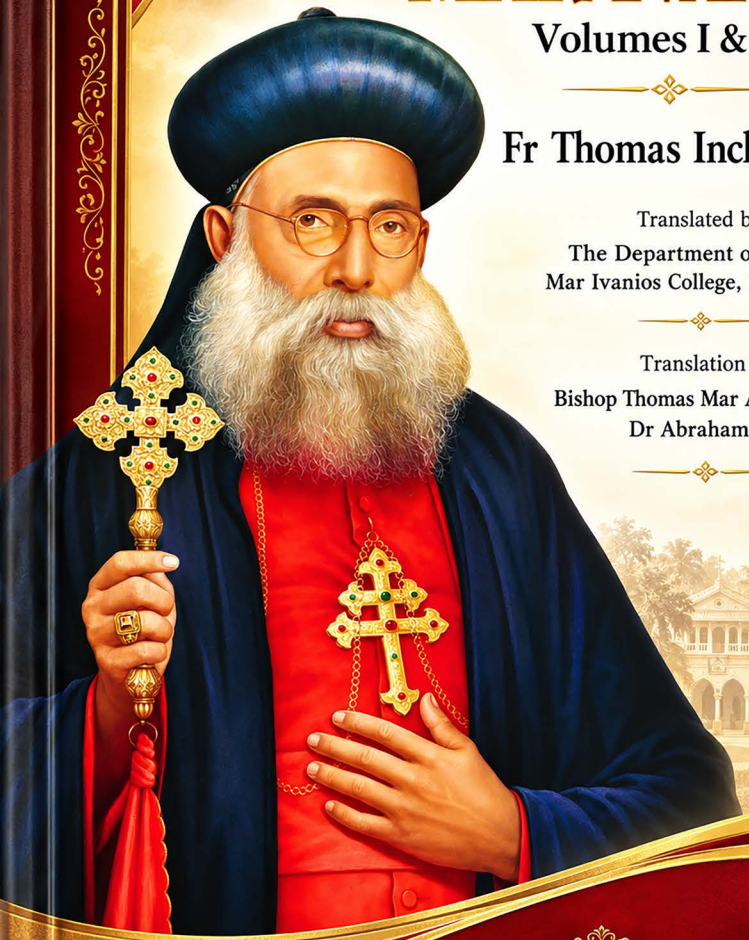
Archbishop
MAR IVANIOS
Volumes I & II

Fr Thomas Inchakkalody

Translated by
The Department of English
Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum

Translation Editors
Bishop Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Dr Abraham Joseph



The Cause of Canonization
of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios
Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum-4
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BLESSINGS

The Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios, also known as the shining sun of Malankara, rose at Mavelikkara. The rising sun began to spread its rays far and wide. After completing primary schooling, the boy PT George or PT Geevarghese, as was Mar Ivanios known in his childhood, left Mavelikkara for Kottayam to pursue his education. He reached the heights of secular and spiritual education in Kottayam and Madras and was ordained a priest. Appointed principal of MD Seminary High School Kottayam, he was committed to the field of education. There was an ardent and irresistible urge in him to dedicate himself to the renewal of the Malankara Church in which he was born and brought up. As he was getting rooted in his commitment to God and His Church, he was drawn to the University of Serampore to be a professor there.

Serampore fashioned the firmament of the sun. Fr PT Geevarghese was drawn to *sanyasa* and moved by the mission command of Jesus, to share the Gospel with India. Prayer and contemplation were moulding the young professor. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him. It dawned on him that the realization of God or possessing God is nobler that the service of God. This enlightenment is the source of his *charism* and genius. This realisation and inner experience is what makes Archbishop Mar Ivanios different from other saints and spiritual reformers. He withdrew himself to the solitude on Mundanmala (the dwarf mountain) at Ranni, Perunadu, Kerala, India, where he assumed the life of a *sanyasi*. From the crest of Mundanmala spread a spiritual fragrance which descended on the horizon of the Malankara Church and enveloped it calling for a spiritual renewal. The sun that rose on the hill top illumined the plains below. In its lustre and warmth there was self-awareness beckoning it to embrace truth and to have communion with the Universal Church. The communion with the Catholic Church blew off the clouds and the rays of the sun spread far

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beyond the confines of the planes below Mundanmala. Asia, Europe, America and Australia came under the range of the rays of the sun of Malankara. When the sun set on the horizon of Malankara on 15 July 1953, it was an eclipse on this side of the world to emerge brighter on the other side – the eternal world - to rise up to illumine the coming generations as the rising spiritual sun of Malankara.

Besides many studies done on the person, life and mission of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios of venerable memory, there exists more than a dozen biographies of this renowned prelate of the Church. A study of these books shows that the Biography of Mar Ivanios written by Rev. Fr Inchakkalody is the source for all these biographies and research studies. Fr Inchakkalody, though not a scholar in history, has scientifically, through authentic documentation, brought out the life of Mar Ivanios, one of the greatest ecclesial geniuses, the twentieth century saw. Even though, the West has a different perspective of life and ecclesial vision, Mar Ivanios was one of the best acknowledged personalities of his time, acknowledged and accepted in the western world.

The focus of the biography of Archbishop Mar Ivanios written by Rev. Fr Thomas Inchakkalody of revered memory is to present this towering personality to the world. Fr Thomas aims to bring out the message of this great man and share it with the world. The author sees the Reunion Movement and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church as the unique contributions of Mar Ivanios to the world at large and to the Church in particular.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:16). This exhortation of Our Lord is realised in the life of the Servant of God Mar Ivanios. Today Mar Ivanios is a shining light before the People of God and before all men of goodwill. The fragrance of his holiness is spreading far and wide. Thousands find solace at the tomb of Mar Ivanios, praying to God through his intercession.

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I am much pleased to see the English translation of the biography, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, written by Rev. Fr Thomas Inchakkalody. I appreciate the initiative taken up by the Department of English at Mar Ivanios College under the leadership of its Head, Dr Abraham Joseph. It is a fitting tribute of this prestigious college to its founder, Archbishop Mar Ivanios. It introduces the saintly character, genius, charism, person and message of Mar Ivanios to the English speaking world. I also congratulate the Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, the Postulator of the Cause of Canonization of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, who together with Dr Abraham Joseph did the editorial work of the translation. I appreciate everyone who painstakingly tried to keep up the originality of the book in its English translation as well. It is also a great contribution to the Cause of Canonization of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. I invoke God's blessings on all who participated in the translation of the book!

May this book help in spreading the sanctity, life and message of Mar Ivanios far and wide, especially beyond the confines of the Malankara Church! May the book find a large and wider readership! God bless us all!

✠ **Cardinal Baselios Cleemis**
Major Archbishop Catholicos,
Major Archbishop of Trivandrum &
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India

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INTRODUCTION

The books *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*, Volumes I & II, written by Rev. Fr Thomas Inchakkalody have left an indelible seal in the history of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. They were reprinted a number of times. It became a source of study and discussion in the academic and non-academic historical circles and is widely accepted by all who study dispassionately the history of the Church in Malankara. It is an epic that narrates the history of the Reunion Movement in the Malankara Church together with the biography of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios. It is an anthology on the blessed life of Mar Ivanios, the sage and the holy sun of Malankara. The non-Malayalees have been longing for an English rendering of the book for a long time. It has become all the more important in the context of the Cause of Canonization of the Servant of God Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios Panickaruveettil, to introduce the Servant of God to the entire Christian world and to humankind at large. Hence, We happily present this English translation of the book *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* by Rev. Fr Thomas Inchakkalody.

Rev. Fr Thomas Inchakkalody was born on 21 August 1908 in the Perissery family, an offshoot of Mukkathu family, at Chengannur. After the untimely death of his father, he was brought up at Maramon by his paternal uncle. He grew up as a member of the Malankara Marthoma Church. From the age of seven, he came under the influence of Rev. Fr Dominic Thottassery, a Catholic missionary, whose apostolate was centered at Maramon. This friendship led to a lot of debates and discussions concerning faith. The leaflet, *Prathyaksha Pathram*, published by him raised profound discussions in the Mar Thoma Church. At a time when very important ecclesial discussions were in progress and heated debates went on unabated, Thomas

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Inchakkalody joined the Minor Seminary of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla. He completed his Major Seminary formation from the Pontifical Seminary Mangalapuzha (Aluva) and was ordained priest on 3 March 1940.

At the time when many vehemently opposed the Reunion Movement, Fr Thomas Inchakkalody's pen functioned as a double-edged sword in the fight for truth and its exposition to the world. With his sharp tongue and powerful pen he fought against all powers opposed to the Reunion Movement. Through powerful and valiant speeches in response to the critique of Sri KN Daniel and Rev. Fr KT Zacharias, he could lead the young generation to the cause of the Reunion Movement. His life was untiring, restless and courageous. As the editor of *Kraistava Kahalam*, he wrote many articles and books. He is the author of the books *Nammude Pithankkanmarude Viswasam* (The Faith of our Fathers), *Kristiya Matha Prakasika* (The Light of the Christian Religion), *Lakshangalude Viswasam* (The Faith of Millions), *Archbishop Mar Ivanios* (2 volumes) etc.

Fr Thomas Inchakkalody served as parish priest in several parishes and inspired and motivated the reunion of thousands. After retiring from active ministry he lived at Archisbishop's House (where the Catholicate Centre is now constructed). In the minimum living conditions of the time, it was with great difficulty that Fr Inchakkalody completed writing the two volumes of the book *Archbishop Mar Ivanios*. This he has stated in the introduction of the books. He collected documents and facts either from Archbishop Mar Ivanios himself or from other sources. The first volume was published in 1957, four years after the demise of the Servant of God. The second volume was completed and published in 1971. He expired on 16 April 1974 and was buried in the cemetery of the Malankara Catholic Church Chengannur.

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There are many books on the life and sanctity of Archbishop Mar Ivanios[1]. However, all these books draw their authenticity, facts and inspiration from the books of Fr Thomas Inchakkalody. It is a blessing for all those who collaborated in the translation of this book into English. It is a privilege that they could present the glorious personality of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, a universal humanist, in a universal language.

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Archbishop
MAR IVANIOS

Volume I

Fr Thomas Inchakkalody

Translated by

The Department of English
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Translation Editors

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Dr Abraham Joseph

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FOREWORD

(To Volume I by the Author)

This biography is the fruit of my relentless hard work of the last four years after the demise of the renowned Archbishop Mar Ivanios. At the outset, I acknowledge the opinion of many well-wishers that the publication of the biography of His Grace would be beneficial in many respects. The request of many friends, who persuaded me saying that I myself should take up the task, was the main inspiration behind the writing of this book.

I do not hide the proud thought, before I set my hand to write this book, that I would be able to write it, as I had written and published a few books on religious matters. But on beginning to write it, the difficulties I had to face and the sacrifices I had to endure began to frighten me. To write and publish a biography one has to accomplish five essential prerequisites:

1. All books, documents and facts that touch the family and the domains of the life of the person have to be collected.
2. The materials collected have to be keenly scrutinised and studied.
3. Choose one by one the pertinent documents and unite them together and write the book.
4. Consult the experts and scholars on matters of history, ideas and language and get the necessary corrections.
5. Print well the book with various photographs.

I am really gratified that I can publish so soon the volume one of this wide-ranging book withstanding the 'five difficulties' and enduring many hardships.

I do not take pride in any gift of 'infallibility' in writing this book. I have incorporated in this book only the facts, that I am convinced,

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through my research and learning, are true. However, as in any book, a few historical, ideological or linguistic mistakes might have crept in. But I assure you that, if impartial readers point them out, they shall be corrected, with acknowledgements and regrets, in the second volume of this book expected to be published soon.

If I acknowledge the names of the priests and the members of the laity who selflessly helped me in writing this book, it will run into many pages. It is only possible to express in general my boundless gratitude to all those who helped me by way of giving me the ancient books, documents, letters etc., who narrated and made cognizable many historical events, who suggested the necessary components of authoring a book, who translated the documents from English and Syriac, who transcribed the manuscript in good handwriting, who corrected linguistic mistakes, who supplied the blocks and photographs to be included in the book, etc.

I have included only those parts of the biography of Mar Ivanios up to His Grace's Reunion with the Catholic Church. I intend to give in detail, in the second volume of this book, the state of affairs after His Grace's Reunion, letters, speeches, activities, progress of the Reunion Movement, present state of affairs, etc. I hope to publish soon that book, which I have almost completed writing.

I record here my gratitude to the management of St Mary's Press, Pattom, for printing this book very well. Lastly, I humbly appeal to my Kerala Christian brethren, to give all possible help for wider circulation of this book.

- Fr Thomas Inchakkalody

Pandalam
15 – 7 – '57

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Chapter 1
A DEPARTED WORTHY

The rules of destiny are inviolable just as they are fair. As the wheel of fate turns, human individuals are born; they live and die. Humankind can be divided into two - those who live like the dead and those who live on in their death. Individuality and differences in tastes are inborn in man. His actions elevate and diminish him. Selfishness, envy and harmful nature invite derision while selflessness, sacrifice and service of humankind draw praise from others. The first group comprises those who live for their own pleasure and good. The second group has persons, who work for others throughout their lives. This is the main difference between the two.

Today, there are many good persons in the world, who live solely for the benefit of others. They are focused on helping others in many ways. Their services to the nation, society, literature and religion stand apart. Their life's mission is the external and internal advancement of humankind. For this, they will not hesitate even to sacrifice their lives. The truly great men are those who see in the enrichment of others their own fulfillment. The truly great men are those who recognise their own essence in their fellow beings. They are the ones who live beyond death. It is impossible for the world to forget them. Their footprints will remain eternally in the sands of time.

Great Men

The great poet Shakespeare has divided great men into three groups. Some are born great, some acquire greatness, and some have greatness thrust on them. It is not certain whether the world will accept the bard's opinion wholly. One does not become great by noble birth,

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wealth or patrimony alone. Just because time-servers, sycophants and, persons with vested interests praise someone he or she does not become great. The world will consider someone great only if that person with innocent and selfless motive strives tirelessly for the welfare of the world. The question, who a great man is, can be answered in one sentence. He, who enters life with the sole intension of catering to the greater good of the human community and faces with courage the difficulties that arise while serving others with a lifelong commitment, is indeed great.

A Great Archbishop

Though there were a few who disagreed with some of the ideals of the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios, no one can deny the fact that he is a great man. This is because he had an extraordinary personality in which blended all the qualities of great persons. It is not possible to include in one sentence all the virtues, which glowed throughout his eventful life. His unique vision, determination and unflinching courage will inspire awe in anyone. He constantly strove with the administrative acumen of a monarch, the bravery of a soldier, the composure of a philosopher, the purity of a saint and the personal aura of a messenger of God. He adorned many positions and founded many institutions. He fought bravely in the midst of some very hostile circumstances. He succeeded in the end. He contended, that he achieved his goals.

A Scholar

"If I were the pope, I would have appointed you a cardinal." Attracted by the personality of Mar Ivanios, a cardinal commented thus in 1932 during his visit to Rome following the Reunion with the Catholic Church. "Thank God you are not the pope", pat came the reply from Mar Ivanios. He had received numerous such compliments on several occasions from many great persons.

The erudition he had in various sciences, arts and languages was astonishing. Right from his childhood, he showed great enthusiasm in

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acquiring knowledge. He used to read many spiritual, literary and scientific books. He is one of the rare Keralites to have taken an MA degree with distinction half a century ago. He had no hesitation in accepting anyone as *guru* for acquiring knowledge. He used every opportunity to pass on knowledge to others. One could observe the archbishop seriously discussing deep and significant topics with political theorists and administrators one day and enjoying light conversation with ordinary people the next day. He could be seen conversing with a Syriac scholar on grammar and chatting joyfully with a student who excels in football. His nature was such that he could speak to shepherds, landlords, ministers or directors with ease and bring them under his sway. This great scholar was always ready to receive knowledge from any person or grant it to anyone. He had profound erudition in English, Malayalam and Syriac. Yes, he was truly a great scholar.

Political Thinker

Even Sir CP Ramaswamy Iyer, the head of the government of the erstwhile State of Travancore had great admiration for the political thoughts of Mar Ivanios. It is a well-known fact that Sir CP had no respect for great men like Gandhi, Nehru or Rajagopalachari. Readers will be surprised to note that the fiercely free and bold Sir CP had reverence for Mar Ivanios. One of the reasons for this respect was Sir CP's awareness of the archbishop's influence in the British Parliament. He knew that His Grace was a genius who could grasp his tactical moves and come up with brilliant responses. Sir CP used to relish as well as be awed by the multifaceted excellence of His Grace. He used to congratulate His Grace and revere him. Mar Ivanios arranged a reception for Sir CP to mark the Dewan's 60th birthday. On the occasion, Sir CP spoke eloquently and cordially about the nobility of the Catholic Church. This was reported in many Western dailies and broadcast from Radio Vatican, thereby giving worldwide fame to Sir CP. The incident proves how His Grace generously blessed those who loved him.

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While travelling through Europe, America and Australia Archbishop Mar Ivanios was able to meet famous political personalities, discuss various issues and gain their deep admiration. British Emperor George V, the uncrowned leader of Ireland Eamon de Valera, the famous writer GK Chesterton, the renowned German leader Hindenburg, Cardinal Schulte of Cologne, President Motta of Switzerland, King Albert of Belgium, US President Truman, Canadian Governor General Alexander, and Cardinal Spellman are some of the famous men he visited. His Grace used his influence efficiently to get US citizenship for Indians residing in Canada. Many great political leaders of the land used to seek in person and through letters, his advice in solving complicated issues. All these are examples for the archbishop's political acumen.

Tireless Campaigner

Only a few people in the world have been gifted with the ability to do several things at the same time. His Grace was undoubtedly one such person. He could easily do four tasks at a time. He could take food, browse the dailies, engage in light conversation with persons sitting at the table and dictate matter to the waiting typist with ease. One wonders whether His Grace ever knew rest in his life. Many medical experts and intimate friends advised him to take rest for a while every year. However, the tireless campaigner in him was ever so often dragged into new tasks. No visitor ever found His Grace in a relaxed mood. It was because of his tireless nature that he could achieve many things for the good of fellow beings. Thus he was able to run the course of his life successfully, obtain the title of the 'faithful servant' and receive from the Lord of the Universe the eternal reward.

Proponent of Reunion

"After my death I shall be in heaven from where I shall pray for the reunion of my non-Catholic brethren before the Almighty." These were the words His Grace spoke weary and dying from his deathbed

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to the auxiliary bishop Mar Gregorios.

His constant longing was that the millions of children of St Thomas the apostle, who were scattered in many Churches, would be led into the Catholic Church, their Mother Church. Even as a member of the Jacobite Church, he had tried tirelessly to make it easy for them to do so. He motivated his fellow bishops and priests for this mission. He wrote many letters to both Antioch and Rome. He advised spiritual leaders and the people on this theme. He procured the permission from the Roman See to launch the Malankara Syrian rite and establish its clergy. He toiled day and night for 22 years facing the relentless pressures of hostile circumstances in order to ensure progress in the Reunion Movement. His constant yearning was for the return of over 1.2 million non-Catholic brethren to the Catholic faith. All his efforts and prayers were for this goal. He was able to build churches, convents, monasteries, schools and other institutions through hard work, sacrifice and prayer. Through these, he was able to usher in thousands of non-Catholic brethren to the maternal sanctuary of the Catholic Church. Thus after lovingly nurturing the 'reunion infant' for 22 years, he went beyond the curtain of time a happy and contented person leaving the responsibility in the hands of the new generation. We can believe that even now he is interceding before the Almighty for the growth and health of this infant.

Karmayogi (Devoted)

"By God's grace, almost all the ambitions of my life have been fulfilled. Two more are left unfulfilled. The first is to celebrate Holy Qurbono in the Cathedral, which is being built. The second is to ordain an auxiliary bishop with my own hands." These words were spoken by the archbishop to Rev. Fr Koshy OIC, who was taking care of His Grace, who was on his deathbed, after receiving the Extreme Unction. None of the persons who saw his physical condition could believe that his dreams would come true. However, the Almighty God who had granted many of His Grace's wishes throughout his life granted

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these wishes too in the twilight years of his life and made him contented. The people gathered there were united in thinking that His Grace could not go through the Episcopal ordination ceremony because of his physical condition. However, due to the blessings of the merciful Almighty and the mental fortitude of His Grace, he was able to celebrate Holy Qurbono and conduct the three and a half hour long ordination ceremony like a hale and hearty person. Thus two of his long-standing dreams were fulfilled.

While serving as principal of the MD Seminary, professor of the Serampore College, head of the Bethany Ashram, proponent of the Reunion Movement and the archbishop of Trivandrum, his dreams were realized one after the other. His selfless intent, strong will, tireless effort and above all God's blessings helped him to be crowned with success. The dream, which he pursued 45 years ago of raising the MD Seminary at Kottayam, while he was its principal, to a first grade college was realized in the founding of Mar Ivanios College. He was able to found the Bethany Ashram and Convent and other institutions after ten years of toil and prayers. He had to strive for several years to get the Malankara Syrian rite and the ecclesiastic province of Trivandrum granted by the Holy See. It was through twenty years of hard work and prayers that he could see the Reunion Movement flourish. He was constantly blessed with a rare gift of being successful in every venture.

Educationalist

Mr A Gopala Menon MA, BCom., the then director of Education, while inaugurating in 1940, the English high school at Pattom under the management of the archbishop, spoke thus: "This is a unique first in the educational history of Travancore. Classes from preparatory to the sixth form are starting on the same day and about 700 students from various schools have been attracted to this school. This clearly shows the archbishop's readiness to serve everyone, his interest in educational endeavours and his practical excellence."

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His Grace who received his MA degree with flying colours from the Madras University gave wide acceptance to education. He worked tirelessly to make the people of this land educated and culturally enriched. While serving in the MD Seminary at Kottayam and the Serampore College he encouraged several male and female students by providing them financial assistance. He sent many priests and non-priest students to the colleges in Madras, Serampore and Calcutta. He served as their patron helping them selflessly.

After his reunion with the Catholic Church, he started several educational institutions like primary schools, middle schools and high schools in different regions of Travancore. Mar Ivanios College set up in the capital is a living memorial to his untiring efforts, his commitment to education and willingness to serve. It will always remain the crowning glory among all his institutions. It is worthy of special mention that he headed the Oriental Languages Committees of both the Madras and Travancore universities until his demise.

A Blessed Soul

The late Archbishop Mar Severios once said thus in a speech about His Grace: "I state with deep remorse the fact that while at the Serampore College I had to make several wounds on my master's back by caning him. While I was studying there as a deacon, he used to call me to his room upstairs and order me to cane him on his bare back. I was forced to do this cruel and sad act several times. The very memory makes my body sweat and my hair stand on its end. Let me not feel ashamed before the eyes of Justice in obeying that inviolable diktat of my mentor."

His Grace, who grew up grounded in faith from his childhood, steadied the boat of his life until his death as an ideal believer. Throughout his life, he indulged in activities, which were aimed at the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. He was entirely focused on regulating his life. After entering the Catholic Church, which offered

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all the circumstances for leading a noble spiritual life, he was very diligent in iterating the daily prayers, celebrating the Holy Qurbono, meditating, practising the devotion to the Mother of Our Lord, introspecting, doing acts of penance and undertaking fasts. The inmates of the Archbishop's House had many opportunities to observe His Grace praying before the Holy Eucharist in the chapel, for himself and for everything under his care, in tearful meditation, at midnight. He also had the good fortune to use well the brief period God gave him, in his sick bed before his death. As a result, he was able to offer his soul gladly and peacefully to the hands of the Almighty and die a fortunate death.

Review

The sickbed is an apt place to ponder over the various experiences one had in life and the services one has rendered to the Almighty and one's fellow beings. His Grace frequently shed tears of joy lying in his sickbed, remembering how the merciful and loving Lord had used his weak self as an instrument in achieving several things. He also felt sad recalling his mistakes, faults and shortcomings. Once he said to those who stood around his sickbed thus: "Many errors and slips have occurred in my life. What gives me relief is the absolute belief that in spite of these, the merciful Lord has forgiven me; because I had done everything in good faith." What rises in one's mind at this time is the Lord's words, "There is no one who is righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:9). One is also reminded of the poet's words, "Has the creator created anything which is completely perfect?" It is not possible to find even a single person without minor shortcomings or errors from among those great persons who set out to work aiming for the upliftment of their fellow beings. Only a child that runs around will fall and get bruised. A barren woman will not suffer the loss of a child and a man who lies down will not fall. Brave hearts and the hard working will often taste failure, despair and sadness. However, it does not suit ideal persons to back off from activities on account of the hardships

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of life or failures. One will finally reach the planned destination and be crowned with success only if one corrects and in future avoids the pitfalls and errors that happen in life.

During the 45 long years of tireless activities, certain rare shortcomings might have affected the Archbishop too. However, none of these had the power to divert him from his life's mission even in the slightest. Not as a brave soldier but as an army chief, correcting his mistakes and solving his deficiencies that great personage lived to his last moment and passed beyond the veil of Time, peacefully and gladly saying, "I have run my course, kept my faith and the crown of life is kept for me."



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Chapter 2

THE HISTORY OF THE PANICKAR FAMILY

His Grace was born into the famous Panickar family of Mavelikkara in central Travancore. In this chapter, we intend to detail the history of that ancient family and its ancestors.

Kshathriya Community

In the Madras Presidency on the shores of the Bay of Bengal was situated between Penar and Vellar from ancient times a village called Cholamandalam. Noblemen of the Kshatriya community settled there from time immemorial. They were extraordinary experts in sciences like astrology, medicine and martial arts. They travelled through various kingdoms and made a living by helping monarchs in battles, receiving as reward money and gifts. It is a well known historical fact that in 345 AD during the reign of King Bhaskara Ravi Varma also known as Cheraman Perumal there came to Kodungalloor by ship, a large group of traders and some priests led by Knanayi Thomman (Thomas of Cana) from Syria. Cheraman Perumal who was pleased with these traders and their followers gave them buildings, land and many titles. Knanayi Thomman and friends who were Christians spread the gospel in and around Kodungalloor and attracted many Hindus to their faith. At this time a few Kshatriyas reached Kodungalloor by land from Cholamandalam. It must be assumed that these Kshatriyas they who were traditionalists came to Kerala because of their antipathy to the propagation of Buddhism by the Pallavas in Cholamandalam.

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Cheraman Perumal decided to test their prowess in the martial arts. They presented many exercises striking awe in the King and the visitors. A few of these are included below.

1. A man with sword and shield enters a cage, fights with a large lion and hacks it to death (This feat was known in those days as *Puliyangom*).
2. A man stands on a lotus leaf in a pond and performs certain feats (It was known as *Jalasthalangom*).
3. Climbing up a creeper hanging from a tree and reaching its top.
4. Scaling the high wall behind the palace, leaping on to the roof of the palace to reach its front and landing in the front yard safely.

Seeing the stunning feats the King and Knanayi Thomman decided to settle them in Kodungalloor. Apart from food and shelter, they were given special titles and positions. The title 'Panickar' was one such title.

Embracing Christianity

Not much later under the persuasion of Knanayi Thomman and others, these Kshatriyas embraced Christianity, married the locals and settled in and around Kodungalloor. It is known that they split into four families.

1. Vallakada Panickar, 2. Karakunnath Panickar, 3. Kanamangalath Panickar, 4. Orayam Karakunnathu Panickar. These four families are said to have built the ancient Kadamattam church. Even today, members of these families receive certain privileges from this church. In those days, the king had entrusted them with the administration of the martial arts centre. Their task was to select smart youngsters, train them in martial arts and send them to the royal army. Due to this, they used to receive several concessions from the kings.

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Among them, the Karakunnath Panickars stayed in Moovattupuzha. In mid thirteenth century a Panickar reached Mavelikkara, which was then under the king of Maadathinkur, with his family and settled there. Pleased with Panickar's prowess in the martial arts, the king made him the mentor of his *kalari* or martial arts centre. Thus, the Mavelikkara Panickars became the trainers of the army of the kingdom of Maadathinkur. A few years later when this family had no heirs they adopted two individuals from the Venad royal family and established relations with the ruling family of Travancore. Gradually the kingdom of Maadathinkur merged with Travancore. The Kings of Travancore also allowed the privileges and concessions enjoyed in the Maadathinkur Kingdom, by the Edassery Unnithans in their capacity as ministers and the Panickars in their capacity as military trainers.

Mallitty Panickar

Around 895 ME, Pottis, Ettuveetil Pillas and Madambis started harmful activities against the royal house of Travancore. Crown Prince Marthanda Varma and his sister started for the north to preserve their lives. They reached Mavelikkara without any harm. The princess' residence was shifted to the Karimbala palace in Karhikapally. As for the prince, though he had decided to stay in Mavelikkara for a longer period, he feared the traitors and moved on with his confidantes. During his stay in Mavelikkara, the prince received the wholehearted support of the Lords of Edasseril and Itty Panickar. Itty Panickar's loyalty and expertise in the use of arms created in the Crown Prince Marthanda Varma a deep sense of satisfaction and respect. As a result, later in the secretive travels he undertook to quash the traitors, he accepted Itty Panickar as one of his bodyguards.

Once while on a secretive mission the crown prince and his men came across a herd of wild bisons on a mountain slope. The bodyguards

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ran for their dear lives on seeing the charging herd. However, the extraordinarily courageous Itty Panickar gave confidence to the nervous crown prince and slew the beast with his sword without any trepidation. The rest of the herd scattered and the crown prince and his bodyguards regrouped to continue the journey. Pleased with the outstanding courage of Panickar, who ignored his own safety in protecting his bread giver from the attack of a wild beast, the prince bestowed on him the title, 'Malluketty Panickar'. This title's short form 'Mallitty Panickar' has been used in all documents till the present. (Another version is that Mallitty Panickar is not the abbreviation of Malluketty Panickar. It is from math + Itty+ Panickar, that is, math = my. Itty = dear one/ beloved. The crown prince gave the title Mallitty Panickar because it meant, "My beloved Panickar". This was intimated by a senior member of the family to the author.)

Army Chiefs

Mallitty Panickars had a large following of disciples from the Nair and Syrian Christian communities. Mallitty Panickars and their disciples took part in every major battle King Marthanda Varma fought north of Kollam after his enthronement. There were large army units under the Nair Panickars and the Syrian Christian Panickars in ancient times. The tasks undertaken by the Panickars of those days were to dress up the warriors, train them in the martial arts, lead the armies to the battlefields obeying the command of the rulers, fight the enemies and thus establish peace. The Mallitty Panickars also had the duty to accompany the king during his processions. Caste and religion were not hindrances for becoming their disciples. Keralites got training in the martial arts the same way they received basic schooling. The teachers from the Nair and Syrian Christian communities and in some places Ezhava community took in students from the ruling families and the Namboodiri, Nair, Syrian Christian, Ezhava and Kaniyar communities without any discrimination.

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Syrian Christians and the Martial Arts

A few excerpts from the books written by scholarly historians on the martial arts of Syrian Christians are included here. Rajashri C. Achuta Menon the author of the *Cochin State Manual* comments thus while describing the martial arts training of ancient Kerala: "Syrian Christians from the well to do families had the right to carry arms. They fought alongside the Nairs. They also had their own traditional martial arts training Panickars. However, they did not keep any distance. Nair Panickars had Christian disciples and vice versa" (*Cochin State Mannual*, page 84).

On the same topic, the eminent historian KP Padmanabha Menon has written thus in the *History of the Kings of Cochin*: "Gradually the king of Cochin used in war not only Nairs but also Syrian Christians. The Syrian Christians had training centres and the Panickars had martial dress (*kachakettu*) and martial arts" (*Kochi Raja Charthram* Vol. 1, page 85). Mr Padmanabha Menon again states, "It has been said earlier that among the residents of Cochin the Syrian Christians were not insignificant. They also performed martial arts like the Nairs. The Portuguese and the Dutch did not hesitate to enlist them in their armies. The Dutch gave many of them positions like Capithan, Alperes, Othananthe and Arras." Their usual occupation was farming and trading" (*Kochi Rajacharitram* Vol. II, page 673).

The famous historian Gibbons, in 1776, had commented thus on the lifestyle of Syrian Christians prior to the advent of the Portuguese in Kerala: "The Syrian Christians were far ahead of the natives of Hindustan not only in the martial arts and the cultural arts but also in morality. Farmers among them cultivated coconut trees. Traders became rich by selling pepper. The warriors were ahead of the noble Nair soldiers. Both the Rajah of Cochin and the Zamorin of Calicut recognized their traditional positions and titles out of fear or gratitude"

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(*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1787-se edition, page 836)

The historian Francis Day has recorded thus: "Syrian Christians were greatly valued. The fear, neighbouring kings had for a native kingdom was based on the number of native Christians there. They were that reliable and trustworthy. The men folk carried arms whenever they went out. Because they received training from the age of 8 to 25, they were experts in the use of weapons" (*Land of the Perumals*, page 219).

The famous historian Howe has observed thus: "The Syrians are very agile and smart because from their childhood they use a lot of oil and massage their joints with oil. In ancient days, they never used to travel far without carrying weapons. Apart from the common weapons some of them also carried guns and spears with iron rings attached. When the spears were airborne, the rings made a pleasant noise. However, most of them always held a naked sword in their right hand and a shield in their left hand. They were given training in the use of weapons from the age of eight onwards. This was the sole reason for their proficiency in it. They excelled in big game hunting and were excellent fighters too. It is no wonder that the kings of yore valued them so much. A king was respected or feared by his neighbouring kings based on the numerical strength of the Syrians in his kingdom. The rulers valued and depended on their loyalty, truthfulness, intelligence, and military expertise. Though they were competent in combat they were always seekers of peace too. Even today, their nature is the same. There are very few quarrels among them and murders are rarer still. When entering the church it is the routine to keep the weapons in the front yard. At that time, the front yard looks like an armoury. After the Divine Liturgy, each one takes his own weapon and goes home peacefully" (*History of Christianity in India,* pages 324-5).

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Readers must have grasped the position of Christians in ancient Kerala, from the comments of the erudite historians given above.

It was the armies of the native rulers of kingdoms north of Edava, the northern border of ancient Travancore, that all the Nazarani Panickars used to train in warfare. As a reward for that, they enjoyed several granted properties. However, Mavelikkara Mallitty Panickars are the only ones who seem to enjoy several temple related privileges apart from the granted properties. As the *Kalari Panickars* (martial arts trainers) of Madathinkur principality, they had to groom the Pillais of the fort and accompany the deity during worship and rituals like *pallivetta* at the temples of Kandiyoor. As the military gurus of Madathinkur they also had to perform martial arts like *Vâler* (sword throw), *vadithada* (combat with sticks) and *kunthamchandal* (spear throw) from the first festival till the procession in the precincts of the temple. As remuneration for the *kachakettu* (grooming) Mallitty Panickars were given 66 *para* 2 *edangazhi* (660.2 litres of paddy) fields and special gifts on all the eight days of the festival at the Mavelikkara temple. The performances at the temples were usually done by the disciples of the Panickars. However, it was insisted that Mallitty Panickars themselves should appear for rituals like the *pallivetta*, the *aarattu* processions, accompanying the deity and the martial arts. The deity is brought in sacred procession to the eastern side of the elephant's cage at about a distance of one and a half furlongs near the platform at the foot of the banyan tree in the temple. Then performers of the *pallivetta* (Royal Hunt) arrange themselves on both sides towards the east with all preparations. After that Mallitty Panickar, the successor and chief bodyguard of Madathinkur dons the ceremonial cloth *chatta* and *kavani* (body armour) letting its ends dangle behind. He ties a turban on his head with a *puliyirakarayan* (drape design) cloth. He holds a leopard skin shield in his left hand and a sword in his right hand. He positions himself near the *nagaswaram* (martial music) players on the western side. At this time, one of the disciples of Panickar

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will be standing with the group below the two standards with one or two spears with long red silk streamers. When the *pallivetta* commences and the first roar is heard Mallitty Panickar takes the spear and walks into the middle of the group, picks up pace and throws the spear into the air. The next moment he grabs it back. Thus after showing his prowess with the weapon once or twice, he returns the spear to the disciple. Then he takes the sword and shield and accompanies the *pallivetta* until it reaches the front of the elephant cage. On reaching that spot he takes the spear again, and repeats his feats several times. As soon as the spear performance gets over, the *pallivetta* enters the walls and Mallitty Panickar returns. On the day of the *aarattu* procession, he does the same spear performances and accompanies the deity.

The last martial arts performer of the Panickar family was Mallitty Thoma Panickar the father of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. Thoma Panickar who was the head of the Mallitty Panickar family for twenty years till the age of 50 performed such martial arts and received benefits from the temple. However, when the European CMS missionaries who centred their work in Mavelikkara spoke and taught that the performances at the temples were idolatrous and unsuitable for Christians by 1070 ME the members of the Panickar family gave up the temple connections and privileges.

Temple and Church Related Privileges

Besides the privileges granted to the family of Mallitty Panickars by the Travancore Royalty for martial arts training, performances and accompanying the deity, they were also granted by decree, certain rights by the Puthiyacavu Jacobite church. Many documents proving that elderly Panickars have been enjoying such privileges till quite recently are found in these families

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Attached below is a decree sent in 1903 to the Mavelikkara parish by the Metropolitan Divanassios who led the Jacobite Church from 1865 to 1909 AD:

Blessings to the parish priest, the religious in the region, the members of the parish committee and the people attached to our parish in Mavelikkara!

Dear ones! Traditionally and currently, the families of Mallitty Panickars in this parish have been receiving as their right betel leaf bunch and money during the marriages that take place in that church. This privilege has been decreed by the Travancore Royal family and honoured by our predecessor. Padinjareveettil Mallitty Thariyathu Thariyathu Panickar the eldest in the family has now complained to me that many claim the privilege as their own and collect the leaf and money during marriages slyly. He has also presented us with the appropriate decrees and documents. Hence, I order that according to the convention the eldest member of the family should receive the betel leaf bunch and money during marriages held in the church.

May the mercy and blessing of God be always upon you!

1903, 27 *Midhunum* 1078 ME,

from Puthuppally

Sd/-

Mar Divanassios

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Ancient Memorials

Mallitty Panickars had in the Thazhakkara Puthiyakav markets 64 Nazarene disciples and 130 Nair disciples in the "Kotaickakom Vakappadi". The two *kalaris* or training centres under them are now in ruins. Of these, one was in the property on the north of the Puthiyakavu Bhadrakali Temple west of the Mallitty Panickar house of Very Rev. Fr PT Thomas. Today in the government documents that property is referred to as 'Kalarickalparambu'. It was in the plot on the north side of this property that big guns, bullets etc were moulded under the supervision of Mallitty Panickar while Captain De Lannoy, who was known as "*valiya kappithan*" (the great captain) was the head of the Travancore army. That property is even now called the "*varppupura*" (moulding room). The sword and shields used by their ancestors are even today stored safely in the Panickar homes.

Thus, Archbishop Mar Ivanios received the blessing to be born as a member of an ancient family, which became famous by the brave exploits of several ancestors.



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Chapter 3

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

His Grace was born to Thoma Panickar and Annamma on 21 September 1882 in the ancient and famous family of Panickaruveetil in Mavelikkara. His mother was the daughter of Mathai Asan from Palliyil Areepurath near Kayamkulam. She was a well educated and God fearing jewel of a woman. Since her family was not blessed with a male member for many generations, she constantly prayed tearfully to the Lord for a male heir. She appealed for the intercession of the Holy Mother of God for this wish and dedicated the child in her womb to the service of Our Lady. As a result she received a beautiful baby on the day of Blessed Virgin's feast. It is worth remembering that His Grace who was a lifelong devotee of the Mother of God was born on the feast of the birth of Mother Mary. He became a deacon on the day of her exaltation. He was ordained a priest on the day of the Assumption. He passed away on the eve of the feast of the Mother of Carmel.

A few days after his birth the parents took their newborn child to the nearby Puthiyakavu Jacobite church. There his uncle Panickarveetil Rev. Fr Thariyathu Zachariah Panickar baptized and anointed the child with Holy Myron. On the occasion of the baptism, the fortune to be the godfather went to Thoma Panickar's elder bother Mallitty Parambil Geevarghese Panickar. This was perhaps why the child was given the name Geevarghese. The history of the family shows that there were many members with the name Geevarghese. It is a fact that reverence and devotion to St George was more prevalent among the Jacobites

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than among the Catholics of Kerala. About 25% of Jacobite males had names like Geevarghese, Varghese, Varkey, Vakkan and George. There are many churches, schools and other institutions named after this saint in Kerala. His feast is celebrated in many churches in Kerala. It must be admitted that giving the name Geevarghese to the child at the time of his baptism becomes more meaningful now, remembering how like the saint he courageously overcame hostile forces and throughout his life did many things for the good of the people. He was known as "Kochukivarichan" in his childhood.

Thoma Panickar had four brothers. They were Chacko Panickar, Gheevarghese Panickar, Rev. Fr Thariathu Zachariah Panickar and Yohannan Panickar. Among them Rev. Fr Zachariah Panickar was a celibate priest throughout his life. He served several churches in and around Mavelikkara as the vicar. Rev. Fr Zachariah who was God-fearing and efficient in administration passed away in 1911 at the age of 68. It was he who gave the inspiration and the necessary advice to Geevarghese to embrace priesthood, to obtain higher education and to lead a celibate life. It may be because of these good deeds that he received various services including the extreme unction from Fr PT Geevarghese.

At present the eldest member of the Panickar family is Thariyath Panickar, the son of Geevarghese Panickar, the elder brother of Thoma Panickar. He served sincerely for many years in the founding and towards the progress of the Bethany Ashram. His son is Rev. Fr PT Thomas Panickar. The family history reveals that continuously from ancient times, there were priests in the family. Karichal Rev. Fr PT Geevarghese Panickar and Rev. Fr CT Geevarghese BA (Hon) who is doing his higher studies in the Washington University are members of this family. Apart from them, four members of this family are studying in various seminaries.

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Thoma Panickar had three sons and three daughters. One of the sons died in his childhood at the age of Nine. The younger brother Mathai Panickar was an integral part of every major event of the life of Mar Ivanios as an ideal friend. He fought alongside as a fighter and helped as a co-worker. His services in the founding of the Bethany Ashram and the various developments of the Reunion Movement are unforgettable. He has two sons and four daughters.

Geevarghese's elder sister Sosamma was married to Thomas the son of Kunjumacanda Vaidyan of the Kallumpurathu Kottarathil family in Mavelikkara. Their son is Rev. Fr Ephreme OIC of the Bethany Ashram. His sister's son is Rev. Fr Thomas Panickar DD who completed his studies in Rome. Geevarhese's younger sister Kunjamma was married to Thomas Varkey (Police Inspector) of Kanianthara in Mepral. After his death Advocate Eapen of Chathaparambil in Pulinkunnu remarried her. Since his demise Kunjamma has been staying in her house.

The parents took great care in bringing up their dear child with great affection. An incident which took place when he was a child reminds us of the many dangers he could overcome with the help of the invisible hands of providence. The child was not yet four. One day the bullock cart driver of the Panickar household took the child and placed it on the yoke of the cart and drove the cart. Suddenly, both the oxen ran in panic and the nervous child fell in the path of the cart wheel. The oxen stopped running at that very instant as though an invisible force applied a sudden brake. If the bulls had not stopped quickly, one can only guess how tragic that scene would have been.

Oh! How else can one remember the blessings of the Almighty God, who protects weaklings like us with His boundless love than by a heart overflowing with gratitude? A great person, who has to become world famous, one who has to be a lifelong fighter for the external and spiritual prosperity of millions of people in and outside Kerala, that

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seeker of peace who broke one by one the ropes that fettered the Syrian Church in the path of unity and peace, the beloved father who has to nurture the infant Reunion Movement and raise this lovely baby till its adolescence. The helper of men who has to start many institutions in Kerala to serve the public - will he disappear behind the veil of this world before he makes his first tiny steps by dying beneath the wheels of a cart? Will the invisible power who has knowledge about the three-fold-time allow such a thing to happen? Good grief! If such a thing had happened, the course of the Malankara Church could have taken some unknown direction, the omniscient Lord alone knows!

"And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." This verse on the childhood of our Lord is more or less true in the life of Geevarghese too. He was known as "Kochukivarichan" in his childhood. At the age of five the child was admitted to the primary school adjacent to the Mavelikkara Puthiyakavu church run by David Asan. Observing the boy's unique interest and smartness in studies the Asan prophesied that he would one day become famous.

A comment on the education that was given about 50 years ago northwards from Trivandrum is relevant here. In those days education was given in two streams - namely rural and urban. The rural education was treated at two levels - a general and higher education. General education was learning Tamil and Malayalam by writing on the sand under the local Asans, learning by rote words and synonyms, iterating *Amarakosham*, *Siddharoopam*, *Balaprabodhanam*, *Sriramodantham* and *Neethisaram*. Higher education involved learning Sanskrit poems like *Raghuvamsam*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Kiratharjuniyam*, *Magham*, *Naishadam*; plays like *Shakuntalam* and *Uttararamacharitham* and mastering logic, grammar, figures of speech and medicine. In those days, scholars had to leave their native lands to seek higher education in the rural stream. Hence a majority of

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people was satisfied with the primary education in the *kalari* of the *Asans*. Urban education meant learning English. After the general rural education the scions of certain rich families were sent to the city to learn English. Schools with matriculation were very rare in Travancore. There were English schools in those days only in towns like Kottayam, Alapuzha, Mavelikkara, Kollam, Trivandrum and Nagercoil.

Geevarghese lived in his own house till the age of Twelve and completed the rural education. It was under the tutelage of David *Asan* that he studied writing on the ground and reading letters together. *Asan* gave him the post of the '*chattampilla*' in the class because Kivarichan was well behaved and intelligent. The post is the equivalent to the modern day post of the monitor and must have meant keeper of the laws. The tasks given to the '*chattampilla*' included keeping the *kalari* and the surroundings clean, seating the students in their allotted seats when they reach the class, reporting the quarrels of the students to the *Asan* and placing on the *Asan*'s table the cut stick for punishing the offenders. Kivarichan carried out all his duties sincerely. However, on one occasion he had a small tiff with his *Asan*. For some trifle, *Asan* scolded the '*chattampilla*' publicly. Shamed and angered at this Kivarichan said, "O *Asan*, there is no need to be so angry, I shall go home. You may take your writing back. Give me my palm leaf back." Saying this Kivarichan took his palm leaf and ran home. Thinking that the boy would inform Thomas Panickar and bring trouble to him the *Asan* reached his house and explained his innocence. Thoma Panickar called the boy and asked him about the incident. The boy said, "It is true, Father. I said so because the *Asan* was angry with me. The writing is by the *Asan*. The palm leaf is mine. That's why I said that he could take back his writing and give me my leaf back." Hearing this everyone burst out laughing. Thus, the boy escaped punishment.

The desire for an abstemious life Geevarghese had from his childhood is evidenced in an incident, which occurred once. The boy

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was smiling watching a cock stamping a hen in the front yard. His paternal uncle's daughter who was there said to him thus, "Child, those who watch such scenes with interest can never become a priest, enter the *madbaha* or go to heaven." At the very instant closing his eyes and saying, "In that case, I do not want to see this," the boy ran away from the place. The desire the boy had from his childhood for a priestly and self-disciplined life can be grasped from this incident.

Mar Ivanios has said on several occasions that it was his own mother who had put in, in his childhood, the kernel of the idea of Reunion with the Catholic Church. The incident is somewhat like this. Once, his sister was afflicted with some ailment and bedridden. The treatment did not bring about the desired result. In order to pray for the sick one, Annamma took Keevareechen to the nearby Catholic church. As they entered the said church they experienced the presence of God. They knelt in the presence of God and prayed for the sick one. Following that as they were returning home, midway the mother said to the son, "Son, that is the real church. We should join that church." It took about 40 years for that seed to sprout, grow, blossom and bear fruit. Even though certain concepts of the Catholic faith took shape several years ago in their minds, many were ready for conversion only after such concepts expanded and reached full growth. The experience of many great men who embraced the Catholic faith stands testimony to this verity.

Because he had displayed immense interest in faith in God and prayer from his childhood, the boy became dear to all. The enthusiasm Keevareechen showed in going to church, praying and taking part in the Holy Qurbono was unique. It was his daily practice to enter the Puthiyakavu church, pray for some time on his way to, and back from his school. Keevareechen also adopted from his childhood the practice of making the sign of the cross and praying before and after his meals.

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His teachers had a high level of satisfaction regarding his studies. An incident, which makes it clear, happened once. When David *Asan* had retired from service due to old age, his son Yohannan Asan became the teacher in the *kalari*. The new teacher was alcoholic. It was difficult for him to teach without a little alcohol. One day while teaching mathematics, he became intoxicated with liquor. He gave the kids a problem, which no mathematical expert could solve. "One for three. If so, how much will each get without remainder?" This was *Asan*'s Himalayan problem. What answer could the poor kids give? He kept on calling each student by name, ordering him or her to give the answer. All of them gave silence as answer. At last, he asked Keevareechen. It was Asan's belief that Keevareechen who was smart in all subjects would give an answer to this question too. But, what could be done! The clear headed can only bow before the inebriated! "One for three. If so, how much will each get without remainder? Give the answer, uhm, uhm, uhm." Before the many 'uhms' with which *Asan* prodded, Kivarichan could only put into practice the theory that silence is the ornament for a scholar. *Asan* could understand others failing to give the answer. However, *Asan* could not stand Keevareechen who was smart in all subjects failing. Shaking with rage *Asan* ran out of the class and returned with a huge stone. "*Aha*! You too cannot give an answer. Bend down, *uhm*!" The boy obeyed the intoxicated teacher and bent immediately. *Asan* placed the stone on the pupil's back and left it there for 10 minutes. As he became sober, *Asan* deeply regretted his cruel deed. However, on somehow coming to know of the incident Thoma Panickar reached the school the next day and had an altercation with him. Before the well built and trained martial arts expert, Thoma Panickar, *Asan* shivered and offered apologies.

How strong the faith in prayer and the respect for priests in Geevarghese were in his childhood can be grasped from the following incident. Once, Keevareechen was down with high fever. Mar

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Gregorios of Parumala had arrived and was staying in the nearby church. The young boy somehow came to know of it and said to his father. "*appacha* (father)! Carry me to the church. The bishop of Parumala should place his hand on my head and pray. If so my disease will be healed." Because of the child's assertion, Thoma Panickar carried him to the church. Deeply delighted in the boy's faith in prayer, the bishop praised him, placed his hand on his head, and prayed.

The view of his father Thoma Panickar was that the boy who completed rural education did not need English education and should become a farmer like himself. However, the aspiration of the highly educated mother was that her son should get higher education and become a priest. In order to realize her wish she approached her husband's brother Rev. Skaria and apprised him of her thoughts. He gladly agreed to take up the responsibility. As a result he advised his brother on the subject and Thoma Panickar agreed to send his son for higher education.

After his education at the *kalari*, the boy was admitted to the CMS English Medium School (of Protestants). A few months later when the bishop of Parumala visited the Mavelikkara church he enquired about the boy. On hearing that the boy was studying in the Protestant school, the bishop called Rev. Skaria and instructed thus: "It is never right to send our children to Protestant schools to study, because it will lead to the loss of apostolic faith and will instead gradually fill in them Protestant beliefs. Hence, get the Transfer Certificate immediately and get Keevareechen admitted to the Government School."

As per the metropolitan's decree, later the boy was admitted to the Mavelikkara Kottackakom Government English Medium School. In this school there were classes from the infant class to the fourth form. The infant class was then known as the fourth class. The boy went to this school a mile away from home for his studies. The boy

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was the apple of the eye to all the teachers in the school as he was smart in all the subjects and astonished his classmates with his behaviour and culture. Geevarghese who had stood first in all the five years at the school earned a praiseworthy pass from the fourth form. The thoughts about the boy's future troubled the parents a lot. The teachers, relatives and friends who had good faith in the bright future of the boy, started compelling his parents to send him for higher studies. There was an English high school only in Kottayam. His parents were hesitant in sending the twelve year old boy to Kottayam that was considered a distant country. In an age when motor cars were not available, the only means of reaching Kottayam 30 miles from Mavelikkara were boats. Moreover, there were no right lodgings also in Kottayam. How the Almighty God opened a way when the parents were worried, can be learned in the next chapter.



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Chapter 4

HIGHER EDUCATION AND OBTAINING THE MA DEGREE

A significant incident took place while his parents were contemplating higher studies for their son in Kottayam after he successfully completed his fourth form at the Kottackakom Government School, Mavelikara. This became a turning point in the life of the young boy. The courage, obedience, respect for the clergy and altruism which filled the boy of fourteen is revealed in the incident which forms the bedrock of his life. "The strength of the bamboo is evident in its sapling itself." The incident is as follows. His Grace Pulikkott Mar Divannasios who was administering the Malankara Jacobite Church for over 44 years from 1865 till 1909 was staying in Mavelikkara for a certain purpose. It was around twilight. Several parishioners were assembled there to meet and speak to His Grace. Besides the pitch darkness there was a raging storm too. There was also a heavy downpour. At this moment, His Grace asked the persons surrounding him, "How many miles is it from here to Vazhuvady?" One of them replied, "About a mile." Immediately His Grace ordered, "I have to meet our Deacon Veetinal urgently. Can anyone of you go to Vazhuvady and bring him here?" For some time the crowd remained silent. There were many strong-bodied persons there. There were many sanguine youngsters too. However, none of them had the courage to go up to Vazhuvady at that time. An affirmation rose from no one's tongue. At that moment surprising everyone, a young boy came forward elbowing the crowd, kissed His Grace's hand and humbly volunteered to go. Joyfully and with surprise His Grace asked, "Who are you my child?"

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The boy : Your humble servant is the son of Thoma Pannickar of Panickarveetil.

His Grace : Ah! Ha! The son of our Rev. Skaria Kathanar's brother? Good. What is your name?

The boy : PT George

His Grace : In which class are you studying?

The boy : Completed the fourth form.

His Grace : Good. You are indeed smart. Take the lamp, go and bring Dn Veetinal.

The boy : Yes, Your Grace.

At the very instant, taking the umbrella and lamp in that pitch darkness the boy went a mile away to bring the Dn. Veetinal. Pleased in this His Grace blessed the boy specially. The very sagacious bishop decided then itself that this brave and intelligent boy should be taken for the service of the Church. The next day itself, His Grace summoned to his quarters Rev. Skaria Kathanar and Thoma Panickar. He asked them to send George for the service of the Church and offered to teach him in Kottayam. Both of them agreed heartily. Thus by the beginning of the school year, Rev. Skaria Kathanar took the boy to Kottayam and entrusted the boy with Mar Divannasios. His Grace made all the arrangements for George to stay in the Old Seminary and study in the MD Seminary High School two miles away. Thus, the boy joined the fifth form in the Kottayam High School and pursued his studies. It could perhaps be according to the advice of Mar Pulikott that the boy chose his baptismal name Geevarghese instead of the name PT George and from then on came to known as PT Geevarghese. The boy stayed in the boarding of the Old Seminary and pursued his studies at the High School two miles away.

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It was Mr KC Mamman Mappila BA who was the headmaster of the MD Seminary. He was a prominent person who throughout his life spoke and wrote for the progress of the Christians of Kerala in politics, social life, literature and economics. Their relationship started from the very day PT Geevarghese joined the MD Seminary in the fifth form. Both their life histories reveal that the relationship, which started as a *guru-sishya* (teacher-student) relationship lasted a lifetime. Both these individuals worked with cooperation and trust when PT Geevarghese later adorned positions as deacon, priest, principal, head of the ashram and metropolitan-archbishop. For the progress of the non-Catholic Syrian Christians of Kerala, they both spent ever so many days in planning, writing essays, finding means and executing ideas. However, even as their ideas, ideals and work started flowing as two streams following His Grace's Reunion it did not reduce the love they had for each other even an iota. As the Archbishop was welcoming the messenger of death from his sickbed, the aged Mr Mamman Mapilla inspired by a desire to see His Grace in this world itself, ignored the tedium of travel and reached Thiruvananthapuram from Kottayam. He embraced His Grace. Both of them recalled incidents from the past and wept. One can imagine how strong the bonds of love they shared were. Since more details can be read in the chapter titled 'The Archbishop and Mr Mamman Mappilla' in this book it is considered unnecessary to elaborate it here.

Among the students of Headmaster Mamman Mappilla it was P T Geevarghese who was the foremost in receiving his affection. This was because Geevarghese was second to none in character and learning. He showed unusual talent in learning his daily lessons. He continued to study even when his classmates in the boarding went to bed. In order to escape the embrace of the goddess of slumber it was his routine to stand on a bench and read in the light of the lamp hanging from the ceiling. As a result, it was possible for PT Geevarghese to score more marks in all classes and subjects.

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His Grace had from his student days an extraordinary ability to turn even opponents to his side by presenting logical arguments. An incident, which took place while studying at the MD Seminary, is appended to illustrate this.

About 25 students stayed and studied with him in the boarding. Every day at dusk, they went to the riverside in a file to take their bath. On the way close to the fence was a small rock. One day as he was going with his classmates as they reached the rock, he drew a cross on the rock and said to them, "There is something every one going this way to the river should do. That is, all of you should bow your head and kiss it. If so, we can have our bath and return safely." Hearing this absurdity from Geevarghese his classmates laughed and ridiculed him. In spite of that, Geevarghese did not give up. While taking the bath and after that, he continued to present his arguments. Finally, all his classmates agreed to bow before the rock and kiss it. As they returned from their bath, each one of them bowed before the rock and kissed it. Thus, the young boy was satisfied. Who would have thought that this boy would, thirty years later, become an instrument in the hands of God and bow his head before the rock St Peter and make many thousands bow their heads too!

Just as in his studies, the boy surprised his classmates in his behavior too. Iterating his daily prayers with piety, assisting in the Holy Qurbono in the chapel on Sundays, keeping the altar and the objects on it clean - all these he carried out with great interest. As a result, the Principal Vattasseril Gheevarghese Malpan also had tremendous fondness for the boy. Mar Pulikkot had also mentioned the boy's courage and smartness to the Malpan. Considering the boy's profound interest in spiritual matters, Vattasseril Malpan gave him the post of caretaker (sacristan) of the chapel in the Old Seminary. He carried out the responsibility in a most sincere manner.

From his matriculation class PT Geevarghese passed with flying colours. A desire to ask the boy to take up holy orders had sprouted

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in Mar Pulikott's mind two years ago. He decided to go ahead on this occasion. Soon Mar Pulikott in consultation with Vattasseril Malpan wrote letters to the Mavelikkara parishioners, Pannickarveetil Rev. Thariath Skaria Kathanar and Thoma Panickar enquiring whether there was any objection to granting diaconate to PT Gheevarghese. Both Rev. Thariath Skaria Kathanar and Thoma Pannickar sent letters to Mar Pulikkot expressing total agreement. "The parishioners of the Jacobite Parish of Mavelikkara under the direction of the vicar held a meeting and sent to the Metropolitan their resolution expressing no objection to Geevarghese the son of Panickarveetil Thoma Panickar and Annama becoming a deacon. Learning that he was going to be made a deacon PT Geevarghese submitted himself before the will of God. Accordingly, on 26 *Dhanu* 1074 ME at the Puthenkavu church in the presence of many priests, friends and relatives. Metropolitan Pulikkott Mar Divannasios ordained him deacon. Geevarghese considered it a great blessing that he could serve the Lord throughout his life by entering priesthood.

As per the direction of Mar Pulikkott the deacon joined the CMS College to pursue his higher studies. A room adjacent to the one where Vattasseril Malpan resided was arranged for the deacon in the Old Seminary to stay and study. An incident that happened while he was staying in this room bears witness to the unique faculty of concentration with which he was endowed. One day, it was at around 10 in the night. The deacon was in his room reading a book. Vattasseril Malpan who was sitting in the next room called him, "Shemmasha!" He did not hear it. The Malpan called out repeatedly but the deacon did not hear him. Since the lamp in the room was not yet put out, the Malpan was sure that the deacon was not sleeping. Immediately, the Malpan stepped into the veranda and called out loudly, "*Shemmasha*!" Still there was no response. So, he stopped at the deacon's door and called again. The effect was the same. Deeply delighted with the deacon's concentration while reading, the Malpan returned to his room.

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The next morning on seeing the deacon, the Malpan praised him saying, "I have never seen a person studying with such concentration in my life." Several incidents can be cited to prove that this power of concentration remained with him till the very end of his life.

Another incident took place while he was residing in the Archbishop's House at Pattom when he was the Metropolitan. His Grace was sitting in the western most room on the ground floor of the two-storied building in the Archbishop's House. It was late in the evening. There was a heavy downpour outside. There were strong winds too. Many tiles from the roof were dislodged and started falling on the first floor. Rainwater started flowing downstairs. The weak building started shaking in the strong winds. The inmates of the Archbishop's House panicked not knowing what would happen next. They were scared and saddened by the thought that the building would collapse soon. A few of them rushed to the Archbishop's room to inform him. How strange! The Archbishop was oblivious of everything that was happening outside. Sitting in his chair, he was reading and learning from the Hebrew grammar text in front of him. He knew about the events when they listed the woes. There are ever so many incidents from his life history, which can reveal his powers of concentration. While he was reading in bed or lost in deep thought, people who approached him hemming and hawing for his attention, had to walk away disappointed. Concentration is a quality much admired in great men.

Mar Pulikkott in consultation with Vattasseril Malpan decided to send the deacon to the Madras Christian College for his BA course on passing his FA examination after studying in the CMS College, Kottayam for two years. The Christian College was set up in Madras by the leaders of the Free Church of Scotland in a 400-acre area with many two storied buildings and other facilities. It was the practice of all Malayalee youngsters to go there and get higher education. Even

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before Deacon Geevarghese went there Mr EJ John, Mr MA Chacko, Mr KC Mamman Mapillai, Mr A Philipose and Mr AM Varkey received their education there.

During those days, Mr A Philipose from Kalluppara and a member of the ancient Marett family was studying there for his MA course. As per the directions of Mar Pulikkott, his secretary Mr Edavazhikkal EM Philip wrote a letter to Mr A Philipose in Madras. The contents of the letter were as follows: Dn PT Geevatghese has completed his FA examination; he is coming to the Christian College for his BA Course: arrangements for his admission and stay should be made. Accordingly, on the appointed day Mr A Philipose met him at the railway station and got him admission in the college. He also made all the arrangements for the deacon to stay with the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) fathers in the Sullivan Garden Hostel and pursue his studies. The optional subjects he took for his BA course were Indian History and Economics. He pursued his studies for a few months, staying in the Sullivan Garden Hostel. However, travelling four miles daily to college became quite tedious and he shifted to the YMCA Hostel.

Dr Millan was then the principal of the college. After him, Dr Skinner held the post of the principal. It is no wonder that the principal and professors had great love and respect for Dn Geevarghese who was smart in his studies and a model in behavior. He was the leader of all the Syrians who were his classmates in the college. George Joseph, KK Chacko, KK Thomas, Cheeran Varghese, KC Mathew, KV Chacko, CG Varghese and Idichandy who later became dazzling stars of the Kerala Christian community were all his friends and classmates.

The students who studied in the Madras Christian College learned about the history of England, the growth of the constitution, the several battles the English fought for political freedom, their successes, and the like. This led them to conclude that democratic principles should be the model of Christian administration also. Though the Protestant

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Churches have more or less practised it, it is a historical fact that Episcopal Churches have never accepted it. Moreover, for a Constitution to be effective and noble, democratic principles can never be implemented in the Christian Church. It led to most of the students falling into the maliciously liberal view that their Mother Churches too should adopt a democratic system of administration, be free from the rule by clergy, and gain independence. The underlying secret behind the Catholic Hierarchy forbidding in earlier times their flock from studying in protestant schools is evident from these experiences. The teaching in protestant institutions inspires the lowering of the regard for priesthood and activities against the clergy. The deacon tried his best in preventing his Malayalee-Syrian classmates from deviating into such ways. The deacon showed apathy towards visiting protestant churches or attending their meetings. He frequently gave speeches and talks helpful in generating greater faith and devotion among his classmates who were members of the Jacobite Church. The deacon stayed at the YMCA for two years and completed his BA course with flying colours. After that with the special interest of Mar Pulikkott he started his MA Course. Since the stay at the YMCA was not conducive to his physical health, he took a house on rent and stayed with Mr A Philipose at Puthupettah. Since there were not enough books in the college library to prepare his dissertation he borrowed books from the Connemara Library at Puthupettah and studied them. He was preparing the dissertation on the topic, *Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians*? He completed the dissertation within a year, staying at Puthupettah and reading the ancient historical texts from the Connemara Library. Anyone who reads the dissertaion can understand the amount of attention given to the perusal of ancient records and studying the history books.

Mr CP Tharakan translated the dissertation written in English verbatim for Malayalee readers in 1907, through the *Suriyani Sabha Leghu Lekha Sangham*. That the deacon had diligently read books by scholarly historians like Dr Howe, Neil, Cosmos, Badger, Assemani,

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Whitehouse, Roy and Bar Hebraeus is proved by the book. What the deacon did was to oppose totally the view presented by certain historians that the Syrian Christians of Kerala prior to the 16th century were Nestorians. A few excerpts from the book published 50 years ago when His Grace was a deacon are appended below.

Foreword

There is a dearth of authentic books to study the ancient history of the Syrian Church in Kerala. This has led to many Europeans who tried to piece together the past of the Church to give variant histories of the Church. I have often felt that Syrians with good education should ascertain whether the books by Europeans are founded on authentic works or they are products of their imagination. A formidable party among European historians has argued that St Thomas the Apostle never came to Kerala and the Church was founded only in the sixth century. In order to discern how valid this argument is, one should read diligently the speech by a person who strives for the glory of the Church Mr Philipose MA BL Another argument by these historians is that the Syrian Church was Nestorian till the 16th century. This leaflet tries to examine that in the light of indisputable documents from history.

May I state here gratefully that Mr KC Mamman Mappila encouraged me to write a tract on whether the Syrians were Nestorians. He helped me in finding historical records. He also gave me a manuscript of the history of the Syrian Church written in English by Mr EM Philipose.

21- 10- 1907
Parumala Seminary — Dn PT Geevarghese

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An excerpt from the opinion expressed on the original text in English in the *Suriyani Suvisheshakan* published by the Jacobite Church is appended here.

In can be comprehended from this excerpt how communities held in high esteem the deacon who was the author of the book.

Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?

Text of the speech written by Rev. Dn PT Geevarghese in English.

It is our opinion that the reverend deacon has undoubtedly exposed in the book the invalidity of the view of historians that the Malankara Syrian Church was Nestorian till the advent of the Portuguese in the 16th century. The part that introduces the differences in faith among the Nestorians, the Romans and the Jacobites is very relevant.

"...It is specially to be remembered that several sections of books by authors who go around saying that the Syrian Church is Nestorian are interpreted by our deacon. We feel, without any exaggeration, it can be said that to the Syrian Church which expects so much of this deacon, his first book itself has been so grand and has given so much delight, especially since this profoundly meaningful book has been translated by CP Paulose Tharakan into Malayalam and is to be published soon. Mr Tharakan's effort is praiseworthy. Let me state here our firm belief that the Malankara Syrian Church will be ready to help Mr Tharakan. We also hope and pray to the Almighty Lord of the universe that the deacon who has created such a book will create more such nooks in future. *Adieu* for now.

A few sentences from the preface to the Malayalam translation by Shri CP Tharakan are given below.

