Patriarch Mar Abdalla, there could never be peace, unity and prosperity. It was his firm conviction concerning the autonomy of the Church that enabled him to give the leadership to establish the Catholicate in 1912. But contrary to his ideals, the *Metran Kakshy* did not appoint another one till 1925 and both sides went to the court for litigation. It must be affirmed very clearly that the Jacobite Patriarch was thoroughly opposed to the idea of an autonomous Catholicos in India.

The Monastic Ideal

He knew the importance of monasticism in the renewal of the Church. So, as a priest, he started a kind of monastic life, even when he was at Serampore. In 1919 he resigned his teaching post at Serampore and came to Ranni-Perunad and started a monastic establishment for men. He was then known as *Abo Geevarghese*.

Monasticism was totally absent in the then Jacobite Church in India. There were a few isolated monks in the West Asian Jacobite Church. But as a living force to give leadership for the renewal of the Church, monasticism was absent there. *Abo Geevarghese* loved the Church and aimed at its renewal. Before establishing his monasteries in Kerala, he went around the villages and cities of India and the *ashrams* of Hindu monks and received first-hand experience of the Indian way of monastic life. He adapted a lot from the Hindu monasticism in its forms of expression. Through the Bethany monastic establishment, he succeeded in renewing the Church in some quarters in Kerala. In 1925, when he became the bishop of Bethany, he adopted the name Mar Ivanios. Later he started the Bethany monastic establishment for women at Tirumulpuram near Thiruvalla in the Kottayam district.

Bishop of Bethany (1925)

After the death of the first Catholicos in 1913, the *Metrán Kakshy* installed the second Catholicos only in 1925. It was done after a temporary victory for Mar Dionysius in the civil courts. This installation was done without the cooperation of the Jacobite Patriarch, although the *Statikon*(letter of erection of the Catholicate) of Mar Abd-al Msiha stipulated that it should be done with the cooperation of the Patriarch. Vattasseril Mar Dionysius did not take part personally in the installation, nor was there present any bishop of the Jacobite faction. The Second Catholicos was one of the bishops ordained by Mar Abd-al Msiha and the bishops who conducted the installation were also ordained by the same Patriarch. So in the eyes of the Jacobite Patriarch and the Jacobites, the act was illegal and the bishops and the Catholicos were schismatics in the eyes of the Jacobite Church. The same was true in the case of *Abo Geevarghese* who was ordained by the new Catholicos on the following day (May 1), bishop of Bethany, with the name Mar Ivanios. Even though they all were Jacobites by birth, they were having no allegiance to the Jacobite Church. That is to say, the Catholicos and the three bishops were independent of the Jacobite Church. In 1925 the Patriarch Mar Elias III, wrote to the Jacobite parishes in Kerala, that these three bishops and the Catholicos were excommunicated from the Jacobite Church because they were

schismatics². Abo Geevarghese was ordained bishop of Bethany, not with the permission of the Patriarch, nor was he elected by the Malankara Association nor approved by the Managing Committee. He was ordained bishop of Bethany at a time when several Dioceses, erected by Patriarch Peter III, were vacant. So there was no need to have allegiance to the Patriarch, nor to the other bodies. He was ordained head of an independent and autonomous monastic establishment, not involved in any way in the civil litigations. Abo Geevarghese did not write a *Šalmūta* (*declaration of faith and obedience*) that he accepts the teachings of the Jacobite Church and the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch. He did not curse Pope St. Leo the Great, as prescribed by the Jacobite ritual. So he became a bishop entirely in a new way. He told in anticipation to the ordaining bishops that he would not condemn Pope Leo and they accepted it³. So even at the time of the Episcopal ordination, Abo Geevarghese kept the autonomy and independence of Bethany. The Jacobite Patriarch condemned this enthronement and ordination and branded them as “laymen with red clothes” and men excommunicated from the Jacobite Church. He told his followers in Kerala that these people have no authority any more in the Jacobite Church.⁴ Since there was no *Šalmuta*, Mar Ivanios was not even under the Catholicos. Later Mar Ivanios writes about his Episcopal ordination:

I have become a Remban on the 15th of *Makaram* 1925 (*Makaram* is a month in the Malayalam reckoning which is more or less identical with January- February). It was rather accidental that I was raised to the episcopacy. The Episcopal synod met at Parumala to discuss the installation of Mar Philoxenus as Second Catholicos of the East. At that time I was also present there. The bishops decided that I should become a bishop. I answered: If only the bishops are convinced that I am called by God to be a bishop, I would agree to it. They again insisted that I should become the bishop of Bethany. Accordingly on 19th *Medam*, 1925, I was consecrated bishop⁵.

² Mar Ivanios, *Bethany Charitram*, Tiruvalla, 1930, p. 31-32.

³ *Ibid.* 34-36.

⁴ *Ibid.* 42.

⁵ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, p. 140-141.

Motives for Reunion

Mar Ivanios explained to a gathering at Perunad the reasons why he sought for the full, visible and canonical communion with the Catholic Church. He says:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the unique Savior of mankind established just one Church, his living body. It grew in the world according to the divine plan. In 451 at Chalcedon a small group of bishops disagreed with the vast majority of bishops and separated themselves from this body. Eventually this anti-Chalcedonian group was formed as a separate ecclesial body, but was further divided into several sub-groups, having differing doctrinal tenets. They were later organized by a certain Jacob Burdaya and were known after him as *Jacobites*. In Kerala, basing on a false rumor, a group remained separated from the main body, the Catholic Church, and got into touch with the above-mentioned Jacobite Church in West Asia. From the beginning till today, this community has become a field of constant rivalries and civil litigations because of the absence of a common leader, as in the Catholic Church. There arose first the Thozhiyur Church (1772), a few joined the Anglicans (1836), the Marthomites originated in 1889, and in 1912 those who got separated from the Catholic Church, were again divided into *Bawa Kakshy* (Jacobite) and *Metran Kakshy* (Orthodox). As a member of the *Metran Kakshy*, I worked hard for its growth and uplift. My close contact with the Church enabled me to look into the depth of the Church and it forced me to leave for Serampore. I looked for the Church of Christ and I found that it subsists in the Catholic Church and thus I started our ecumenical contacts. If obeying Christ is the primary duty of a Christian, I tried to obey him and I did not think of the difficulties for its realization. The Church is God's Church and is not to be dealt with according to each one's whims and fancies. The real body of Christ is the Catholic Church. Those branches separated from the main trunk are destined to dry up. It is this peeping into the inner life of the Church that led me to ecumenical relationship with the Catholic Church. The late Second Catholicos knew it very well and was intent on communion with the Catholic Church. He was very impatient when the reply from Rome was delayed. The present Catholicos also was convinced that this was the only solution to the problems, facing the Jacobite Church. Although I made all the contacts with Rome, I did it as the representative of all the others. I agreed that we would accept the Pope. I requested that I should have the authority over our faithful, the liturgical texts should not be changed and the position of the Catholicos with the Synod should be recognized.⁶

⁶ *Ibid.*60-70 (not literal).

We have a letter from Mar Ivanios which demonstrates the inner disposition of Mar Ivanios regarding communion with the Catholic Church. It was written on 14th January 1929⁷ from Tiruvalla to Mr. Mamman Mappila:

We are fully confident that in each of our steps we are being guided by the good God. I desire earnestly to raise the community in which I was born and brought up to God in order to reform it and lead it to prosperity. May I share with you that I had no personal interest in this matter. I believe firmly that the reunion of the Christian communities must be based on the foundation of the true history of Christianity. I am fully aware that such a reunion is not possible without the Roman Catholic Church. Rome should be the principal partner for this purpose. During this period, the Spirit of God is moving me forcefully to propose me as a sacrifice for this cause. A reform Movement with a noble ideal alone can save this community. I believe fully that God is calling me for upholding such an ideal⁸.

He continues,

I feel that the Almighty God is calling me to jump into His Ocean of love. In my correspondence with Rome, I have not written a single sentence for my personal gain. I have aimed only at the glory of God's name, the uplift of the Jacobite community and the reunion of the separated sons of St. Thomas. I have sought for reunion, demanding the acceptance and preservation of our liturgy and traditions, recognition of the episcopacy of our bishops and their authority over our faithful. In our correspondence with Rome, we aimed at the continuous existence of the Catholicate and the reunion of all the bishops of the *Metran Kakshy*. Thus I aimed at opening a door for the reunion of both the *Puthenkuttukar* and the *Pazhayakuttukar*.⁹

⁷ Malayalam Era 1106.

⁸ T. Inchakkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 1, p. 407.

⁹ *Ibid.* 408-9.

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The Ecumenical vision of Mar Ivanios

Geevarghese Chediath

The Malankara Catholic Church is one of the Particular (Individual, *sui juris*) Churches in the Catholic communion. It has its beginning with the preaching of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of our Lord. From the beginning till the 17th century, it was an undivided Church. It was the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ in this part of the globe. During the 17th century, there was a revolt against the latinization policy of the Western Portuguese missionaries and it is known in history as the *Coonan Cross Oath* of 1653. Eventually a section of the Thomas Christians, the forefathers of the present day Malankara Catholics, joined the non-Chalcedonian Syrian Orthodox Church in West Asia and became Jacobite. Thus the group drifted away from the full, visible, and canonical communion with the Catholic Church. But there were continuous efforts from the part of this section to reestablish the lost full communion. The other section of the Thomas Christians who continued under the Western missionaries also tried in this regard. But the attempts did not bear ample fruits chiefly because of the pre-Vatican mentality of those days and the opposition from the part of the missionaries working in India.

The pre-Vatican Mentality

It had certain characteristics and was different from the post-Vatican mentality of the Catholic Church. The Christian Church in the Western Patriarchate considered itself as **the** Catholic Church, considering all the rest as non-Catholic. That is, it identified itself with the Church of Christ. There was one-sided growth in ecclesiology. There emerged a very centralized administrative system in the West. As a result of the Papal States, the Pope had absolute authority in all the affairs of the Papal States. As the Patriarch of the West, and as the temporal ruler of the Papal States, Pope had a very prestigious position among the European rulers and faithful. With the colonialism of the 16th century, the Western missionaries went to the Asian, African and American countries and there also the Latin Church established its own dioceses. Thus geographically the Latin Church became worldwide. But still it was a Church having one ecclesial tradition, namely Roman or Latin. It did not have the full communion with the other Christian Churches.

The Western missionaries entered into missionary activity among some of the Orientals in order to "convert them to the true Church for the salvation of their souls". Thus there originated the Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine tradition and others in the East. These missionaries believed *in uniformity* and tried to merge these non-Latin Churches into the Latin Church, keeping the bare minimum of external liturgical diversities. They appeared to be Orientals, but chiefly the Western missionaries did their seminary training and their spirituality was Western. The missionaries imported the Western pious practices among them. As a result of this type of formation, there emerged a mentality among the Oriental Catholics, which upheld everything Western and Latin. Their philosophy and theology were those of the Latin Church. In general, latinization was the general policy in those days. The Church was considered in a monolithic pattern. Eastern mentality was not at all taken into serious consideration on many occasions. It was not given its due honor and status. The Western mentality was to consider these Eastern Churches as Rites, namely part of one

monolithic Church, having slight liturgical diversities. Although many of these Churches were of Apostolic origin, they were considered mere Rites. The autonomy of these Churches was not at all considered. This mentality prevailed till the second Vatican Council. Many of the theologians, since the General Synod of Lyons in 1274, were uniformists. They believed that unity is uniformity and for them plurality or diversity was the root cause of all evils in the Church. One typical example is the expression, "*Varietas mater est et initium discordiae*" (diversity is the mother and the beginning of disunity) of the Dominican Master General Cardinal Humbert, who dominated the General Synod of Lyons in 1274.

Background of Mar Ivanios

It was in this background that Mar Ivanios entered into ecumenical negotiations with the Roman Catholic Church. The Coonan Cross Oath of 1653 was a reaction against the Western Portuguese missionaries, who did not at all respect the *autonomy* of this ancient Apostolic Church. The Thomas Christians always wanted to uphold the God-given autonomy of their Church. They had the consciousness that their Church was never part of any other Church, but it was the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. It might not have always maintained the contact with other Christian Churches. That it did not have continuous contact with the other Churches, did not mean that it was not Catholic and was not the Church of Christ in India. When the Portuguese missionaries, according to their then Western mentality, tried to make it *Roman Catholic* (= Latin) and latinize and merge it with the Church in the Western Patriarchate, there occurred the resistance. They wanted to preserve their centuries old liturgical traditions, authority of the local leader, the Archdeacon, and the autonomy of the community. They did not want to alter their laws, customs and traditions. But, alas, in 1876 a section, the forefathers of the Malankara Catholics, lost all these. Their liturgy was changed. The West Asian Jacobites changed altogether the East Syrian Liturgy and introduced the West Syrian liturgy in all the parishes. The Church was made part of the anti-Chalcedonian Syrian Jacobite Church in West Asia. The

Patriarch Peter III divided the Malankara diocese (*Idavaka*) into seven dioceses and established a *Malankara Association* and a *Managing Committee* in order to weaken the authority of the Malankara Metropolitan, the leader of the community, and thus he tried to destroy the autonomy of this Church.

One group stood for Autonomy

Mar Ivanios knew that a section among the *Puthenkūttukār*, under the leadership of the Malankara Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Dionysius, stood for autonomy. That group thought that in order to regain the autonomy, the establishment of the Catholicate was necessary. But the West Syrian Jacobite leadership was opposed to such an idea of giving autonomy to the *Puthenkūr* Malankara Christians. In spite of such opposition, that group managed to establish it in 1912, by the senior Patriarch Mar Abd-al Msiha. But the events did not develop, as they wanted. In 1913 the first Catholicos died and the group could not install another one till 1925, because of the civil litigation with the other group and of the thought of some, that the Malankara Church was under the Jacobite Patriarch. The Second Catholicos also died in 1928.

When the group around Mar Dionysius and Mar Ivanios entered into ecumenical contacts with the Roman Catholic Church in 1926, they demanded three things:

1. The Catholicos and the Synod should be recognized; i. e., the autonomy of the Malankara Apostolic Church.
2. The bishops should have authority over their faithful, wherever they are.
3. Liturgical and other ecclesial traditions should be respected and should not be changed. i.e., the integral Oriental traditions should be preserved without any change.

Autonomy not recognized

From their part, the Malankara bishops pledged that they would enter into full, visible, canonical communion with the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, the Chief of the Apostles in the ancient

Apostolic See of Rome. According to the pre-Vatican mentality of the Western Church, it was impossible to recognize the autonomy of this Apostolic Church. So the first demand was rejected. All the rest were granted. The Pope recognized the Malankara Church as a *Rite* in the Catholic communion. Mar Ivanios was very sorry about it. He demanded again and again the recognition of the autonomy. Since it was not recognized, the Catholicos could not enter into the communion and give leadership to this movement. At that time, communion meant subjection to the Pope. Since Mar Dionysius won the civil litigation, he withdrew from further ecumenical negotiations and was even opposed to it.

Communion-a Gigantic Task

In spite of these setbacks, Mar Ivanios entered into full, visible, canonical communion with the Catholic Church. It was a great and gigantic task that he achieved. God has sent a giant to accomplish it. God opened a path through his instrumentality for the full communion of all the separated St. Thomas Christians, who were eager for the visible and canonical communion with the Roman Catholic Church. He achieved a communion in accordance with the mentality of those days. But his objective was autonomy in communion. Through him, God fulfilled the earnest desire of many of the Thomas Christians and showered his gift of unity.

From 1930 many thousands of Thomas Christians from the various *Puthenkür* communities followed the path shown by Mar Ivanios. The Malankara Catholic Church spread the message of *catholicity and communion*. Whoever wanted to be away from civil litigation and to lead peaceful Christian life, became Catholic. It was the courageous steps of Pope Pius XI, that made this communion a reality. There were strong opposition from several quarters, both from the part of the Orthodox-Jacobite Church, from the part of the secular rulers and even from some Catholic brethren. But Pope Pius XI of blessed memory did not at all consider any of the objections. In the case of Mar Ivanios, the Pope did not also follow all the formalities of the Roman Curia. As the guardian of unity, with extended hands, he embraced Mar Ivanios with the words, "My Son,

you are my good son. Welcome a big welcome." In later life on several occasions Mar Ivanios remembered with tears of joy of this memorable event. Even at his death bed he remembered it. By this loving gesture, Pope Pius XI was embracing all the Thomas Christians who cherished the full visible communion with the Catholic Church. The Pope sanctioned the demands and requests of Mar Ivanios, even without consulting the Curial officials. It was the great generosity of Pope Pius XI and the earnestness of Mar Ivanios that made the communion in 1930 a reality. Under the leadership of Pope Pius XII the territory of the diocese of Tiruvalla was extended to the North and to the East. His Eminence Eugène Cardinal Tisserant, the then Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, played a leading role in realizing it. He will be remembered with gratitude in the history of the Malankara Catholic Church. Numerically the Malankara Catholic Church grew considerably during these years.

The post-Vatican Roman Catholic Ecclesiology

There is a marked difference in the attitude and ecumenical relationship of the Roman Catholic Church towards the other Christian Churches. The Catholic Church does no more identify itself with the Church of Christ. On the contrary it considers that the *Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church*. It avoids any exclusive claim that it alone is the Church of Christ. It no more calls other Churches heretical or schismatic. They are now called Sister Churches. Latin theology is no more the norm and criterion to judge other theologies. It does not demand any more uniformity but it accepts legitimate diversity and plurality in the forms of expression in Liturgy, Catechesis, Church life, Church government, Spirituality and Canonical Discipline. It made a distinction between the *content of faith* and the *formulation of faith*. It acknowledges that there is *Hierarchy of Truths*. It publicly acknowledges that there were mistakes from the part of the Catholic Church towards other Churches and asked pardon for its faults. It told publicly that it pardons every Church which had offended it in any way in the past. It assured that the mistakes in the past would not be repeated in the

future. It clarified that unity is not the merging of any Church in another Church, but it is communion of Churches. It believes firmly that division in the body of Christ is a grave sin. Unity is the gift of God for His Church. Human beings do not determine the nature or the time of union. It is with God according to His divine plan. And in fact only God knows the mode and time of this communion. In other words, there is no pre-planned model for unity in the future. We do not make the unity of the Church. We receive it as a gift from God. We prepare ourselves through *dialogue of love* and *theological dialogue*, change of attitudes and conversion of hearts and personal and common prayer. The Catholic Church believes that for the full, visible, canonical communion, the ecumenical relationship at the time of separation among the Churches should be taken into consideration. Even though the Churches can no longer go back to that state perfectly anymore because of time and persons, that element cannot be discarded. All the Churches should have a will to pardon and to reevaluate their Ecclesiologies which they have developed in isolation.