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From the time, I read the speech by the deacon I was excited to get it translated. Because, no one had ventured to translate it, because this book helps in allaying the misconceptions many had about the Syrian Church, and it invalidates the arguments held by reformists in many a case I decided to translate it to make it lucid for all members of our community in spite of my lack of erudition in English and Malayalam. Hence, I conclude by expressing my gratitude to the great men Mr KM Kurian, Mr Kocheapen Tharakan and Dn PT Geevarghese who patiently read the translation, corrected it and gave me the permission to publish it.

28. 10.1907 CP Tharakan
Old Seminary, Kottayam

The review written again in the *Suriyani Suvishekan* on the Malayalam translation of the book is added here:

Were the Syrian Christians Nestorians?

I have received with gratitude a copy of the book written in English with the above mentioned title by Very Rev. Dn PT Geevarghese who is the first among Syrian priests of Kerala to get an MA Degree. We do not wish to say anything on this occasion in general about the book written in English as we have already reviewed the Rev. deacon's work. We have realized that many Syrians who do not follow English were eagerly awaiting a Malayalam translation of the book, which the Rev. deacon has published after a long period of striving. This writer recalls a conversation with Mr CP Tharakan who said that he desired a translation of this work because of the reputation of

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the deacon among the Syrians and the yearning many people had for a translation. Besides that, we are not hesitant in saying that the language used in the work is good. There will not be any opposition to the view that this book stands out among the so-called books written in Suriyani-Malayalam. We firmly believe that all those who have heard a lot about the ancient history of the Syrian community from others and are eager to learn the early history of this community should buy and read this book.



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Chapter 5

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DEACON

His Grace Mar Ivanios had an extraordinary skill in delivering entertaining and lengthy speeches. He had in him the qualities of a good orator, like scholarship in many languages and the ability to express well. While he was a deacon, priest and bishop he travelled widely over Kerala to deliver many speeches. After embracing the Catholic faith, he travelled not only in India but also in the continents of Europe, America and Australia visiting churches, schools, universities and large meetings delivering thousands of speeches. All his English speeches received great appreciation from the Western audiences.

His speeches could be taken down and published directly since the words and sentences which flowed from his tongue were so clear and pure. He could speak for hours on end without tiring his audience because he had the faculty to adapt his style according to the time and circumstance and make his speech informative and interesting. As a result, thousands gathered wherever he spoke. While he was a deacon he gave many speeches on the blessed sacraments and came to be known as *Koodasha Shemmashan* or Deacon of the Sacrament. The speech made by the deacon 45 years ago at the annual assembly of the '*Jacobite Suriyani Mahajana Sabha*' was published in the *Suriyani Suviseshakan* brought out by the Jacobite Church. That speech on God, created objects, religion, human incarnation, the Church and sacraments is given here. The speech reveals his knowledge on these subjects even while he was a deacon. The Speech was as follows:

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God and Man

The reality of God, the soul and the world is an indisputable certainty, which has emerged as the result of the deliberations of philosophers down the ages. God, the soul and the world are real. They do not exist in the world alone. Even if divine revelation is not accepted, through reasoning and experience it is somewhat easy to realize that these are real and cannot be opposed by those who think in terms of logic. If these three are real it is imperative to know whether they are related and if they are related what is the nature of the relationship.

It is only possible that God is one and that the soul and the world have come from him. All the visible and invisible creations are the fruits of the power of God's will. Everything originates from him (John 1:3) and everything is related so as to join him.

There is a Theory of Evolution, which is accepted by all kinds of scientists and is manifest to science (That is, the form and nature of an object or animal is determined by the surrounding circumstances and forces. When they are altered these objects also change. This scientific principle is called the Theory of Evolution). New scientists are of the opinion that this principle can be applied in any science. As St Paul says, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:22). All spiritual and corporal creation find bliss in reaching God. It is clear that the changes which happen even now in the universe are a preparation for that to happen.

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Three types of Creation

We can divide creations into three types. Firstly the pure souls, which are invisible; e.g.: Angels. People who are concerned only about material things without any spiritual life or effort to interact with God think that souls do not exist. There is no need to consider the opinion of such people. Secondly, creations, which are mere elements: e.g., inanimate objects and animals without conscience.There is no need to consider the opinion of scientists who say that there is nothing physical. Thirdly, man who represents the whole of creation with his invisible soul and visible body. If one reflects either according to the science of evolution or accepting the verities offered by God-given religion, it will be clear that Man is the crown of the all creation. Hence, we can deduct that if Man attains God, in him and through him all creation will attain God.

Religion founded by God

The desire for union with God is natural to Man. Usually even among atheists, when they are not solely dependent on their brains, the yearning for the Lord is felt. This feeling is present even among the Australian aborigines and natives of Africa untouched by civilization. Just as there are congenitally blind people there are congenital atheists too. Our yearning for the Lord is natural. Its performance and result is religion or the way or *dharma*. To be in devotion means that Man dwells in God and God dwells in Man as a result of the interaction between Man and God. Many religions agree on the one fact that the purpose and evolution of religion is the union of God and Man. It is not scientifically possible to call a

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practice without faith in God a 'religion.' Natural religions are the result of Man's attempts at reaching God without His direct guidance and by using the faculties God has naturally endowed Man with. Such religions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Confucianism. Apart from these there are religions formed for special ways of divine communion, revealed by God himself and historically verifiable manifestations. The faith of forefathers like Abraham, the religion received by the Jews through Moses and the religion established by the Messiah, the Son of God, can all be called religions revealed by God. Even though the verities of natural religions are revealed by God, it is evident here that the term God revealed faith is used in a special sense.

The Mystery of the Incarnation

Our yearning to attain God is natural. This means, since it is God-revealed, the means of realization of this yearning should also be given by God. Man is deified when God becomes present in Man and Man in God. However, it is impossible for Man to become God since he has many bondages and sins. Hence, only when God himself, who gave Man the natural instinct to yearn for God takes human form, that is he becomes incarnate, and creates the means for Man to realize God, will the above mentioned yearning be fulfilled.

It has been stated above that all creation should attain God and for that all creation is related. Man who has both body and soul represents all creation visible or invisible, not merely the ones with body or soul. This principle has also been mentioned above. In this case, if God becomes incarnate to unite Man who has both body

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and soul with God, the purpose of the incarnation will not be achieved if the incarnate has just the soul or the body. In order to unite Man who has both body and soul with God, God had to become incarnate as a man with both body and soul. This incarnation is Jesus Christ. Our Lord is God himself. Our Lord is also a real human being with both body and soul. Our Lord is perfect man and perfect God. The mystery of the incarnation is that the "Word" (Jn 1:14-18) who is both God and the Son placed himself in one body and soul as a means for all creation to unite with God. This is the most important tenet of Christianity. The entire strength of Christianity rests on the belief that the Messiah is God. If the Messiah is not God, that is, if God had not become incarnate, the origin and the miraculous spread of Christianity, the force which reformed the whole world and the noble path of righteousness of Christianity would all have been futile. The reason is that all these depend on the Messiah's divinity. If the Messiah is not God there is no way to say what the foundation of all these is. The fact that the Messiah is God is the basic tenet of Christianity. Let us see what St John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being ... And the Word became flesh, and lived among us, and we have seen his glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth... Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known (Jn 1: 1-18). "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). These words of the

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Messiah refer to this fact. As a result of the human incarnation of God, that is, if we say, through Jesus Christ the Man incarnate it is possible for us to attain God, what else does it mean other than that, we can enter the divinity of the Messiah through the only means decided by God which is the humanity of the Messiah?

Divinity and Humanity

What is the need of incarnation if we can attain divinity without the humanity of the Messiah? What is the advantage of God assuming humanity? If to realize our God-given yearning for God, and for us to attain God, God has become incarnate, it can only be the real Jesus, the Messiah who nineteen centuries ago was born in Bethlehem to the Virgin Mary, grew up, died on the cross and resurrected. Hence, St Paul says, "There is one God and one mediator between Him and men. It is Jesus Christ who is a man" (1Tim 2:5). The incarnation is the means by which God unites in Man and Man unites in God. Just because of this, each one of us has not united with God. God's human incarnation is a means for all men to become one with the divinity. God has decided that all those who accept the Messiah will attain divinity through him. That is, the God-given means for men to commune with God is the humanity of the Messiah. That is why it is said that the Messiah incarnate is the only mediator.

The Messiah is perfect God and perfect man. The Messiah's humanity is the means given by God for us to reach divinity. When it is said that the Messiah is perfect man it means that he is totally without the blemish brought about by sin in the soul and body, in Adam and the family of man. An Adam without an iota of sin is necessary to

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solve the inadequacies of our bodies and souls wrought by the sins of our fathers from Adam till date, as well as our sins. The Word became incarnate as a second Adam to absolve our sins through a relationship of mercy as opposed to the natural relationship we had with the first Adam.

The Messiah, with both body and soul and without sin, was the means God adopted to make us, who are sinners with body and soul, united with divinity. Therefore, what we have to do to attain God is to unite our body and soul with the body and soul of the Messiah. If we do so, we will have a communion with divinity as willed by God. If we receive the body and soul of the Messiah in the right measure in our body and soul, the divinity united to the body and soul of the Messiah will be united in us. This manner of communion with God is more real and nobler than the mere communion with God that is purely of this world or of the mind. This kind of communion with God creates in us the awareness that we are fully God's own and that we stand united with God. This consciousness that we get from experience helps us more to remain in the devotion to God than the mere mental consciousness.

It should not be misunderstood that it is simply figurative to say that the humanity of the Messiah is the means for communion with God. That the Messiah's humanity is the means to communion with God is said in a true sense. It is not of the mind alone. Man should be united with the Messiah in body too. As a result he should be united with divinity as well. If communion with God was supposed to be simply spiritual, the Messiah would have simply taken the form of the soul. However, the

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Messiah became incarnate, became like us with body and soul in everything except sin. If we believe that the Messiah is God, that is, if we believe that the means adopted by God in order to unite us with divinity, is the human incarnation of the Messiah, then we are ought to admit that communion with God should be through the Messiah, that is, through the humanity of the Messiah.

Body and Soul

It is accepted that the means of communion with God is the body and soul of the Messiah. However, some may think that we can commune with God either only through our body or only through our soul. Let us consider the truth. The evolution of all creation with body or soul is towards union with God. It has also been stated that God became incarnate as the only means of uniting man, who represents all creation and is the paragon of creation, with God. If only man's soul or body alone communes with God, man does not wholly commune with God. He will not represent the whole of creation with partial communion. It was stated earlier that *iswaran* (god), soul and the world originated from God and strives to attain God. God became incarnate specially to unite man who represents all creation with God and to make it easy for all creation to be united with God. Hence, it is necessary that man should totally, with body and soul, unite with God.

The Resurrected Body

The belief in resurrection strengthens this. We know the historical events in which his body suffered, died and was buried and the same body rose up on the third day acquiring spiritual features. The Messiah's resurrection is

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as true a historical fact as the Russo-Japanese war and the demise of Queen Victoria. All documents and witnesses required to prove scientifically a historical event are available for this historical event too. Because the Messiah rose from the dead we too can be sure to have resurrection and a life after that. It also agrees with the theological position that all creations strive to unite with God. According to the theory of evolution accepted by all branches of science, man also, through evolution has to change and attain a better or nobler status. From the resurrection of the Messiah and the God-given precepts it should be understood that this nobler status becomes pure with resurrection. It is certain that He resurrected because when his dead body was sought after, it was not to be seen in the tomb and the angel vouched that his body had risen. It becomes the foundation for us to believe in resurrection in a similar manner.

Thus, it is not just our soul alone or body alone that resurrects. We will rise up in body and soul and unite with God. In our life itself we should acquire the qualifications for this magnificent union with God through the Messiah who became incarnate. The Messiah is the means of salvation in this world and at resurrection too. "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6).

The means given by God for our body and soul to unite with God in this life and at resurrection is the incarnation of the Messiah. The means for our soul and body (that is, we as a whole) to be united with God, not only in this life, after death and at resurrection but also at all times, is to be united with the body and soul of the Messiah who is both God and man. It is not enough that

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our body or soul alone be united. The Christian religion is neither merely psychological nor superficial. Christianity binds the whole man. Therefore those Christian communities which say that faith is merely of the mind deny the central precept of Christianity which is incarnation. These and traditional Churches differ in the way in which they accept the Messiah who is both God and man. Let us decide not to consider all such insignificant differences. However, does it go well with Christianity to ignore the denial of the supreme truth that the Messiah is both God and man?

The Visible Body and the Sacraments

Now let us conclude this speech saying what the humanity of the Messiah is and how we unite and ought to unite with the humanity of the Messiah

After the death of the Messiah, he resurrected and ascended into Heaven with the glorified body. As the decree, "Till the end of the World I (that is not just in divinity but the Messiah as a whole) shall be with you", our Lord lives among us in his risen body. His body has spread over the world as the Church. It has been decreed clearly that the Church is the body of the Messiah.

We are united with the Messiah because we exist in His body which is the Christian Church. One who grows in the Messiah by relishing the Messiah with greater fervour than before and following the tenets of the God-given Christian faith as a real Christian is a true faithful devotee of Christ.

It is not enough that we receive the Messiah into us merely as an opinion or speculation. The true Christian

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Religion is not merely of the mind or body. We should receive the body and soul of the Messiah in our body and soul both physically and spiritually. There are means given by the Messiah himself to receive visibly and invisibly the Messiah through both spiritual and physical ways. These are called mysteries or sacraments. There are many sacraments.[1] It is commonly said to be seven. Since we consider the Messiah as the only means to salvation there is no way other than receiving the Messiah both invisibly and visibly in our bodies and souls. For example, let us think about the Holy Qurbono. The Messiah himself willed the Holy Qurbono as the means by which our minds and bodies unite with the body and soul of the Messiah. It is not merely of the mind. He blessed the bread and the wine saying, "This is my body; this is my blood". He also commanded that this should be done till he comes again. He exhorted, "He who drinks my blood and eats my body lives in me and I in him". Hence the fact is clear that the Messiah commanded that for us to be united with the Messiah we should enjoy the Messiah through the sacrament of the Holy Qurbono in which there are seen and unseen things. All the strength of the Holy Qurbono and other sacraments rests on the fact that the Messiah is both real man and real God. If the Messiah is not God all the sacraments are fruitless. If the Messiah is not God, believing in and following the apostolic succession, the sacraments like the Holy Qurbono, the Holy Baptism are useless. If the Messiah is not a real man then also the sacraments are futile.

[1] The word "sacrament" is used here not in a specific theological sense, but in a wider sense (Author).

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Hence the faith and rituals of the Apostolic Church which is the real Christian religion are dependent on the divine and human nature of the Messiah. So we should realize these truths and reckon that those who reject the sacraments and the Church reject the true Messiah. We should also, with true belief and real penitence, accept the Messiah and be in Him. If we do thus, we will individually and through us the members of the Church in general and the Church and the community and other communities too will prosper as never before.



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Chapter 6

THE PRINCIPAL OF THE MD SEMINARY

Metropolitan Pulikott Mar Divannasios and Vattasserril Malpan had discussed and decided in advance the job which could be given to Rev. Dn PT Geevarghese who had obtained the MA Degree with high marks and returned to his native place. The MD Seminary at Kottayam was a high school belonging to the Jacobite community. Mar Pulikott agreed to Vattasserril Malpan's desire to post Rev. Fr PT Geevarghese as the Principal of the High School. The then manager or principal of the school was the late Edavazhikkal E M Philip, a leading member of the Jacobite community and an author of a few Church-related books. What Mr E M Philip wrote in the book titled *Malankara Sabhayude Rahasya Pedakam* (*The Secret Capsule of the Malankara Church*) on being relieved from the office of the Principal and Fr Geevarghese assuming the office is as follows:

> In 1902 when the Metropolitan of the Niranam parish passed away and Fr Geevarghese (Vattasseril Mar Divannasios) relinquished the post of Principal, the financial matters of the school also passed on to me. However, at that time, apart from the fees collected from the classes and the government grants, no money came my way. I undertook this heavy task because no one could accuse me of any embezzlement as the collection did not suffice even for disbursing the salaries. From then till January1908 when Rev. Fr PT Geevarghese MA was appointed the Principal, I bore all responsibilities of school management. As said earlier, since resources other than

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> fees and the grants did not come into my hands, it is impossible to describe the trouble I had to face in running the school. Since Mr Mamman Mapilla who was the headmaster was helpful and I was friendly with my colleagues and also since they did not complain about the breaks in disbursing the salary, I did not get a bad name. However, just as my predecessor Mr Mamman Mapilla was only too happy to give up the post I too was looking for a person on whom I could place my load when Fr PT Geevarghese was appointed the principal. Though he was not appointed in such a manner that he could handle finances as my position as secretary entitled me to, I found that it was the right time to give such authority to him as he showed signs of interest in the same. It could honour him and make his work more independent and efficient. He received the responsibility with joy. Thus I pulled my head out of the responsibility of running the MD Seminary (*Malankara Sabhayude Rehasaya Pedakam* pages 96- 97)

There is a long history about the MD Seminary and the buildings housing *The Malayala Manorama* in the Woodlands estate (16 acres) in the heart of the Kottayam town, which is a major centre of Christians in central Travancore. This plot was bought jointly by the Jacobite Metropolitan Pulikkot Mar Divannasios and a prominent Catholic priest Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar for several ventures under the auspices of the *Nazarani Jathaikya Sangham.* What was implicit in these activities was facilitating the reunion of the Jacobites with the Catholic Church. The inspiration behind the local initiatives, the activities carried out and the pathetic failures in the end were all interestingly narrated 24 years ago by writer and historian Mr IC Chacko in a series published in *Dasan*, the newspaper brought out by MM Varkey. Here is an excerpt from the series.

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It is true that soon the Catholics will have to leave societies which are formed jointly by Catholics and non-Catholics and are growing in a wayward manner. When such societies are dissolved the contributions of the Catholics and the expenses they met with would be in vain. Not only that these will turn against them. It is a firm resolve of the Catholic Church that whatever be the losses or the suffering, their faith will be preserved. In such circumstances Catholics may have to withdraw from groups which deviate into anathema and resist them.

The Mar Divannasios Institution at Kottayam is a good example for the losses suffered by Catholics who withdraw from such groups. In the present *Vattippanam* case there is an evident return to the Catholic faith from the Jacobite Church. Similarly when the Seminary case was in an unresolved state there was an attempt for a return. Bearing in mind the experience of the Jacobites, Rev. Nidhiyirikkal Mani Achan who was always enthusiastic about the welfare of the Church and Jacobites like Mar Divannasios and the *Pazhayakoottukar* and those among the *Puthenkoottukar* who were thought to have shown interest in joining the *Pazhayakoottukar* jointly bought the property where the MD Seminary and the *Malayala Manorama* stand. In those days the *Pazhayakoottukar* were under the rule of the Metropolitan of Verapoly. The Metropolitan was in favour of this movement which could have resulted in the *Puthenkoottukar* becoming Catholics. Because of this favour, many Catholic churches donated money to this movement. When this news reached Rome, the authorities there warned the Metropolitan of Verapoly that such associations between Catholics and non-Catholics would end up harming the Catholics.

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It may be inferred that Rome had no obvious objection to such associations since the Metropolitan initially approved of them. Be that as it may, after the disapproval from Rome the response from the Catholics became cold. However, there was still much warmth in Mani Achan's heart for this movement. Pride in the community was the prime mover of his activities. It was when things were like this that Bishop Lavigne became the head of the *Pazhayakoottukar*. Mani Achan's hope was that the Jacobites would become Catholics through this movement and as a result the Syrian society would become united. Bishop Lavigne became favourable towards this hope of Mani Achan. According to Mani Achan's wish the Metropolitan stayed in Mani Thomas' bungalow in Kottayam while his committee members and secretary stayed in the *Manorama* buildings.

The idea was to stay there thus and establish a common high school and seminary for the Catholics and Jacobites. During this time the old seminary case ended with a verdict in favour of the Jacobites. The Jacobites began to think that unity with the Catholics was not a must. It was in such a time that Bishop Lavigne tried to have a common educational institution. Bishop Lavigne insisted that he should have the right over the selection of teachers of the high school and seminary, who will form and fortify faith. The leaders of the Jacobite faith who lost interest in reunion with the Catholic Church following a favourable verdict in the Old Seminary case refused to agree to this. They argued that the appointments in a common institution should be done together. This argument is legally sound. However, we should look at the plight of a Catholic Bishop who has to protect the faith undivided. Should he remain calm when the Jacobites appoint

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teachers who hold heretic views and become a corrupting influence on Catholic youth? Bishop Lavinge might have lamented: "After destroying what has to be preserved, can one stand by the side of the one who gave the thing as though one is unhurt?" (Raghuvashom II Sloka 56).[1] The Catholics argued that Catholic faith should be taught in a common institution aimed at facilitating reunion with the Catholic Church. The Jacobites countered by asking whether any document could be produced to prove that they had agreed to such an arrangement. What both the parties said was true. However, there would be no progress.

While this controversy was raging the *Manorama* building and premises were with the Catholics. Nine legal points were with them. The Jacobites thought of getting hold of the property. Since Catholics were not prevalent in Kottayam at that time, it was not difficult for the Jacobites who were very strong. However, they thought of an easy way out. Catholic priests too could stay in the *Manorama* building which was a common property. True! Jacobite priests were married. St Paul himself had advised that wives should stay with their husbands. This too was true! The Jacobite priests who came to stay with the Catholic priests brought their wives too. All these are true! However, the Catholic priests who had taken the vow of celibacy could not share a house with women, even if they are married to Jacobite priests. All these tuths added up to a big wrong!

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[1] *Sthathum niyoktur Nahishakyamagre*
Vinasharakshyam wayamakshaphathena (the original Sanskrit)

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One evening Bishop Lavigne got the information that the Jacobites were planning to attach the property the next morning. He asked all the priests staying in the *Manorama* building to vacate their rooms with all their possessions and relocate at the parsonage of the Edakkattu Church. Thus the common venture of the Catholics and the Jacobites came to an end. I gathered this from the secretary of Bishop Lavigne, Bishop Mar Louis, who had fled from the *Manorama* building on that midnight. (Because I do not remember the correct name and because it is now in the hands of the *Manorama* Company, from what I call the *Manorama* building, readers should not think that *Malayala Manorama* has anything to do with it.)

Mani Achan had great disappointment and grief over the way the endeavour which was the greatest goal of his life ended. He wanted to give definiteness to the right of the Catholics in the common institution. However, Bishop Louis told me that Bishop Lavigne stopped Mani Achan saying that the time spent on the venture was a waste and that he thought that the Jacobite brothers could keep the right to themselves.

This was the result of the efforts undertaken in this land to make the Catholics and non-Catholics work united. This became a good lesson for the Catholics of this land. The Catholic Church which has the experience of observing the world for over 2000 years must be keeping in mind several other lessons too while formulating rules (*Dasan*, 7 January 1933 page 5 *Oru Perinte Nyunatha* by I C Chacko).

The text of the title deed obtained from the American Catholic Mr Dara is attached herewith assuming that it will be of interest to students of history.

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The title Deed executed on 24 *Thulam*, 1064 ME for the founders of *Nazrani Jathaikya Sangham* - Kottayam Mandavathum Vathukkal Ettumanur District, Most Rev. Dionysius staying at the Govindapuram Village Suriyani Seminary, church administrator, Christian Religion, 56 year old and Ettumanur District, Rev. Fr Immanuel Abraham Nidhiyiri statying at Kuravilanadu Church, Kuravilangadu Village, 47 year old, by American Trader Mr James Dara, 62 years old, staying at Kadapurath Puthan Bunglow, Alapuzha. Mr James Dara is the attorney of the Mr Hucrafort Esquire, an Alapuzha commercial agent, who has presently gone to Europe. This title Deed is written by him. I am handing over the following objects, buildings and the trees and other flora for British Rupees 3541 and 4 Paise to the Jathaikya Sanghom, Most Rev Metrapolitan Dionysius and Rev. Fr Immanuel Abraham Nidhiyiri as per the power of attorney of Hucrafort 1886 March 24 – I have vacated the property. The amounts received are given below: 24 March - Rs 500; 4 November - Rs 557; 16 December - Rs 340; 2 March 1887 - Rs 2144.04; Total 3541. 04. Agreed that the buyers can enjoy the property and register the property in their name and after having cleared all the taxes, as they have paid the said amounts (*The Biography of Nidhiyirikal Mani Kathanar*, p. 204).

It has been mentioned above that Pulikottu Mar Divannasios and Vattassereil Malpan Achan had decided to post the deacon as headmaster of the MD Seminary. As a first step he was appointed as headmaster for one month. The news which appeared in the *Suriyani Suviseshekan* is appended below.

Our deacon Geevarghese MA had returned to Parumala on the 15th of this month after serving as

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headmaster as KC Mamman Mappila BA, the Headmaster of the Mar Divannasios Seminary had gone to Trivandrum for treatment. The general opinion is that his model of teaching and interaction with students are satisfactory. It is wished that there will be public approval for all things concerning him.

Deacon Geevarghese was appointed the principal of the said high school while Mr KC Mamman Mappila was serving as its headmaster. Below is attached a portion of the article which was serialized in the *Malayala Manorama* weekly with the title "The Sad End of my Teaching Career."

Though Vattasseril Malpanachan was serving as the manager of the school, and its honorary Principal, in all meetings of the school the audience perceived me as the star performer. That this caused jealousy and intolerance among some was only natural. For some time in the beginning, I felt enthusiasm and intensity in teaching. As I went along for some time my enthusiasm slowed down and I lost interest in teaching because of the profession's limitations and several other circumstantial reasons. I came to know that Malpanachan did not enjoy the fact that I was the headmaster.

Perhaps, Malpanachan thought, that if a person who was more submissive was the headmaster he could have survived under Malpanachan's mercy with loyalty.

It was at such a time, when things were slowly going awry that a student named deacon PT Geevarghese from Mavelikara came to study in the M D High School in the fourth form. Since this deacon was naturally smart and intelligent he received the special fondness of Malpanachan. Malpanachan took an interest in the

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deacon's studies and the deacon had great veneration and respect for him. Between them arose a cordiality as in a father-son relationship. As he was elated in finding the ideal youth for future service to the communinity, Malpanachan freely paid from the Church accounts all expenses for the deacon's education. The deacon studied till matriculation funded by the Church at the MD School. From there, after passing the matriculation, Malpanachan sent him to learn at CMS College, Kottayam. From there, after passing the FA exam he was sent to Madras Christian College for higher studies. From there he passed both BA and MA and returned. By then it was clear that deacon PT Geevarghese was the person groomed and readied in the wings to be installed over my head in my official position at the MD School. The only problem, which remained, was when I would resign as headmaster or when I would be removed. The desire to place in a significant role, for service of the community, the deacon who attained a Master's Degree with the financial assistance of Malpanachan became intense in him. On one occasion Malpanachan hinted it during a conversation we had.

"Do the members of the Kandathil family have a quarrel with Deacon Pannickar (that was how Deacon Geevarghese who was born in Panickar Veettil was referred to)?"

It was a question that let the cat of Malpanachan's wish to show its head out of the bag. I understood its hint very clearly. I did not fail to understand that the diplomatic Malpanachan was using the generic name Kandathil family to blunt the sharpness of using the singular name Mamman Mapilla. In order to get clearer and candid

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picture of the idea that rested in the Malpanachan's mind, I tried to cross him within the ambit of the generic. I named the important members of the Kandathil family and asked one by one which of them had a quarrel with the deacon. I received the answer, "No, No" repeatedly from him." Then what is the meaning of the query whether the Kandathil family had a quarrel with the deacon?" I asked. Cornered he reached the problem, "Does Mamman Mapilla have a quarrel?"

It is not easy to imagine how humiliating and distressing the Malpanachan's determined and ruthless chess like moves were at that time in spite of his diplomacy. I felt as though I was faced with evil prospects of being pushed into the water, while I was responsible for a rather large family in the youthful boat of my life. In that bylane in the beginning of my life's journey where should I go? What should I do? I had no quick answers. It was like a lightning strike in the face of my pride. I was in a state of total shock. How to erase this humiliation without many people knowing of this? I expressed an opinion that Geevarghese could, if necessary be appointed Principal of the MGM High School in Tiruvalla. I also opined in the form of a request that if the Deacon has to be foisted in the MD High School, it would be good if I could be temporarily made the Secretary of the community trust or some such position. At this distressing juncture, I sought the help of Metropolitan Pulikott. He was by nature loving and sympathetic towards the sorrows of other people. However, he did not generally possess an independent and firm personality or opinion. The Metropolitan was mostly sympathetic to me in my moment of sadness. I went to the Old Seminary and apprised the

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bishop of the facts. After listening to everything he consoled me saying that after due consideration he would give a decision the next day. The essence of that response was that he had to consult Malpanachan. Bishop Pulikott did not have the courage to do anything without consulting Malpanachan or against his wishes. The next day around 10 am as per the bishop's word, on reaching the old seminary to seek the bishop's decision, I found that he had left for Parumala. There is no need to elaborate on the immense frustration I felt then.

On a later occasion when I met the bishop, he admitted that he had left for Parumala because he could not face me and give the unsavoury news that Vattasseril Malpanachan was unrelenting when the Metropolitan discussed my matter with the Malpanachan.

Eventually what I feared happened one day. Fr PT Geevarghese was appointed principal of MD High School. Many responsibilities regarding the school were transferred to him. I had to become a mere namesake of a headmaster. Malpanachan was not likely to feel that I would sit in a corner quiet and peaceful suffering this humiliation. He might have expected a storm and unrest since I was a young man with boldness, pride and powerful relatives like Varghese Mapilla, Advocate Eapen and Advocate John who were important persons in the community. However my self-respect did not allow me to discuss this matter with anyone. Hence, I silently and in isolation suffered my heartburn. Malpanachan must have been surprised at this. Though due to certain circumstances, I silently bore this thrashing of my self-respect, which singed me. The pain it gave me simmered and emitted smoke in my heart for long. Let it be.

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> Fr PT Geevarghese who was the protégé of Malpanachan was installed the principal. Malpanachan saw in his farsighted mind the intelligent and loyal Fr PT Geevarghese the future glory of the Jacobite Syrian Church. (*Manorama Weekly* Vol 1 No. 25 page 17)

On becoming the principal of the MD Seminary the great man prepared a daily routine and adhered to it strictly. He used to sleep for only four hours and spent the remaining twenty hours working. He had taken from Mavelikara to Kottayam Mr Kilileth Chacko who was the son of his father's brother's daughter and very diligent and loyal in his work. Mr Chacko was given many responsibilities in MD Seminary to be carried out under his directions and was appointed manager. The manager was also given the task of waking him up very early every morning. Whatever time he retired to bed, he instructed the manager to wake him up after four hours. Since then he adopted the style of going into deep sleep as soon as he was in bed and got up the moment he was called. He had the habit of reading for about 15 minutes *The Imitation of Christ* written by the Catholic ascetic Thomas à Kempis. After that he recited prayers in Syriac and iterated personal prayers. This was his routine.

The principal taught various subjects in most of the classes. The principal's classes were informative and interesting to the students. He gave the school peon advance instruction to place his chair in the class he was to teach. Thus that chair was considered by the students as the signal for the principal's visit. This chair known as the principal's chair moved from classroom to classroom for the next four to five years.

The principal showed great interest in promoting smart and well behaved students. Likewise he was strict in dealing with erring students and punishing them harshly. Once he caned a deacon on his palm causing a wound. Furious at this, the deacon consulted certain advocates in Kottayam to file a criminal case. However, the deacon's

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father reached the school and admonished his son, thereby ending the efforts for the case. The principal evinced great firmness in maintaining the school's discipline and harshly punishing culprits.

A great meeting was held at the Niranam Church to felicitate and offer presents to the deacon who had become the Principal of the MD Seminary. Below is appended the news which appeared on it in the *Malayala Manorama*:-

> After that, deacon Geevarghese who is the first priest to have passed MA was extolled by Pallath Mathew Esquire and a gold watch and chain were presented by Kizhakedath Geevareghese Kathanar. The deacon thanked the people of Niranam for their praise and present. (*Malayala Manorama*, 29 July1908)

It was a few months after he became the principal of MD Seminary that Vattasseeril Remban and Paulose Remban went to Antioch to be ordained bishops. When they returned to Kottayam after being ordained bishops with the names Mar Divannasios and Mar Koorilos by Patriarch Abdulla, a grand reception was accorded to them, for which the Deacon was the main organizer.

Without much delay Vattasseril Mar Divannasios appealed to Bishop Pulikott to ordain Deacon PT Geevarghese a priest and he gladly agreed to it. Accordingly on 15 August 1908 at the Parumala Seminary, in the presence of Pulikott Mar Divannasios, Mar Osthathios Bava and a large number of priests and people Vattasseril Mar Divannasios ordained Deacon PT Geevarghese. Deacon MJ Michael who was the son of Master John, an assistant at the MD Seminary, was also ordained priest on that occasion. Our deacon came to be known as MA Achan.

A mega meeting of the Jacobite Church was held at Kottayam to felicitate MA Achan who was the principal of MD Seminary. The news on that event, which appeared in Malayala Manorama was as follows:

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> Rev. Fr PT Geevarghese, who is the first Syrian priest to pass the MA examination, was given a gold medal by Metropolitan Mar Ivanios on behalf of the members of the community and he received it with a short speech expressing his gratitude (*Malayala Manorama* 1909 August 11).

Apart from the administration of the MD Seminary and teaching in the classes Fr Geevarghese was involved in many activities related to the community. Patriarch Abdulla's visit to Kerala, the tug of war for authority over the temporal goods of the Church, the Decree of Interdict imposed on Mar Divannasios, the revolution which followed that, the visit of Patriarch Abded M'siha, the establishment of the See of the Catholicos, all these events which split the Jacobite Church in Kerala occurred during this time. In all these MA Achan played a pivotal role. It will be detailed in the ensuing chapters.

After becoming the principal of the MD Seminary MA Achan bought a four-wheel phaeton carriage drawn by horses and rode it through the town of Kottayam. When the School was closed for vacations he travelled to the parishes and gave talks on various spiritual subjects. For his speeches he took along with him Thumpamon Puthenveetil Fr Yakob and Kozhancherry Thevarvelil Fr Mathai. His speeches were repeated for the large audiences by Mavelikara Kallarackal Eapen *Upadesi* and Samuel *Upadesi* the son of David *Asan.*

The principal tried his best to realize his dream of turning the MD Seminary into a first grade college. His wish was to employ unmarried priests in every class. It was for this that several deacons were sent for higher education to the universities of Calcutta and Serampore and the financial assistance they needed given. All the four deacons sent, passed their MA but three of them got married and one passed away. Because of this, the principal's dream was not fulfilled and the MD Seminary remains a High School still. Some 55 years ago

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news which appeared on the MD Seminary in the Jacobite's *Edavaka Patrika* published under the editorship of Mr EM Philipose read, "It is known that the authorities want to upgrade the Mar Divannasios Seminary to a second grade college." (*Edavaka Patrika* 1902 October edition)

Readers may think and wonder about the real reason why though many colleges have been established in Kerala up until now, the 55-years old dream of upgrading the MD Seminary into a college, has not yet been realized. It was made clear in the beginning of this chapter, why even today the seminary and its premises stand as the place of origin and womb of the community litigation, which started 45 years ago and is likely to last much longer. Not only was it made into a scene of action which deviated from the purpose of its establishment but were not the plot and buildings also appropriated by employing cunningness to deny the due rights of the Catholics? How many tear drops had fallen on the ground of the Woodland estate on that night from the eyes of Nidhiyirikal Mani Kathanar, the luminous star in the firmament of the Catholic community of Kerala!



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Chapter 7

TWO PATRIARCHS OF THE JACOBITE CHURCH

Mar Abdulla and Abded M'siha were two patriarchs who claimed to be the head of the Jacobite Church at the same time and competed with each other. The visits of these two patriarchs who mainly caused the separation of the Jacobite Church in Kerala, their activities, partisan one-upmanship, the role of Fr P T Geevarghese in these - all of this will be dealt with in the ensuing chapters. However, before that, since the readers should know certain truths about these two Patriarchs, I intend to add here a document received from Syria in 1932 and filed by our protagonist safely.

The unresolved issue in the 45 year old community case between the Jacobite and Orthodox Churches of Malankara is, who of these two, is the real patriarch. In order to get the precise details of these two Patriarchs a set of questions was sent by Mar Ivanios a few days after his reunion, through Bishop Dr Benziger to a Catholic priest who was an eminent historian in Syria. This Catholic priest went to the Catholic Patriarch's palace in Syria and the Jacobite Patriarch at Mosul and collected information, recorded it separately and then sent them to Mar Ivanios. Some of the answers to the same questions were very different. Diligent readers will perceive that information collected from the Catholic Patriarch's palace was in favour of Patriarch Abded M'siha and the information collected from the Jacobite Patriarch was in favour of Patriarch Abdulla. The interesting and informative questions and their answers are added here omitting irrelevant portions.

Information received from the Catholic Patriarch's Palace.

Question 1: In which year was Patriarch Abded M'siha anointed patriarch? Who anointed him as patriarch?

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Answer: Ignatius Abded M'siha II was consecrated patriarch on 16 June 1905 by seven bishops at Dayar al Safran. He also received a *Firman* from the Sultan of Turkey.

Question 2: Has he been ousted from his throne? If so, who did so? In which year was it? Or did he resign on his own?

Answer: Abded M'siha was neither ousted nor did he resign on his own from his throne. However, Bishop Abdulla Sattaf made a secret deal with a few bishops (not all of them) and a few people staying in Mardin. As a result the said bishop who had in 1896 reunited with the Catholic Church gave up the Catholic faith and on 15 August 1906 in the presence of a few bishops received anointment (usurped) as patriarch. Patriarch Abded M'siha immediately shifted his throne to Tur Abdin near the mountain. He was reckoned the true Patriarch as he ruled from the same throne near the mountain, where his predecessors ruled from 1364 to 1496 and 1700 to 1817. As a result, till he travelled to Mosul, Baghdad, Basra and Malabar (from 1906 to 1912) he was considered the real Patriarch of Tur Abdin. He returned from these countries in March 1911. Later on 3 May, 1913 he declared his faith in Beirut and embraced the Catholic Church. Afterwards, on 16 May 1914 he reached Mardin and stayed there as a guest of the Syrian Catholics of that place. At this time a few monks, people and government officials of the Jacobite Church sent him a letter through Bishop George stating their willingness to accept him as their patriarch. Believing this to be true, Patriarch Abded M'siha travelled to Deir-el-Za'aferan. There they received him ringing bells and singing songs. There he passed away in 1914.

Question 3: Was Patriarch Abdulla recognized as the real patriarch instead of Patriarch Abded M'siha by all the priests and people.

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Answer: All the residents of Tur Abdin and five or six bishops did not recognize him. Among them were the Bishops of the parishes of Jerusalem, Homs, Hama, Tur Abdin and Asek.

Question 4: In which year did Patriarch Abded M'siha and Patriarch Abdulla pass away? Where did they die?

Answer: Patriarch Abded M'siha passed away in October 1914 at Deir-el-Za'aferan and Patriarch Abdulla died in 1916 in Jerusalem.

Question 5: Was it after the demise of Patriarch Abded M'siha that the present Patriarch Elias was chosen and installed on the throne?

Answer: It was after the deaths of both Patriarch Abded M'siha and Patriarch Abdulla that Patriarch Elias[1] was chosen and enthroned on 12 February, 1917.

Question 6: Where is the official residence of the Patriarch? Where does the Patriarch usually stay?

Answer: The patriarch's official residence is in Deir-el-Za'aferan near Mardin in Turkey. However, the patriarch now stays in Jerusalem in Syria. For the last two years, he has been staying in Mosul. It has not yet been decided where the permanent residence should be.

Question 7: How many people and bishops are there in Asia Minor?

Answer: It is said that there are about a hundred thousand people in Deir-el-Bakir, Homs, Mosul, Aleppo, Mediyan, Jerusalem, Damascus and Mesopotamia. There are 10 bishops in total.

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[1] He visited Malankara in 1912 and died of a heart attack at Manjanikara, Omalloor (The author)

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The information was written and sent after enquiries in Syria and Mosul. However, appended below are answers sent by the priest who copied from an old report kept in safe custody at the Jacobite Patriarch's palace.

Information Received from the Jacobite Patriarch's Palace

Question 1: In which year and by whom was Abded M'siha consecrated as Patriarch?

Answer: After the demise of Patriarch Peter III the bishops and metropolitans assembled at Deir-el-Za'aferan and elected Metropolitan Abdulla as patriarch. As per tradition the letter containing the news of the election was sent to Constantinople for the Sultan's approval. However, since all the bishops had not signed on it, it was sent back. As a result Bishop Abded M'siha of Damascus was chosen by the bishops and after nine months anointed as the patriarch. On 4 June 1895 in the presence of seven bishops and two Metropolitans the Metropolitan of Amad (Deir-el-Bakir) Georgios Cyril of Mardin placed his hand over his head and anointed him. Metropolitan Abdulla who was earlier elected did not participate in the anointing, out of rage. He stayed in Mardin for a year and joined the Catholic religion. The main reason for this was that during the conflict between the Armenians and the Sultan (the massacre of the Armenians), Abded M'siha instigated to assassinate him.

Question 2: In which year, for what reason, how and by whom was Abded M'siha ousted from the throne of the Patriarch? Or did he resign? If so, in which month?

Answer: Patriarch Abded M'siha went to Constantinople on 15 November 1900 and stayed there for two years to see the Sultan. However, on the night before the meeting

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with the Sultan, he got drunk to excess and fell on the floor of the main room adjacent to the church. At midnight, he woke up and while walking for some purpose fell from a window seriously injuring not only his hands and feet but also several other parts of his body. Next day on coming to know of the incident the Sultan denied permission to meet him.

After that the patriarch returned to Amad. Bishop Paulus, who was his vicar in Constantinople, kept on lobbying against him. Within a few days of his return to Amad, all the bishops turned against him and they corresponded with each other on ousting him from the throne. They raised the reasons that his election was not divinely ordained, it was not canonical and that the electors were corrupt. Because of all this, Sultan Abdul Hamid sent a decree ousting Patriarch Abded M'siha from his throne and ordering the election of a new Patriarch.

From what has been said so far, it is obvious that patriarch Abdul M'siha had not resigned on his own. He kept on arguing that he alone was the lawful Patriarch.

Question 3: Was Abdulla who became patriarch instead of Abded M'siha undoubtedly recognized by all? What should be inferred from this fact?

Answer: A year after Abded M'siha was ousted from the throne, Abdulla who was elected Patriarch returned from the Catholic religion to the Jacobite Church. They enthroned him on 15 August 1906 as patriarch. It was Msgr Dennis Dahanan, who laid the hands in that ritual of consecration. Patriarch Abdulla was extremely intelligent, just and a good administrator. He achieved peace among the bishops and the people under them. In 1908 he ordained five bishops. One among them, Saliba Kafarjea was given the name Osthathios and sent to Malabar.

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When the patriarch was in Jerusalem two unmarried priests came to be ordained bishops. Geevarghese who was one of them was ordained as Divannasios and the other as Koorilos. A lot of people had come accompanying them. They had brought many presents and much money to be given to the patriarch and the *Dayro* of St Mark at Jerusalem.

In 1908 the patriarch went to Constantinople and was received with honour by the Sultan. After that he went to London and raised a fund. Following that, he went to India and happened to create many problems there. Bishop Geevarghese who was ordained by him recently fought with him and the people were divided into two factions. As a result he excommunicated the bishop, ousted him from his position and anointed two bishops. With this the problems in Malabar increased indescribably. As a result the patriarch left India and returned to Jerusalem. The Syrians of Malankara who challenged the patriarch sent letters inviting Abded M'siha who was ousted from the throne of the patriarch. Along with the letters, they sent 100 sovereigns to meet his travelling expenses. As a result Patriarch Abded M'siha travelled to Malankara in 1912. When he reached there, he was received by the followers of Bishop Geevarghese who was punished by Patriarch Abdulla. As a consequence new problems arose. Patriarch Abded M'siha enthroned a bishop with the title *Malankara Maphrian*. Before long, knowing that the patriarch would be in distress, they said farewell to him. As a result, the patriarch left India, reached Jerusalem and decided to embrace the Catholic Church. For that he went to Beirut to see Patriarch Rahmani and joined the Catholic Church. The person who was enthroned Maphrian of

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Malankara died a few days after the return of the patriarch from Malankara. Following that, Abded M'siha returned to the Jacobite Church, went to Mardin and stayed in Deir-el-Za'aferan.

Question 4: In which year and where did Abded M'siha and Abdulla expire?

Answer: Patriarch Abded M'siha died on 12 September, 1915 at Deir-el-Za'aferan and was interred in the tomb of his predecessor Patriarch Peter. Patriarch Abdulla died on 9 December 1915 at Jerusalem and was buried at the Monastery (*Dayro*) of St Mark.

Question 5: Was it before the demise of Abded M'siha that the present patriarch was consecrated and enthroned?

Answer: No, it was after two years. Abded M'siha died in 1915 and on 12 February 1917 Mar Elias assumed the throne of the Patriarch.

Question 6: How many are the Jacobites of Asia Minor? How many Bishops do they have? Where does the Patriarch usually reside?

Answer: According to an estimate of Patriarch Peter III the predecessor of Abded M'siha, the number of Jacobites is 237880. However, it seems to be a little exaggerated. Since the exact number has not been taken it can only be guessed that there are between 40000 and 50000 Jacobites in Asia Minor.[2]

After religious persecution in Turkey, the number of their Bishops is nine or ten in Asia and four or six in India. Before the Great War, the patriarch's headquarters was

[2] This number was taken 30 years ago. The number of Jacobites abroad is dwindling by the day. Now it won't be more than 20000. (The author)

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in Deir-el-Za'aferan. In order to facilitate better contact with his followers the present Patriarch left this headquarters much earlier. He stays for a few days in Jerusalem and after that in Mosul. Since he loves to stay in Mosul it may be assumed that he is likely to set his official residence there. The reason could be that the majority of the Jacobites under his administration and who are intense in their faith are staying in Mosul (The letter sent from Syria by Rev. Fr Innocent OC on 28.1.1832).

I hope the readers get more or less an idea about Patriarch Abdulla and Patriarch Abded M'siha, from the information given above.

* * * *

It is accepted by all the fact that while he was a Bishop, Patriarch Abdulla reunited with the Catholic Church and ruled for ten year (1896-1906) as the Catholic Bishop of Homs and returned from the Catholic Church to be the Patriarch of the Jacobite Church. However, it is recently known that some have stated that Patriarch Abded M'siha never embraced the Catholic faith and it was a fabricated tale spread by the Catholics. Is not the reunion of the said patriarch made clear by the letter given above? I intend to add here a few more documents regarding this.

It was on 3 May 1913 AD that Patriarch Abded M'siha embraced the Catholic Church in Beirut. The details of the news of the said reunion were published at that time in the monthly *Missions Catholicus* by a Corespiscopo of Syria. The article was published again by the September 1913 issue of the *Morning Star* printed from Trichinopoly. It is given below.

The Reunion of the Jacobite Bishops

On 10 December, 1912 the Jacobite Metropolitan of Jerusalem Msgr. Elias Hallooli and the Jacobite

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Metropolitan of Appameya Msgr Abraham David reached the house in Beirut of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Msgr Ignatius Ephrem Rahmani. Along with them was a Jacobite priest too. The metropolitan informed the patriarch of their firm resolve to be reunited with the Catholic Church. As a result, Msgr Rahmani received them with love and asked them to stay with him and made arrangements for them to receive spiritual training under Rev. Fr Salhani SJ, a native of Syria.

After 11 days, on 21 December, in the presence of many priests they were asked to make the profession of faith according to the formula of Pope Urban VIII and received into the Catholic Church. Following that he spoke movingly on their responsibility to work intensely towards the Catholic reunion as a whole or in part of the flock under their care.

This conversion caused a great stir in the Jacobite Church and resulted in a massive flow to Rome.

After teaching both the reunited metropolitans the Catholic theology and the moral laws, Msgr Rahmani sent Msgr Elias Hallooli as the Patriarch's vicar to Jerusalem. The day after he reached the holy city, the patriarch of the Jacobites Msgr Ignatius Abdul M'siha, who had donned the eastern vestments reached there to meet him.

The prelate of the Syrian schismatic Church had returned from his tour of Malabar. He had stayed there for many months and ordained three bishops. Instead of castigating his *suffragan* for converting to Catholicism he lauded him.

Two days later, Msgr Hallooli was able to understand the secret behind this. In a meeting of Syrian Catholics

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there came the public announcement that he wished to embrace Catholic faith, accept the primacy of the Pope and stay in an oriental land under the French government.

After a few days, he met the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Msgr F Camassei, apprised him of his wish and requested him to inform it to the Holy See. Immediately a telegram was sent to Msgr Rahmani in Beirut expressing his free and earnest desire to be reunited with the Roman Catholic Church.

Patriarch Rehmani immediately invited this Jacobite Patriarch to Beirut, received him cordially and gave him lessons on religious matters intently. On 3 May Abded M'siha professed his faith and was received into the bosom of the Catholic Church.

We do not have the slightest doubt that the reunion will have a desirable result among the Jacobites who are loyal to Patriarch Abded M'siha in the countries of Syria, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Malabar. A few Jacobite priests have sent letters of appreciation. A few others have written that they wish to be reunited with the Catholic Church, leading their flocks to the nearby Metropolitans or Missionaries and taking the profession of faith.

A few weeks after this joyful event, Patriarch Rahmani went to Rome. He took to Rome the document of the profession of faith of Patriarch Abded M'siha, who reunited with the Catholic Church and a letter expressing his obedience to the pope.

It was on this 11 June that the letter written by Abded M'siha in his own hand and its Italian translation were presented to the Holy Father by Patriarch Rahmani. The

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> Holy Father who heard this joyous news was very pleased and complimented the efforts of Patriarch Rahmani for the conversion of the Jacobites and asked him to pursue his mission intensely. Not only that, he also deputed him to bless, on his behalf, the patriarch, the two bishops who followed him and the people who accompanied them. Accordingly the Holy Father authorised Patrriach Rahmani to give pontifical blessings to those who contributed to the construction of churches for the reunited Jacobites and schools for their children, or helped the missionaries who worked among them (*The Morning Star*, September-October 1913, page 42).

(2) This is also stated in the letter Patriarch Abded M'siha wrote on 17 *Karkidom* (month in the Malayalam Era) 1914 from the *Kurkmo Dayro* to Vattasseril Mar Divannasios. A few excerpts from this letter are attached below.

> ... I had to take refuge in the Patriarch of the Roman Church.
>
> ...From there I went to Beirut and stayed with them till the big feast... After a few days, we went to Mardin. I had to stay there with them.

Even though the fact that he had embraced the Catholic faith is not mentioned explicitly, may the truth-seeking readers judge it for themselves from the sentences.

(3) This fact is clearly stated in the book, *The Real Sate of the Establishment of the Catholicate* brought out by the Malankara Syrian Christian League of the Jacobite Church. Attached below is an excerpt from the article written in the book in response to the article written in the *Malayala Manorama* by Bishop Timotheos of the Orthodox Church in praise of Patriarch Abdul M'siha.

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Later, our bishop writes in his article that when Patriarch Abded M'siha returned from Malayala land to his See, he was received with great honour at the Kurkmo Dayro and when he died there, he was buried there with even greater respect and that "all this is to be considered the work of providence." However, he has deliberately left out certain important things. Patriach Abded M'siha returned from Malayala land and on reaching Beirut joined the Roman Church. There his arthritis worsened and the Romans sent him to their church in Mardin, where the people shoved him to his relatives. When his relatives could not bear him, they sought the permission of Patriarch Abdulla, who was residing at Ursser at that time to shift him to the Kurkmo Dayro. There his body was mostly paralyzed and he lost his consciousness and died. He was interred in the underground cellar marked for the inmates of the *dayro* (in the lower chamber below the resting place of patriarchs). All this is the "work of providence." Mar Timotheos must have left out a detailed discussion in his *Manorama* article since Patriarch Abded M'siha had admitted in his own words, his conversion to the Roman religion (*The Real State of the Establishment of the Catholicate*, pages 8-9).

Hope that the readers have grasped from the documents presented above that it is an undeniable historical truth that both Patriarch Abdulla and Patriarch Abded M'siha are persons reunited with the Catholic Church.



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Chapter 8

THE ARRIVAL OF PATRIARCH ABDULLAH AND THE DECREE OF EX-COMMUNICATION MAR DIVANNASIOS RECEIVED

When the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Abdullah Bava, came on his Malankara visit, our hero was serving as the principal of MD Seminary High School, and was known among his wards, by the name 'MA Achan'. The patriarch, had informed Metropolitan Mar Divannasios by telegram that, after making a tour of England and some other places, he intended to visit Kerala, that he would arrive by ship in Bombay and expected to be received there. The metropolitan summoned MA Achan and arranged for a team, representing the community, to receive the patriarch at Bombay. The group included Father PT Varghese, Konattumalpan Achan, Thamarapallil Abraham Kathanar, EM Philip, KC Mamman Mappila and the metropolitan himself. MA Achan was in the beginning, reluctant to be part of this prestigious mission, but later was forced to agree, since he could not ignore the persuasive order of the metropolitan. On the appointed day, the group welcomed the patriarch with deep respect and warmth.

The Patriarch's Secretary.

Father Geevarghese, with his high educational qualifications, position as principal of MD Seminary High School, and unparalleled proficiency in Syriac and English, was the most prominent in the team. Moreover he expressed absolute willingness to serve, and displayed

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great excellence in all matters relating to the office of the patriarch. The patriarch was deeply impressed and felt deep love and affection towards MA Achan. Within a short time, he was functioning as the patriarch's secretary. He translated English and Malayalam letters, which were mainly greetings or requests for blessings, addressed to the patriarch, into Syriac. The patriarch used to converse with Fr Geevarghese regularly in order to know more about the Malankara community in Kerala. These conversations covered matters relating to the Church, the social status of the community and details regarding the prominent personalities of the community. During one such conversation, the patriarch asked him confidentially, "If a dispute comes up between me and Mar Divannasios, will you stand by me?" MA Achan, being taken unawares, was in a dilemma. His hesitation made the patriarch repeat his query. This time, it seemed like an order, and pat came the reply, "Mar Divannasios is my *guru* (spiritual master). I will always stand by him. But I will not be party to any act he does, which is against the truth."

Two things were evident from this question. The first was that the patriarch was aware that he would be facing opposition from Mar Divannasios, when he claimed authority over the temporal goods of the Church from the metropolitan. On the event of opposition, the patriarch was prepared to take necessary steps to impose forceful restrictions on Mar Divannasios. The second was his firm belief that, with the smart and efficient MA Achan on his side, victory would be his. Such was the impression MA Achan's personality had on the patriarch, within a few days of meeting him. However, the patriarch could not hide his disappointment at the answer, which was contrary to the one he had expected.

Throughout the journey from Bombay, MA Achan remained committed in serving him and attending to his needs. On the third day of *Thulam*, in the year 1085 ME, the patriarch, began his stay in the old seminary at Kottayam, with Mar Divannasios occupying the adjacent room.

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Dispute over Temporal Goods

According to the history of the Malankara Church, it was only after the *Coonan Kurishu* Oath that the Jacobite Church gained a space in Kerala. There is evidence to the fact that the man behind it was Mar Gregorios Bava who arrived here, in 1665. History also proclaims that, prior to this, the Jacobite Patriarchs of Antioch had neither spiritual nor temporal authority over the Christians of Kerala. However, after the *Coonan Kurishu* Oath, the new converts to Jacobite faith accepted the Patriarch of Antioch as the Head of the Church. The bishops who ruled the Jacobite Church, had always been against the patriarch gaining absolute control over the Church, though on certain occasions, for practical purposes, they had made allowances for the temporal authority of the patriarch.

Patriarch Abdullah had arrived in Kerala, with the ulterior motive of establishing temporal authority over the Church on a permanent basis. He announced it publicly, within a few days of arriving here. He requested the Jacobite bishops to get the agreement registered. He also declared that those who dissented would not be eligible for the episcopacy. As per the order of the patriarch, Mar Athanasios, Mar Severios and Mar Koorilos signed the agreement. However the extremely intelligent Metropolitan Vattasheril who had far- reaching vision refused to be part of it. It was MA Achan, well versed in canon law and the history of the Jacobite Syrian Church, who gave the necessary advice and encouragement to the metropolitan. He was inspired to do the same for three reasons:

1) The temporal authority of the Patriarch of Antioch, was against the existing practice of the Malankara Church. Till date, the bishops of the Jacobite Church had not agreed officially to this.

2) Any agreement of this kind would allow the patriarch the liberty to transfer the wealth of the Church abroad. This

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would dwindle the resources of the Malankara Church and lead to not only the temporal, but also the spiritual deterioration of the Church.

3) The patriarch would have the authority to appoint as bishops, those who were already in his favour. Since they would rule in name only, there would be differences of opinion between the patriarch and the ruling bishops which would ultimately develop into a crisis.

These were the reasons which prompted MA Achan to advise Metropolitan Vattasseril Divannasios against signing the agreement. Almost at the same time, another incident happened which made our MA Achan fall out of favor with the patriarch for the second time.

The Question of the Authority of the Patriarch and the Synod

Fr Geevarghese, while giving a lecture on spiritual salvation to the senior students of MD Seminary High School, spoke of the sacraments, especially the Holy Orders. A smart and intelligent boy immediately asked, "Who has the authority to ordain the bishops of the Church?"

The patriarch was at the time firm in his argument that he had the absolute authority to ordain as well as to remove from office the bishops of the Jacobite Church. The patriarch's presence in Kottayam would deter any priest, especially the principal of the MD Seminary High School from replying bluntly that the patriarch had no role there. Fr Geevarghese knew that the patriarch would hear of his answer within no time, that he would be submitted to severe questioning and that he would have to incur the displeasure of the patriarch. But he was not prepared to hide the truth, deceive the students and win the favour of the patriarch. He replied, "The authority rests with the synod of bishops. Two or three bishops together could ordain a bishop. This was decided in the Synod of Nicea. In accordance to this, three bishops of Malankara together had anointed Bishop Alvarez."

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The news very soon reached the patriarch and Fr PT Geevarghese was summoned to the old seminary the very next day. He was prepared to speak the truth though he knew that it might involve punishment. The angry patriarch asked him seriously, "Is it true that you taught the students that not only the patriarch but also the catholicos and metropolitans could bless the Myron and ordain bishops." The principal without feeling discouraged answered, "I did not speak of the Myron, I have only discussed the question of ordaining bishops"

Patriarch: What is the source of this knowledge?

Principal: I read about it in the Hudaya Canon. I have not taught anything that is against the laws of the Church.

The patriarch could not counter this since the answer was based on the canon law. However he commented sarcastically to Konattu Malpan who was beside them, "His path is broad; he seems to be an ocean of knowledge." Ramban Ougen who was also present there said, "He has not said anything in defiance to the authority of your Beatitude." The patriarch retorted that he had forgiven MA Achan and ordered him to kneel down for his blessings.

"I have not committed any mistake. However, I need your blessings." said our MA Achan and received blessings from the patriarch, kneeling down. Thus, the scene ended!

The Decree of Ex-communication

All the bishops submitted to the will of the patriarch and submitted to the agreement, except Mar Divannasios who refused to reconsider his decision. He was confident of the support of MA Achan and other eminent members of the Church. He felt encouraged and was courageous enough to resist the patriarch and his followers. The patriarch was disappointed and angry and threatened that the metropolitan would have to face the consequence and reminded him of the fate of Mar Ivanios of Jerusalem. The patriarch and his followers

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henceforth conspired to appropriate the wealth of the Church. The patriarch along with his supporters Bishop Osthathios, Bishop Koorilos, Bishop Athanasios, Ramban Jovachim, Ramban Ougaen, two Rambans from Syria and Konattu Malpan settled down in the old seminary. They occupied all the rooms except the ones occupied by Mar Divannasios, Mattackal Malpan and a few deacons. They won over the press manager and got the keys of the press from him. Disputes arose regarding the ownership of the seminary. The patriarch was now convinced that it was imperative to rescind the authority of the metropolitan and issued a Decree of Ex-communication on 28 *Edavam* 1911. Though they were staying in adjacent rooms, the decree was registered and sent.

The Notorious Decree of Ex-communication

Mr KC Maman Mappila, in his autobiography has referred to this incident under the title, "The Most Notorious Decree of Ex-communication in the History of our Church". It reads as follows:

> "The two groups though sworn enemies continued at the Old Seminary like two opposing factions camping at the same site. They sat at the same table during meals and took part in the ceremonies of the church as usual. But there was no love lost between the two groups and they were poles apart in their attitudes, functioning and routine activities. It was during this time that the metropolitan received the Decree Ex-communication written by the patriarch, which had been registered and sent. The news spread like wildfire and by evening, it reached us. Immediately Fr PT Varghese, MA Philipose MA, BL, KV Chacko BA BLt and I set out for the Old Seminary (three out of these four later embraced the Catholic faith). I have always found it difficult to walk even small distances. In spite of this we walked. The stretch between Chunkam Bridge and Old Seminary was

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covered with water and mud. We ignored the tedium, waded through water, trudged along the slush, somehow reached the old seminary and went straight to the metropolitan. There we saw him struggling to maintain his cool though his heart was seared by the Decree of Ex-communication that had fallen on him like lightning. It was amazing to witness the willpower and confidence of the metropolitan who with a rare fortitude held the future of the community at his hands. We discussed the future plans for quite a long time. Amidst the conversation I said, "My descendant and I do not wish to be part of a Church which is subjugated to the Patriarch of Antioch who has the authority to issue such foolish and baseless orders which can affect the stability of the Malankara Church and lead to disintegration"

INCOMPLETE

That night the leaders of the Metran's party came together in the Old Seminary for a discussion. The decision of the meeting was to organise a public protest meeting to manifest publicly that they disobey the Decree of Ex-communication issued by the patriarch. In fact, it was their aim to unleash a clash. The next day was Sunday. All, including Mr CJ Kurien of the Patriarch's party, believed that the patriarch would read the decree of excommunication before the congregation gathered in the church. Since the people of both the parties knew that there would arise some commotion, a large number of people assembled in the church. It was manifest that the hundreds of members of the Metran's party had assembled prepared to face any eventuality. The situation was so tense, that it could be compared to the alarming moment before the eruption of a volcano. The metropolitan did not come to the church that day. He was in the old seminary. The church-worship began. Since Konattu Malpan and others were standing within the sanctuary, they could not make out how enraged were the people

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who stood outside. But Mr CJ Kurien and others who were standing outside with the people could understand the serious situation. Mr CJ Kurien standing among the people wrote a note and sent it to Konattu Malpan through a deacon. Konattu Malplan secretly read the note and tore it to pieces and dropped it there itself. He might have thought that nobody noticed it. One of the priests standing there was observing it diligently. It was Fr PT Geevarghese. His vision that traverses great distances had gone beyond the confines of the Jacobite Church! Standing among other priests in the sanctuary, he gently stooped down, picked up the torn paper, and kept it safe. Later, when the pieces were put together, it was evident that Mr CJ Kurien had noted down that the decree of excommunication should not be read on that day. Fr PT Geevarghese had kept safely that note which CJ Kurien had written by his own hand. Is it there until today! (Malayala Manorama Weekly, 6 October 1956, pages 32-33)

Those who have studied the life and activities of the Jacobite Patriarchs of Antioch would not wonder at this. Their lives betray their inborn authoritarian, selfish and undiplomatic character. One of the reasons for the decimation of their Church from a population of ten million to less than twenty thousand is this. Whenever these patriarchs visited Kerala, there arose a division in the Church of Kerala. Patriarch Mar Gregorios, who was on visitation here in 1665 served to deepen the division among the Christians of Kerala, who was one in communion with the Pope of Rome and made them more Jacobite. In 1751 Patriarch Mar Gregorios who came here ordained Ramban Kattumangattu under the name Mar Koorilos and thus the Anjoor Church was formed. Patriarch Mar Pathrose who came here in 1875 ex-communicated Metropolitan Mathews Mar Athanasios and this paved the way for the formation of the Reformist Group or the Marthomites. Patriarch Abdulla who came on visitation in 1910 ex-communicated Metropolitan Vattasseril Divannasios and thus the Metran's party (the Orthodox Church) was formed. Patriach Elias

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who came here in 1932 could not stay here for long; he died suddenly. Hence, a new party was not created.

The Patriarch's Party and the *Metran*'s Party

After the ex-communication, there ensued a duel between the Patriarch's Party and the *Metran*'s party. Some were plotting to steal the lives of Vattasseril Mar Divannasios and MA Achan who was his right hand man, giving all advices. MA Achan had transferred many valuable documents of the Church from the old seminary and kept them same at the MD Seminary. The enemies were trying their best to get hold of them.

As a body-guard for Metropolitan Mar Vattasseril MA Achan had employed 'Anappappi', a giant and expert in physical training. He was brought from Tiruvalla. He stayed at the old seminary. The enemies murdered him. On post-mortem, it was found that his skull was broken into thirteen pieces. Recollecting these brutal incidents, Fr PT Geevarghese wrote in *Girideepam:*

I was worried that the duels in the Syro-Malankara Community, the mutual rivalry, vane thinking and selfish interests, at last, submersed the courtyard of the old seminary with blood. The community's false prestige and obstinacy led men to murder. The readers might be thinking now, if such a murder did not happen there; things much more terrible would have taken place. And if they did not occur, it was just because the courtyard of the Old Seminary drank human blood. All were convinced that, since long, the Syrian Community thirsted for this bloodshed. Need we say, to what this quenching of thirst of the community signify?. Yes, to nothing else other than the absence of the fear of God and love for Him. Indeed, the absence of these two has broken the skull of Pappy thirteen pieces. His blood was sprinkled on the whole community. Why, still many are not repentant?.

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The Secret Discussions at *Parishkarappara*

On the southern side between the MD Seminary and Mar Elia Chapel, there was a flat, two feet high rock called *Parishkarappara*. After the duel between the Patriarch's Party and the *Metran*'s Party had begun, from five to nine in the evening, MA Achan and other members of the *Metran*'s Party used to assemble there and discuss matters. Mr KC Mamman Mappila BA, Mr PP John BA, BL, Mr KV Chacko BA, LT and Mr KM Mathulla Mappila were the prominent among them. In those secret conferences held there, it was decided to write articles and books, to conduct protest meetings and to strengthen the Metran's party. The decisions were informed the next day to Mar Divannasios who lived in the old seminary.