Moreover, Catholic Church firmly believes that on basic tenets of Faith, the Eastern Churches uphold the Orthodox faith. Even those remaining apparent differences could be considered as diverse formulations of this one faith and could be solved under divine providence. They are no more sound reasons for remaining isolated and separated. With the Eastern Apostolic Churches, the Catholic Church is in *almost full communion*. “We have become almost one Church” are the words of the Pope. Catholic Church does not persuade anybody from the Eastern Churches to join it. The Orthodox Churches are not mission fields of the Catholic Church. For the sake of salvation, one is not invited to join the Catholic Church. At the same time, Catholic Church does not hinder anybody, who wants to join the Catholic Church, but respects the freedom of conscience of the individuals. The Churches are invited to get united because it is the will of Christ and that division is sinful and counter *witnessing*. Catholic Church makes a distinction between *full communion* and *partial communion*. With the Eastern Apostolic Churches, Catholic Church is in *almost full communion*;

i.e., Catholic Church is recognizing the basic Apostolic faith, Holy Orders and other Sacraments and the Apostolic succession of these Churches. The Western Protestant Churches also are related to the Catholic Church in varying degrees. It is the affirmation of the Catholic Church that there are more uniting elements among the Churches than the separating elements. But at the same time, it realizes that there are still weighty differences in doctrine still existing between Catholic Church and the Western Protestant Churches. Catholic Church is today even prepared to discuss the ministry of unity of the bishop of Rome. It is trying to solve all the remaining problems through fraternal discussions. It upholds today that unity is necessary only on the essential things. It is trying to understand the varying formulations of the other Churches and is seeing whether they are complementary.

Setbacks

There were ecumenical setbacks from the various quarters.

(1) First of all, not all the Malankara Catholics imbibed the new change of attitude and mentality of the Second Vatican Council. Many continued to think in accordance with the pre-Vatican categories. They could not convince others that the Malankara Catholic Church stood for the unity of all the Thomas Christians and through the unity, the evangelization of the vast Indian sub-continent. There arose a kind of lethargy in regard to ecumenism. Even some spread the idea that the ecumenical activities of 1930 was against the ecumenism of the Vatican Council. To some extent they failed to project the new ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. Once the first generation of the Malankara Catholics passed away, those who came after them acted like the ministers of an established Church. Some how they forgot that this Church has a very special ecumenical mission in Kerala and outside. It was not made known to others in a proper way in the new spirit.

(2) Secondly many of the members of the Latin hierarchy in India continued to uphold the mentality of the middle ages. That is to say, they continued, and still continues the pre-Vatican

ecclesiology. They still considered the Oriental Apostolic Churches as *Rites*, as appendix to the monolithic Latin Church. They were not at all prepared for a change of mentality in accordance with the Second Vatican Council and the post-Vatican documents. They continued to be uniformists. Even the highest ecclesiastical authorities could not convince them of putting into practice the teaching of the Council. In the Indian context they all failed to uphold the post-Vatican newness of life; many went back to the fourth Lateran Synod of 1215 and its Canon 9. They systematically opposed the pastoral care of the Orientals outside the restricted area in Kerala, and the missionary activities of the Apostolic Malankara Church. As a block they succeeded in hindering the hierarchical growth of the Malankara Church. Thus the documents of the Vatican Council and the post-Vatican documents regarding the equality of the various Churches in the Catholic communion remained as fine documents for the press and as positive quotations to be cited in future in the doctoral dissertations. It has created a great ecumenical scandal.

(3) Since 1930 the Malankara Catholic Church was growing in diverse ways. It had a very humble starting. Pope Pius XI was very generous to accept it into Roman Catholic communion even when there were only Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilus as bishops to enter into communion. And even when the Malankara Catholic hierarchy was established in 1932, there were not considerable faithful. But in the divine providence, it grew into a big community of believers who wanted really to enter into full visible communion with the Catholic Church. But as the community grew numerically and as time went on, there was not the hierarchical growth for the Church. Mar Ivanios and even before him all the Fathers of the Malankara Church in all their writings to other ecclesiastical leaders were demanding the autonomy of the community. Those who guided the Church failed to realize the need for the autonomy or rather the later leaders were unaware of the need of the autonomy of the Church. They were also happy with the pre-Vatican ecclesiastical structures. As a Church, the situation of 1930 continues even today. As things stand, any move for autonomy will be very strongly opposed by a

section of the bishops in India. They will continue to oppose the two basic duties of any Church, namely the pastoral care of the Malankara emigrants by the Malankarites themselves under their own hierarchy and the missionary activity of the Malankara Catholic Church outside Kerala.

(4) As a result of this retardation of the hierarchical growth of the Church, the Orthodox have a very faulty idea about the ecumenism of the Catholic Church. What they see in the Indian context is not a post-Vatican ecclesiology, but a pre-Vatican, nay a Fourth Lateran ecclesiology of the 13th century. In the day to day life of the Catholic Church in India, they do not see any newness of attitude, nor a new ecumenical outlook. They do not see that the Malankara Catholic Church enjoys its autonomy. They see this Church as an extension of the Latin Church. They see it as another Province of the Latin Church, like the Latin Provinces in Kerala .Of course, there are just some liturgical diversities. That is precisely the pre-Vatican mentality. Hence they begin to disbelieve the documents and pronouncements from the part of the Roman Catholic Church and become non-committed in the ecumenical dialogues with them. This is the ecumenical tragedy in India.

(5) From the part of the Orthodox themselves there are elements which are opposed to any genuine Christian unity. From the very beginning of the Reunion movement in 1930, some Orthodox were trying to present this Church unity as a merging with the Roman Church and as a going away from the *Mother Church* to a foreign Church. Some tried their level best to make it a failure. Some even instigated the civil authorities to prevent its growth. A typical example is the case of C. P. Ramaswamy Ayer, the *Divan* in Travancore in those early days of the Movement. He was brought by the Patriarchal group to plead against the *Metran Kakshy* in the civil litigation. Some Orthodox tried to tarnish the image of Mar Ivanios and a lot of false ideas were spread among the masses. But we forget and forgive all those who did all these. We want to purify our memory. We do not want to remember them any more. We confide them to the mercy of God. God was very kind and generous

towards us and He blessed this community superabundantly. Our aim is the reunion of all the Thomas Christians, as they were seventeen centuries together. Even if some Orthodox continue to spread false ideas about us, we do not react. We find some of their leaders who take part in international ecumenical meetings, blaming the Malankara Catholic Church in time and out of time and finding fault with it and accusing it of proselytism. We do not believe in proselytism. But we do believe in the communion of all the Thomas Christians. We try to spread the message of unity and that too in line with the Second Vatican Council and the post-Conciliar documents. We do not go back to the pre-Vatican ideologies. Always we stand for autonomy in communion. This is our God-given mission.

(6) The continued civil litigation and factionalism among the Jacobites and Orthodox hinder them from entering into any serious ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Church. In the same way there is in some, at least, a mentality which does not give any respect to the history of Christianity in India. Every now and then one finds falsification of history. Some forget conveniently today that the Thomas Christians were for seventeen centuries one Church and one community. Unless there is a will for a new way of thinking from the part of all concerned, ecumenism in India will remain a dead letter.

Conclusion

In spite of the withdrawal of a section of the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church from the ecumenical field and in spite of the denial of Rome to recognize the Catholicos and the Synod, Mar Ivanios entered into visible communion in 1930. In the same way, in spite of the misrepresentation and continued prejudices of some sections of the Christians towards the Malankara Catholic Church and in spite of the opposition from the part of the Latin hierarchy in India in regard to the pastoral care of the Malankara faithful, outside Kerala and the missionary mandate, the Malankara Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to *autonomy in communion*. The vocation of the Malankara Catholic Church is to proclaim the *oneness, Catholicity and communion* on the one hand and

autonomy, individuality and Apostolicity on the other hand. In this we are simply obeying the will of the Lord. There are still restrictions and hurdles in the growth of the Malankara Church. It has to grow to full autonomy in communion. It has to be a model for the Orthodox. It has to be a bridge Church. It has to be a bridge between the Western and Orthodox Churches. That is why its members think differently. But they think in line with the Conciliar teaching and the post-Conciliar teaching of the Holy Roman See. They have an added vocation. The Latin hierarchy has to understand the special history of the Malankara Apostolic Church, and see how it entered into full visible communion with the Catholic Church. In God's providence, it is growing very fast in the ecumenical, missionary and pastoral dimensions. In the words of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, "*the Malankara Catholic Church is one of the fastest growing Churches in the Catholic communion.*"

If the Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church had decided in 1930 to enter into full, visible communion with the Catholic Church together with Mar Ivanios, they could have given the leadership and the attitude of Rome would have been different. But the course of history took a different turn. After 1950 some of the Malankara Orthodox leaders turned to Ethiopia, Egypt, Geneva and Moscow. And that also did not help them. If they had paid some attention to the successor of Peter in Rome, the history of Christianity in this land during this period would have been different. Without a visible foundation and center of communion, it is practically impossible to achieve lasting unity, as Christ wants for his Church. In other words, keeping the bishop of Rome out of the ecumenical scene, no full communion of Christianity is possible. But all the ecumenical negotiations are helpful, in the sense that they are stepping stones for the wider communion.

There will be opposition from some quarters. But just as Pope Pius XI took a courageous step in receiving the Malankara Church into communion, courageous steps are necessary for the implementation of the Conciliar teachings. We demand not for our personal gain, but for the wider interest of the Church and for the

promotion of the ecumenical cause of the Catholic Church. The elder brother may grumble when the younger brother is embraced. But Pius XI had the magnanimity to embrace the younger brother. The successor of Pius XI also is *presiding in love* and is the universal head and common Father of all the Churches in communion. At times he has to tell the elder brother, "My Son, whatever I have is yours. You have the whole world as the Latin territory. But these Christians of Apostolic origin are devoid of pastoral care throughout the world. They should have the basic ecclesial right for that and it is only justice that they take care of the spiritual needs of their faithful. It does not curtail your chances for service to humanity, but enhances when your brother is also with you. Let us rejoice. As a loving Father, I have to do it and only I can do it for them. Nobody else would and could do it. Have compassion on them".

The autonomy of the Malankara Catholic Church is something yet to be realized. In today's ecumenical contacts, mere platitudes alone will not help us to go forward. We do not want ecumenical picnic travelers who fly from one ecumenical meeting to another. They may fill files and we may have volumes to read. "Who can read all these documents?" We need action rather than mere words. And we expect that it will be done. One need to be hopeful. Christianity is a religion of hopes and expectations. We are called to make history and transform the world in the love of our Lord. We do not exist to react, but we have to act. We should show the world at large that we believe in values and we are not afraid of Truth but we honor it and put into practice. Let us be able to hear once again what Pope Pius XI told to Mar Ivanios in 1932, "My Son, you will find good news awaiting you on your return to India."



Mar Ivanios' Contribution to Education

Joshua Mar Ignathios

Margaret Gibbons writes that Mar Ivanios was known popularly as *M.A Achan* (A Priest Holding a Master's Degree). He was the first Syrian Orthodox priest who did a Master's Degree examination and came out with high credit and as such the people of the Malankara Community were delighted to refer to him as M.A. Achan. But the sobriquet points to a far more complex facet of Mar Ivanios' personality than his being the first M.A. Degree holder of the Malankara Community. His life was supported by the strong conviction that education was fundamental to the growth of a person's life, be it intellectual, moral or spiritual. Hence it is easy to see how the young Geevarghese took to his education seriously.

Mar Ivanios, as a young boy, went through a rigorous discipline at home designed to form his character and his moral and intellectual abilities. As a child he was made a disciple of David *Āśśān*. *Āśśān* is the local term for a person who initiates a child into the learning process in the state of Kerala. David *Āśśān* introduced the young Geevarghese to the Malayalam alphabet, which in the Hindu tradition are symbols of various emanations of the divine power. The Absolute reveals itself as word or *Vāk*, according to the Gubdy tradition. David *Āśśān* had inkling into the greatness of the

boy and he took great care to teach Geevarghese all the subtle nuances of Malayalam letters.

Mar Ivanios held David *Āśān* in great esteem. The legend has it that after the boy Geevarghese became a priest and then a bishop and the founder Father of the Congregation of the Imitation of Christ with headquarters in Mundan Mala, a hilly area in the present district of Pathanamthitta, David *Āśān*, one day, made a trip to Mundan Mala in his old age to pay a visit to his one-time disciple, now *Abo* Geevarghese of Bethany, leading a holy life in the Monastery. The confreres of the Ashram (Monastery) informed their *Abo* that an old man had arrived at the Ashram and that he wanted to meet the *Abo*. He instructed them that the old man be brought to him. When the *Abo* saw the old man faltering his way up the stairs he exclaimed with joy: "That's David *Āśān*". The other confreres came out to see what was happening. They were struck with amazement to see their revered *Abo* of the Ashram bowing his head before the old man. *Abo* said to them: "Look, this is my master". *Abo* respectfully hugged the old teacher and then led him into the dining hall. David *Āśān* said: "I do not have another student who has achieved so much in life as you have. I longed to come here and see you before I die. I am happy now. So I shall take leave of you". David *Āśān* had brought some ripe mangoes from the *Abo*'s house at Mavelikkara which the *Abo*'s parents wanted him to take to their son. The *Abo* had the mangoes peeled and sliced and brought to *Āśān*. The monk told his aged Guru: "Do not go away now; please spend the night over here". *Āśān* was given a great deal of gifts and sent back home by boat. Before he took leave, he blessed *Abo* Geevarghese: "You will rise to greater heights; you will become a great man".

The episode related above reveals *Abo Geevarghese* as a man deeply devoted to those who educated him. It is with this ardent devotion to learning that, as a young boy, he joined the C.M.S. School in the neighborhood of Mavelikkara an ancient town in central Travancore. Interestingly, Joseph Mar Dionysius Pulikkottil, who was the then boshop of the boy took a keen interest in the education of young *Geevarghese*. He knew the boy and his parents well. He wanted the boy to be transferred to the Government School

under the patronage of the resident prince. That was to wean him from the influence of the Protestants. At the Government School he applied his mind to his studies with devotion. There he did his studies so brilliantly that he was viewed as a model to the other students.

At the age of fifteen *Geevarghese* joined the M.D. Seminary, Kottayam. While he was a resident in M.D. Seminary, he was also continuing with his secular education by attending C.M.S. College Kottayam. After his under graduate studies at Kottayam, he joined Christian College, Madras, as a Master's Degree student. Here he chose history as his optional and did a Master's Degree in that discipline. His research into history was providential. His interest was in the study of Church History, especially the history of Christianity in Kerala. It certainly paved the way for his reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. It is easy to see that Mar Ivanios' education was the foundation of his work in the field of education which he would undertake later.

Mar Ivanios' contribution to the educational development of the Malankara community had already begun when he was a student at the Christian College, Madras. As Gibbons writes, "He gathered young Jacobites about him, most of them attending purely secular courses". He established a private study circle for the Orthodox students, he himself being the centre of the circle. When P.T. Geevarghese was appointed Principal of M.D. Seminary he viewed his academic position as an opportunity to put into practice his much cherished educational vision.

In 1912 when Fr. P.T. Geevargese came into contact with the High Church Fathers and Sisters of the Oxford Mission, Calcutta, a golden opportunity presented itself to him for realizing the much cherished goal of uplifting the Malankara community educationally. In the journal on the reunion of Mar Ivanios titled *Punaraikyathinte Ādyā Kālangal* (ed. Anniyil Tharakan), Mother Salga writes that the Bethany Movement, which Mar Ivanios started at Barisol as a result of his association with the Oxford Fathers and Sisters was an educational movement. It was especially meant to work for the educational progress of Malankara women. Mother Salga writes: "Mar Ivanios realized that for the progress of the Malankara

community, the higher education of Malankara men and women were necessary. In pursuance of this vision, Mar Ivanios had already sent three young deacons to Trichinapally for higher education. And a few were already at Serampore College doing their studies". Young girls from well-known families of Central Travancore like Anniyil, Ponvanibhom, Koodathumuriyil were joining him to dedicate themselves to the cause of the education of the Malankara community. One can read in great detail the account of such a movement in Mother Salga's diary published in 1990. The authoress herself was one such candidate who joined Mar Ivanios at Barisol in the first decades of the twentieth century. Mar Ivanios founded the Bethany Monastery in 1919 at Perunad and the Bethany Sisterhood in 1920 at Tiruvalla.

In 1930 Mar Ivanios left the Orthodox Church for re-union with Rome. After he was appointed Archbishop of Trivandrum, he took great efforts to develop his community educationally. The founding of Mar Ivanios College, one of the premier institutions in Kerala, is a story by itself. He bought 170 acres of land at Nalanchira and put up a College to render higher education to the people of the Malankara Church and others. The College was started in 1947 and was affiliated with the Erstwhile University of Travancore. Since 1957 it is one of the Colleges affiliated with the Kerala University. It has postgraduate courses in English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Zoology and Commerce. Some of the Departments are research centers, too. Though St.John's College, Anchal, was started by Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, in 1964, the land which its campus occupies was acquired by Mar Ivanios himself some time in 1932. Both these Arts and Science Colleges together with Mar Theophilos Training College have contributed much to the higher education of the Malankara Catholics.