MA Achan's knowledge of the canons, Mr KC Mamman Mappila's talents in writing, Mr A Philipose' knowledge of the law and the organisational abilities of Mr KV Chacko, Mr. Mathulla Mappila and KC Mathew were pooled together. As result of their work, the number of the sympathisers of Metran's Party increased. The *Suriyani Samrakshaka Masika* and the article "What did the patriarch do?" created contempt among the people against the activities of patriarch. Disregarding his own life Fr PT Geevarghese worked for the progress of the Jacobite Church. Some interesting anecdotes he wrote in *Girideepam* are given below:

Our Life Rocked in a Balance

On another day, we were sleeping at night in our room on the western end of the bungalow, which belonged to the MD Seminary. After the incident of the stealing of the brief case, we used to keep a companion in the room at night. That night it was deacon, Cheppattu Philipose, who now resides at Bethany Ashram as a priest. Everyone in the school was fast asleep. There was pin drop silence all over. No sound was heard from anywhere. Then, three or four murderers entered into our room opening the closed window, by inserting an iron rod inside and pushing aside the stopper of the window. They gazed at us

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from head to foot. One of them carried with him a sharp knife; another held a sack in his hands. We neither knew nor have seen any of these things. Our life was rocking in a balance. With one stroke, our head would have been separated from the body. It was such a golden opportunity for the enemies. If the deacon, who slept in the room were to awake, that would have marked his end. The one, who held the knife approached closer to our bed. We were in sound sleep. He looked at us intensely; raised his hand for the deadly stroke and then looked at his companions, as if for a nod of assent: "Shall I?" They needed only to have remained silent and that would have been our last moment; the moment that we should bid farewell to everything mortal. But he was prevented by one of his companions. They must have decided to kill us in case we woke up. Hence two of them stood by our side and closely watched us. Others were busy removing our suitcase containing books and our briefcase. (We heard these details from our enemies themselves later on). The deacon somehow woke up and saw two men standing by our bed side and others carrying things from the room and passing them on to their friends, who stood outside. At once his eyes were closed. He must have thought that we were no more. No wonder! A sight like that at midnight would drive any one out of his mind. He lay down there like a corpse. Luckily, he neither got up nor made any noise. In fact, no sound escaped from him, as he was terribly frightened. Fear of death made him dumbfounded. If at all any sound escaped from his mouth that would have resulted in the death of both of us. It is indeed the immense mercy of God and nothing else that saved us from that sharp knife. Having made sure that all the murderers have left the place, the deacon, who was till then secretly looking at them, jumped up end roused us. He was chocking with emotion when he tried to narrate events that had happened. With the intention of calling the boarding master, we at once tried to open the door of the next room, calling out "manager". But we could not succeed. None of the doors through which to go out could be opened. The manager then jumped out through the window.

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He saw someone running carrying a big suitcase and he chased him shouting "catch him". The murderers dropped the suitcase, which contained the Syriac books, and took to flight for their life. They had then with them only a briefcase. They ran down the sub way on the northern side of the MD Seminary and crossed the Nagampadam Bridge. The manager ran after them shouting "thief, thief." He caught hold of one of them near the Arathutty Bridge. But it was unknown to the manager how a thief was to be treated when he was caught. So he started shivering with the thief. When the thief realized that the one who caught hold of him was not capable of doing any harm; he shook him off and ran towards the Kurisupally-shrine. No one could trace out to which direction he ran or in which house he hid himself. Then the manager returned. Only then it was understood that the murderers had closed all the doors from out side before they entered into the room. Only when Fr. Joseph Valakuzhiyil, who was then a deacon, residing at MD Seminary, came and opened the door, could we step out of our room. The scoundrels of the rival group could not make any substantial gain even at this time. Me got back the suitcase containing the books. The one they took away had nothing valuable in it. The readers will remember the fake briefcase we used to keep in our room.

Though there was no material loss, the incident intended to take away our life, still reminds us that it was a night, God had permitted us to live a little longer to fulfil his designs.

(*Girideepam* page 14-17)

The persons mentioned in the above anecdote, Fr PT Geevarghese, Deacon Philipose Cheppad, Deacon Joseph Valakuzhiyil and Mr Chacko Kilileth (Manager) later reunited with the Catholic Church. The detailed account of it is given elsewhere in this book. One of the thieves who stole the things, like the "good thief", embraced later the Catholic Church. Another anecdote narrated by Fr PT Geevarghese is given below.

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Walking Stick, Snatched away

On another day, Friday 17rh Meenam 1087 (April 29, 1912), we were going to the old seminary in a horse cart. Father Cheriyamadathil senior was also with us in the cart. He had come to the MD Seminary to enquire about the current developments in the Church. "Come, let us go the old seminary and see the metropolitan". When we said thus, he also got into the cart. When we reached the seminary, His Grace was sitting in the northern side-room of the West Block. Both of us entered into the room and started talking about many things. Then we saw through the window a ruffian, carrying a shining knife in his hand, walking up and down in the courtyard of the northern side. Then, the Father came closer to us and said secretly: "Listen, something may soon happen here" and to His Grace he told loudly: "This is a very critical time". After a while, we went back. We were seated in the back seat and the Father was in the front. We reached near Chunkakadavu. It was dusk. The horse, which was running suddenly stopped. We leaned forward to see what had happened and saw some people holding on the reins of the horse. There were others at the back. All were rogues. We are caught in a trap", we exclaimed. We were disturbed at heart not knowing what to do. An opportune moment has arrived for the murderers. What is to be done!; get out of the cart and run away! Or fight back!. Neither of it was possible. Somehow, we collected all courage and shouted: "Driver, Go". Our command was lost in the mind!. The cart did not move; the horse did not make a step forward.

We raised our voice and asked: "What right have you to obstruct those who travel through the public road? Is this the right manner? Free the horse, let us go".

Those who stood in the front and the back of the cart simply laughed at us. Later on, we heard that among them was Kamaldeen, a bandit, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder case. Then, an argument followed:

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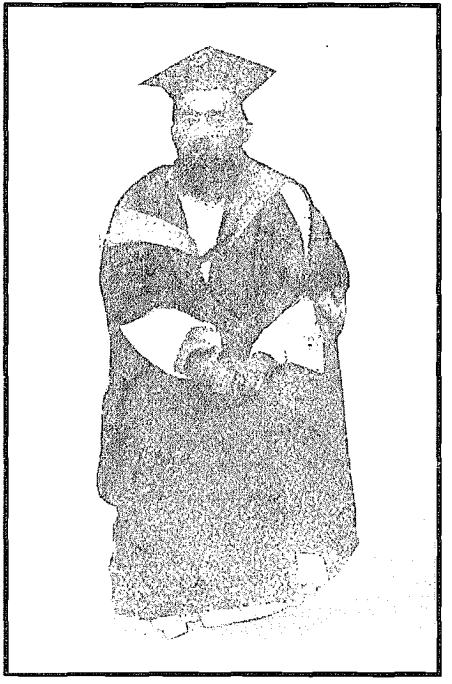
A photo taken at a church at Chengannur during a priest-retreat



Many prominent Jacobite Priests are in this photo. In the middle of the front row is Mar Gregorios (the 3rd Catholicos). Fr P T Geevarghese (Mar Ivanios) is in the middle of the row of people sitting. The late Metropolitan Mar Severios of Tiruvalla (then Deacon) is standing at the right end in white cassock.

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From Profesorship to *Sanyasa*



Fr P T Geevarghese



Aabo Geevarghese OIC

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"Why do you obstruct the cart?"
"Get down from the cart".
"What for?"
"OK., remove your cassock".
"No, We shall not"

Then, one went in front and stared at Fr. Cheriyamadathil. Later on, the Father told me that he was Nattakam Cherian. He signalled one who stood near him. Meanwhile another one took his stand at the back of the cart and caught hold of our walking stick, which was in our hand. Without showing any resistance, we let it go.

Then he uttered: "This is enough guys, let them go". Saying so he struck on top of the cart with the stick and the cart moved. We could talk to each other only after half an hour or so.

We leave it to the imagination of the readers to conjecture about what would have happened if we did not give up the walking stick!. It was really helpful, we thought, that Fr Cheriyamadathil was with us. Did we do anything against these bandits or to their ancestors?!. No, not at all. "But we are certainly aware that we ought to suffer these kinds of atrocities from them repeatedly. We should not have loved the Church more than God Himself.

Since Fr PT Geevarghese went through many such experiences, he was forced to write in the first chapter of *Girideepam*: "These experiences have enabled us to observe and smell the stench of the filth that lay accumulated at the bottom part of the Malankara Church, whose apostolic origin and preaching of the one, true, catholic and apostolic doctrine we glory at".



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Chapter 9

THE ARRIVAL OF MAR ABDED M'SIHA AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLICATE

There has been deep controversy among the seekers of truth, for the past forty years, about the question who is the canonical patriarch of the Jacobite Church, Abdulla or Abded M'siha. There were people on both sides, and to date they have not come to a consensus as to who the true patriarch is. It is irrelevant to comment on this issue in this book. But the fact remains that the Jacobites of Kerala had accepted Mar Abdullah as the supreme head of the Jacobite Church, till the time he ex-communicated Vattasseril Mar Divanassios. If Mar Abded M'siha had been the canonical patriarch, Pulikottu Mar Divanassios and the representatives of the community would not have sent Vattasseril Gevarghese Ramban and Paulose Ramban to Mar Abdullah, with applications to be ordained as bishops. Why is it that they did not approach Mar Abded M'siha, but went straight to Mar Abdullah, gave *Shalmoosa* in writing, and got themselves ordained bishops? If Mar Abdullah had not been the true, canonically ordained patriarch, why was he received with the respect and warmth due to a patriarch, on his Malankara visit? The supporters of Abded M'siha will not have convincing answers to these pertinent questions.

The wound created by the fall of the sword of the Decree of Ex-communication from Mar Abdullah caused excruciating pain to Vattasseril Mar Divanassios. The extremely intelligent and courageous metropolitan felt shocked. He was anxious about the future and wondered whether he would be able to continue as the metropolitan.

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His mind was filled with questions. Would he have followers and supporters in case he formed a new faction? What would happen to the wealth and assets of the community? Would he have to face litigtions and rebellions in future? Would it not dent his dignity if he succumbed to the wish of the patriarch and signed the agreement granting him absolute authority? His book *'Mathopadesha Sarangal' (The Essence of Religious Catechism)* which he had written years before his Ex-communication included passages on the authority of the patriarch and the dislocation that may be caused by an Ex-communication order. It reads as follows. "The authority over the Holy Orders of the Church rests with the reigning patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignathios. Defaulters should be ex-communicated and excluded from all church activities, especially the receiving or serving of any sacrament" (*Mathopadesha Sarangal*, pages 22, 23).

It was MA Achan who consoled the despondent metropolitan, instilled courage and strength in him and suggested the strategies to be adopted by him in future. MA Achan with his deep knowledge of Church history and canon law had already grasped that Abded M'siha was the true patriarch according to canon law and the only way to free the Malankara Jacobite Church from the autocratic domination of the Patriarch of Antioch was to establish a Catholicate. He suggested that they invite Abded M'siha to visit Malankara Church and with his support establish the Catholicate. Thereupon he started making efforts towards its realisation, taking care to avoid public attention.

As soon as Mar Divanassios had been ex-communicated, MA Achan had passed on the news with all the details, by telegram, to Patriarch Abded M'siha. This was only to check the response and gauge the attitude of the patriarch. A very reassuring response, which reads thus, came from him: "Mar Divanassios and his people are blessed. The ex-communication Order from Mar Abdullah is invalid". When the metropolitan learned about this he was happy and wept tears of joy.

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After consulting Mar Divanassios and the representatives of the community, MA Achan sent a detailed letter to Abded M'siha asking him to visit Malankara Church and establish the Catholicate. He knew that there were chances of the reply falling into the hands of the enemies, if sent to Kottayam. In order to avert the problems that may arise from such a situation, he requested the patriarch to send it to the address of Pastor Eapen of Mavelikkara. Within a few days the reply reached him and as arranged, it was sent promptly through a messenger to MA Achan, the same evening itself. The letter expressed the patriarch's willingness to visit Malankara and establish the Catholicate. Since he had asked for the travelling expenses in advance, a hundred sovereigns were sent towards it with the consent of Mar Divanassios.

The news of the communication through letters between Mar Divanassios and his opponent, Patriarch Abded M'siha and the possibility of the patriarch arriving in Kerala at any moment at the request of the metropolitan, reached Patriarch Abdullah. Immediately, he wrote to friends in Midiyath to stop him at any cost. They set to work promptly by arranging for the eminent personalities of the area, who were Muslims, to approach Abded M'siha and request him not to go anywhere else, but to continue there.

Abded M'siha : Will you change your word, once you have committed yourself?

Eminent Muslim : Never.

Abded : Having given my word, is it right to stay back?

Eminent Muslim : No.

Abded : Following my request, they have already sent me the travelling expense.

He showed the sovereigns he had received. The Muslims said, "Do as you wish", and went back.

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After attaining passport from the government of Turkey, Abded M'siha set out for India from Midiyath accompanied by two rambans. He travelled on ship till Karachi and proceeded by train to Bombay, where he was received with due respect by MA Achan. When the two of them reached Cochin by train, they were greeted by Mar Divanassios. Their plans to bring Mar Abded M'siha to Kottayam were thwarted by the efforts of CJ Kurien. He convinced the District Magistrate that Mar Abded M'siha's arrival in Kottayam would create a riot, which made him release an official order against it. This resulted in Mar Abded proceeding to Parumala instead of Kottayam. What followed was a series of discussions under the leadership of MA Achan on the establishment of the Catholicate.

Mar Abded M'siha had been informed through letters earlier itself that the only way to ensure the stability and well-being of the Jacobite Church in Kerala was to establish the Catholicate. He had come to Kerala to effect this and when he was told that his presence in Kottayam would create an agitation, he confided in Mar Divanassios that he would feel relaxed only after he fulfilled his responsibility of setting up the Catholicate. All of them together decided to ordain Murimattathu Mar Ivanios as the Catholicos, at Niranam Church. The news was made public through official declarations and the press.

On the eve of the appointed day, the patriarch accompanied by rambans, bishops and a group of priests arrived at Niranam Church. On Sunday morning, thousands of people, for and against the decision, gathered in and around the church to witness the ordination of the catholicos, since it was a remarkable occasion. The patriarch had discussed the matter with the rambans who had accompanied him. A crisis developed when the two rambans threatened that they would strongly oppose the ordination. In his helplessness, the patriarch wished to disappear from the scene. He conveyed to Mar Divanassios that he did not want to proceed in the present circumstances. The Metropolitan faction was terribly disappointed while the opposite group rejoiced.

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MA Achan had been away in Mavelikkara and knew about it from Mar Divanassios, only on Sunday morning, when he reached Niranam church. He had been optimistic and hopeful, but now he felt himself sinking to the depths of despondency. He could not bear to face the metropolitan who had put all his faith in him. How could he hold his head high among his friends as well as foes? How could he continue in Kottayam? Would this not affect his image and reputation? He was racked by a series of questions that were difficult to solve. However, he collected himself and with courage and optimism boldly knocked on the door to the patriarch's room. After opening the door, the patriarch resumed his position in the armchair and lost himself in thoughts. MA Achan greeted the patriarch and said in a grievous tone:

"What is it that I hear? This is a disgrace. How can we have faith in Your Beatitude's decisions and orders again? How can we continue to love and respect Your Beatitude? The decision to establish the Catholicate was not abrupt. Your Beatitude had enough time to carefully consider the matter. Your Beatitude had been for it and had said so in your letters, from the beginning itself. Your Beatitude could have changed your mind as soon as you arrived, but should not have gone back on your word at this crucial moment. I am perplexed and cannot understand why you have changed your mind now."

Patriarch : My dear son, what can I do? Please do not misunderstand me; personally I have no objection in establishing the Catholicate.

MA Achan : Then we shall proceed to the church.

Patriarch : Wait, I have not finished. This will cause unhappiness to those who accompanied me as well as the people. They are not going to favour this anyway. I feel that I have to consider it seriously.

MA Achan : Let them be for or against this. Your Holiness should grant us our earnest request.

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Patriarch : I am not against it. Let me put it clearly. I have realised that the rambans who have come with me have a different view. They have revealed that if I ignore their suggestion or act against it, they will be forced to throw me overboard on my return voyage. My dear son, please try to understand my predicament.

MA Achan : There is no need to be afraid of these rambans, since there is nothing they can do against you.

Patriarch : Your words are not reassuring. Just tell me whether you can accompany me on my return journey.

MA Achan : I will accompany you to Bombay and put you on board the ship. If you insist that I should come all the way, I assure you, I will see you safely to your native land. Isn't that enough?

Patriarch : There is something else. I strongly suspect that they have their eyes on the money I have with me. Being an old man I will not be able to defend myself, in case they try to grab it forcefully.

MA Achan : Everything is clear to me. Do not be afraid. No one will harm you as long as I am alive. It will be an irreparable loss and a cause for regret to the Malankara Church as well as Your Beatitude, if you go back without fulfilling your promise. Just remember that Your Beatitude has come all the way from abroad, to execute this. The place is overflowing with people. Kindly honour them with your presence.

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Patriarch : I am ready.

Thus, on 15 September 1912, with the co-operation of Mar Divanassios and Mar Gregorios, Kandanattu Mar Ivanios was enthroned the first Catholicos of Malankara by Patriarch Abded M'siha, at Niranam Church. Before leaving, the patriarch signed a decree for the permanent establishment of the Malankara Catholicate. MA Achan drafted the order and got the signature of the patriarch. Excerpts of the order are given below:

> In the name of God Almighty who is perfect and eternal in essence, who is without beginning and end! May priaise be to you forever! From the humble servant, Patriarch Ignathios Abded M'siha II
>
> * * * *
>
> After bestowing my blessings on you once more, I wish to convey something very important to you, since I am convinced of your sincere love and respect for me. From the time your requests reached me, at Midiyath, to this time, I have been much disturbed and upset. I am aware that Abdullah Effendi has been creating many problems among my spiritual sons and also causing a lot of confusion in the churches. Following your requests, I set out for Malabar depositing all my faith in God Almighty. My spiritual fervour made me confident and by God's grace I reached this place without encountering any obstacle or difficulty. When I was convinced that the Malankara Metropolitan Mar Divanassios and his supporters were honest and worthy, I convened a meeting at the Parumala Seminary. It was here that I got a more vivid picture of your needs, as well as the activities of Abdullah Effendi, which has been against canon law. My heart was weighed down with sorrow when I learned about the chaos created

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by rebellion, strife and murder among the innocent and sincere flock of the Lord, in Malabar.

With increased sorrow, I implored the help of Jesus Christ, and was inspired by the Holy Spirit to comply with your requests. Thus by the grace of God, according to your request, I enthroned a Maphriyan, that is, a catholicos, with the name Paulose Baselios and enthroned three Metropolitans Mar Gevarghese Gregarios, Mar Joachim Ivanios and Mar Gregorios Philixinose. I realised that if the enthronement of the catholicos did not take place, the Malankara Church of Malabar will not be able to maintain its purity and sanctity. Now by the powerful intervention of Jesus Christ, peace and holiness will reign over the community, till the end of time. I know that cordial relationship with Antioch will be more stable than in the past. My heart is filled with happiness. Dear children! Live in peace henceforth! I will be leaving shortly, but rest assured that you would forever live in my memory.

I am hopeful that the catholicos and metropolitans, as good shepherds will look after your needs. With the support and cooperation of the metropolitans, the catholicos will, according to the canons of the holy fathers, ordain the bishops of the Church and bless the Holy Myron for you. The metropolitans will have the privilege and authority to ordain another catholicos, in case of the demise of the present one. No one can oppose it. However, everything should be executed with wisdom and in the right order, according to existing practices and by consultation with a committee presided over by Malankara Metropolitan Mar Divanassios. This is my request to your love and I advise you in the name of Jesus Christ to be discreet. Do not be led away from the

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true faith of the Church which is built on the foundation of the rock that is St Peter. I make this appeal out of love for you that you be not misled by the acts and instigations of a miscreant, and detach yourself from the loving relationship with the Apostolic See of Antioch. I know that you are obedient to the Church like your holy and virtuous ancestors. This is enough for your understanding, since a few words is enough to convey a lot of wisdom.

May you and your dear departed be fortunate enough to hear the good tidings, "Come, those who are blessed by my Father; inherit the Kingdom of Heaven which has been kept ready for you from the beginning of time". May this be possible through the intercession of Mother Mary, all the saints and the Holy Apostles, especially St Thomas! Amen.

From Parumala Seminary

AD 1913, *Kumbham* 8

I hope that the readers now have a clearer picture of the leadership role played by MA Achan in the establishment of the Malankara Catholicate. All this is evidence to the untiring efforts of MA Achan, his extraordinary courage, perseverance, and readiness to face challenges and overcome obstacles for the realization of his dreams and projects.

After the establishment of the Catholicate, for almost a year, Abded M'siha and the rambans travelled to almost all the parishes of Malankara Church and received a large amount of money by way of donations. After that when the patriarch and the rambans started for Antioch, our MA Achan accompanied them up to Bombay, since he had already given word that he would send the patriarch safely to his homeland. He was afraid that if they travelled on the same ship, the rambans might attempt to rob the money. Hence, he decided to send

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the patriarch in the P&O mail, and the rambans in another ship that had a lesser fare. He said to the rambans, "Of the different kinds of ships leaving this harbour, the most exclusive is the P&O mail. Though the voyage will be comfortable, the fare is high. A good number of ships are less expensive. The only difference is that these reach a few days later than the P&O mail. Would you prefer P&O mail or any of the other ships? Anyway, we would like the patriarch to travel by the P&O mail."

Rambans: Let the patriarch travel by P&O mail. We do not mind travelling in a ship with a lesser fare.

MA Achan felt relieved of a problem that had been weighing him down. He conveyed everything to the patriarch and asked, "Do you insist now, that I accompany you on the voyage?"

"No son, I am happy and contented."

Thus, the patriarch and the rambans set out on separate ships.

The difficulties encountered by MA Achan in bringing Abded M'siha here, establishing the Catholicate and sending him safely back is clear from all this. What prompted him to struggle forward was the faith that this would ensure the peace and order of the Jacobite Church. If the decision to sever relationship with Patriarch Abdullah and establish the Catholicate had been approved by the Patriarch faction of the Jacobite Church, the hopes and expectations of our hero would have materialised perfectly but "man proposes, God disposes".



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Chapter 10

PROFESSOR AT SERAMPORE COLLEGE

A convention of Christian students from all over India, took place in Serampore, which is near Calcutta, under the leadership of a protestant missionary from America, called Dr John R Mott. This was organized, to discuss ways, which would help in the spiritual growth of students, and to discover how evangelization could flourish in India. Dr Mott had requested the heads of the non-Catholic Churches in India to send representatives and participants. Vattasseril Mar Divanossios also received an invitation and he went to Serampore accompanied by MA Achan and participated in the same.

MA Achan was fortunate enough to be introduced to many eminent persons, from India and abroad, including Dr Howells, the principal of Serampore College, who was known for his untiring efforts in the establishment of the institution as well as its welfare. Dr Howells was greatly attracted to MA Achan and was full of appreciation for his deep knowledge, eloquence and ability to engage in light conversations. He wished to appoint him as professor at the Serampore College and waited for an opportunity to broach the subject. Once when having meals together, Dr Howells asked him, "Is it possible for you to leave your native place and take up professorship in this college? You will be an asset to this institution".

MA Achan knew that professorship would bring him higher position and salary. It would also give him an opportunity to take people from Kerala to Serampore for their higher education. However, instead of giving a definite answer, he pointed to Mar Divannasios and just said, "I am afraid I cannot answer the question. Kindly ask the

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metropolitan." Immediately Dr Howells turned to the metropolitan and repeated his wish to have MA Achan at Serampore. Mar Divannasios replied that though it was a good suggestion, there would be practical difficulties. However, he promised to think over the matter and send a definite reply later.

Dr Howells kept in touch with MA Achan even after he returned to Kerala. He requested him in his letters to try to persuade the metropolitan, overcome all impediments, and come to Serampore. MA Achan was in a dilemma. There were mainly three obstacles that stood in the way:

1) the reluctance to part with Mar Divannasios
2) the deep desire to continue to work for the peace and welfare of the Jacobite Church, especially in times of crisis
3) his wish to elevate the status of MD Seminary

It is not surprising that the idea of parting with his *guru* and well-wisher, Mar Divannasios, even if it was only for a short period, turned out to be a matter of deep sorrow to him. The restlessness and agitations in the community were worsening by the second. He was afraid that this would soon precipitate into a crisis. The opposite faction continued to make use of every opportunity to endanger the life of the metropolitan. He felt that it was his duty to stay back and discuss the existing problems with him, reassure him, and inspire him to be active in the service of the Church and the community. He was upset at the thought of going afar, lured by the offer of professorship. The thought of bidding farewell to MA Achan was heart-rending to Mar Divannasios, since he had become his refuge and strength and had always helped him tide over difficulties.

MA Achan wished to strive to the best of his ability to establish peace and order in the Jacobite Church. He felt guilty about leaving the place, instead of trying to tackle and settle the strife, competition and ever-increasing number of cases.

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His aspiration, from the moment he took up responsibility as the principal of MD Seminary was to promote the institution and raise it to a college. He had already formulated a plan and in accordance with it, he had sent Deacons John and Koshy to SPG College Trichinapoly to gain higher degrees, so that they would be qualified to work as professors. His plans included building a Theological College next to MD Seminary, with all the facilities, which he felt, would increase the prestige of the community. The realisation that all his efforts would prove to be futile if he went to Serampore troubled his mind. He wanted to unburden himself and hence in an autobiographical mode wrote in *Girideepam* as follows:

> Hence I do not know whether to go or not to Serampore college. I am much disturbed as this question is constantly troubling my mind. Even after the passage of many days, I am not able to come to a decision. I have no appetite, and I sleep fitfully in the night. I am haunted by the images of Serampore college and Dr Howells on one side and MD Seminary and the metropolitan on the other. Now I wake up much earlier than the usual 5 am I felt that it was much better to get to the adjacent chapel and immerse myself in prayer or meditation than lazing on the bed indulging in fanciful thoughts. I started getting up at 4 in the morning, sometimes even much earlier and found solace and comfort in prayers and meditation. The Serampore journey occupied prime place in my prayers, and as days passed the college seemed more attractive to me. It grew into an obsession and I concluded that it was part of God's plan. But I could not do anything about it. Since I had submitted myself to the authority of a great leader of the Malankara Church, my decision would not be valid. I had seen and experienced on many occasions the filial love, which the metropolitan had for the MD Seminary and the passion he entertained for its growth

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and development. If he got an inkling of my interest in Dr Howells' proposal, he would definitely try to nip it in the bud. I did not know how to broach the subject to him. I had to do something, as Dr Howells' letters continued to reach me like arrows. Hence, without losing time I went to the metropolitan, armed with some of Dr Howell's letters. After exchanging pleasantries and discussing the latest, I introduced the topic of the letters, and calmly informed him of my desire. The metropolitan who had been listening to everything and asking questions in between said, "Let it be so. I am happy to approve of it and allow it." (*Girideepam*, pages 41, 42)

MA Achan was confident that his position in Serampore college would contribute to the progress of the community. A good number of smart young men of Kerala could be admitted in this college for their higher studies. He would be able to set apart a portion of his salary for this purpose and influence the college authorities to grant scholarships. Thus, the Malankara Community could have competent priests with high degrees. Goaded by such desires, MA Achan decided to set forth for Serampore, with the blessings of Mar Divannasios.

Serampore college was a protestant institution (Baptist mission) which encouraged not only English education but also theological studies. Dr Howells had agreed in advance and had assured that all conveniences and facilities would be provided to teach the students from the Jacobite Church their faith and for service and worship, according to traditional Malankara Syrian faith.

As soon as MA Achan received the consent of the metropolitan, he resigned his position as principal of MD Seminary and started for Serampore. He took along with him the smart and well behaved Deacon KA Jacob (Mar Theophilos) who had just matriculated from MD Seminary. On reaching Serampore, he joined duty and took up lodgings in a room on the second floor of the college. It is not surprising

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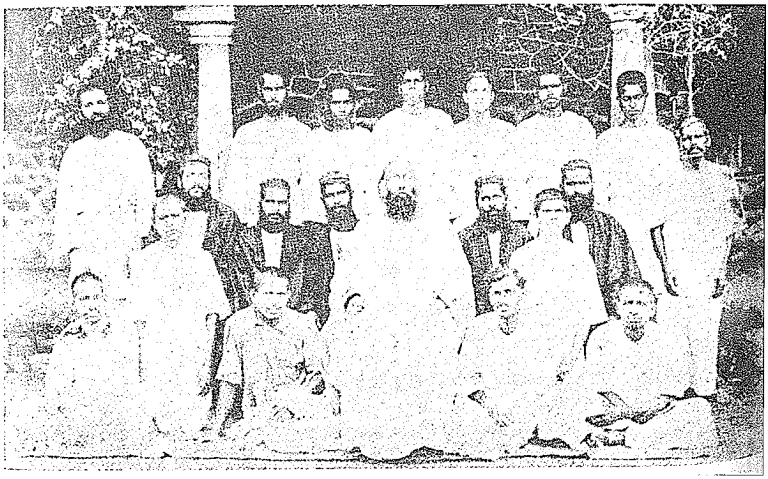
that the students and teachers of the college were full of praise for him and admired him for his sterling character, adept conversation, efficient teaching and competence. Though he had accepted this prestigious position, he was preoccupied with thoughts of the future of his community and its members. Within a short time, because of his regular correspondence with the Church leaders in Kerala, about twenty young men, who included both deacons and laity, were enrolled in Serampore college. MA Achan took special care of their spiritual and temporal life. In addition to the monthly salary, he received a huge amount for paper valuation and other duties. A part of what he wrote about this in '*Girideepam*', is given below:

> Finances, in those days, involved a huge income as well as great expenditure. Now, thinking of it, I am amazed and thank God Almighty for providing from an eternal source. I was receiving a substantial amount by way of salary; the money received for evaluation of papers was also not negligible. Allowances and gifts earmarked for deacons sent by Mr Leechman and other friends, at the recommendation of Dr Howells constituted another source of income. Thus by way of salary, remuneration and gifts, we received approximately Rs.10,000/-. This will give the readers an idea of the amount we used to spend for the establishment, upkeep and progress of the theological college and MD Seminary. It is worth mentioning here that when the metropolitan on learning the details of my stay, income and expenditure at Serampore, commented with affection and great joy that the amount received per year is as substantial as '*Vattipanam*'.
>
> The deacons and brothers at Serampore were engaged in the study of either the English language or theology. When the number of students increased, the income

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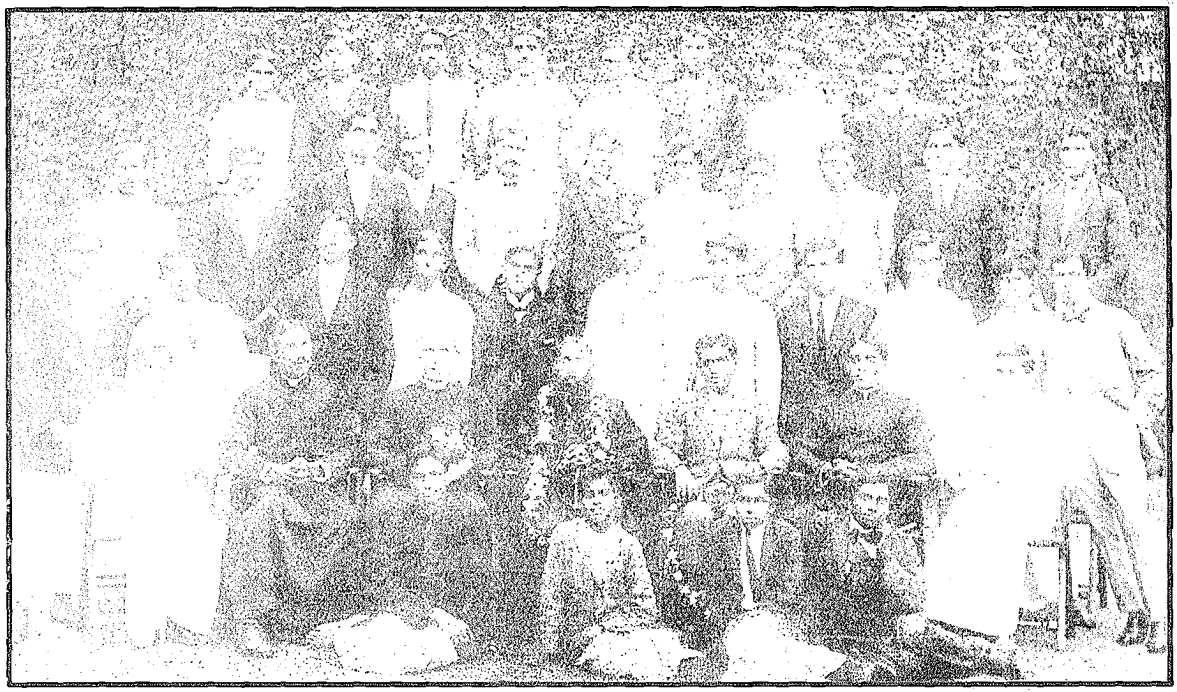
The Founder of the Ashram, the orphans and a few ashramites
(before a hut at the Bethany Hills)



The Superior of the Ashram and the ashramites

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A photo taken on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Syrian Christian Samajam at Calcutta



Fr P T Geevarhese who presided over the meeting is at the centre

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> quoted earlier was not sufficient to meet the expenses. On those occasions, the college authorities were kind enough to grant loans, which were repaid with the salary received during holidays. There is no need to hide the fact that I fell into debts, as I was contributing towards the educational expenses of some other students who were pursuing their education in Allahabad, Madras and Calcutta universities. My friends got the impression that I was earning quite a lot of money but was in the habit of spending beyond my income. (*Girideepam,* pages 45, 46)

A chapel was improvised in the rented building that served as the lodging of the students. Retreats, sermons, special daily prayers, etc. were conducted and Holy Qurbono was celebrated in this chapel. MA Achan was extremely cautious and took care to prevent the pernicious seeds of protestantism from penetrating into the minds of the Jacobite students in the course of the collegiate education. What MA Achan expressed in '*Girideepam*' concerning this, is given below:

> I am happy and thankful that I have been able to work sincerely and wisely to turn the deacons and brothers at Serampore into loving children of Our Lady of Malankara Church and also mould them as ideal craftsmen and protectors of the Malankara community (*Girideepam*, page 47).

Fr PT Geevarghese took care to see that the deacons were given the best training in the study of English as well as Syriac. He was aware that proficiency in Syriac was indispensable since they had to read and grasp works written in Syriac that contained the liturgy, theological mysteries, scientific interpretations and history of the Jacobite Church. Moreover, the popularity of English education had created in priests an indifference towards Syriac, which had been considered the language of priests. Mar Divannasios had predicted earlier that if this was not remedied, it would in due course prove to

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be a disadvantage to the Church. Hence, MA Achan tried to include Syriac as one of the main subjects in the college. He exerted considerable influence on Ashutosh Mukherjee, Vice-chancellor of the University of Calcutta to have Syriac included as an optional subject in their curriculum. Later, the University of Madras followed suit in recognising Syriac as an optional subject. It may be mentioned here that Fr PT Geevarghese headed the Board of studies for Eastern languages including Syriac, of the University of Madras for a long term.

Many have been able to choose Syriac as optional subject and obtain MA and BA degrees. Those who had their education in Serampore and other places, inspired, encouraged and supported by MA Achan are now serving the Church in a commendable manner in various parts of Kerala. Six among them had been fortunate enough to be installed as leaders of the Church:

1. Archbishop Mar Severios
2. Mar Theophilos
3. Mar Oshathios
4. Mar Ivanios
5. Mar Thevadosios
6. Mar Philixinos

The names of those who became priests are: 1. Deacon Thacheril Varghese 2. Deacon Pulithitta Abraham 3. Deacon Chandanapalli David 4. Deacon TV John 5. T.G. Deacon Koshy 6. Deacon MI Daniel (Kotampalli) 7. Deacon VI Koshy (Sooranadu) 8. Deacon VT Thomas 9. Deacon PT Thomas Panicker 10. Deacon Kaatumangatu John 11. Deacon MC Geevarussu 12. NG Kurian 13. Deacon Cheriyamadhom Skaria.

Among these, Deacon Kattumangattu John MSc, Deacon Thacheril Gevarghese MA BD, etc. passed away before they could

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be ordained priests and Deacon Kottampally Daniel died after he became a priest.

MA Achan taught Syriac, the history of the Church, Economics, Politics, etc. in the college. One or two incidents, which happened in the college, reveal his predilection for the Catholic Church. The college authorities had given the professors complete freedom to select the books needed for the study of the history of the Church. Though there were many protestant books related to the subject, our hero selected the history books (The Greater Eastern Church, The Lesser Eastern Churches) written by the Catholic historian Adrian Frotesque as the main texts. These books enabled the students to gain an awareness of the differences in rituals and beliefs, which existed among the different non-Catholic Churches, the difference between the Catholic Church and non-Catholic Churches, etc. and created in them an inclination towards the Catholic Church.

One day while teaching the history of the Church in the class, a Jacobite Deacon asked, "Which is the Church established by Jesus Christ? Is it the Jacobite Church or the Roman Catholic Church?" Fr PT Geevarghese, being the professor of a protestant college as well as an important priest of the Jacobite Church was not able to give a suitable answer immediately. The students in the class debated on the issue for a long time. Finally the professor set the students at ease by responding thus: "There are evidences in the holy scriptures as well as the history of the Church that there is only one true Christian Church. I do not think that the Jacobite Church is the true Church. To answer whether the Roman Catholic Church is the one established by Christ, more research is needed."

MA Achan felt that higher education possibilities should be made available for not only Syrian men but also for women. This, he felt, would contribute to the progress of the society and the country. He discussed the matter with Sister Mary Victoria, principal of Diocesan

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college of Calcutta, which was being run by European nuns who belonged to the Anglican Church (High Church). He was able to make her agree to accept a few young women from Malankara on the college rolls. She also offered to take special care of them. He learned that a convent in Barisole, East Bengal gave training in both *sanyasa* life and English studies. He went there, met Mother Superior Edith and arranged for a few young Syrian women from Kerala to be given training there. He knew that these women who received high education and training would evolve into cultured and refined ladies. He hoped that they would motivate and inspire the women of Kerala and enlighten them spiritually and intellectually. A building was built at Thirumoola, Tiruvalla at the initiative of Kandathil Varghese Mappila who was well known as the founder of the *Malayala Manorama*, social activist and a language scholar. His dream had been to establish a girls' high school, but before it could materialise he passed away. MA Achan took up his objective of doing something worthwhile for the community. For the girls' high School to be more effective, MA Achan wanted the the women of the community to serve as teachers and as members of the governing body. He sent young women from Kerala for their higher studies and training to the Diocesan College in Calcutta and the convent in Barisole. He visited these institutions regularly and enquired after the welfare of these students, inspired them to build up their faith and gave necessary advice for their spiritual growth.

During vacation, MA Achan along with the deacons came home from Serampore. On these occasions, he used to discuss matters relating to the community with Metropolitan Vattasseril. He also gave sermons in the parishes; he visited and tried to the best of his ability to promote the community.

His deep interest in the welfare of the community made him dream of organising a missionary order. The prospect appeared attractive to him and he suggested that it was imperative to have a congregation

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consisting of selfless people, willing to make sacrifices, to spread the Word of the Lord in and outside Kerala. In the course of his travels in South and North India, he had witnessed thousands of Catholic and Protestant missionaries engaged in successful and fruitful evangelical work. He was sad and ashamed when he realised that the traditional Malankara Jacobite Church could not boast of a single missionary who ventured outside Travancore-Kochi to preach the gospel. To remedy this, he took steps to establish a missionary order while at Serampore itself. He created an awareness regarding this in the students from Kerala who were under his guidance. He wrote an inspiring article in *'Suriyani Suvisheshakan'* (Syrian Evangelist) magazine, which could create a zest in the priests of the parish for missionary activities. It reads as follows:

The Parish Priests and Evangelisation

(Fr PT Geevarghese MA)

There should be a deep interrelation between the spiritual life of the members of the Church and evangelical work. The desire and enthusiasm for such work undertaken by the Church, depends not only on the piety of its members but also on their love for God. A cold attitude to love for God and a lack of heart-felt pain in the increase of the power of sin in the world denote spiritual decadence. Likewise, the decline of the spirituality of the Church and disinterestedness in declaring Jesus Christ as Saviour to the members of the Church as well as others, signifies deterioration of the Church. It is the responsibility of the leaders of the Church to awaken the community from slumber and inspire them to be active in spiritual matters. The spirituality, grace and wellbeing of the Church will increase by the day if it strives to draw people from all castes and communities to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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The Church, which engages in evangelical work inspired by holiness, will grow in piety through evangelisation.

In the present times, all the Churches are enthusiastic about doing evangelical work in different parts of the world. The members of the Russian Church engage passionately in evangelical work in countries like Japan, China and Central Asia. Romans do the same in an amazing way in many parts of the world. Protestants also in a very spirited manner spread the Word of our Lord. When Churches all over the world are conscious of their responsibility, why does our Church alone prove negligent? It might be the lack of zest of the Church leaders or disinterestedness of the members of the community. What ever it may be, if the priests in the parishes realise that they are tools in the hands of God, this can be remedied. If the priests take the initiative to enkindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in the community, their endeavour will prove successful through God's grace. Devout priests can mould devout parishioners and there will be an increase of people, who will willingly lay down their lives because of their love for God (*Suriyani Suvisheshakan'* 1085 ME, *Medam* issue).

Evangelical work can be done fruitfully only by selfless people who are inspired by the love of God and who have a deep reverence for him. MA Achan knew that liberal minded people not bound by fixed laws will not flourish in such work. In the protestant Church there are people who call themselves *upadesis*, evangelists, pastors, etc. The works done by such free persons who do not submit to any authority is not only futile but have many disadvantages. On the contrary, the Catholic Church carries out missionary activities through organised missionary groups and ascetic orders. They preach the

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gospel throughout the world and reap a rich harvest. A deep awareness of these facts made MA Achan firm in his decision to establish a *Sanyasa* Order (ascetic religious community) for evangelical work. It was with this aim in mind that he founded the Bethany Ashram sometime later. The details regarding this are given in the next chapter. With this intention, he resigned his job at Serampore College after serving as professor for six years in a commendable manner, and returned home.



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Chapter 11

THE FOUNDING OF THE BETHANY ASHRAM

Those who keep track of the lives of great personalities, learn the fact that it is not possible for anyone to limit or draw reins on their views, ideals, and plan of action. They tend to consider things carefully before they start striving for a particular goal. They chalk out an ideal plan and work towards its realisation. Fruitful and innovative ways gain shape in their mind's eye. They work hard to make these ideas practical, overcome hurdles and obstacles and do not rest until their dreams are fulfilled.

Efforts to Elevate the Community

This is a fact, which is evident throughout the life history of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. After gaining MA degree, returning to Kerala and becoming principal of MD Seminary, what preoccupied him was discovering ways through which he could promote the Jacobite Community and thereby the Christian Community. He was aware that as long as the Jacobite Church was under the domination of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, no such prosperity was to be expected. This motivated him to free the Church from the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch, to establish the Catholicate, and bring the Jacobite Church under its rule. He struggled valiantly neglecting his own life and worked along with Vattasseril Mar Divannasios for this purpose. However, because of the strong commitment of the opposite faction and lack of zest of his own group, MA Achan's intention did not meet with complete success.

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He realised that the most appropriate way to facilitate the development of his community would be to send the youth for higher studies. Hence, he endeavoured to elevate MD Seminary high school to a first grade college. For the same reason, he accepted the job at Serampore college, got many young men of Kerala admitted there and gave all possible assistance for their education. He considered establishing a Theological College near MD Seminary, as he hoped that smart and scholarly priests could contribute to the progress of the community. With this end in view, he took deacons to Serampore and gave them adequate education and training. He took the initiative to lead many women to Calcutta and Barisole for their higher education, since he was confident that these educated and enlightened women could help in the advancement of the women of the community.

In addition to this, he recognised the need for smart, selfless, and righteous missionaries to preach the gospel in Kerala and other parts of the world. He felt that an organised missionary order would be able to achieve much more than a heterogeneous group and seriously started thinking about founding a *sanyasa* order. Thus, he became a willing instrument in the hands of God, in order to establish Bethany *Sanyasa* Ashram and Convent.

However, through his experience over the years, he realised that this would not lead to the prosperity of the community and hence concentrated on working towards Catholic Reunion. He was aware that remaining under the authority of Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Malankara metropolitan, or catholicos would not bring any progress and that lasting peace and prosperity would be assured only if they reach the rule of the Pope of Rome. Continuous prayer, hard work, and careful planning led him to Catholic Reunion. He requested his brethren, which came to several lakhs, to work for its success. Since the details of his selfless work for the progress of his plan is given in the next chapter, only the efforts for the founding of the Bethany Ashram will be elaborated here.

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Wish to Found the Bethany Ashram

The desire to establish the *Sanyasa* Ashram took roots in his mind while serving as principal in Serampore college. Inspired by the thought that a missionary order would prove to be a boon to his people and community, he started working for it. The divine inspiration, which paved the way for the establishment of the ashram, is described thus in *Girideepam:*

> Many months passed. Though my heart was like clay before God, it had not yet been moulded into any shape or become graceful. I did not have any idea as to how to proceed. But I was strengthened by the faith that God would give a definite shape to it. My heart that was free until then, I installed there itself and watched it from a distance. I had to overcome many trials and tribulations. The physical and mental agonies I had to undergo as a result of self-negation could be understood only by people who have had similar experiences.
>
> I felt that attaining God was nobler than serving God. People have varied aims in life. Some strive for happiness, others for health. A great many have momentary fame in mind. Many people fix their minds on amassing wealth. Many struggle for God's grace. Thus, though they have different interests, they are all struggling forward. No one remains idle. It is not possible for those who lead a Christian life to sever all ties with the world. But those who genuinely serve God can devote the rest of their life towards discovering God. Those who are anchored in Christian life are aware that the most precious and noble thing that can be gained from this termite-ridden, transitory world is God Himself. Man should have faith and find

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refuge only in God. He should be radiant with the love for God and nothing else. The one, who has discovered this, will adopt sacrifice as the only way to experience the presence of God. It is imperative to emulate Jesus Christ. The example of the self-sacrifice in Golgotha should be reflected in his mind. He should renounce his family, his country, and the world itself. He should practice self-negation like the disciples of Jesus Christ. Those who have discovered God have the confidence and will power to declare that they have renounced everything to follow Jesus. They are the real Evangelists and it is through them that the world has come to know Christ. One who attains *sanyasa* (ascetic) life can achieve all this. He has the capacity to withdraw from the world and negate himself for Christ. Words like wealth, fame, popularity etc. become synonyms for poverty, humiliation, and defamation, to a *sanyasi*. He experiences divine bliss when he becomes a fool and a lunatic, for the sake of Christ, in the eyes of the world.

"The world, his father, brothers, people, home and everything else

He does abandon for Jesus."

Those who are willing to die to the world, in order to live in Christ, welcome sacrifice and poverty. I realised that what we needed was a *sanyasa* (ascetic) order, consisting of people who were willing to devote themselves to Christ. I recognised that it was God's will, that it was my life's mission and decided to devote the rest of my life for its realisation. After days and months of careful thought, prayer, Holy Qurbono etc. I started considering this divine plan as something invaluable and sought the grace and wisdom to make it materialise. (*Girideepam*, pages 52-55)

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Initial Efforts

Henceforth MA Achan concentrated on founding the ashram. He tried to gain knowledge and experience on the necessary constituents of an ashram, such as the observance of religious vows, rules, and constitution. He started by visiting the ashrams of both catholics and protestants in North India, and imbibed many things from the noble personalities there. He read many books relating to ascetic life, which were written mostly by Catholic ascetics. He was fortunate enough to visit Santhinikethan, founded by Rabindranath Tagore under the name Viswabharathi, many times, and had discussions with the great poet. He also went to Sabarmathi Ashram, established by Mahatma Gandhi who was struggling for Indian independence and imbibed with fervour the prevailing spirit there. All these helped him in his endeavour to mould a *sanyasa* ashram.

He kept communicating to his spiritual mentor Vattasseril Thirumeni and the distinguished members of the community, through letters, his wish to establish a *sanyasa* ashram somewhere in Kerala. The eminent members of the community agreed with him that if this wish materialised it would help in the progress of the community. Their replies expressing their willingness to extend support and assuring him of their cooperation reached Serampore promptly. Vattasseril Mar Divannasios blessed this proposal heartily and granted the request.

MA Achan decided to lay the foundation for the ashram, while at Serampore itself and started leading an ascetic life. The deacons who were with him joined him in following certain ascetic practices and observances, which in the beginning were limited to prayers at fixed times, meditation, examination of the conscience, observation of silence, etc.Thus, what was created in Serampore, developed gradually behind secure curtains, for almost a year.

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Acquisition of Land

His next deliberation was finding a suitable place to set up the ashram. He wanted to select a place that was far from the densely populated cities. He preferred a place that was quiet and peaceful. He did not know how to find the money for the land, the buildings, and the daily expenses. Nevertheless, he was confident in his faith that God would take care of everything.

He wrote about the establishment of the ashram to Mr EJ John Elanjickal, his intimate friend, a true Christian, an eminent advocate and a wealthy person. He received a very encouraging reply from this friend of the community. He had written that he was willing to donate 100 acres from the land he possessed at Perunad near Vadasserikara on the eastern end of Chengannur Taluk. MA Achan's joy knew no bounds and he wrote back saying that he would soon make a visit to Kerala and proceed to Perunad to see the land.

After several months, during vacation, when MA Achan came home to Kerala, he went to Perunad and saw the location in the company of Mr KG Cherian from Puthenkavu, and Mr IM Idikkula from Ranny. He saw for himself the facilities the land offered, walked about the hilly area and was satisfied. All of them agreed that this was the ideal place for the ashram. Next to the hundred acres promised by Mr EJ John, was a large area of land owned by the government. Mr KG Cherian suggested that it would be nice to acquire some of the land lying contiguous to the 100-acre property and hence steps were taken in this direction. A request was made to the government with the help of Mr KC Mamman Mappila and Mr KK Lukose. Since he did not have the money to pay for the land that was offered at the price of Rs 5 per acre for 300 acres, he got a loan of about Rs 2000 from his father, through his brother Mathai Panicker.

This place, known as Mundanmala, was a hilly area, dense with thickets, on the eastern side of the confluence of Pampa and Kakkat

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rivers. The scenic beauty of the place, which proclaimed the glory of the Creator, was pleasing to the eye. The place had been the habitat of wild animals and hence unfit for human occupation, until 50 years back. However, the soil and climate was favourable for the cultivation of tea, rubber, pepper, etc. Many well-known estates like Peruman, Laha, Kurungali, Chittar, Carmel, etc. lay in the surrounding area. *Ayyappans* trudged along the foot of this hill during their annual pilgrimage to Sabarimala to enjoy *Ayyappadarshanam.*

MA Achan's brother Mathai Panicker and his friend Kilileth Chacko wrote to Serampore that they wished to acquire a few acres adjacent to this land. This was what they received as reply: "None of you should own even a cent of land anywhere near this property. The whole area should be registered in the name of the ashram. Jehovah will take care of the family of one who devotes his life for the service to God."

The Naming of the Ashram

After acquiring the land for the ashram, he prayerfully preoccupied himself with finding a suitable name for it. He resolved to find a name, which reflected the manifold ideals of the ashram and its deep relationship with God. Meditating on this, he opened the Biblical dictionary and what met his eye was the word Beth'a-ny. He realised that the word was also part of God's plan. He remembered Lazar and his sisters of Bethany, their service to God, charitable activities etc. and was convinced that the name was meaningful.Thus the ashram was named Beth'a-ny. (The ashram was named Beth'a-ny in the beginning, though later it came to be known as Bethany.)

Next, he searched for an apt name for the ascetic order. Since the order was being established to imitate Christ and to be obedient to Him in everything, he decided to choose the name "Order of the Imitation of Christ."

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A considerable amount was needed to clear the *Mundanmala* woods, construct buildings, roads, and fencing, to plant trees and meet the initial expenses. MA Achan did not know how to find the approximate amount of Rs 7000, needed for the purpose. With the help of God Almighty, he found a way. He informed an American missionary J H Howler, he had known at Serampore, of this need. He took him to Calcutta to meet Sir Daniel Hamilton, and together they described to him everything regarding the establishment of the ashram, its purpose, and the plan of activities. Sir Hamilton was much impressed and promised to lend the amount needed, as loan. Thus a few acres of Bethany land was pledged and Rs 7000 borrowed to meet the expenses. Deacon Mattackal Alexios from Niranam (Mar Thevodosios of Orthodox Jacobite Church), Shooranad Oommen Vadhyar (Baskeepa Ramban of Jacobite Church), Mathai Panicker (brother of MA Achan) and Kilileth Chacko (Manager) were given the responsibility of carrying out the initial work at Bethany Hills. They cleared the land that had been the haunt of wild animals like tigers, elephants, etc. by their incessant hard work. They improvised buildings, which would serve as ashram and chapel with materials like bamboo and branches of trees and thatched them with grass. Within a few months, the buildings were ready to be occupied.

The Holy Rule and Habit

MA Achan's next concern was about the rules of the Bethany Order of the Imitation of Christ and finding a suitable habit for the monks. He read the constitutions of many religious congregations. In order to know the laws of the congregations of the Carmelites, he travelled to Mannanam ashram from Kottayam along with MA Philippose, KV Chacko, etc. Since father superior was out of station, they got the opportunity to discuss matters with the ashram procurator Rev. Fr Alexander Kattakkayathil (Kochuchandy Achan). When he learned about the establishment of the ashram, he asked, "What name

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do you intend to give the ashram?" MA Achan replied that they had chosen the name Bethany. Immediately the far-sighted Kochuchandy Achan said, "Bethany! That is very close to us." He meant that Beth'any being close to Carmel Hill, there were more chances of unity and friendship developing between the two (from the following chapters we can understand that Carmelite *sanyasis* played a significant role in the Bethany Reunion). Since father superior was absent, they had to return without seeing their 'constitution'. After a week, Rev. Fr Stephanos came to Kottayam to hand over the 'constitution' to MA Achan. Though he examined the laws of different religious orders and congregations, he finally chose the laws of the monastic order of St Basil for the Bethany Ashram.

He had not yet decided on the habit of the *ashramites* and its colour. The many ascetic orders of the Catholic Church had their own particular dress and chosen colour. This was one way of distinguishing one order from the other. MA Achan decided to emulate the Indian *sanyasis* and hence chose a *kavi* (saffron) habit with a sash, for Bethany ashramites. He was aware that they had to preach the Gospel among the Hindus of India. To reform them, it was imperative that they choose a dress, which was Indian in character. A part of the letter he sent from Serampore to Vattasseril Mar Divannasios, regarding the habit, is given below:

2. Circular Road Serampore

25 Nov.'17

Most Beloved Father,

... To engage in spiritual work among the non-Christians, we, Deacon Mattackal and I strive to become *dayaroyo* (monks) and we wish that the preparation and work for this be done in Bethany. Kindly suggest a suitable dress for Deacon Mattackal and for me. It is advantageous to

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Mar Ivanios after the Episcopal ordination



Mar Baselios
(the 2nd Catholicos)



Kandanattu
Mar Ivanios

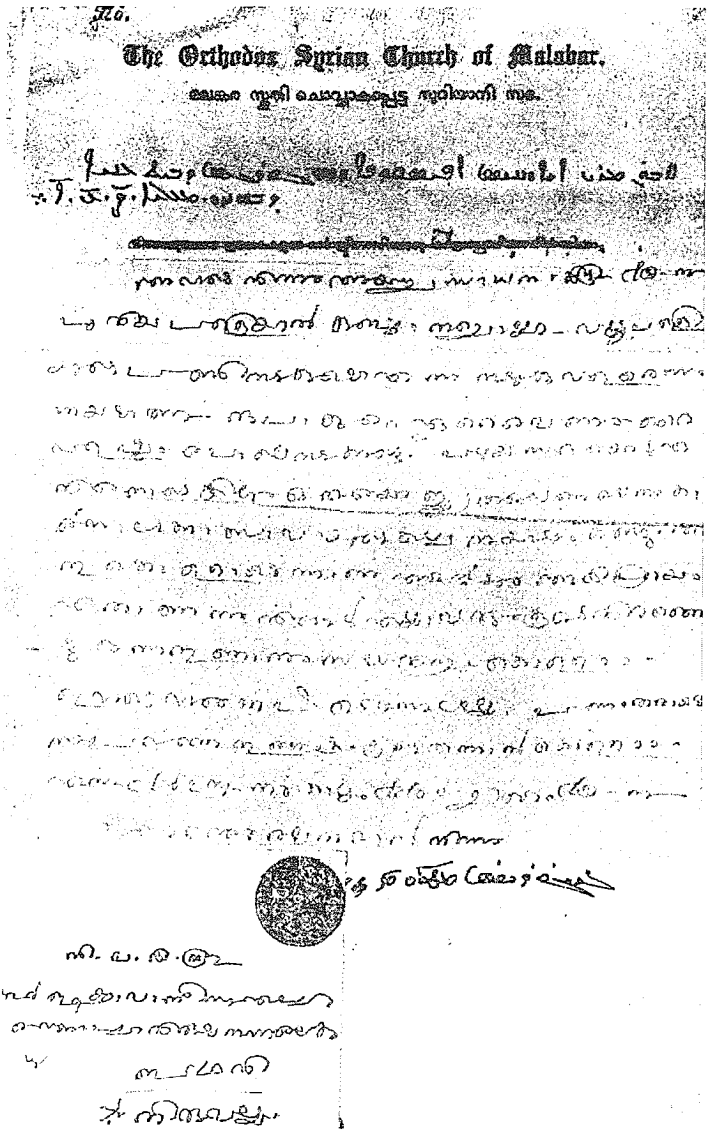


Mar Gregorios
(the 3rd Catholicos)

The Metropolitans who ordained Mar Ivanios a Bishop

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The letter concerning reunion sent to Mar Ivanios by Mar Baselios, the 3rd Catholicos, in 1926


The Orthodox Syrian Church of Malabar.

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prescribe the habit at the time of admitting a person permanently in Bethany. This will make us, as well as the others, aware that we have been selected for specific work. The habit should be suitable for our country, should not be branded as a Western habit, and should be cheap. The ascetic should bear in mind the advice of Jesus Christ to his disciples that they should not possess two sets of clothing. They should be willing to work in any corner of India. Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists should acknowledge it as the dress of the servants of God. It should be one that has not been selected by any other ascetic order. It should be appealing and draw crowds who are eager to listen to the Word. Since I have pondered on this for long, I have a suggestion to make. A white cassock similar to the black one worn by our priests should be stitched, dyed kavi and worn along with a sash of the same colour. I am not insisting on this particular habit; there is no urgency either. Take your own time, and if at the end of five or six months, you feel that this dress is appropriate for our country, kindly give your consent. I am sure that it will create an awareness among our people that Kerala is only a tiny part of the world and that we are responsible for the evangelical work of a country which is many times larger than Travancore and Kochi.

May it please Your Grace!

Fr P T Varghese. (Sd/-)

This was the kind of habit worn by the European missionaries, Fr De Nobily and Buskey who preached the Gospel in places like Madurai, a few years back. The ascetics of Sheeluvagiri, established at Salem recently, have also chosen a habit of *kavi* colour.

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Inauguration of the Ashram and Religious Consecration

After fulfilling all the responsibilities for the establishment of the ashram, MA Achan decided to resign his job as professor in Serampore College and get back home. Respecting the wishes of the college authorities, he had intended to engage classes for two more years. However, the unpleasant climate and his rheumatic problems that were becoming more serious, made him decide against it. His friends advised him to return to Kerala and go in for Ayurvedic treatment, which they felt would give him relief. Hence he was forced to submit his resignation and return to Kerala. He went in for Ayurvedic treatment both in Kottayam and in Mavelikkara for several months and gained considerable relief. Meanwhile following his instructions, all arrangements for the establishment of the ashram were made at Beth'a-ny.

In the beginning, only ten people came forward to accept ashram-life. Their names are:

1) Fr PT Varghese (Mar Ivanios)
2) Deacon Jacob (Mar Theophilus)
3) Fr Alexios –Niranom (Mar Thevodosios)
4) Deacon Koshy Shooranad (Rev. Samuel TOCD)
5) Geevarghese - Chengannur (Fr Geevarghese OIC)
6) Jacob - Mavelikkara (Fr Barsleeba OIC)
7) Oommen – Shooranad (Ramban Buskeepa)
8) Abraham- Kalloopara (Fr Abraham OIC)
9) Isaac - Mavelikkara (Fr Isaac)
10) Varghese-Pulikkeezh (Fr Varghese)

It was decided that the consecration ceremony of the first offsprings of Bethany, MA Achan, Fr Alexios and Deacon Jacob, would be conducted after six months of spiritual formation. Thus on

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the day of Pentecost of 1920, they were consecrated as *sanyasis* and the Holy Qurbono was celebrated in the ashram chapel by MA Achan. At the time of *Bas'malkho*, the service of Pentacost was celebrated and MA Achan gave a sermon on the solemnity of the consecration ceremony. A part of the sermon is given below.

> A *sanyasi* can be compared to a sacrificial cow, which has to pass through four stages. At first it has to be identified and separated from the herd, secondly it should be tethered outside the temple. Thirdly, on the day of the sacrifice the worshipper comes, cuts off its head, removes the skin, cuts it into many pieces, throws away the unholy parts, collects the blood in a special bowl, gives it to the priest, and carries the blood and flesh to the sacrificial altar. Finally, the priest places the flesh on the altar, burns it and pours the blood over it. Of the many sacrifices sacred to the Jews, the noblest is the holocaust[1]. In the other sacrifices, the worshipper and the others are given their share. Only a part of it is burnt on the altar. However, the holocaust is not like that, since the whole thing is offered to God. That is *sanyasa*.
>
> The ascetic, who is comparable to the sacrificial cow, voluntarily separates himself, and joins an ashram, in the surrounding area of the church. Anticipating the day of sacrifice, he washes off the impurities of his soul with tears, day after day. On the day of the sacrifice, the ascetic's head should be cut off by himself, at the threshold of the church. He should sever it with his vows and promises, entrust himself to the priest who will dedicate him to God and then receive him into the ashram. His

[1] 'The holocaust' refers to a burnt offering and animal sacrifice to God in traditional Judaism.

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skin should be removed, body cut into pieces, and the unholy parts cast off. Observing the vows alone, will not make one a perfect ascetic. He should lie on the altar like Jesus Christ, and allow himself to be burnt as an offering, to the end of his life. *(Girideepam,* pages 129-130*)*

After the sermon, MA Achan and the others conducted their personal prayers, knelt before the altar and professed the vows. Thus, as a result of incessant hard work, prayers and sacrifice, Fr PT Geevarghese was fortunate enough to establish the Bethany Ashram at *Mundanmala*, Perunad.



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Chapter 12

THE ACTIVITIES OF BETHANY

The Catholic Church has been consistently contributing to the overall progress of humanity by establishing thousands of *sanyasa* ashrams and convents all over the world. The whole-hearted services rendered by priests and sisters of the Church through educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, old-age homes, vocational centres, etc. have been commended by eminent personalities the world over. They have always expressed a readiness to lay down even their lives for their fellow beings. Their mission is to love and serve humanity in general. Anyone who fails to notice or appreciate his or her heroic and sacrificial lives and their selfless work must be either ignorant or envious. They are not motivated by worldly gains, popularity, or mere sympathy. They are inspired by the divine commandment of Jesus Christ, "Love your neighbour, as you love yourself." They are impelled by faith in the last judgement and eternal life and hence endeavour to purify and perfect their souls through innocent and selfless service.

There are ascetic orders in non-Catholic Churches; they are few in number, their activities limited and progress negligible. It is because they do not have the favourable ambience, atmosphere, or the fertile ground to flourish. The history of these orders started by non-Catholic Churches prove that in due course the number of members dwindles, these orders lose their strength and is forced to merge with the Catholic Church. From the following chapters the readers will be able to discover that the experience of Bethany *sanyasa* order was also not different.

An excerpt from the article titled "Mar Ivanios, the Departed", which elaborates the establishment of the Bethany Ashram and the innumerable services of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, written after his death

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by the chief editor of "*Church Weekly*", a magazine published from Kottayam by the Orthodox Church, is given below:

> It was while MA Achan was serving in Calcutta that India began to show political and social awakening. Gandhiji, the great lamp appeared on the political horizon. Tagore had become famous as one of the world's greatest poets. Gandhiji's Sabarmathi Ashram and Tagore's Santhinikethan known by the name Viswabharathi came into being. MA Achan might have been inspired by these two personalities to give up his comfortable position as professor, don a *kavi* habit that was in tune with the Indian culture, and establish the Bethany Ashram. The ashram developed in harmony with the national consciousness awakened by the Indian National Congress and the leaders of the Indian Independence Movement and displayed a significance that was truly Indian. The radiance of Christianity thus expressed itself in an Indianised style and character and impressed our fellow citizens who were already familiar with the practices of sages like Vasishta and Viswamitra. This, they hoped would be auspicious and lead to great developments in future. It can be concluded that, in a way the most prominent chapter in the life story of Archbishp Mar Ivanios is the Bethany Ashram period. He inspired many young men and women to pursue spiritual life, have high principles, and commit themselves to God and service. He emulated the *rishis* of the *puranas* and gave importance to meditation, prayer and service. His presence and sermons at the many conventions, students' conferences, retreats and gatherings generated grace, hope and confidence. The competition and sensation caused by the faction fights were, for the time being, forgotten by the community. His Grace was

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able to collect large amounts of money. Families were enlightened about the importance of worship and the Holy Qurbono. Many took it for granted that the community was making steady progress. Churches and educational institutions were started at the initiative of the Bethany Order. Fr Geevarghese took all necessary steps to ensure the freedom of worship of the Catholicos faction, no matter what the verdict of the case might be. Everyone started addressing him as 'Bethany Father'. When he became a ramban, he was known as "*Aabo* Geevarghese."

Unfortunately, this noble lifestyle was lost to the Syrian community. The community had anticipated great developments when *Aabo* Geevarghese was elevated as bishop with the name Mar Ivanios. People will never forget the conference that took place at Niranam in connection with the ordination ceremony. His Grace explained that there were two categories of *maharshis*; the royal diocesian metropolitans who adopt a grand life style, live in palaces and govern the congregation and the ashramites who accept *vanaprasta*, live in huts, have a wooden crosier and wear a wooden cross. Thus, Archbishop Mar Ivanios effected a great change by continuing to wear the *kavi* habit. The latter part of the story elaborates how His Grace, who set a new trend, kept his promise. His potentialities as well as passion for active service, did not allow him to continue his austere life of prayer and meditation. He was proud of the way he handled the faction fights and legal tangles and conscious of his leading role in the establishment of the Catholicate. He started thinking about greater things like seeking union with the Roman Church, which spread out like the great seas. He realised that gaining membership there would ensure the

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well-being and progress of his community and started corresponding with Rome in a very discreet manner. He gained a special rite for the Syrian Church. He was exhilarated by the confidence that the whole community was behind him. He ignored everything and took the initiative... This turned out to be a headache for the Orthodox Syrian Community." (*Church Weekly* – Volume VII No. 29) (May the impartial readers judge, after reading the following chapters, whether Mar Ivanios was obsessed or motivated by sincerity, in endeavouring to effect the Reunion, with the approval and consent of the metropolitans and the members of the Orthodox Church.)

Aabo Geevarghese had established the Bethany *sanyasa* order with the intention of carrying out many acts of service. He wished to work among the non-Christians too, and thereby strive for the prosperity of not only his own community, but also the outside world. The methods adopted by him for this purpose and his practice of the same are listed below.

1. Ascetic Formation

His main aim was to accept a few men in the ashram and a few women in the convent, provided they were willing and had received the divine call, and give them adequate training for striving for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He tried to make this materialise by endeavouring consistently for many years. As a result of the awareness created about poverty, obedience and celibacy, the Bethany *sanyasa* Order was able to produce about twenty men and thirty women, willing to sacrifice everything for God.