Mar Ivanios started schools for his community. Soon after the reunion took place in 1930, one of the main concerns was to organize primary and secondary schools. St. Aloysius Seminary was put up at Pattom in 1934 for the education of the minor seminarians. Pope Pius X1 High School was started at Kattanam in the district of Mavelikara, an important Orthodox centre where Bishop Benziger started the reunion of Malankara Orthodox families as far back as

1914. In the fledgling days of Pope Pius X High School, it also ran a boarding (hostel) for the reunited Catholic boys who came to Kattanam from different parts of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. To facilitate the running of the school, a Bethany Monastery was started in 1947 at Kattanam. St.Mary's Higher Secondary School, Pattom, Trivandrum, started in 1940 with 260 students and 12 staff headed by Mr.A.Sankara Pillai with recognition for preparatory class (V-X). The School has grown to be the biggest school in Asia with 12300 students and 350 staff. There were 17 High Schools, 20 U.P. Schools and 42 Lower Primary Schools in the undivided Archdiocese of Trivandrum. Of the 17 High Schools, nearly half of them were started by Mar Ivanios himself. All the 5 Girls High Schools were started during the tenure of Mar Ivanios. It was Mar Ivanios who took the initiative to evangelize the Southern Nadar belt in the District of Kanyakumari and in the neighborhood of Trivandrum. When the diocese of Marthandom was erected in 1997 the schools of the area were given over to the newly erected diocese. But for Mar Ivanios' educational endeavors in the Kanyakumari District, the Malankara Community would have been deprived of educational facilities in the fledgling days of the Re-union Movement.

To conclude, it is important to know that what sustains the educational endeavor of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and, for that matter, that of Marthandom, is the infrastructure created by Mar Ivanios till he died in 1953. The history of the Malankara Reunion is certainly the history of Mar Ivanios and the efforts he has put in to organize the community. The most effective part of that organization is to be seen in the field of education. To quote M. Gibbons, "Mar Ivanios did bring the blessings of higher education to all within reach of it, without destination of caste or creed". The Malankara Catholic community is twice blessed because of the spread of education to all its members.



Prayer and Prayer Life in the Spiritual Vision of Mar Ivanios

Sr. Unnata SIC

Mar Ivanios, the Pioneer of the Reunion Movement in the Malankara Church and the founder of the Bethany Religious Congregation for both men and women—the *Order of Imitation of Christ (OIC)* and the *Sisters of Imitation of Christ (SIC)*, and Archbishop of Trivandrum, was first and foremost a man of prayer. He was a man of diverse qualities and abilities, but at the basis of everything that he was and everything that he did, there was the super human strength and inspiration coming forth from his constant union with God through prayer and penance. He has not written many volumes on prayer and prayer life except the few booklets, which he has authored for instruction of the members of the male and female congregations. But more than what he wrote and louder than what he said, the life that he lived proclaims about prayer. In this article, which searches into the depth of the prayer life and vision of prayer of this great ecclesiastic, I will make use of his booklets and sermons he has preached and above all the testimony others have borne about him.

The Praying Boy

Geevarghese Mar Ivanios' vision of prayer has matured in his later days and we know about it from the foundation of the Congregations and from his writings and sermons. But even as a child he had a special liking for prayer and an enthusiasm to see

others pray. Mar Ivanios is the name he took upon himself when he was ordained Bishop of Bethany in the Malankara Orthodox Church. His baptismal name was Geevarghese/George. About the boy Geevarghese his biographer, Fr. Thomas Inchakkalody says,¹ “because of his earnest desire for prayer and his God-fearing nature, he became the favorite of all”. He had a special interest in the church and church matters. He was regular in attending Sunday services and he used to attend long convention preaching on the Word of God. What his biographer reports about him is based on clear evidences. From his childhood he showed extraordinary interests in things divine. People who knew him used to say that God was preparing the boy for greater things in life. On his way to the school he had to pass by the Syrian Church at Puthiyakavu. When he reached the place he used to spent long hours in the church praying to God. Another thing, which people have noticed in his boyhood days is that he never ate any meal without first making the sign of the cross and saying a short prayer. It is also reported that he had deep faith in the efficacy of prayer. An instance in his boyhood days proves this fact. Geevarghese was bedridden with high fever. Mar Gregorios of Parumala was staying in the nearby church. Geevarghese also came to know about it. He requested his father to take him to the Bishop so that he might pray over him. He was sure that the prayer of the Bishop would heal him. The father of the boy complied with his request and the Bishop readily prayed over him and he was immediately cured. There is another witness from Margaret Gibbons, another of his biographers. She says that Geevarghese used to take the key of the church from his father who kept it, so that at intervals he could open the church and pray in it.²

Geevarghese was careful about keeping the sanctuary in the church clean and tidy. Because of his care for holy things even as a boy he was made the Sacristan of the M.D.Seminary School Chapel, at Kottayam where later was a student.³ In his *Rulebook* prepared for the members of the Congregations founded by him, he

¹ T. Inchakkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I, p.32

² M. Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Apostle of the Church Union*, Kottayam, 2002, p.25.

³ Cf. T. Inchakkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I, p.40.

particularly insisted on keeping the chapel and the premises always clean and in good condition. He says, "The monastery chapel and its glory should be considered as the glory of the members. The way the religious enter the chapel, the way they behave within it, and the way they pray, tell upon the character of the religious. Nothing in the chapel may be allowed to stay in a disorderly manner".⁴ As it is written of Jesus Christ that He grew and became strong filled with wisdom and the favour of God was upon Him (Lk.2/40), he also grew up in age and matured in his prayer life.

Prayer and Inner conflict

It is a fact reported about many great spiritual men of the past that they had a period of conflict in their spiritual journey. The Malankara Syrian Church of that time was passing through a period of crisis. After the *Coonan Cross Oath* and the subsequent events which led to its adherence to the Antiochene Syrian Jacobite Church, it was passing through a period of spiritual stagnation, ideological impoverishment and ever-growing weakness created by conflicts and disunity. M. A. Achan, as he was called in later life, was well versed in the history of the Church. He knew the apostolic origin of the Malankara Church. He also knew how his *Puthenkūr* community drifted away from the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. He was well aware of the illegitimacy and falsehood on which the faction which broke away, was based on, especially the invalid consecration of a person as a Bishop by twelve priests. The introduction of the liturgy of the Antiochene Church in the place of the age old East Syrian liturgy of the Persian Church inherited and made its own by the Thomas Christians. He was passing through an experience of inner conflict. The question was how he could continue as a member of the Church when the foundation of that Church itself was shaking.

To contribute his mite to the spiritual uplift of his Church he conducted retreats, seminars and created other forums to teach and conscientize the faithful. But he was also aware that something drastic was to be done to restore the real ecclesial character of his Church. It was during this time of conflict that he got an opportunity

⁴ Mar Ivanios, *Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi*, p.52.

to attend a students' meeting at Serampore along with his Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Dionysius. Mr. Howells was the Principal of the Serampore College. When Fr. P. T. Geevarghese/ M.A.Achan was introduced to him, the Principal said: "Could you leave your place and join the Serampore College as a Professor?" This question was most unexpected and it only strengthened the conflict that was going on in his mind. He thought if he joined the college, all that he was doing in his native land for his people would have to be left unfinished. In his homeland he was also working as the Principal of the M. D. Seminary School at Kottayam. Moreover Mar Dionysius was like a father to him. To leave the bishop at this time of litigations would be most cruel on his part. Mar Ivanios himself speaks about the conflict he was passing through when he was forced to take a decision as to whether he should take up the new job offered at Serampore or continue with his services to his own people in Kerala.

I became uneasy with this thought. Mr. Howells and the Serampore College were vivid in my mind. At the same time the thought of M.D. Seminary and Mar Dionysius became brighter and brighter. These two pictures seemed to fight against each other. I experienced in my heart the heat and uneasiness created by these conflicts.⁵

He would resolve the inner conflict only through intense prayer. Serampore was becoming a stronger and stronger attraction. He knew that God was preparing a new life style for him and a way out from the pathetic situation in which he found himself and his Church. It is through prayer that the intention God for him grew into clarity in his mind. What his inner conscience told him was also in conformity with the desire of the Bishop. About these two factors—the call of his conscience and the decision of the Bishop he writes:

Gradually Serampore became the centre of attraction for me. That attraction grew to a relationship, an intimate relationship, from which I could not withdraw myself...His Grace, the Bishop also gave expression to this decision. He spoke to me bout Serampore 'let it be so then. Joyfully I allow you to go'.⁶

⁵ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, p.46.

⁶ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, p.47.

The joy at Serampore and his influences with foreign Professors there and other missionaries were made use of to the maximum to uplift his Church and community. Constant prayer and deep study helped him to know the real cause of the deplorable condition of his Church. First of all the priests of the Church were not properly educated. By educating the priests and those to be priests, a new situation could be brought about in the Church. They should be shown that much higher values are there to live for than to fight for petty things connected with tradition and families. Therefore, he wanted to attract young men and women to Serampore for higher education. His idea was that if a few people were given higher education, they would teach others and this would bring about a revolutionary change and an awakening in the society. But he also knew that this idea was not easy to implement. First of all he thought how many of the present deacons had a talent for teaching and a liking for it and how others were going to respond to his revolutionary ideas. Therefore he knew that first and foremost the divine will is to be sought before any plan was made. It was a question of deciding about what his God-given mission was. And it was in prayer that he sought clarity about his mission.

Here we cannot fail to see the close parallelism between the vision of Jesus and that of Mar Ivanios. After a full day's busy schedule and being tormented by the thought of what to do next, Jesus goes to the wilderness and prays alone. It was His way of confirming His God given mission. On the one hand he had the attraction of the world, the acclamation of the people who were healed and who wanted Him to stay with them and continue His healing ministry. On the other hand He had before His eyes vast areas, which had to be evangelized. In that tension Jesus goes to the wilderness and prays. Peter was unable to think with Jesus, unable to feel with Him, goes in search of Jesus and when he finds Him says, "everyone is searching for you". Jesus who got confirmed in His mission through prayer answers, "let us go on to the neighboring town so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that's what I came out to do" (cf.Mk.1/ 32-38). For Mar Ivanios also prayer was an occasion for confirmation in his mission.

Fr. P.T. Geevarghese had many plans for the renewal of his Church. It was in this connection that he thought of starting a missionary congregation to evangelize the people and to educate them. Here also he did not act upon his decision. Rather he sought the will of God in prayer. It was not simply a temporary consolation he wanted in prayer rather a clear picture about the plan of God and a confirmation of his mission. Prayer for him was nothing but seeking the will of God; it was a painful seeking indeed. He writes about it:

This way months passed by. I placed my mind with this plans in it before God as clay before the potter. Slowly I came to learn that my heart, which was placed before God, was taking clear shape of ideals and a beauty of ideas. Surely He will give shape to it. I kept my mind there before God and watched from a distance.⁷

Three characteristics of his prayer life can be clearly distinguished- a sense of inner freedom, seeking shelter in God and complete detachment.

1. A Sense of Inner Freedom

Mar Ivanios' mind was not biased in any way. He had no plans and desires of his own. All he desired was the glory of God and the good of his Church and community. Therefore he was free to seek the will of God even if it proved to be bitter for him. A person who has his own selfish desires and plans will never be able to pray sincerely. In his mind there will always be the conflict between the self and God. The more one is free from the self, the better-disposed will he or she be to pray. Mar Ivanios enjoyed this inner freedom. Therefore he was free to pray.

2. Seeking Shelter in God

Man can never be sure of the course of action that is best suited to him. Those, which appear to be the best, may be appearing in disguise. There are moments when we will feel complete darkness at heart. What are we to do then? Who will kindle a candle and shed light in the midst of darkness? Only God can do that. Therefore taking shelter in God is the only right thing to do in times of conflict. When we examine the life of Mar Ivanios we become convinced that for him prayer was moments of taking shelter in

⁷ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, 60.

God. This he did with a sense of self-surrender. Self-surrender means many things. First one declares that he is unable to come to a conclusion. Secondly he acknowledges that God can find solution. Thirdly he tells that whatever be the solution he is not able to implement it. Fourthly he declares that with God's help he is able to implement. All these steps can be detected in the self-surrender of Mar Ivanios.

3. Complete Detachment

Mar Ivanios was completely detached from the desires of the world. Honour and praise went in search of him. That is why he became a renowned Professor of Serampore College and then the Founder Superior of the Congregation, a Bishop of the Malankara Orthodox Church and first Metropolitan-Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church and a great man acclaimed as such by his own people and foreigners. All these fame went in search of him. But he never went in search of fame. This detachment from worldly pleasures and the name and the fame, which the world gives, made him well disposed to seek God in prayer.

Prayer and Imitation of Christ

It is only when we know the characteristics of Mar Ivanios' vision of prayer that we will be able to know why he named the Congregation he started as '*Imitation of Christ*'. As we noted earlier, Mar Ivanios' prayer was an imitation of Jesus' prayer, a prayer in which one sought to get confirmed in one's mission. For him Christian life can be summarized as an imitation of Christ. He prayed as Jesus prayed. He wanted to live as Christ lived. Therefore he named his Congregation '*the Imitation of Christ*'.

According to Mar Ivanios Christian and religious perfection should consist in imitating Christ, both in one's life of prayer and life of action. This is the ideal, which he proposes right at the beginning of his constitution. "The special end of the Congregation shall be to imitate Christ as closely as possible...Our Lord is Christ both in His life of prayer and in His life of action".⁸

It is from his own experience that Mar Ivanios prepared the *Rules* for his monks and sisters. This imitation of Christ was the

⁸ L. Moolaveetil, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*. Kottayam, 1977, p.72.

characteristic note of Mar Ivanios' life, before the establishment of the Congregations and after that, his awareness of this life-principle added depth and meaning to his prayer. Imitating Christ in his prayer life does not simply mean to pray to God before taking decisions. It is more than that. A monk does not simply imitate Jesus who prays but imitate Jesus who is united with the Father in prayer. Therefore, for Mar Ivanios to imitate Jesus means to be united with God in prayer as Jesus was united with his Father.

Mar Ivanios analyses the factors that constitute the prayer life of a monk. It is not simply an idea or an impractical ideal - but it is a practical way of life. In his *Rules* he says:

The factors that constitute the life of prayer are the sacred liturgy, divine praise or the divine office, the spiritual reading, the examination of conscience, the reception of the sacraments of penance and the divine Eucharist, silence, holy recollection, common life etc. All these are means to foster a habitual union with God.⁹

His own life was the best example for this type of spirituality. In the wilderness of Perunad he continued his life of prayer with great zeal. He rose at midnight to chant the Divine Office. As he himself witnesses "by means of prayer, meditation, examination of conscience etc, I myself and the other monks lived within the heart of Jesus".¹⁰ As a beam of light is composed of so many colours and yet seems to be white, the prayer life of Mar Ivanios had many aspects in it, aspects like openness to truth, fasting, penance, solitude, long hours of silence etc. But at the last analysis they are found to be different colours of one reality, namely his union with the Father through Jesus Christ in prayer.

Openness to Truth

Prayer in a sense can be defined as a basic openness to truth and commitment to it. If we apply this definition to the life of Mar Ivanios we can say with certainty that he was a man of prayer. Even from his childhood he was open to truth and a seeker after truth. When we examine the events, which led to the historic reunion, we become more convinced of his openness to truth and his courage to embrace it readily. He was not a Nicodemus type of seeker after

⁹ *Rules*, Chapter 1, No.3.

¹⁰ Mar Ivanios, *Girideepam*, p.126.

truth. Nicodemus wanted to go to Jesus and he waited till darkness fell on the face of the earth. But Mar Ivanios was bold and committed and totally detached from prejudices. It is reported about his childhood that he learned the lesson of truth seeking from his mother. One day he went with his mother to a Syrian Church to pray for his deceased sister. When the mother was in the Church the boy went to the nearby Catholic Church and prayed there. On their way back the mother told his son that the Church where he prayed was the true Church and that they should join it when an opportunity came. Ever since his heart was seeking the truth about the true Church. He searched for truth unceasingly and proclaimed it whenever he found it. When at last he was convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church, he was ready to forego anything to embrace it. We should consider the situation in which Mar Ivanios found himself during the time when he made up his mind in favour of reunion. Mar Dionysius, who gave him permission to initiate correspondence with Rome for reunion, withdrew from this movement when the decision of the civil court was in his favour. All the other Bishops and priests and lay leaders also followed suit.

The boldness with which he embraced the Catholic Church will be clear only if we evaluate it against his particular position in the Church and his relationship with the higher authorities. At the moment of its reunion every eye looked at him for guidance and consolation. Even his authorities, in a very special way Mar Dionysius, whom he considers his father and teacher (*Guru*), trusted him so much and looked at him with hope. He was the most learned man of the Church and most influential within the community and outside. As the most beloved of the Bishops, everybody expected him to be the next Catholicos of the Church. More than anything else to part company with Mar Dionysius was a heart-renting experience. It was with much difficulty that he bade farewell to his *Guru*.¹¹ In all these instances he was guided and encouraged and strengthened by his openness to truth.

Reunion added new impetus to his prayer life. When he was the Archbishop of Trivandrum and the head of the Malankara

¹¹ Cf. T. Inchackalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I, p.96

Catholic Church, it is reported of him that he spent many long hours in prayer during night. Many people, priests and others are eyewitnesses to this. When he prays, the Archbishop used to prostrate himself on the ground and spread his hands to make the sign of the cross with his body. In this posture he prayed before the Eucharist. He had a sweet and loving devotion to the holy Eucharist and he knew that the Eucharist had a power to transform the simple human to the sublime divine. Another aspect of his prayer life is in connection with his fasting. The Lord said, "This can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mk. 9/29). Taking inspiration from these words of the Lord, the Archbishop cleansed himself of the desires of the flesh by severe fasting. The ultimate end of prayer is the union with the spiritual and immaterial God. For that certain sacrifices of the body are not only conducive but also compulsory. In the Rules he prepared for the members of his Congregation he says that fasting is absolutely necessary to fight against the hostile forces, to repulse all the attacks of the demons and to practise virtues.

Though he was well aware of the need of asceticism, of penance and sacrifices he was against excessive and imprudent ascetical practices. Excessive fasting and imprudent austerity will only hinder the prayer life. Therefore, he insisted that the monks and nuns should take up penance and austerity not by their own personal desire and decision, but at the direction of their spiritual guides. Mar Ivanios' austere life attracted not only his monastics but also the outsiders, both Christians and others. It is reported that during the Lenten period thousands of people used to gather at the Perunad monastery and spent days there in fasting and penance and in deep meditation on the sermons preached by Mar Ivanios. It is also reported that many Non-Christians also participated in this spiritual exercises. Mar Ivanios and his followers not only fasted but also forwent items like fish, meat, egg, milk and milk products. Habitually on Wednesdays and Fridays they ate only vegetarian meals foregoing even milk and milk products.