2. The Third Order

Aabo Geevarghese also strove to establish the third order for those leading family life, as in the Catholic Church. As a result, he was

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able to include many as members there. The declaration he made about the third order in the speech he had made after his episcopal ordination is given below:

> We intend to establish a third order ashram to enable those already established in family life to lead a Christian life. We have started the initial work for the same. Anyone who wishes to continue in family life with piety and deep devotion to the Lord can become members of this order. They need not observe the practices of the *sanyasis*. Their only obligation is to lead a holy and pure family life. They need not give up their wealth, leave their native place and take up residence in any convent or ashram, since those leading a family life will not be accepted there. Though they can continue in their family and native place, their lives should reflect their innocent love for Jesus Christ and they should lead a devout life in accordance with the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The Bethany Ashram Father will be giving them the necessary regulations, which will help them in this. We only want to present before you this ideal way of living. We are not eager to make this order flourish among those already settled in family life, by imposing it upon you. We believe that this way of life will be well received among the Christians at the time appointed by God. Much evangelical work will be successfully carried out in our country, through the initiative of the Christian families who accept this way of life.

Aabo Geevarghese, the head of the ashram included a considerable number of people as members of the Bethany Third Order Ashram and tried to do his best to inspire them to lead a spiritual life.

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3. The Sermons

The founder of Bethany Ashram and his followers travelled to most places in Kerala and gave sermons in order to create a spiritual enlightenment among the Christians as well as to popularise Christian doctrines among the non-Christians. It was usual for people to crowd at these gatherings in order to listen to the speeches delivered by the Superior of Bethany Ashram, which were informative and brimming with spiritual radiance. *Aabo* Geevarghese took utmost care to prevent the seeds of protestantism from entering the atmosphere of the Jacobite Church and ensured that the members of his Church remained rooted in traditional faith. He spoke on the relevance of the sacraments and the spiritual vigour that could be attained through them. He rode on a mule he had bought, when he had to travel to different places to deliver sermons and to collect money. The devout people gained much spiritually through the sermons given by him during the Holy Week. He spoke continuously for ten years at the convention held yearly at Makkamkunnu, Pathanamthitta. At the bidding of the superior of the Ashram, the priests and deacons of Bethany travelled to the different parishes and created spiritual awareness among the people.

4. Publications

There is no need to elaborate on the importance of publications in the twentieth century. The modern world has witnessed the great changes brought about in the hearts of people through political, literary, scientific, and religious journals and books. The scholarly head of the Bethany Ashram realised this fact and established the Bethany Press in Tiruvalla. It was his intention to publish works that would create spiritual awareness among the people. The Bethany Magazine was published under his guidance and articles, which dealt with spiritual themes and subjects, were regularly included. The chief editors of the magazine were Deacon Pulikkottu Joseph (late Joseph Ramban who had reunited with the Catholic Church) and Rev. Fr Mathews Parettu (now Mathews Mar Ivanios of the Orthodox Church). The publications

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included spiritual books, prayer books, Sunday school texts, etc. The names of some of the books are given below:

1. Kurbana Dhyanam (Meditations on the Holy Qurbono), 2. Jeeva Prakasanam (Light of Life) 3 Volumes, 3. Atma Prakasam (Light of the Soul), 4. Pratidina Prakasam (Daily Light), 5. Chodyotharangal (Questions and Answers), 6. Vedapata Pustakangal (Books of Catechism), 7. Aradhana Sahayi (Hand Book of Liturgy), 8. Papamochanam (Forgiveness of Sins), Four Volumes, 9. Marga Prakasika (Light of the Way), 10. Satya Veda Kathakal (True Bible Stories), 11. Namaskarakramam (The Order of Prayers), 12. Qurobonokramam (The Order of the Holy Qurbono), 13. Misihanukaranam (The Imitation of Christ).

5. Ordering the Liturgy

The liturgical practices in most churches of the Jacobite Orthodox Church were conducted in an unattractive manner. They were not spiritually inspiring and efforts were made by the Bethany *ashramites* to reform the existing practices. The activities of Bethany have generated among the people an interest in unity of worship, chanting hymns fervently, preservation of the sanctity of the church and conduct of prayer sessions during Lent. The changes and harmonisation of liturgical practices of the Jacobite Church was inspired mainly by this.

The *ashramites* as well as the superior of Bethany took extreme care to conduct prayer and other religious services with utmost perfection at the time of Lent. Thousands of pilgrims from distant places gathered at Bethany during the Holy Week, stayed there the entire week to listen to the sermons and participate in the special prayers, abstinence, fasting, veneration, etc. and also gain spiritual strength through confesssion and holy communion. This was one of the many occasions when the Bethany ground was flooded with people. Many

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were fortunate to feel deep stirrings of repentance as well as gain spiritual illumination through the enlightening sermons about the passion of Christ delivered by *Aabo* Geevarghese.

6. The Establishment of the Churches

Bethany was started as an independent congregation free from the rule of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and the Malankara Metropolitan. After being ordained as bishop, Fr PT Geevarghese established churches in many places and strove incessantly for the spiritual development of the people. Churches were established in fifteen places and twelve plots were purchased for building churches. People were aware of the advantages of having a church owned by Bethany in their respective places, hence encouraged, and supported this endeavour. The superior of Bethany Ashram visited these churches regularly and created spiritual awareness among the people. When Vattasseril Mar Divannasios and the other bishops learned that the superior of the Ashram and the *ashramites* had decided to reunite with the Catholic Church, they issued an order prohibiting the establishment of Bethany churches. This will be discussed later.

7. Charitable Institutions

The superior of Bethany Ashram wished to continue missionary work by establishing hospitals, orphanages, old age homes etc. However, because of financial constraints, these dreams did not materialise. He was able to establish an orphanage. But due to unfavourable circumstances he was not able to develop it according to his plans.

8. Non-Christian Mission

The superior of Bethany tried to the best of his ability to spread the Gospel among the Pulayars and Parayars and convert them to Christianity. Such work progressed in places like Thirumoolaapuram, Vennikulam, Thumpamon, Vadasserikara, Perunad, etc. Fr Alexios who was given the responsibility of supervising these activities did a commendable job.

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9. Educational Activities

The Bethany *ashramites* could not contribute much to educational progress. However, the *sanyasinis* devoted their attention towards educational activities. Balikamadom at Thirumoolapuram in Tiruvalla was upgraded as high school at the initiative of the founder. He invited Miss Holmes and Miss Brooksmith to serve as teachers and manage the school without any remuneration. Miss Holmes had rendered honourable service at the University of Oxford in England for thirty years. Bethany sisters took a keen interest in moulding the character of the students as well as keeping track of their educational progress. Only after the Catholic reunion did they give up teaching in this institution. However, they are efficiently managing the students' hostel to date.

Bethany *sanyasinis* started a Malayalam Primary School at Thirumoola for the children of financially backward Sambavars and Cheramars and rendered commendable service there. More opportunities for promoting educational activities and missionary work came up only after Catholic Reunion. The willingness of the Bethany sisters in making use of the favourable circumstances will be elaborated in one of the following chapters.

The ten-year period from 1920 to '30 was very significant as far as *Aabo* Geevarghese was concerned. He remembers with gratitude the selfless service of the Bethany *sanyasis* and *sanyasinis*, the cooperation, support and help received from well-wishers belonging to different castes and creeds, and the numerous blessings showered by God Almighty. This chapter will end by quoting what His Grace has written in the last section of *Girideepam* regarding this.

> "The desire of Bethany is to propagate the love of God Almighty in the world and also to engage actively in missionary activities. You might be aware that Bethany has achieved much or is currently engaged in such service,

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though slowly and peacefully. Whatever they have achieved is due to the blessing of our spiritual fathers and the boundless grace of God. The selfless cooperation of the *ashramites* and the support and encouragement of friends belonging to the Malankara Syrian Community as well as other castes and religions deserve to be mentioned. Though I am the founder of the Bethany Ashram I do not deserve any praise for the innumerable services rendered by Bethany. From my personal experiences as well as those of the *ashramites*, I can say that through the Bethany Ashram we have been able to witness the grace and love of God. The *ashramites* cannot achieve anything on their own. God's grace and compassion is always on them. The Lord started everything, executed everything; we did not do anything, neither did we get things done. God took care of everything. The encouragement and wishes received by Bethany during these ten years is boundless. Counting on an ascetic life we established the Bethany Ashram. We did not imagine that it would flourish thus. Bethany *ashramites* depended on the Messiah and knelt before Him. Nothing is impossible to Him who performed the miracle of changing plain and colourless water to tasty wine. The same God has moulded the ashram into a definite and different shape according to His plan. At times, I think about the many unexpected changes and consequent transformation of Bethany. We had neither prayed for it nor anticipated it. The amazing things that God has done for its stability and prosperity is there for all to see.

We never thought that there would be bishops from Bethany. We did not dream that Bethany would establish

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churches. As mentioned in one of the previous chapters, God the Holy Spirit, through the leaders of the Church, ordained bishops for Bethany. By the Lord's grace, we set up many churches in different places. God inspired men and women to take the necessary vows and join the ashram. God continues to lead men and women through the open doors of Bethany. There is no need to be anxious or be burdened by thoughts about the future of Bethany" (*Girideepam*, pages 145 –147).

Everyone admits the fact that it is because of the myriad missionary activities and selfless service of the Bethany *ashramites* that the Jacobite-Orthodox Churches of Kerala gained spiritual radiance. Opportunities for more elaborate activities and greater service opened up only after Catholic Reunion. The details are given in the following chapters.

Without doubt, the success of Bethany can be attributed to the superior of Bethany Ashram who did everything by his extraordinary faith in accepting God as his refuge and strength, his eagerness to serve the community and his incessant and untiring efforts.



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Chapter 13

THE SPEECH AFTER EPISCOPAL ORDINATION AND THE DECREE OF EXCOMMUNICATION BY THE PATRIARCH

After MA Achan had managed the Bethany Ashram and convent for five years (1920-1925) in a commendable manner, Vattasseril Mar Divannasios and the other bishops decided to ordain him bishop. On 15 *Makaram* 1925 Fr Geevarghese was ordained ramban at Thirumoolapuram Church, Tiruvalla. The ceremony was conducted by Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Niranam parish. The news report published in the *Bethany Magazine* regarding this is given below:

> Rev. Fr Geevarghese was ordained by His Excellency as the first member in India of the religious congregation called "Anuvayakkar". The order of the ceremony of the ordination as seen in the Syriac *Thakso* and used for the profession of the religious went on for about three hours. The "Anuvayakkar" of the Bethany Ashram are given a saffron *masnapso* (head veil), cassock, and mantle. His Excellency said that the Bethany *Ashramites* could be also called "ramban." May the Bethany Ashram evolve into an institution, which will ensure God's abundant blessings on Bharat Matha (*Bethany Magazine*, May 1925).

The Enthronement of the Catholicos and Episcopal Ordination

Three months passed after *Aabo* Geevarghese was ordained as ramban. Vattasseril Mar Divannasios, in consultation with the other

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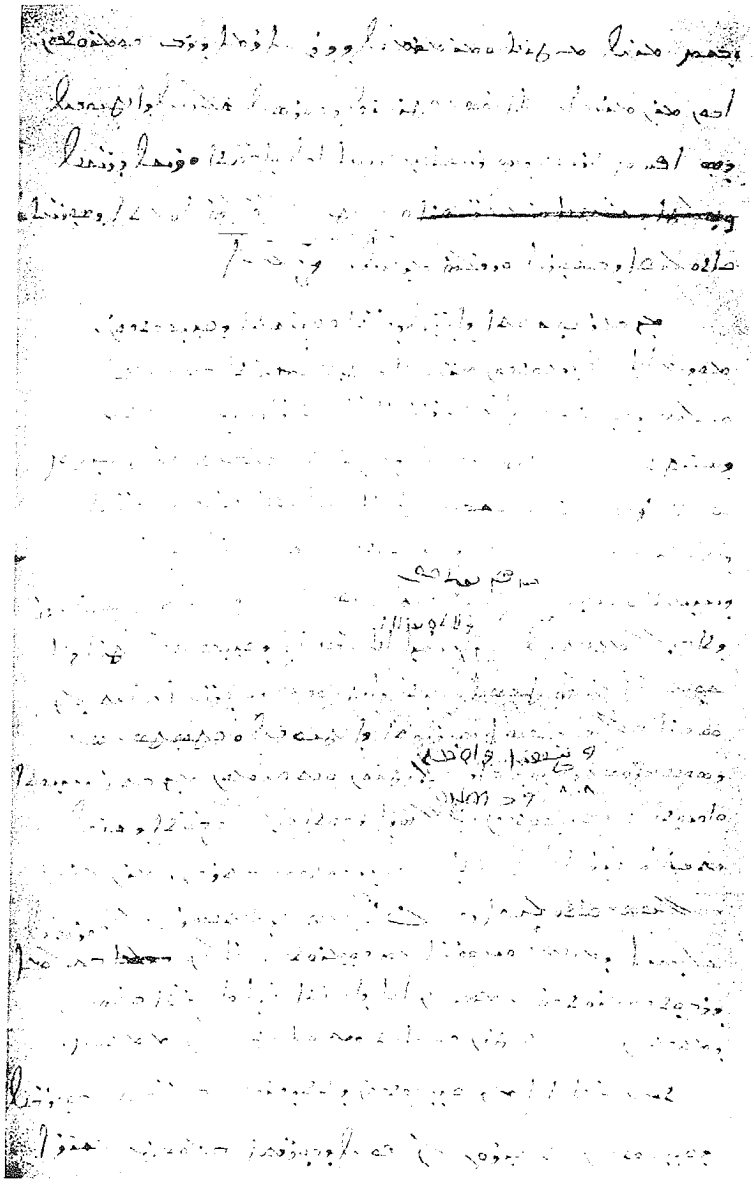
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Mar Baselios
the 3rd Catholicos



A draft of the letter written by Mar Baselios, the 3rd Catholicos (Vakathanam), to be sent to Patriarch Rahmani



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bishops decided to ordain Ramban Geevarghese of Bethany as bishop on 1 May 1925 at Niranom church. Permission was also given to the eminent members of the community to prepare for the enthronement of the second catholicos, which was to take place in the same church on 30 April, the day prior to this.

Mar Ivanios of Kandanad had been enthroned the first catholicos by Patriarch Abded M'siha. After his demise in 1913, the metropolitan faction had not ventured to enthrone another catholicos for the next twelve years. The delay was due to the fear that the verdict of the *vattipanam* case would be against them and the faith that the issues with the patriarch could be settled by a series of discussions. Vattasseril Mar Divanassios and his followers had met the patriarch several times at Antioch, but all the discussions and efforts to settle the differences failed miserably. When he returned he took the initiative to enthrone the catholicos. It was decided to enthrone Mar Philexinos of Kottayam parish (Vakathanam) as the second catholicos. Thus on Thursday 30 April 1925 the second catholicos was enthroned at Niranom church established by St Thomas. The next day (Friday 1 May) Rev. Ramban Geevarghese was ordained bishop of Bethany with the name Mar Ivanios. The ordination was given by Mar Baselios Catholicos who was ordained the previous day, Joachim Mar Ivanios Metropolitan of Kandanad parish and Mar Gregorios Metropolitan of Niranam parish (third catholicos). Many priests and thousands of people from all over Kerala had gathered to witness the ceremony. It is surprising that Metropolitan Joachim Mar Ivanios who had been seriously ill, could be within the altar and actively take part in the ceremonies. He also blessed the people who had come to attend the ceremony (It is significant that His Grace who was also Mar Ivanios got up from his sick bed and entered the sanctuary, celebrated the Holy Qurbono, and surprised the entire crowd by conducting the two and a half hours long ordination ceremony of Metropolitan Mar Gregorios, his successor).

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Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios who was staying at Parumala Seminary, which was just three miles away from Niranam, did not take part in these functions. The reason for his deliberate absence has to be made clear. The famous *vattipanam* case was going on in the court. He had declared in the court that he had accepted the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch. Either he was wise enough to realise that, attending the enthronement of the catholicos or the episcopal ordination, which were not authorised by the patriarch, might turn the verdict against his faction. Moreover, he was advised by his lawyers not to take part in these ceremonies. Mar Ivanios was upset because of the absence of Mar Divannasios, towards whom he had a paternal regard. Mar Divannasios was also in deep grief as he could neither ordain nor participate in the ordination of Mar Ivanios whom he had always considered his son.

The Captivating Sermon

After the episcopal ordination, there was a meeting in the church premises to felicitate the Catholicos and Bishop Mar Ivanios. After the felicitations, a long and enlightening speech was delivered by Bishop Mar Ivanios in which he elaborated on the ideals of the Bethany Ashram, the mission of a Syrian Christian, the need for Catholic Reunion, and the responsibilities of the catholicos. Some interesting and illuminating excerpts of the speech which covered over forty pages in *Bethany Magazine* is given below:

> Your Beatitude the Catholicos, Your Excellencies the Metropolitans, Rev. Priests, and respected audience!
>
> I
>
> The desire to lead a *sanyasa* life sprouted in my mind when I was merely eight or ten years old. From that time to the present, I have gone through many trials, experiences, and changes in life to reach finally this

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position by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Deep within my soul was the ideal and aim to achieve perfection through *sanyasa*. Even while involved in the recent rebellions and issues connected with the community, this *sanyasa* ideal that was deeply ingrained in my soul continued to attract me. The opportunity to nurture the wish and make it materialise arose when I left MD Seminary, Kottayam, and settled in Serampore. I became aware that some of my students and friends had the same divine call to *sanyasa* life. I realised that the best way to evolve spiritually and be of help to others would be to join forces and establish an ashram. This motivated us towards the founding of the Bethany Ashram.

For ten years, we prayed fervently about identifying and accepting as patron saint of the Bethany Ashram, a saint who loved and followed Jesus Christ, the true Son of God and the spiritual guide and guardian of heaven and earth. We decided to choose St John, since he was the youngest of the twelve disciples and best loved by Christ. He loved our Lord longer and deeper and it is apparent from his epistles that his message to the world was to love as Christ did. I have been given the name of Bethany's patron saint by the Most Rev. Bishops of the Church, on being ordained episcopo. It has been the tradition in the ancient Syrian Church for people chosen to lead the Church to take the name of a Father of the Church, as an ideal leader. Though I have taken the name of this apostle who was a messenger of peace and love, to live up to his name will require the blessings of these bishops of the Church, and the prayers of each one of you. Since I depend on God's grace, once more I solicit the blessings of the bishops of the Church and your prayers.

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II

What will be the future of our community? The installation ceremony of the Catholicos has taken place. There may be people among the audience who might raise the doubt whether we intend to sever all relations with Antioch and form a new community. On the hierarchical level, the position of the catholicos is below that of the patriarch. Sometimes due to competition and other problems, more than one patriarch might make claim to the same position arguing that he is the true patriarch. When this happens, the patriarch who had been given the position first becomes the patriarch canonically. The rest are anti-patriarchs. In the Roman Church too, the popes and anti-popes are distinguished according to this rule.

The history of the Church and the judgement according to canon law is this. As long as all the members of the Church remain steadfast in their faith and the Church has already agreed upon a particular See as the See of the Patriarch, no matter how many patriarchs and anti-patriarchs are there at the same time, the Church will remain the same. There might be temporary chaos, but the Church will not split into groups. On the contrary, if more than one See has been established, the Bishops and the people who accept each See, end up as a separate Church. The See of the Patriarch has not yet been established in Malankara. What has been established is only the See of the Catholicos. The enthronement of the catholicos does not mean that we have separated ourselves from Antioch. We should also know something else about this.

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Patriarch Abded M'siha had been governing the See of Antioch from Mardin with the authority recognized by the government of Turkey. He incurred the displeasure of the government of Turkey. The proclamation of Abded M'siha as patriarch was withdrawn. He was unable to retain the authority of the patriarch in Turkey. Though Jesus Christ was crucified by the rulers of those times, he emerged as the saviour. Likewise, the order of the Turkey did not affect the authority of Abded M'siha within the Church. In fact, only the civil authority was cancelled. However, favourable circumstances to make full use of his authority as patriarch did not exist. Fortunately, Malankara was outside the bounds of Turkey. It was in 1912 that Abded M'siha came to Kerala and asserted his authority to establish the Catholicate here.

You must have heard a respectable friend declaring on this dias that it is through my persistant efforts that Abded M'siha came here to establish the Catholicate. It is not true that I am the person who invited him and brought him here. The fact is that I also tried for the same. Even before he had fallen out of favour with the government of Turkey, requests for enthroning a catholicos for Malankara had been sent to Abded M'siha following a unanimous decision of the Syrian community through Deacon Sleeba (later Metropolitan Mar Osthothios) and Malankara malpan. The request had been to elevate as Catholicos the late Metropolitan Mar Joseph Divannasios. The gist of the application had been to grant the dignity if not the authority of the Catholicos. Following that, I corresponded with Patriarch Abded M'siha. When he replied, we requested that the See of the Catholicos of the East be

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established in Malankara with the full authority of a catholicos. We have also tried to remind the patriach through our letters about the aims and justifications for the same from the history of the Church and its catholic extension.

Abded M'siha agreed that to maintain the relationship between Malankara and Antioch and to ensure its prosperous existence it was imperative to establish a Catholicate with full authority in Malankara. He promised to come to this country and establish the Catholicate of the East here. It was following this that he started from Turkey towards this country. When he reached this place our community appealed to him several times to select and ordain the metropolitan. On those occasions, he used to assure me thus, "I have come here to give you a catholicos. Let it be so." No one should conclude that he enthroned the catholicos because he had no other option. This is not the truth. He had fixed his mind on this and given his consent to establish the Malankara Catholicate even before he started from Turkey. He had also given the authority to the bishops to ordain the successor, in case of the demise of the first catholicos and thus maintain the Catholicate. At the time of the enthronement of the first catholicos at Niranam Church, he had declared that no one had the right or authority to prevent this. To add to this, before leaving this place, he wrote, signed and sealed this decree and handed it over to the bishops.

III

There is something more to be said about the patriarch. We look up to the patriarch to accept the present catholicos and the Synod of Bishops of the Catholicate of the East in India. I believe that the catholicos and the

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Synod will be ready to give him due respect the moment he accepts it. I am of the view that the first mission of the catholicos should be to convey this to patriarch and make all efforts to re-establish with greater rapport the relationship with Antioch and ensure agreement and harmony in future. I am confident that His Beatitude will take the necessary steps towards this. It goes without saying that our efforts to be humble without forsaking the doctrines of the Church will ensure God's blessings as well as facilitate the unity of the Church. There is no need to teach the patriarch the history of the Church and Canon Law. Nevertheless, he should be reminded of the same. The catholicos should immediately write, codifying a short history of the patriarchate and catholicate with the pertinent canon law, to the patriarch assuring him of the the fact that we are ready to maintain our love and respect to the See of Antioch.

During the time when Mar Divannasios, Metropolitan of Malankara, stayed at Mardin with the intention of seeing the patriarch, neither the patriarch nor the Syrians there referred to the deposition and consequent validity of the position of Patriarch Abded M'siha. Patriarch Abded M'siha had recorded the establishment of the Catholicate of the East in Malankara and handed over the decree to the bishops who are on this dais. The patriarch demanded an agreement, which would weaken this order. He assured Metropolitan Mar Divannasios that he would accept without question the position of these bishops, provided they give in writing that they would not elevate anyone to the position of catholicos here. The messenger of peace Mar Julios who had been sent here from Syria had brought from the patriarch the order to Malankara

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Church, which contained only words that offered blessings to the bishops and the people of the Church. The order did not refer to any written agreement which had to be submitted to the patriarch and which would weaken the earlier order of Abded M'siha. It is to be surmised that the subject of the agreement would have been either conveyed by the messenger of peace by way of mouth or conveyed in a private or personal letter to Mar Osthathios. Fr Parettu and I had gone to Bombay to receive Mar Divannasios when he came from Syria. In Bombay we received him, Bishop Mar Julios, the vicar of Thiruvananthapuram and Rev. Fr Skaria Cheriyamadathil. When we were returning home together, at Arkonam railway station, Metropolitan Mar Julios took out the decree of the patriarch and showed it to Mar Divannasios. Mar Divannasios and the Bishop from Syria together held the paper while Fr Skaria Cheriyamadathil read out aloud the decree that had been written in Syriac. I did not see or hear the contents of the decree since I was relaxing on a cot just outside the room. The moment Fr Skaria Cheriyamadathil finished reading the letter he came to me and informed me about the contents of the letter and also quoted the date, month and number of the letter. After about five minutes, Mar Divannasios came to the verandah and officially informed me about the contents of the decree. I have already stated that the primary duty of the recently ordained catholicos of the Catholicate of the East is to make peace with the Patriarch of Antioch, strengthen, and stabilise the relationship with Antioch in accordance with the Canon Law and the doctrines of the Church. There are many more such significant and relevant facts.

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All the Syrian Christians of Kerala had been a single Church in the past. The catholicos should take extreme care to effect a reunion and help in the realisation of the biblical dictum "One Church and one Shepherd" at least as far as the Syrian Christians of Kerala are concerned. Laypersons like you should also take this seriously and feel responsible. There is perfect agreement among the Syrian Christians of Kerala in matters like social customs, political responsibilities, past history, language of daily speech, language of the clergy, etc. In fact, they form one single community. They tend to differ and divide only in matters of religion. You should join forces with the Most Rev. Bishops and strive for the unity of all Syrian Christians by ensuring that all of them see eye to eye on matters regarding religion too.

IV

For some time, that is, from the time of the arrival of Patriarch Abdulla, Malankara Syrians had divided into two factions. Patriarch Abdulla had tried to establish a kind of autocracy in Malankara in a manner that was against not only the practices and history of Malankara Church but also the Canon Laws followed in this place as well as in Turkey. The patriarch wanted the Malankara metropolitan to sign an agreement giving him temporal authority. Never has the Patriarch of Antioch enjoyed this authority or imposed it upon the Malankara Church. In those days, Malankara was a Metropolitan Parish with the right to autonomy. In a Metropolitan Parish, the patriarch can never claim temporal authority. The Greek Churches which have about ten to fifteen crores members, like the Church of Russia (only recently they were allowed

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to have a Patriarch), Church of Greece, Church of Bulgaria, Church of Serbia, Church of Rumania, Church of Cyprus, etc. respect the Patriarch of Constantinople as their religious head. The patriarch does not have temporal authority in any of these Churches. In these places the supreme authority rests with the Synod. Autonomy has been practised up to this time.

When Patriarch Abdulla realised that the Malankara Metropolitan will not sign the agreement permitting temporal authority, he decided to ex-communicate him. Instead of stating the true reason in the Decree of Ex-communication, he fabricated several lame excuses to effect the decree. That a spiritual guide and leader could act in this way was a matter of great sorrow. I believe that the patriarch and his supporters were aware that the reasons mentioned in the Decree of Ex-communication (except the reason of the tremors of the hand) were baseless and false. When such complications developed in the community, I followed my religious conscience, stood by the metropolitan and worked to the best of my ability for the prosperity of the Malankara Church. I realised that my efforts helped in the prosperity of the Church, but should contribute more towards inculcating deep devotion to God in all Christians as well as others of this place. Hence, I concluded that it was my primary duty to strive for the development of their spiritual consciousness and devotion to God. My innate aptitude for *sanyasa* life became strengthened by the grace of God. I gave up working for the community; concentrated through Bethany Ashram more on spiritual aspects and worked towards it with single-minded devotion.

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V

There is something more to add about matters regarding the chaos in the community. I had mentioned earlier that Patriarch Abdulla had ex-communicated the Malankara metropolitan, as he had refused to sign the document granting him temporal authority. Patriarch Abdulla failed to observe the usual formalities like trial before the Synod that was mandatory according to canon law. This was against the age-old practices of the Church. Many argued that since the Decree of Ex-communication was against canon law it should be treated as invalid. Another set of people was of the view that the order should be respected. Thus, there arose two factions in the Malankara Church.

It was at this time that Patriarch Abded M'siha arrived in Kerala and established the Catholicate. Thus a new faction originated in Malankara. Most of us firmly believe that these kinds of differences are temporary; that the opposite faction might become more enlightened to settle the issues, and that consequently the two factions would jointly honour the establishment of the Catholicate, which was definitely an invaluable asset. The authority of the patriarch was not overruled while the Catholicate was being set up in Malankara. Since the Catholicate is within the authority of the patriarch we can hope that the existing differences of opinion might prove to be a temporary affair and that God will bless the patriarch of Antioch and inspire him to be broad-minded, generous, and peace loving. Those who believe that Abded M'siha is the canonical patriarch recognised and respected by the Catholicate of the East that has been established here. It is possible to respect and accept Abdulla as patriarch without

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slighting or defying Abded M'siha. I do not believe that the people on the side of Patriarch Abdulla, who want the excommunication order to be honoured, though it is against the rules of canon, will have the heart to surrender the temporal authority to a patriarch from Syria. I have been informed that they are against this and that they too were looking forward to the establishment of a Catholicate in Malankara. Thus, it is proved that the two factions have no differences of opinion regarding this. The sensible people in the opposite faction know that Abded M'siha is the canonical patriarch, that no one has ex-communicated him and that the Patriarch cannot be ex-communicated except for heresy. They also entertain the dream of having a catholicos in Malankara. Thus in the matter of having a catholicos too, there is no debate or argument between the two factions.

I believe that there is nothing to prevent the two factions from coming together. There are two groups in Malankara; one honours the ex-communication of the metropolitan while the other ignores it. One welcomes the Catholicate and the other ignores it. This is the present state of affairs. My dear people! Our main effort should be to be kind to those who disagree with us, and join with them. Let the catholicos enthroned by the bishops of the Church try to strengthen their relationship with the patriarch enthroned by the bishops in Turkey. What you have to do in the meantime is to strive for the success of his second mission. We must work hard to bring the two factions of Malankara together and make them jointly welcome and honour the Catholicate. We can embrace those who disagree with us. When they curse us, we can pray that God forgive them and bless them (what he added

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about Catholic Reunion in his speech will be elaborated in the chapter on Catholic Reunion).

... There has to be another advantage in establishing the Catholicate in India. I will talk about it to those gathered here to felicitate the Catholicos and myself and conclude my speech. We take pride in the fact that Christianity was established in India almost nineteen centuries back. Even after the passage of so many years, Christianity remains foreign about various matters. As long as Christianity is not indigenised, it will be difficult to make the Hindu and Muslim communities turn to Christ. It is possible to indigenise Christianity in India without altering even in the slightest apostolic and Catholic tenets of the Catholic Church. It should be possible. The establishment of the Catholicate of the East will prove a boon to India since all efforts will be made to promote evangelisation in our land.

VI

I will wind up this lengthy speech after adding two sentences about the Bethany Ashram. Since the Christian Church has been compared to the human body, the *sanyasa* ashram should be likened to the heart that resides in it. Theologians share the view that the usefulness of the *sanyasa* Ashram, which specialises in devotion to God, to the Christian Church, is the same as that of the heart to the human body. Bethany is a *sanyasa* Ashram. Though the parish of the Bethany Bishop is very small, the ideal of Bethany is very high. I believe that among us there is a dearth of devotion to God. Instead of finding fault with other communities, we should discover our own shortcomings. The mission of our community should be

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to love God above all and for His sake love and serve the people and communities around us. It is imperative that our community as well as all other Christian communities of our place accept and follow ideals that are better than the ideals adopted by our community in the past. They should be pure, reflect the love, and proclaim the sacrifice of Christ.

Though we, the *ashramites*, are lacking in education, efficiency and devotion to God and might not have the potentiality to attract our community and the other communities of our place to the noblest ideals of Jesus Christ, by God's grace, we have the deep desire to love Christ above everything else. We know very well that to make this materialise, we need the blessing and help of the Holy Spirit. We do not depend on our goodness and piety. We believe that those who pray to God with a true heart and pure soul will be granted gifts and grace that they do not really deserve.

Thus, we believe that God who has called us to this extremely pure ascetic life will bless us with the grace that we do not really deserve and through us shower blessings on this community, all the Christian communities of this place and all the communities of this country. God's grace will never fade. We make use of this opportunity to thank the bishops who have elevated the founder of Bethany to the position of the Bishop of Bethany.

Let me add one more thing. Last night Metropolitan Mar Ivanios of Thumpamon, Kandanad Parishes was in bed due to severe illness and exhaustion. Yet he took part in the ceremonies connected with the ordination. Moreover

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towards the end, he came up to the altar, raised the cross thrice and blessed the entire congregation. I attribute this miracle to the infinite love and compassion of God and the prayers of unworthy people like us. At the time of the enthronement of Baselios I as the Metropolitan of Caesarea, there were only two bishops. The history of the Church testifies that Mar Evusebios, who had been bed ridden at that time recovered and thus the three bishops together solemnised the ceremony. Our intention in establishing the Bethany Ashram is to glorify God. God has remedied our weaknesses and shortcomings, has blessed us and made us instruments to glorify Him. I pray that in future too, God bless us, use us to glorify Him and help us work for the spiritual development of all the communities of this country. I need the prayers of the Rev. bishops as well as all of you to help us in our endeavour. I conclude my speech with heartfelt thanks to each one of you gathered here to felicitate me.

(*Bethany Magazine* – June 1925, pages 195-235)

The Decree of the Patriarch

Patriarch Elias, the successor of Patriarch Abdulla, was already convinced about MA Achan's leading role in protesting against Abdulla's desire for temporal authority and in giving the necessary counsel to Vattasseril Mar Divannasios and re-establishing the Catholicate in Malankara. Mar Julios and the other Metropolitans sent a detailed report to Antioch about the enthronement of the second catholicos, the elevation of MA Achan as bishop, and the powerful speech he delivered against Antioch after his ordination as bishop. On receiving the report, the patriarch became furious and sent the Decree

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of ex-communication, cursing the catholicos and MA Achan in strong language, which was to be read in all the parishes. The order that reveals the attitude of the Jacobite Patriarchs is given below:

In the name of the Omnipotent and perfect in Essence and Eternal God,

Patriarch Ignathios, Elias III of Antioch:

(Seal)

No. 402

To our beloved Metropolitan Mar Sleeba Osthathios, Mar Paulos Athanasios, Mar Geevarghese Severios and Mar Elias Julios. May the blessings of the Lord, our God, be upon you and those you lead, through the intercession of our Blessed Virgin Mary! Amen.

We send peace in response to your love. We received your letter dated 21 Midhunam, 1925. From the same, we came to understand that Ramban Geevarghese of Vakathanam, who had not been a metropolitan, has been designated catholicos by his cursed and ex-communicated allies and that Geevarghese *Kassissa* MA, who has been particularly cursed by our predecessor, the late Patriarch Abdulla, is now called episcopo, by his followers. The three who have been granted the authority by the ex-communicated Abded M'siha should therefore be considered ex-communicated. This is because he does not have any authority in our Holy Church to ordain anyone. His acts and decrees are null and void. Just as it is impossible for anyone to receive any position of authority from one who is dead, it is impossible for Abded M'siha, who has been deposed from the position of

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The handwiriting of Mar Ivanios in Malayalam

(a letter sent to his brother from Bangalore after his European tour in 1933)

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Patriarch Rahmani of Antioch
(the letter sent by him to Mar Ivanios is given above)

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patriarch and therefore dead, to confer any spiritual authority on anyone. We reaffirm, as We have done before, that those who acknowledge and receive the ex-communicated Geevarghese and Abded M'siha, who have been bereft of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, cease to be members of the body of the Church. They remain opposed to our faith. We had sent a common letter to you on 12 Chingam 1924, to this effect. Therefore, that man from Vakathanam and the MA degree holder have no authority. Not only do they have no spiritual authority, but no claim in the Church either. We assume that you have understood this clearly. Acknowledging your love, we declare that Geevarghese, his comrades, and his followers are indulging in evil deeds, that they are defying the See of Antioch, dishonouring the position of the patriarch, that they wish to be guided by self-will and that they deeply desire to establish the Catholicate in Malankara. Remember the ones who rose against Moses, especially Dayanis and Yunabaris. Those who engage in cursed deeds may be likened to them. Remember how our Lord cursed the fig tree. The moment He said, "Let no one ever find fruit on you", the tree dried up completely. These will also not yield any fruit, but wither by the power of our Lord. God did not grant them the spirit of repentance and hence they cannot come back to the fold of the Holy Church. Therefore, stay clear of them; so that you will not defiled by their sins. Since the prophets have proclaimed that the wicked will enjoy no peace, I advise you to see to it that you do not give them (the kiss of) peace. May the God of Israel keep you from all evils!

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This is for public announcement. May the blessings and grace of our Lord be upon those who are obedient! Amen.

Dated 28 *Chingam* 1925, from the *Simhasana Dayara*

This is a translation of the decree sent by Patriarch Moran Mor Ignathios Elias III of the Apostolic See of Antioch.

Metropolitan Mar Sleeba Osthathios (Signature and Seal)

Metropolitan Mar Elias Julios ,,

Metropolitan Mar Paulose Athanasios ,,

Metropolitan Mar Geevarghese Severios ,,

The readers would have realised now, how the Jacobite Patriarch insults and abuses the true catholicos and the other Metropolitans of the Orthodox Church. In the following chapters of this book, you will know, accepting the holy orders of the Orthodox Church, how respectfully these metropolitans have been referred to by the Pope of Rome, the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church, who is the true successor of St Peter and who is recognised as the *Ris* (head) patriarch according to the *Hudaya* Canon of the Jacobite Church. This was one of the reasons why, after holding discussion on reunion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios finally embraced the Catholic Church.



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Chapter 14

SOME INTERESTING ANECDOTES

It is imperative that the readers who have reached the midpoint of the first part of this biography be provided a brief respite. My intention is to include in this chapter certain anecdotes that are interesting and inseparably linked to the life of Mar Ivanios. It is widely believed that these anecdotes illustrate Mar Ivanios' scholarship, concentration, farsightedness, and peace loving nature.

The first two anecdotes date to the period when Mar Ivanios was serving as the principal of the MD Seminary High School, Kottayam under the appellation of MA Achan. The stories, included in his autobiography *Girideepam* (Mountain Lamp), have been reproduced as such below.

If he had agreed with a "Hmm"

It would not be improper to include here one or two incidents that may cause the public to accuse me of lacking courage. My only excuse for relinquishing the momentary victories that could have been gained by grunting my assent to my dependents, who were with me is that, it is the omnipresent God, and not me, who was responsible for this.

Let the first incident be the one on the 29 *Idavam* 1089 ME, the day the decree of interdict (*mudakku kalpana*) regarding Metropolitan Mar Divannasios was supposed to be read out in the chapel of the Old Seminary. The chapel was crowded with both people who believed that the decree would be read and those who disagreed. The public was perplexed about the possible outcomes. Reading the

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decree would definitely result in a row and a revolt; some people contemplating, some praying; some others debating; some hurling abuses; on the whole, there was a racket in progress. In the midst of all this, the Patriarch entered the *madbaha* (sanctuary) along with the priests and the bishops who were on his side. They instantly started the Holy Qurbono. Around this time, I left the MD Seminary and reached the Old Seminary chapel. Some including myself entered the *madbaha* and some others entered the church. Everyone was pensive, expecting the incidents that would follow the *basmalkho* (prayer of intercession to the Blessed Virgin Mary). The Holy Qurbono was proceeding with people's minds elsewhere. One deacon who was my disciple rushed into the *madbaha,* ushered me outside to the northern veranda and whispered in my ears, "In their haste to reach the church they had not locked the patriarch's room. The chest, which contains the money and all the other things, are inside the room. Everyone is in the church. Shall I remove all those things? It will take just a minute."

"No"

"Then I will take them and fling them into the river"

"No, you should not do that. You do not have the permission to do anything that is not needed."

I will not reveal the name of that disciple of mine, who is well known as an orator and a priest.

* * * * *

Decree in the Pocket

Another instance took place at the Aarkonam railway station. Metropolitan Mar Divannasios, Bishop Mar Julios, other accompanying priests and I, were on our way back from Bombay. As per Metropolitan Mar Divannasios' wish, Bishop Mar Julios publicly read out the decree given by the patriarch and stuffed it into the pocket of his cassock. After a while, he went to take a bath. At that point, my

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servant Varu, who hails from Kunnamkulam, approached me with a secret idea:

"What?"

"Bishop Julios has left his clothes in the next room and has gone to take a bath. The decree is in the pocket of the cassock. Shall I get hold of the decree?"

"No, that is uncalled for."

If I had given my assent on the instances described above, some branches of the revolutionary movement in the Malankara diocese would have developed along different lines. But I trust that none of my readers believe that they would have produced any lasting virtue.

The Conspiracy of 1910

The story reproduced below is from the book "*Reethuprasthana Rahasyangal*" (Secrets of the Rite Movement) published from Tiruvalla by the "*Malankara Suriyanisabha Samrakshana Sangham*", decrying Mar Ivanios and the Reunion Movement after his reunion with the Catholic Church.

> The clock struck four. Students who had been as silent as honeybees in a beehive depart hurriedly in various directions with a mild buzz. The teachers put down the canes kept for maintaining discipline. They went out for an evening walk. Many teachers and officials were whiling their time away by playing football, badminton, tennis, and other such sports. While the town of Kottayam was filled with such groups of cheerful people, we observe two or three gentlemen assembled in a clandestine spot. Could they be just resting? Those who observe the cheerful yet serious demeanour and the intriguing conversation would not deny that this must have been a deeply involved deliberation about some serious subject.

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Yes, that much is beyond doubt. At the very first sight, anyone would understand that Fr PT Geevarghese, better known as *"Principalachan"* (Fr Principal), who was presenting facts rationally, was the leader of the group. It is needless to mention that the others were his close friends Mr KV Chacko and the government lawyer (now Judge) Mr A Philipose. One can infer that these meetings, held pretty regularly, were not accidental. A peon at the school, who had heard about these meetings several times, informed Mar Divannasios of this, when he happened to visit the Old Seminary. This incident, recollected by chance, was recently recounted to some people by Mar Divannasios as follows:

Peon	:	Your Grace, some nobles of our Church wish to join the Roman Church.
Mar Divannasios	:	Who told you this?
Peon	:	When I was there at the house (the reference is to Advocate Philipose's house), I heard *Principalachan*, Advocate Philipose and Master Chacko discussing this inside the room.
Mar Divannasios	:	When did you hear this?
Peon	:	I have heard it on several occasions. I heard it even yesterday.

The words "Let that be. You go back to your work" reverberated and the peon disappeared.

* * * * *

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4. Providence at Bethany

The following extracts are from Mar Ivanios' book *Girideepam* wherein he has recounted two incidents that happened at the Bethany Ashram.

> After the breakfast, a little before lunch time, one of the inmates came and asked me, "We have only three measures of rice left. What will we do for lunch?" Not wanting to alarm the inmates who know from experience, the problems that can arise from foregoing one or two meals, I said, "It is alright. Make some gruel or something for the orphan children. For us, there is tapioca?" He immediately replied that there was no tapioca. Even that was over.
>
> "Then let us fast. Let us believe that even this is God's kindness," I replied.
>
> The inmates returned and after some time everyone assembled in the chapel for the afternoon prayers. By the time we emerged from the chapel at around twelve thirty, an old man arrived in front of the kitchen with a load on this head. On being asked about the contents of his package, the old man informed us that it contained some *vellayappams* (loaves of rice). Everyone came to the dining hall and had their lunch at the usual time. In the evening, another person brought some rice. No one had to fast that day.

* * * * *

The Theology of the Orphan Boy

One afternoon, the ashramites were going to the river to take a bath. On the way, they saw an orphan boy returning after his bath.

"Child, is anybody taking bath at the river?" The master asked the child.

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Adopting a grave demeanour for a while, the boy replied, "There is no one - There is one person – There are two persons – There are three persons – Everyone is there or there is no one", and walked off.

The inmates, who were wonderstruck and angry at the child's arrogance, understood the real import of his words later on.

The previous day I had taught the ashramites about the Trinity. It turns out that the child was in the verandah at that time. After having heard me teach the ashramites that God is present where everyone else is absent, that God is not a single person and that God consists of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and that where God is present, everyone is present including angels and the saints, the child wanted to pretend that he knew Theology. Where else should the child open the reservoir of his knowledge but in front of the master and the ashramites.

* * * * *

Hunger-Strike

The incident that happened at Tiruvalla illustrates Mar Ivanios' peace loving nature and his mental courage. The Orthodox Church had lost the community case. Articles, which insulted them, started appearing in the *Navabharati* newspaper published from Tiruvalla by the Marthomites. The articles by a scholar and debater from the Marthomite Church, Mr KN Daniel had made the members of the Orthodox Church angry and vengeful. The leaders of the Church started thinking of what should be done. In the end, they decided that they should bring out a weekly newspaper. Thus, the *Veerabharati* entered the scene as a rival to the *Navabharati.* Not one, but two issues had appeared featuring articles and news items that insulted the Marthoma Church and Mr KN Daniel. The rivalry between the members of the two Churches started intensifying. The leaders of both the Churches requested in vain that the publication of *Veerabharati* should be stopped. The material for the third issue was ready and everyone was

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worried about the possible outcomes. It is at this point that Fr PT Geevarghese MA, the Superior of Bethany Ashram, arrived at Tiruvalla. He met the people in charge of *Veerabharati* and requested them that the newspaper should not be published anymore. But would they, who believe in "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", agree? Would Fr Geevarghese give up in disappointment! He had decided that he would undertake a hunger strike. He spread himself out on a bench in the second floor veranda of the MGM high school in Tiruvalla. People concerned should take a vow that they would not publish the *Veerabharati* newspaper anymore; until then he would not eat anything. He would not even drink water. If needed, he would die on that bench.

This news spread from ear to ear across the Tiruvalla town. MA Achan is undertaking a hunger strike. The future of the community depends on him. His death would result in irreparable loss. If his death is to be prevented, *Veerabharati's* publication should be ceased. The leaders of both the Churches approached the people associated with the newspaper. "You must kindly save MA Achan's life. The newspaper should be stopped. The communal rivalry should be thus brought to an end. The request was accepted. MA Achan was gratified. Thus, the third issue of *Veerabharati* disappeared without ever seeing the light of the day.

* * * * *

It Has Reached the Top of the Hill

Mar Ivannios's scholarship was so profound that he was capable of lecturing on any topic for not just a few hours, but for days on end. His speeches were characterised by the abundance of ideas, purity of language and oratorical skills. Thousands of people used to assemble to hear his speeches. His speeches, which he delivered, sitting on a chair with his eyes closed, used to attract the hearts and minds of the audience alike. However long his speech may be, the audience would be left with a yearning to hear more. He has made thousands of

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speeches in churches, major meetings and at scholarly gatherings. His ability to speak on the same issue for days on end at the same venue can be described only as extraordinary.

He once committed himself to speak about "the parable of the sower" featured in the Holy Bible for thirty days at a stretch. The sermon series commenced. Every day, he used to deliver a sermon for two hours in the evening. Twenty days passed thus. At that point, a stranger asked one in the audience, "Where has MA Achan's sermon reached?"

The listener replied, "It has reached the top of the hill." The sense intended is that it has only reached its half waypoint.

* * * * *

The Liturgy of the First Rate Church

An incident that sowed the seeds for the Reunion Movement has been included below. During the time when Mar Ivanios was the Metropolitan of Bethany he was staying at the Jacobite church Kallurppara for some purpose. Well-known preacher and religious scholar Villothu Mr Ninan Varghese (Pothachan), a native of Ayroor who had left the Jacobite Church and embraced the Catholic Church, had arrived at the aforementioned church to see the Rev. Bishop. The two of them had known each other for twenty years. Both of them had testified as witnesses in the infamous *Vattipanam* Case. Pothachan had arrived to meet the bishop for the first time after embracing the Catholic faith, in order to talk about certain things relating to the Church.

Bishop : Pothachan, where are you coming from now?

Pothachan : I am coming from Ayrur.

Bishop : What brings you here?

Pothachan : I wanted to meet Your Excellency and inform you about certain things.

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Bishop : Excellent. I have some work now. You go to the next room and take rest for some time. The deacon is there and you can talk to him for some time.

Pothachan : As you wish.

Pothachan had vowed that irrespective of the place and the person, he would never desist from mentioning something relating to the Catholic Church. Thus, he started an argument with the Jacobite deacon who was sitting in the next room.

Pothachan : Deacon, can you prove that the Church with the Four Notes as in Nicene Creed is the Jacobite Church?

Deacon : No, no. Didn't you jump to the Roman Church because of your faith in it? Is the Roman Church, which is full of several superstitions and bad customs, the only pure Church which is catholic and apostolic?

Pothachan : What do you know? Which superstition does the Catholic Church teach? Which bad customs has it adopted?

Deacon : Those things are well known to everybody, aren't they? Aren't purgatory, the procession of the Holy Spirit, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and so on, superstitions? Aren't idol worship, wearing of the scapular, indulgences and so on bad customs?.

Pothachan : Have you studied anything about the faith of the Jacobite Church? Let me talk about the first subject. Can a Jacobite say that the faith about the place of purification is a superstition? When you pray for the dead, do you pray for the souls that went to heaven or for the souls that went to hell? Tell me!

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The deacon had no answer to this question. Pothachan's tone became stronger.

Pothachan : Is it enough to just call something a superstition or a bad custom? You have to answer my question. Which souls do you pay for?

The poor deacon was in a fix. It was difficult to say that he prayed for the souls that went to heaven. It was even more difficult to say that he prayed for the souls that went to hell. It was more difficult than both these to admit that a place of purification (purgatory) exists.

Mar Ivanios who, sitting in the adjoining room, had been listening to the loud discussion between the deacon and Pothachan now appeared at the doorway. What a relief this was for the deacon who was at a loss for words! His bishop would rescue him! But confounding the deacon's expectations, the bishop said, "Deacon, you don't need to argue with Pothachan. The Catholic Church is a first rate Church."

The deacon felt like he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. His face fell. This is what the bishop who was supposed to rescue him, had said. What to do! Noticing the deacon's expression, the bishop, who was an expert in psychology, resolved to console him a little and said, "But it is our liturgy that is beautiful." A smile appeared on the deacon's face. Ah! What a relief!

But Pothachan retaliated immediately. "Your Grace, what if both these can be there together? If the beautiful liturgy can be accepted in the first rate Church?"

This incident inspired Mar Ivanios to resolve to get permission from the See of Rome for the Malankara Syrian Rite and to reunite with the Catholic Church.



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Chapter 15

THE *PUTHANKUR* AND *PAZHAYAKUR* GROUPS OF KERALA

What is going to be narrated next is that stage of Mar Ivanios' life that deserves the maximum importance and the one that inspired him to control the spiritual lives of the tens of thousands that followed him. They involve the diligent efforts of Mar Ivanios, who realized that the reunion with the Catholic Church was indispensible for the external and internal well being of the several lakhs of non-Catholics in Kerala including the Jacobites. The intention is to record these efforts in the coming chapters. But since a background knowledge of the ancient Christian Church in Kerala and the efforts made by the *Puthankur* and *Pazhayakur* faithful for reunion with the Catholic Church and the reasons for the failure of those efforts is indispensable for the reader, my intention is to devote the next few chapters for this purpose.

Establishment of the Malankara Church

All impartial historians agree that the Christian Church in Malankara was established by St Thomas the Apostle, one of the twelve disciples of Christ. Of course, at all times and places, there will be a few people who will deny any truth. That being the case, it is hardly surprising that there are people who deny or challenge the fact that StThomas came to Kerala and established the Church. People who deny the truth can be divided into three kinds. The first kind opposes for the mere sake of opposing. They are "*markkadamushtikal* (monkey-fisted, that is, the stubborn)". The second kind opposes for the sake of gaining something. They are "the people with vested interest." The third kind

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denies the truth because of their heartfelt conviction that it is untrue. They are "*suvishwasikal* (people of good faith)." That all three kinds are to be found among those who deny St Thomas' visit to Kerala is indisputable.

The evidence of ancient fathers, traditional belief, ancient records, affirmations of historians, all confirm St Thomas' visit to India. It is a historical truth that the apostle on arriving in Kerala, proclaimed the Gospel of Christ, performed several miracles, and made several people followers of Christianity. The apostle established seven churches in the various parts of Kerala, anointed priests for spiritual ministry and thus established a branch of the Universal Church in Malankara. Subsequently he arrived at Mylapore, proclaimed the Gospel, and achieved martyrdom, slain by the trident of the Brahmin priests.

The Christian Church in Kerala, which had existed under the administration of native priests, received a new lease of life with the arrival of the merchant Thomas of Cana and his men from Syria. Thomas of Cana's migration resulted in the political, spiritual, social and financial development of the Church in Malankara. As a result, the Syrian Christians received several documents from the kings, awarding them various positions. Thus the Christian Church, which was prospering at various levels, was under the Patriarchs of Babylon and through them to the pope in Rome and thus prospered as a single entity for almost sixteen centuries.

The Undeniable Truth

Those who have carefully examined the world history till now will be able to realize one reality that has been obvious throughout. Be it in the case of the nation, society or religion, that reality stands out. What is being referred to is the ill-will held by people with vested interests towards the seat of power, and the resulting disobedience, the protests that these result in and the damages caused as a result of

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all these. The subjects of power have been as responsible for this as those in power. When arrogant authorities view those under them as mere doormats and try to act in accordance with their selfish interests, it is only natural that a voice of protest should rise from among the subjects and that there are acts of revolt. Similarly when the ruled, under the influence of such vices as selfishness and jealousy, speak contemptuously of the rulers and when they defy their authority, it will cause problems and lead to the destruction of the nation, the community and the religion. Peace and progress can be achieved only when both parties become conscious of their duties and work for the common good with mutual love and respect. The history of the world is a witness to the fact that the competition and clashes between the rulers and the ruled have caused much destruction.

Anybody who has carefully read the history of the Christian Church of the past nineteen centuries will definitely agree with the reality presented above. Jesus Christ, the saviour of the universe, founded a Church in this world, appointed the authorities and promised to be with them and rule the Church till the end of the world. By his command, "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me", he instructed that obeying the authorities is necessary. By commanding, "Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant", he spread awareness regarding the duties of authorities. He granted the authorities the right to teach the true faith that he taught till the end of the world and the right to expel non-believers from the Church. The reluctance to obey the authorities and to adopt the true faith has led to several calamities inside the Christian Church. Those who refused to obey the authorities and those who denied the faith have been banished from the Church through the ages. Those who have been unfortunate enough to be banished from the true Church have sown the seed of new organizations and have strongly worked against the true Church. Lakhs of people who left the Church, from

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the followers of Arius, who split from the Church in the fourth century to the Old Catholics of the nineteenth century, have worked against the Church and have strived to spread and promote the new organizations. But most such organizations disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving only their names in the pages of history. As for the few that remained, they split into several internal groups and are declining day by day. On the other hand, the Church of Christ, the true God, has been prospering day by day and its success has been shining all over the world.

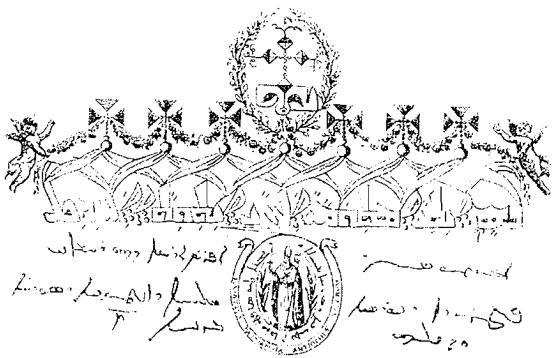
The Scene of Revolution in the Malankara Church

Prominent among the people who created a revolution in the Christian world in the sixteenth century were Martin Luther, Knox, Wycliffe and Henry VIII. Banned from the Church for various reasons, they strived relentlessly to destroy the mother organization and to promote the new organizations that they formed. Not only did such activities not result in any substantial damage to the Catholic Church but also the biography of their leaders proclaim that revolts broke out inside these organizations and the leaders died, caught in the eddy of disappointment. What we see in the twentieth century is the Protestant Church being divided into over a thousand factions by the sword that is the wish for excessive freedom, dagger that is the animosity towards authority and the spear that is the lack of faith.

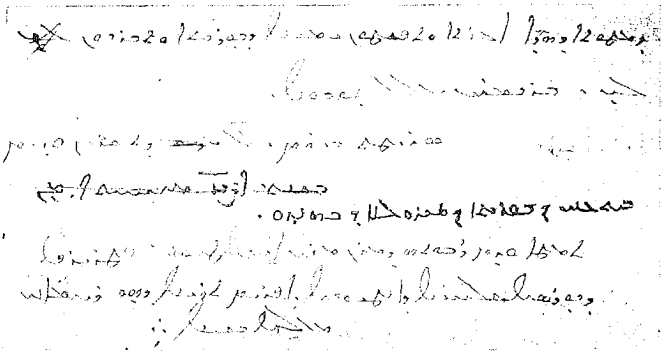
Unfortunately, a revolutionary scene was created in the Christian Church in Kerala towards the end of the sixteenth century. It is not possible for unbiased historians to give the correct answer to the question as to who sowed the poisonous seeds of revolt in the Christian Church in Kerala. The Syrian Christians of Kerala hold that, it is the Portuguese missionaries belonging to the Jesuit Congregation, who came here to spread the Catholic religion, who were responsible for this division. On the other hand, the Portuguese missionaries argue to this day that it was a result of the lack of obedience and the revolutionary

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The reply sent by Patriarch Rahmani to Mar Ivanios



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Mar Baselios II

Catholicos (Vakathanam)

The letter written in his hand is given above

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fervour of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of the students of history, it is impossible for either party to completely wash their hands off the affair. Historical incidents of the day attest that it would not be wrong to accuse the Portuguese missionaries of ignorance, indiscretion and the fascination for power.

1. Ignorance

Apparently, it is because of the ignorance of the Portuguese about the customs of the Chaldean Syrian Christians that they had a misunderstanding that the Christians here were Nestorians. Displaying inexcusable ignorance, the Portuguese Missionaries unwisely jumped to the conclusion that the Christians here were Nestorians. This wrong assumption was arrived at just because some of the customs of these Christians were similar to that of the Nestorians.

2. Indiscretion

Even if the Christians here had been Nestorians, the Portuguese missionaries should have tried to treat them with love and thus strived for their conversion. Instead, because of their arrogance in their financial influence and their influence with the King, what they did was to indulge in activities that wounded the pride of the Syrian Christians here and stirred up hatred in their hearts.

3. Fascination for Power

In order to rule over the Kerala Christians who were being ruled by the Syrian Catholic Bishops the Portuguese missionaries tortured them in several ways and levelled allegations at them in order to drive them away from here. Although they got the authority to rule in the end, God did not allow that to last for a long period.

As the Catholic Church considers it a crime to tempt the members of one rite to convert to another, there is no way to justify the actions of the Portuguese missionaries who tried to convert the people of the

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Syrian rite to the Latin rite. Similarly, their attempts to remove the Christians here from the rule of the Syrian Catholic Bishops and to bring them under the control of the Portuguese Bishops can only be described as reprehensible. History informs us that even the Syrian Catholic Bishops who had sworn on *aalath* (rope) tied to the Cross that "as long as our lineage exists, we will not be subjugated to the descendents of the Paulists", had done some things which are not justifiable.

1. Quick Temper

The oath was triggered by a rumour that the Syrian Catholic Bishop Ahathalla was drowned by the Portuguese. They made no enquiries whatsoever regarding this. They became angry and emotional and undertook the Coonan Cross Oath. History reveals us that the rumor was the creation of some miscreants who wanted to stir up a rebellion among the people and that Bishop Ahathalla was first taken to Goa and then to Portugal.

2. Law Breaking

The second mistake committed by the Syrian Catholic Bishops was that they believed in the genuineness of a letter purported to be written by Bishop Ahathalla. The letter was actually a forgery, written by the Priest Ittithomman. Even the pope cannot legitimize a bishop being ordained by twelve priests. Even if twelve lakh priests joined the cause, they would not have the authority to ordain a bishop as the rules of the Christian Church stipulate that only a bishop can ordain someone else as a bishop. That being the case, the priests should have realized that bishop Ahathalla would not have written such a letter and that, even if he had done so, it would not have been right to carry out those instructions. The ordination at Aalangod, of a bishop by twelve priests cannot be justified under any circumstances.

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3. Conversion to Jacobite Church

Some Syrian Christians courted a bigger disaster than all those mentioned above, the dire consequences of which have not abated even after three centuries. The folly being referred to here is submitting themselves to the rule of the Jacobite Patriarch Greogorios who came here from Antioch and converting to the Jacobite Church. They were cutting off their nose to spite their faces. As a result, a section of the Syrian Christians of Kerala who, as Catholics, had been under the rule of Roman Popes for almost sixteen centuries became subjugated to the Patriarch of Antioch.

People with a quick temper often let their emotions rule them and commit several blunders. According to the experts in the law, not correcting one's errors even after realizing one's mistakes is a graver crime than committing an error. Thus a man who, frustrated by family quarrels, jumps into a well would be committing a graver sin if he foregoes the opportunity to save himself from the well and thus commits suicide. Similarly, it is possible to excuse having taken the Coonan Cross Oath, twelve priests having ordained a bishop and being subjugated to the Jacobite Patriarch all because of the reluctance to convert to Latin rite and to surrender themselves to the rule of the Portuguese. But the decision to remain in the schism and to not reunite with the Catholic Church, the mother Church, even after realizing that the Jacobite Church is a schismatic church and that the Jacobite Patriarch is not a true head of the Christians is without doubt, a grave sin. It is because of the realization of this truth that several people among those who took the Coonan Cross Oath and those who cooperated with the illegitimate ordination of the bishop and those who subjugated themselves to the Jacobite Patriarch reunited with the Catholic Church at various points.

It is a historical truth that those who adopted new customs, a new authority and a new Church came to be known as "*Puthenkuttukar*

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(people of the new alliance)" and those remained in the Old Church under the old authority came to be known as "*Pazhayakuttukar*" (the people of the old alliance)". From the fact that people who remained under the sovereignty of the pope got the name "*Pazhayakur* people," we can learn that the old Church in Kerala is the Catholic Church. Some non-Catholic historians have tried to interpret the use of the term "*puthankur*" in a new way in order to hide and twist this truth. However, in the face of several historical evidences, their sophistry cannot but become weak.



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Chapter 16

PUTHANKUTTUKAR AND ATTEMPTS FOR REUNION

Of all the parables taught by Jesus, the one that deserves the most importance and the one, which has been experienced most in the world, is the "parable of the prodigal son." The prodigal son attracted by external temptations and led by sudden emotions, travels abroad leaving his father and home behind. Once all the money he had was spent, he struggles for the means to feed himself. Finally, he sees reason and returns home. His father, who had been praying for his son's return with great sorrow and optimistically awaiting his arrival all this while, is overjoyed on his son's arrival. Thus, that family again enjoys peace and happiness, and prospers.

Like the father of the prodigal son, the Catholic Church has been constantly awaiting the return or reunion of those who have left the Church at various ages due to various reasons and those who accompanied them. For the same purpose, prayers have been offered to the Lord, the founder of the Church, and efforts of different kinds have been made and are being made. As a result, several thousands have returned to the bosom of the mother Church, either individually or in groups. Even now, several people are entering the Church day-by-day. The failures and decline suffered by the new organizations established by those who left the "house of the father" like the prodigal son, urged them to return to the house of the father "founded on rock and against which the gates of hell will not prevail".

It is clearly recorded in history that the *Puthankur* priests who took the Coonan Cross Oath because of the despicable actions of the Portuguese missionaries and as a result fell in the Jacobite schism

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attempted to reunite with the Catholic Church from the moment they split with it. Of the 114 churches, which took the Coonan Cross Oath, 84 churches reunited with the Catholic Church within a few years. They were urged to do so chiefly because of four reasons.

1. The Catholic Church was the true Church established by Christ in this world. Living as members of that Church is essential for the salvation of the soul.
2. The Roman popes are the true successors of St Peter. Those who truly wish to obey Christ must come under the rule of the Roman pope, who is his representative.
3. Bishops of any rite are either directly subject to the pope or are subject to the patriarch who is subject to the pope. They should necessarily be obeyed.
4. Even though the animosity towards the Portuguese missionaries was the main reason for taking the Coonan Cross Oath, discarding the Catholic Church, accepting the bishop without valid ordination and finally joining the schismatic Church are grave sins.

Such realizations led the vast majority to the bosom of the mother Church. Even then one group remained stubborn and tried their level best to justify their errors.

As soon as he heard about the split in the Catholic Church in Kerala, His Holiness the pope sent a Carmelite priest by the name of Joseph Sebastiani with instructions to end the divisions and to lead the Christians of Kerala in the right way. He deputed the Carmelite priest to gather information and to report to him because he had learned that the split occurred due to the animosity towards the Jesuit priests and that situation would become peaceful if authorities belonging to other communities were sent. As a result of the efforts of Joseph Sebastiani, 84 churches returned to the control of Metropolitan Garcia, convinced that Thomas the Archdeacon did not have valid ordination and was

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not subject to the pope. Only 30 churches remained under the control of Archdeacon Thomas.

In the twelve year period from the Coonan Cross Oath, which took place in the 1658, till one section of the *Puthankur* population fell into the Jacobite schism, several incidents happened here one after the other. Those were the great assembly held at Alangad, the episcopal ordination by 'the laying on of hands' by 12 priests, the arrival of Joseph Sebastiani from Italy, the failure of the Archdeacon's faction and the episcopal ordination of Kadavil Chandy Kathanar. It has already been mentioned that of the 114 churches that had split from the Church by taking the Coonan Cross Oath, 84 realized the actual truth and reunited with the Catholic Church. Five reasons given below prompted the reunion.

1. The Invalidity of the Episcopal Ordination

Many of the people who took the Coonan Cross Oath and who attended the Great Assembly at Alangad became suspicious of the nature of Archdeacon Thomas's ordination as bishop. People like Kadavil Chandy Kathanar, Palliveettil Chandy Kathanar who accompanied him were convinced that the ordination, which happened at the initiative of 12 priests, was invalid and that Archdeacon Thomas was a mere "wearer of a red dress." Similarly, it became widely known that the letter forged by Ittithomman Kathanar, purportedly written by Ahathalla, was a fake document. As a result, within two years of the Coonan Cross Oath, 25 churches left Archdeacon Thomas, subjected themselves to Metropolitan Garcia and thus embraced the Catholic Church.

2. The Activities of Joseph Sebastiani

When the echoes of heartbreaking incidents in Malankara reverberated in Rome, Pope Alexander VII, the then head of the Catholic Church sent an Italian Carmelite religious priest by the name of Joseph Sebastiani to Malankara as his ambassador. Since he was a devout believer and a great diplomat, and since he had brought letters

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and authorizing documents from the pope and since there were many native priests to work alongside him, several churches learned of the actual situation and forsook the Archdeacon's faction. Sebastiani was able to appraise people of the actual situation. Because of all this, several people gave up factionalism and reunited with the Catholic Church.

3. Accidental Disasters

Some sudden disasters that befell some of the leaders who were actively working in the Archdeacon's faction lead several people towards the right path. One native of Alangad, who was the leader of the Archdeacon's faction died as a result of a severe fall. Two churches that were strongly working for the Archdeacon (Chalakkudi, Kuruppampadi) collapsed. The market belonging to the Archdeacon faction at Paravur caught fire and several houses were burnt down. At the Kandanad Parish, which was strongly supporting the archdeacon, the Christians suffered limitless losses as a result of a riot between Christians and Nairs. Several people suspected that all these were punishments for having split from the true superior authorities and for having accepted the wearer of the episcopal dress and they withdrew from the Archdeacon's faction. A Christian noble who had been the right hand of the Archdeacon repented for his errors at the time of his death, received the last sacraments from a priest under metropolitan Garcia and died with the advice that everyone should forsake the archdeacon and accept the authority of Metropolitan Garcia. This incident too weakened the new faction.

4. The Influence of the Government

The Portuguese Governor of Kochi appealed to the King of Kochi to exercise his authority to end this schism. Accordingly, the King tried his level best to suppress the Archdeacon's faction using the officials under his control. They continually harassed them by incarcerating archdeacon and Ittithomman Kathanar, by seizing the Archdeacon's priestly insignia, books, and letters and by attaching the wealth of some churches under his control. In addition, they helped

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the Catholics in many ways. This tempted many people to leave the archdeacon faction and to reunite with the Catholic Church.

5. The Efforts of Bishop Chandi

As per the orders of the pope, Joseph Sebastiani ordained Koravalangad Palliveettil Chandi Kathanar as a bishop under the name of "Alexander." This bishop, who was a native and Syrian Catholic, strived tirelessly to bring those who were under the archdeacon back into the fold of the Catholic Church. As a result, within a short period 29 churches accepted his authority over them and became members of the Catholic Church.

In the twelve years (1655-1667) until the Jacobite Bishop Mar Gregorios arrived in Malankara and made the members of the archdeacon faction join the Jacobite Church, of the 114 churches, which had split from the Catholic Church because of the Coonan Cross Oath, 84 reunited with the Catholic Church. Only the remaining 30 had the misfortune to fall into Jacobite schism.

Mar Thoma I

Due to the realization that living without being subject to the authorities of the Catholic Church was a hindrance to their external as well as internal prosperity, Mar Thoma I and his followers kept making attempts to reunite with the Catholic Church. At a great Assembly of the *Puthnkur* people held at Edapally they informed Bishop Sebastiani that they have a great desire to reunite with the Catholic Church and requested that he should grant two things in order to make that happen: That Archdeacon Thoma should be ordained a bishop and that he should be given the authority to rule. But Bishop Sebastiani rejected both the demands. His response to the first request was, "Let the archdeacon publicly give up the title of bishop that was conferred upon himself". He evaded the second request by replying that the issue of giving authority to the archdeacon can be resolved only with the permission of Rome. If all these things were possible, Mar Thoma I and his allies would not have striven to bring the Jacobite Bishop Mar Gregorios here and the Jacobite Church would not have achieved

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an entry into Kerala and a *Puthankur* division that is separate from the Catholic Church would not have originated.

Mar Thoma IV

Since they were aware that they would neither receive the 'laying on of hands' from the Catholic bishops nor the authority to rule from the pope, Mar Thomas II and Mar Thomas III did not attempt a reunion with the Catholic Church. But history has recorded that the fourth Mar Thoma who ruled for forty years from 1688 till 1728, had tried his level best for reunion. In December 1704, he sent a request to the pope containing the signatures of the 29 churches and 12 chief priests who were under his authority. The said requests were sent to Rome through the Catholic Carmelite Bishop Anjaloose Francis and Fr Augustine. The request mentioned five important points:

1. *Puthankur* people forsook the Catholic Church because of the harassment by the Portuguese Jesuits.
2. Gratitude is expressed to the Pope for sending the Carmelite priests to Kerala.
3. The pope should grant permission for the Syrian rite to be followed all over Malankara.
4. The order allowing them to govern the Catholics of Malankara should be sent along with the Bishop Anjaloose Francis of Varapuzha.
5. Permission should be granted to use leavened and unleavened bread in the Holy Qurbono.

(Paulinus, *India Orientalis*, Page 107)

It was written in the conclusion to the request that the granting of these permissions would end the factionalism in Malankara.

Rome did not send any reply, favourable or unfavourable, to this request from the Fourth Mar Thoma. Disappointed by this, he focused on strengthening the relationship with the Jacobite Church.

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Mar Thoma V

The fifth Mar Thoma who headed the Jacobite Church in Kerala during the Christian years 1728-1765 too had tried his level best to reunite with the Catholic Church. He sent a long request to the pope in 1748, requesting that he, the priests under him, and the followers should be accepted into the Catholic Church. The last part of the said request reads thus:

> In the name of St Peter who is described in Order of the Holy Qurbono according to St Peter as the chief of the apostles, I present a request before you. Grant us permission to use leavened bread as had been granted to the Greek. If you grant our request that this freedom should be allowed to all the churches among us, all of us will subject ourselves to your throne. Please be kind enough to order the Carmelites to aid us and remove the Portuguese bishop from this parish. Kindly allow us this blessing. Let the mercy and sympathy of God be upon us. Amen.
>
> In the year 1748, Thoma, the Head of India, from the church of St Mary

Mar Thoma V's request was taken to Rome by a Carmelite priest Fr Bonifus, as per the orders of the Apostalic Vicar of Verapoly. A reply to this request was sent to Apostalic Vicar of Verapoly by the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propagada. The decision taken at Rome on 3 September 1757, was explained in detail in the letter. From the beginning to the end, the letter expressed strong suspicions regarding the Fifth Mar Thoma's intentions.

> Mar Thoma V who had no valid episcopal ordination celebrated Holy Qurbono and gave ordinations. His statements that Rome did not trust him are false. We do not believe that he and his followers will reunite. Since his statements are mere pretences we need not consider

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his issue. Such were the ideas contained in the decision of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda. It is said that such suspicions and misunderstandings were the result of the correspondences of the Latin bishops who were governing in Kerala. Since Mar Thoma's letter did not express any regret, either for having split from the Catholic unity or for having accepted the title of bishop in a way that offends God and since he requested that the Portuguese should be removed from the country, the authorities in Rome did not consider this request seriously. Moreover, Rome was under the impression that all the Christians of Kerala had agreed at the Synod of Diamper that they would use unleavened bread in the Holy Qurbono. The letter sent to the Bishop of Varapuzha in this regard proclaimed that they should work with Christian love for the conversion of Mar Thoma; but he should not be given any hope that he would be raised to any position or those whom he ordained would be considered priests. (Analecta OCD, 1938 Page 32, 33)

The letter caused severe disappointment to Mar Thoma V who had been expecting Rome's decision and as a result, he withdrew from his efforts to reunite with the Catholic Church. Thus, Mar Thoma V's efforts for reunion ended in failure.



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Chapter 17

THE FIVE REUNION ATTEMPTS OF MAR THOMA VI (MAR DIVANNASIOS THE GREAT)

Among the efforts made by the Jacobite bishops of Kerala to reunite with the Catholic Church, the reunion efforts of Mar Thoma VI have special significance. Mar Thoma V who died without having ever received valid episcopal ordination by the 'laying on of hands' ordainted his nephew as Mar Thoma VI at the time of his death (1765). During the long 43 years between 1765 and 1808, he ruled the Jacobite Church of this place choosing the name Mar Divannasios I. During the seven years until he received ordination from the foreign bishops Mar Gregorios and Mar Ivanios at the church in Niranam in 1772, he had ruled as a bishop without valid episcopal ordination. The English missionary Dr Buchanan who met him at the church at Kandanad has noted thus: "He deserves to be respected on various counts and he is virtuous, pious, and interested in the observance of holy rituals. He has received sufficient general education to enable him to lead all his priests whom I have met so far." (*Christian Researches in Asia,* page127)

Being well aware that only reunion with the Catholic Church could bring progress to the *Puthankur* people under his rule, he continuously strived for it five times. Even though he did not receive the necessary privileges and permission from Rome due to the adverse activities of some foreign Latin bishops who used to rule the *Pazhayakur* people of this region, he kept striving for reunion

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repeatedly without getting disappointed. The said efforts are recorded below:

1. The Request Sent Before Episcopal Ordination

Before being ordained as a bishop at the church at Niranam in 1772, Mar Thoma VI sent a request to Rome through the Metropolitan of Verapoly, saying that he wished to reunite with the Catholic Church and that he should be accepted into the Catholic Church. The group of cardinals of Rome considered this and on 31 August 1771, sent advice in the form of a letter to the Metropolitan of Verapoly. The letter stated that the group had decided that Mar Thoma should be consoled by awarding him the honourable title of "Proto Notary" and by granting him material rights over his dependents without the right to govern their spiritual lives (*The Travancore State Manual* II, page 209).

Since their enquiries had revealed that Mar Thoma VI had not received the true episcopal ordination Rome decided to grant the title, "Proto Notary." Mar Thoma refused to accept the title because he was aware that it would be an insult if it were known that he, who was a bishop in the eyes of the public, was a bishop without valid episcopal ordination. Similarly, he knew that temporal authority without spiritual authority would only end in failure. Though the reunion did not happen then because of these factors, the requests that he sent subsequently prove that he had genuinely wished for reunion.

2. The Reunion Attempts Made After Episcopal Ordination

After being ordained as a Bishop at Niranam by two Jacobite Bishops Mar Gregorios and Mar Ivanios who arrived in Malankara in 1772, Mar Thoma VI sent a request to Rome as part of his efforts at reunion. When Rome made enquiries regarding this, they received letters that questioned the intentions of Mar Thoma. Apparently the Metropolitan of Kodungalloor wrote, "Mar Thoma is like a camel

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with its mouth wide open and I doubt his intentions." It is not surprising that the Latin authorities doubted Mar Thoma's intentions considering the fact that he rejected the title of "Proto-Notary" and the right to govern over people's temporal matters and relied on the Jacobite bishops. Mar Thoma's idea was that rather than entering the Catholic Church without the position or authority of a bishop, he would gain valid episcopal ordination and then reunite with the said Church as a bishop. After he received *kaiveppu*, he again sent a request to Rome for Catholic Reunion. In reply to this, Rome sent a letter to the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly.

The letter authorized him to duly consider Mar Thoma's issue and grant him temporal authority over the masses except spiritual authority and to grant him an annual allowance of 100 Scudi for his subsistence. The letter was an indication that the misunderstandings about Mar Thoma had not been removed completely. It can be assumed that Rome was tempted to send such orders because they acquiesced with the wishes and the opinions of the foreign missionaries in Kerala. The letter did not serve either to satisfy Mar Thoma or to urge him towards Catholic Reunion. Mar Thoma realized that his attempts were failing because he had used foreign missionaries as intermediaries and he resolved to try for reunion with the help of native priests.

3. The Attempt made with the help of Malpan Kariyattil

The sixth Mar Thoma addressed a letter to Malpan Kariyattil, a native of Aalakkattu who had obtained a higher degree from the Propaganda College in Rome, indicating that he wishes Catholic Reunion and that he wished to consult him regarding this. Malpan Kariyattil came to Niranam as per the wish expressed in the letter and Mar Thoma welcomed him with great affection. As a result of their conversation, Mar Thoma's wish to reunite with the Catholic Church multiplied manifold. Malpan agreed to travel to Rome to get the permission for the same from the Roman See.

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Accordingly, Malpan Kariyattil left for Rome in 1778 along with Paremakkal Thoma Kathanar. Mar Thoma sent a request along with the malpan to be submitted before Rome, which contained all the details. The old Malayalam translation of the said request has been reproduced below:

> The following is written to be taken notice of by the holy mind of His Holiness Pope Pius who is the Head of the Roman Church which is the head of all the Churches of the world and who is the one that sits in the place of Christ, our Holy Father and Lord,
>
> "I, the weak Metropolitan Divannasios, who earlier had the name of Thomas, Bishop of Malabar. I believed in the faith of the Chaldeans of the East and of the Jacobites which are different from the faith of the Roman Church. Knowing that the minor and major orders the episcopate I had received before were not valid, I received priesthood and episcopate from the hands of a Jacobite Metropolitan. Now by the grace of God and by the prayers of the Congregation of the Roman Church I am convinced in truth that the faith of the Roman Church is the true one and that the souls who do not accept this faith will not be saved. I appraised the Prelates of the Archdiocese of Cranganore, and of the Diocese of Cochin, my thoughts and also revealed the same also to the priests and people whom Rome trusts, and I asked them to receive me and my subjects who are 50,000 in number in the faith of the Roman Church. But the rulers of these dioceses not only did not receive me but also said that I who am a Metropolitan shuld obey the Holy Church as a layman.

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When I heard this, I was very sorry and I wondered why these Prelates have said so since they are those who have been sent out by that Throne of Domination which endeavours to receive gladly any heretic who desires to obey the Holy Church and also to bring even pagans to the teaching of Christ. Again, because of these prelates and of their priests, the true Christians of Malabar suffer great scandal and evil. For, what one Prelate binds, the other unbinds; what one Prelate unbinds the other Prelate binds. God knows the state of their actions. I feel very much afraid to bring these to the notice of your Domination. So I, the priests and the people of Malabar who are obedient to the Holy Church have sent to the Holy See the Rev. Dr Joseph Cariatti and the Rev. Fr Thomas Paremmakal that they may bring to the notice of the Holy See our complaints and sorrows to the end that we may have solace and salvation through favours granted by the power of the Petrine See which by the Grace of God you are occupying. Since we who are under the rule of a pagan king are impoverished and poverty-striken, it is by raising from many of us a collection towards their journey expenses that we are sending them to your Domination.

Hence I, the weak Metropolitan Divannasios, implore your Holiness to receive the petitions which the priests who are thus sent will submit to Your Throne, to forgive my sins and shortcomings, to receive and unite into the fold of the Roman Church me and the people under me, to send with these priests, four doctors who know Syriac well so that they may teach us our Syriac languages, removing errors from them. One ruler must be appointed

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for the salvation and protection of the true faithful who at present have many rulers. The rest of the grievances our priests will make known to Your Domination. Therefore, O our Father, Lord of Lords, Pastor of pastors, since we are like sheep without a shepherd and like servants without a master. I again implore you to have mercy on us and to render us all the help we have asked for. O our Father who is in the place of Christ who set out in the search of good and whose trumpet summon sinners with solace, by the passion of Christ and by His death on the Cross, we pray you to receive our petitions: save us by remitting our sins: we the people of Malabar are orphans. (written in the year 1778 on 19 *Meenam* (March)[1]

They embarked on a ship from Madras and after suffering many hardships and overcoming several obstacles, they reached Portugal in ten months, having gone around the African continent. They subsequently visited Pope Pius VI on the 3 January 1780, apprised him of the purpose of their journey, and submitted the request.

The Holy Father replied that an enquiry would be conducted regarding the said issue and the decision would be intimated without much delay. Accordingly, Rome made the necessary enquiries. The enquiries focused on three issues.

1) Has the Mar Thoma VI received the 'laying on of hands'? Is Mar Gregorios, the person who ordained him a bishop, a true bishop?

[1] The translation is taken from the writings of Fr Placid Podipara, "The Efforts for Reunion in Malankara, South India" (manuscript), pages 8- 9 (translator). The translation is also available in the second edition of the book, *The Travancore State Manuel* written by Mr T K Velupilla (author)

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2) Has the request purporting to be from Mar Thoma written by Mar Thoma himself?

3) Are the facts stated in the request sincere or is there a vested interest?

A letter was sent to the Metropolitan of Goa, demanding a report on these three subjects. In 1782, the Metropolitan of Goa deputed that task to the Bishop of Kochi and sent the report that he received to Portugal. Though the report contained several parts, which were critical of Mar Thoma, after the canon law experts of Rome examined it, it was decided that Mar Thoma should be accepted into the Catholic Church with a title close to that of a bishop. Rome authorized Metropolitan Kariattil to welcome Mar Thoma into the Catholic unity provided he received a favourable report from the government of Portugal. In 1785, he left Portugal for India and reached Goa on 1 May 1786. He met with an untimely end at Goa on 9 September 1786. Thus, Mar Thoma VI's third effort too failed due to misfortune.

4. The Effort Made Under the Influence of Thachil Mathu Tharakan

If it had not been for the Metropolitan Kariattil's untimely demise at Goa, he would have accepted Mar Divannasios and his followers into the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Mar Divannasios did not get disheartened and continued his efforts. Thachil Mathu Tharakan, who was an undisputed leader of the Kerala Catholics and a rich noble, masterminded the initiative. On 19 September 1796, a meeting was held at Kollam, which was presided over by the head of the Diocese of Kochi. Mar Thoma VI and Parèmakkal Thoma Kathanar participated in the meeting and discussions were held regarding Mar Thoma's reunion. The Syrian Catholics' request was that His Holiness the Pope had granted permission for Mar Thoma to be accepted as a

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Bishop 18 years ago (in 1778) and accordingly he should be welcomed into the Catholic Church as a bishop. The Bishop of Kochi rejected the reunion request, as he feared that if Mar Thoma was accepted into the Catholic Church, he might become the Bishop of the *Pazhayakur* Syrian Christians as well. This was motivated by Mar Thoma's unwillingness to be a bishop who does not have the power to rule. Thus, even the fourth reunion attempt ended in failure.

5. The Last Attempt that Succeeded and Failed

With a firm determination to achieve the Catholic reunion of the *Puthankur* Syrian Christians, Mar Thoma VI made attempts once again. From the side of the *Pazhayakur* people, Thachil Matthu Tharakan took initiative for the same. Since the Mar Thoma suspected that the Bishop of Kochi expressed unwillingness to admit him into the Catholic Church because he had not agreed to the decisions of the Synod of Diamper, he sent a signed resolution on a palm leaf in which he accepted the decisions.

> Mar Divannasios, Metropolitan of Malabar, with the representatives of the churches under his jurisdiction; Mar Abraham, Bishop appointed by His Excellency the Most Rev. Patriarch of the Chaldeans in obedience with the Holy Roman Church; the Governor (Vicar General) who governs the Archdiocese of Cranganore with the representatives of the churches under his jurisdiction; and the Presbyter Hormindas, deputy of the Patriarch, assembled in the Holy Cross Church at Alleppy and having heard and disposed of all the controverted points of both the parties, made under oath this document in solemn contract that all in future might be united together.
>
> From the time of our ancient forefathers till the year 1599 AD, we were observing the Syro-Chaldean rite of those

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who were in communion with the Holy Roman Church; but owing to the interruptions of the Syrian bishops who are in communion with Rome, we were deprived of Episcopal dignitaries. Then Dom Alexis, Archbishop of Goa by the order of His Holiness the pope arrived in Malabar and convoked a synod at Diamper, the decrees of which we all obeyed and unanimously observed till the year 1652. At the time a Syrian bishop came here, whom the Paulists (i.e., the Jesuits) through the help of the Portuguese commandants of the Fort of Cochin managed to kill. Where upon the representatives of the Syrian parishes in Malabar assembled in Mattanchery church and took an oath that they never more would accept the Paulists as their ecclesiastical superiors. After this they proceeded to Alangatt church, where assembling without the assistance of any bishop they proclaimed Archdeacon Thomas as their bishop. Subsequently, some disputes having arisen among ourselves, we accepted two ecclesiastical heads and rites in our community. And now we of both the parties unitedly agree on oath to join together as our forefathers did, submitting ourselves to the Holy Father, the pope, performing the Mass, reciting the breviary, observing the fasts and other rites as they were prescribed by the Synod of Diamper and to report accordingly to the Holy Father, the pope, with the view of obtaining the permission to conduct all ceremonies according to the Syro-Chaldean Rite of those who are submissive to the Holy Roman Church. Moreover, we agree that those who observe at present the Jacobite creed and rites shall abjure them and make the profession of faith prescribed by Pope Urban VIII for the Orientals and submit to the order of His Holiness the pope. And so

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agreed on oath on this twentieth day of *Edavam* (May) 1799 AD, we of both the parties have declared and signed this contract at the Church of the Holy Cross at Alleppey, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."[2] (*Marthoma Nazranikalude Sathyaviswasam*, page 200)

Thus on 22 June 1799 Mar Thoma and his followers achieved reunion with the Catholic Church at the St Michael's Church, Thathampally, Alapuzha. Subsequently, he stayed there for almost six months and offered Holy Qurbono. But Mar Thoma was disappointed by the Bishop of Kochi's failure to act upon his promise of granting him the right to govern and he returned to the *Puthankur* group, after paying the fine determined by the Travancore government as per the agreement. He went to Puthankavu and in 1808 he passed away. Thus, though the last effort of Mar Thoma VI, who had been striving throughout his life for Catholic Reunion, had been initially successful, due to the misfortune of the *Puthankur* people, it too culminated in a failure.

* * * * *

Some Clear Evidence

In the book *History of Syrian Christians in the Land of Malayalam*, the Jacobite historian Ittoop Writer has written the following regarding Mar Thoma VI achieving Catholic reunion at the Thathampally church in Alapuzha:

In a long time Mathu Tharakan was trying to bring the *Puthankur* Syrians to the Roman obedience. It did not work. From then onwards and he showed diligence in

[2] The translation is taken from the writings of Fr Placid Podipara, "The Efforts for Reunion in Malankara, South India" (manuscript), pages 11-12 (translator)

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plundering their money and was not obedient to the *Puthankur* Syrians. By order of the government the metropolitan was brought to Alleppey and made to stay at Thathampally Church. By order, the important priests and laymen were brought from Areekara. There the Syrians were forced to offer Qurbono with "*patheera*[3]" removing "ammeera[4]". They were forced, as against their custom of renouncing meat on Wednesdays, to eat meat and break their lent. A big feast was arranged and some of them took part in it against their will. But the Metropolitan himself had half a mind to be submissive to Rome because of the disturbance and tricks of Mathu Tharakan. As there was no good will of the people, he could not do anything against it; pretending that it was because of the instigation of Mathu Tharakan, standing at the altar of the church, he asked sadly, "Shall I offer Qurbono with *patheera* keeping aside *ammeera*? Then the leader Edavazhikal Kuncheria of Kottayam, Kizhakkedathu Kochu Pothen, Vettikkunnel Venkadath Alaksadraos Kathanar etc. and many elders and people altogether said, "You eat it yourself, Your Grace, we are leaving". So saying they immediately took the boat, went to Niranam, and gave the news. They consulted with others to have another bishop (*Suriyani Kristyanikalude Sabhacharitram*, page 143-144).

Ittoop Writer subsequently proclaims that during the period of Mathu Tharakan's financial decline, the metropolitan returned to Niranam from Alapuzha. He undertook penance for having celebrated Holy Qurbono with *patheera* and rejoined the Jacobite Church and

[3] Unleavened bread

[4] Leavened bread

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continued his governance. Nevertheless, it appears that Ittoop Writer is reluctant to proclaim openly the historical fact that the Metropolitan embraced the Catholic Church. When Ittoop Writer records that some of the prominent members of the Jacobite Church left their Metropolitan at Thathampally and returned to Niranam, that Mar Divannasios celebrated Holy Qurbono with *patheera*[5] and that the nobles assembled at Niranam considered electing a new Metropolitan, the implication is that Mar Divannasios achieved Catholic reunion.

Another historian of the Jacobite Church, Idavazhikkal Mr EM Philipose has openly accepted that Mar Divannasios reunited with the Catholic Church in his book, "The Indian Church of St. Thomas the Apostle" (*Mar Thoma Sleehayude Indian Sabha*). The relevant part is quoted below:

> Soon after this, Mathu Tharakan revived his intentions and assembled a meeting at Kayamkulam. Though debates raged for fifteen days, no decision was taken. When he saw that there was no peaceful method to achieve consensus, Mathu Tharakan requested the help of the Maharaja of Travancore. The Maharaja demanded a fine of twenty tive thousand rupees from the metropolitan for the crime of having misappropriated the wealth of a Dewan who had been dismissed recently for failings in his official capacity. The churches at Niranam and Chengannur and other wealth such as the metropolitan's crosier, hand cross and sacred vessels, etc. were attached.

[5] Patheera (unleavened bread) is used for Holy Qurbono by the Chaldean Syrian Christians and Latin Christians. At the same time, Antiochian Syrian Christians use *ammeera* (leavened bread). The authorities would not have allowed a Jacobite priest to offer Holy Qurbono at a Catholic Church if he had not embraced the Catholic Church. (Author)

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Around rupees five thousand was levied in this manner and the metropolitan paid another rupees five thousand. The remaining sum was collected from several churches and the rest of the fine was paid. In the midst of the chaos, Mathu Tharakan informed the metropolitan that if an agreement could be signed as per which the Syrian Christian community would accept the authority of Rome, the whole fine amount would be excused. But they decided that it is better to lose their wealth than to sell the faith of their ancestors. When he realized that tricks and financial losses were insufficient to bend the Syrian Christians to his will, Mathu Tharakan adopted the methods of Menezes. Tharakan took as hostages the metropolitan and several nobles of the Syrian Christian community with the aid of armed soldiers and took them to Alapuzha. After suffering starvation for several days, the bishop was forced to sign an agreement. As a result, the metropolitan had to accept the principles of faith laid down by pope Urban VIII for the Westerners, the supreme authority of the pope and the decisions of the Synod of Diamper concerning the Holy Qurbono, prayers, lent, etc. Accordingly, he celebrated the Holy Qurbono at the Thathampally Roman Church on 30 Idavam (*Mar Yhoma Sleehayude Indian Dabha*, pages 188-190).

Mr Philipose accepts in his book that Mar Divannasios' Catholic Reunion was a historical fact. But the proclamation that Mathu Tharakan made him swear to Catholic faith by taking him prisoner and by starving misleads the readers regarding Mar Divannasios' reunion attempts. Hence, I am recounting a few things here to prove the actual facts.

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1- I trust that the readers would have grasped from the first part of this chapter, the truth that Mar Divannasios had already attempted four times to achieve Catholic Reunion. It has been mentioned above with proof that he corresponded several times for the same and that in the end he sent a long request to the pope. There was no need for Mathu Tharakan or anybody else to make Mar Thoma, who had been extremely desirous of Catholic Reunion and who had been tirelessly striving for the same, join the Catholic Church through force or by making him suffer starvation. The willing needs no persuasion.

2-Mr Philipose has recounted in his book that Mar Divannasios who was the sole Metropolitan of *Puthankur* groups was abducted from Niranam, the stronghold of Jacobites, and that he was starved in order to make him join the Catholic Church. How can one believe that the Jacobites were silent witnesses to their metropolitan being taken captive from Niranam and that they did not engage in any form of protests? Is the suggestion that even after the metropolitan was put through the ordeal of starvation at Thathampally for several days, the people under his rule made no attempts to rescue him from there and at least save his life? Is it conceivable that the descendents of a group of Christians, who had believed the rumour that a Bishop Ahathulla, who came from somewhere had been drowned by the Portuguese and protested and took an oath on the Coonan Cross that "we will not surrender to the Portuguese as long as our lineage exists" and committed mistakes which can never be justified, remained silent and despondent and passive when the lone metropolitan who ruled over them had been incarcerated, threatened, tortured and starved? The answers to such questions prove that Mr Philipose's statement that Mar Divannasios was forced to join the Catholic Church has no factual basis.

3-How is it possible to believe that Mar Divannasios, whom Jacobite historians unanimously consider the one who has ascended

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to the highest levels among those who have ruled them, forsook the Jacobite Church due to external temptations, or due to fear of force or starvation? If he were truly convinced that the Jacobite Church was the true Church established by Christ, if he had believed that the Catholic Church was beset by superstitions and bad customs, he would never have been willing to sacrifice his conscience in the face of external temptations. How can our Jacobite brothers say that Mar Divannasios, who had ruled their ancestors for forty-three years, whom the British missionary Dr Buchanan described as "deserving respect on various counts, virtuous, pious, and interested in the observance of holy rituals", acted against the dictates of his own conscience?

Thus, the fact that Mar Divannasios embraced the Catholic Church proves that he was convinced that reunion with the Catholic Church was the sole way for the external and internal prosperity of the *Puthankur* population.



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Chapter 18

THE REUNION ATTEMPTS MADE BY FOUR METROPOLITANS

Four metropolitans who became the heads of the Jacobite Church after the demise of Mar Thoma VI strived to achieve Catholic Reunion. The efforts made by the Bishops Mar Cheppad Divannasios, Pulikottu Mar Divannasios, and Bishop Mar Severios of Knanaya parish and Mar Ivanios of Kandanad can be undeniably proved based on historical records. History proves that the factors, which encouraged them to make such attempts, were the following: faith in the oneness (unity) of the Church, the belief in the necessity of obeying the pope who is the *Ris* Patriarch, disapproval of the actions of the Jacobite Patriarchs of Antioch, and thoughts about the decline of the Jacobite Church. The reunion attempts made by the aforementioned metropolitans are narrated briefly below.

The Reunion Attempt Made by Cheppad Mar Divannasios

Since Punnathra Mar Divannasios and Pulikkottil Mar Divannasios who ruled the Jacobite Church before Cheppad Mar Divannasios reigned only for brief periods and as they were under the influence of the Protestant missionaries, they did not make any efforts for Catholic Reunion. However, Cheppad Mar Divannasios who ruled the Jacobite church for 30 years (1825-1855) corresponded with the Metropolitan of Verapoly regarding Catholic Reunion. Two reasons motivated him. The first was the unbearable and autocratic activities of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. The second was the protest towards the Protestant missionaries' "evangelical work" in which they used tactics to inject "the poisonous seeds of reformation" into the members of the

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Jacobite Church. Similarly, he was saddened by his predecessors' allowing the Protestant missionaries free passage into the Jacobite Church out of their desire for external gains. Due to the harassment he had to face from both sides, he strived for Catholic Reunion in the hope that he would be able to join the Catholic Church along with the *Puthankur* population and live in peace. But since the adversaries who foiled the earlier reunion attempts acted on this occasion as well, the final reply from the Metropolitan of Verapoly was that he would be unable to accept Cheppad Mar Divannasios as a bishop. As a result, Mar Divannasios decided to desist from reunion attempts.

Pulikkottil Mar Divannasios and Reunion Attempts

The reunion efforts made by Pulikkottil Mar Divannasios, who ruled over the Jacobite Church for forty-three years (1865-1909) before Vattasseril Mar Divannasios, reveal his diplomatic aptitude and his farsighted vision. His intention was to achieve the external unity of *Pazhayakur* and *Puthankur* people and then make the *Puthankur* people rejoin the Catholic Church. Prominent among the people who stood by him in this venture was Koravilangad Nidhiarikkal Mani Kathanar. He shared a close relationship with Mar Divannasios and with his cooperation and that of the *Pazhayakur* Syrian Christians, the two groups together started several movements. Some among them are briefly described below.

1. Nasrani Jathyaika Sangham

As a preliminary step for reunion, an organization named "*Nasrani Jathyaika Sangham*" was formed. The organization was intended for both *Pazhayakur* and *Puthankur* people and all the Syrian Christians. Some of the rules of this organization are as follows:

> Not only have the Syrian Christians of Kerala who have become renowned under the name of Mar Thoma Christians split into two groups called *Pazhayakur* and *Puthankur* people and became like a body whose bone-

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joints have come apart, they have not achieved high levels of education, urbanity, government employment or other similar social achievements. Hence, some people decided to form an organization named "*Nasrani Jathyaika Sangham*" to remove these deficiencies and to include all the Mar Thomite Christians in it. Years before the organization was formed, the people who took the initiative discussed their ideas with some great people who were their friends and who loved the community and framed a large number of rules for the organization. The first one of the said rules is reproduced below:

> They are called Antiochian Syrian Christians and Roman Syrian Christians. An organization by the name of "*Nasrani Jathyaika Sangham*" should be formed as a representative of the Mar Thomite Christian community and to consider and work for the people's religious and social advancements (*Nidhiarikkal Mani Kathanar*, page 200).

Since they were convinced that people belonging to the reformist faction (the current Mar Thomite Church) and CMS members belonging to the Syrian Christian Church would not be willing to join the said organization, their only intention was to include the Jacobites under Mar Divannasios and the Old Syrian Christians under Fr Mani.

2. A Separate Place

A separate place was needed for setting up the office of the organization, to hold meetings and to build other organizations. They managed easily to purchase a separate place in Kottayam town, which was the main centre of Christians. Mar Divannasios and Mani Kathanar managed to purchase Woodland estate and bungalow for Rs. 3541 from a European named Mr Hugh Crawford who was a business agent in Alapuzha. They got his representative, a Catholic named James

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Darra to sign over the deeds. The readers would not have forgotten reading about this in the sixth chapter of this book.

3. United College

Both parties decided jointly to start a college in Kottayam and to start schools and other philanthropic institutions. The following is noted in the 8, 9 and 10th clause of the rulebook of the said organization:

> 8 – An educational institution should be started in the building, which currently stands in the land owned by the organization, and the buildings, which are proposed to be built in the land, and the institution should be open to people of all religions and castes.
>
> 9 – It would be preferable if the head master and two assistant masters were not Protestants, atheists, or agnostics. If it is possible to find the members of some fraternity or monks belonging to the same religion who will exercise their power with more care than the laity and who will work for a small salary, that will be more profitable for the organization and hence they should be made to run the advisory organizations.
>
> 10 – Following the practices of St Xavier's colleges in Bombay and Calcutta, St Louis College in Mangalore and St Joseph College in Trichnopoly, subjects needed for the university examination should be taught in this educational institution. The head master should have full freedom in educational matters and no one else should interfere in those matters as long as they do not concern the questions of faith and morals (*Nidhiyarikkal Mani Kathanar*, page 201).

4. Newspaper

Both the parties decided to bring out a publication under the auspices of the *Jathyaika Sangham*. Regarding this, Shri VC George

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BA, LT wrote the following in "The Biography of Nidhiyarikkal Mani Kathanar":

> Not many people know that it was "Nasrani Deepika," which was jointly published from Mannanam by *Puthankur* and *Pazhayakur* people as the mouthpiece of *Nasrani Jathyaikia Sangham* that metamorphosed into "*Deepika*" published from Kottayam and that it was Mar Ivanios who accepted the post of the first Editor of the newspaper as per the instruction of Bishop Marsilinose (*Nidhiyarikkal Mani Kathanar*, page 206-207).

5. Charitable Institutions

The office bearers of the Nasrani Jathyaikia Sangham had decided to establish charitable institutions of various kinds under its auspices for the various kinds of prosperity of the Christian community. The sections 22-28 of the rulebook of the organization note that it was decided to start schools, orphanages, workhouses, industries, cooperative societies and banks. But unfortunately, such initiatives planned to bring together the *Puthankur* and *Pazhayakur* populations were never put into practice and remained on paper.

The Meeting with the Delegate

Under the encouragement of Mani Kathanar, Mar Divannasios decided to go to Ootacamund and visit Monsignor Aiuti, the apostolic delegate. One part of the letter sent by Msgr Aiuti from Ootacamund on 14 January in response to the letter sent by Mani Kathanar read as follows: "I would be happy to meet Mar Divannasios when I come to Kerala. As you said, he is waiting to meet me. That visit will be certainly joyous for me. How joyous would be the occasion of the Jacobites returning to the lap of the Church, our Holy Mother. It would be fitting to remind you that I've been given full authority in this regard by the Holy See."

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"The God of mercy is with us!" - this sentence in this letter is fullfilled in the progress of the reunion movement in the last 25 years

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A photo taken on the occasion of the Annual meeting of the Syrian Catholics at Calcutta



Msgr Edward Mooney

(he obtained permission
for the reunion movement in Kerala
through his correspondence with Rome
as Apostolic Delegate)



Dr Aloysius Benziger

(Bishop of Kollam)

(he sowed the seeds of the Reunion Movement
receiving the first 5 persons including Mar Ivanios
into the Catholic church)

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The delegate wrote the following in a letter to Mani Kathanar on 4 April 1888: "Regarding Mar Divannasios, whenever he chooses to visit my residence at Ootacamund, I would be happy to receive him. You can also certainly accompany him to Ootacamund. He will be able to stay here with all the comforts that he deserves. I say this, since I am aware that Mar Divannasios should be provided comfortable accommodation."

Mar Divannasios and Mani Kathanar went to Ootacamund and visited the apostolic delegate as per the interest expressed in the letter and the relevant section in Mani Kathanar's biography has been reproduced below:

> The apostolic delegate inviting Mar Divannasios to his own residence and Msgr Aiuti expressing a lot of concern over the comfort of his accommodation is impossible under ordinary circumstances. It goes without saying that the invitation came because the apostolic delegate was informed. Mar Divannasios reached Ootacamund as per the invitation. He accepted the hospitality of the apostolic delegate and stayed there for a few days. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Mar Ivanios (MA Achan) acted as the guide to Mar Divannasios during the journey and his stay at Ootacamund. The meeting between the Head of the Jacobites among the Christians of Kerala and the representative of the pope was extremely friendly and cordial. Since Mar Divannasios was not well versed in English, it was Fr Mani who functioned as an interpreter. Mon Aiuti had already learnt about Fr Mani's skill as a translator. The fact that Mar Divannasios expressed during the visit, the reverence that he held for the Holy See and Pope Leo XIII who adorned it pleased Msgr Aiuti tremendously. It has to be mentioned that it was after promising to send a message to the Holy Father

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expressing these emotions that Mar Divannasios returned from Ootacamund (*Mani Kathanar*, page 214).

Mar Divannasios sent a message to the pope as per his promise without much delay and with the counsel and encouragement of Mani Kathanar, continued his reunion attempts. But due to some unknown reasons, the reunion of Mar Divannasios and consequently that of the *Puthankur* people was not achieved.

But in the letter sent by Mani Kathanar from Kandanattu on 17 September 1890 two obstructions to the reunion attempts of Jacobites are noted. The relevant portion of the letter is produced below:

> From the several conversations that I have had with the Jacobites, they see two things are standing in the way of reunion. First, they believed that if they go back to the Church without the requests sent over the fifty years after the Synod of Diamper for Bishops from their own people and rite being accepted, that would amount to accepting that their ancestors' actions were wrong and would be a shameful thing. Secondly, in the Coonan Cross Oath taken at Kochi by their ancestors, they had sworn that they would never accept a Latin bishop as their leader. If they who are Syrians accept Latin Bishop Lavinge, that would amount to breaking that oath and betraying their conscience. Also, it is strange and unheard of in world history for a bishop belonging to one community and rite ruling over the priests and population of another community and rite. (*Mani Kathanar*, page 308)

Anyway, it needs to be said that due to some reason, the reunion efforts made by Metropolitan Pulikkottu Mar Divannasios did not come to fruition.

The Reunion Attempts of Kandanattu Mar Ivanios

The reunion efforts made by Kandanattu Joachim Mar Ivanios who was a Metropolitan in the Orthodox Church and the pathetic

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failure of those efforts have been described in a heart rending language in his article "The Harsh Betrayal" published in "*Sathyasabhakahalam Viseshal Prathi*" by Simon D Corepiscopo who was his nephew and a well known preacher of the Jacobite Church who died a few years after embracing the Catholic Church. The said article is reproduced below:

> It was in 1086 ME that I received the title of deacon from Patriarch Abdulla. During those days I used to live with my uncle Bishop Joachim Mar Ivanios. I have known His Excellency for more than twelve years. He was a sincere holy man. I have heard him speak about the specialities of the faith of the Catholic Church.
>
> He was a scholar of Syriac and his most important argument concerned the part about the *Ris* Patriach in the *Hudaya* Canon which the Jacobites accept with reverence. I have a book in my possession in which his Excellency has translated those parts into Malayalam in his own handwriting and bearing his signature and seal. He had a firm opinion about the need to accept the Roman Patriarch's position of *Riso u Rabo* (Head and Leader).
>
> The second fact His Excellency has ordered with force is that things like the primacy of St Peter, Roman See, etc. can be proved clearly from the Jacobite liturgy. As a result of the strengthening of His Excellency's convictions, in 1098 ME he started discussing the possibility of reunion with Fr Thottunkal, the then Vicar of the Catholic Church in Kandanattu. He summoned Painunkal Rev. Fr Joseph PhD, DD, a native of Kandanattu, who was the secretary of His Excellency apostolic delegate to India and who has now become a priest in the Diocese of Ernakulam and after having consulted with the Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, His Excellency Mar Augustine

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Kandathil, arranged for all the urgent things needed for reunion. Even the date for making the profession of faith at the Bishop's House in Ernakulam was decided. Learning this, I tried my level best to discourage him from these endeavours. I strongly argued against his opinions. Even though there was no fair reason, which could make him change his resolve I used several unrelated reasons. I had so many grievances and issues with the Catholic Church that when I realized that I could not achieve this through direct methods, I decided to employ a deception.

I sent for Ramban Mukkancheril Patrose who was the deacon during those days and shared my thoughts with him. We learned that the arrangement was for a car to be sent from the Bishop's House of Ernakulam so that he could reach there early in the morning the next day. We told His Excellency in a very convincing manner that travelling through land would not be ideal since there is a chance that people may create issues and block the way and that if he travels by boat at night he would be able to reach his destination peacefully and on time. His Excellency, who was of a very innocent nature, believed us completely, and acquiesced to this plan. We immediately arranged for a good boat. Thus, we boarded the boat with our entire luggage after dinner. Without His Excellency's knowledge, I secretly instructed the boatman to take us to the Parumala Seminary. During that journey, His Excellency slept more peacefully than he usually does. At 3 in the morning, His Excellency woke up for the morning prayers and summoned me. When he was washing his face, he looked at the banks and asked me, "This is the place called 'Chemmanakiri" near Vaikkom, isn't it? Why are we going south on our way to

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Ernakulam?" I vociferously presented the difficulties involved in going to Ernakulam and revealed that we were going to the Parumala Seminary. His Excellency wept uncontrollably and ordered, "Do what you wish". That day, his mental anxieties and diseases became worse. He stayed at Parumala Seminary for three years. It was during that period that he ordained as Bishop present Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram His Grace Mar Ivanios at Niranam in his capacity as the President of the Episcopal Synod. He was especially interested in giving his own name, "Mar Ivanios", to the ordinantee. His Excellency's love and regard for our great archbishop was extraordinary. A few months before he passed away, His Excellency summoned our Archbishop to the Parumala Seminary and entrusted to him the relics that he had obtained during his journey to Jerusalem. His Excellency, was a holy man who believed that Catholic Reunion was indispensible for eternal salvation, passed away holding on to this conviction.

If I had not prevented His Excellency's actions, I would not have had to face the difficulties that I am facing and hear the abuses that I hear today after becoming a Catholic. I now bear the "crosses" for having obstructed His Excellency, who was a pure soul. If His Excellency's reunion had succeeded then, today the Reunion Movement would have been strong in this country. Late Metropolitan Simon Mar Divannasios is His Excellency's paternal uncle. Certain parts of his diary prove that he too had ardently wished for reunion. Many bishops of the Jacobite Church have wished for and strived for reunion. But it is difficult to achieve that without the special grace of God. Anyway, I remain, inviting my Jacobite

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brethren to a profound reflection on the attempts of Joachim Mar Ivanios's reunion with the Holy Church" (*Sathyasabhakahalam Viseshal Prathi*, pages 54-56).

The Reunion Attempts of Knanaya Metropolitan

His Excellency Mar Severios who was ordained by Patriarch Abdulla who came to Kerala in 1909 and became the Metropolitan of the Jacobites belonging to the Knanaya community met His Excellency Choolaparambil Mar Alexander who was the Bishop of the Diocese of Kottayam at Valiya Palli in Kottayam on 30 March 1921 and had discussions regarding reunion. On 21 *Medam* 1096 ME, when Bishop Choolaparambil visited the Mission church, Ranny, he made the following announcement regarding the deliberations on reunion at a meeting attended by Catholics and Jacobites:

> We are people who migrated here in 345. Unfortunately, we split into two... Even though it has been seven years since I assumed this position, it was only recently that I chanced to meet Bishop Severios. We talked about the unification of our community.
>
> ... Now I have to say "us" and "you." I trust that the day will come when I merely have to say "us." I trust that God will create a situation in the near future in which Bishop Mar Severios and I will together come to Ranni Valiyapalli (Jacobite Church) and bless you."

On 10 August 1921, 13 priests, some deacons, and lay people, all belonging to the Knanaya Jacobite Church met Bishop Choolaparambil and discussed reunion. In the public order sent to the churches in the Diocese of Kottayam on 27 November 1921, taking these heartening deliberations into consideration and spreading the awareness that Catholics should conduct special prayers for the reunion of their Jacobite brothers, Bishop Choolaparambil says the following, "We have not convinced just their priests and people regarding this

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unification but also the head of their Church. We arranged for a meeting, then, I first visited him and then received him here. We have announced this matter both together and separately and we have convinced their people and strengthened these convictions in their minds. There are a few objections to this idea here and there... Several people in various places are adopting the true faith. Already one priest and one deacon have joined the true Church."

Mar Severios' thoughts regarding reunion were never put into practice. Those who think about his serious deliberations on this matter would believe that he would have entered the Catholic Church if he had lived longer.



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Chapter 19

THE DIFFERENT RITES AND ORDERS OF THE HOLY QURBONO IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

As we all know, Mar Ivanios had embraced the Catholic Church after receiving the approval of the Holy See for a new rite. His Holiness the pope was inspired to such a decision by his wish for the unity of Christians all over the world, the wish for the reunion of the non-Catholics in Malankara and the powerful petitions of Mar Ivanios. The following chapters present further details regarding this. Before I proceed to that, since it will be useful for the readers to have a wholesome understanding of the existing rites and the Order of the Holy Qurbono of the Catholic Church, I intend to mention a few things about it in this chapter.

The Meaning of Rite

It is the Latin word "*Ritus*", which indicates the rituals of any religion, that gradually evolved into the English word "Rite". Linguists should think about the origin of the Malayalam word "*reethi*" which is similar to the word "rite" in both pronunciation and concept. Apparently the word indicates the prayer rituals or customs of a religious group. The word "rite" is used to refer to the liturgy, a compendium of the order of the Holy Qurbono, the most important of the Christian sacraments. In a more strict and clearer sense, the term can be used to refer to a set of rules that includes such rituals and which is followed by a particular set of people. Some people include the ecclesiastical rules of each and every rite within the scope of the term "rite". Some

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people consider rules regarding fast, penance, etc. as part of the canon law. It is believed that the church, church materials, sacred vestments, the lectionary, priestly hymns, priestly habits, etc. are part of the rite. The technical meaning of "Rite" in liturgical language is the method to be followed in the means of worship such as the celebration of the Holy Qurbono, Sacraments and the vestments to be worn for the Holy Qurbono, etc.

From the very inception of the Catholic Church, various rites have existed on the basis of racial, national and linguistic differences. Though Catholics insist on uniformity in the questions of the principles of faith and rules of good conduct, there is considerable freedom for protecting national, linguistic and racial differences in the matters of religious rituals. This is because the Catholic Church is a spiritual organization is spread all over the world and which respects the just aspirations of human beings irrespective of regional, racial and linguistic differences. Apostles formed orders of worship in the local churches in the noble languages, which were popular in earch country, and these continued to be traditionally followed there. The history of the Church proves that the Catholic Church has always taken extreme care to preserve and promote the ancient rites.

Today 20 rites exist in the Catholic Church, spread over 12 languages. These rites reveal unity in diversity and diversity in unity. It is said that the Catholic Church resembles a garden, which is full of flowers of varying colour, smell, and shape. What we see in the Catholic Church is the picture of fifty crore people all over the world following the same faith under the same sovereign, following the sacrament and other rituals in different languages and ways.

The twenty extant rites can be divided into "Western" and "Eastern". The details regarding each rite are mentioned concisely below:

Western Rites

There are three rites in this group.

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1. Latin rite. This rite is spread all over the world. The majority of the people in the West belong to the Latin rite.
2. Mozarabic rite. About one and half crores of Catholics in Spain belong to this rite.
3. Ambrosian rite. This rite exists only in Milan in Italy. About half a crore Catholics belong to this rite. It is worth mentioning that His Beatitude Pope Pius XI who gave permission to the Malankara Syrian Rite and hierarchy belonged to this rite. Latin is the common language of these three rites.

There are 17 rites in the Eastern group. They can be grouped into 5 and their population strength and the place where they are widespread is indicated below.

The Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church

Name of the Rite	The Region Where It is Widespread	Approximate Strength of Population
1. Alexandrian Coptic (Egyptian)Ethiopian (Abyssinian)	Egypt Abyssinia	66,000 55,000
2. Antiochian (Western) Antiochian SyrianMaroniteMalankara	Near Eastern region, America " " India	65,000 550,000 100,000
3. Antiochian (Eastern) KaldayaSyro-Malabar	Near Eastern regionIndia	1,50000 1,200,000

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4. Armenian Armenian	Near Eastern region, America	200,000
5. Byzantine		
Bulgarian	Bulgaria	12,000
Pure Greek	Greece, Near Eastern region	6000
	Hungary	
Hungarian (Serbian)	Western Italy, Sicily, ESA	260,000
Italo-Greek	Near Eastern region,	100,000
Melkite	USARumania, USAPoland,	3,10,000
Rumanian	Russia, America, Eastern	2,800,000
Russian Ruthenian	countriesPoland,	40,000
" "	Czechoslovakia, Rumania,	
Yugoslavian (Georgian)	Hungary, South and Northern America Yugoslavia	9,400,000
		65,000

The twenty rites of the Catholic Church are present in 12 languages. They are: 1. Latin, 2. Greek, 3. Coptic, 4. Ethiopian, 5. West Syrian, 6. East Syrian, 7. Armenian, 8. Georgian, 9. Arabic, 10. Czechoslovakian, 11. Romanian, 12. Magyar. Of these Latin, Coptic, Greek, Western and Eastern Syriac are dead languages and the rest are living languages.

The Order of the Holy Qurbono

The book containing the prayers and the rituals to be followed while offering Holy Qurbono, which is the most important sacrament in the Christian Church, is known as the "Order of the Holy Qurbono"

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or "*Thakso.*" There are several orders of Holy Qurbono extant in the Catholic Church and in the non-Catholic Churches. Because of long years of study of these, historians believe that all the *Thaksos* have evolved from four kinds of *thaksos*. Brief descriptions of those kinds are provided below.

1. Antiochian *Thakso*

This is the oldest among the *thaksos* and it was popular in the Eastern countries and it was known under the name "Jacob's *thakso.*" However it is not possible to say with certainty that this *thakso*, which originated after the second century was authored by St. Jacob. This *thakso* was used all over Antioch in the fourth century. Scholars opine that the source document of this *thakso*, which was followed here and there in the second and third centuries, was written in Greek and that it is this document that was translated into Syriac. It is used in Greek in Greece and Jerusalem once in a year. All the Holy Qurbono rituals extant among the Christians of the eastern nations are based on the Antiochian *thakso*. Fifty-four orders of Holy Qurbono that have been derived from Jacob's *thakso* is extant in the Jacobite Church. Mar Jacob's *thakso* is the basis of the Mar Ivanios' *thakso* used by the Greeks of Constantinople, the *thakso* of the Armenian Church, the *thakso* of the Nestorians, several *thaksos* among the Jacobites, *thaksos* used by the Antiochian Catholics and the Malankara Catholics.

2. Alexandrian *Thakso*

This *thakso* was used in such countries as Egypt and Alexandria and it was known as Mark's *thakso*. In an established form it emerged in the fifth century. It is said that the *thakso* was different earlier and this Holy Qurbono ritual evolved from the advice of the Evangelist Mark. It is believed that Greek, Coptic and Abyssinian Holy Qurbono rituals emerged from this *thakso*.

3. Roman *Thakso*

This *thakso* was known as St Peter's *thakso* and it was used in

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Italy, Sicily and some parts of Africa. This *thakso* achieved an established form in the sixth century during the time of Pope Gregory. Now a manuscript copy has been found dating from the time of Pope Gelalius in the fifth century. Several scholars opine that this *thakso* originated from St Peter. Palmer, who has studied the various *thaksos*, states the following: "There is just reason to believe that the rituals and the content of the Roman *thakso* which was used during the time of Pope Gregory dates back to the second century."

4. Gallican *Thakso*

This *thakso* was used in France and Spain and it is said to be St John's *thakso*. Regarding this *thakso*, Palmer has stated that it originated from St John the Apostle and Irenios took this from Policarp, the disciple of St John and introduced it in Gaul.

Scholars are of the opinion that the *thaksos* known and accepted in the Christian world today emerged from these four *thaksos*. Today it is uncertain whether all these four *thaksos* emerged from another *thakso* or whether they are the *thaksos* used by Jacob, Mark, Peter and John, the Disciples of Christ or whether they are just known by their names. Whatever be the truth regarding this, scholars who have studied the *thaksos* unanimously agree on certain things:

a. Origin from the Apostles

Everybody agrees that the origin of the order of the Holy Qurbono is the same. Among the various lessons that Christ had imparted to his disciples in the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension in to Heaven, he had also taught them the order to be followed in offering the Holy Qurbono. In the early days, the disciples and their successors used to offer Holy Qurbono by reciting the prayers from memory. It was only later – during the fourth century – that they were recorded in the established form.

b. Differences

Though the orders of the Holy Qurbono were recorded by

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the fourth century, some changes have been made to each and every order, prayers and observances at various points. In the orders of the Eastern and Western rites, several things have been added, removed and modified. Even in the Roman *thakso* such changes have been made even as late as the sixteenth century. It was at the Council of Trent that a unified form was given to the Roman *thakso*. In the encyclical "*Quam Primum*" issued by Pope Pius V in 1570, it was instructed that one who uses the Roman rite should not make any changes in it.

c. The Similarity in Essence

The scholars who have examined the ancient *thaksos* are of the unanimous opinion that all of them agree with each other in terms of content. All these *thaksos* maintain that the bread and wine in the Holy Qurbono will transform into the sacred body and blood of Christ. In all of them are found the faith that the Holy Qurbono is a sacrifice, the petitions to the saints, and prayers for the deceased. The Reformers who emerged in the sixteenth century Europe removed several portions of the ancient *thaksos*. Recently, the Marthomites of Kerala have modified several parts of the *thakso*.



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Chapter 20

DELIBERATIONS ON CATHOLIC REUNION AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MAR IVANIOS

The deliberations undertaken by the catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Church and the other bishops, including Mar Ivanios regarding the Catholic Reunion, the letters of correspondence with Antioch and subsequently with Rome, the replies received for the same, the backsliding of the other bishops and the entry of Mar Ivanios into the Catholic faith are dealt with in detail in the following chapters. However, before that a few things that inspired Mar Ivanios to strive for Reunion are given.

It is not possible to give a definite reply to the exact date as to when the thoughts of reunion sprang up in the mind of Mar Ivanios. The history of Reunion from non-Catholic churches shows the various hurdles faced by the non-Catholics in their quest for truth. The history of the reunion of Mar Ivanios also shows that his path of conversion was no different.

Long before the Catholic Reunion, Mar Ivanios had the misfortune to be part of the factional infighting, litigations and power struggles in the Jacobite Church and "to see and smell the stench and filth that had accumulated at the base of the Malankara Catholic Church" (*Girideepam*, page 1). The eminent bishop had read many books and indulged in lengthy conversations with Catholic scholars, priests and laymen and had visited many Catholic institutions while he was the principal of the Kottayam MD Seminary and professor at Serampore College. These were enough to instill in him a respect and

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admiration about the Catholic constitution, canons and the innumerable philanthropic activities undertaken by the Catholic Church across the world.

It was while he was a professor at Serampore that Mar Ivanios decided to set up a *sanyasa* ashram and *madhom* with a view to enhance the physical and spiritual prosperity of the Jacobite Church. He was motivated to found these *sanyasa* communities inspired by the sacrificial services rendered by the Catholic priests around the globe. The Bethany "Order of the Imitation of Christ' was based on the traditions, rules, regulations, and programmes of contemplation followed by the Catholic Church. He got the help of the Carmelite priests during that time. May be this is why many erudite non-Catholics prophesied, "This will only finally end in the Church of Rome" at the time of its establishment itself. The events that followed show that, those prophesies have been fulfilled.

Mar Ivanios was ordained bishop at a time when he was thus full of respect for the Catholic Church. He was diffident to sign the canon that insisted that a bishop of the Jacobite Church before being ordained should sign and repeat the statement cursing the Council of Chalcedon and Pope Leo. Mar Ivanios (then Ramban Geevarghese) informed the bishops who came for his ordination his refusal to curse the Council of Chalcedon and Pope Leo and said that he would rather not be Bishop than do something so spiteful. Nonplussed by this, the catholicos and the other bishops finally agreed to ordain him bishop without signing and repeating the 'statement of curse'. This was a manifestation of the respect and allegiance of Mar Ivanios towards the Catholic faith.

The Speech Made About Catholic Reunion

At the function organized at Niranam to felicitate the newly ordained bishop, Mar Ivanios made a long speech in which he made

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Fr John Ribeiro DD

(Through Fr John Ribeiro from Mavelikkara Metropolitan Mar Ivanios sent to Rome two memoranda seeking Reunion.)

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Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios

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his agenda of Catholic Reunion very clear[1]. The relevant part of the speech is reproduced below:

> "The catholicos must strive to bring all the Syrian Christians of Kerala 'under one fold and one shepherd' as it was during the olden times, after attaining a true reunion. Dear people, you have a very serious responsibility towards this. There is a unity among the Syrians of Kerala regarding social customs, political responsibilities, previous history, spoken and priestly language etc. Actually, they are a single community. Only in religious issues, there is a division. Even in this regard, all of you along with the bishops must strive for harmony.
>
> I know people who are obsessed by factionalism will not take it lying down. In those circumstances, pray that God will bless me with humility, patience, and unstinting faith in God so that it will lead to the glory of God and become a sublime ideal for you. Our generation should not allow the Malankara Syrian Community to be divided during our time. We should do whatever is Christianly possible to avoid such division and to increase mutual brotherhood. We should forgive and be patient as much as possible. It is not just to end the present division that we along with the catholicos should try.
>
> Last time, about fifty years back, the Syrians through their unlawful ways – there were people even then to support such unlawful activities - divided the Marthoma community from us. Efforts must be made to bring them back into the fold. They had the misfortune to secede from us. True.

[1] Readers will remember the same speech reproduced in Chapter 13 with minor deletion

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I believe before God that the misfortune is more ours who allowed them to go away, than theirs and not right in the eyes of God. Whatever be their shortcomings the way we treated them is not right and has been completely loveless and unchristian and many of the comments we made about them are totally baseless and without any truth. They had to stray from the basic tenets of the apostolic and Catholic Church because we the people of the Catholic Church were unable to show through our lives the basics of a true Christian life.

We should not be content merely by ending the strife within the Malankara Church or by getting reunited with the Marthoma Church. The majority of the Syrian Christians of Kerala are a part of the global Roman Catholic Church. They are also blood from our blood and flesh from our flesh. It is essential that the bigger faction, who calls themselves "*Pazhayakur* people", should itself be united with the remaining Syrians who call themselves as "*Puthankur* people". Even those who are merely interested in political and social upliftment want the unification of the entire Syrian people into one Church. I am not mentioning this with any political motive. You all know the prayer of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ to God Almighty, "Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." In order to fulfil this prayer in our country and in our generation it would be a blessing if the catholicos and all of us work together with humility and faith in God. What more could the Syrian Christians of Kerala ask for?

The revolutionary force that evolved within the Church in

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> the last hundred years has led to the splintering of the Church into various groups. I believe that intelligent people across the world have started thinking about the debilitating power of these divisive forces and the foolishness of succumbing to such forces. The predominant desire in the minds of the heads of the Christian Churches today is the formation of a unified Church. The Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church and the Anglican Church along with other smaller churches wish for and are striving for a union in spite of the hurdles in their paths without letting go off their essential faith. I sincerely believe that the catholicos will imbibe the soul of this reunion spirit that is blowing across the world and will do his best to strengthen it in the soil of Kerala. If His Beatitude were able, along with the bishops of the neighbouring churches, to interact with love, humility and in friendship, then that would be the greatest blessing to the Church (*Bethany Magazine*, June 1925).

This speech, made five years before the reunion became a reality, is a manifestation of the profound desire for reunion in Mar Ivanios.

* * * *

It was after his episcopal ordination, that Mar Ivanios started his correspondence with Rahmani, who was the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, regarding the reunion. It is very clear from the letters that the late catholicos and the present catholicos (then Bishop Mar Gregorios) had given complete support and advice to Mar Ivanios[2]. The following passages and letters taken from his autobiography written a few years before his death tell us clearly about the Reunion discussions:

[2] Those letters are included later in this book

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Autobiography

When Metropolitan Vattasseril was assured of the possession of the Old Seminary and the Seminary at Parumala he went to Mardin to meet the Jacobite Patriarch for peace talks. He had taken with him Rev. Abraham of Thiruvananthapuram and Rev. Skaria Kathanaar of Cheriamadhom. He had informed me of some incidents that occurred in that visit when I went to receive him in Bombay.

He told me that while he was travelling to Mardin, Mar Divanniasos had visited the Syrian bishop, who was under Patriarch Rahmani, at Baghdad. This was to get himself acquainted with the Syrian bishop so that in the case of his talks with the Jacobite patriarch failing, he could initiate talks about a Catholic Reunion. But nothing about the reunion was mentioned during that visit as he planned to open the topic only on his return. On his return journey, he visited again the Bishop of Baghdad. But he was unable to talk about the reunion as the representative of the Jacobite patriarch, Mar Yulios, was present with him. He told me all this during the train journey from Bombay to Ernakulam.

After a few days Bishop Mar Divannasios received a letter at Parumala from Patriarch Rahmani. He invited me to the Parumala Seminary to have more discussions related to this. He asked me to write a reply to this letter after reading it. The contents of the letter were as follows:-

> Peace to Bishop Mar Divannasios in the name of the Lord! I am happy to know that you had journeyed through the land and visited the Bishop of Baghdad. But I feel sad that you did not visit me in my place. If you had visited me, I would have told you what I wanted to say. Therefore, I am telling you what I wanted to say through this letter. Your Church in Malankara had been following

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the rites and *thaksos* of the Antiochian Church very faithfully. In order to fulfil the gospel of one fold and one shepherd, you and the entire Malankara Church must get reunited with us. I live in catholic unity in holy communion with the Pope of Rome. You will get the permission to follow the *thaksos*, the order of the liturgy, and the ancient canons of Antioch that you had been following so far. I promise that the Catholicos, the Metropolitans, and Episcopoi will be ordained from people among you from generation to generation. I hope you will think about this and reply happily.

The metropolitan, after entrusting me to write the reply to this letter said, "I am willing to join. The final decision can be written only after consultations with the brother bishops, priests, laymen and elders."

When he said, "I am willing to join" I immediately asked him whether that can be written and he said, "Yes." It was after that he added the second part of the statement. Later I came to know from VA Varghese BA LT, who was the nephew of the metropolitan that some changes were made in the reply that I had written and that VA Varghese had sent the letter by mail.

After my ordination, when the court order of Veeraraghava Iyengar was in force, I was called by Metropolitan Mar Divannasios, along with the catholicos and Bishop Mar Gregorios to the Parumala Seminary to discuss the future course of action. He asked us to sit together and come to a decision and said that he would accept any decision taken by us. He showed the letter from Patriarch Rahmani separately to us and talked about it. We held a Synod. The catholicos presided over and I acted as the Secretary. The main agenda of the Synod was the reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. The Synod entrusted me to initiate the correspondence in such a way that we would be able to follow the canons of the Church of Antioch provided

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Malankara get indigenous bishops from generation to generation. Accordingly, I wrote to the Patriarch Rahmani. I received a reply as well as a copy of the the *thakso d'Qurbono* he uses. I invited Bishop Mar Gregorios (the present Catholicos) to the Paliakkara Bethany Church at Tiruvalla and both of us went to the Bethany printing press and carefully went through the *thakso d'Qurbono*. Metropolitan Mar Gregorios told me that it was similar to the *thakso* used by the Malankara Jacobite Church and that it should be accepted. The only difference in this *takso* was that instead of "*hokkano sareerois,*" a prayer for the Service of Fraction, a prayer made before Divannasios Barsleebi in 12 century AD, as used in the Jacobite Church of Antioch was given in the Jacobite *thakso*. This is the only change we saw in it. The sentence "I break this bread in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" was there in this *takso*. Bishop Mar Gregorios said that this was acceptable. He too read the letter of Patriarch Rahmani and asked me to write a reply in consultation with the catholicos.

There upon I called Mr KV Chacko and Fr Mathews Parettu (the present Bishop Mathews Mar Ivanios of the Orthodox Church) and went to Vakathanam to meet the catholicos. We showed the letter of the Patriarch Rahmani to him. We confidentially decided on the kind of reply to be written. We made a draft of the letter in his handwriting in Syriac[3]. Thereafter I returned to Tiruvalla and made Moolamannil Thomas Kathanar, the husband of the niece of Mar Divannasios to rewrite the letter in good handwriting and send it to Patriarch Rahmani. But we did not receive any reply from Patriarch Rahmani. May be the time lag was because of the deliberations there. Later on, I asked to see Advocate Elanjickal Mr EJ John and he

[3] The letter written in his own handwriting by His Grace Mar Baselios II will be included in the chapter "Letters written by Patriarch Rahmani" (Author)

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came to see me at the Paliakkara Bethany Church in Tiruvalla along with his wife. At that time, I showed him the English translation of the letter in Syriac written by Patriarch Rahmani. After reading the letter, he encouraged us to have direct communion with the pope.

At that time I went to Trissur as I was invited to bless the marriage of the son of Mr MA Chacko, the police superintendent and army commander of the State of Kochi. The wedding was at a church near Kunnamkulam. On the way to the church, in the car, I talked to Mr Chacko about the move for reunion. This was what he said:

> Your Grace, even before you started thinking of this I had been trying for it. I am corresponding with the pope through Fr Gill SJ (a Catholic priest) residing in Calcutta to get our rites, priests, bishops and the catholicos accepted by the pope. My opinion is that the union will be hastened as you are directly involved with it.[4] (First part of the autobiography)

It is seen that many of the members of the Orthodox Church seem highly interested in publicly denying this historic truth. Many of them have written in articles and mentioned in public speeches that none of their bishops were involved in the reunion deliberations and Mar Ivanios was independently involved in the whole process. But Mar Ivanios has very clearly and in detail written about the role of the other bishops in the autobiography. The truth of the whole matter will be more evident to those who read the correspondence with the Patriarch Rahmani included elsewhere in this book. The Orthodox deny three things delineated in the autobiography.

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[4] The subsequent part of his autobiography where he talks about the correspondence with Rome, their replies, the back tracking of certain bishops, the reunion of Mar Theophilos and himself etc. are included in the chapter "The Memorable Reunion" (Author)

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1. The correspondence with Patriarch Rahmani was in consultation with and the permission of the late catholicos and the present catholicos, the then Mar Gregorios.
2. Though Metropolitan Mar Vattasseril Mar Divannasios had not given his explicit agreement, he had given his silent approval.
3. The original draft of the letter sent to Patriarch Rahmani was written in his own hand by the catholicos at Vakathanam.

These three things denied by many in the Orthodox Church can be proved beyond doubt.

1. The fact that the present catholicos and the late catholicos of Vakathanam had taken part in the reunion deliberations along with Mar Ivanios is very clear from the autobiography included earlier. The letter sent by the present catholicos (then Mar Gregorios) to Bethany from Kundara proves this beyond doubt. The photo of the post cover which carried this letter which was carefully preserved by Mar Ivanios is included elsewhere in the book. The contents of the letter with its translation from Syriac are given below:

No.

The Orthodox Syrian Church of Malabar

The Syrian Church upholding the praise of Malankara

To Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Bethany in India; let your prayers be with us!

I received your letter. I celebrated Holy Qurbono in the new church on the seventeenth. I have serious doubts as to whether the construction of the *Valiya Palli* will take place. We need a lot of money. Let God's will be done.