Time and Place for Prayer

Mar Ivanios knew that God's presence could be experienced in any place and at any time. Therefore, every place is an appropriate place for prayer and every time the best the time for prayer. 'Pray continually and unceasingly' was the motto of the Archbishop. He advises the monastics "even in the midst of external occupations they should try to raise their hearts to God and remain continually united with Him by means of frequent short prayers and remembrance of the presence of God".¹² He asks the monastics, "How is your mental prayer? Do you love it? Are you able to pray mentally always and everywhere so much so that you do not waste a moment of your life?"¹³

The Prayer of the Heart

Mar Ivanios was a highly intellectual man. His sermons were well prepared and logically arranged. Even in his conversations he spoke with logical clarity and sequence. But when he comes to prayer, it seems that his heart was more at work than his intellect. The intellectual intuition and the logicality of his theological knowledge gave way to the fervor of love that was always flaming in his heart. Therefore, his prayers had a unique sweetness. He communicated with God as a child speaks to his father, as a bride tenderly speaks to her bridegroom and also, at times, as a servant implores before his master. Mar Ivanios has not advocated any particular posture or method of prayer. Every prayer is a genuine prayer if it comes from the heart. He just advises his followers to pray and pray simply. Communication with God should be from the heart and it should be personal coming out from the love of the heart. He tells the monastics, "You should make secret, personal and a tender conversation with Jesus Christ the habit of your life."¹⁴

Perhaps Mar Ivanios understood prayer not as one of the things, which a Christian does not even as the majority of things a Christian does, not even all the things, which a Christian does;

¹² Rules, Chapter 13, No: 3.

¹³ Mar Ivanios, *Sannyasa Jeevitha Sahayi*, p.232.

¹⁴ Rules, No. 119.

rather prayer is for him all that a Christian is. That is why he speaks about unceasing prayer, making the existence itself a prayer.

Prayers written by Mar Ivanios

Mar Ivanios has written so many prayers to be used with the official liturgy and to be used in private devotion. He did not write them for mere recitation, but for fostering habitual union with God through Christ. Through prayer one imitates Jesus Christ in being one with God the Father. These prayers were the spontaneous overflow of his heart, which was full of love, and trust in God. All his hopes and expectations were given expression in these prayers. He was pouring out his heart before God, His beloved Father. Among the prayers written by Mar Ivanios there are short ejaculations, acts of love, faith and hope, short praises and some long prayers. Whatever the form and the length of these prayers they were expressions of his interior life. Some of the prayers are addressed to Jesus Christ, some others to the Father and yet others to the Holy Spirit. From his Orthodox tradition he had acquired a deep knowledge of the Trinitarian theology. He converses with each of the Trinitarian persons and had built up a strong relationship with each of them. The prayer of dedication, which he wrote and attached to the Divine Office of the evening, is an excellent example for his relationship with the three persons of the Trinity. The Father is praised and thanked for creation. The Son is praised for the redemption and the Holy Spirit for sanctification. This prayer of dedication also thanks God for bringing him and his people to the Catholic Church. After thanking God for the gift of true faith and membership in the true Church he goes on to pick up each and every dogma of Catholic Church and to thank God for these. The universality of the Church, the primacy of the Pope, the communion of saints, the unique position of Mary among the saints, the guidance and protection of the angels, the sad fact of sin etc are all beautifully expressed in this prayer.

Thinking and Praying

It seems that the Archbishop exercised his intellectual faculties in union with his heart of prayer. Therefore, even when he writes on serious subjects he would suddenly be going to the subject of prayer. His autobiographical book *The Girideepam* is an excellent

example for the intermingling of thought and prayer. When he narrates some of the sorrowful experiences of his life his heart rises to God in prayer without his knowing it. Those who read his *Autobiography*, will feel that as he was writing these words he was sitting with Jesus Christ and was speaking with him. In other words, he speaks to his readers as well as to Jesus Christ at one and the same time. It is in keeping with his idea of monastic life. For him a monk is not a lonely person; rather the monk and Jesus Christ do every act together and simultaneously.

His ardent longing for the love of God is clear in his prayers. In one place he says, "My God and My All. Be thou the only object of my love. May the principal intention and purpose of my heart be to be submissive to Your rule in all things and to please You and to love You. As I am not getting the sweetness of Your nearness I will go on loving You more and more".¹⁵ His prayers were such sweet utterances of a love-laden soul.

Conclusion

For Mar Ivanios prayer was not a mere spiritual exercise or a ritual. For him prayer was the imitation of Christ. It was communing with God as Jesus himself communed with the Father in prayer. Prayer should be unceasing and no moment of the life of a Christian, the religious in particular, should be spent except in prayer. Every place where the religious live should be made a place of prayer. The whole person should be involved in prayer-his heart, body and soul. So prayer is an existential reality and not a functional reality. It is a process of becoming, a process of becoming united with God. Therefore prayer and communion with God are not two things, but two aspects of the same thing. Both of them grow simultaneously. Both grow to perfection. As a person grows in the prayer life he/she also grows in union with God. In substance, prayer is imitation of Christ and the end is union with God.

¹⁵ Mar Ivanios, *Dhyānakusumangal*, Kottayam, 1981, p.33.

the social transformation on a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, scientific temper, social mobility, social cohesion and economic growth reducing inequality thorough poverty alleviation programmes. In essence his concept of social development involves a whole amount of changes in the entire social groups within the system and moving better conditions of life. As a humanist, he preached that the human rights are the most fundamental of all rights. They are the rights, which belong to each person irrespective of caste, creed, man, women and child. They are the rights to life, liberty including all the political, civil, social, religious, cultural, educational and economic rights necessary for people to live dignified lives. He promoted the recognition of the equality and dignity of all individuals, recognition of cultural diversity as a fundamental human value, recognition and guarantee of the fundamental equality of all persons in human rights without discrimination with regard to race,

Mar Ivanios - A Social Scientist
Jose Konnath

creed, colour, nationality, ancestry, language, gender, place of origin or other status.

As a moralist, Mar Ivanios believed that religion and morality are intimately related. Religion and morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Morality is the essence of religion. When morality incarnates itself in a living man, it becomes religion, because it binds, it holds, it sustains him in the hour of trial. Mar Ivanios was a man of extraordinary interior life. For him it was the most potent instrument in moral life. He made it clear that as soon as one loses the moral life he ceases to be a religious man.

As a spiritual leader Mar Ivanios was convinced that the soul force of Christian religion is love, ie, love of God and love of man. This commitment of love is not fulfilled by mere cultic enactment of religion, but it should take the form of service of the helpless. Thus Mar Ivanios wanted to combine the greatest commandant of Christianity - Love, with the service of the weaker sections of the society. In other words, foundation of his social insight is rooted in Christian love.

Among the acts of love Mar Ivanios emphasised the importance of social service. For him humanitarian service is the horizontal dimension of Christian love. The immediate service of human beings becomes a necessary part of this endeavour simply because the important way to find God is to see him in the poor and identify oneself with him. This can only be done by service of all human beings. For him love was to serve others without any restriction.

The most potent contribution of Mar Ivanios to the society was the constructive programme designed for the uplift of the down trodden. He believed that without constructive social work humanitarian service was impossible. For this he envisioned a theological, metaphysical and positivistic evolution of the society through a series of social interventions. He had a zest for life in its fullness; besides he had an overwhelming preoccupation with the social variables of equality, reduction of disparity in opportunities, women empowerment, literacy, employment, health, conscientization

programmes and so on. Again he possessed a compelling interest in the preservation of all that mankind has inherited from history, experience and ethical ethos whether in art, architecture and culture.

Mar Ivanios gave a sharp and contemporary edge to his vision by his dedicated and committed work for the socio-economic and educational advancement of the Dalits, Nadars and other weaker sections of the society, in its most acceptable and popular dimension. In order to uplift these sections he has identified the structural and process deficiencies of development programmes launched among these people by the government and social agencies. The Schemes prepared by the government and voluntary agencies, such as *Marthandom project, Sriniketan experiments* etc lost momentum and gradually ceased to operate. In this juncture Mar Ivanios started community based development programmes in view of initiating vertical social mobility among Nadars, Dalits and other weaker sections of Southern Travancore. Together with the community based development programmes, he started education for human centrisim and women empowerment through a neo-renaissance. Education for human centrisim refers human awareness creation. A dynamic and progressive society finds ways and means to resolve issues and solve problems related to women in the society. Mar Ivanios introduced education as a tool for liberating women from socio-cultural taboos and identified it as a present investment for the future, bearing cumulative effects in the women empowerment schemes. Besides he implemented mid-day meals, free distribution of articles of basic necessities, text books, uniforms, scholarships etc. for the children and weaker sections of the society.

According to him community based development and related indices are really people developing themselves and their community, based on the strengths and resources of their own community. As pointed out by him, human development is development of the people, for the people and by the people. Development of the people means investing in human capabilities, whether in education, or health or skills, so that they can work productively and creatively. Develop-

pment for the people means ensuring that the economic growth generated by them is widely and fairly distributed among them. Development by the people refers to opportunity given to all sections of the people to participate in the development process. Mar Ivanios had a people centred vision of development that recognises the centrality of all sections of the people in the society. His idea of people centred development had inherently combined three important values. They are firstly, life has inherent meaning and value beyond the possession of goods. Authentic development must contribute to the actualization of that meaning in its social, cultural, intellectual and spiritual, as well as its material dimensions. Secondly, sovereignty resides in people. People must be the real actors for social transformation. All types of development must be their creation, it cannot be transferred to or bestowed on one people by another; and finally, community is basic to human well being. We become fully human only through nurturing our sense of responsibility for one another and for the Earth through our participation in family and community life. It is here that we learn the idea of sharing our knowledge, skills, specialities and insights into the deeper meaning of life and the realities of the society.

Mar Ivanios, silently, but vigorously fought against the untouchability which prevailed in the society. His constructive programmes were designed to alleviate the evils of caste system and untouchability. In fact, his life was, to a great extent, dedicated to remove the social stratification based on caste. Dalit service and the uplift of the down trodden was a major concern of his social activities. Dalit colony centred mission activities of Mar Ivanios created great social consciousness among different social groups. Large number of Dalit s embraced Christian values due to his constructive programmes. He used to visit the Dalit missions and intermingled with Dalit s through dialogues and discussions. He selected young people from them and trained them for mission work.

Mar Ivanios' work among the Dalit s aroused public opinion against the untouchability and other inhuman practices that

prevailed in the society. As a result, a good number of social leaders like Sree Narayananaguru, Ayyankali, Chattambi Swamikal and their followers accelerated their work among the weaker sections of the society. In fact Mar Ivanios was a forerunner of the great social reformers of his time in Kerala. He fought against all the oppressing and suppressing elements that existed in the society. For the uplift of the Dalit families he instructed the priests and sisters to intensify their services through education and health awareness programmes. Sisters were instrumental in cultivating a habit of cleanliness among the women folk of these sections. They taught them the rules of sanitation and asked them to observe them. Many of the Dalit s had the habit of drinking and gambling which created a large number of broken families with delinquents and widows. The guidance and counselling programmes conducted among these people by the missionaries under the instruction of Mar Ivanios emancipated the people from the vicious circle of poverty and peril. By the removal of untouchability and related evils, Mar Ivanios wanted the Dalit s to have human rights, especially the right to worship in the church and their children to be admitted in Christian schools along with other children of the higher caste. He believed that interdining and intermingling were essential to the removal of untouchability and other social taboos. The result of his silent revolution against social evils was marvellous. This revolutionized public opinion against all inhuman practices that prevailed in the society and it became a mass-conscientisation movement. Weaker sections of the society began to taste the fruits of his efforts. In short, awakening the conscience of the society through conscientisation programmes and constructive missionary activities, Mar Ivanios shook the main citadels of caste and social stratification. By removing social evils Mar Ivanios wanted to realize the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God which is the quintessence of Christianity. In working for the liberation of the weaker sections of the society, the sole aim of Mar Ivanios was the dissemination of Christian love and service.

Mar Ivanios facilitated reform activities to remove the disabilities of women too. In working for the emancipation of women his motto was the equality of human beings as the children of God. It is a tragic fact that women have low status and manifold social disabilities. From being man's co-equal, co-sharer and help mate, she became his subordinate or rather slave to be used at will for satisfying his wants, with no rights or will of her own. He knew well that as God's design man and woman or husband and wife have equal status. They both are created complementary to each other. But in the society man regards women as his tool. As a result women lost many of their rights, began to suffer many disabilities and were called weaker sex. Being aware of this Mar Ivanios started a series of social reforms for the uplift of women. His main reforms in this sphere consisted in giving education, availing health and sanitation facilities, giving them skill formation and providing employment opportunities. Well trained missionaries and sisters were directed to remove the social backwardness of women by giving the moral and spiritual orientation and discipline.

To sum up, Mar Ivanios was a social scientist par excellence. He was a man of great vision and mission. He was the master tiller of the intellectual, social and cultural soil of our society. The soul force of his reforms was grounded and rooted in the universal message of love of our Lord Jesus Christ. He tried to construct a social structure based on the kingdom of God on earth in which all the people enjoy freedom and love as children of God realising the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.



Mar Ivanios Prophet of Cosmic Communion

Kurian Valuparampil

Introduction

Saint Paul says (Rom 8/22), "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now." Accordingly, real bliss consists in the reunion of all spiritual and physical creatures with God. The changes that are still taking place in the universe is the preparations for its realization.

Thus proclaimed Deacon P.T.Geevarghese in his public address at the annual convention of the *Yakobaya Suriyani Mahajanabha* at Tiruvalla.¹ Mar Ivanios is a world-renowned twentieth century prophet of ecumenism, dialogue and communion of Churches. The fundamental principle that drove him forcefully from interior for the said programmes is the divine plan of cosmic

¹The Speech of Deacon P.T.George (later Mar Ivanios) at the annual convention of *Yakobaya Mahajanabha* (The Great Gathering of the People of Jacobite Syrians) Tiruvalla. The year of the speech is not clear. Complete text of the speech is quoted from "Suriyani Suvisheshakan" in T. Inchackalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios I* 52-62, here 52; Hereafter the speech will be referred to as "Deacon's Speech," with page numbers according to Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*.

reunion with God through Jesus Christ. He has succinctly articulated it in his speech a quote from which opened this very paper. So this paper is based principally on that speech. Exposition of the said fundamental vision necessarily invites illustration and embellishment by principles articulated by him in some of his other formal and informal speeches, writings including correspondence, and conversations of various occasions.

But few have recognized him as a great prophet of cosmic reunion with God. A prophet in Christian understanding is one who stands before God listening to his word and stands before men speaking in human words the word of God he hears. A very close look at Mar Ivanios' extraordinary zeal for ecumenism, dialogue and communion of Churches compels us to re-search the fundamental principle for his untiring toil in those regards. The same principle is the driving force for his engaging multivalent dimensions of human development. Above all, he was a burning lover of divine love and ardent and assiduous pilgrim after God.

Delving deeper and deeper in search of the abysmal force of Mar Ivanios' excellence and entrepreneurship in the above-mentioned fields, one finds his vision of integrated cosmic ecumenism and communion with God taking that universally and eternally honoured place. All his enterprises in the above said respects are anchored on his unified vision of the original and final union between God, man, and the universe of created things, and on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And it is this vision about the union in which God, the created things (universe), man, and Jesus Christ are involved that we have indicated as Mar Ivanios' vision of cosmic communion. In fact it is his desire and attempts for dialogue with all, for ecumenism and communion of Churches that culminated in his reunion and his inauguration of his Church's reunion with the Catholic Church and the bishop of Rome, the chief of the patriarchs. Mar Ivanios' union with the Catholic Church is only the most sublime and manifest Christian exercise and outcome of his fundamental vision of God's plan of cosmic reunion with God.

God-Universe Relation²

Mar Ivanios believed that all those who believe in God acknowledge the reality of God and that of the world (universe). There can be only one God. That means that there can be only God as God. He is one without equal. Here it is necessary that we keep in mind that the One God Mar Ivanios believed in is the Divine Trinity of the Christian faith. God is unity of three divine persons --Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, God is the source and model of unity. Bearing this in mind many times in his formal and informal words Mar Ivanios quotes or alludes or refers to Jesus Christ's prayer fully or partly, "...that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us ... that they may be one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one..." (Jn 17/21ff).

All things, visible and invisible, are the results of God's works. In creation God, his Word and Spirit worked together (Gen 1; Jn 1/1-3). "All things were made by him (Jn 1/3) and all strain themselves to join him," says Mar Ivanios, quoting Jn 1,3^a with adjustment and alluding to St. Paul's words in Rom 8/22, and soon quoting the latter passage: "...the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now." Mar Ivanios recalls evolution theory to illustrate his point further. The sum and substance of the principle of evolution is that the form and nature of a thing or living organism are dependent on the facilities and forces surrounding it. The bliss of all creatures consists in reaching God and all the changes that take place in the universe are the preparations thereto. Union with God is the ultimate bliss of all spiritual and material creatures, of the whole universe.

Man the Representative

Under the subtitle "Three kinds of creatures" in his "Deacon's speech" Mar Ivanios highlights the representative position of man in the universe. All those who believe in God and man as his creation and God as man's ultimate end acknowledge man's anxiety for

² "Deacon's Speech," 52-53

union with God as only natural to him. For the time being Mar Ivanios ignores atheists. Because man has invisible spirit and visible body, he represents all creatures. Also according to evolution theory, he is the peak of creatural evolutionary development. Though at this point Mar Ivanios does not invoke the biblical vision of creation, we may support him with that which introduces man as the crown of creation, with glory only a little less than God's own (Gen 1/1-2,9;Ps 8;Heb 2/5-9). It follows that man has the obligation of adopting ways and means to get united with God. Mar Ivanios continues his reflection: since man is the representative of the whole creation, if he reaches God, we can rightly assume that in him and through him all creatures reach God.