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I saw catholicos' decree that there should be communion with any of the ancient Churches. Even I am of the opinion that it is a good idea. All of you take a decision and I will acquiesce. There is no news here. It would be good if you give me the rest of the promised sum of money.

Regards,
1926, on 15 *Chingam* 1102 ME,
From the Bishop's House at Kundara
Metropolitan Gregorios, (Signature)

In the letter quoted above, the present catholicos has written clearly that Vakathanam Catholicos' decree contains the instruction that there should be communion with any of the ancient Churches and that he is of the same opinion. Mar Ivanios wrote the following in a letter sent to the Catholicos of Vakathanam around that time regarding the communion with the ancient Church:

... I am very particular that no one else should see this letter. I am writing this so that *Moran*[5] can consider all these matters and think of a solution. I have thought of a few ways. I had written to you earlier raising the following: Is it a good idea to unite with some ancient Church without compromising our basic beliefs and sacred rituals? What is your opinion? You do not have to reply to this. I only want you to think about the various aspects. You, the auxiliary bishop and I should consult Lord and only that opinion should be conveyed to the *valiya* metropolitan. Right now, nothing should be said to any one regarding this, especially from *Moran*'s lips.

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

[5] *Moran* is a Syriac word used to address respectfully a bishop. It means Our Lord / Your Grace

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The letters quoted above prove that the authorities of the Orthodox Church were aware of the need to commune with an ancient Church. What needs to be thought about is, what their intention was regarding the selection of that "ancient Church". It is beyond debate that their only aim was the internal and external progress of the Church they were heading and its members. Hence, there can be no doubt that they would wish to unite with the Church which had progressed and which is progressing still. Greek, Jacobite, Nestorian, Armenian, and Coptic Churches have made no progress and moreover they are deteriorating daily, as people who have understood the history and the modern condition of these Churches will attest. Hence, it is clearly proven that the revered bishops intended to join the Catholic Church, which is spread all over the world and which is flourishing on all fronts. The further correspondences prove this fact.

In the book named, *The Telescope of Malankara Church*, (*Malankarasabhayude Kuzhal Kannadi*) written by the Most Rev. Pulikkottu Joseph Ramban and Cheppattu Philipose Ramban before their Catholic communion, it is said that a council was held at Parumala involving all the bishops to take this decision. The passage quoted below is from the book, *The Magnifying Glass of Malankara Church* (*Malankarasabhayude Bhoothakannadi*) written as a reply to this by a member of the Orthodox Church, Mr PJ Mathew of Kottayam. He wrote the book after talking with the bishops of the Orthodox Church regarding this. The book says the following regarding this issue:

> On one occasion when all the bishops were present, Mar Ivanios insisted that there should be a discussion regarding the future of the Church and as a result, the Catholicos and the auxiliary bishop had a discussion with Mar Ivanios. Though Metropolitan Mar Divannasios was present, he did not participate in the discussion. He said, "Take some decision that does not question the authority of the Episcopal Synod"

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> and he left the room. But we need to know the details of the discussion that took place. Using the opportunity that presented itself when *The Great Metropolitan* left the room, Mar Ivanios made a long speech on reunion with Rome. Since neither the catholicos nor the auxiliary bishop had rhetorical skills and the ability to make a rational argument like Mar Ivanios they were in a quandary. But it is worth mentioning that it was especially decided that no decision should be communicated to Mar Divannasios. When they came out of the discussion, in answer to His Beatitude's query, "Did you take any decision?", Mar Ivanios said "yes, we decided" and he left. The readers should consider whether Mar Ivanios would not have made the decisions clear if his intentions were good. (*Magnifying Glass*, Page 74-75)

From the passages quoted above, it is clear that Mar Ivanios wrote to the Patriarch Rahmani with the consent of the bishops other than Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios. Though it is true that Mar Ivanios had strong reasons for doing this, it cannot be denied that he did the correspondences with the consent of the other bishops.

2. It cannot be denied that this venture had the silent consent of Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios. He said, "Take some decision that does not question the authority of the Episcopal Synod" to the other bishops and left the room because there was a case going on in the court in which he was arguing that he was the actual Metropolitan of the Malankara Jacobite Church and he had testified that he accepted the spiritual authority of the Antiochian Jacobite patriarch. If it became known that he was corresponding with the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, who was under the *Ris* Patriarch of Rome, he would have lost the case. Since it had been also decided that the decision of the bishops should not be conveyed to Mar Divannasios, one cannot blame Mar Ivanios for merely saying, "yes,

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we decided" in reply to his question, "Did you take any decision?" There is no doubt that Mar Divannasios gave his silent consent to the plan so as to prepare a plan of action for the future in case he lost the case.

3. It is true that the late catholicos (Vakathanam) had written a letter in his own handwriting in order to be sent to the Patriarch Rahmani of Antioch and that Mar Ivanios had kept it safely. Mar Ivanios had kept that letter safely for 30 years in order to convince those who argue that such a letter has never been written and those who are skeptical about the same and an excerpt from that letter has been quoted elsewhere in this book. An extract from the *Magnifying Glass* written as if in reply to what the revered rambans wrote in the *Telescope* is given below. The author has clearly accepted the truth that the catholicos wrote such a letter in his own hand. That part has been reproduced below:

> It is said in the *Telescope* that Mar Ivanios has with him a letter written by the catholicos in order to be sent to Patriarch Ephrem Rahmani. Mar Ivanios took the initiative to write the letter when both he and the catholicos were present. Nobody needs to be reminded that Mar Ivanios' Syriac handwriting is terrible. Therefore, when the cunning Mar Ivanios suggested that the letter should be written in His Beatitude's handwriting for the convenience of those who write the fair copy, he acquiesced innocently without realizing the treachery. It is worth mentioning that His Beatitude had specifically ordered that the letter should not be sent in his handwriting and that he would not sign it. When Mar Ivanios said that he would have the letter written in somebody else' handwriting and send it, the catholicos ordered, "Whatever you do is alright. I would only insist that it should not be sent in my handwriting" (*Magnifying Glass*, page 78).

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The extract clearly shows that the letter was written by the late catholicos in his handwriting. But the author of the *Magnifying Glass* has tried to reduce its credibility by arguing that the catholicos wrote the letter in his own handwriting only because Mar Ivanios compelled him to do so. If he did not want Catholic Reunion, if it had been against his conscience, the catholicos would never have agreed to write the letter in his own handwriting. The letter has come into the possession of this author. It is clear that the catholicos' handwriting is as bad as Mar Ivanios' handwriting and that the letter was written on a piece of scrap paper and that it was never meant to be sent as such. It is clear from the extract from Mar Ivanios' autobiography reproduced earlier in this chapter that the letter was copied in a good handwriting on a good sheet of paper by Rev. Fr Moolamannil. It is said that it is because the other bishops had authorized Mar Ivanios to correspond with the Patriarch Rahmani that he signed the letter as everyone's representative without the catholicos' signature.

Anyway, it is clear from everything said above that Mar Ivanos carried out the correspondences regarding the Catholic Reunion with the complete knowledge, consent and support of the Bishops of the Orthodox Church. The subsequent correspondences can be found in the other chapters.



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Chapter 21

THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH RAHMANI, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH

As informed in the previous chapter the Synod of the Orthodox bishops had appointed Mar Ivanios to correspond with the Patriarch of Antioch, Rahmani, for the Reunion. In this chapter we can see the translated version of the letters sent by Mar Ivanios to the Patriarch in Syriac and the reply he received from him. But before that a brief profile of the Syrian Catholics of Antioch is given.

The Reunion Movement of Antioch

Towards the end of the eighteenth century (about 150 years ago) the Patriarch of the Antiochian Jacobite Church, Ignathios Jarweh, had embraced the Catholic faith along with his followers. A new hierarchy was erected and the rite they were following was recognised for them by the Holy Roman See and the patriarch was given the title 'the Patriarch of Antioch'. *[At present there are six patriarchs serving under the title of 'the Patriarch of Antioch'. Out of these four (Latin, Syrian, Maronite and Melkite) patriarchs are catholics in communion with the Pope while the other two are non-catholics belonging to the Arthaduksa Jacobite Church. (Author)]* Following this several bishops, priests and lay people embraced the Catholic faith, thereby strengthening the Re-union Movement.

The Antiochian Syrian Catholics are using the corrected version of the order of liturgy of the Jacobites. In this particular rite, the Arabic language is used along with the Syriac language for the Holy Qurbono,

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the various sacraments and prayers so that the common people will understand. The Antiochian Syrian Catholic bishops and priests have not deviated much from the Jacobite tradition in their vestments and rituals. The holy throne of the patriarch is located in Beirut.

Out of his deep affection for the Eastern Catholics, Pope Pius XI of revered memory elevated the reigning Patriarch Ignatios of Beirut to the position of cardinal. He is known as Cardinal Gabriel Thappuni. There are 8 bishops, 164 priests, over 70,000 people and several Institutions under him. There is a constant flow of people from the Jacobite Church getting reunited there.

Patriarch Rahmani was the predecessor of Cardinal Thappuni. He was a great intellectual having extraordinary erudition in various languages and sciences. He had acquired a distinct scholarship in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, French, and several other languages. Several books of great learning were written and published by him. It was this Patriarch Rahmani, who was ruling in the Antiochian throne when serious deliberations and negotiations for reunion were being undertaken by the Orthodox Bishops of Kerala. This was the reason for entrusting Mar Ivanios with the correspondence regarding the Reunion Movement. The letters of correspondence between them are given one by one below.

Letter sent to the Secretary

The first letter was not sent to Patriarch Rahmani directly by Mar Ivanios, but by his secretary Jacob Kasseessa[1] who later became Bishop Mar Theophilos. The translation of the detailed letter sent by Patriarch Rahmani to the secretary in Syriac language is given below:

> Apostolic greetings and peace of God to our dear and affectionate son Jacob Kasseessa who is the secretary to Geevarghese Ivanios, the Bishop of Bethany,

[1] Kaseessa = priest

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Dearly beloved in the Lord!

I read with great joy and delight the letter of good news sent on 17 July last year, and the article sent joyfully to our secretary. I have fully understood its contents. I sincerely pray that God showers his blessings on you and on the people of the dioceses of Malabar. I specially pray for God's grace on all of you so that you may live in faith enjoying the peace of God and protected from all deceit and evil, enriched by your good deeds.

I praise and thank God, for his great mercy, which has brought in your hearts the spiritual reawakening of harmony and unity. I am a bit late in replying to your letter, as I was away on a tour of the Western countries. I only returned to my See in Beirut this month.

The fact that the holy bishops, priests and the Syrians of India have expressed their intense desire to join the Universal Holy Catholic Church with the Pope of Rome as the chief head gives me great joy and I convey my happiness to you. I hope and pray that all is well with our dear brethren, the honoured Mar Baselios Gevarghese Catholicos, Bishop Geevarghese Divannasios of Malankara and Mar Ivanios Geevarghese Episcopo of Bethany. Along with the Psalmist, David and the Holy fathers let me exult: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"

We have been very carefully following the early Order of Worship of the Syrian Antiochian Church. The rituals in it have been kept like the apple of our eye. We will not allow or agree to even the minutest addition or deletion from it. Either in the East or the West, there does not exist a better Order of Worship than ours. The Syriac

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language was used by our Lord the Messiah and the glorious Apostles and has been in use ever since. I will neither agree to any change in the rites of our Church as has been done and followed by the Chaldeans of Malabar nor change it in accordance with the western rites of the Latin Church. I have published the books you follow and you would have understood how carefully I have done it. You will have understood the problems we had in protecting the earlier rites while publishing the order of service for the Holy Qurbono, funeral, ordination, etc.

Let me manifest my love for you by proclaiming that when you become united with us you will have priests, ashramites and spiritual leaders from amongst you to lead you.

Let me make a clarification regarding your concern that you will lose your churches and ashrams on reuniting with us. Once you get reunited with us along with bishops, priests and blessed brethren we will use our persuasive powers with the pope to persuade the authorities in London, so that you can retain your churches and ashrams. We will earnestly pray for your reunion and for the welfare of your priests and for your seminarians. In the name of our living Almighty God I assure you, as the Lord has proclaimed, they will become the light of the world and the salt of the Earth. Therefore let them be informed in the truths so that they can instruct others the ways of God. They the responsibility to be the image of our Lord Jesus to the people of their parishes so that they can be good examples and manifestations of God on earth.

I pray God Almighty to bless you and your dioceses and keep you under the wings of His care so that you will

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prosper and be delivered from all evils enabling you to keep all the commandments of the Church.

Submitting to His abundant glory, I believe that all the Syrian Christians in India who are believers will be united in His name. I look forward to a reply for this letter.

Abide in the Lord in all safety,

Sd/-

Patriarch Rahmani

This was written in the Bishop's House at Beirut on 12 October 1926.

* * * * *

The reply sent by Mar Ivanios

The reply to the above referred letter sent to his secretary was written by Mar Ivanios himself.

'Father of all Fathers and Head of all Heads who has power over the Syrian Catholics of the East, who rules over the apostolic throne of Antioch, Aboon Aprem II Moran Mor Ignathios, Patriarch Rahmani,"

After respectfully kissing your pure and sacred hand, I wish to inform Your Beatitude, in the holy name of our Lord who protects and glorifies your lofty priesthood, the following:-

I have received the loving and affectionate letter sent to my humble secretary by Your Beatitude from Beirut written on 12 October. I praise God Almighty for every word mentioned in your letter. I hope and pray that the gates leading to the unity of all the Catholics in the world will be opened to us also shortly. It is with great joy that I have learned that your Beatitude follows without fail all

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the Order of the Liturgy of the Antiochian Syrian Church .We believe in the name of God that the rites followed in India by the Episcopal Synod will be protected along with the Antiochian rites even after we are united with you and the Roman Catholic Church. I will write to you about this and similar issues shortly.

Moran Mor Baselios Geevarghese Catholicos who sits on the Eastern apostolic throne and his fellow bishops, send their regards and ask after your health.

I sincerely believe that this letter and the ones I have sent earlier will be treated confidentially and will not be published. I request you to kindly remember me in your prayers and in your Holy Qurbono. Please send the reply to this letter as registered post. I pray that you stretch forth your right hand and bless me.

Barekmor, Al subukhono

Your Beatitude's humble Servant

Sd/-

Ivanios, the humble servant of Bethany

Geevarghese Episcopo

Written at Bethany, Thiruvilla Village, India, on 30 October 1927

* * * * *

The Reply from the Patriarch

It was after a year that Patriarch Rahmani sent a reply to the letter personally written by Mar Ivanios. It has to be inferred that the delay in the reply was caused, as the patriarch came to know that Mar Ivanios in consultation with the other bishops had sent memoranda to Rome appealing that they be received directly under the jurisdiction of the pope. This must have come to the notice of the patriarch. The

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pope must have sent letters to the patriarch asking them to furnish details regarding the Jacobite Church in Antioch, their leaders, the validity of the ordination by the 'laying on of hands' they received, the order of liturgy, etc. Through these letters, the patriarch realized that the genuine desire of the Malankara Orthodox bishops was for reunion, to be directly under the jurisdiction of the pope. This was the reason for the one-year delay in receiving a reply. And this is what he wrote:

'In the holy name of the almighty, perfect in essence,
without beginning and end and eternal Father!
Your humble servant of the Apostolic Throne
of the East and Antioch,
the humble Aprem II, Ignathios, Patriarch Rahmani

(seal)

May the Holy Spirit who descended on the Holy Apostles at the house of Zion descend upon Bishop Mar Ivanios of Bethany in India!

Peace to you dear brother in the Lord!

On receiving Your Excellency's letters sent last year on 30 *Thesrink'din* (October) 1927, I offered in gratitude prayers and praises to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of shepherds. I am very happy to know about your well-being and joyfully acknowledge your pleasant reply and profound knowledge. I especially praise the God almighty with happiness for enlightening your pure conscience with rays of unity with the Holy Catholic Church and the Apostolic Throne of Antioch of the Syrians. Along with Psalmist David I too sing, "Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim You, who walk in the light of Your presence, O Lord. They rejoice in Your name all day long; they exult in Your righteousness" (Ps 89:15).

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You have mentioned in your letter that you liked very much the letter I had sent to your esteemed secretary. Let me put forth something that crossed my innocent mind. The holy path of reunion has been laid ready. The great door of love and unity with the holy Roman Church and us has opened before you. Through this, the fortune to be the children of the global church is before you. The pope who is the successor to the See of St Peter, the chief of the Apostles, is the head of the Church. You will become respected members of the Church of Antioch, where the people who were converted through Gospel teachings attained the name Christians. Founded in the Syriac language spoken by the Lord and his disciples we safeguard as the apple of our eye its apostolic order and canons. I have not kept silent in providing our common prayer books in their right order to the faithful and from protecting them unadulterated. I know already that this is the order founded by the Apostles, the Fathers who made their presence felt in the Church of Antioch and the scholarly *Malpans*. It is because of this reason that we desire that you unite with us. Let me tell you, it is not because of the craving for power or the desire for authority. In order to convince you of the above facts we send you a *Qurbono Takso*[2] and a pontifical for sacred ordination, which is being printed. I will try to send you later in your name all the other church related books at the earliest.

Let me reiterate that all the bishops who unite with us can continue in their sees. The spiritual rights of the bishops ordained for India will be protected whenever it occurs.

[2] Missal

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The bishops to head the dioceses of India will be chosen from among them.

The glorious and the exalted Maphrian Mor Baselios Catholicos and his successors chosen from India will have authority over all bishops, priests and people. Let them obey the pope, the head of the holy Catholic Church and the Patriarch of Antioch according to the canons of the Church. Let the words, "one flock and one shepherd" of our Lord Jesus Christ be fulfilled. Let us not forget our responsibility before God to use our might and strength for unity. The priests and the people should foster their spirituality and show their keenness in prospering to new heights of virtue and glory.

"As the deer panteth for the water let our hearts yearn for the Lord" through this act of unity. I eagerly await a clear and detailed letter from Your Excellency and from the other bishops of India. Inform us of your decision for unity with the Roman Catholic Church and us and also your general decisions. After receiving such a letter from you, we would help you in all matters. It would be good if His Beatitude Baselios Geevarghese Catholicos sends a similar letter to us.

Be assured that until the union is completed according to your desire and decision, not a word of our confidential letters will be made public except to the great high priest, the Pope of Rome.

I am willing to send two or three priests or bishops well versed in Syriac and English to your country if you feel the need for it. They will reveal our heart to you through face-to-face conversation.

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In conclusion, I embrace in pristine love my esteemed Maphrian Mor Baselios Geevarghese Catholicos as well as the other blessed bishops of your Church. We extend our hearts to the Lord of lords and with a sigh, plead for the successful completion of this admirable endeavour. We specially pray that you be filled with God's grace, for showers of blessings so that you and your congregation are filled with spiritual and physical prosperity and benediction. Let His compassionate eyes protect us from all dangers and temptations. We will be with you in all your noble endeavours.

Written on 5 January (*Konunhroi*) 1929 AD at the Bishop's House of the Syrian Patriarch at Beirut.

Your humble Ignathios Aprem II of Antioch and the East.

sd/-

Patriarch Rahmani

* * * * *

The Reply Sent by Mar Ivanios

The reply sent by Mar Ivanios to the long letter sent by Patriarch Rahmani is given below.

In the name of our Lord who protects and exalts the esteemed priesthood in you, the great, exalted, illustrious Beatitude Patriarch *Aboon* Moran Mor Ignathios, who reigns from the Apostolic Throne of Antioch,

After kissing your holy hands let me inform your high priesthood that I have received on time the letter sent to me this year on 15 January (*Konunhroi*). I have shown it to Moran Mor Baselios, the Catholicos of the East and

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to His Grace the Metropolitan Geevarghese. I send this letter in accordance with their advice.

Last week I had sent a letter to you in English. I hope you have understood everything about this humble servant from that letter. I understand from your letter that there are a few priests with you who know English. Since we are better able to write in English, henceforth we will write to you in English if you do not forbid us. You can write to us either in Syriac or English as you wish. All our priests and bishops are seriously thinking about the unification and integration and specially praying to God.

We would like to know about the dioceses under your throne. We desire to know about the number of bishops, priests, people, and educational institutions under you and also as to how the needs of the priests and the seminarians are met. I hope that you will not feel even the slightest offence because I ask such questions.

His Grace Moran Mor Baselios Catholicos and His Grace Metropolitan Geevarghese along with me, your humle servant, went through the *Thakso* of the Holy Qurbono sent to us. There is not much difference between that *Thakso* and the *Thakso* used by us here. We wish to see the other books of worship used by you there. Kindly send us the books which will assist the priests in their service, the Book of Penkeeso and other canonical laws.

His Grace Moran Mor Baselios Catholicos and His Grace Metropolitan Geevarghese and all of us enquire after your health and specially beseech your blessings. I hope in God that soon I will be able to write more clearly about

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the communion with the Roman Catholic Church and with your See.

Barekmor Alsubukhono

Yours,

Sd/-

Your Servant, the humble Mar Ivanios Geevarghese

Episcopo of Bethany

From the Bethany Bishop's House on 27 July
(*Thomus*) 1929

* * * * *

The Reply from the Patriarch

As soon as Patriarch Rahmani received the letter given above from Mar Ivanios, he sent a reply. The translation of the letter, which was written in Syriac, is given below.

Moran Mor Ignathios Aprem II Rahmani, Patriarch of Antioch.

May the apostolic blessings received by the Apostles at the house of Zion alight on Episcopo Mar Ivanios Geevarghese, the Bishop of Bethany! May the grace of God protect him from all dangers that might befall him!

We have received the loving letter written to us on 27 July (*Thomus*) this year and also the letter written in English sent on the same day. We praise God for keeping you in good health. We are happy to know that you are praying for us and loving us with a pure heart. We will relentlessly pray for you and your parishes. We await with hope to see that happy day when our aspirations

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will be fulfilled and according to the will of God the dear Syrian Malankara people will be united with us and the Holy Catholic Church. Our heart throbs with happiness to know that you have shown our letter to His Grace Moran Mor Baselios Catholicos and His Grace Metropolitan Gregorios and that it was acceptable to them and that they encouraged you to reply. We have no problem with you sending any number of letters in Syriac or English. We know both the languages. But the reply from us will be written in Syriac.

You have made it explicitly clear that all the priests and bishops of India desire and are praying for unity. Let us pray to God who gives us light, for the speedy realization of that worthy endeavour so that we can say "Behold, *how good* and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in unity*".

Given below are the dioceses of the metropolitans and bishops under the throne of Antioch in Syria.

Mosul, Haleb, Darsukh, Baghdad, Hamad, Hemas, Mesram, Lebanon, Besnahereen are the sees. They are under the bishops appointed by us.

Many Syrian Catholic people who submit to the throne of Antioch dwell in and around Mosul, Haleb, south of Mardeen, Funokia, Misrene, Alexandria, Ursem, Bethlehem and Yopha.

We have three seminaries that train priests for priesthood. Of that one is in the hilltops of Lebanon, another is in Urssem and the third is in Mosul. We have three dayaras in the revered name of Blessed Mar Aprem. One is in Lebanon, another in Rome and the third in Mesrum. We also have another three

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dayaras, one in the name of Mar Behanan near Mosul, another in the name of Mar Yuliano at Karitheem and one in the name of Mar Moosa at Napek. Not only in the towns but also in the villages we have established at least one educational institution.

The remuneration for the cor-episcopoi and priests are borne from the offerings in the churches or from the donations given by the faithful or pious organizations.

You had asked us to send the books required for use in the churches. Some of them had been sent to you. Thakso of the Holy Qurbono, common order of worship, some parts of the book for ordination, etc have been sent to you. The order of service for funerals, *Basgasakoodaseetho*, the *Penkeeso* of Denaho, the lectionary containing the Gospels and Epistles, the Order of the Yearly Feasts of our Lord (*Anduthakso*) and the canonical laws of the Church are being sent to you.

Our spirit exults and we are filled with joy on knowing that you will write in detail regarding your union with the Roman Catholic Church and the apostolic throne of Antioch. Along with the psalmist David let us also pray for that wonderful day with eagerness. "*This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*"

We pray God to bless you and all your parishes with spiritual and worldy blessings and keep you under His benediction. May God bless you and protect you from all dangers and sorrows and may all retribution be taken away from you! May peace and serenity reign over you!

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Hoping that all is well with Mar Baselios Catholicos and Mar Metropolitan Gregorios and all the priests and people of the *Dayaras* who respect you.

Yours

(sign)

Ignathios Aprem II of Antioch in Syria.

Patriarch Rahmani

Written on 22 October (*Tesreenkdeem*) 1929 at Beirut

* * * * *

From the above letters the readers would have realized the extent of the love and respect and the desire for the union of non-Catholics shown by Patriarch Rahmani. But later on Mar Ivanios became aware that due to several reasons it would be better to be directly united with the pope than with the patriarch and hence started his direct correspondence with Rome. Those letters and their replies and the reasons that were behind it will be given in the following chapters.



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Chapter 22

THE FIRST MEMORANDUM SENT TO ROME AND ITS REPLY

The last chapter included the letters written by Mar Ivanios as the secretary to the Bishops of the Orthodox Church to the Catholic Patriarch Rahmani of Antioch. It was because the possibility of a Catholic Reunion after obtaining permission from the Pope of Rome for a new rite and hierarchy was deemed unlikely that Mar Ivanios decided to have correspondence with Patriarch Rahmani. Not only that, the letters show that he was aware that only by subjecting to the said patriarch, the Antiochian rite could be preserved.

During the course of his correspondence with the Catholic Patriarch, Mar Ivanios happened to see Mr E John Elanjickal BA BL, with whom he shared this information. Being a visionary and an intellectual he told the bishop thus: "bishop, it is not wise to leave the Patriarch of Antioch and search for another Patriarch from Antioch. If I can voice my opinion openly, you should try to integrate the ways of worship (liturgy) of our Church with the constitution of the Western Church and try for a reunion with the Catholic Church under the direct jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome. The rulers of the Western Church are cultured and noble. We have had an experience of the culture of the Turks. Therefore you should directly correspond with the pope."

When Mar Ivanios talked to a few prominent members of the Orthodox and Jacobite Churches, they too voiced the same opinion as Mr E John. In this circumstance, it will be relevant to include an experience of the author of this book:

Two years before the reunion movement I, who was a priest, had

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the good fortune to embrace the Catholic faith (1928). Along with a few young men, I went to meet the Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, Mar Augustine Kandathil. After discussing several things, the bishop asked us: "How are things in Bethany?' We replied, "The Bishop of Bethany and others will shortly reunite with the Catholic Church. But it is heard that it will be under Rahmani, the Patriarch of Antioch."

As soon as he heard this, the aging bishop got up from his chair, hit on the table and said vehemently, "It should never happen. There will be no prosperity. Bethany should come under the direct rule of the pope; only then will there be prosperity."

Our shortsightedness did not allow us to understand the full impact of what the farsighted and experienced bishop said then. It can be said without any exaggeration that the Reunion Movement owes its prosperity over the last twenty-five years to the providence of being under the direct rule of the pope.

* * * * *

The Opinion of Bishop Kalassery

Due to these reasons, Mar Ivanios decided to send the requests to Rome. But he had legal doubts as to whether he could send the letters directly to Rome or whether it should be sent through the apostolic delegate in India. For this he decided to secretly meet Bishop Mar James Kalassery of the Diocese of Changanassery.

Around ten in the night a car came and sounded the horn at the gate of the Bishop's House at Changanassery. Immediately a watcher came rushing and opened the gate. A stranger got out of the car and asked the watcher, "Is the bishop here?"

Watcher: Yes but I think he has gone to sleep.

Stranger: That is all right. Take me to the Bishop's room. You also come with me".

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The watcher led the stranger to the second floor of the Bishop's House. Showing the room he said, "This is the room". As soon as this was said there came a sound from inside, "Who is it?" The stranger replied, "The Bishop of Bethany Mar Ivanios". The door of the room opened. Both the bishops embraced each other. After the initial exchange of pleasantries Mar Ivanios said, "Bishop you might know that we are trying for a reunion with the Catholic Church. We are corresponding for a union with the Patriarch of Antioch. But many are of the opinion that it is better to be under the direct jurisdiction of the pope. We intend to send applications for the same. Can we send the applications directly to the pope or should we send it only through the delegate in India? It is to get your advice regarding this, that I came this night."

Bishop Kalassery: "It is definitely better to have a reunion directly with the pope. It is my opinion too. We, the Catholic Bishops, can send important letters to Rome only through the delegate. But you, the Bishops of the Jacobite Church can send letters directly to Rome."

Following this, they talked for some more time and then Mar Ivanios left for Tiruvalla. After a few days Mar Alexander Choolapparambil, the Bishop of Kottayam visited Tiruvalla and imparted some advice and directions regarding the re-union. As a result of all this, Mar Ivanios decided to send a memorandum to Rome, giving all the details. A small passage from his autobiography regarding this is given:

> As per this I wrote to Rome. The first letter was written through Fr Ribeiro who had his priestly education in Rome and who was leading a retired life due to old age at Mavelikkara his native place. The content of the first letter was somewhat similar to this: "A group of people in Kerala who belong to the Christian Church founded by St Thomas in India along with their priests and bishops would like to rejoin the Catholic Church. They follow the rites of the

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Antiochian Church. They are now under the rule of the catholicos. Would the catholicos and the bishops be accepted in a Catholic Reunion? Will the sanctity of their Sacraments and their apostolic *kaiveppu* be rightfully accepted? Will the traditions and canons of the Antiochian Church as followed here be accepted? We know that the former Holy Popes had at several times reiterated that the Catholic Church and the Holy See were willing to accept the distinctly different Eastern Churches and their traditions. We are writing this letter to know your policy regarding us on this issue. This letter was handed over to Fr Ribero without my signature and name.

Fr Ribeiro told us that there was a cardinal in Rome who was his teacher while in the seminary and through him, he would get a reply for the letter. We received an unsigned reply for the unsigned letter that was sent to Rome. There were answers in that reply to all the questions asked. There were also questions regarding the historical validity of apostolic laying on of hands (*kaiveppu*) for the priests and bishops of the Orthodox Church and also whether there were any beliefs in the Jacobite Church contradicting the beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Church.

For this letter we wrote a letter with signature and name. We replied that the apostolic laying on of hands was a historical fact and that a patriarch of the Jacobite Church Abded M'siha had come to Kerala in 1911 and enthroned a Metropolitan as catholicos and that metropolitan was given the position of Metropolitan by Patros III, a Jacobite Patriarch who visited Kerala in 1876. The present bishops were ordained either directly by the Jacobite Patriarch or the catholicos and therefore there was nothing about the beliefs that went against the teachings of the Catholic

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Church. This was what was said in the reply. This correspondence was during the years 1926 and 1927. The last reply came from Rome in August 1930. In between a letter was sent to the apostolic delegate of the pope in Syria enquiring about the legitimacy of the episcopacy in the Orthodox Church in Kerala. He confirmed the things said in our letter and this was known through a secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches while we were on a visit to Rome to meet Pope Pius XI in 1932. We were also handed a copy of the report of the Apostolic Delegate of Syria.

* * * * *

The first memorandum[1] sent to Rome is given below:-

MEMORANDUM

What is Wanted

The entry of the Jacobite Church into the unity of the Catholic Church

i) Preserving their ancient rites and rituals and

ii) Conserving the jurisdiction of the uniting bishops over their own flock.

STATEMENTS

Since the year 1665 some of the Syrians in South India have been members of the Jacobite Church and recognized the spiritual supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, living in Mardin in Turkey. And the

[1] The quote is transcribed here from the original manuscript kept in the archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome. The spellings are as in this original.

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Jacobite Church in India enjoyed autonomy as regards the internal affairs of the Church.

Since 1910, the Jacobite Church in South India has been split into two sections. One section owes allegiance to Elias III, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch living in Mardin. The other section owes allegiance to the catholicos of the East living at Vakathanam, near Kottayam, Travancore. The Catholicate was established in India by the Jacobite Patriarch Abdul Messiah II who visited Travancore in 1912. The Catholicate is the revival of the early Catholicate of the East which had its See at Tigris in Mesopotamia. The Catholicate is independent of the Patriarch of Antioch. And within the Catholicate, patriarchal powers are exercised by the Holy Synod which is composed of the catholicos and his comprovincial bishops.

It is the bishops of the Catholicate that seek re-union with the Holy See. The Holy Synod of the Catholicate consecrates bishops and metropolitans and performs all the patriarchal functions and exercises patriarchal powers within the archdiocese of the Catholicate. The Holy Synod claims to itself legislative, administrative and disciplinary powers in all matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, within the arch-diocese.

The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church, themselves,

i) Preserving the ancient rites and rituals,

ii) Retaining for the Holy synod and for the individual bishops their jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians that come into re-union, and

iii) Accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the pope being the successor of St Peter, the Chief of the Apostles of Our Lord.

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The Holy Synod does not want to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Beyrout. For the Holy Synod itself exercises Patriarchal jurisdiction within the arch-diocese of the Catholicate in South India.

The archdiocese consisted of seven episcopal dioceses and lately an eighth diocese has been added to the seven. And the eight dioceses are placed under the jurisdiction of the three bishops of the Catholicate who are the present members of the Holy Synod. Their names with the names of their respective diocese are given below:-

i) The Most Rev. Moran Mar Baselios (Givergis) catholicos of the East and Bishop of the Dioceses of Kottayam, Kandanad and Angamalee.

   Head Quarters :- Vakathanam, Kottayam, Travancore

ii) The Most Rev. Mar Gregorios (Givergis) Metropolitan Bishop of the Diocese of Niranam, Quilon, Thumpamun and Cochin.

   Head Quarters:- Kundara, near Quilon, Travancore.

iii) The Right Rev. Mar Ivanios (Givergis) Bishop of the Diocese of Bethany:

   Head Quarters: - Tiruvalla, Travancore.

The Bishop of Bethany has two Religious orders under him, one of men (clerical) and the other of women who do educational work. They have also an orphanage under their care.

The Holy Synod will finally decide about re-union after definitely hearing from the Roman Church. If after Rome has done her part to enable re-union being effected, the Holy Synod were to refuse to enter into the unity of the Catholic Church, one at least of the bishops will make

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his submission to the pope and beg His Holiness to give him jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians in order to make it possible for the union-loving Jacobites who would seek re-union but would be kept out on account of differences of rite, to become members of the Catholic Church and continue to use the same rites and rituals that they have been using hitherto. These rites are already in use in the arch-diocese of the Patriarch of the Syrian Catholics in Syria and Mesopotamia.

The Syrian Christians in South India are about 900,000 strong, about one half of whom are already within the Roman Communion using a modified form of the Chaldean Syrian rite. The other half consists of about 300,000 Jacobites and 125,000 Mar Thomites. The Mar Thomites follow practically the same rites as the Jacobites, although they have accepted a few teachings of the Protestants. The Jacobites follow the traditional Christian belief. They are not the followers of Eutychesin their belief that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is divinity and humanity perfected in one Man.

If the Holy See agrees to this appeal then more than four and a half lakh non-Catholics will accede to the Catholic faith following the rites they were hitherto following and accepting the primacy of their bishops and priests."

The Reply received from Rome

It was in November 1926 that the memorandum given above was sent to Rome through Rev. Fr Ribiero. It was to know the mind of Rome regarding the entry of non-Catholic bishops, priests and people that such a memorandum was sent. The unofficial letter sent from the Holy See in Rome explaining their course of action is given below.

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The recent expression of a desire on the part of the Synod of the Catholicate for reunion with the Catholic Church under the primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St Peter and the Vicar of Christ on earth, was received by the Holy Father with that deep sense of satisfaction which is but natural in view of his fatherly affection and pastoral solicitude for all Christians.

The wish that there may be "one fold and one shepherd" represents the deep and abiding aspiration that dominated the thought of the Holy Father from the very beginning of his pontificate. In his first encyclical to the Catholic world, letting his heart go out to those, all too many indeed, who as yet "are not of this fold" though in God's designs they should be of it. He added, "He who represents the Eternal Pastor cannot but be inflamed with the same desire that surged in His Sacred Heart, cannot but repeat the very phrase, brief indeed but full of love and indulgent fatherly affection, which he used, "them also must I bring". I cannot but experience an ineffable joy as I recall the prophecy of Christ, "and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

Again in the Encyclical issued on the occasion of the third centenary of the blessed death of St Josaphat, Martyr, the present Pontiff gave expression of greater length to his desire that all separated brethren return to Catholic unity and asserted that to this end it is necessary that they seek to know the true life of the Church: on the other hand he strongly urged Catholics of the Latin rite to study more deeply the history and customs of Christians of Oriental rites, expressing the hope that this increase of mutual understanding and the strong force of prayer on both sides may have this blessed effect that they who for any reason whatsoever have cut themselves off from the Chruch may be brought back to Catholic unity and thus enter the enjoyment of those rights which the Chruch safeguards for all alike: "*Aequo jure utantur conjuncti populi, cunusvis sint generis aut lingeae, quorumvis rituum sacrorum quos Romana Ecclesia et sanctissime simper*

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venerata retinuit, semperque decrevit retinendos, iisdem se tamquam pretiosis vestibus exornans, quasi regina ... in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate."

From these words the bishops of the Malabar Catholicate may clearly see how their expressed desire to retain their liturgical books will be treated by the Holy See. In readmitting separated Christians to unity, the Roman Pontiffs with vigilant care have ever followed the policy of approving or permitting the retention of their rites, if, and in so far as, these rites contained nothing contrary to Catholic Faith, nothing that might constitute a danger for souls or bring the Church into disrepute. One might quote in this connection the words of the famous Bull of Benedict XIV, "*Esti Pastoralis*" of 16 May 1742, para. 9: "Romani Pontifices satius conultiusque duxerunt ritus hujusmodi qua in parte nec fidei catholicae adversantur, nec periculum generant animarum, aut ecclesiasticae derogate honestati, approbare aut permettere." The same pope repeated these very words in another notable document, the Bull "*Allatae nobis*" of 26 July 1755, in which, instancing the celebrated reunion of the Rutherians with the Holy See during the pontificate of Clement VIII, he referred to the decree published on that occasion by the Ruthenian Archbishops and Bishops and quoted its words in regard to the conditions under which they had petitioned for reunion: "*Salvis tamen et in integrum observatis ceremoniis et ritibus cultus divini peragendi et sanctorum sacramentorum Juta consuetudinem Ecclesiae Orientalis, correctis tantummodo iis articulis qui ipsam unionem impedirent ut more antique firerent omnia sicut olim unione durante fuerunt.*"

Of the same tenor and if possible, yet more clear than the above are the words of Pius IX in the decree "*Romanae Pontifice*" with which on 6 January 1862 he set up in the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda a special section to deal with the matters concerning Oriental rites. In that document, for instance, we read: "*Hinc ipsi decessores Nostri non solum in animo nunquam habuere*

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orientales gentes ad ritum latium ducere, verum etiam quoties opportunum existimarunt, luculentissimis verbis clare aperteque declararunt, se nolle proprios orientalium ecclesiarum ritus, utpote venerabili suae originis antiquitate et sanctorum Patrum autoritate commendatos, destruere vel immutare, sed unice velle ne quid in ritus ipsos forsam induceretur quod fidei catholicae adversetur, vel periculum generet animarum vel ecclesiaticae deroget honestati."

* * * * *

The second Memorandum sent to Rome is included in the next chapter.



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Chapter 23

THE SECOND MEMORANDUM SENT TO ROME

As soon as the first memorandum, which was sent unofficially, was received in Rome, an unofficial reply comprising of six questions related to the Jacobite Church in Malankara was sent to Mar Ivanios from Rome through the apostolic delegate. The questions were:

1. When did the Jacobite Church and the Antiochian rite gain entry in Malankara? What are the troubles faced by the Jacobite Church now?
2. How many churches and people are there in the faction that wishes to be reunited with the Catholic Church?
3. From that faction, how many churches and people will reunite with the Catholic Church immediately?
4. How many bishops were ordained by Patriarch Abdulla and Patriarch Abded M' siha? Who are they?
5. How many of them and where did they decide to reunite with the Catholic Church?
6. Who is the canonical patriarch among Patriarch Abdulla and Patriarch Abded M'siha?

The second memorandum with answers to the above questions was sent to Rome through the apostolic delegate in January 1927. It was sent with a foreword.

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MEMORANDUM II

The appended Memorandum II is a supplementary statement in answer to the questions asked. Please find the answer to questions 1 and 6 in paragraphs 1-7. The answer to question 2 is given in paragraphs 9 and 10. The answer to questions 3 is given in paragraphs 9 and 10. The answer to question 4 is given in paragraphs 6 and 8. The answer to question 5 is given in paragraph 7.

You will remember that only six questions were asked.

1) It is an undisputed fact that from AD 1599 to 1665 all the Syrian Christians on the Malabar Coast were subject to the pope. In 1665 a section of them broke off from the Roman Communion and placed themselves under the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. And since then the Antiochian rite has been in use in Malabar. In 1875 the Jacobite Patriarch for the first time visited Malabar and consecrated six bishops as suffragans to Mar Dionysius Joseph, the then Metropolitan of Malabar.

This patriarch, Peter III was succeeded by Abdul Messiah II (Abdul Masih) who was for several years the undisputed patriarch of all the Jacobite Syrians both in Turkey and in Malabar. But in AD 1906 the Turkish Government deposed him, probably at the instigation of a few Jacobite bishops in Turkey; and Abdullah Suttuf succeeded him.

2) Doctor Adrian Fortescue in his history of the Lesser Eastern Churches (pages 339-340) says the following about Patriarch Abdullah's succession to the patriarchal throne and adds that he "had these details from first hand sources in Syria" (see footnote).

"He (as bishop) was a Syrian uniate for nine years, and held the uniate see of Homs. Then in 1905, he went back to the Jacobites, received again his See of "Diyarberker" and a promise of the Patriarchal Throne when it became vacant. Soon after, in 1906, the former Patriarch Ignatius Abdul Massih (Abdul Messiah II) was deposed

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and went to Malabar. In spite of the promise, it cost Suttuf much intrigue and £ T. 350/- (borrowed from the resident Jacobite bishop at Jerusalem) to secure his own election; eventually he had to spend altogether £ T. 500/-. He was enthroned on August 15, 1906[1]

3) Patriarch Abdul Messiah II never accepted his deposition and always claimed to be the rightful and canonical patriarch, and considered Abdullah Suttuf as a usurper.

4) According to the canon of the Jacobite Church, Abdul Messiah II is the canonical and rightful patriarch, while Abdullah Suttuf is an anti-patriarch. Doctor Adrian Fortescue testifies that "of the canon law, which rules all these people the classical collection is that of Barhebraeus (Ibid. page 342)". The Syriac text has been published in Paris in 1898. This is the canon accepted by the Jacobite church for centuries. The canon law is clear on the status of the two patriarchs. The following passage is the only passage in the whole of the canon law treating the question of rival patriarchs:-

"When there is no dissension of faith, and a split of this kind occurs from self will and love of power, and two patriarchs or two metropolitans are consecrated to one throne, the first shall minister, and the other shall sit idle. For even Arsenius who was appointed to the throne of Rome sat idle, while Domosus who was consecrated before him ministered, as Socrates says in his Ecclesiastic. And also Maximus the Cyrie who was consecrated to Constantinople after Gregory the theologian was rejected as the third Canon of the One Hundred Fifty confirms. And Arch-deacon Gayona who was consecrated to Alexandria after Theodosius was sent into exile by Emperor Justinian, and Theodosius sat on the throne as John of Asia informs (us)."

Barhebraeus Nomocanon Ch. VII

[1] The Lesser Eastern Churches: Catholic Truth Society, London, 1913

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5) Patriarch Abdul Massih II sent several letters to Malabar declaring that he still continued as the rightful and canonical patriarch, and that Abdullah Suttuf was a usurper. In 1909 Abdullah Suttuf came to Malabar and tried to secure registered documents securing for him control over the temporalities of the Church of Malabar. Mar Dionysius Givergis, the Metropolitan of the Malabar Jacobite Church, objected to this procedure on the ground that the Church of Malabar, although recognizing the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch was an autocephalous church. And Patriarch Abdullah Suttuf excommunicated Mar Dionysius. Patriarch Abdul Messaih II declared from Turkey that Abdullah Suttuf had no jurisdiction in Malabar and that the excommunication of Mar Dionysius was uncanonical and invalid. And in 1912 Patriarch Abdul Messaih II came to Malabar, and "Abdul Massih, still lawful patriarch, acknowledged Dionysius and by his supreme authority made the Malabar Jacobites autocephalous" (see footnote to page 373, the Lesser Eastern Churches-Adrian Fortescue). This patriarch raised to the degree of Catholicos Bishop Mar Ivanios Paulose (titular metropolitan), bishop of the diocese of Kandanad who was consecrated bishop in 1876 by Patriarch Peter III when the latter visited Malabar. The following statement given by Dr. Adrean Fortescue is correct. "This Catholicos was to be independent of Antioch and the Syrian Jacobites. He may ordain bishops by his own authority; when he dies, they (the bishops of the Catholicate) are to choose his successor. So Abdul Massih set up an autocephalous Jacobite Church at Malabar. Abdul Massih during his visit ordained three new bishops to be suffragans of the Catholicos."[2] (The Lesser Eastern Churches page 373).

[2] It is understood that the Catholicos acts Synodically, in accordance with the Canon Law (Barhebraeus Ch.VII)

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6) The bishops thus consecrated are 1) Mar Ivanios Yoakim 2) Mar Philexinos Givergis 3) Mar Gregorius Givergis.

Of these, Mar Philexinos was on the death of the first Catholicos, consecrated his successor with the title of Moran Mar Baselius. And subsequently these three bishops together consecrated Mar Ivanios Givergis, bishop of the diocese of Bethany. Since then Mar Ivanios Yoakim died. Mar Dionysius did not take part in the consecration of the Catholicos and the Bishop of Bathany. But his grace is a great supporter of the Catholicos and belongs to this party.

7) At a meeting of the Bishps' Synod held at Perumalai, Tiruvalla, on 1 November 1926, at which

   1) His Holiness Moran Mar Baselius, Catholicos

   2) The Most Rev. Mar Gregorius (titular) Metropolitan, Kundara and

   3) The Right Rev. Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Bethany, were present, it was decided that the Bishop of Bethany be authorized to make enquiries with the authorities of the Roman Church with a view to reunion. It was further decided that this resolution as well as the correspondences and proceedings connected with it be kept strictly secret, and that the Most Rev. Mar Dionysius be not informed of this at present, but that at a later stage, the whole matter be made known to His Grace. Mar Dionysius has not formed any new party, but is connected with litigation.

8) Patriarch Abdullah Sattuf consecrated two bishops in Malabar. They are

   1) Most Rev. Mar Athanasius (residing at Alwaye)

   2) The Most. Rev. Mar Severius (bishop of the Southeast section, residing at Kottayam)

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And lately, a few weeks ago, the present patriarch consecrated at Jerusalem two more bishops for the Patriarch's party of Jacobites in Malabar. These new bishops have not yet arrived in India. They are named as follows:-

3) Mar Dionysius Michael,

4) Mar Dioscorus Thomas. This latter is to be the suffragan of Mar Severius. This list does not include Mar Osthathios, the patriarch's delegate in Malabar, who is a native of Turky. Four new candidates have been nominated for consecration in that section of the Jacobite that adhere to the Catholicos; but the consecration of these has been postponed for the present.

9) The strength of the party that adheres to the Catholicos is about 150,000. The statement in Adrian Fortescue that this party, called the Metran's party numbers about 200,000 is an exaggeration. (The Lesser Eastern Churches- page 374). This party has about 300 churches. Of these over 100, are new churches erected after separation from the patriarch. The patriarch's party has no right to these churches. The remaining churches in the possession of this party are older ones, and it is a question of law whether adverse possession of these churches for the last 16 years establishes their permanent right. In Travancore the high court has decided that it does.

10) One cannot at this stage say with any certainty how many churches and people will come into reunion at the very beginning. As soon as assurance is given that the request made in memorandum I is granted by the Holy See, definite steps will, it is hoped, be taken to bring into reunion as many churches and people as possible. This may take some time. For, we shall have to fight against inherited prejudice, ignorance and intense conservatism, as well as in some cases vested interests. But there is no need to doubt that the faith shown in doing the needful to facilitate reunion will be amply justified

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by the results. It seems that the best plan for successfully bringing all these separated Christians into reunion is utterly to disregard the number of Christians or churches that would come in at the outset. The cause of the reunion of Christendom is God's own cause, and is bound to succeed. Once the Antiochane rites which is already in use in the Roman Communion under the Syrian Catholic Patriarch, Ignatius Aprem II Rahmane, is accepted for the use of the uniting Jacobites, and the bishops that would come into reunion be recognized to continue the same status and jurisdiction as they now enjoy, a strong current will, it is hoped, set in towards reunion both within the Jacobite church and the Mar Thomas church. This current will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit get stronger every day until all the Jacobites and the Mar Thomites (who in spite of their protestant teaching, follow the same rite as the Jacobites) will all come into reunion, and in this way our Lord's last prayer, "That they all be one", will be fulfilled in the near future as far as this part of the country is concerned.

11) A word may be added here as to why this memorandum has been thought of. Three considerations have weighed with the writer of this memorandum.

i) The conviction that it is the will of our Blessed Lord that all Christians should be united, and the sooner the reunion is effected, the better for the glory of our Blessed Savior. The present condition of the Christian world cannot but break the heart of any person who desires to love our Blessed Lord.

ii) The Catholic Church ought not to be, and never has been identified with the Western Patriarchate. Eastern Christians, like the Jacobites in Malabar can and ought to have all facilities to end the schism in Christendom as far as it lies in their power.

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iii) The attitude of the Holy See towards Eastern churches has been sympathetic. The following passages in the Catholic Encyclopedia, as well as similar announcement, have greatly encouraged the writer of this memorandum.

"The Council of Florence has not been forgotten in the east. It showed Eastern Christians what the conditions of reunion are and it has left them always conscious that reunion is possible and is greatly desired by Rome. And, on the other hand, it remains always as an invaluable precedent for the Roman court. The attitude of the Holy See at Florence was the only right one; to be quite unswerving in the question of faith and to concede everything else that possibly can be conceded. There is no need of uniformity in rites or in canon law; as long as practices are not absolutely bad or immoral, each church may work out its own development along its own lines. Customs that would not suit the West may suit the East very well; and we have no right to quarrel with such customs as long as they are not forced upon us. So at Florence, in all these matters there was no attempt at changing the old order. Each church was to keep its own liturgy and its own Canon law as far as that was not incompatible with the Roman prima which is *de fide*. The very decree that proclaimed "the pope guides and rules the whole church of God", without prejudice to the rights and privileges of the other patriarchs." And the East was to keep its married clergy, and its leavened bread and was not to say the *Filioque* in the Creed, nor use solid statues, nor do any of the things that they resent as being Latin. This has been the attitude of Rome ever since. Many popes have published Decrees, Encyclicals, Bulls that show that they have never forgotten the venerable and ancient churches cut off from us by these schisms. In all these documents consistently the tone and the attitude are the same.

" Pope Pius IXth in his Encyclical, 'In Supreme Petri' (Epiphany, 1848) again assures non-uniates that "we will keep unchanged your

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liturgies, which indeed we greatly honour; Schismatic clergy who joined the Catholic Church are to keep the same rank and position as they had before."

"In the encyclical "Praeclara Gratulationis" of June 20, 1894, that has been often described (as Leo's) testament, he again turned to the Eastern Churches and invited them in the most courteous and gentle (manner) to come back to communion with us. He assures (...) that no great difference exists between their faith and ours and repeats that he would (...) For all their customs without narrowness." (Vol. V; P.P 238-239)



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Chapter 24

THE LETTERS SENT TO THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE AND THE REPLIES RECEIVED

During the period in which correspondence was going on with the Holy See for permission for the Malankara Syrian rite and hierarchy, Mar Ivanios was also corresponding with several others seeking their help and recommendation. The most important among them are the letters he had sent to the Papal representative in India, apostolic delegate Edward Mooney, then residing in Bangalore, to Bishop of Kollam Dr Aloysius Benzinger and Rev. Fr Rebeiro of Mavelikkara. Due to the lack of space in this book, it is not possible to include all the letters, but still the letters sent to the apostolic delegate and the replies he received from him are included here in this chapter.

The First Letter Sent to the Delegate

Mar Ivanios had submitted the first memorandum in November 1926 and the second memorandum in January 1927 to Rome through Rev. Fr Ribiero. Rome took more than two years to enquire into the particulars given in the memorandum and to discuss the modalities regarding the setting up of a new rite and a hierarchy. It is said Rome moves slowly. When he did not get a reply for two years Mar Ivanios became anxious and decided to write to the apostolic delegate directly in July 1928. The letter that was written to the delegate urging him to persuade Rome to take immediate action is given below.

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Tiruvalla (PO)

1-7-1928

May it please Your Excellency!

I beg of Your Excellency to allow me to approach Your Excellency with this letter. I trust the Rev. Fr Ribiero forwarded to Your Excellency my letter answering the unofficial communication from Rome regarding the rites of the Syrian church of Malabar (Jacbite). Lately I received a letter written in Syriac from His Beatitude the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch (Beirut). I enclose the Translation of the same. In this connection I beg to state that in 1925 AD His Beatitude wrote to His Grace Mar Divannasios, the Jacobite Metropolitan of Malabar, suggesting that re-union may be effected between the Malabar Jacobite church and the Syrian Catholic Patriarch. Mar Divannasios did not give a hopeful answer to this letter. In 1926 my Secretary wrote to the Secretary of His Beatitude the patriarch making enquiries regarding the possibility of re-union. But the letter remained unanswered for several months. In the meantime the Synod of the Bishops of Malabar Catholic authorised me to make private enquiries regarding the possibility of re-union with the church of Rome with special reference to the conditions mentioned in the first memorandum unofficially submitted to Your Excellency. The second memorandum was unofficially submitted in answer to the questions that were sent to me in January 1927. His Beatitude the patriarch subsequently answered my secretary's letter, and then I wrote back to thank His Beatitude for His letter and stated that since no answer was received for several months from His Beatitude, we

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opened direct correspondence with Rome requesting His Beatitude to render us every possible help to achieve re-union along the lines that we were seeking. And the present letter (please see the enclosed translation) is His Beatitude's answer. And now I am writing back to His Beatitude thanking him for His great kindness. I am also adding that direct correspondence is being continued with Rome through Your Excellency.

I desire to hear from Your Excellency whether in Your Excellency's judgement a re-union along the lines suggested by His Beatitude the patriarch or a direct re-union between the Malabar Catholicate and Rome would be more helpful for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in this country. May I further submit the following proposals in continuation of my letter, addressed to the Rev. Fr Ribiero, which I believe is with Your Excellency.

(i) That we adopt for use in Malabar the Missal, the Breviary and other books that are used in the arch-diocese of His Beatitude the patriarch. These books are printed. May I ask for printed copies of the priests' book and the pontifical books. After seeing these books I shall inform Your Excellency whether there are any difference between the usages in Malabar and in Syria.

(ii) That we modify the present constitutions of our church which provide for the Synod of Bishops limiting the authority of the catholicos and that the catholicos be recognized as having supreme jurisdiction over the bishops of the Catholicate, while the catholicos himself will be subject to His Holiness the pope.

(iii) That the extent of the patriarchal jurisdiction of the catholicos be defined so as to safeguard the primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff and to conserve the

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monarchical principle of Government in the Catholic Church.

May I request Your Excellency to treat all the correspondences on this subject as strictly confidential, and that Your Excellency's answer be sent to me by registered post. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten us and guide us to fulfil His Holy will.

I remain,

Your Excellency's very sincerely in

Our Lord Jesus Christ

Mar Ivanios (sd/-)

Bethany

* * * * *

Second Letter

It was after he sent the letter to the apostolic delegate that Mar Ivanios came to kow that the delegate was on a visit to Rome. Immediately he sent a letter, containing all relevant details to the delegate apostolic to Rome. The second letter was sent so that the apostolic delegate could inform the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches and thereby to get the requests granted quickly.

Tiruvalla

21-7-1928

Your Excellency,

I hope that you would have received the letter sent to you on July 1, 1928. It was after the letter was sent that I came to know that you had already boarded the

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ship to Rome. I became very sad knowing it, as I was planning to come and meet you in Bangalore. I also learnt the you will return from Rome soon. I am sure that since you are in Rome now you will do everything to speed up the reunion process. I have tried to explain our requests to the Holy See in the letter that was sent to you. Bishop Theophilos and I are undergoing untold harassment. But these harassments will not deter us in the least. We are just waiting for our reunion with the Holy See to become a reality. We do not think our priests have any problem in reuniting with the Holy See and submitting to the authority of the pope. This is because the historical reason for the difference is not due to heresies. Not only that the supreme sovereignty of St Peter is very clearly mentioned in our books. "The net of the fisherman Peter saves souls from death to eternal life. The church has been established over this rock. He has the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the prince of apostles and in matters of faith the educator of bishops." These things are referred to in our books. Moreover, there is an interesting part included in the order of worship. "Moses is the head of the Old Testament and Simon that of the New Testament. There is an uncanny similitude between them. God lives in them. Moses brought the tablet containing the Ten Commandments and the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven were received by Peter. The Arc of the Covenant was built by Moses and the Holy church was built by St Peter. Lord let thy name be praised in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Let their prayers bless us and help us."

The Bishops of Rome are the real followers of St Peter. The fact that St Peter died in Rome-that he was crucified upside down is mentioned several times in our

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books related to the church. The Bishops of Rome are also the patriarchs of the East.

"There should be four patriarchs for the four parts of the world and the patriarch of Rome should be the head and the most important." This is our canon law.

Our different sources tell us that a sizeable number of people will express their willingness to follow us. Some priests have already conveyed their desire to follow us. They have also asked for time to convince their congregations to make them ready to enter this union. It is my hope that at least hundred priests would follow us.

Bishop Theophilos and I have certain administrative organisations that receive and welcome all those priests who wish to join us. When Mar Theophilos was appointed as the Bishop of Tiruvalla, councils were set up with the respective Bishops, Priests and people. I too have such councils.

We desire to publish and circulate a restructured version of the Syrian *Qurbono Thakso* used in the regions under the Patriarch of Antioch (Beirut). This *Thakso* is very similar to the *Thakso* used by our Priests except for one single area. "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we break this Holy Bread" is used instead of the slightly long and confusing part in their *Thakso*. I also intend to print another edition to be used for other services (like baptism, marriage, etc) here. Our rites of worship and practices are exactly like in that book. Therefore there need not be any problem regarding the *Thakso* and other books.

Just as I had written to Your Excelllency in the beginning, we did not have more than five churches with

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specific members. All others were established as mission churches. People in the neighboring regions come to our churches for receiving the Holy *Qurbono* and to participate in the various activities, constantly accepting our advice. These formalities will help us to ask them to be inducted into our church. This enabled us to induct people into our church and initiate an organized administration of these churches. Now we have about forty churches which have been completed or where work is underway. We have people also in these places. A good number of people will follow those priests who join the reunion movement. There will not be any difficulty in providing the necessary convenience for those people who follow us. But in other places, chapels and churches have to be established and necessary facilities have to be given to the priests. Once the dioceses are set up, the priests themselves will take care of their requirements. Till then we have to think about providing the amenities for the protection of the priests.

I suppose it would not be a problem, for Your Excellency to divert the excess *Qurbono* offerings to us to meet the requirements of the priests to start with. Some of our priests and laymen happened to accept the Syro-Malabar rite when they joined the Catholic Church. I request you to kindly give them permission to return to our Rite, if they wish so. The prayer book in Malyalam used by our laymen was sent to the eminent bishop of Changanassery and he kindly went through it and unofficially informed me that except for the two parts mentioned beforehand as wrong, there is no other variation from the Catholic faith in it. The place cited as mistake is where the names of the Jacobite Bishops are mentioned. If Your Excellency requires, this particular bishop will give

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a positive testimonial for this. Can we hope that as soon as you return from Rome, as the pope's Delegate, you will accept me into the Catholic Church and you will give me the authority to accept Bishop Mar Theophilus into the Catholic Church and also that you will allow us both the establishment of a church which follows the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Rite ? There is no doubt that the resolve for the prosperity of the Church will continue and that slowly but steadily it will succeed.

I intend to seek the help of a few Priests from nearby parishes to help me to organize retreats for the spiritual prosperity of our priests who will be reunited. I will further update you on this and several other issues when I get the opportunity to meet Your Excellency in person.

I hope Excellency is aware of the fact that most of our priests now are married. There are priests among us who have been given permission to offer the Holy Sacraments in spite of them having remarried. But their number will not be more than half a dozen. Though it is not common to allow the priests who remarry to conduct service, some changes have taken place regarding that also. As this is a matter of education permission has been given to remarried priests to conduct the church services and it continues to be given. Some of those priests wish to come back to the Catholic Church along with their people. Can we accept them also?

Two ashramite groups, the men and women of The Order of the Imitation of Christ who are under me follow the laws of St Baselios. When I created their constitution, I had accepted the laws published by the Holy See regarding ashramite groups.

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I accept that in this letter and the letters written before this, I have taken some freedom with Your Eminence, revealing my heart to make clear my aspirations and requests. I am eagerly waiting for that glorious day when at least a small schism will be healed. I will be extremely grateful to Your Excellency if you would strive to make these things happen as soon as possible.

The Most Rev. Bishop of Kollam has kindly secured a book, containing the rites and profession of faith to be made by the metropolitans, bishops and laymen when they are received into the Catholic Church, from the Patriarch of Antioch in Beirut and given it to me. Bishop Mar Theophilus and I have read through it.

I request Your Eminence as you are in Rome to give my warm regards to the pope.

Yours faithfully,

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

The Replies Sent by the Delegate.

Unfortunately, the delegate did not receive the above quoted letter send to Rome while he was in Rome. This was because he returned to India without staying in Rome for long. He received the letter redirected from Rome after he reached India. Immediately he wrote a reply to Mar Ivanios. This reply is given below:-

Bangalore

23 October 1928

My Lord,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your esteemed communication of July 21, which, however, has only recently come to my notice on my return to India after

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several months of foreign travel. I hope that this fact will sufficiently explain my tardiness in letting Your Lordship know of the safe delivery of your letter.

Let me at the same time assure Your Lordship that the contents of the letter will receive attentive and sympathetic consideration at my hands, though Your Lordship will readily understand that it may take some time to give a definite answer on account of the necessity of referring the matter to Rome.

In the meantime, I am happy to say that Msgr. Bensigor of Quilon has kindly consented to obtain and transmit to Your Lordship the liturgical books about which you made enquiries.

With a fervent prayer that the Holy Spirit who has begun excellent effort will perfect it unto the fulfilment of our dear Lord's own desire that there be one fold and one shepherd, I am, my lord,

With sentiments of respect and esteem

Sincerely Yours in Christ

Edward Mooney (Sd/-)

Apostolic Delegate

The Rt. Rev. Mar Ivanios,

Bishop of Bethany

A few months after the letter mentioned above was received, Mar Ivanios received a statement from Rome through the delegate. On 17 September 1929, Mar Ivanios sent a letter to the delegate as its reply. The reply sent by the delegate to that letter which had said about

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the withdrawal of a few Orthodox bishops who had undersigned the memorandum and the staunch commitment of Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos to go ahead with the reunion, is given below:-

Bangalore

October 11, 1928

Honourable Bishop,

With gratitude let me inform you that I have received the letter sent to me on September 17. I pray to God that He blesses you and Mar Theophilus for your determination to set up Christ's Church in Malankara and pray that it produces great results.

Let me at the very outset inform you that there is some difficulty in informing the Holy See about the various issues you had asked me to write about. Let me inform you openly with brotherly affection that it is impossible to write to Rome again without getting a response from those bishops who had originally signed the memorandum. I strongly suspect that this situation could prove to be a hindrance to further correspondence with Rome.

I am writing this letter with the full belief that you will not misunderstand me on any count. I request you to inform all the bishops involved with the reunion about the statement that was sent to you from Rome and that their reply to the long and detailed heritage of their calling should be intimated to me immediately. It is not possible to think that any of the bishops who are spiritually involved with such an important problem will not contemplate over the seriousness of the issue and take a decision. If a decision is taken against that very important document

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then decision regarding it will prolong over a long period and will lead to unwanted criticism against you and me.

Praying that the strength and unity and light that the Holy Spirit has promised us for the fulfillment of His work help us.

Yours faithfully in Christ with respect,

Edward Mooney (Sign)

Apostolic Delegate

* * * * *

The Letter Sent by Mar Ivanios

Mar Ivanios replied to the above quoted letter immediately. It was requested in that letter that the delegate should try his best to make Rome agree to the throne of the catholicos. But contrary to what was expected, it was not a positive reply that was received from the delegate. Therefore Mar Ivanios sent another letter which is included here.

Tiruvalla

24 May 1930

From

The Most Rev. Mar Ivanios Metropolitan

Bethany, Tiruvalla.

To

His Excellency the Delegate Apostolic,

Your Excellency,

In your letter No. 1735/30 dated 17 February 1930, Your Excellency informed me that the points mentioned in my letter of 17 September, 1929 were receiving the

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attention of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church. And that Your Excellency will very kindly appraise me of the answer of the congregation as soon as it reached you. I can quite imagine that the delay may be due to the practical difficulties in the direction of accounting recognition of the Catholicate. If I could get from the Holy See a favourable answer on the question of the recognition of the catholicos, more or less along the lines suggested in my letter of 17 September 1929. It would give me one more opportunity to inspire His Beatitude to come out and lead the Reunion Movement.

I feel that, in view of the critical situation that has arisen in Malabar in consequence of the interdict issued against me and His Lordship Mar Theophilos, by the catholicos openly declare our allegiance to the Holy See without delay. I do hope that at a later stage His Beatitude and the remaining bishops will see the light and seek reunion. May I therefore, urge Your Excellency for an answer for the several points mentioned in my letter dated 17 September 1929.

Last week about a dozen priests privately informed me of their desire to follow me into reunion. I have no doubt that even if we do not get many to come with us in the beginning, large numbers of priests and people will in the near future come with the desire to unite with the Holy See. We shall have to think of ways and means for supporting these priests and putting up churches or chapels for their congregations. Some of the priests who met me last week told me that it would substantially help the cause of the Reunion. If I made a public pronouncement that the Holy See has promised to maintain the use of the present rite for all time and the uniting Orthodx Syrians

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will not be compelled to change their rite in future, and that the uniting Syrians will perpetually have their own bishops and metropolitans for the Orthox Syrian rite in Malabar.

These priests further emphasised the importance of the retention of the present prayers of the common people and the ritual and liturgical books which they almost know by heart. I told them that the Holy See was not likely to ask for any change unless there were anything in them contrary to the Catholic faith.

I am thinking of inviting the help of His Lordship, the Bishop of Changanassery to read the prayer books with me in order that His Lordship may be able to certify to Your Excellency that there is nothing in them contrary to the Catholic faith. If Your Excellency approves of this step, may I request Your Excellency to unite privately to encourage His Lordship, the Bishop of Changanassery to cooperate with me in this matter.

I am much looking forward to the privilege of visiting Your Excellency in the near future. His Lordship Mar Theophilos and I feel that it is important that at the eve on our formal reunion with Holy See we should be able to make a pronouncement to the Orthox Syrian people regarding points mentioned in my letter of 17 September 1929 excepting the one relating to the catholicos.