Religion³

Man's natural anxiety to unite with God results in what is popularly called religion, or *marga* or *dharma*. A life of genuine devotion to God means that man lives in God and God lives in man as the fruit of their mutual communion. The purpose and end of true religion is the union of man in God and God in man, assent many religions. Different methods and approaches to realize man's union with God have been adopted, advocated and proposed by many visionaries of human societies. The results and consequences of the efforts that man has made making use of his God-given natural faculties but without any particular intervention by God are the natural religions. However, the truths given in them are God-given.

There are also religions revealed by God himself to man. These accept in faith the way or ways God has revealed to man for his union with God. God's revelation means his particular intervention in humanity's history. Christianity is a revealed religion. The Jewish religion is another one. The former is founded on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The latter is the religion that the Jews received through Moses. There is also the religion of the forefathers like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God has personally intervened in their life.

³ "Deacon's Speech," 53-54

Incarnation of Jesus Christ⁴

The crucial and central point in Mar Ivanios' vision of the reunion of the whole creation with God is Jesus Christ's incarnation. Let us attend to him on this great event of world history. That man's anxiety to get united with God is natural to him means that it is God-given. And because it is given by God, he himself must satisfy it. Union with God is man's divinization, so to say, man is made God. Man cannot achieve this by himself, because he is in bondage and sin. The said anxiety must be satisfied to man. One who is perfect God and perfect man can satisfy the natural human anxiety for union with God. *God become man* alone can fulfill it. So God himself, who implanted in man his natural God-anxiety really became man. Jesus of Nazareth is God incarnate. In the person of Jesus God's incarnation has taken place in human history. He is perfect God and perfect man. That he is perfect man means that he is like man in all things except sin and also is without sin, and also repaired the defects incurred upon humanity due to the sin of mankind beginning from Adam. Jesus Christ is both spirit and body. In him God has taken humanity to himself. In response, in him humanity has taken God to itself. In him perfect union of God and man has taken place without either party losing their respective properties and identity. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the way for the union of the whole creation with God.

All things were made through the Word, who is God and God's Son. It is only proper that all things made though the Word are united through the Word become flesh. And it has taken place in history. The Word become flesh (=man) is Jesus Christ. Mar Ivanios quotes the relevant parts of Jn 1:1-18. "In the beginning was Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.. And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace...No one has ever

⁴ "Deacon's Speech," 54-59

seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." (Jn 14/1-18). Jesus himself has said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14/6).⁵ Following the Christian vision of God's self-revelation as Trinity that was traditioned to and experienced by Mar Ivanios, through Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, man gets united with God the Trinity. Jesus Christ is the God-given way for mankind (also the whole creation) to get united with God. Nay more, Jesus Christ is the sacrament of man's unity with God. It is compelling and important to observe that Mar Ivanios situates Jesus Christ's incarnation first against man's innate anxiety to reunite with God and secondly with his sinfulness. This positive approach Mar Ivanios adopted as early as a century ago and most probably unthinkable to other Christian thinkers of India and elsewhere of his time is very crucial and significant in radical inculturation, which is the crucial point in the missiology and method of mission at present.

More on Jesus Christ's Incarnation as the Way for Man's Union with God

Mar Ivanios reflects on the incarnation of Jesus Christ in relation to its place in Christian faith, in man's growth and development in civilization, and man's union with God. At this turn of his speech he deals more with the third point. Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the most important principle of Christianity. The whole strength of Christianity is its faith that Jesus Christ is God. The power Jesus' incarnation pours leads the whole world to growth and development in civilization. Also Christian morality is based on Jesus' incarnation.⁶

Jesus Christ is the Son of God who is God himself. Jesus Christ is God incarnated (become man). So through Jesus Christ we can enter into union with God. It means that Jesus Christ's holy (sinless) humanity is the way for man to reach his divinity. Incarnation of the Son of God is the way God has made in order to join man in divinity, namely, to place man in God and God in man.

⁵ "Deacon's Speech," 56.

⁶ "Deacon's Speech," 56.

Incarnation of Jesus Christ does not mean that God has already united us individually with him through Jesus Christ. It means that God has set before man the way for getting individually united with God. God has condescended to give us the possibility and the way through Jesus Christ. In order to get united with God we have to unite our body and spirit (man in his totality) with the body and spirit of Jesus Christ (with the totality of Christ). Since Christ's incarnation is the way God has made for man's union with him, with all his human faculties and members of his body man must unite himself with the humanity of Jesus Christ. If we do so God will grant us union with him according to his will; Christ's divinity united with his spirit and body also unites in us.

As a result of such communion with God we become conscious that we totally belong to God and are in him. This consciousness is bound up with our real experience, and is not the product of mere fancy or mind. God has incarnated in order to unite man, the representative of the whole creation, with him to make it possible for the whole creation to get united with him. Hence it is necessary that man gets united in God.⁷ That man gets united with God is a creaturely and divine necessity, discerns Mar Ivanios.

Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Our Union with God⁸

Jesus Christ's resurrection assures our resurrection and the possibility of our post-resurrection life. It accords also with the scriptural saying that the whole creation strains to unite in God. According to evolution theory, it is necessary that by evolution man also reaches a status loftier than that of the present. That this loftier status is purified with resurrection, we shall understand from Jesus Christ's resurrection. "Worthy of praise is Jesus, the brightness who set out from the tomb and brightened the creation,"⁹ Mar Ivanios was used to sing along with and in his Church every Sunday

⁷ "Deacon's Speech," 57-58.

⁸ "Deacon's Speech," 59-61

⁹ Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malankara Church, *gyomto' sapro'*, First *enyonos*.

morning of the liturgical season of the resurrection. In resurrection Jesus' body was glorified; in common parlance, was spiritualized. Thus his resurrection is the answer to the question how can corporal man be united with God, who is spirit, that is to say, not corporal.. "Risen Jesus is the first fruit of the glorified mankind."¹⁰ We will resurrect with our spirit and body (in our totality) and unite in God.

In our present life itself we shall attain through the incarnate Christ the qualifications required to unite us so gloriously in God. Jesus Christ is the way for our union with God both here in this world and in the heaven hereafter. Christ's incarnation is the God-made way for the union of our body and spirit with God both here and in resurrection. Hence it is not enough that either our body or our spirit is united with Jesus Christ. It is not enough that we are mentally united with Jesus Christ. It is also not enough that we are only externally united with him. Christianity affects the whole man.¹¹

Church, Christ's Body, and the Sacraments and Union with God¹²

In the period after Christ's resurrection and ascension he abides in us with his glorified risen body. Now his body lives and has grown as the Church in the world. It has been clearly attested that the Church is Christ's body. Here Mar Ivanios evidently refers to Paul's teaching in 1Cor 12 as well as the much emphasized traditional teaching of his own Syriac Church. "So now it is through the Christian Church that we are united with Christ. Church is the visibility of the invisible Christ. We get united with him by abiding in the Church." Church is the mystery (sacrament: way and reality) of Christ. Mystery in Christian tradition contains visible and invisible realities. Mar Ivanios is insistent that if we accept Christ as the mystery / sacrament (way and reality) of God-man unity, his Church cannot but be accepted as the way and reality (sacrament) of

⁶ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana Oru Dhyānapathanam* (Kottayam:BP, 1980) (hereafter, Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*) part I, 11.

¹¹ "Deacon's Speech," 61-62.

¹² "Deacon's Speech," 61-62

Christ-man unity. "A true devotee of Christ is the one who grows in him tasting him more than ever before, and abiding in the God-given Church of Christ lives as a real Christian." Here Mar Ivanios is only transcribing what he along with the Malankara Syrian Church was accustomed to sing in the *First Hour* of her Sunday vigil in the liturgical period of resurrection:

The king of the heaven and the earth
Built the Church
And made it his seat
He entered in and abided in it.
Whosoever would speak to him
Let him enter in the Church
Behold! He is abiding it it.
Praise be to God and Praise be to God
You who grows the Church
Have mercy upon us.

This hymn celebrates the mystery that the Church is Christ's mystery.

Sacraments, the Way for Union with Christ in the Church

Church being the body and the sacrament of Christ in the post-resurrection (ascension) period, unity with the Church is not only the way for but also is unity with Christ. She performs these roles through her sacraments. Christ unites man with the Church through her sacraments. Sacraments are the streams through which the salvific graces Christ earned for mankind by his salvific economies flow and are kept in the treasury of the Church.¹³ Mar Ivanios deliberates in the following way: "We must receive Christ into us spiritually and physically, in appearance and in mystery. Mysteries (sacraments) are the ways Christ himself has ordered for us to receive him as described above."¹⁴ Sacraments of the Church are the practical and existential ways of living in Christ, that is to say,

¹³ Mar Ivanios, *Kumpasāram oru Dhyānapathanam*, Kottayam 1980, 12.

¹⁴ "Deacon's Speech," 61.

for remaining in the Church, Christ's body, and thereby in Christ and through him in God.

He further illustrates the point with the example of the Eucharist. He selected the Eucharist as the example for the evident reason that the Eucharist is "the perfection of perfections" namely the crown of sacraments.¹⁵ Christ has said, "... my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him" (Jn 6/55-56). Holy Eucharist is a sacrament in which visible and invisible elements are united to unite us to Christ. Hence, in our reception of the Eucharist we are visibly and invisibly united with Christ. The tangible character of our union with the humanity of Christ is the most evident in the Eucharist.¹⁶ Mar Ivanios further exposes the said truth:

Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man. Wherever his Godhead is, there is his humanity. Wherever his humanity is, there is his Godhead. His body and blood is in the Eucharist. That is to say, Jesus Christ's humanity is in the Eucharist. And since wherever Jesus Christ's humanity is, there is also his Godhead, his Godhead and humanity is in the Eucharist. Briefly said, Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, is present in the Eucharist.¹⁷

The holy Eucharist is *Ammauel* (God-with-us).¹⁸

Mar Ivanios' vision about our unity with Christ through the Eucharist as described in the last paragraph is very closely related with his vision on the relation between the Eucharist celebrated in the Church and Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. The very same sacrifice of Christ that took place in those days on Calvary takes place today in the Eucharist on the *thronos* (= throne, for 'altar') in our midst in the church. The Eucharist is not a sacrifice similar to, nor a simple remembrance or repetition of Christ's sacrifice, but *the*

¹⁵ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* part I.

¹⁶ "Deacon's Speech," 62.

¹⁷ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* part I,39.

¹⁸ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* part I,6.

very same sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice is eternal, offered once for ever.

Jesus Christ is eternally offering before God the Father in heaven the sacrifice he fulfilled by his death and ascension (1Jn 2/1;Rom 8/34;Heb 9/2;12/24;Rev 2/11). The Church in this world united with Jesus Christ in the said eternal sacrifice offers to God the Father the same eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

Mar Ivanios is only retelling what Saint John Chrysostom, (Ivanios of golden tongue), has taught about the oneness of the Eucharist and Christ's sacrifice: "Always we offer the same lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one. For this reason the sacrifice is always only one ... Even now we offer that victim, who was once offered and who will never be consumed."²⁰ Uniting ourselves with Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice we complete in our flesh what is lacking in his sacrifice for the sake of his body, namely the Church (Col 1/24).²¹

Eucharist-Celebration of Cosmic Unity through Christ

Mar Ivanios could not but be overwhelmed by the universal and cosmic dimension of the Eucharistic celebration which is very much emphasized in the Oriental liturgies, and particularly in the liturgy of his own Church. He was very much delighted to celebrate every day the Eucharistic liturgy as solemnly as possible.

His commentary on the holy Eucharist reveals that he was well versed in symbolism, the unique character of oriental theology. In fact in many symbols and prayers of her Eucharistic liturgy the Malankara Church celebrates its universal and cosmic character. The very hemisphere shape of the two main entrances, those at the western wall and the one to the sanctuary, of her churches permanently teach the traditional understanding inherited from Judaism that the church (temple) in which she performs worship

¹⁹ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part I, 29, cfr also *idem*, 5,23,24.

²⁰ John Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews," XVII,3.

²¹ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part II *Qurbana Dhyanam*, 20.

(celebrates the Eucharist) is “a model of the universe which offers its entrants a transfer from earth to heaven, from humanity to divinity and from mortality to immortality.”²² This vision is very dazzling in the Syriac tradition, which the Malankara Church has inherited as her own, and also in the Hindu (Indian) belief in which ambient the Malankara Church was born and brought up.²³ Time and space permit us only to cite three moments of the Eucharistic celebration.

(1) The altar stone is covered with a tri-colour corporal (*virikkūttam*). It is made of three pieces: red, green and white, set over each other. The red, the largest in size, symbolizes the whole universe. The green, smaller than the red and set over the red, symbolizes the earth, “the central planet of the universe from the spiritual point of view, wherein God created and placed man for whose salvation God became Man on earth.”²⁴ And the white, the smallest piece and set over the green, symbolizes the Church upon the earth. The vessels are placed over it and therein is celebrated the Eucharist. This arrangement of the tri-colour corporal symbolically re-presents the position of the celebrating Church on the earth in the universe. Chalice and paten are placed on this tri-colour corporal. Every Eucharistic celebration takes place in the Church in the world in the universe. Every Eucharistic celebration takes place on (in) the Church, the throne (*altar* in western vocabulary) of the whole universe. The Church celebrates her Eucharist in communion with the earth and the whole universe. Through the priestly ministry of the Church Jesus Christ the high priest, who by his sacrifice entered the eternal heavenly sanctuary, gives back to the Father and creator the whole universe redeemed.

(2) The celebrant priest, taking for communion the *pearl*, also called livecoal (piece of the Eucharistic bread) from the chalice and holding it in his hands, privately says the prayer, whose first

²² Crispin H.T.Fletcher-Louis, *All Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden / Boston / Colone:Brill, 2002) xii.

²³ Pauly Maniyattu, *Heaven on Earth*,(Rome: Marthomma Yogam, 1995) 297-325.

²⁴ M. Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*. 127.

sentence is, "*In my hand I take you who hold the borders of the universe.*" In the Eucharistic communion he who holds the borders of the universe communes with the communicant priest. In the Eucharistic communion the priest is united with the one through whom the whole universe was created and who holds it and offers it redeemed to the Father.

(3) In the exaltation of the holy mysteries immediately before communion the celebrant priest lifting the paten and chalice in his hands acclaims the three divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity to which acclamation the faithful responds:

The one Holy Father be with us who fashioned the world in his mercy.
 (People: Amen). The One Holy Son be with us who redeemed it by his precious passion. (People: Amen). The One Holy Spirit be with us the perfecter and fulfiller of all that has been and that will be... (People: Amen).

In the Eucharistic celebration God the creator of the world and God its Redeemer and God the perfecter and fulfiller of all that has been and that will be is with the faithful. At the celebration of the Eucharist the Church and her member faithful enjoy the company of the three divine persons of the Divine Trinity who saved the whole world (universe). (Creation - redemption - perfecting of all that has been and that will be, is the process of salvation of the whole creation by God).

Mar Ivanios' explanations of the titles "first fruit" and "firstborn" applied to the Eucharist in the Malankara Cathelic Eucharistic liturgy sheds light on the said cosmic character of the Eucharist. "First fruit" represents all that God has created. The "First-born" is the Only Begotten of God and the first of the redeemed humanity.²⁵ The Malankara Cathelic Church offers her first fruit / born to the First- born of the heavenly Father²⁶ so that it be joined with the eternal offering of the former to the latter.

²⁵ In the First Service of the Preparatory Service the priest, while placing the host in the paten, privately recites the prayer, "First-born of the heavenly Father, accept this first fruit from the hands of your bumble servant."

²⁶ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part I, 2-4.

The Malankara Church manifested in her Eucharist

According to Mar Ivanios, the Malankara Church must first of all be explained by the celebration of the Eucharist; say, with her Eucharistic liturgy. This point could be better illustrated with an anecdote from Mar Ivanios' life which the late Fr. Dominic Zachariah quoted personally to the present author during one of our informal discussions on the relation between the Church and her liturgy. During a visit of Mar Ivanios in Fr. Dominic Zacharias' student days in St. Joseph's Seminary, Mangalore, the students there requested the guest dignitary to explain the Malankara Catholic Church. Remember, it was not many years after the constitution of the same Church. In those days the Latin and Malabar Catholic seminarists, their priest professors and laity not excluded, had good little knowledge about the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Mar Ivanios responded them that the next morning he would answer them. The next morning he celebrated the Eucharist very solemnly for the seminary community. And when the Eucharistic celebration was over, he turned towards the community of students and professors of the seminary and said: "This is our Malankara Syrian Catholic Church."

Eucharist celebrated in the Church unites the faithful with the Divine Trinity and heaven.²⁷ Since the Eucharist is the Church's celebration of the unity, on the one hand, of God and humanity in Christ, of her own, and on the other hand, of the unity of the whole cosmos with God through Christ, it follows that the actual life of the Church must be a celebration of the unity she celebrates in the Eucharist. Because the Church is the body of Christ her life should be a dynamic manifestation of the unity of the mankind and the whole creation with God through Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

Eucharist and the Unity of the Church

Church is Christ's body. In this body his body and blood is solemnized and communed by the faithful in the Eucharist.

²⁷ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part I, 7.

Eucharistic communion manifests and confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ In fact the latter truth is the unique glory of the Church.²⁸ Eucharist, which is rightly called the Holy Communion, makes the Church communion and catholic.²⁹

In his reflection on the relation between the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and unity of the Church, the body of Christ, Mar Ivanios was only faithfully confirming the vision of the Christian sages from the beginning of the Eucharist and the Church. According to Luke, Jesus Christ's institution of the Eucharist created the brotherhood (Lk 22/32) of the twelve apostles (Lk 22/2.30-47), disciples (Lk 22/11.39-45) and the seventy two missionaries (Lk 22/34-36). St. Paul teaches that the faithful formed one body of Christ and their unity is both expressed and brought about in the breaking of the bread (namely, the Eucharist). He wrote to the members of the Church at Corinth, "... The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the *body* of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one *body*, for we all partake of the one bread" (1Cor 10/16-17) (emphasis added). The second *body* in this quote is the Church. Down through the centuries the oriental and Eastern Church fathers were traditioning the same vision. John Chrysostom, commenting on the above cited Pauline text says,

For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The body of Christ--not many bodies but one body. For as bread is completely one, through made up of many grains of wheat, and these, although unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.³⁰

Live the Organic Unity of the One Body of Christ

²⁸ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part I, 10-12.

²⁹ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana* Part I, 1-20; Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios* I, 61-62.

³⁰ Homilies on the First Epistle to Corinthians, also alluding to *Didache* 9,4; Cyprian, Letters 63,13.

Mar Ivanios truly believed that the oneness of Christ's body the Church realized, manifested, and communed in Christ's body the Eucharist by the hierarchy and the faithful, is to be manifested and exercised in the real incarnated life of the Church. The oneness of the Church is not to be eschewed as a *noble idea* for the entertainment of the theologians of separation and division. He is confirmed in the knowledge that

... Our holy Saviour has instituted only one Church in the world.

That visible Church is one and indivisible. She maintains unity in faith, organization and dynamic activity. She shines forth in physical unity with her divine bridegroom, by the sacramental unity of all the faithful members, and externally organized as the kingdom of God on the earth...³¹

He is sure that the unity of the body of Christ is sustained in the Catholic Church headed by the pope of Rome by divine inspiration.³² He reminds, "*the right form of catholicity will be always united with the See of St. Peter.*"³³ At the same time, it should be noted, as early as January 1927, nearly thirty eight years before Vatican II, in his second memorandum for reunion with Rome, he reminded Vatican that *the Catholic Church and the western Patriarchal See should not be considered as one and the same...*

Archbishop Mar Ivanios believed, "separation within the Christian Church is a great sin."³⁴

The existing organic divisions within the one Church of Christ are paining wounds in his body. "It is the loving heart of our Lord

³¹ Letter dated March 20, 1931 from Tiruvalla to Father Barnabas, Malayalam translation in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 23-25, here 23.

³² "Kothamangalam Speech" quoted fully in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 35-38, here 38; Letter dated January 31, 1931 from Tiruvalla to the Antiochene Jacobite Patriarch, in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 14-18.

³³ Mar Ivanios "Speech at Unity Octave 1947, America," Malayalam translation given fully in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 228-234, here 229.

³⁴ "Welcome Speech at the First Anniversary of the Reunion", September 22, 1931 at Thirumulapuram, Tiruvalla, (hereafter, Mar Ivanios, "Welcome Speech") Malayalam text partly quoted in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 12.

Jesus that beats in the chest of the Holy Church. All divisions that have occurred from the beginning of the history of Christianity till today have caused painful wounds in the body of that loving Lord... His loving heart is incessantly burning to see the whole mankind, redeemed by the loving Lord's life-giving passion, death and resurrection, united with the salvific Catholic Church.³⁵

Mar Ivanios perceived that the present division within Christ's body is certainly against his will manifested in his prayer for unity (Jn 17/21-23).³⁶ Mar Ivanios also understood and pointed out that the present divisions within the body of Christ remain as the greatest hindrance for the conversion of the whole world.³⁷ In this vision also he is only remaining listening to and faithful to Christ's prayer for unity (Jn 17/21). It is to be observed that Mar Ivanios' vision of the unity of Jesus Christ's body the Church is centered on his incarnation and Eucharistization.

Mar Ivanios deeply shared the pain the Lord is suffering from the wounds in his body, and perceived it his obligation under obedience to the Lord of the Church to do what he could do to heal the wounds in the Lord's body that constantly pain him and thereby to reduce his pain. And he challenged all others to dare do what they could do for the same purpose³⁸ (There are many more sound fundamental reasons why Mar Ivanios stood and argued for and entered into union with the Catholic Church headed by the Patriarch of Rome. To elucidate them is beyond the scope of this article).

Union in Love

Mar Ivanios is a symphonist and sing master of love, especially of God's love manifested and given in the incarnation of

³⁵ Mar Ivanios "Kothamangalam Speech"³⁵

³⁶ Mar Ivanios, "Post-Consecration Speech" of May 1, 1925 at Niranam. Full Malayalam Text published in *Bethany Masika* June (1925) 195-235 in Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 169-183, here 176; "Second Memorandum," 313 no.1; Mar Ivanios, "Speech at Unity Octave, 1947 America," 233.

³⁷ Mar Ivanios, "Speech at Unity Octave, 1947 America," 233; Letter to Archbishop Apollonarius: Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 20-23.

³⁸ Mar Ivanios, "Welcome Speech," 12.

Jesus Christ. The second part of his book on the Eucharist is titled *samsargam* (=communion) or “*Qurbanadhyānam*” (Meditation on the *Qurbono*) (my English translation), and five of its chapters are on our Lord’s love: They are titled, in my English translation, “Love of Our Lord manifested in the holy *qurbono*,” “The way for us to work in love with the Lord, who manifests himself in the holy sacrifice,” “About the love the Lord Jesus, who becomes our spiritual food in the holy *qurbono*,” “The love of the Lord revealed to us in the *qurbono*’ the spiritual food,” and “Our Lord’s sacred heart.”³⁹

He took the Church as a spiritual movement, a spiritual relationship, of love that climaxes in unity. He placed unity by love at the center of the relationship between individuals and the Church as well as between hierarchs of the Churches. For him love relationship with Jesus Christ must be at the center of relationship in the Church and in the world.⁴⁰

Christians achieve the said unity in love practically in the reception of the sacraments of the Church, particularly the holy Eucharist. The holy Eucharist enables the faithful for a mystical union with our Lord and through him with the Father. Recipients of the sacraments taste and share Christ’s love for mankind. Christ’s body the Church is a community of love that tastes his love and gets united with him. It should be manifested also in the hierarchical communion of the Church. In his speech in 1925 at Niranam after his episcopal consecration he requested, “...let the Catholicos (the hierarchical head of the then Malankara Syrian Jacobite Church of the speaker-author) installed by the bishops of the Malankara Church try to strengthen the love relationship with the Patriarch installed by the bishops of Turkey.”⁴¹ In the same speech he reminded the Catholicos that the latter’s primary duty was to make all efforts to get united in love and communion with the Patriarchal See of Antioch... Love relationship should govern mutual relation-

³⁹ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*, Part II, 11-15.

⁴⁰ Kurian Valuparambil, “The Ecumenical Ecclesiology of Mar Ivanios,” *Christian Orient* 13/4 (2002) 174-178, here176.

⁴¹ Mar Ivanios; “Post-Consecration Speech,” 180.

ship... And he challenged the whole community of the faithful to recreate the unity, especially, of all the Syrian Christians of Kerala.⁴²

In many other ways also Mar Ivanios gave expression to his priority of love. Here we cite a few examples. He, the founder father of the Bethany Monastery, took, after reflection and longing for ten years, Apostle St. John, the apostle of love, for the patron saint of that community. Traditionally, bishop-elect in the ancient Syrian Churches adopts at the time of his episcopal consecration the name of a model Church father as his official episcopal name. At his episcopal consecration Fr. P.T.George took for him the name *Ivanios* (John), because Apostle John is known to be an apostle of love.⁴³ What prompted Mar Ivanios to plan and found the Bethany Religious Congregation? - nothing but unlimited love towards God and mankind; "...to earn God" (his own beloved phrase) and give that God. He warns, "*he (a monk) shall have no spirit other than love of God.*" Only one who "*earns (the) God,*" who has emptied himself in Jesus Christ's incarnation can give himself to God and others and restore mankind. This biblical perception was a constant of his.⁴⁴

Christ's Incarnation and Mar Ivanios Engagements in Human Development

"...if God has not incarnated as the Christ... Christianity's power that brings the whole world in the way of civilization ... is in vain," said Mar Ivanios in his "Deacon's Speech."⁴⁵ This book contains a study on Mar Ivanios' engagement in the field of education. Certainly, the apparent motive was multifaceted human development to enhance the development of the whole society. But was it the fundamental motive or powerhouse for his engagement in

⁴²Mar Ivanios; "Post-Consecration Speech,":Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 258-267.

⁴³ In his "Post-Consecration Speech" Mar Ivanios announces both these cases; Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 181-182.

⁴⁴ *Girideepam* 55-57: Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 142-143; "Post-Consecraion Speech," Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 181-182.

⁴⁵ "Deacon's Speech," 55.

multilevel educational activities -- to educate himself and others? It was his disinterested absolute commitment to the incarnated Jesus Christ. The starting citation in the present paragraph (also indicated earlier) points to Mar Ivanios' understanding of Jesus' incarnation as Christianity's power for civilizing the whole world and ennobling mankind by Christian morality. Jesus Christ's incarnation affects the whole man. Christianity has always given priority to education in the process of civilizing mankind. Mar Ivanios reminds the members of his Church that it is in obedience to Jesus Christ's (the Lord's) last command to teach all nations (Mt. 28/20) that the Catholic Church engages education all over the world. It is worth noting that Mar Ivanios has made an adjusted quotation of the Matthean text to highlight the Church's understanding of the command to teach all transcending boundaries of faith confessions, gender and genus discriminations. The Malankara Catholic Church found and manage schools with clear vision and definite intention: All students shall get general education founded on character culture and ideal instruction on duties of ideal citizenship, affirms Mar Ivanios.⁴⁶

While a professor in Serampore College he took both young men and women from Kerala for higher education with the further intention of incapacitating them to work for the future development of the society. Young women were given facilities of higher education with the further intention of facilitating the development and empowerment of women.⁴⁷ The women wing of the Bethany religious congregation was instituted with the particular intention of forming a dedicated group of women to work for the development and empowerment of the women flock of the society. Taking young women parallel to taking young men along with a priest to such a distant place was unheard and even scandalous in those days. Forming a women disciples' community parallel to men disciples' community was new in the Malankara Church. We find, in this regard, he was only imitating the enhominalized Jesus Christ, who

⁴⁶ Pastoral Letter of 1st December, 1950 to counter Shri Panampally's *Secondary School Scheme*: Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 265.

⁴⁷ Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 140.

took both men disciples (Lk 6/12-16) and women disciples along with him in his travelling ministry from Galilee (Lk 8/1-3) to Jerusalem (Lk 23/49).

Political Engagements

“...faith in God, loyalty to the king, and legal submission to authority are factors that should go hand in hand,” declared Archbishop Mar Ivanios on February 5, 1934 in his valedictory speech in honour of Governor Mr. Austine. Mar Ivanios engaged politics (not party politics). He enjoyed personal contact with many world leaders of his time, and made use of that privilege for the good of India and Indians.⁴⁸ His basic principle in political engagement also was that of Jesus Christ, incarnate Son of God: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mk 12/17 and parr). When political authority infringed limits Mar Ivanios was the first to compel it retreat.⁴⁹ We are quickly reminded of Jesus’ answers to Herod’s threats (Lk 13/31-34) and Pilate’s assumptive authority (Jn 19/8-11). Mar Ivanios incited the whole Catholic community to engage politics:

Taken antiquity as criterion, Christianity and Kerala are related and close like any other society in Kerala. Kerala Catholics have the great obligation to see from the heights and work in the frontline for the welfare of the state and the development of the nation. Each Catholic believer is duty bound to enter courageously into and defeating obstacles perform moral battle for the welfare of the nation, development of the state, and progress of the society.⁵⁰

Both in obeying the legal authority and in opposing its illegal and immoral highhanding Mar Ivanios united himself with Jesus Christ, God incarnated. As indicated above, Mar Ivanios encouraged and worked for the progress and development of humanity as part of

⁴⁸Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 209-243.

⁴⁹Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 150-159,254-271

⁵⁰ Speech at All Kerala Catholic Congress Meeting at Muvattupuzha: Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 28-33, here 32-33.

its way towards its final reunion with God through Christ the incarnated Son of God.⁵¹

Inculturation

In an earlier section of this paper I drew the readership's esteemed attention to Mar Ivanios' entry into a very crucial point of radical inculturation. Any one acquainted with him personally or through his endeavours to found the Bethany monastery for men readily acknowledges in him an ardent advocate of indigenization of Christianity in India. The stories about his visits to Ramakrishna Mission, Mahatma Gandhiji's Sabarmathi Ashram and Tagores's Santhnikethan and Indian ashrams elsewhere and discussions with many Hindu sanyasis for collecting ideas of the life style of the monastery of his plan and his decision for saffron colour of the monks' dress in imitation of Indian monks have already been long imprinted in the minds of Keralites. From the aspect last mentioned he made it a rule that meat shall be kept away from Bethany monasteries. Well, today we know that permanent abstinence from meat belongs not to the original Indian (*Sindhu/Indus*) proto-Dravidian culture, but only to the Aryan culture that invaded India at a later time (but long before Christian faith arrived India) and marginalized the original Indian culture. However, Mar Ivanios adopted those elements in good faith of maintaining the Indian face of Christianity, and in the years to come it proved quite relevant. His fondness for uniting Indian and Christian perception about mountain as an ideal place for enjoying closeness to God found expression in the very choice of the place for the mother monastery of the Bethany religious community. Here is a western witness about his very appearance: "...By the look of him, he might have walked that moment out of any Hindu temple covered with bulbous imagery or any Persian mosque scrawled with a fantastic script..."⁵² He practised many Indian customs and studied Indian scriptures and made these regulatory for the monks of the monastery he founded.

⁵¹ As described above the purpose of Bethany.

⁵² G.K.Chesterton, "The People I Saw in Dublin," *The Universe: Inchackalody, Mar Ivanios II*, 180-81.

Brightening the Indian face of Christianity in India was a life long burning issue for him. An exceptional part of his famous post-consecration speech is dedicated for this cause. He admonished the whole community:

... We take pride in the founding of Christianity in India before nineteen centuries. Even after such a long period in many respects our Christianity remains simply foreign ...We can indianize Christianity in India with the least alteration in the fundamental principles of ancient apostolic and catholic Christian Church...⁵³

On another occasion in Canada he asserted:

... All of them (ancient Christians in India) are Indians. Their Christian culture is a mixture of the teachings of Jesus and the good aspects of Indian culture -- certainly there are many good aspects...Christianity (in India) is a beautiful flower deep rooted, growing and dancing in the fertile soil of pure Indian culture. Christianity is not one that deforms or destroys the body of Indian culture, but one that fulfills it and tries to formulate its whole possibilities...⁵⁴

Certainly it is his unity with the incarnate Son of God Jesus Christ that compelled the greatest ecumenist to see and search for further ways to strengthen the unity of the many good aspects of Indian culture and Christianity. In this light need we review also the following events of Mar Ivanios's history. Many followers of faiths other than the Christian generously contributed financially, some with their "widow's penny," for establishing the Bethany Movement at Perunadu. He highly honoured their goodwill and sacrifice.⁵⁵ Even when his own brethren (members of his own society) were fighting tooth and nail against the Syro-Malankara Church headed by Mar Ivanios many influential local followers of faiths other than

⁵³ "Post-Consecration Speech": Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 180-181.

⁵⁴ "Unity Octave Speech 1947 America":Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 233.

⁵⁵ Mar Ivanios' letter dated Kollavarsham 1105 from Vadasserikkara to the Donors for the First General Body Meeting: Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios*, I, 358;Mar Ivanios' Presidential Address: Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 357-363, 361.

the Christian used their good name to grow his Church.⁵⁶ Certainly Mar Ivanios gazed at the unity of Indian culture and Christianity as the unity of India and Christ.

Conclusion

Mar Ivanios perceived with exceptional perspicuity the great mystery of the enhominization of Jesus Christ in its reality, meaning, cosmic relevance and compelling challenge for responsive unity among men, especially among the disciples of Jesus Christ. Consequently he could not but be an exceptionally great prophet of ecumenism, Church unity and cosmic communion.

Prophet he was, stood before God for long with the years long problem of the divisions within his own Church in particular, in the whole Christian world, and in the world at large. He felt with Christ the depth and pain of the divisions within his own Church in their rude and crude forms. Prayed God to show the way out. Heard his word saying: Enjoy unity with God the Divine Trinity through union with Jesus Christ, the enhominalized Word, Son of God. Enjoy union with Jesus Christ through union with his Church. Enjoy union with Christ, the Church and the whole created universe through the sacraments of the Church; especially the Eucharist. Enjoy union with Christ also by love (mystic union) and sharing the same love with all others. Finally, Christians all over the world are especially challenged by Christ to enjoy and witness to their unity with him and through him with God, Christ's Church, and the whole universe by recovering the unity of the Church of Christ. All ways of Christian engagement for the progress and development of humanity in its manifold aspects are to be drawn on the inhumanized Jesus Christ.

Having stood before God and heard him speak Mar Ivanios stood before his people. He prophesied to the people of God. He prophesied to their leadership. Christian Church is the sign of the unity of the whole creation, the unity God reestablished in and through Jesus Christ his enhominalized Son. Church should really

⁵⁶ Philip Pantholil, *Mar Ivanios Ente Smaranayil* (Kozhencery, 1997) 14-15.

celebrate herself so that God's design for her is truly fulfilled. Organic unity of Churches in the Catholic communion of Churches is the divinely inspired and humanly viable efficacious live expression of the Church's unity with her one bridegroom through whom all things have been made and all things will be restored to God in response to their anxiety. Mar Ivanios' reuniting the Malankara Syrian Church with the Catholic Church, visibly headed by the bishop of Rome and thereby the successor Peter, was not an isolated act of change of Church, but the most expressive obeisant and overt "yes" to God's plan for cosmic reunion with him through his only begotten Son Jesus Christ.



Mar Ivanios Lover of the Lord's Virgin Mother

Introduction

A Christian's devotion (= love) to Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is related and proportionate to one's reception and perception of the mystery of his incarnation in its entirety. Mar Ivanios was overwhelmed by the significance of the mystery of Jesus Christ's incarnation in God's salvific plan. So it was only natural for him to have excelled as an ardent detotee of the Blessed Mother and a zealous apostle of Marian devotion. The present study about Mar Ivanios' love towards the Virgin Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ will review the subject mainly from two aspects; namely, the factors that influenced and helped him to be an ardent lover of Blessed Mary and the methods he employed to express his love towards her and encourage others to do the same. In both these aspects students of his life will notice two periods: (1) before his visible communion with the Catholic Church (pre-reunion days); (2) after that event (post-reunion days). We could also distinguish in both those aspects traditional methods and methods he developed on his own.