With sentiments of high regard,

I remain,

Your Excellency's sincerely devoted in Jesus Christ

* * * * *

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The delegate sent a reply to the letter given above also. He wrote in that letter "As the catholicos and the others who agreed to the reunion in the beginning have gone back on their word, there is no need to consider the acceptance of the throne of the Catholicos".

After these correspondence and requests - and after long deliberations and discussions - the last letter was received from Rome on 30 August 1930. Readers can get an idea of the 'document of agreement' containing the recognition of the Malankara Syrian rite and the Reunion Movement in the chapter "The Memorable Reunion".



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Chapter 25

MAR IVANIOS AND VATTASSERIL MAR DIVANNASIOS

Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios was a person of exceptional intelligence and extraordinary potential. He had to be constantly struggling for the twenty five years that he was the metropolitan from 1909 to 1934. It can be said, without any doubt that he was undoubtedly the best metropolitan who ruled over the *Puthankur* people. He had several qualities like diplomatic skill, fortitude and perseverance which are essential for people in power. Those who have closely followed the lives of Mar Ivanios and Mar Divannasios will definitely agree that Mar Ivanios acquired many of these qualities through his close association with Mar Divannasios. Mar Divannasios was getting Mar Ivanios ready as his real successor - as the Malankara Metropolitan - to entrust the administration of the Church with him. But, 'man proposes, God disposes'.

For about twenty-five years their thoughts, ideals and aspirations flowed in the same direction until towards the end some differences crept in. They differed on mainly three different issues.

1. Primacy of the Patriarch.

Mar Ivanios was fully convinced that if the *Puthankur* people if they come under the spiritual or temporal power of the Patriarch of Antioch, the Church here will in no way prosper. The reader can understand this from the various references made by Mar Ivanios in the various letters quoted in this book. But Mar Divannasios was of the opinion that the spiritual primacy of the Patriarch should be

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accepted. But Mar Ivanios was unable to accept this stand, though he respected Mar Divanniasios greatly.

2. The Independent Stance of Bethany

Mar Ivanios had established and administered Bethany in such a way that the Jacobite Patriarch or the Malankara Metropolitan or the catholicos could exercise no authority over it. But as the reunion process neared the finishing point a panic that the Bethany institutions may be absorbed into the Catholic Church assailed Mar Divannasios. Therefore as the Malankara Metropolitan, he tried to bring Bethany under his administrative control. But Mar Ivanios did not agree to this and was extremely careful in maintaining the autonomy of Bethany. This fact can be understood from the various letters quoted and from the speeches, he had made about the autonomy of Bethany.

3. The Catholic Reunion

The opinion and desire of Mar Divannasios was to reunite with the Catholic Church subject to the primacy of the pope only if the priests and people under him agree and it becomes impossible for him to come to an agreement with the Jacobite Patriarch and the material assets of the community are lost through litigation. But the strong conviction of Mar Ivanios was to reunite with the Catholic Church under the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome - whatever be the hardships he had to face - even if he had to abandon everything and had to face opposition from whomsoever, as he believed that internal and external prosperity can be achieved only though this union. There is no doubt that Mar Divannasios was aware of the correspondence of Mar Ivanios with Patriarch Rahmani, the Holy See and the other bishops. But he was careful not to be found guilty of initiating dialogue with another patriarch even when he was giving witness in the court accepting the spiritual authority of the Jacobite Patriarch. This is very evident from the letters included elsewhere and from certain areas of the autobiography of Mar Ivanios.

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The continuous and relentless work carried out by these two great personalities to bring peace and prosperity to the Jacobite Church and the deep friendship that sprang up between them, their combined efforts and the final differences that developed between them are explained in this chapter.

Their initial friendship and relationship

It was when Mar Divannasios (then Geevarghese Malpan) was teaching the brothers of the Old Seminary at Kottayam, Syriac that a boy by the name PT Geevarghese went to Kottayam for his High School studies. While staying at the MD Seminary doing his fifth form and matriculation, he became the favoutite of both the teachers and students. It is no wonder that Bishop Mar Divannasios of Pulikkottu and Vattasseril Geevarghese Malpan had a special affection for this boy who showed exceptional brilliance in studies and had sterling character. It was Vattasseril Malpan who motivated Bishop Pulikkottu to send Geevarghese who had completed his matriculation with flying colours to be given the ordination of diacontate and to be sent for higher studies first to Kottayam CMS College and then to Madras Christian College with partial funding from the diocese.

It was again at the recommendation of Vattasseril Malpan that the Bishop Pulikkottu, appointed PT Geevarghese who came back after securing MA Degree (1907) as the Principal of the MD Seminary high school. That very same year Vattasseril Malpan went to Jerusalem and got ordained as bishop from Patriarch Abdulla of Antioch, taking the name 'Mar Divannasios'. Shortly in 1909 Deacon Geevarghese was ordained priest and he came to be known as 'MA Achan'. During that time there started a tug of war between Vattassseril Mar Divannasios and Patriarch Abdulla who came to India, over matters of temporal jurisdiction. In this rivalry, MA Achan played an indomitable role supporting Vattasseril Thirumeni even willing to forego his life for the cause[1]. It remains an indisputable truth that while he was the

[1] A detailed description of this is given at the beginning of this book- The Author

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Principal of MD Seminary and after retiring from there when he became Professor at Serampore, later Founder of the Bethany Ashram, then the Metropolitan of Bethany and as Bishop Ivanios there was nothing he would do without consulting Metropolitan Vattasseril and he in turn would not do anything without discussing it with Mar Ivanios. Such was the extent of the love, care and respect they showed each other. The documents given below confirm this fact.

Mar Ivanios has written about Metropolitan Vattasseril in '*Girideepam*' in this manner: "It is our belief that very few have known Metropolitan Vattasseril the way we have known him. We had the fortune to see his broadness of mind and extraordinary patience. God has given him a heart with the strength to bear anything, and eyes and ears that neither shut nor sway on seeing or hearing. We have also seen the softness of his heart under its tough exterior" (*Girideepam*, page 17).

After the reunion, Mar Ivanios in a letter sent to the catholicos wrote about his relation with Mar Divannasios thus: "If anybody decides to carry out a litigation, then the person to lead from the front is Metropolitan Mar Divannasios. His Grace is my *pithavu* and *guru* (father and teacher). I have loved and trusted him with a childlike innocence from my childhood. I have no desire to keep with me any church under Bethany or its assets through litigations with him."

This is what was underlined by Mar Divannasios in a letter he wrote to Mar Ivanios while he was a Professor at Serampore: "We are not unaware of the fact that, if we have a true and trustworthy friend it is you." The reference to Mar Ivanios by Mar Divannasios, in a letter written to the Judge Sri Philipose is note worthy. "In this world I have not loved and trusted anybody the way I do the Bishop of Bethany. We love and trust him more than the catholicos or even more than myself".

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In these circumstances it is only understandable how agonizing and heartbreaking it must have been for Vattasseril Mar Divannasios who considered Mar Ivanios as his 'own son and dearest friend' and for Mar Ivanios who considered Mar Divannasios as 'his father and teacher' to part forever till death because of the Catholic Reunion. But still Mar Ivanios for the sake of God's love and moved by his conscience decided to let go his relationship with Mar Divannasios.

Two Letters

When he realized that Mar Ivanios was determined to be united with the Catholic Church, Mar Divannasios tried his best to dissuade him from it. Mar Divannasios continuously intimidated Mar Ivanios through letters, through important and influential people, through invitations for direct conversations, and through injunctions to demoralise him. But the fact that all these tactics could not deviate Mar Ivanios even in the slightest from his determination is evident from the letters below.

The reply written by Mar Ivanios to Mar Divannasios who wrote to him from Trivandrum about the Catholic Reunion is given below:-

Vadasserikkara
12-3-105 (ME)

May it please Your Grace!

I got the letter you sent me from Trivandrum. In that letter I see that you were able to understand my principles from KV Chacko at Parumala and from Judge Philip at Trivandrum, both of whom are good friends of Your Grace and me. I infer that you came to know of certain opinions and principles of mine which I have not shared with you and that you have come to know of it from them. Your Grace knows that, more than they, I have shared with you my ideals and opinions. From the newspapers, I

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understand that the patriarch is on his way to England enroute to Kerala. I have received a letter from Mr AM Varkey of Aluva. He has written that the only way out of the impasse the community is in now, is to unite with the patriarch. Recently our Deacon CM Thomas (presently Thomas Mar Divannasios of the Orthodox Church) also hinted the same thing confidentially to one person. He said that he was not going to England but was planning to go to Mosul to see Patriarch Elias.

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

For the letter given above, Mar Divannasios sent a reply for which Mar Ivanios replied as follows:

Vadasserikkara
22-3-105 (ME)

Your Grace Mar Metropolitan Divannasios,

I got the letter you sent me on 20 Thulam. I had come to your presence at the last Feast of the Cross (*Sleeba Perunal*) and informed you of certain things. I have experienced through Your Grace the harassment meted out to you by Patriarch Abdulla and other enemies. I do not intend to go through any path that will lead to similar harassments in future. Last week I did not come for the festival at Parumala not merely because of my cold. I was scared I might have to speak in a contradicting way in the presence of the Catholicos and others. For the good of the community a means has to be found foregoing all litigations. I am not against anyone whom Your Grace wishes to ordain as Bishops...

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

* * * * *

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The Letter Sent Through Mr VA Varghese

After this letter Mar Ivanios sent a letter to Mar Divannasios through Vattasseril Mr VA Varghese B A Lt. This letter is written making things clear regarding the autonomous status of Bethany and explaining the discussions that took place among the catholicos and other Bishops at Parumala regarding reunion and offering clarifications on the correspondence that took place later. It is to be specially noted that this long letter was written ten months before Mar Ivanios reunited with the Catholic Church.

Vadasserikkara
28-3-105 (ME)

Blessing to our beloved Geevarghese!

Dear Geevarghese, you should read this letter to the Great Metropolitan.

A letter has come here saying that Your Grace said to Advocate John and Judge Philip at Trivandrum, "When asked who is the head, the Bishop of Bethany did not reply. Might have to fall out with him" Your Grace's statement of what is written in *Girideepam* about this matter is also dealt with. Your Grace knows very clearly that I have no problem to accept your authority, to respect you and to obey you. It has not been made clear whether there was some connection between the catholicos and the patriarch and between the patriarch and the Synod. I had informed Your Grace about my conversation with Judge Philip when he told me that if under any circumstance the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch is accepted, then I will be excommunicated when the patriarch comes here next time and all the assets of Bethany will be attached. To this I replied that Bethany was independent of the patriarch.

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Whatever happens I do not intend to accept the authority of the patriarch or go through the hardships faced earlier once more. If Your Grace feels that because of Bethany's isolation from the patriarch, some schism occurs to the bishop or to the catholicos or something adverse happens to the cases of Your Grace, then I fully agree that you can proclaim that Bethany has no links with you. I desire to be distant from all litigations and also to be away from harassments of the Syrians.

Prima facie, it might appear as though I do not agree to the authority of Your Grace. But the reality of it is referred to above. I do not wish to be independent of any authority. But I also do not wish to be a part of any agreement where I have to accept the authority of the patriarch in any form. I do not wish to cause any harm to Your Grace and your litigations.

Just before the last chapter of *Girideepam* was printed advocate John had come to Thirumoolapuram in the month of *Karkidakam.* I happened to mention casually that the authority of the patriarch will not be accepted by Bethany. He replied that he also will not accept it.

There does not seem a way out for the Bishop's faction but to submit to the patriarch or to join some Church or to stay as an autonomous Church. When we met at the festival at Parumala in 1101 (ME) in the month of *Thulam,* the late catholicos, the present catholicos and I had discussed this matter. At that time the three of us had discussed several issues related to our faith and they had entrusted me to find out discreetly if a reunion with the Roman Catholic Church was possible without causing

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shame to our faith and our community and with our priests and bishops having the power over our people. It was then decided that the great metropolitan should not be informed of the matter immediately and it could be intimated to him only if it becomes possible eventually. As decided then all correspondences were carried out only with the intention of a unification of the whole community. The present catholicos saw most of the correspondence regarding this. He had then said, "There was nothing wrong in ascertaining everything". This was informed to the great metropolitan at the behest of the catholicos of revered memory. And I had informed the late catholicos and the present catholicos of great metropolitan's note of dissent. A few days back at Parumala-when he was in Trivandrum-Mr KV Chacko sent me the excerpts of the conversation he had with the catholicos. *The catholicos assures that he is prepared to promote reunion with Rome provided he is not asked to anathematize any of the fathers or abjure any part of the faith he holds*[2]. This is the opinion of the bava. I believe that our Lord wants the rivalry between Churches to end and wishes that the Churches should reunite. I wish Your Grace not to pass any decree against it.

Another matter I want to intimate to you is regarding the conversation that we had at Parumala. I felt as though it was being declared that the foundation of the Church is faith and not Peter. I answered that it was both. In truth Christ is the foundation of the Church. The Church is established on the divinity and human incarnation of Christ. Peter who declared this faith is the foundation of the Church. All the prophets, apostles and confessors

[2] The italics is the original text in English (Editors)

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form the basis of the Church. Similar matters form the foundation according to the prayer book. I do not deny any of these.

I am more than convinced that as long as the Malankara Syrians are under the yoke of the Jacobite Patriarch they will not have any prosperity. A temporary treaty would not suffice. I am sure Your Grace also has the same conviction. Your Grace has often warned me against getting Bethany involved in the litigation. The experience of several previous generations is proof of the fact that anyone who follows the path of the Patriarch of Antioch will only face danger and despair in the end. The experience of Your Grace substantiates this fact.

I have confidentially and otherwise told you the various reasons as to why Bethany should remain autonomous. In these circumstances I feel sad at the words of Your Grace to Advocate John that you might have to fall out with me.

Yours,

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

* * * * *

Reply

The letter given below was written by Mr Vattasseril AV Varghese to Mar Ivanios as a reply to the letter sent by Mar Ivanios through Mr AV Varghese, summarising the responses of Mar Divannasios to Mar Ivanios' letter.

MD Seminary
5-4-105 (ME)

May it please Your Excellency!

Hope you would have received the letter I sent you last week. I have received the letter you sent to me to be read to the great metropolitan. Yesterday evening, I went

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to the seminary. The bishop said that he "did not see a solution to anything that was worrying him" in the letter. "I do not have any doubts regarding what is written about respecting, regarding and accepting my authority. But that is not what is needed now. When he says that he will accept my authority, it is just like a son obeying the father or a disciple obeying his master. He should be willing to submit to the Episcopal Synod. Any obedience other than that is something personal towards me". This is not what I say but what was told to me.

I do not think that anyone should enter into a liaison with the patriarch so that it would lead to an interdict to the patriarch. If the patriarch is Abded M'siha, then the position of the catholicos will be valid. Then no patriarch will be able not to accept the canonical authorities of the catholicos. He says that if the position of Abded M'siha as patriarch is made null and void by the court, then all the priests and the catholicos (except that of the Great Metropolitan) will become schismatics and all the assets secured under Abded M'siha who is a schismatic will not be a part of the litigation of the Patriarch's faction.

"By conducting the correspondence regarding this secretly you (bishop and the catholicos) were cheating the great metropolitan. There is no point in saying reunion. It means you are joining the Roman Church by securing a special rite. The attempt to get permission for the rite in collaboration with the catholicos was to deceive me". This is what he said about this matter.

I tried to commiserate as far as was possible with the knowledge I have of the matter. The catholicos was also at the seminary yesterday. When I talked to the

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catholicos, I talked about you also to him. I did not mention your letter to the catholicos. I do not know whether the great metropolitan will ask or say anything about it. He said, "I have also opined that it would be good if a union with the Roman Church is possible without abjuring the Fathers and without deviating from the faith. But I have said it as I believe a union like that is impossible." Taking all these into consideration I think that Your Excellency should arrive here. Amidst our talk the great metropolitan said, "The Bethany Bishop believes that problems that do not exist, exist. If he is willing to obey me I will show him the way out of the problems that might come". He is apprehensive about your not coming to Parumala. He cynically observed, "I wonder whether he will arrive at least at the arrival of the Viceroy". The catholicos will arrive at Parumala after visiting Vakathanam today.

Many prominent people have started using the gossip, that the Bethany Bishop is thinking about going to Rome, as a weapon.

He asked me whether I too am joining the Roman Church[3].

I would like to inform many things to Your Excellency directly. I wish to do that when you come to Tiruvalla or Kottayam.

I am sad over the troubled times that Bethany is passing through. I beseech Your Excellency to give a

[3] Mr Varghese followed Mar Ivanios into the Catholic Church in his search for truth and joined the Catholic faith. Mr Varghese who was fortunate enough to join the Catholic Church is a valiant warrior who continues to work incessantly for the reunion of non-Catholics – The Author.

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solution to the present problems without hurting the intention of the foundation of Bethany and by trying a way of reconciliation with the present situation.

Your spiritual son,

VA Varghese (sign)

* * * * *

The Letter Sent Again

The next letter was written by Mr Varghese two days after the letter above written including the issues talked while on a second visit to Mar Divannasios. It is very clear from this letter how much Mar Divannasios wanted to meet Mar Ivanios in person and persuade him from his staunch decision.

MD Seminary
7-4-105 (ME)

May it please Your Excellency!

Yesterday also I went to the seminary. When I went there the great metropolitan was talking about you to the junior bishop. Yesterday he was mild in his words. But still we could feel the hurt and pain in his words. After sometime we were joined by Fr Mattackal. We talked among us and the three of us felt the same thing. And what we felt was that Your Excellency should meet the great metropolitan immediately. Fr Mattackal said that I should come to Vadasserikkara and bring you here. I left saying that I will inform the matter through a letter. One thing the great metropolitan asked me yesterday was whether I had asked Your Excellency to come and visit him. I replied that I had. I also affirmed that you will definitely come soon. Then I saw a favourable look on

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his face. I hope Your Excellency has received the letter I send yesterday. The great metropolitan even said, "What should I do. It would have been good if I could meet him in person. If it was in Tiruvalla I could have gone there. It is difficult for me to go to Vadasserikkara." The great metropolitan thinks that Your Excellency is deliberately avoiding him. Some wicked people have taken it as an opportunity to fuel the fire. In short, I would like to tell Your Excellency to immediately, without even delaying for a day, go and meet the great metropolitan and talk to him in person and sort out all issues. If there is a difference of opinion between the two of you, bishops then you can talk clearly about the issues in person. I think that most of the misgivings of the great metropolitan will be sorted out when Your Excellency talks in person with him. Therefore I submit this letter with my earnest request that Your Excellency should definitely come and meet the great metropolitan.

Your spiritual son,

VA Varghese (sign)

* * * * *

The Letter Sent Directly

Though Mar Divannasios sent several letters like this Mar Ivanios had great qualms in directly confronting the great metropolitan whom he considered as his own father. The catholicos also sent letters to Mar Ivanios asking him to meet Mar Divannasios either in Tiruvalla or in Kottayam. But citing trivial reasons Mar Ivanios avoided such a meeting. Finally Mar Divannasios came to Tiruvalla (Thirumoolapuram)

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and directly talked to Mar Ivanios. The letter containing details of that visit will be included elsewhere.

A letter that was sent to Mar Divannasios eight months before the reunion is given below. This letter in a few words speaks of the embarassment Mar Ivanios had to face during those days because of counter activities and propaganda from within and outside the Church.

Bethany, Vadasserikkara
3 *Makaram* '105 (ME)

May it please Your Grace,

Received the letter sent to me. I am heartbroken when I think about the present position of the Malankara Syrian Community and the impending doom awaiting it in the future. In this situation, it is Your Grace, who should show a suitable way to rescue our community. I am not ready to give up my present life and principles. I believe that it is divine and that it will finally be for common good. If I agree to what Your Grace asks me then I will be forced to accept the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch and will have to involve in the litigations and civil conflicts. My desire is to be away from all this. And over the last two months, as a result of the public and private statements made by Your Grace, Bethany and I have come under dire remarks and humiliations from several people denying us even the handful of rice offering that we used to get. Let me humbly inform you that even if I have to face further hardships I will in no way let go of my principles or go against my conscience.

Yours

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

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Last Meeting

When Mar Ivanios left Bethany and was staying at the cradle of the Reunion Movement at Thirumoolapuaram in Tiruvalla Mar Divannasios came to visit him one last time. Mar Ivanios had sent a letter to the inmates of the Bethany Ashram at Vennikkulam, a letter describing the conversation and shows the affection between Mar Ivanios and Mar Divannasios. Astute readers can very easily discern the irrevocable distance that was forming between the two who once were 'like flowers stringed together in a single string'.

This incident occurred after Mar Ivanios had returned from Trivandrum where he went to meet Sri. EJ John regarding the assets of the Bethany. The last part of the letter written by Mar Ivanios regarding it is given below:

> After that when I returned to Thirumoola the great metropolitan was there. As soon as I came I went to the chapel to pray. I felt that if something could be done to heal even a small wound in our Lord's feet, I was willing to be cut myself into pieces to be placed inside that wound. It was with that attitude that I went to the metropolitan. In accordance with the Bible verse, "And when you are taken and given up to be judged, do not be troubled about what to say". I did not think of anything. Whatever has to be said was told to me by God. As soon as I went, I kissed the feet of the metropolitan and sat on my knees with folded hands, I talked sadly, appealing, "If I have hurt you in any way please forgive me for God's sake. Please bless me. Should I obey God's will or man's desire?" Instead of giving me a reply to this he insisted that he would speak only after I sat on the chair. Seeking a reply to my question I continued. "I have a feeling that Your Grace has your eyes on men and not on God. Kindly discard this attitude.

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The Great Metropolitan : Shouldn't I carry out my responsibilities?

I : What responsibility? Responsibilities given by God or by Man?

The Great Metropolitan : Will you take my people to Rome?

I : Don't say my people. Say God's people.

The Great Metropolitan : Are you going to Rome?

I : I have not decided to go to Rome. But we-the pope, the patriarch and the catholicos should take a decision to be one Church. These fights and differences are not godly.

The Great Metropolitan : Why did you leave Bethany?

I : I heard that you had sent the order for electing the representative of the Church to the Association in the name of Kochu Mamachan. Is that true?

The Great Metropolitan : Yes, I sent it in the name of Kochu Mamachan.

I : There are no parishners in the Bethany Church at Tiruvalla. Kochu Mamachan is not a parishner. The three people who have given their application to join as parishners have not been admitted. In this

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His Holiness Pope Pius XI

(He gave approval to the Reunion Movement)

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circumstance, what Kochu Mamachan sends you will be an illegal document. I felt that you were doing this to formulate records to make it appear as though Bethany is under you which would help in your litigation. You are my father. I do not have a desire to keep the assets of Bethany after a court verdict. I thought about this. Thursday during the time of the Holy Qurbono, I felt that I should leave Bethany Ashram. I left Bethany after ascertaining that everything was I had understood.

The Great Metropolitan : Where do you all stay now?

I : In a house at Vennikkulam. I had always wanted to leave the Bishop's House and the Church to Your Grace. I request you to kindly accept it. The other Churches I thought I will leave to the people who gave the land for it. I do not want to give even a single paisa of Bethany to Rome. I continued:-

Bishop Pulikkottu had entrusted this ramban[4] to me while he was just 13 years. He was ordained Deacon at the Old Seminary in Koyayam. I was called from the MD Seminary

4. The reference is to Pulikottu Joseph Ramban. The letter asking Mar Ivanios to do so is given elsewhere – The Author.

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and he was entrusted to my care. "This is our boy" he said. Immediately I kissed the hands of the great metropolitan. As this is the way things are, how sad it is that the catholicos asked me to send this ramban away from me?

The Great Metropolitan : We will talk privately about that.

I : I heard that the catholicos recently said that it was because of my advice that Your Grace did not create the catholicos fund. Have I ever done anything like that?

The Great Metropolitan : If the catholicos has said something like that it is not true. In fact you had asked me to create the catholicos fund and to entrust it with the catholicos rather than giving it to the Trustees. That was intimated in writing.

I : "I would like to go and sleep after kissing your feet once more and praying in the church" saying this I kissed his feet once more and left.

Saying, "it is I who should kiss your feet" the great metropolitan tried to get up from the bed. Then I got up and ran out of the room. He asked whether I would go to Parumala.

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I : I will come to Your Grace. I will also write to you. So saying, I went to the chapel to pray.

In the morning, the great metropolitan got up and came to the chapel to take leave. We talked to each other and kissed each other and then we left. After kissing, when His Grace was about to leave, I went from behind, embraced him once again and went into the *madbaha*. The great metropolitan said something to the rambans and left for Parumala. Our meeting was guided by providence.

His Grace said that I got the episcopo title because of his insistence and that I had not shown any deception. Father Kalekkattil and Advocate Kunjena were with me.

Yours

Mar Ivanios (Sd/-)

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Readers will be able to understand the determination with which Mar Ivanios overcame all the opposing forces that tried to take him away from his calling, the last of which was the strong force of the great getropolitan, which he broke on his forward march towards the fulfilment of his ideal. History shows the great promise God has in store for his people who suffer great sacrifices and pain for Him and His gospel's sake.



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Chapter 26

THE MEETING AT BETHANY AND THE SPEECH OF THE HEAD OF THE ASHRAM

After resolving to embrace the cause of Reunion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios became involved in thoughts about the future of Bethany's assets and properties. There were three ways open before him regarding this.

1. Continue the life of service that he was leading in Bethany hills even after the reunion with the Catholic Church.
2. Relinquish the Bethany Ashram and its assets to the catholicos or to the Malankara Metropolitan, go elsewhere and get reunited with the Catholic Church.
3. Put all the assets of Bethany under a trust; leave everything and embrace the Catholic Church.

The Chosen Way

Of the three ways the most acceptable one for Mar Ivanios was the last one. He was sure that if he chose the last path, there would be no room for any litigation or quarrel. On the contrary if he had not left the assets of Bethany and continued to live with the Ashramites there itself even after the reunion, the furore that would have risen is unimaginable. The blood of many Anapappis would have flowed over Mundanmala with one side clamouring to chase away the Bethany Ashramites who had become Catholics and the other side staunchly supporting the founder of Bethany saying Bethany has every right to

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be there being an autonomous institution. Not only that it would have led to further litigation asking the Ashramites and Mar Ivanios to leave the place saying it belonged to the Orthodox Church and that they forfeited the right to be there when they became Catholics. Mar Ivanios decided that it was better to leave Bethany Hills rather than cause unending court cases and unimaginable clashes over the issue.

Many people opined the second way as appropriate but still Mar Ivanios knew that even that would bring him trouble. If he writes the assets in the name of the catholicos or Mar Divannasios, it would lead to more cases. The people who had contributed to the setting up of Bethany independently will not allow it to be given to any single person or Church. The head of Bethany does not have the right to do that. If he does that Mar Ivanios knew that immediately there will be a court case charging him as accused. Mar Ivanios was very convinced that the litigation will be resolved in favour of the Patriarch faction and if that happens then Bethany would come under the rule of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and that will lead to the slow decline of Bethany and its final ruin. Therefore he did not show interest to entrust the properties with any particular church.

Mar Ivanios decided the the third way, that is, to leave the assets with a trust before stepping down from Bethany Hills and embracing Catholic Faith, was the best way. As the first step towards it he decided to call a meeting of all the sponsors at Bethany and for this he sent forth an invitation as shown below.

From Mar Ivanios,

the Bishop of Bethany

(Seal)

By the grace of the merciful God, we have founded and are running a charitable institution named "Bethany". Inorder to carry out the humanitarian activities associated

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with it, I had begged people for money and sponsorships and people from various walks of life irrespective of religion, caste or creed, have helped me monetarily. It was then decided that any denomination of money below hundred rupees will not be included in the corpus fund and will be used for daily expenses. As the money thus received was not enough for our daily use, the only thing remaining out of it is debt. As I have written and published the entire history of Bethany in *Girideepom* I will not elaborate on that here. Although the sponsors and others who have helped me hitherto have trusted me to carry on the work of Bethany according to my will, I wish to appoint a trust or a Governing Body to help oversee the work of Bethany. In order to give me advice regarding this I request all the sponsors who have contributed to the capital to kindly attend the meeting which will be held at Perunad, Ranni in the orphanage near the Bethany Ashram on Thursday, 9 *Kumbha* Month at 3 pm.

I need not specially say that only those who have contributed towards the capital will be allowed to attend the meeting. All accounts from the beginning will be presented at the meeting,

May the grace of our Lord be upon you now and forever. Through the prayers of the Holy Mother and the saints. Amen

Bethany Ashram
Vadsserikkara
9-6-1105 (ME) MarIvanios (sd/-)

According to the letter of invitation given above a meeting was held Perunad, Ranni in the orphanage near the Bethany Ashram

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at 3 pm, on Thursday, 9 *Kumbha* 1105 (ME) with Bishop Mar Ivanios presiding over the function.

Apart from Bishop Mar Theophilus and other ashramites, a lot of other people who had contributed to the corpus fund attended the meeting. After reading the invitation that was sent to each of the sponsors personally and also published in the papers the president made the following address.

Presidential Address

Dearly Beloved,

It was while I was a Professor at Serampore that I decided to establish Bethany Ashram. Even today I believe that it was the divine will of God. But I did not leave the post of Principal of MD Seminary with that intention. I believed that the wholesome development of the Malankara Church is possible with the educational upliftment of the priests. My dear brother Episcopo Mar Theophilos sitting near me now had come with me to Serampore. While I was a professor there, I had taken many people from here for their higher studies. Like now, even at that time I wrote the accounts myself. I used to give all my salary to the deacons who used to stay with me. Please do not misunderstand me and think that I am boasting. I was very happy to see most of them become respected degree holders. Then my thoughts turned to how I should utilize their services. I did not feel confident about coming back home and setting up churches. I felt that all of us should become missionaries for the propagation of the Gospel. Then after much prayer and consideration I realized that the best thing would be to

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leave all relation with the physical world and live as *sanyasis* considering God as our wealth.

I consider this way as the most convenient and noble way of glorifying God. That is why I decided that I should lead them and show the way instead of merely advising the seminarians who have the mind and calling to lead such a life. With this budding thought in mind, a few of us started leading such a life even while we were in Serampore. We started thinking about where to go and how to continue that life. We considered going to Punjab as missionaries. I had informed this through a letter to Advocate EJ John. He did not seem happy with our going to Punjab. He informéd me that coming back to our land was more important and that if we wanted seclusion we could use his land at Perunad for this purpose. I said 'yes' to his proposal. When we returned home, we went to see the land and decided to acquire some more land near it. But where was the money for that? All the ways thought of ended in failure. I knew that if we sought the help of our European friends there would be no difficulty. But I did not feel happy doing this. Finally what is to be said, I got the required money from my father and fulfilled my desire. The Bethany Hills that you see today with the Bethany Ashram and other properties were obtained through such means. After that, I have received money and other assets from many other friends.

At least some of you would remember that I went to Serampore while a lot of discord was there in the Malankara Church regarding the visit of the Patriarch Abdulla. Everywhere there were only disputes and litigations. For the last several generations the Malankara

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Syrian Church has been going through litigations and I felt that there would be no respite from these in the near future. Therefore, I decided ten to fourteen years back at Serampore that the Ashram that I wanted to establish should be independent of all these disputes and that it should be named 'Bethany'. Many of the people who were willing to become Ashramites supported me saying that if Bethany is not independent then surely varied harm could befall it.

It was not possible to establish Bethany just because we had acquired some hill land in Perunad. It was essential to clear the forests and construct buildings and do some agriculture so that the daily needs of the Ashram could be met. The money in hand was not sufficient for this. Therefore we took Rs. 7000/- on interest from a European friend in Culcutta. I had informed advocate John about it. He agreed to give the deed of the 100 acres land he had donated to Bethany as collateral. Even then, instead of pawning the land donated by somebody else I pawned a part of the land I had bought with my paternal gift. Even today that debt still exists[1]. Some more debts came our way.

As soon as the buildings were completed, it could be said that Bethany was established. Our agricultural were not fruitful. The daily needs of the Ashramites had to be met through other means. Not only that the money in hand was spent for hospitals, orphanages agriculture, etc. It was then that I started money collection. I had

[1] It is known that when Mar Theodocius, the head of the Jacobite Bethany Ashram went and met Mr Hamilton, the European who loaned the money, he waved off the loan: Author

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informed you then itself that I had collected money from my friends and well-wishers for the sustenance of Bethany. I also registered a will in the name of a few ashramites detailing the transition of all properties, buildings and any future assets to their names in case of an eventuality befalling my life.

Only after that, I started collecting money. May be many of you here are not aware of that will and testament. I have travelled to several places collecting money. When I approached you and other friends with seriousness and compassion bestowed upon me by the divine love of God, many people including strangers willingly helped me. I am grateful to all who helped me. There were a lot of sincere friends who were Malankara Syrian Christians, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Marthomites, Hindus and Muslims who helped me form the corpus fund and also gave me monetary and other help for the day to day needs of the Ashram. All the detailed accounts of expenditure and receipts and the available balance can be easily understood from the account book in front of me. The year wise financial report of receipts and expenditures will be read to you. You know that I have not travelled for collecting money in the last few years. Still God Almighty lovingly protects it and takes care of the needs of Bethany without any hindrance.

Bethany is a simple, independent institution. When it became necessary for Bethany to have a Bishop for its spiritual needs ahead, I was appointed episcopo by the Grace of God. It was the time when the *Vattipanam* case was lost. I can only say that it was only because of the exceeding grace of God that I escaped from all litigations of the Jaobite Malankara Syrian Church without being trapped in the tryst and without signing the *Salmoosa* treaty accepting the sovereignty of

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the Patriarch of Antioch or taking part in the election of the representatives of the Malankara Jacobite Association and it was God's boundless grace that I was first ordained episcopo and then Bishop of Bethany along with Ramban Jacob as episcopo.

All of us here in the Ashram, this *Kochumetrachan* (junior bishop) here and I are extremely glad to see you all who have contributed more than Rs. 100 towards the corpus fund of Bethany. A rumour has started in several places that money is being collected for issues that were not part of the founding ideals of Bethany and if so it would be tantamount to cheating the people who contributed towards Bethany. In this regard, I had earlier and even now, decided to be truthful and pure. I have kept in front of you all the assets I have acquired with the money given by you to be utilized in any way you deem fit. Although I wish to entrust the future functioning of Bethany with a Trust or a Governing Body, I do not intend to force you to accept it. I am willing to follow whatever be the decision you come up with. Though the properties are bought in my name, I am more than willing to register it or make a memorandum of understanding in any name you suggest. You can write any deed you like. I will sign it.

Since I stopped my practice of travelling to collect money, the daily needs of Bethany are met by rice offerings and money offerings. But because of adverse rumours being spread regarding Bethany there has been a considerable reduction in the offerings. I am happy that although this has led to some physical hardships like the ashramites taking food only once or twice a day nothing very bad has happened. These are not strong enough to lead one away from one's chosen path or weaken the strength of will.

I do not have anything special to say other than to tell you that whatever be your decision it should be one that upholds without hindering the great ideals for which Bethany has taken a lifetime vow. Consider this and take a decision carefully according to your intelligence.

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After this speech, the annual report and accounts were read out and the following decisions were taken unanimously.

Decisions taken at the meeting

1. The meeting while accepting unanimously the report of the multifaceted activities of Bethany along with the accounts thanked and praised God almighty for having gracefully blessed Bishop Mar Ivanios, who solely looked upto God, to found and run Bethany along with all other institutions started by His Grace.
2. Even though Bishop Mar Ivanios has independent charge of the running of Bethany as the founder and President of Bethany, the meeting congratulates and thanks His Grace for calling a meeting of those who contributed to the corpus fund to discuss the future care of the Bethany funds.
3. The meeting agrees to the setting up of a Trust or a Governing Body for the governance of the 'charity fund'.
4. The meeting accepts the constitution written for the governance of the Trust and requests His Grace, Superior and the Founder of Bethany to appoint IM Idicula, (Vadasserikkara), PK Kochummen (Niranam) and M Punnoos Varghese (Niranam) as its trustees and another thirteen members (Bethany Ashramites) as members of the governing body.

* * * * *

The Necessity for a Catholic Reunion

After the speech made by Mar Ivanios on the independent status of Bethany, he made the speech given below about the Universal Catholic Church, Christianity in India, the factionism in the Jacobite Church, the need for Catholic Reunion, the ongoing discussions about reunion, etc. He made it clear in this speech about the correspondence and discussions carried out for the Catholic reunion.

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Finally what I want to tell you is about the clamour that is going on regarding the Catholic reunion initiated by me. Jesus Christ the saviour of the world established a Church for the salvation of the world. It has been prospering and flourishing ever since. At the world council of Bishops (Chalcedonian Synod) that met in AD 451, there occurred a division in the Christian Church. All historical documents say that it happened because of the conceit of a minority whose opinions were not given much regard. The people who left with a difference of opinion formed a new Church. In short it can be said that the Jacobite Church was formed in this way. We have to realize that the history of Christianity in India is also similar to this. There is no need to remind you that Christianity took roots in India when the holy feet of St Thomas the Apostle (*Marthoma Sleeha*), one of the disciples of Christ, first touched its soil. Till the seventeenth century all these people lived in unity as one family. It was then that a group of people left its fold as a result of a hearsay that induced suspicion. It has to be remembered here that it was not because of any religious difference that such a division took place. The people who left were called '*Puthankur*' people and the old group was called "*Pazhayakur*" people. The head of the "*Pazhayakur*" people is the Supreme Head of the Universal Church, the pope. The '*Puthankur*' people started to worry because they did not have a proper head for their Church. As a resolution to that problem the head of the Jacobite Church, the patriarch came to Kerala and the Jacobite Church took root here in Kerala.

If we look at the history of the '*Puthankur*' people we can see that there was incessant infighting and

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litigations. The first group that left the Church formed the "Thozhiyoor" Church, also known as the *Anjoor* Church. Later a few left and became members of the Anglican Church. Still later after a long drawn out litigation a major chunk left and made themselves independent forming the "Marthoma" Church. They got into all kinds of litigations and factionalism that we see in the Jacobite Church even before they completed fifty years of existence. The fight that started with the two factions calling themselves "*Metran Kakshi*" and "*Bava Kakshi*" is like a duel which has not ended even today.

All of you know that, I was associated with the "*Metran Kakshi*" in the beginning and I had worked hard for their prosperity which enabled me to see the Jacobite Church in its entirety which forced me to leave it and flee to Serampore, where I set up Bethany independent of the Jacobite Church.

While on a journey to reach the goal, when we come to know of a clear pathway instead of having to travel through a path filled with thorns and stones, definitely any wayfarer would want to travel through it. If you realize this, then you will not judge me wrong and accuse me of doing wrong. If the duty of a Christian is to follow the principles of Christ, he has a duty to work overcoming all the hurdles. Christianity should not be obligated to individual likes and dislikes and false pride. If all Christians believed this, there would not have been so many sects in Christianity. As Christ has not made any moral teachings that contradict one another, it would not be difficult to see the dirt accumulated in the foundations of the various churches.

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There is no doubt that the true body of the Christian Church is the Universal Church. No branch that is cut off from the main tree has an existence of its own. This basic fact is more relevant for the Christian Church than anywhere else. I just like to consider that people stay away from the Universal Church because of ignorance or false pride or a desire for undue freedom. Let me say truthfully that I have looked deep into the Christian Church in this way. You could say that it was the result of such a close examination that led me to start thinking about the reunion with the Universal Church. At least some of you are in the know that there are a few others born in the Jacobite faith desiring for a reunion just like me. We know the anxiety and concern of the second catholicos of revered memory regarding this. Even the present catholicos is aware that this is the only way for a peaceful Christian life. As a result of the deliberations among the three of us several letters of correspondence have taken place. We started the correspondence with the belief that the Malankara bishop will also be a party to this great and divine event. We had been expecting the permission to remain as a separate group accepting the supreme authority of the His Holiness, the pope while continuing to follow the liturgy and rites hitherto followed. Although I had been doing the correspondence, the replies I got for these letters will vouch for the fact that I was only acting as a representative of the deliberations done among us[2]. It is worthwhile to remember the initiatives taken by the spiritual heads of the Malankara Jacobite Church for

[2] Readers would not have forgotten the various letters printed in chapters 21-24 of this book- Author

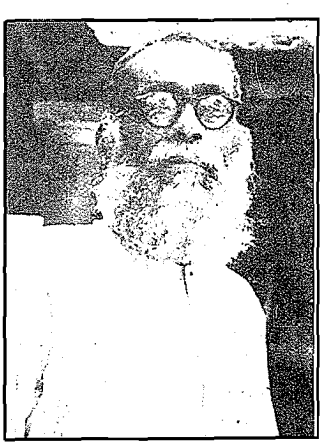
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Cardinal Tappouni
(The present Prelate of the Reunion Movement of Antioch)



A Philipose MA, BL



V A Varghese BA, LT

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The small thatched building at Thirumoolapuram,
the first institution.
Now there are hundreds of churches, schools,
colleges, ashrams, convents, orphanges, hospitals

The Reunion Movement - past and present



The first five members of the Reunion Movement
who reunited at Kollam.
Now there are about hundred thousand faithful in the
Archieparchy of Trivandrum and the Eparchy of Tiruvalla.

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a Catholic Reunion. It will only be appropriate to mention the names of a few of these people. The history of the Malankara Jacobite Church shows that Pulikkottu Mar Divannasios who left for his heavenly abode in 1909, Cheppad Mar Divannasios who was the Malankara Metropolitan, thirty years before that, Mar Thomas VI who was known under the name Mar Divannasios the Great in1770 AD, his predecessor Mar Thomas V, etc have strived to this effect in their times. Since their efforts had been praised as respectable and praiseworthy, I am sure that my efforts will also be accepted and received.

You might be aware that the Jacobite Church and the Roman Catholic Church have an underlying unity. You are aware that both these Churches mutually recognise the validity of the ordination of their priests and accept each other's rites. Since the Jacobite Church left the Catholic Church in the fifth decade they have become schismatic and do not have any relation with the Catholic Church. We had hoped and still hope that the Catholic Church will fulfil the Biblical verse of "one shepherd and one fold" with the Jacobites, the Orthodox, the Greeks and the Armenians reuniting with the Catholic Church. That was why we corresponded with the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignathios Rahmani residing at Beirut in Syria. There is no need to say that he is the Patriarch of Antioch in the Catholic Church.

I would like to inform those Jacobite brothers who are present here some facts about the reunion. There is a sentence in the canon of the Jacobite Church: "There must be four patriarchs in the four corners of the world. The Patriarch of Rome should be their leader and head". It is

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made clear in this part that the Patriarch of Alexandria and the Patriarch of Constantinople should accept the Pope of Rome as their head and leader. When we study the prayer book of the Jacobites, it can be seen that it is observed that the pope who is the Patriarch of Rome is the successor of St Peter and that St Peter died in Rome.

The Jacobite Church in the midst of the Holy Qurbono prays for "the bishops who rule the four corners of the world". It shows the unity of the four patriarchs.

From what has been said above it is evident that nothing was said or done by the catholicos or me, who is the Bishop of Bethany, for the Catholic Reunion, that could be found wrong in the eyes of the Jacobites."

The meeting concluded with a prayer and benediction.



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Chapter 27

THE SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL AND THE DECREE OF INTERDICT

The previous chapters of this book had focused on the endeavours made by Mar Ivanios for the prosperous future of the Malankara community and the whole of Christianity in India. The readers might have been convinced about the diligent efforts Mar Ivanios has undertaken, the letters he has written and the remarkable speeches he has made to realize this mission. The succeeding chapters will examine other related works and correspondences made by him to achieve this aim.

By preserving the independent status of the Bethany community, Mar Ivanios hoped that the Jacobite Church in Kerala could make its progress through Bethany *sanyasis* and *sanyasins*, at home and abroad. But gradually he learnt from his experiences that his hopes were in vain and there were growing disturbances and conflicts within the Jacobite Church. With great sorrow he wrote in *Girideepam*

The End of a Reverie

> When the discussions of Bethany Ashram were in progress the Thiruvananthapuram district court had opened the trial of the infamous *vattipanam* case. We were the witness for the defence. So the major concern during my stay in Serampore was to read several books on the history of the Church and canonical interpretations that would be useful for the witness' deposition. Such occasions and later my visit to Thiruvananthapuram for

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providing the depositions and thereafter, prompted me to rethink the future of the Malankara Church. An overview of the course of the Malankara Syrians after 1050[1] filled me with immense grief. The Church has become a play field of conflicts, strife, duels and disputes that arise one after the other like the waves in a sea. It has filled me with an apprehension; whether it is easy to accomplish God's will in re-establishing Christianity in Kerala as it was in its early age. It is equally difficult to maintain the very essence of the ideal of the Malankara community and bring forth more and more glory to it. I realized that the present situation of the Malankara Syrian community is ignoble, that it could easily deteriorate into savagery at the hands of a opportunists. I am aware of the fact that the peace and harmony that could be achieved by settling all the disputes and strife is not an easy task. How difficult it is to see the sea calm without waves! Disputes among the members of the Church will mar the glory of the Church. Any flaw in the church will harm the community as a whole. Should these hindrances distract our mission of achieving real faith and attaining the sanctity of Christians? (*Girideepam*, pages 70-71).

Submission of the Proposal

Mar Ivanios informed the heads of the Orthodox Church, the catholicos and Mar Divannasios, both directly and through his letters, that he would maintain Bethany's independent status. He asked Advocate EJ John to undertake the task of submitting a written document, which included Mar Ivanios's three major proposals to the Orthodox hierarchs. Mar Ivanios handed over the document to

[1] Malayalam Era

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Advocate John on 15 *Kumbham* 1105 (Malayalam Era) at Thiruvananthapuram. This occasion was blessed with the presence of Fr Kalekattil, Fr Puthakuzhiyil, FrChittakattu and Mr JJ Philippose.

The proposed suggestions were the following:

I. The following demands must be considered before any reconciliation with the patriarch.

1. The metropolitan must be reinstated and the decree must be read in all churches.
2. A national catholicos with full jurisdiction must be granted permanently.
3. Malankara does not require a delegate of the patriarch
4. Canon A must be established as the original canon

All the demands mentioned above are essential for the promising future of Malankara and with the litigations so far, none of these demands have been achieved. Therefore, it will be extremely difficult to think about abandoning Bethany's independent existence without realizing these demands.

II. To separate from the patriarch, the following are essential. Fear of displeasing the great metropolitan and the catholicos causes hesitation in stating these demands. However, these demands have to be stated in the common interest of our community.

1. All disputes must be settled.
2. Everything that belonged to the Jacobite trust must be abandoned.
3. The catholicos and all bishops must assure us that they will terminate all relations with the Jacobite patriarch. The independent stance of Bethany will not be overlooked unless the above suggestions are considered.

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III. During the lifetime of the great metropolitan, we must embrace a movement for the good of the community. The metropolitan's support is indispensable to this initiative would assure the welfare of the whole community. However, the present uncertainty may hinder the fulfilment of the above mission and the realization of a spiritual renewal.

The Decree of Interdict

The next day the proposal was submitted to the Bishops of the Orthodox Church by Mr EJ John. Two days after this event, on 18 *Kumbham* 1105 ME, the Orthodox bishops convoked a Synod at Kundara and passed a decree of interdict against the construction of any churches by the Bethany community and it was sent to Mar Ivanios, the Superior of Bethany. The order is as given below:

> To our brothers of Bethany, Most Rev. Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ivanios and Most Rev. Episcopo Jacob Mar Theophilos,
>
> We hope that you have come to know that the newly formed Bethany churches in many of parishes are creating unrest among the people and among the clergy. On these grounds, we have decided that the Bethany community shall not build new churches until a final decision is taken on this matter by all of us together. So any such activity must be suspended at present. You can continue all your devotional activities in your present parishes. We will be forced to inform our decisions to the whole Malankara community through letter, if you act on contrary to this.
>
> Yours,
>
> AD 1930 (ME 1105 *Kumbham* 18),
> from Bishop's House, Kundara,
>
> (Sd)
> Catholicos of the East, Moran Mar Baselios,

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(Sd)
Metropolitan of the Malankara Church, Mar Divannasios

(Sd)
Mar Gregorios Episcopo of Kottayam Diocese

* * * * *

Excerpts from *Kuzhalkannady* (Telescope)

Most Rev. Pulikottu Joseph Ramban and Cheppattu Philipose Ramban have made an interesting account of the event in the book, *Malankara Sabhayude Kuzhalkannadi* (The Telescope of the Malankara Church). An interesting excerpt is given below:

> The synod was convoked as scheduled at Kundara on a Friday. His Beatitude the catholicos had been staying there to take part in it. Many leaders of the community including Advocate Shri EJ John and Advocate EJ Philipose had arrived there from Trivandrum. But details regarding the discussions on the proposals suggested by the Bishop of Bethany are not yet revealed. It seems that a decree was prepared to be conveyed to the Bishops of Bethany. The Synod concluded with the drafting of this decree. It is interesting to find that the decree was publicized in Niranam and Tiruvalla before it was 'confidentially' delivered to the Bishops of Bethany. The details of the decree have already appeared in the magazine *vaidikan* (priest) released from the Old Seminary. It is said that the Synod has declared a prohibition on building new churches by Bethany until a further decision is taken on this. *Prima facie* this seems to be simple and beautiful but one would only later recognize the gravity of such a decree!

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A bishop wields the authority to build new churches and administer the sacrament of holy orders. The readers will readily agree that prohibiting a Bishop to build churches is as grave as commanding a priest not to celebrate the Holy Qurbono. But the statement 'until a decision has been taken' seems to be too florid to hide the unpleasantness.

The decision of just warning against the construction of new Bethany churches instead of uprooting all their activities seems to be very 'amiable' in a context where the Bethany community is accused of creating 'unrest' in a calm and serene scenario. It is surprising to hear that the Bethany church creates problems in Malankara! Any way it is new knowledge to us that building a church can also be termed as 'unrest' in a community. The crisis does seem to have developed all on a sudden and so we suspect if there is any real crisis at all. If so what is the reason? Shall we assume that the so-called disturbances have been put up by Malankara to escape themselves from answering if they would associate with Rome?

This reminds us of another contentious context years ago - the excommunication of the great metropolitan. The great metropolitan was not informed anything in advance when Patriarch Mar Abdulla took such a decision in the year '86 nor did he seek Mar Ivanios' explanation. Naturally, the excommunication was declared invalid on grounds of practical justice. Now when the people of Bethany are denied the right to build churches, injustice repeats. We know that both the catholicos and the metropolitan had not made any previous references about this unrest to the Bishops of Bethany either directly or

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indirectly. So the decree seems to be unjust as it has no valid reasons.

If the Bethany institution is accepted as an independent community, their right to build churches cannot be denied. Anjoor diocese (Thozhiyur) sets another example. Though they show affiliation to the Marthoma Church the latter will have no right to prevent them from having their own churches. So this decree foresees the predicament of rethinking the independent stance of the Bethany community. If they consent to the order they would permanently be under Antioch and if they defy it they would be accused of despotism. His Beatitude the catholicos had repeatedly expressed his disagreement with the decree as he knew that it was an arrow shot against the Bishops of Bethany and they would be at a loss of what to do. But his sympathy was of no avail. A pathetic situation indeed! Anyone who attempts to renew the Malankara Church is rewarded with such curses. How did the patriarch reward the Great Metropolitan himself? How does the bishop now treat the Bishops of Bethany? In fact, the patriarch was trying to put the yoke of Antioch on the great metropolitan. By thwarting the freedom of Bethany, the great metropolitan on the other hand is trying to bring Bethany and Malankara back to Antioch! Who played a vital role in regaining the self-governance of the Malankara Church? Who helped in establishing the Catholicate here? The catholicos himself fairly rewarded that shepherd. Let the readers use their discretion to realise the truth!

The guardians of the Bethany church who strived with a spiritual fervor to liberate Malankara Church from

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all its blemishes have been punished with accusation! They are now treated as enemies for all the noble deeds they did and for preserving the freedom of Bethany to safeguard the peace and prosperity of the Malankara Church! The readers should not be surprised at the turn of these events. They are new versions of events of the past. Old wine in new casks! But the Bethany brotherhood would easily overcome these sufferings which they are very familiar with in their ascetic life. We are sure that they will accomplish their mission.

A few days after sending the decreee of interdict to Mar Ivanios, the great metropolitan met him at Thirumoolapuram Balikamadhom, Tiruvalla. On seeing him, the Bethany Bishop fall at the great metropolitan's feet and said, "I have been made unworthy for your embrace". However, the great metropolitan walked away and stood at a distance watching him. Rev. Ramban KT Geevarghese who was present then consoled Mar Ivanios and set him upright. The Bishop of Bethany then walked towards the great metropolitan with the remark, "If you cannot allow me to kiss thy feet, allow me to kiss thy hands". Then they embraced each other and it seemed as if all the disputes ebbed away at once.

In the course of their discussion on God's mercy, Ramban Rev. Geeverghese suggested that the decree be withdrawn, but the great metropolitan expressed his dissent by gesturing his finger across his neck. He continued to signal his rejection in this way a second time also and when Mar Ivanios saw this, he said with great

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sorrow, "O! He says that he will not withdraw the order even if his throat gets cut".

We do not realize why the great metropolitan had behaved like this. Is it because of the solemnity of the situation or due to his old age? The only inference we will make is that God might have decided that the great metropolitan must atone for the preferences he had shown when Anapappy died years ago while the Bishop of Bethany was ready to give his life to rogues like Kamaldeen (*Kuzhalkannadi*, pages 71-79)

Letter Sent to EJ John

Mar Ivanios sent a letter to EJ John soon after he had received the decree of interdict. He expressed his opinion as well as the attitude of Mar Theophilous in this letter.

Tiruvalla
March 1930

My dear Sir,

Let me express my gratitude for your detailed letter dated 18 March 1930. As the contents of the letter include the interest of Bishop Mar Theophilos also, I took the freedom to show it to him. We suggest that the letter must be made public, as it is advantageous in many ways. Let me include our explanation on this matter along with this. We strongly believe that we have sincerely worked for the prosperity of the community to which we belong.

When we met at Thiruvananthapuram on 25 February last, I had handed over a written document of some of our suggestions regarding the prosperous future of our community. It contained the suggestions of Mar

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Theophilos also. But His Beatitude the catholicos, Metropolitan Mar Divannasios and Bishop Mar Gregorios had not said anything regarding it when they met at Kundara Seminary the same day. Instead, they issued a decree of interdict on us. We asked them bread but they have given us stones.

You wrote that our major differences were on the matter of reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. But, I regret to say that our letter did not contain any issues regarding reunion or our relations with Malankara that could wound their feelings. They did not tell us anything regarding the 'disturbances' we seem to create among the people, though we met at a meeting a few days before the Kundara meeting. That is the only argument raised in favour of the present decree of interdict.

Let us continue our prayers to receive more enlightenment from God.

Yours faithfully

(Sd)

Mar Ivanios of Bethany

Threat of Interdict to the Rambans

The catholicos sent separate letters to Rev. Ramban Pulikkottu Joseph, and Rev. Ramban Cheppattu Philipose owing to their loyalty to Mar Ivanios and the possibility that they would also reunite with the Catholic Church. The letter sent to Mar Ivanios is as follows:

The Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

Palace – Kundara

... 19...

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His Holiness
Moran Mar Baselios Geevarghese II
Catholicos of the East

I have not received a reply to the letter I had sent earlier. Rammbans Pulikottu and Cheppattu received their orders from me. It was done in view of our needs; not for Bethany. Ramban Pulikottu was sent to Bethany for a few months training as he wanted to stay in Bethany and learn things. After its completion, he should return now; if he does not obey, he will be banned. I have already written to him. Cheppat Ramban has been staying with you without anyone's permission. He should also come back at once. Otherwise, he will face to face consequences. I hereby inform you that you should not allow these two persons to remain with you or in any of your institutions.

1930, 1105 ME, 24 *Karkidakam*
From the Bishop's House at Pathanamthitta

Mar Ivanios replied immediately to the letter and it is given below:

To

May it please His Beatitude Moran Mar Baselios catholicos of the East!

Received your letter dated 24 *Karkidakam* regarding Rambans Pulikottil and Cheppattu. The rambans are not permitted to live in their own houses. Besides, it is known that the Kottayam Seminary does not have facilities to accommodate the Rambans. I am unable to send them away, these descendants of our late Malankara metropolitans, from our ashram. It would be advisable if

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you could directly communicate your decisions to the rambans themselves. I regret to say that it will be impossible for me to forbid them. Well, I need not remind you that only through kindness and mercy can we attract people and reform them. Rigid actions like a ban may make one more resistant.

Sd/-
Mar Ivanios

When the rambans came to know about the ban, they wrote in the last pages of the *Kuzhalkannadi*,

The news about the restrictions on the Bethany community is heard everywhere. We firmly believe that we would hardly be exempted from it. In fact, we are looking forward for such a sentence on us. Something is likely to happen within a few days. Now a Pulikodan[2] and a Cheppadan[3] on their own accord have jumped into the vast ocean of the Malankara Church rocking in the roaring waves. Come whatever may, these little children will be protected by St Thomas. O! Dear Reader! Could it be any other way? (*Kuzhalkannadi*, page 258)



[2] A person from Pulikkott

[3] A person from Cheppad

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Chapter 28

FIVE LETTERS SENT PRIOR TO THE REUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mar Ivanios received several letters from friends, well-wishers and relatives supporting and opposing the decision to reunite with the Catholic Church. He sent replies to all. A few of these letters of reply are included in this chapter. Mar Ivanios explains the reason for the reunion in these letters.

Letter sent to Mathulla Mappila

Given below is a letter sent to Mathulla Mappila, the nephew of Varghese Mappila, the founder of Malayala Manorama, a social worker, manager of Malayala Manorama and a friend of Mar Ivanios.

My dear Mathulla Mappila,

Received your letter. I don't think the community can stay away from disputes even in the future. Is it possible to live without disputes even if it is regarding the establishment of the Catholicate? We have to think about it seriously. If we surrender ourselves, fully to the Syrians, then the disputes may end but we will not have spiritual progress or mental peace. Maintaining peace is doubtful even if we form a new community. I have thought about reunion only after ensuring that it would presevere the faith, pride and spiritual creed of our community. It has also been considered that this reunion will maintain the

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authority of our priests and Bishops as it is now. Some discussions have been made with my friends regarding this matter. Your letter seems to express such a concern. I truly wish to bring prosperity to the entire community. Let us not give heed to the rumours spread by ignorant folk. May God bless you!

Sd/-
Mar Ivanios

Letter to Varkey Vaidyan

Mr Varkey Vaidyan from Puthupally is the founder of Chempakasseri "Kireedadharana Vaidyasala". During the early years of the formation of Bethany, he helped Mar Ivanios with many donations. A reply to one of his letters is included below:

Dear Varkey Vaidyan

I do not think the community can stay back from disputes even in the future. Is it possible to do away with litigations concerning the establishment of the Catholicate and the status of the Malankara Metropolitan? If we surrender ourselves fully to the Syrians, there may be temporary respite to litigations; but it would be difficult to maintain spiritual progress or mental peace. Is not maintaining peace and prosperity doubtful, even if we form a new community? I have thought about reunion only after ensuring that it would preserve the faith, pride and spiritual creed of our community. Some discussions have been made with my friends regarding this matter. I want our community to stay away from all disputes now and in the days to come. I had discussions with the great metropolitan regarding this matter. I think this was the major concern in your letter. Let us not give heed to the

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rumours spread by ignorant folk. Our close friends may misunderstand me. But my trust is in God and on my conscience. Many misinterpret my reasons for the reunion. I am not attracted towards the money, power and honours of Rome. I do believe that it is right to join the Roman Catholic Church if they accept our beliefs and customs. Why should we compete with them when they show the willingness to accept us? If the Marthomite Church embraces our faith or if the Greeks or the Romans accept our faith, is it not a divine responsibility to be ready to join with them? Is it not Godly to live in peace with everyone? I had expressed these opinions publicly and hence the tumults. Do not bother about that. The uproars will end. I do not permit this letter to be shown to others or to be published. In fact, I thought all uproars there had subsided; but your letter makes me think that is not so. Anyway, it will end slowly. Do not worry.

Mar Ivanios

Vadasserikkara
19/05/1905

Letter of Ms Brook Smith

Ms Brook Smith and Mrs Holmes were two European women with MA degree from Oxford University, England. Mar Ivanios had invited them to India to take charge of Thirumoolapuram Balikamadhom, Tiruvalla. The following is the translation of the letter of Mar Ivanios sent in reply to the letter of Ms Brooke Smith who was Headmistress of the said school for forty years.

Dear Ms Brook Smith,

First of all let me express my gratitude for your letter. When I received the letter, I had sent a letter to the Mother

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Superior enquiring her opinion about our sisters continuing their service there. I realized that they are unwilling to continue the school-service any more. So my advice is to relieve them at once.

However, do not infer from this that the reunion with the Roman Catholic Church will take place soon. I have instructed them to keep away from all such discussions. Our sisters have strong convictions regarding their teaching profession and they are doing well. Yet because of the growing disinterestedness shown to them, I will write to our daughters to give up the job there with your permission at the earliest.

I believe that you are aware of the depressing state of the Syrian community. Nothing but the power of a grand and noble ideal can save this Church from its dismal state. I foresee the noble ideal only in the Reunion with the Catholic Church. Only such a reunion can save the Church from class and community struggles. It will fulfill our vision about human life and religion and render the blessings of a community, which extends missionary services worldwide.

For the last twenty years, this Church had separated itself not just from the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch but from all the ancient and apostolic sees and remains in schism. All attempts including those made by Mar Divannasios in Mardin for a mutual agreement have been a failure. The patriarch had publicized a decree stating that he had no valid *kaiveppu* (ordination) on the enthronement of the catholicos. The Bishops had translated this into Malayalam and it was read out in all Churches. As a result, they receive the priests and

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deacons who were ordained by the Catholicos only after reordaining them.

We expect a reunion that will give due regard to our liturgy, customs and traditions, the validity of our *kaiveppu* and recognising the jurisdiction on our people. The condition from our side was that we should recognize the primacy of the Pope, the successor of St Peter. Our prayers and canons clearly proclaim that St Peter met with martyrdom in Rome and that the Pope of Rome is the head of the patriarchs.

The statements given by Metropolitan Mar Divannasios in court are those that agree with his acceptance of the power of the patriarch of the Jacobite Church. Thus, the metropolitan openly supports one patriarch in the court and secretly makes correspondences with another patriarch! It is insincerity on his part. So we have decided not to disclose any of our future correspondences to Mar Divannasios who proves himself to be unworthy of our trust. The late catholicos entrusted me this and I have done it accordingly.

The proceedings progressed in this way. I have written a long letter on this matter. I wish to inform Miss Holmes these events and I will be relieved of the burden of writing another letter if you would forward this to her. If I do not inform her of the internal circumstance of this process, it would be a cause grief to her.

I have given complete freedom to all our brothers in the ashram and our sisters in the convent to take the decision on their own. I had told them clearly that I would dispense them from the obligations of their vows, when I

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began to think seriously on this matter, and if I submit myself to this process. They have been pondering over this matter for a while. Each one has the complete freedom to choose his/her obligation.

A word more: I remember that you had extended your helps in various ways to the nuns. We had a very cordial relationship. I have a vision of living in greater love and unity with my friends. I fully believe that our mutual loving relationship will become more cordial and mystical and that the love of our blessed Lord will abide in our hearts because, we all believe in Christ, the one Lord.

With all best wishes,

Sd/-
Mar Ivanios

Letter to Mar Divannasios

Mar Ivanios had sent a letter to Metropolitan Vattassseril Mar Divannasios soon after he decided to leave the Bethany Hills in Perinadu. The letter is included below:

This is to bring to the kind attention of Most Rev. Metropolitan Mar Divannasios of Malankara, the President of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Association:

I founded Bethany and the institutions including the Bethany Church with a firm and lasting determination that the Jacobite See of Antioch or the Jacobite association or committee will not have any power over them. His Grace is aware of the fact that I have always stayed independent of the Jacobite Patriarch or the assembly of the association when I was installed as the episcopo and metropolitan. I had also informed Your

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Grace and the catholicos that we will stay away from all committees of the Jacobite Church. Neither Mar Theophilos nor I have participated in any such meetings. In the managing committee meeting held in *Midhunam* 1104 ME Mr EJ John had informed my decision in a written document. I hope Your Grace will remember that you have also advised me to preserve this independent stance of Bethany.

Yet I regret to say that Your Grace had, without my knowledge or that of Mar Theolphilos, sent some letters to the Bethany churches asking them to send representatives to the Association meeting of the Malankara Jacobite Church to be held at Kottayam Seminary on 19 *Chingam* 1106 ME. Our parish priests have sought our advice and we have warned them not to send our members to the same. No representative of the Bethany Church shall be sent to the meeting. I humbly make known to Your Grace that if any one claiming to represent the Bethany Church participates in the meeting, it would be an ineligible act.

The twenty-four owners of the Jacobite Church at Puramattom had handed over to me the Church through a contract. As a result the church has been governed by me for the last four or five years. However, if this church stands as a reason for claiming ownership of any Bethany Church established independently, attributing a Jacobite relationship, I will give up its control to those who entrusted that to me. The deed of transaction regarding the estates of Mallapally Poovanakadavu and Paduvayal also require an understanding. As you know, they were bought in my name with Your Grace's money. I had informed you to

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make necessary arrangements regarding the transfer of its documents and so far, you have not said anything in this regard. Therefore, I now send all those documents. Since you had asked me to keep that land with me, I have not transferred it to the trust. All other possessions of the Bethany Church will be transferred to the trust very soon.

Last Sunday (26 *Karkidakam*) a deacon from MGM high school came to the Paliyekkara Bethany Church in Tiruvalla for Sunday Holy Qurbono. He entered the sanctuary disregarding the parish priest and forcibly took away the censer. Though a teacher from the school rebuked him for his audacity, he continued to be there throughout the service. He also interfered when the first *Thubden* was read by reading Your Grace's name instead of Mar Theophilos'. As such incidents are likely to happen in the future Mar Theophilos has given the order to close the Church and hand over the key to its trustee.

He has asked them not to conduct service there until he reaches Tiruvalla. I hope you will remember that you had offered me help for the building of a church. However, I had refused it then saying, "If I take this money it will be regarded as a contribution from the Jacobite community and I will have to face disputes on that matter again. Therefore, I will find money on my own. Whereupon you replied, "This is my own money." Then I accepted it. I have used those three thousand Rupees for its construction. I know very well that Your Grace wishes to stay there and so I hand over the building and the church to your authority. I humbly request you to forgive me in the name of Our Lord, if I have in any way caused mental

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grief to Your Grace. We are happy to transfer all the buildings and churches without any disputes. I pray that Your Grace's love and care be with us abundantly.

May it please Your Grace!

Sd/-
Metropolitan Mar Ivanios
Bethany

Vadasserikkara
2/1/106

Letter Sent to the Catholicos

This is the letter that Mar Ivanios sent to Mar Baselios Catholicos during his stay in Vennikulam soon after he left the Bethany Hills:

May it please Moran Mor Baselios, the catholicos of the East!

All the members of the Bethany Ashram including Mar Theophilus and I have left the Bethany Hills and are now residing in a house at Vennikulam. I am forced to write this letter because of my intense love for you. I think I must make you aware of the circumstances under which we took such a decision. I strongly believe that our community will deteriorate into spiritual barrenness if we continue the disputes and power struggles without any respect for the glorious name of God. I had requested Your Beatitude and the great metropolitan in different ways and occasions to accept a movement that would glorify God's name in our land.