Sources of Mar Ivanios' Marian Devotion

In the normal course of human life one does not begin his / her spiritual (religious) life as an informed follower of a doctrine or set of doctrines. Spirituality is breathed into one's prime life particularly through his/her mother and family and religious community. And it happened in the right time and the right track with little Geevarghese (later Geevarghese Mar Ivanios). His mother Anna was a passionate devotee of the Lord's Blessed Mother. Mar Ivanios' mother had an added reason for it. For long her own maternal family line has not received male issues. She made it almost her habit to make uninterrupted recourse to the Blessed Mother's intercession with unfailing confidence for the grace to fondle a male child in her bosom, and offered the child to the Blessed Mother's special patronage.¹ And the grace was granted. It is an accepted scientific truth that an expectant mother's deep emotions and feelings tell very much upon the personality and character of the issue in her womb. Anna's most triumphant religious feelings at and during her pregnancy of the hero of our story were certainly those of her passionate attachment to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord. It is no wonder, then, devotion to and unfailing confidence in our Virgin Mother was among the notable traits in the religious character of young Geevarghese.²

Mar Ivanios was born in a traditional Kerala Malankara Syrian Christian family that had a long unbroken priestly succession. The Malankara Christians are traditionally very much attached to the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary. Offering the prayers of the liturgy of the hours for the laity was a regular and unfailed spiritual exercise of every pious Christian family. Mothers were very keen to fulfill it in the company of their children. Prayers of the liturgy of all the

¹T. Inchakkalody, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, I 25; Mother Salga, *Punaraikyattinte Adyakālangal*, 2.

²Varghese Karippayil, *The Reunion Movement of India* (Tiruvalla, 1964) 54; Fr. Joshua's letter: Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 98.

hours included the prayer "Hail Mary, full of grace..." This prayer was repeated many times in the liturgy of the same hour. It means, in his early childhood many times a day the same prayer addressing the Blessed Virgin was uttered by the whole family into the tender ears of Geevarghese. The same method was repeated in his parish church during their liturgical and paraliturgical services. As a practising faithful Mar Ivanios' mother used to take her child regularly into the church to participate in the divine services, as did the Blessed Virgin Mother take her Son regularly to their synagogue and the temple (cfr, Lk 2/41-42;4/16).

Geevarghese embeded his boyhood in profound religious sentiments. That is why he made the following public confession:

My desire to lead a life of religious discipline sprouted in my mind already as early as I was only eight or ten years old. From that day onwards passing through many stages and by the grace of the Holy Spirit it reached the present status The most important thing that laid deep in my heart as the ideal of life was to attempt at attaining the perfection of sanctity in religious life.³

These words prove that young Geevarghese participated in the spiritual exercises in his family and his parish church or in any other gathering of similar interest not indifferently. He did not say the prayers mechanically. He was fully involved in them. In the days of the young boy the evening and morning liturgy of the hours for the laity in the Malankara Church was immediately preceded by a few Christian hymns and readings from the Bible. One could not imagine of a Malankara family without Bible reading. "Their principal reading is the sacred scripture." In the liturgy of the hours in the family the following order was kept up for the readings from the Bible: a passage from the Old Testament (except Psalms), a passage from the New Testament, a passage from the Psalms. The Bible passages were read by the children of the family. Reading started from the youngest and moved on to the eldest or the other

³ Mar Ivanios, "Post-Consecration Speech": Inchacklody,*Mar Ivanios I*, 169-183, here 169

way about. Being the eldest son of his family, young Geevarghese could be the sentinel Bible reader.

Besides, his Church constantly encouraged her faithful for regular Bible reading. Bible passages were apportioned for the catechism lessons so that by the time children completed their catechism course in full they could know by heart the whole Bible or at least its important parts. That Mar Ivanios acquired exceptional acquaintance with the Bible already from his early youth could be rightly inferred from his later works and homilies.⁴ Without formal biblical training in a seminary, he could lead long discussions on biblical themes,⁵ make extensive sermons of Gospel themes and their practical applications,⁶ and continue with commentaries on scriptural passages.⁷

As an attentive and involved reader of the sacred scripture and an ardent lover of the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary, young Geevarghese certainly listened to what the Holy Spirit has said through the scriptural authors, particularly of the New Testament, about Mary. Mar Ivanios says,

Mary is the most dynamic person the world history. She was allowed to take part in the first step in the new world of grace; she chose virginity, a way of life which contradicted every tradition, she asked Christ to perform His first miracle; she was the first under the cross.¹³⁸

These words of Mar Ivanios prove that he had acquired a good grasp of the biblical, especially the New Testamet picture of Blessed Mary.

Youg Geevarghese's familiarity with the biblical passages of Marian stories or references or even allusions certanly helped him to substantiate and enhance his filial loving devotion towards the

⁴ Cfr Mar Ivanios, "Love of God," "Meditations on Humility" in *Jivaprakāsham: Moolaveetil, Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 108 note 2.

⁵ Father Abraham, O.I.C., *Bethany Ashram* (Manuscript) 17: *Ibid.* 108 note 4.13

⁶ M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 34.

⁷ M. Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 32.

⁸ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddhavāra Dhyānangal* (Tiruvalla, 1926): Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 102

mother of Jesus Christ. Later, as an informed student and an erudite exponent of the universal significance of Jesus' incarnation he could appreciate and admire the depth and width of the biblical witness to the unique relation between Jesus and his mother. His comprehensive vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary is well attested in his reflections on her in relation to the holy Eucharistic (to which we shall come towards the end of this treatise). She, she alone, has borne God's Son, God's first born (Heb 1/6), as her first-born (Lk 2/7). God, in fulfilling his salvific plan in the fulness of time by sending his only begotten Son, graciously chose Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the latter. She was graced to be the meeting place of Godhead and humanity.

Young Geevarghese of "brilliant brain and religious temperament"⁹ could find in her the fabric and fecundity of virginity, the first lessons and example of which he had from his own paternal uncle priest Skariah Panicker, who was a celibate.¹⁰ Anna Panicker, Geevarghese's mother, loved her priest brother-in-law for his many virtues, and holding up him as an example would admonish her own son, "priests ought not to marry."¹¹ Moolaveetil surmises that young Geevarghese made a vow of perpetual virginity to God, in honour of Mary.¹² Whatever be the veracity of young Geevarghese's "vow of virginity in honour of Mary," certainly already at his boyhood he was inspired by "Virgin Mary" for celibate life.¹³ In the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ could he find the heroic life of sacrifices and mortification a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ should necessarily lead for his / her own spiritual progress and for the good of others.¹⁴ He found her the most benevolent mother pleading on her own initiative before her son for the cause of

⁹ M.Gibbons, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, 31.

¹⁰ In those days celibate priest was a very rare phenomenon in the Malankara Syrian Jacobite Church. Only with special permission from the highest hierarchical authority of the Church could a priest candidate (deacon) opt for celibacy for life.

¹¹ M.Gibbons, Archbishop Mar Ivanios,23.

¹² Moolaveetil, Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios, 99.

¹³ T. Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios I*, 31.

¹⁴ Mar Ivanios, "Post-Consecration Speech," Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios*,169-170.

those in need. His own mother's life experience confirmed him in his good faith in the mother of Jesus Christ as an unfailing implorer for families that suffer from shortage of livelihood, the necessities of life, sorrow, shame, disgrace etc. He could only be happy to receive in faith, like the beloved disciple at the foot of Jesus' cross, the mother of Jesus as his own beloved mother and give himself as her son, as Jesus Christ, raised on the cross, willed lastly from the disciple whom he loved. It is out of his filial loving devotion that in later years Mar Ivanios with the deepest sentiments of love usually called her "*kannyāstri ammachī*" (virgin mother). Proofs of the intimacy between the *kannyāstri ammachī* and Mar Ivanios could be seen in the association of some important events of his life with some Marian feasts: ordained deacon on the feast of the exaltation of the Mother of God (January 18, 1899); episcopal consecration on May 1, 1925; and breathed his last at 10 p.m. on 15th July, 1953, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.¹⁵

Church

Young Geevarghese's regular and zealous participation in the spiritual services conducted in his church embellished his Marian devotion drawn and developed from the spiritual atmosphere of his family and his own personal religious temperament. As already mentioned, all spiritual services in the church necessarily contained the Hail Mary prayer. The liturgy of the hours contained hymns of or in honour of the Mother of God. She was remembered and hailed many times in the Eucharisticic liturgy. The very public opening of the Eucharisticic liturgy is built on a co-remembrance of "Mary, who bore the Lord King" and "John who baptized" him (the opening *manito'* of the Syro-Malankara eucharistic liturgy). The various Marian feasts celebrated every liturgical year in the church were occasions of added joy and Marian affection for young Geevarghese. The Malankara Church celebrates the following Marian feasts (according to the order of the liturgical cycle):

¹⁵ M. Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 155; Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios*, 25.

Presentation of baby Mary in the temple (November 21), Annunciation to the Mother of God (first Sunday of *the twenty five days fast* in preparation for the feast of the nativity of Our Lord), Visitation of the Mother of God to Elizabeth (second Sunday of *the twenty five days fast* in preparation for the feast of the nativity of Our Lord), Mother of God, protectress of seeds (January 15), *Suboro'* (Annunciation) to Virgin Mary (March 25), Mother of God, protectress of growth (May 15), Dedication of the first church in honour of the Mother of God (June 15), *Shunoyo'* (transitus) of the Mother of God (August 15) in preparation to which there is *a fifteen days fast*, nativity of Holy Virgin Mary (September 8) in preparation to which in South India there is *eight days fast*. The eight days fast in preparation of the feast of the nativity of Our Lady is a speciality of Kerala Syrians. Marian feasts of the yearly cycle of the liturgical year were celebrated with all solemnity. Some of the Marian feasts were celebrated almost like village festivals in which people participated irrespective of creed, cast and colour. The Virgin Mother is "*amma*" (mother) for all.

Besides the Marian feasts in the Malankara Church feasts of the nativity of Our Lord and pentecost are also occasions of Marian remembrance. Practically, in the Syro-Malankara Church, there is no liturgical feast without special remembrance of Holy Mary. The Marian feasts and remembrances were also occasions for the faithful to hear the Marian interpretations of the relevant biblical passages running from the Fathers of the Church.

Young Geevarghese could also see or hear, to exaggerate a little, every other Christian woman in Kerala bearing the name 'Mary.' Similarly, the name of every other Malankara Church in Kerala was "St.Mary's Church."

Mariology of his Church

As the highest educated and erudite cleric of his Church Mar Ivanios fully imbibed her Mariology. The list of the Marian feasts given above in fact provides with a general idea of the Mariology of the Malankara Church. Divine maternity of Blessed Virgin Mary is

her fundamental prerogative, and the basis of all her other prerogatives (as for example, mediation before Jesus Christ). It is connected with the incarnation of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and on that account the unique relation between her and Jesus Christ. It means also that veneration to Blessed Mary is due to the part she was given by the Most Holy Trinity in the economy of salvation, and consequently and subsequently in the Church. Hence all Marian praises of the Church end with praises of the Divine Persons, either individually or as communion, of the Most Holy Trinity.

The Malankara Church was at all times in the front line to honour Blessed Virgin Mary on account of her role given by God in his economy of salvation. In this regard the Malankara Church boosted her. The Blessed Virgin was remembered also in the liturgy of the hours of all the days of the weekly cycle. The liturgy of the hours of all the days is enriched by the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mother.

So one could rightly say that the Malankara Church rises up in the morning, walks in the day, ends the day and sleeps at night with the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary, because there is no Church without her and there is no worship of God or life without her. There is no other Church that has so many daily liturgical Marian commemoration as the Syrian (Malankara) Church.¹⁶

Besides, Wednesday of the weekly cycle is specially dedicated for her remembrance. There are also the many Marian feasts of the yearly cycle of the liturgical year to which we have made general mention in paragraph no.5 above. We can rightly qualify the ecclesial life of the Malankara Church as wholly Marian.¹⁷ "Devotion to Our Lady breathes in every breath."¹⁸

The Malankara Church commemorates her within the communion of the Church and the saints. This is especially evident in the setting up of her remembrance within the structure of the liturgical prayer.¹⁹ A little above I indicated that the Church's

¹⁶ K.Valuparampil, *Visvasa Satyangular: Tirusabha. Atmabodhanam* (Tiruvalla:2000) 108.

¹⁷ K.Valuparampil, *Tirusabha*, 108.

¹⁸ M.Gibbons, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, 125.

¹⁹ K.Valuparampil, *Tirusabha*, 108.

praises of Mary end in praises of God. That means, the Syrian Malankara Church praises Blessed Mary in order to praise God / Jesus Christ / the Holy Spirit / God the Father / the Most Holy Trinity. Why? Because it is the Trinity who exalted her. Marian praises is part of the Divine praises.²⁰ God has exalted her to the highest rank among his saints. In the liturgy the Malankara Church praises her as "the second heaven," besides remembering her by the many other symbolical and typological titles and appellations used by the fathers of the Church. Mar Ivanios' love towards her, inherited from and cultivated in the family and his parish and surroundings in his early days, was cemented by the sound theological Marian vision of the Malankara Church.

Post-Reunion Days

By familial and ecclesial birth and growth Mar Ivanios was an ardent lover of Blessed Virgin Mary. His knowledge of Blessed Mary and his filial love towards her were a thousandfold intensified and exposed in his life in the Catholic communion. He was very much taken up by the Marian devotions and Marian organizations, particularly the Legion of Mary, in the Western Catholic Church. From this point of view two instances are worth particular notice. First, during his first European visit in 1932, after visiting the pope in May, on June 25th he visited the Frank Duff, founder of Legion of Mary, in its international central office, and had long discussions with him. Mar Ivanios was deeply attracted to the Legion of Mary and the recital of the Marian rosary.

Second, his participation in the Marian Congress in June 1947 in Ottawa. It left a lasting and lofty impression in him, particularly on the Marian devotion and the spiritual strength of the Catholic Church connected with it and Eucharistic communion. His presence in Canada then was due chiefly to his loving devotion to Our Lady. He himself confesses it to Canadians:

²⁰ K.Valuparampil, *Tirusabha*, 109. 29; M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 135;

...It is only my disinterested devotion to the Holy Lady, whom we venerate under the title "the Second Heaven" that prompted me to accept the invitation of the archbishop of Ottawa and participate in the Marian Congress that takes place here. I would like to return with the sweet dreams of this great celebration of this Marian feast. The firm devotion of the Canadian Catholics towards the "²¹Second Heaven" has certainly given me incitement and encouragement.

He repeats the same sentiments in his long farewell letter published in *Catholic Record* (a Canadian Newspaper) of Sept.23, 1947.²² He was so haunted by the devotions of the Western Catholic Church towards the blessed Virgin Mother that he did not bother to discriminate them as typically western. Hence, he introduced them in the Malankara Catholic Church.

Outward Flow

"A brimfull pot overflows." Mar Ivanios was from his first breath to his last filled with Marian love. Naturally it overflowed in many ways unintermittently throughout his life, say, before and after his full communion with the Catholic Church. Our discussion in the preceding pages shed much light to the various ways his filial love towards Holy Mary found its extensive expression. Besides his private exposures of his intimacy with her, there are also common prayers honouring her in the family and the church in which he actively participated and / or took the lead. Already before his full communion with the Catholic Church he worked in the different capacities of the hierarchy (deacon, priest, and bishop), and also as the abbot of the Bethany religious congregation. In all those capacities he took the lead to foster Marian devotion according to the ecclesial spirit in the respective congregations of his care. All the ecclesial ways of Marian commemoration of the non-Catholic Malankara Church were continued in the Malankara Catholic Church, constituted with Mar Ivanios' full communion with the Catholic Church. His fundamental and original Marilogies and

²¹ Mar Ivanios' Speech titled "Canada in My Eyes" addressed to a great gathering of Canadians, Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios*, II,234-236.

²² T. Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios* II, 237-240

Marian devotion were those of the Syrian Church. He did not inherit new Mariology from the Western Catholic Church. But he adopted the most prominent form of Marian devotion (the Rosary), universally practised in the Western Catholic Church. He did so on account of his very high appreciation of the spiritual strength of the then Catholic Church of the west, and because he found it a convenient way to increase the Marian devotion of his Malankara Catholics.

Next we shall have a browsing of some of Mar Ivanios' personal initiatives of augmented Marian devotion. While a deacon, for a Master's degree he wrote a dissertation on "Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?"²³ In his dissertation he proved, contrary to the thereto western historians, that the Malankara Syrians were not Nestorians. It has Mariological implications. Nestorians do not honour Blessed Mary as the Mother of God. But Mar Ivanios (then a deacon) argued that from the time of St.Thomas the apostle, the Malankara Syrians were honouring Blessed Mary as the Virgin Mother of God since they believed in Jesus Christ as perfect God and perfect man. Here his personal Mariological interest is identical with that of his Church.

Mar Ivanios designated the Holy Virgin Mother as the heavenly patroness saint of the Bethany Religious congregation he founded in his Syrian Malankara Jacobite days.²⁴ Thereby he presented her life as the example of that of his spiritual sons. In an article of the Rule of the same religious congregation he proposed, "Let the brothers have a child-like devotion to the most pure mother of God, and daily entrust to her the purity of their soul and body."²⁵ By this rule he made child-like devotion to Holy Mary a duty incumbent upon all the members of the religious congregation whose heavenly mother is Holy Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mother. She is their example and mediatrix for their spiritual development and perfection. Without closely imitating her in spiritual lives they

²³ T. Inchakkalody, *Mar Ivanios I*,45-50.

²⁴ *Rules*, chapter 1, No.4.

²⁵ *Rules*, Chapter 9, No.3

could not faithfully fulfill their service to the people of God and humanity at large for which purposes they have been congregated in the Bethany religious community in the Church. Mar Ivanios views love towards the Blessed Mother and imitation of her exalted virtues absolutely necessary not only for the spiritual growth of the members of the Bethany religious congregation, but also for the material prosperity of mankind.²⁶

"In union with Mary let us go to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit," Mar Ivanios exhorted the Bethany sisters, his spiritual daughters, in a retreat he preached to them on April 20, 1927.²⁷ The method he proposes here is parallel to and reciprocal to the one God adopted: He sent his son to us through Mary in the Holy Spirit. Mar Ivanios firmly believed that imitation of Christ could not be carried on but through Holy Mary, the first and most perfect human being that the world had ever seen.²⁸ During his episcopacy through his teaching and preaching he impressed upon the faithful the Holy Mother's powerful patronage, benevolence in welcoming sinners, and motherly assistance, especially at the hour of death.²⁹ He believed that any amount of praise of or prayer to the mother of Our Lord for mediation would not exceed limits.

That may be one of the reasons why he introduced the Legion of Mary, a western form of Marian devotion, already in 1932 in the Malankara Catholic Church headed by him. Soon after his return from the European visit in 1932 he sent Mrs Pappiyamma George Joseph (a disciple and associate of Mahatma Gandhiji) and Chachiyamma, both from Chengannur, to get trained in matters of Legion of Mary. He himself took the lead to start a Legion Presidium in their leadership in Chengannur under the title "Help of Christians."³⁰ The Legion Presidium Chengannur was the ever first

²⁶ L. Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 102.

²⁷ Quoted from Bethany Archives and translated into English in Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 101.

²⁸ Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, 101

²⁹ Mar Ivanios' Pastoral Letter dated 5th October, 1950; *Spiritual Life*, 100.

³⁰ Information personally given by Mr. Mathewkutty Valuparampil, a former archdiocesan president of Legion of Mary.

one in Kerala. Another reason for his high interest in promoting Legion of Mary could be that already in 1930 the Holy Father had sanctioned permission to it to grow as an international missionary organization.

It must be observed that Mar Ivanios did not replace any of the Malankara Marian devotions with the western. He only adopted, but without adapting, it to the Malankara Catholic Church.³¹ Further, he promoted the Malankara Marian devotions; as for example, the traditional *eight days fast* in honour of and in preparation for the feast of the nativity of Our Lady. However, in course of time his pioneering introduction of the western forms of Marian devotions, practically overtook the Malankara forms of Marian devotion. This is true also with other western devotions introduced into the Malankara Catholic Church. His overriding filial attachment to the Mother of God empowered him to introduce her statue in the Malankara Catholic Church, whose age old oriental heritage avoided statues for public veneration. He acquired a statue of the Blessed Mother and placed it provisionally on a hillock near one of his temporary homes, and later enshrined it in the grounds of the Archbishop's house at Pattom (now St.Aloysius Minor Seminary). He called her "Mother of Reunion," a title given her nowhere else in the world.³² He used to pray regularly before that statue invoking her, "Oh! Our Lord's Mother," and encouraged the seminarists to do the same. Against the popular Indian religious context an oriental catholic may solace his oriental insipidity over the introduction of a statue of the Mother of Our Lord in the Malankara Catholic Church. However, the innovation is the least attuned to the spirit of the oriental ecclesial tradition. Even supporting the introduction by an anti-iconoclastic spirit, it must be said, he could have opted for a

³¹ According to the "Instructions from the Sacred Oriental Congregation for the Preservation of the Purity of the Syro-Malankara Rite," dated February 25, 1957, Rome (hereafter, "Instructions"), all devotions adopted from the west must be adapted to the rite of each Church (see no. 4 and 3). Malayalam translation of the full text (undersigned by the local ordinaries of both eparchies (Trivandrum and Tirualla; was sent on 13.5.1957 from Trivandrum to all the churches of both eparchies.

³² M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 156;

statue of the Holy Mother holding the child Jesus in her arms. The theological custom of the Oriental and Eastern Churches is to see her only together with child Jesus. In fact "Instructions of the Sacred Oriental Congregation for the Preservation of the Purity of the Malankara Rite" dated February 25, 1957, sent to the hierarchs of the Malankara Catholic Church categorically prohibits placing any type of statue inside the church, and directs for the removal of statues if placed inside the church ("Instructions" no.7).

Mar Ivanios' adoption of Marian devotions crossing borders found expression also in including western Marian feasts like those of Our Lady of Lourdes (February 8), Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16), Rosary (October 7), besides that of the Immaculate Conception of the mother of God (December 8) in the liturgical calendar of the Malankara Catholic Church. Though the Roman definition of the Immaculate Conception of Bl. Mary remains still problematic in ecumenical circles, it could be rightly understood as the western Catholic formulation of the age old faith of all the ancient Churches including the Syrian in the all-holiness of the Blessed Mother of God and God's election and consecration of her before she was formed in her mother's womb (in Jeremiah's terms).³³ These typically western Marian feasts also gave the Malankara Catholics occasions to express their special devotion to her.

Mar Ivanios made use of every chance to witness to his Marian love and encouraged the faithful of his Church to follow him in this regard. Mar Ivanios dedicated in honour of Holy Mary his pro-cathedral in which in 1932 the canonical erection of the Metropolitan eparchy of Trivandrum and the canonical installation of its archbishop was performed.³⁴ Later, he dedicated the Cathedral also to the honour of Holy Mary's name: "St.Mary's Cathedral." Nearly half of the churches built in the Metrpolitan eparchy of Trivandrum during his pastorate were dedicated in honour of Holy

³³ John MacQuarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (London: Collins,1990) 75. John MacQuarrie is an Anglican theologian.

³⁴ M.Gibbons, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, 101.

Mary. The prayers he added to the evening hours of the liturgy of the hours of the laity contained a prayer directly addressed to the Holy Mother for protection in God's grace and holiness.³⁵

A Poet of Marian Greatness

Syriac Churches have inherited the Mariology of the early Church of Syria, where the early fervour of Marian devotion reached its peak in the person of Deacon Mar Aprem, "the lyre of the Holy Spirit." Mar Aprem was a poet theologian. His main medium for teaching the people of his Church Mariology was poems of popular lyrics. Mar Jacob of Serugh also composed many hymns on Holy Mary. Both of them wrote in Syriac. Some of their hymns form part of the liturgy of the hours of the Syrian Churches. These best Syrian masters have a good disciple in Mar Ivanios, who also composed poems in Syriac on the Blessed Mother. Gibbons gives the English translation of one of such poems:

O Cloud that rained forth The Dew of Life
Maid through whose face the sun shines,
Who stands out among the generations of the earth
And prevents darkness encompassing it.
Central diamond set in the crown of the Lord of Heaven,
Who transmits the light of her Son
To the four corners of the Universe,
Door unbuilt by hands, uncut by tools, closed forever,
Through whom the King of Glory entered once,
Ship that carried to us riches from the treasure of the Father,
All-pure, ever seaworthy vessel piloted by the Prince of Peace,
Creeper plant that climbed to the zenith of the mountains
And budded for the fruit of life--the Son of God.
Mother in whose lap the sad find comfort,
The sinners hope, and the saints ecstasy.
In Chorus: Pray for us

³⁵ Thus reads the prayer: "Holy mother, protect us at this night in God's grace and holiness."

Mary, Mary the Holy
Mary the Immaculate,
Mary the ever Virgin,
Mary the Eve of Redemption, Mary the Mother of God,
Mary the Second Heaven,
Mary my Mother,
Alleluia!³⁶

Meditation on Mary in Relation to Eucharist

"Filled with the love to die for Jesus Our Lord, what made it possible for her to keep her heart from breaking, but made the life in this world bearable? It was nothing but the presence of Lord Jesus who lives in the Eucharist on the *thronos* (throne = altar)." This quote is (my English translation of) a golden string of Mar Ivanios' personal reflection on the relation between Holy Mary and the Eucharist.³⁷ Earlier in this paper attention was drawn to the frequent commemoration of Holy Mary in the Syrian Antiochene Eucharistic liturgy inherited also by the Syro-Malankara Church. Besides the common ecclesial Marian commemorations Mar Ivanios made personal reflections on the relation between Holy Mary and the Eucharistic. His book *Viśuddha Qurbana Oru Dhyānapathanam* contains thirty one meditations connected with the holy Eucharist. They are designed as thanksgiving reflections. The thirtieth is titled (in my English translation) "On Imitating Holy Mary."³⁸ The main theme of this reflection is the joy Mary experienced in the company of Jesus even amidst all her sufferings and difficulties in her real life. After reflecting on her company with Jesus during his earthly life, what about her company with him after his departure from this world? Mar Ivanios passes on to Mary's company with Jesus in the Eucharistic. He continues:

She liked Bethlehem, Misrayim (Egypt) and Nazareth on account of her memories of those places. But more than these she liked the places where Lord Jesus live in the Eucharistic... She used to kneel

³⁶ M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 156-157.

³⁷ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*. 100-103, here 101.

³⁸ Mar Ivanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*, 100-103.

down before the *thronos* not only for hours but also for days. There in his presence she forgot the sufferings and sorrows of this world. Her heart was filled with the desire for the shortening of the life in this world and the removal of the veil of the sacrament to see her Son face to face.³⁹

The author closes this reflection inviting all to take the decision to spend some time to imitate Holy Mary in entering into communion with God by enjoying the presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist.

Devotion to “Our Lady of Sorrows”

“In his meditations he never failed to contemplate on Mary’s sorrows, following, in thought through different stages of the passion of Jesus Christ, and mourning with her at the loss of her beloved Son,” says Father Louis Moolaveetil, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Iyanios* (p.100). Gibbons makes the assuming statement, “The last conscious prayer of Mar Iyanios was to Our Lady of Sorrows.”⁴⁰ From these informations we may not wrongly infer that he was simply copying the western way of devotion to “Our Lady of Sorrows.”⁴¹ A close study of his meditation on Holy Mary reveals that his devotion to *Our Lady of Sorrows* does not appear to be in the western style, though his knowledge of the same need not be

³⁹ Mar Iyanios, *Viśuddha Qurbana*, 101-102.

⁴⁰ M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Iyanios*, 156.

⁴¹ Hilda Graef, *Mary. History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Combined Edition, fourth impression (Seed & Ward, 1994) (hereafter, Graef, *Mary*) 306-308, gives detailed information about the origin and development of the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows in the west. It was the special devotion of the Servites of Mary, founded in the late thirteenth century, a mendicant religious order like the Carmelites. The special devotion to the sorrows of Mary had developed from the *Planctus Mariae* and was further elaborated during the fourteenth century, when it was given a more literary form. By the first quarter of the fourteenth century the number of Mary’s sorrows was fixed at seven: Simeon’s prophecy, the flight into Egypt, the loss of Jesus in the temple, his arrest and the outrages following it, his crucifixion and death, his deposition into Mary’s arms and their separation at his burial. Sometimes the seventh sorrow is taken together with the sixth, and then seventh is her sorrowful waiting afterwards.

totally denied. In his reflections on the sorrows of Holy Mary he is not lamenting on them. He is concentrating not on the sorrows, but, as we have clarified in the last paragraph, on the joy she experienced in the company of Jesus even amidst sorrows and tribulations. Reflecting on the sorrows of Mary as Mar Ivanios does is quite oriental. The Malankara Church's liturgy of the *Worship of the Slibo'* (popularly called "Good Friday Service") is replete with reflections on the sorrows of Holy Mary, particularly in connection with the passion of her son. We shall not surmise that in his last conscious prayer Mar Ivanios uttered any prayer of the western catholic *four Hours* in honour of "Our Lady of Sorrows,"⁴² simply because there is no evidence thereto.⁴³ In his last days, as part of his constant reflection on Our Lord's passion,⁴⁴ he prayed to his mother, who suffered grief on account them but with hope and joy they would bring to her and the world at large.

Witnessing to the Mariology of the Malankara Church to the Western Church

On November 1, 1950 Pope Pious XII proclaimed the dogma of Holy Mary's assumption. Roman preparations for this proclamation gave Mar Ivanios a conspicuous occasion to bear witness before the Western Church to the traditional faith of the Syrian Malankara Church in the bodily assumption of the Blessed Mother of Jesus Christ into heaven. In a circular letter dated May 1, 1946, long before the official proclamation of the faith as a dogma, the pope had requested all patriarchs, primates, archbishops, bishops and local ordinaries of the whole Catholic Church to give their opinion on the matter. In his reply dated November 2, 1946 to the pope Mar

⁴² In the first quarter of the fourteenth century Hours (miniature Marian offices) in honour of the sorrows of Mary was published. The Hours were designated as *Dolours, Hours, Swords and Sorrows*; cfr Graef, *Mary*, 307-308.

⁴³ None of the ejaculations of his last days contain such a prayer; cfr Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 333-334.

⁴⁴ In his last days he was insistent to keep crucifixes at his sides so that whichever side he turns he could see it and meditate on the passion of Our Lord, Inchackalody, *Mar Ivanios II*, 340.

Ivanios⁴⁵ quotes extensively from the traditional liturgical prayers of the Syrian Jacobite /also of the Malankara Church (of both Malankara and Syria) for the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mother's *shunoyo'* (transitus) on August 15, and the days preceding and succeeding it. The feast is preceded by a fast called "fifteen days fast." In the letter he asserts,

The Divine Office assigned for the Feast and for the days that precede and follow, speaks in the clearest terms that the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary was separated from her body at her death, and that her soul and body were transferred to Heaven after her death.

And Regarding his priests and laity he writes in the same letter:

Those of my priests who were born and brought up in the Catholic Church believe this doctrine as something handed on to them from all antiquity. Regarding those re-united from Jacobitism both clergy and laity, I have no hesitation to say that they find in this doctrine the same teaching that they were believing while they were in the ... Jacobite Church...

Mar Ivanios points out that Nestorians also celebrate the feast of the *shunaya'* (transitus) of Blessed Virgin Mary. He goes on to state "As there is no age in the history of the Church to which one can point out that this belief in the bodily Transitus of the Blessed Virgin Mary was newly introduced, we must infer that it is Apostolic in origin." He brings to the notice of the Holy Father that the faith in the transitus of the Holy Virgin Mary and its feast on August 15 was a common heritage of the undivided St.Thomas Christians of Malabar and still continues to be so among the Syro Malankarites and the Syro Malabarans. Therefore he supports and recommends the proclamation of the faith as a dogma of the Church: "With regard to the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar, both the Syro Malankareans and the Syro Malabarans, such a declaration will give a new impetus to their filial devotion to the Mother of God whom they venerate in a very special manner." Before concluding

⁴⁵ The full English text of Mar Ivanios'letter to the Pope is reproduced in Moolaveetil, *Spiritual Life*, 172-179; M.Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, 174-179.

his letter he quotes the “*eight days’ fast*” ending with the feast of the nativity of Our Lady, observed only by the St Thomas Christians in the whole world; as characteristic mark of theirs in manifesting their special devotion to her.

Conclusion

Mar Ivanios was born and brought up in a family and Church deep rooted and radiating their traditional ardent love towards the Virgin Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mar Ivanios interiorized and personalized their ancient Marian devotion and grew it in correspondence with his growth in age, stature and wisdom. After his full communion with the Petrine See of Rome and thereby with the whole Catholic Church he continued to foster the traditional Malankara ways of practicing Marian devotion. Besides, may be with the good intention of enriching the same, uncritically he adopted, without adapting, some ways of the Marian devotion of the western Christendom. In the course of time it led a big number of the members of the Malankara Catholic Church to a certain amount of being unconscious of the traditional Malankara way of practicing Marian devotion. However, only with admiration can we look into Mar Ivanios’ inciting filial love towards and trust in the *kanyāstri ammachi* (Virgin Mother).



Terms Explained

Ābo=Father: title used to designate the Superior of a Monastery.

Achan=Father: a title used in Kerala at present to designate a priest.

Ādya Kālangal=early days.

Amma=mother

Āshrams=Monasteries

Āśān=A person who initiates a child into the learning process.

Bethānian Sannyāsa=Bethany Monastic Establishment

Bethany Yogam Report=the Report of a Meeting in 1930 concerning Bethany.

Bhagavad Gita=The Song of the Lord: The name of one of the Hindu Scriptures.

Bhakti Mārga=Way of Devotion

Brahmachārees=Celibates

Cathanār=Priest: a title used formerly in India to designate a priest.

Darśana=Vision

Divān=A political officer under the former kings.

Fides=A News Agency

Girideepam=Light from the Mountain: the name of a book published by Mar Ivanios.

Guru=Teacher

Jñāna Mārga=Way of Knowledge

Kannyāstri Ammachi=Virgin Mother

Karma Mārga=Way of good deeds

Kepha=Rock: the name given by Christ to Simon, the brother of Andrews.

Kurillos Kakshy= One of the names of the Jacobite Patriarch's faction of the Puthenkur community in India, used around 1912.

Mahājanasabha=the Great Gathering

Makaram=a Malayalam Month.

Malpāns=Teachers/Doctors in the Seminary.

Māppila=A Great Son: the title used formerly to designate Christians in India.

Mārga= Way

Mēdam=a Malayalam Month

Mysterion=Sacrament

Pasoka=Section

Patriarcha Bāwa= A name used in India to designate the Patriarch: Patriarch, the Father.

Pazhayakūttukār=One Section of the Thomas Christians: today's Syro-Malabar Catholics.

Punaraikyathinte=of the Reunion

Puthenkūr=One Section of the Thomas Christians who broke away from the full Catholic communion and who eventually accepted the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

Qurbānadhyānam=Meditation on the Holy Eucharist

Qurbanō/Qurbāna=Holy Eucharist

Rozō/Raza'=Mystery

Samsargam=Communion

Sannyāsa Darśana=Vision of Monasticism

Sannyāsa Yaaga = monastic life as a Sacrifice

Sannyāsa=Monasticism

Sannyāsa Jeevitha Sahāyi=Guidelines to Religious Life: name of a book of Mar Ivanios

Sannyāsi(s)=Monk(s)

Sarvāṅga Hōma Yaaga=Holocaust

Shunōyo'=Assumption of Mary/Transitus

Slībo'/Slība'=Cross

Snēha Mārga=Way of Love

Snēha=Love

Statikon= Order: letter of Erection of the Catholicate in India in 1912.

Sui Juris Church=An Individual Church within the Catholic Communion.

Suriāni Suviśēshakan=the Syriac/Syrian Evangelist: name of a periodical.

Suriāni=Syriac/Syrian

Theologia Prima=First Theology

Thronos=Altar

Vāk=word

Yaaga=Sacrifice

Yakobaya=Jacobite

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