It is the duty of the bishops to lead us to heaven with due regard to the basic beliefs of the Malankara Syrian Church. It is the most important duty of the bishops

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to lead the people under their jurisdiction to the heavenly kingdom without altering the essential faith of the Malankara Syrian Church and to heal the wounds and to end the pain caused by the disputes and mutual rivalry to the Mystical Body time and again. Genuflecting before Your Beatitude and Your Grace – kissing your feet – I repeatedly request you this in the name of God.

I am greatly in grief at the deeds of the Great Metropolitan to possess the land owned by the Bethany. The institutions, including Bethany Church, do not belong to the Jacobite trust. Bethany has always been an independent community. After I was ordained metropolitan, the great metropolitan himself has reminded me in our meeting in the Old Seminary never to abandon its independent status. The great metropolitan had sent letters to Bethany Church asking to send representatives for the Malankara Jacobite Association that was to be held on 19 *Chingam* 1106 ME in the Old Seminary. Neither Mar Theophilos nor I had any information regarding this. The letter sent to Paliyekkara church in Tiruvalla was not addressed to the parish priest but to Advocate KM Mammen. He was not a member of that Church. Moreover, there were no members in that Church except the three people who submitted application for membership.

As they have requested for membership, their needs will be attended to with great concern. If any one from the Bethany church would sign the letter of authorization for the selection of Jacobite representatives, they would be treated as fake representatives. The only benefit the great metropolitan will receive through such orders are

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the "make-belief documents" to ensure the trust's authority on Bethany. His Grace is my father and my master whom I have served with innocence and loyalty right from my childhood.

I will write to Your Beatitude and His Grace later, certain things that you should know. I humbly request you to think of the plans for the greater glory and the good future of the Jacobite Church. We are not concerned about us; we who have enjoyed the favour of Your Beatitude, will love you and respect you forever. I had been entrusted by Your Beatitude and the late catholicos to find out the possibilities of a reunion with the Roman Catholic Church without altering the essential faith of the Oriental Churches. I find that you support this at times and at times oppose it. Regarding this, a few things are to be let known to Your Beatitude. I shall do it later.

May it please Your Beatitude!

Sd/-

Metropolitan Mar Ivanios

Vennikulam

6/1/106



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Chapter 29

THE ARCHBISHOP AND KC MAMMAN MAPPILA

KC Mamman Mappila has rendered significant contributions for the social, political, literary and economic progresses of the Christians in Kerala for about forty years through his efficient pen, fearless tongue and exemplary pursuits. It was during his tenure as the headmaster of the MD Seminary School, Kottayam that Mar Ivanios joined there as a student. The deep bond that developed between this teacher and the student continued throughout their life. Both of them worked together, discussed together, written articles and made speeches for the development of the Jacobite Church in Kerala. But at the end, their relationship became and reached a level of discord and disagreement.

The Disagreement

Mr Mamman Mappila wanted to remain firmly in the Jacobite Church and wished for a union between the patriarch and the Bishop's Party. He was also of the opinion that efforts must be made for unity with the Marthoma Church and through this to bring about the spiritual awakening of the *Puthankur* Christians in Kerala. He wrote editorials and articles on this regard in the newspaper Malayala Manorama. He tried to attempt reunion and encourage those who attempted reunion. However, Mar Ivanios upheld the union with the Universal Catholic Church as the panacea for all the problems of the Jacobite community. Mr Mamman Mappila has already referred to this attitude of Mar

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Ivanios even when he was a priest, in his *Jeevitha Smaranakal.* The following excerpt has been taken from Mamman Mappila's description of the discussions held at a meeting in Kottayam soon after the failure of the *vattipanam* case through the judgement of Veera Raghava Ayyankar. Many prominent members of the Bishop's Party attended the meeting.

> In order to encourage the popular opinion for an independant stance, a meeting was held in Kottayam by the Bishop's Party. Fr.PT Geevarghese and Mr MA Chacko, the superintendant of police were among the prominent members who attended that meeting. I discussed the future of the community with Fr.PT Geevarghese. Then he asked me to consider a union with the Catholic Church. He seemed to be inclined to this union. I expressed my opinion that the attitudes and aspirations of the majority of the people in our community must be respeçted. If the prominent members of the Jacobite Church join hands with the Catholics then the rest of the Church will be like lambs without a shepherd. So it will be sinful to leave them but if the whole community supports such a reunion then I have no disapproval.
>
> Fr.PT Geevarghese replied, "I think leaders like us must pave the way for the whole Church by joining the Catholic Church. It will inspire others also." I added, "I don't think so. It is not only that this thought is in vain, but also, I do not have the inner conviction that it is necessary to join the Catholic Church". (Malayala Manorama Weekly Journal Vol II, No. 45 Page 45).

Principal and Headmaster

After completing his MA Degree from Madras Christian College

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with distinction Deacon Geevarghese was appointed as the Principal of the MD Seminary High School by Metropolitan Pulikkottu Mar Divannasios on the advice of His Grace Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios (then Malpan Geevarghese). The designation of the Principal was created on account of the difficulty in appointing Fr. Geevarghese as a teacher where Mr. KC Mamman Mappila was the Headmaster. However, Mamman Mappila resigned from his post a few months after Fr. Geevarghese joined and expressed his dissatisfaction through letters he sent to the deacon.

An excerpt, which speaks about this in Mamman Mappila's Jeevitha Smaranakal, is given below:

My Unexpected Tolerance (KC Mamman Mappila)

I had imagined what would happen to me if Fr. Geevarghese would come there after his MA degree. He was a star eyeing my position in that institution. I knew that I will have to give up my authority there soon after his return. As I had expected this situation two years before his return, the sudden tragic events were not accidental. I had decided to find out some alternatives for this though I could not formulate them clearly. Hence, when he came and took charge as the principal I had no other options but to resign my post there. There were no clear pathways defined for me. As a man with a wife and four children, that job was my sole source of income. I remember those days of humiliation and mortification. Those days, the school reopened in January and I spent a few more months there in disappointment. Finally, I decided to avoid any future confrontations with Fr. Geevarghese who was installed as my superior and I carefully stayed away from the situation.

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MA Achan, an Epitome of Tolerance

Deacon Geevarghese was ordained priest in 1909 and thenceforth he was known as MA Achan. After becoming a priest, he reconciled with Mr. Mamman Mappila and they became thick friends, cooperated, and worked together. MA Achan proved himself a man of openess, patience, love, sympathy and tolerance. Once he had said to Mr Vattasseril, "Mr Mamman Mappila had sent several letters insulting me while I was a deacon. I had kept those letters but burned them when I became a priest. I was convinced that it is not good to keep them. My wrath against him had also burnt to ashes along with the letters. This incident had melted the tension between these two great persons.

Later Mr Mamman Mappila had acknowledged the support of Mar Ivanios in the walks of his life. The disagreement between them and the latter's resignation from the school had prompted Mr Mamman Mappila to enter journalism, politics and the banking business. When the circumstances of the Orthodox Church were tumultuous, in all matters, MA Achan, Mr KC Mamman Mappila BA, A Philipose MA BL and KV Chacko BA LT gave advice to Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios. It is to be stated specially, that, of these, all, except Mr Mamman Mappila, embraced the Catholic Church.

Neutral Stand

Mr Mamman Mappila also was aware of the Catholic Reunion attempts of the other Orthodox Bishops who were doing it through Mar Ivanios. However, Mr Mamman Mappila was in a situation in which he could write neither for nor against it.

Knowing that Mar Ivanios who had left the Bethany Hills with the ashramites, was living in Vennikulam, and had decided to reunite with the Catholic Church, Mr Mamman Mappila went to Tiruvalla and met His Excellency. His Excellency narrated to Mr Mamman Mappila the

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many reasons and incidents that inspired him to Catholic reunion. About this, His Excellency in his *Atmakathakathanam* wrote, "After a few days, Mr KC Mamman Mappila came to see me at Bethany Ashram Thirumoolapuram. He came there after coming to know that I had decided to join the Catholic Church. When I explained the reasons for my decision to reunite with the Catholic Church, he replied, "If you wish to join the Catholic Church on account of the reasons you have just mentioned, I have nothing to say against it. As long as there is breath in my nose, neither I, nor the Malayala Manorama daily will oppose Your Excellency's movement. Many prominent members of the Orthodox Church came to meet me and I explained to them my convictions" (*Athmakathakathanam*)

The Editorials in the *Malayala Manorama*

The articles and editorials that emanated from the pen of that veteran journalist, the old and wise Mamman Mappila, testify to his deep knowledge and respect for the Catholic Church and the Papal See. As an example, we quote below an excerpt from an editorial written in the *Malayala Manorama* on the greatness of the Catholic Church:

> It is a universally acclaimed fact that of the great powers that are in the world now or that were there before, none can be compared to the power and glory of the Catholic Church. What the English historian Macaulay rightfully wrote about this Church might have been read by most English-speaking people. After the Roman Church was founded, many powers rose and declined. However, the power of that Church has only increased until today; it never declined. All the people in the Western countries in Europe belonged to the Roman Church. But a Roman priest, Luther, slipped away from that Church and began the Reformation and after sometime, many

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people left the Roman Church. But still, the miraculous zeal and the purity of life of Francis Xavier and Ignatius of Loyola, made more gains than this loss (*Malayala Manorama*, 28 August1909).

A part of the editorial that Mamman Mappila wrote in *Manorama* on the Papal See is given below:

> It is not necessary to state specially that the Papal See in the city of Rome that became a Christian centre from the beginning of Christianity is an ancient intstitution. Thereafter, many powerful kingdoms and empires rose and declined in the world. Seeing their rise and fall, the Catholic Church and its leadership persist even today with the brightness of fame and unfading glow. In this modern age with a world divided among different castes and nations, there is a lack of institutions and persons who are the subjects of awe and reverence of all peoples. However encouragable is the quality of caste-consciousness, it is only His Holiness the Pope, and none else, who can instruct all sectionsof the people in the civilized world on the principle that all-caste-consciousness and all-caste-friendship is necessary for universal peace. The English, the Germans, the Westerner and the Easterner – all look upto the Pope with reverence and believe in his sense of justice and impartiality. There are representatives from almost forty countries of the world, including Great Britain, France, Germany, USA, Australia, Belgium, Italy, etc., who reside in the papal state. The representatives of the Pope are sent to these and other countries.
>
> (*Malayala Manorama*, 4 June 1929).

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Letter to Mathew Mappila

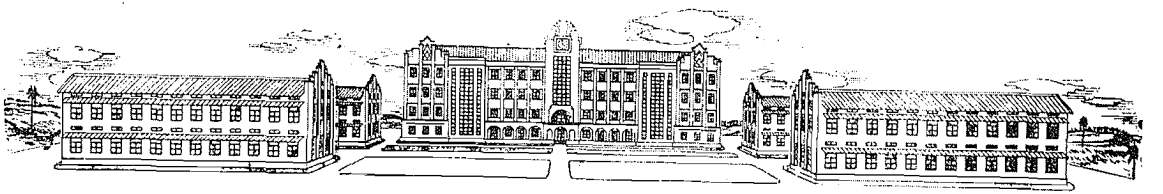
The letter given below is one that Mar Ivanios, while he was living at Thirumoola after leaving the Bethany Hills, wrote to Mr Mamman Mappila. The readers can understand how powerfully he made clear, aiming at the reunion of the Christian Churches, making clear his total willingness to self-sacrifice, that only through union with the Catholic Church and the Papal See, the Syrian Church in Kerala can make internal as well as external progress.

My dear Sir,

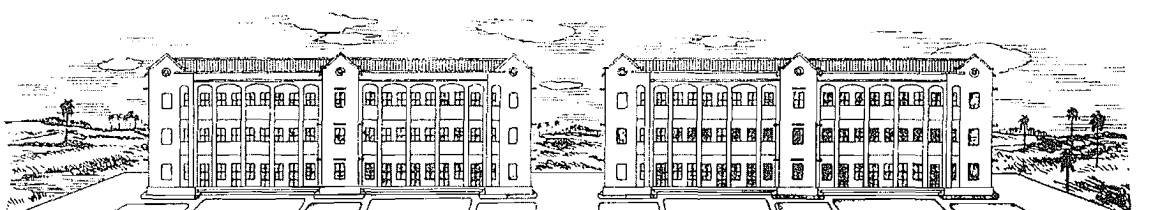
These last few days, I thought of you many times... I have the firm belief that the good God is controlling me in every step that I make. I desired very much, for the renewal and prosperity of the community in which I was born and brought up and with that one and only aim, I desired to lead it to God's presence. I make it clear to you that I have no selfish interest at all in this matter. Based on the history of Christianity, I very firmly believe that reunion is needed in today's Christian world. I am entirely sure that a reunion of this sort is impossible discarding Rome. The most important factor in this is Rome. The Holy Spirit of God is very strongly compelling me to sacrifice myself for this. Only an elevating power aiming at noble ideals can redeem a community. I firmly believe that God is calling me to show through my life such an ideal.

... The immediate cause to leave Bethany Hills is the procedure that Metropolitan Mar Divannasios has recently taken. I have written in detail about it to His Beatitude, the Catholicos and to Metropolitan Mar Divannasios. I am sending a printed copy of one such

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Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram



The College Hostels

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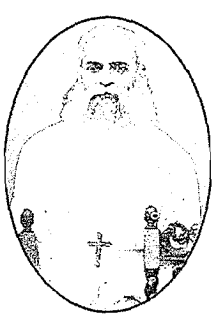
The First Offsprings of the Reunion Movement



Mar Ivanios



Mar Theophilos



Fr John OIC



Dn Alexander
(Fr Seraphion OIC)



Kileelethu Chacko

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letter along with this letter. The ideals and means that the Jacobite community have adopted till now have only led to its decline. This is my firm conviction.

I know that it is not possible for you to accept my opinion of Catholic Reunion. For the moment, I satisfy myself with the principle, "So let us agree to differ and still continue as the best of friends". How encouraging it was for me that you visited me during the last month many times. To confess the truth, your visits were instrumental to relieve me of the acute pain that oppressed me. Hence, I will be very much grateful to you.

I felt that the Almighty God is calling me to leap into the ocean of his love. In the correspondence to Rome, there is not even one sentence, which I wrote with selfish motive. I aimed only at the glory of God, the prosperity of the Jacobite community and the reunion of the spiritual children of St. Thomas. I have requested for a reunion that would approve and protect our customs, rituals and liturgy and accept the validity of our priesthood and Episcopacy, Now, Rome has approved all these. I wish to publish these in detail shortly.

In the correspondence with Rome, I have intended the continuity of the See of the catholicos and the total union of the Bishop's Party. Thus, I wished to open a way for the union of all the *Pazhayakur* and *Puthankur* Syrians. Like this, due to my untiring efforts for the good of the community in the last years, I had to undergo a lot of suffering. Nevertheless, all these sufferings were very much useful for me and so, I am extremely thankful to those who were instrumental to it. Last Saturday, Metropolitan Divannasios came to Tiruvalla and saw me.

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I got the chance to let him know the truth that God is calling me to follow the sublime ideal that I believe.

With much love and respect,

Yours faithfully
Sd/-
Mar Ivanios

The Farewell

When Mar Ivanios was in his deathbed at the Bishop's House, Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram, Mr Mamman Mappila came from Kottayam in spite of his old age and difficulties travelling. The inmates of the Bishop's House watched tearfully the meeting of those two prominent persons who had worked together for the prosperity of the Syrian communities in Kerala. When Mamman Mappila saw Mar Ivanios waiting for death, they broke into tears. Mr Mamman Mappila embraced Mar Ivanios and they cried bitterly. Both of them remembered the days they had spent together and Mamman Mappila went back to Kottayam with a heavy heart leaving his friend on his last journey.

After the demise of Mar Ivanios, Mamman Mappila shared his condolence in the editorial of *Malayala Manorama* in the following way. This testifies how greatly he appreciated and revered Mar Ivanios.

Mar Ivanios the Deceased

It is a matter of great grief that of our renowned *Thirumeni* who was popular among us as MA Achan, Principal of MD Seminary, Professor at Serampore College, the Founder of the Bethany Ashram, Aabo Geevarghese, Mar Ivanios and Archbishop Mar Ivanios passed away. In the last half century, he held a prominent role in any community, institution and movement of which

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he was a member. Not many great personalities endowed with such qualities as intellectual acumen, wisdom, oratorical skills and courage of action required of gifted men who adorn the seats of leadership can be counted in the land of Kerala. It is clear from a number of events that can be listed, that in whatever initiative he had taken, he had an indomitable will and manliness to succeed. From the beginning of the *vattipanam* case of the Malankara Syrian Community, Bishop Mar Ivanios had played a unique role as the right hand man of the illustrious Metropolitan Vattasseril. The Bethany Movement, which attracted the admiration of not only the Christian world but also of the other religions created a social revolution. When MA Achan who insisted on changing cassocks every hour came and settled at the Bethany Hills in Ranni with earthen plates and saffron clothes, he reminded us of the ascetic life of the great poet Tagore at the Vishvabharathi and of Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmathi Ashram. When he settled at Bethany Hills in Ranni, it became a pilgrim centre for the devotees of the community. Even the most penny-pinching persons who guarded their wealth now gave away their money as they were swayed by the life-style and oratorical skill of Abo Geevarghese. He was of the opinion that the Malankara Syrian Community should merge with the universal Roman Church in order to safeguard its future and the initiation of the famous Rite Movement ultimately brought endless pain to *Thirumeni*'s mother Church. Even after he joined the Roman Church, he made use of his extraordinary talents for the foundation and conduct of a first grade college, several high schools and other schools. His conversational proficiency and rhetorical skill helped him

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to collect funds in his trip to Western Countries, which he used for these institutions. It is no wonder that he who created history was subject to positive and negative criticism. He has left an indelible personal imprint in the history of the Syrian Community. Without doubt he was an extraordinary great person. Even, those who disagreed with him in opinion had to agree on his great talents and genius. The magnitude of his personality won him several accolades and honours and the provision for an autonomous Church from the Pope and the demise of this noble soul is an irreparable loss to the Kerala Christian world in general and especially for the Kerala Catholic Church. May his Soul rest in peace! (*Malayala Manorama*, 17 July 1953).



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Chapter 30

TAKING LEAVE OF THE BETHANY HILLS

Conviction and conversion are two terms that are interrelated but different in their meanings. (Conviction is one thing but conversion is another thing). A renowned speaker and saint of the Catholic Church once observed, "I can convince many but I cannot convert one."

One cannot embrace the Catholic Church merely because of the realisation that the Catholic Church is the one true Church founded by Christ and that hence communion with that Church would assure the salvation of one's soul. The search for truth and reflection is sufficient to make conviction in a person. Nevertheless, to embrace Catholic faith or for conversion, it is essential that the grace of God moves one powerfully.

Letters with Strong Persuasion

Mar Ivanios received several letters expressing their impatience in the delay of the reunion with the Catholic Church and requesting earnestly that one should not delay reunion any further. Two such letters have been included below:

Fr Geevarghese Peedikayil
Omallur

Pathanamthitta P. O.
Travancore
18/01/1930

My dear Lord,

I am extremely happy to have met Your Excellency

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at Bethany recently. Though I wanted to discuss certain ecclesial matters with you then, I was forced to keep myself away from it because of your disapproval.

We have been hearing about the news of Your Excellency joining the Catholic Church for the last two years. Many are thrilled with joy that through correspondence with the Holy See, a rite is recognized. We are overjoyed at these developments. A vast majority opposes it due lack of understanding.

The devoted and obedient Jacobites everywhere are dependants of Bethany. They will follow your footsteps. It is certain.

Many are impatient in Your Excellency delaying it. Besides, I humbly beg to bring to Your Excellency's attention that the delay of a difficult task for us, tarnishes Your Excellency's name. Even now, many are bothering Your Excellency. It is not good that Your Excellency remains here making yourself a victim to the wrath of other Bishops.

Therefore, without delaying for a moment, with courage and the joy of a morning sun, not as a valiant son of the mother Church, but as one of her prelates, bless us, who are waiting with thirst! The Catholics here consider Your Excellency's reunion similar to the conversion of Cardinal Newman in England. The Most Rev. Bishop of Kollam also thinks so. Most Rev. Bishop, the majority of the Jacobite Church may, for the moment, oppose us; but in due course, in Your Excellency's lifetime itself, you and Bethany will be like leaven in leavened dough. Nobody can exist, opposing truth. The supreme

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authority of Peter, the two natures of the Messiah, the schism of the Jacobite Church, etc. are truths that can be proved very soon. As soon as Your Excellency enters into communion with the Church, publish a newspaper like *Sathyadeepam* and a few good books from Bethany. Conduct Catholic conferences in a few places.

I would be glad to host the first conference here where we have a large courtyard, the big church and bungalow for accommodation. With intense longing, I look forward to that auspicious occasion, when my Bishop - as my Bishop – touches this soil with his feet and blesses it.

As soon as these are fulfilled, Your Excellency must make a journey to Europe and America. This will help Your Excellency to achieve many of our goals.

I conclude my letter reminding Your Excellency once again that delaying it (the reunion) would be detrimental to you and your activities.

Praying for the prosperity of Your Excellency,

Yours humble servant

Sd/-

Fr Geevarghese Peedikayil

Letter from Dr. Benziger

The prayers, letters and advice of Dr Benziger, Bishop of Kollam had always inspired Mar Ivanios in all his endeavours. The last letter of Dr Benziger inspired Mar Ivanios to descend the Bethany Hills and to embrace the Catholic Church. Mar Ivanios had sent a letter to Benziger seeking the advice of the latter on his plan about the reunion.

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Mar Ivanios wanted to create awareness among the Orthodox priests and laymen to win their support for the Reunion with the Catholic Church. In reply to this, Dr Benziger wrote:

> Suppose a few men with their leader had fallen into a pit on their journey to some place. Their leader ardently desired to save them from the pit. Nevertheless, how can he save others while he himself is in the pit? In order to lead them out he must escape on to the ground first so that he could save the rest with a rope or a ladder. Therefore, my request to you is to descend the Bethany Hills and embrace Catholic Church without hesitation. Thereafter, Your Excellency can, by the grace of God, bring all the non-Catholic brethren to the Catholic Church.

This Letter strongly influenced Mar Ivanios to hasten the Catholic reunion.

The Reunion of the Two Priests

Deacon Koshy from Sooranad and Fr Geevarghese from Chengannur, heeding to the voice of their conscience, had the fortune to embrace the Catholic Church. Deacon Koshy, with the consent of the Superior of the ashram reached Mannanam, joined the Catholic Church, received the name 'Samuel' and became a member of the Carmelite Order. Fr Geevarghese, who had been faithfully serving the Bethany Ashram for ten years, left that community on the dictates of his concience, reached the Changanassery Bishop's House and professed his faith before Bishop Dr Kalassery on 25 September 1929. It is worthy of mention, that Mar Ivanios, their spiritual head, did not express any sort of disapproval on their decision to leave the Bethany Ashram and become Catholics. He only said in a manner of advice, "Please be patient for a little while; is it not better that we all join together?" However, they acted according to their conscience.

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The Intercession of Saint Little Therese

Thousands of people in the four corners of the world, who were eager to see the conversion of Bethany, were daily praying for it. Many requested the intercession of St Little Therese, the patron of missions. A letter was sent in this regard to Mother Agnes, sister of St Little Therese through Rev. Fr Geevarghese who embraced the Catholic Church and Rev. Fr Marsilinos TOCD, a monk from the Chethipuzha Ashram in Changanassery. In that letter, they requested the prayers, through the intercession of St. Little Therese, for the reunion of the Bishops of Bethany Ashram. Therefore, Mother Agnes along with the nuns there offered this request in a novena (special prayers for nine days). Later they sent a letter on 30 August 1930, which read like this: "We believe that our little saint will obtain grace for those two prelates to enter the fold very soon." It is to be considered a miracle that their prayers were answered within one month after the Novena.

The Tears that Broke the Rope of the Coonan Cross

After the Catholic Reunion, the Catholics of Kothamangalam gave a grand reception to Mar Ivanios. In that felicitation meeting, the parish priest in his welcome address stated, "I am so happy to tell you that it was His Grace Mar Ivanios who broke the rope that a few of our fathers tied to the Coonan Cross at Mattanchery in 1653". Mar Ivanios, who had been listening to this statement commented later in his reply, "Reverend father has said that it is I who broke the rope of the Coonan Cross. I am sorry to say that he is mistaken in this matter. It is not I, who broke the rope of the Coonan Cross, but the tears of thousands of people. In order to heal the disunity or schism that sprang among the Christians of Kerala after 1653, thousands of believers had been fervently praying with tears to liberate the people of *Puthankur*, who were entangled in the rope tied to the Coonan Cross, to bring them back to the mother Catholic Church. Those tears that have been incessantly falling on the rope of the Coonan Cross have

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melted the rope that was tied to it and on 20 September 1930 it broke by itself. Therefore, my dear children, it is not my effort but the tears of thousands of believers that broke it".

As His Excellency stated, the reunion of Bethany and the birth of the reunion-child of Kerala is the fruit of the prayers of thousands of people.

The Counter Propaganda within the Ashram

The blessing of God and the relentless efforts of Mar Ivanios created a congenial circumstance for communion with the Catholic Church. However, there took place some unexpected counter propaganda within the Bethany Ashram. Fr. Alexios (Mar Thevodosios, the present Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church), who was the right hand man of the Superior of Bethany from its inception, participating in all its endeavours, gave leadership to this. Mar Ivanios, on the other hand, was of the firm confidence that all the priests and *sadhus* (the ashramites who were not priests) of the Ashram and the nuns would follow him and embrace the Catholic Reunion. Since, at the time of the planning and correspondence for Reunion, all the ashramites spoke and worked in favour of it, Mar Ivanios did not anticipate any such opposition.

The Superior of the Ashram had sent Fr. Alexios to Singapore to collect funds for Bethany. But Alexios fell ill before beginning the donation drive and stayed there for a few months for treatment. Hence, Mar Ivanios wrote to him to return without collecting the funds. On his return he went to see Mar Ivanios at Thirumoola in Tiruvalla. On that occasion, Mar Ivanios discussed with Fr. Alexios about the attempts at Catholic Reunion and its favourable circumstances. Not only he did not speak anything contrary to it, but he showed a favourable attitude to it. Mar Ivanios told Fr. Alexios to go to Bethany and take rest for a few days; thus his health would improve with convalescing. On his

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way back, he called on his uncle Mattackal Rev. Alexanthriose Kathanar at the Old Seminary in Kottayam. He also met Metropolitan Vattaseril there. Since they were bitter enemies of the Reunion they spoke against Mar Ivanios and advised him not to support the latter's attempts for the communion. Meanwhile, his uncle tearfully lamented, "Dear son, do not forsake me in my old age". These words and his uncle's tears moved Fr. Alexiose. Besides, the compelling persuasions and advice of Metropolitan Vattasseril, other priests, relatives and friends made him develop an attitude of revolt against the wish of his Superior of the Ashram. Though he was advised to take rest after his treatment, he spent time to work against the reunion soon after his return.

He started teaching the inmates of the ashram his arguments against the communion. He told them that the reunion was a façade to entangle the poor Syrians in the Roman Church and that it was a heinous act to forsake the Jacobite Church, the maternal commune. Some of them believed in his rhetoric. Fr. Alexios then tried to influence the priests who lived in churches other than the Bethany ashram through letters. Fr Barsleeba who lived in the Puramattom church and Fr Job who stayed in the Mangalam church received his letters claiming that Mar Ivanios' attempts for reunion was a deception. Mar Ivanios who was staying at Thirumoola came to know about Alexios' true nature from these priests. His Grace was grief stricken at this turn of events and was perplexed about further action. However, he made up his mind to reach Bethany at the earliest. The next day he reached Bethany with Mar Theophilos and stayed there.

As Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos reached Bethany the force of the opposition of Fr. Alexios began to subside. Thereafter, instead of open propaganda, he began, in secret, to advise others privately. However, Mar Ivanios, through daily open classes in ecclesial matters dispelled the doubts of the ashramites. All, except Fr. Alexios and two

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three *Sadhus*, participated in the classes. As a result of conducting class for about a month, he could create a congenial atmosphere in Bethany. Fr. Alexios' party boycotted everything.

Though the Superior was grief-stricken, he behaved lovingly to the opposite party. Besides, the two bishops continued their prayer seeking God's plan for future actions.

Finally both of them decided to leave the Bethany Hills on 20 August 1930 (4 *Chingam* 1106 ME). Their plan was to reach Kozhancherry quay in a boat through Pampa River and from there to Tiruvalla where they would stay in a rented building. Killileth Chacko had been asked to bring a bus to Kozhencherry for this purpose. On 19 August, after the evening prayer, Mar Ivanios made a speech in the chapel of the Bethany Ashram. Its conclusion can be summarized as follows:

> "I would like to tell all of you that Mar Theophilos and I have decided to leave these Bethany Hills. All those who wish to join us in our journey for the Reunion with the Catholic Church must inform us by 12 O'clock this night. As Superior of the Ashram, I give you, the ashramites, complete freedom to take a decision on your own. I will be here until 12 O'clock tonight".

By 11.30 pm everyone in the Ashram, except Fr. Alexios, Deacon Alexander and two or three *Sadhus*, came before the Superior of the Ashram and expressed their willingness to follow him and to leave the Bethany Hills. Since Mar Ivanios had expected Deacon Alexander to join him in his decision, his Excellency was deeply pained when he did not see the deacon until 11.30 pm. However, Mar Ivanios went on praying for the conversion of the deacon and finally at 11.45 pm, inspired by God, Deacon Alexander entered the chapel and knelt before Mar Ivanios who had been waiting for him earnestly. Thus, the Superior of the Ashram was very happy.

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Pusbasshlomo[1] Bethany Hills!

Given below is an excerpt from *Bethaniyude Charithram* (a manuscript) which narrates the farewell of Mar Ivanios and the ashramites from the Bethany Hills.

> "The day had come when Mar Ivanios, the founder of the Bethany Ashram along with other ashramites had decided to bid *adieu* to Fr. Alexiose, to the ashram and to all its buildings. His Grace asked the ashramites to take only what was needed. So they left everything in the ashram and were busy packing their luggage with the essential items. Just then, Fr Barskipa and Fr Barsleeba reached there by chance. They also helped them in their work. They also decided to take along with them the youngest of the orphans. The workers carried the goods to the boat arranged in the nearby quay. Now it was time for the departure of Mar Ivanios and the ashramites.
>
> "Let's go to the Chapel" said Mar Ivanios and that good shepherd walked towards the Chapel followed by the *sanyasis* sobbing, with a loaded heart and with tears streaming down their cheeks. They entered the chapel and fell down before the Lord who resides in the tabernacle day and night. After a while, with a quivering heart and trembling lips, Mar Ivanios said, "Let us all stand up. Remember brothers we had come here empty handed and now we are leaving this place empty handed." He sobbed while he said this and everyone broke into tears. The scene was charged with such varied emotions that one could hardly describe it. Later when everyone seemed to be calm, Mar Ivanios said, "Let us go out." Even then,

[1] The Syriac expression for goodbye meaning, "remain in peace"

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a few of the *sanyasis* unable to control their sorrow went on sobbing. They all took the oath that they would meet their Lord in the tabernacle of the Catholic churches very soon and that it was their last meeting with their saviour in that chapel. With folded hands they all came out and proceeded towards the building of Fr. Alexios. He and his associates were staying back without any interest in all these events. However, the separation of all his brothers who had shared their lives together for twelve long years broke the heart of Alexios as well.

His Grace Mar Ivanios and his followers, with a burning heart and uncontrollable grief, left the chapel and entered Fr Alexios's room with tearful faces to say goodbye. When all approached him, they saw that Fr Alexios who was lying on the bed was suffering from severe pain. They were all confused at this unexpected turn of events. Soon everyone began to console their brother who was writhing with pain in his bed. Even though they show enmity and lack of love, we cannot act so. Some of them massaged his palm and legs while others fanned him, and of course, there was panic! They all knew that it was due to mental struggle that it happened so. After a short while, when everything seemed to be calm Mar Ivanios came near him and called him. He opened his eyes and looked at everyone. His Grace laid his hands on him and prayed. Soon he became quiet and lay on his bed. Mar Ivanios then removed his watch from his wrist, offered it to Fr Alexios, and said, "Please accept this. This is my last gift to you. We are leaving." He could only utter that much. Their hearts were so rent with emotion that no one could say anything. All came out. Yet as it

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was not humane to leave Fr Alexios in that condition; he asked Fr Joshua to stay there until his situation improved. Then everyone took their bundles and walked towards the main gate. His Grace said, "Put down your bundles. Let us pray for a while before we go from this place." Therefore, they kept their bags down and His Grace said the prayer (*Bethaniyude Charithram Manuscript, pages109*-111).

Journey to Vennikulam

When more than twenty *sanyasis* clad in saffron (*kavi*) descended the Mundanmala in a row with their bundles in hand, it gave the impression of a pilgrimage. Yes, it was a pilgrimage in all its sense. From Egypt to Canaan, from the desert to green pastures, from the whirlpool of turbulence to the harbour of peace - a pilgrimage of Christ's warriors from the Jacobite Church to the Catholic Church under the leadership of Mar Ivanios. When they reached the road, one of the *sadhus* asked their leader sadly, "Father where are we going to?," and he replied calmly, "My son, God will take care of it". Finally, they all reached the quay (Madathummuzhy) where three small boats were waiting for them. About 25 people including His Grace Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos, *sadhus*, Medayil Pappy and Churulukuzhiyil Skaria got into the boats. They sailed through the rock-laden Kakkattu River and reached the Vadasserikkara Jetty. A large barge was made ready for the rest of their journey by Panachimootil Mr Mani, a well wisher and close friend of Mar Ivanios. So the group continued their journey to the Kozhancherry Jetty through Pampa.

In the course of their journey when they reached Ranni, Fr Barskipa submitted the following request to the leader of the pilgrimage. "Father if we intend to stay in Tiruvalla we will face several hurdles. First, there is not enough space in the building there rented by the manager to accommodate twenty-two of our members. Secondly,

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the Christians in Tiruvalla are indifferent to our mission. Therefore, we cannot expect any favour from them. We will have difficulty regarding food also. So, my opinion is that, it is not good to go to Tiruvalla. But, in Vennikulam, we will not have to face such hardships. There we have a church and a school of our own. People there, both Christians and non-Christians, are more tolerant towards us. Therefore, they will give us all assistance. Hence, my humble request is that we stay at Vennikulam." Everyone including Mar Ivanios accepted his opinion and so they got down in the quay of Ranni. From there they went to Vennikulam in a private bus and reached there by evening. As there were no facilities for their lodgings, they slept in the Memala Primary School.

The news that the Bishop of Bethany and *sanyasis* were staying in the Memala Primary School spread like a wild fire. The next morning a lot of people from different castes and groups visited His Grace Mar Ivanios and offered their help and support for him. Since the school was very small, the pilgrims moved to a building that was freely offered by a well-respected person of the place, Kanjirathummoottil Kutty. Mar Ivanios stayed at Thirumoolapuram and frequently enquired of the welfare of the inmates at Vennikulam.

Experience in the Horns of a Dilemma

Mar Ivanios and the Bethany Ashramites left the Bethany Hills and stayed at Vennikulam with a desire to reunite with the Catholic Church. They had left the Bethany Ashram; but could not embrace Catholic Reunion. Thus, the Most Rev. Bishops and the *sanyasis* had to spent almost a month in a dilemma. They had to go through several humorous yet pitiful events during this time.

Many Orthodox Church members helped the Bethany ashramites with collections, church donations and *pidiyari*[2]. But since Metropolitan

[2] A small portion of rice, set apart as an offering for the church

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Mar Ivanios receives his own parents into the Catholic Church

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The Prelates who reunited with the Catholic Church and are gone for their eternal reward



Mar Dioscoros, Mar Theophilos, Mar Ivanios, Mar Severios

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Vattasseril Mar Divannasios had issued a decree banning any sort of help to Mar Ivanios, those services were terminated. They could not collect funds from the Catholics either, as they had not joined the Catholic Church. Under these circumstances, Ivanios called all the members together and said, "Dear Children, we have to face several trials and sufferings before we achieve our noble ideal. We will be under poverty from tomorrow onwards. Metropolitan Vattasseril has ordered the churches to stop all their incentives for us. So I believe that all our *sanyasis* will be ready to starve with me." The monks replied, "Father, do not worry, we have come to suffer poverty with you. We are men and so it does not matter if we live begging for alms. Nevertheless, we have to take care of our dear sisters who are now staying in the convent. As they are women, they will not be free to go out in search of food. Therefore, Father, kindly help them with what you have."

Mar Ivanios, their spiritual leader was immensely happy at their willingness to suffer tribulations with him. He discussed the same with the sisters in the Thirumoola convent. They replied "Father it is to the priests and *sanyasis* that you must extend your help with what you get. We are always staying within the convent and hence we can suffer starvation. However, our priests and sanyasis will have to go out to work and hence they must not starve. So, our humble request is not to starve them. When Mar Ivanios heard these replies, he was happy and submitted all his supplications to God. So God did not allow them to starve, not even a day; a true example that God will not forsake whoever put their trust in him.

When it was heard that Mar Ivanios and the *sanyasis* from the Bethany Ashram were staying at Vennikulam and that they had financial difficulties, Kalekkattil Thomas Kathanar, a well wisher of Bethany and one of the earliest to commune with the Catholic Church, visited Mar Ivanios and said, "Your Grace, do not get upset at Metropolitan

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Vattasseril's intimidation. If you have any difficulty regarding rice or any other goods please send a bullock cart to my home. I will send whatever you need. If you are in need of money, I can send you any amount from the bank. So, Your Grace, do not worry. I will help you."

Many good-hearted, Christians and non-Christians as well, continued to support Mar Ivanios in his plans. A member of one of the ancient Hindu families at Pullattu near Vennikulam, Varikannamala Narayanan Vaidyan, was deeply moved by the plight of the Bethany priests. So he bought land of four acres with his own money and offered it for the lodgings of the *sanyasis*. Due to the constraints of space, it is difficult to include the names of all the priests and laymen who helped Mar Ivanios in his endeavours. Most Rev. Pulikkottu Joseph Ramban, Cheppattu Philippose Ramban, Shri A Philipose MA, BL, K V Chacko BA, LT, Melamparambil Umman, Medayil Pappy, Thundiyil Philip, Killileth Chacko, Panagottethu Umman, etc were a few among the many whose names were to be written in golden letters in the history of the Reunion Movement, for their relentless service and help to Mar Ivanios.

Mar Ivanios reunited with the Catholic Church a month after his descend from the Bethany hills. The details of Reunion will be included in the next chapter.



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Chapter 31

THE MEMORABLE REUNION

The reunion attempts made by the *Puthankur* people of Kerala have already been discussed in the Chapters 16 -18 of this book. It is a pity, that the annals of history clearly depict that such endeavours have not met with success. Mar Dionysius the Great (Mar Thoma VI), after many attempts, attained reunion; but unfortunately it ended in failure. After that, several priests and laymen from the *Puthankur* people, in their search for truth, had embraced the Catholic Church individually.

Several bishops, priests and lay leaders of the *Pazhayakur* people had tried to bring their bretheren, the non-Catholics to their mother Church. Special mention must be made about the selfless attempts of the Bishops of the dioceses of Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kottayam Changanassery and Kollam to bring the Jacobites, Orthodox, Nestorians, Marthomites, Protestants, etc. back to the Catholic Church. The renowned Bishops Mar Augustine Kandathil, Alexander Choolaparambil, James Kalassery, Alosius Benziger, Francis Vazhapally and their successors are prominent among them. The constant endeavours of Very Rev. Fr Dominic Thottassery MA, LT, the Director of the Apostolate of Evangelisation of the Diocese of Changanassery and Very Rev. Fr Lawrence Pereira (the late Bishop of Kottar), the Director of Missions of the Diocese of Kollam deserve to be written in golden letters in the history of the Reunion Movement. The commitment and vision of these legendary heroes paved the way for the reunion of about ten thousands of lay people and more than fifty priests. However, the Reunion Movement led by Mar Ivanios

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opened the way for a mass reunion. This will be explained in the second part of this book.

Permission for the Antiochian Rite

In 1921 (9 years before the beginning of the Reunion Movement) the Bishops of the *Pazhayakur* Syrians had obtained permission from the Holy See for the priests who reunited to the Catholic Church from the Jacobite Church of Kerala to administer the holy sacraments and other observances according to the Antiochan rite. Some unexpected circumstances of that time compelled the bishops to obtain such a permission.

A reputed leader from the Jacobite Knanaya community visited His Grace Mar Alexander Choolaparambil in Kottayam. He expressed their decision to commune with the Catholic Church along with their bishop if they got permission from Rome to follow the Antiochian rite. His Grace informed this to the representative of the pope who had come to Ernakulam at that time. As a result, in 1920 the representative of the pope convened a meeting of the *Pazhayakur* Syrian Bishops in Ernakulam. According to the decision made at this meeting a petition was sent to Rome immediately. After discussions in Rome on this matter, on 5 July 1921, a decree was sent to the bishops granting permission to receive, according to the Antiochian rite, the Jacobite priests who reunite. The English version of the decree is given below:

> "The Sacred congregation after maturely examining the matter has come to the determination to permit the Jacobite priests who return to the Catholic Church to conserve their own rite provided nothing is found contrary to the integrity of faith and does not result in any way superstitious. In accepting the said priests the Most Rev. Ordinaries should make an accurate inquiry in order to satisfy themselves that the sacrament, especially baptism and sacred ordination have been validly administered to them. In any case I recommend the greatest prudence on

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such an argument that no regrettable inconvenience may come from it."

It is to be remembered with gratitude that the bishops of the dioceses of the Syrians in Kerala, especially, of the dioceses of Changanassery and Kottayam, had given permission to the priests who reunited from the Jacobite Church to administer the holy sacraments, according to the decree cited above.

The Official Letter of Recognition for the Reunion Movement

As the secretary of the Bishops of the Orthodox Church in Kerala, Mar Ivanios sent the first memorandum to Rome in the month of November 1926. That was a request to grant recognition to a new rite and permission for the exercise of the power of governance. After several correspondence and constant efforts, the plenary meeting of "the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church" held in Rome granted permission to this supplication in July 1930. The decisions of the congregation were sent to Most Rev. Msgr Edward Mooney, the apostolic delegate of India. He forwarded it to Mar Ivanios through the Bishop of Kollam, Dr Benziger after adding some explanations. This letter of approval with its explanations is considered as the "Magna Carta" of the Reunion Movement in Kerala. This letter is reproduced below[1]:

Apostolic Delegation
No 2035/13

Bangalore
20th August 1930

In the "Plenary session" of the 4 July last, The Cardinals of the Congregation for the Oriental Church have duly examined the question of "Desiderata" exposed by the Jacobite Bishops of Malabar belonging to the *Metran* party and especially of the Most Rev. Mar

[1] The excerpt is copied here from a collection of typed documents of correspondence bound together and kept in the archives.

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Ivanios, Metropolitan of Bethany and Mar Theophilos, his Suffragan, about their Reunion with the Catholic Church.

Considering that from among the five bishops belonging to the *Metran* party, Mar Ivanios who composed the Memorandum of November 1926 remained faithful to the proposal already then exposed also in the name of two other bishops, and considering that Mar Ivanios as well as Mar Theophilos, his Suffragan (who has joined with him and subscribed to the proposed "Desiderata"), from the information taken are known to be worthy persons, sincere, beyond any exception and well esteemed to the state of things, after the negotiations already conducted between this Sacred Congregation by Your Excellency and Monsignor Benziger regarding these two Jacobite bishops, it is found that there is no more need of postponing further the reception of the above mentioned bishops into the bosom of the Church and that it is necessary to give them a formal declaration of this benevolent disposition.

It is therefore convenient to meet the desiderata of the afore-said two bishops, as it has already been done in greater part.

1. Assuring that the pure Syrian Rite of Antioch will be maintained and that therefore they will not be confounded with the Syro-Malabar whose rite is of Syro-Chaldean origin.

2. Moreover, assuring them that, having verified the validity of the baptism and of the sacred ordination and the consecration of the above said two bishops, they will be kept in their respective office and jurisdiction, that is,

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Mar Ivanios will remain Bishop of Bethany with the personal title (*ad personam*) of Archbishop Metropolitan and Mar Theophilos, Bishop of Tiruvalla.

3. As for the title of the "Catholicate or catholicos", it is not advisable to touch this question in view also that, as the present catholicos is not going to be converted, it is premature to decide now what should be done in case of his conversion.

The Archbishop of Bethany and the Bishop of Tiruvalla (*in presentibus rerum adanctis*) will at present depend directly on the Holy See without any dependence on the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch.

4. Regarding the liturgical books (missal, ritual, pontifical) which are those coming from the Propaganda, the same will be kept, correcting however, the expressions not proper and erroneous, which eventually have been introduced.

For examining those books, the Bishop of Syro-Malabar of Changanassery, who knows well Syriac, Msgr Benziger, Bishop of Quilon, will be charged by the delegate apostolic for the reason also of the territorial vicinity of the two bishops desiring the reunion.

5. As for the "Filioque", being assured that the Catholic doctrine has been accepted not only by the bishops who have already declared it, but also by the people, the question of this insertion or at least of such an institution in the "Creed", become secondary and of a disciplinary charater.

In this case therefore, it will be enough to follow the rules given by Benedict XIV (Constitution *Etsi pastoralis* I and Constitution *Allatae sunt* 30).

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Having exposed the above and considering that in the Antiochian liturgical books used by the aforesaid Jacobites the word "*Filioque*" is already given, this word will be recited in the liturgy in the popular prayers however, it will be continued according to the present practice.

6. Regarding the name, these new Catholics may be called "Syro-Malabar Catholics of the Antiochian Rite" or "Malabar Catholics of the Syro-Antiochian Rite" or "Malabar Antiochian Church" or Syro-Malabar Church". In this way, they will be distinguished from the Malabar Catholics of the Chaldean rite.

PROVISIONS

1. The Holy See having given the formal assurance of their acceptance, as above, it is required however, to secure the necessary guarantees, especially regarding the validity of the sacraments. Hence as regards the sacred ordination, the apostolic delegate will not omit to carefully enquire himself or through some others, and case for case, about the validity of the sacred ordination of the would be converts.

2. It will also be necessary to keep in mind the instructions given by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, dated 25th June 1888.

3. His Excellency the delegate apostolic by himself or Msgr Benziger or others will absolve the two bishops from the irregularity. They will take care that priests and laity who wish to convert make the profession of faith, in the best way possible.

4. As regards the celibacy, in the future, no candidate will be admitted to the sacred orders unless he promises to remain unmarried. For the present however, married

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priests who converted will be accepted and tolerated and the married deacons may receive the priesthood.

5. The two bishops will endeavour to vindicate their rights over the churches.

6. The Holy See desires also that a clear and definite limitation or jurisdiction with territorial limits be established between the two bishops seeking now the reunion.

7. We shall see later on whether it will be convenient to provide for the erection of a seminary.

His Excellency the apostolic delegate has been charged to put into execution all the above with the powers to delegate accordingly.

After having given the above instructions, the letter of His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of the said Sacred Congregation enumerates the following provisions for the eventual union of the two Bishops.

The second part sets forth certain guarantees. I am therefore asking Your Lordship to communicate the provisions of the documents to Mar Ivanios on behalf of His Excellency the apostolic delegate.

For this purpose, I am quoting here a few explanations and instructions I have received from His Excellency the Apostolic Delegate on the matter.

The item about the territorial division between the bishops, writes His Excellency, is not mandatory but a suggestion to me – it will be best, the cardinal thinks, to let them go on together for a while and when the opportune time comes to make the divisions, after we see what the movement amounts to", the division shall be effected.

About celibacy, the instructions are clear enough

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about deacons and priests, as for other married clerics, each case may be proposed (and the permission will be given) in obedience to the orders of Rome and at the request of His Excellency the apostolic delegate. I am also asking Your Lordship to come in touch with Msgr Kallacherry (to whom I shall also write) for the examination of the liturgical books of the Jacobites and, before that, for the investigation of the validity of the Orders of the two reuniting bishops and their clergy. For this purpose, the apostolic delegate is giving the following instructions:-

"Msgr Benziger and Msgr Kallacherry need not refer the data either to me or the Congregation but if they are personally satisfied that the baptism, ordination and consecration of the bishop is valid, they can go ahead. Even the absence of doubt on the part of Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos can be taken into account.

In short, a summary examination that convinces them (such as they have already made about the priests received) will suffice.

Then Msgr Benziger who has the faculties to give the necessary dispensation can receive the profession of Faith"

Sg. V Belgen
Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate

As soon as Mar Ivanios received the above letter of approval from Rome from the delegate, he began making arrangements for the reunion.

The successful Reunion

Now, I invite the interest of the readers to a great event – a dream come true – for the *Puthankur* people in Kerala. Their attempts of

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the past 300 years attained victory's laurel wreath at the auspicious moment of the Reunion. Mar Ivanios, who took the beautiful and secure road to reunion, which led the non-Catholic fold of Kerala to the arcade of that beautiful and universally adored mansion of the Catholic faith, remembers those moments in his autobiography:

> All those who supported the reunion when the Church failed in the *vattipanam* case abjured from their decision later when we won the case.
>
> I attended the Holy Qurbono in the Parumala Seminary in 1105 ME in the month of 14 *Kanni*, the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross. After the service, Metropolitan Divannasios and I left the sanctuary and went to the first floor of the seminary. We discussed church matters and the need for reunion with the Catholic Church, in a room in the southern end. I requested with tears that he lend his support and guidance regarding this matter. He pacified me and asked me to be calm and take decisions peacefully. Then we joined for food in the northern part of the building. As we sat together for breakfast, tears rolled down my face and fell in the *kanji*[2] that was served. On seeing this, he sent out our stewards Chacko and Daniel so that we would be alone. Without uttering a word, we had our food and went back to our rooms. At noon, we had lunch separately but after that, he invited me to his room where we discussed the reunion with the Catholic Church. My opinion was that all the bishops, priests, and laymen of the Jacobite Bishop's party that accepted the name "Orthodox Church" must join the Catholic Church. Soon, I realised that only a few of the Orthodox Church will concede to that proposal. The

[2] Rice boiled and served with water

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Church and its abundant wealth will entice them to remain in the Orthodox community. Moreover, if they abandon the possessions they will be taken over by the patriarch. Since the Orthodox community won the *vattipanam* case, the Old Seminary and the Parumala Seminary belonged to them. I understand that he was unwilling to forfeit these. I reflected on the futility of clinging to earthly possessions when we are destined to leave them at the time of death! However, he agreed to discuss this matter later.

A few days later, he visited Advocate John Elanjickal at Thiruvananthapuram and mentioned the discussions we had at Parumala. He had told him in utter despair "The Bishop of Bethany is going to Rome" and on his insistence Advocate John sent a letter to me. He made clear his decision in that letter. He was unwilling to accept my decision to join the Catholic Church. He also asked me not to build Bethany churches again as this would only facilitate Bethany's communion with the Roman church. I sent a reply to this letter through Mr AV Varghese BA, LT, his nephew, so that he would receive the letter directly. He met the third Catholicos, Mar Baselios, in Kundara Seminary and discussed the situation. They sought ways to prevent me from going to the Roman Church and ways to tide over the difficult situation in case of my reunion. After that, the catholicos paid a visit to my Bethany Ashram at Thirumoolapuram in Tiruvalla. I insisted on a reunion of the Church for the future prosperity of the community. We parted that day without the usual embrace.

Bishop Benziger sent me a letter stating that the Holy See approved the decision of the congregation of the

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cardinals that the bishops who join the Catholic Church will be allowed to maintain all their titles and honours in the same way as it is in their parent Church. The letter also stated that the Antiochian rite of the Malankara Syrian Church would be preserved in this community. After receiving this letter, I visited the third catholicos Mar Baselios and the other bishops. He expressed his disapproval and so did Metropolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios. Kuriakose Mar Greegorios, the Bishop of Pampadi revealed that he was more willing to join the patriarch than the pope if any case he drifts away from the Orthodox Church. But Bishop Mar Theophilos expressed his readiness to join the Catholic Church. I met Bishop Benziger and he told me that he was delegated as the representative of the pope to receive the others and me to the Catholic Church. I also informed him that the eighth of the month of *Kanni*, according to the oriental Julian calendar (1930 September 21), my birthday and the birthday of Mother Mary, was the auspicious date to celebrate my first Holy Qurbono as a member of the Catholic Church. So the day before that was selected for the reunion.

I returned to Thirumoolapuram Ashram in the evening when the Metropolitan Mar Divannasios came there to meet me. He wished to stay there that night. When he saw me, he asked, "Have you decided to join Rome? I told him that I had decided to join the Roman Church and requested him to lead us in the Reunion Movement". After our discussions, he seemed to realise that my decision came out of my conviction and was deeply touched by the thought of our forthcoming separation. The next day morning when I entered the Chapel for the

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Holy Qurbono he came to me to bid farewell and embraced me.

On 18 September 1930, I set out for the Bishop's House, Kollam along with Bishop Mar Theophilos, and some other inmates of Bethany, Omallur Kuzhimepurathu Fr John and Venmany Cherialummoottil Deacon Alexander. Just then Killilethu Chacko, the Manager, came towards us and said, "I heard that Your Grace is going to join the Roman Church. If you are going to the Roman Church, I am also willing to join the Church. If you are going to hell, I will follow you there also. But Your Grace, I know, you will not lead us to hell." Saying so he joined us for the journey. We all reached the Bishop's House, Kollam. After two days of meditation and prayer there, we were received as members of the Catholic Church at 7.30 am, on Saturday, 20 September. We reached Mavelikkara from there and received my father Panikkaruveetil Thariathu Thoma Panicker, my mother Annamma, brother Mathai Panicker, eldest sister Mrs. Sosamma Thomas, Thomas, son of Mathai Panicker and his wife Achiamma to the Catholic Church. Then we reached Thirumoolapuram, Tiruvalla and accepted the sisters and other servants to the Catholic Community (*Atmakadhakadhanam*).

The second part of this book vividly portrays the contributions made by Mar Ivanios as the Metropolitan of the Catholic Church for the Reunion movement and the progresses made by this new community. The next chapter of this book will give a brief description of the prominent members of the first generation of the Reunion Movement.



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Chapter 32

THE FIRST OFFSPRINGS OF THE REUNION MOVEMENT

It is possible to deduce numerous instances from the history of the world and of the Church where God's invisible hands worked on all those events, which men defined as mere coincidence. The beginning of the Reunion Movement of Kerala is the best example of this. It was not decided in advance that five persons would embrace Catholic communion at Kollam. It was decided that Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos would make the profession of faith before Bishop Dr Benziger at Kollam and that on their return to Tiruvalla, others would be received into the Catholic Church. However, God's invisible hands worked in a different way.

On 18 September 1930, Mar Ivanios decided to go to the Bishop's House at Kollam. That morning Fr John and Dn Alexander who had been staying at Vennikulam with the Ashramites reached Thirumoolapuram for some other matter. Melamparambil Mr Umman's car was arranged for the journey of the Bishops. When they were about to set out Kililethu Mr Chacko reached there. It seemed as if it was divinely inspired. Mar Ivanios then said, "Let the priest, deacon, and manager also accompany me in this journey". So those first five fruits of the Reunion Movement together reached Kollam and after two days of prayer and meditation they embraced Catholic reunion at 7.30 am on Saturday, 20 September. Thus, they were fortunate enough to be remembered as the first among the generations of Metropolitans, Bishops, priests, deacons, and lay people who were to accept the Catholic faith and reunite with the Catholic Church. The future

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generations must know these pioneers and so I include a brief history of the legendary heroes here.

I

Archbishop Mar Ivanios OIC, MA, LL D

As this book and its second part explicitly narrates the story of Mar Ivanios of happy memory, the universally acclaimed pioneer of the Reunion Movement and his efforts to strengthen the spirit of reunion, I will include chronologically only the major events of his life here.

1.	Birth	21-9-1882
2.	Baptism	4-10-1882
3.	Primary Education	1882-1897
4.	High School Education (MD Seminary)	1897-1899
5.	Diaconate Ordination (at Puthenkavu by Pulikottu Mar Divannasios)	9-1-1900
6.	CMS College, Kottayam	1900-1902
7.	Madras Christian College	1903-1907
8.	MA degree	1907
9.	Priestly Ordination (Parumala Seminary by Vattasseril Mar Divannasios)	15-9-1908
10.	Principal, MD Seminary	1908-1913
11.	Arrival of Patriarch Abdullah	1911
12.	The Interdict against Mar Divannasios	6-6-1911
13.	Arrival of Patriarch Abded M'siha	1912
14.	Establishment of the Catholicate	15-9-1912
15.	Professorship at Serampore College	1913-1919
16.	Foundation of the Bethany Ashram	23-8-1919
17.	Ordination as Ramban	28-1-1925

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18	Episcopal Ordination	01-05-1925
19.	Enthronement as Metropolitan	13-2-1929
20.	Left the Bethany Hills	20-8-1930
21.	The Catholic Reunion	20-9-1930
22.	European Travels	1932
23	Demise of his mother	5-4-1932
24.	Visited the Holy See	1932
25	Returned	1933
26.	The Formation of the Malankara Hierarchy	12-3-1933
27.	The Reunion of Mar Severios Metropolitan	29-11-1937
28.	Demise of his father	9-12-1938
29.	Reunion of Mar Dioscoros	12-11-1939
30.	Foreign Trip	26-05-1947
31.	Visit to America	1947-1948
32.	Visit to Australia	1948
33.	Return to Thiruvananthapuram	24-6-1948
34.	Foundation of Ivanios College	1949
35.	Beginning of illness	4-6-1952
36.	The Last Rites	2-9-1952
37.	Demise	15-7-1953
38.	Burial (Pattom Cathedral, Trivandrum)	17-7-1953

II

Bishop Mar Theophilos OIC, DD

He was born at Olassa, near Kottayam on 21 February 1891 as

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the son of Abraham Tharakan, from the renowned Kalappurackal Family and Achamma of Nalathra family. He was christened Jacob. After his primary education, he joined the MD Seminary at Kottayam. He prestigiously passed the matriculation from there and worked there as a teacher for some time. As he expressed great spiritual fervour and interest in theology he was ordained deacon by Mar Vattasseril. Fr PT Varghese (Mar Ivanios), who at the time was professor at Serampore, was impressed by his character and diligence. So, he took Theophilos to Serampore and enrolled him for the Honours degree in the college. Deacon Jacob took part in all discussions regarding the reunion during that time. He helped Ivanios in forming the ashram at Mundanmala and formulated plans for the training of the monks there. He lived in the Bethany Ashram offering noble service to the community; so he was ordained priest in 1924. He was appointed as the *Guru* of the ashram owing to his simple life of prayer and faith. He was a man of pure character, punctuality, hard work, silence, and above all, piety. One would easily accept that he was the one who provided the oil for the engine of the Bethany Ashram while Mar Ivanios was its maker and protector.

The pure holy life that shone forth in him and his efficiency at work that made every one wonder were convincing to the bishops. Hence, he was ordained Bishop of Bethany by Mar Baselios Catholicos in 1929. He went on inspiring Mar Ivanios in all his attempts for reunion. At last, even when all the bishops withdrew their support Mar Theophilos stood firm with Ivanios in his attempts for the catholic communion. Thus he was one of those blessed to embrace the Catholic Church with Mar Ivanios at Kollam on 20 September 1930.

In 1932, he was appointed bishop of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla by the Holy Roman See. He went to Rome in 1938 and met Pope Pius XI. After receiving the blessings of the Holy Father he visited Europe, returned to India, and continued the administration of the Eparchy. There he started several schools, churches, ashrams and convents.

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He could bring thousands of non-Catholics to his Catholic Church within a short span of time. However, he was forced to withdraw from the administration of the Eparchy owing to ill health. Yet God gave him the opportunity to witness the progresses of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla under Msgr Vachaparampil and Metropolitan Mar Sevarios.

His Grace Mar Theophilos continued his services to the Reunion Movement through his ardent prayers, penance and sufferings. Thus after enjoying the fruit of all his labours, he passed away at 5 pm on Thursday, 27 June 1956, at the age of 65. His funeral service was attended by priests, monks, brothers, sisters and men from all walks of life. He was buried inside the Cathedral at Tiruvalla and the funeral service was led by His Grace Mar Gregorios, the Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram and Mar Athanasios, the Metropolitan of Tiruvalla. Mar Theophilos is a unique name that will ever be remembered with Mar Ivanios.

III

Rev. Fr John OIC

Fr John was born at Omallur near Pathanamthitta as the son of Kuzhimepurathu Eapen and Kocheetha on 23 *Midhunam* 1078 ME. After completing his primary education, he joined middle school in Pathanamthitta. After receiving his ordination as deacon from Mar Baselios Catholicos in 1919 he studied at MD Seminary in Kottayam for three years. After that he stayed with Mr KE Paul, his brother, at Pala and did his high school education in St Thomas school.

An incident that occurred during the time he was studying at this school deserves special mention. One day Dr Thomas Kurialassery, the metropolitan of the diocese of Changanassery visited the church in Pala. The students of the school approached him to express their respect and Deacon John delivered a speech on that occasion representing them. After listening to his speech His Excellency called him and praised him happily. He blessed him saying, "You will become

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a Catholic in the future." After ten years, His Excellency's prophecy was fulfilled.

He joined CMS College and completed Intermediate but gave up further studies as he was convinced about his call. He decided to become a *Sanyasi* and joined the Bethany Ashram in 1927. After two years of training he made his first religious profession in 1929 and was ordained priest in the same year by Mar Ivanios. In 1930, he accompanied Mar Ivanios on his journey from Bethany to Vennikulam. On 20 September he entered the Catholic communion along with Mar Ivanios. After that, he joined the Carmelite monastery and underwent training. Later he worked as the novice master and Superior General of Bethany. He rendered services to the mission ministry of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla and brought in many non-Catholics into the Catholic fold. Presently he is the member of the General Council of Bethany Ashram and continues his services to the well being of the Bethany Ashram and the Reunion Movement.

IV

Fr Alexander Deacon OIC

Deacon Alexander was the son of Easow and Saramma, born on 5 *Makaram* 1078 ME, of an ancient Christian family Attupurathu Vadakkethil at Cherialummoodu in Venmony. He had his elementary education in Venmany and Kodikulanji. His high school education was from the MD Seminary Kottayam and Government high school Mavelikkara. He received his ordination as deacon from Metropolitan Mar Vattasseril in 1927.

With an ardent desire to lead an ascetic life he joined the Bethany Ashram in 1927. He worked as the manager of the Bethany Press in Tiruvalla for two years. Though he returned to Bethany in 1930 for further training he bade farewell to Bethany with Mar Ivanios and many others to reside at Vennikulam. In 1930, he accepted the Catholic faith and made his first religious profession with the name Seraphion.

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After the reunion, he remained in the Carmelite Ashram, Chethipuzha to receive training in Theology and Ethics. On 23 December 1933 he received his priestly ordination from Mar Ivanios in the chapel of the Bethany Ashram, Thiruvanananthapuram. He executed remarkable services as the procurator of the Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram and as the correspondent of the MSC Schools. From 1946-'49 he served as the superior and Superior General of the Bethany Ashram. He played a leading role in the missionary activities of South Travancore. As the member of the Administrative Council, he had helped Mar Ivanios in administration and has been helping the present Archbishop Mar Gregorios too. For the last 25 years, he has been guiding the construction and design of several schools, churches and other buildings. He has been guiding the administration and maintenance of Mar Ivanios College. The Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram owes much to the strenuous efforts of this great visionary - Rev. Fr Seraphion.

V

Mr Kilileth K G Chacko

Mr KG Chacko was born in Kilileth family, Kayamkulam as the son of Geevarghese in 1888. His mother is Kandamma, the daughter of Chacko Panicker (paternal uncle of Mar Ivanios). Since his father passed away while he was young, he stayed with his mother in her house. When Mar Ivanios became the Principal of the MD Seminary he took Mr Chacko with him to Kottayam. He was given the charge of the high school and the boarding and made him the manager. He was known as the 'manager' thereafter.

When Mar Ivanios helped Metropolitan Vattasseril in the conflicts of the Jacobite Church he was given counsel and guidance by Mr Chacko. Even after Mar Ivanios left the Seminary as the Professor at Serampore College, Mr Chacko continued there for more than ten years. Later, when Mar Ivanios decided to found the Bethany Ashram,

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all arrangements like buying the land, clearing the forest and constructing buildings were supervised by Mr Chacko. He had supervised the Balikamadhom at Thirumoolapuram for seven years. In 1930, he joined the Catholic Church along with Mar Ivanios. He assisted Mar Ivanios in gaining victory over all adversities in the early years of the reunion. As a steward to the Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram he had supervised the purchase of land and construction of buildings for more than twenty years. He served as the hostel warden of Mar Ivanios College. One of his daughters joined the Bethany convent. Seeing the negative attitude of non-Catholics towards the Reunion Movement in the course of the last twenty seven years and comparing their change to a positive attitude now, Mr Chacko is leading a contented and happy life praising God.

***

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Archbishop
MAR IVANIOS

Volume II

Fr Thomas Inchakkalodi

Translated by

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Foreword

(To Volume II by the Author)

It is eighteen years since the demise of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, a man of universal fame and the initiator of the Reunion Movement in Kerala. It is fourteen years since the publication of the first volume of the biography of that great man. I cannot, but accept as an unpardonable lapse, that the publication of the second volume was delayed so long. In the mean time, I endeavoured to publish two books - *Nammude Pithankkanmarude Viswasam* (The Faith of our Fathers) and *Kristu Matha Prakasika* (The Light of the Christian Religion). I had to undergo treatment and take rest due to ill- health. There was also delay in getting the necessary photographs and documents. These are the main causes for the delay. However, I am gratified that, at least now, I could complete wrting and publish this book.

I have employed mainly four means to write this book.

1. The Files of the Archbishop

I could examine, one by one, the files carefully kept by the late Archbishop and gather the documents I needed. I am grateful to his successor, His Grace Archbishop Mar Gregorios, who graciously permitted me to examine the files.

2. The Publications

I could collect from different places, the books, articles that appeared in newspapers, reports, letters, speeches and pastoral letters published during the life time of His Grace Archbishop Mar Ivanios and thereafter. In the pertinent context I could include them in this book.

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3. Interviews

The historical facts that I could gather from the many interviews I had with many people, with close friends, colleagues and relatives who had acquaintance with His Grace, helped me author this book. I am immensely grateful to all the Most Rev. bishops, reverend priests and leaders of the laity for their selfless help. Some of them, through death, have left this world. Praying for eternal peace to dawn on them, I remember them with gratitude.

4. Experience

In the twenty-two years (from 1930 to 1952) of His Grace's administration I was under him as a seminarian and as a priest. From this acquaintance, I could gather many facts. In the various chapters of this book, I could include them in relevant sections. With a grateful heart I state here that I have made use of all the means for writing a biography like this.

I do not hide the truth that, as in any book of history, this book too has its imperfections and shortcomings. I request the readers to kindly forgive me and forget the rare mistakes and flaws in the ideas, language, printing etc. of this book.

The first volume of this book contained the events of history from the birth to the Catholic Reunion of His Grace Mar Ivanios. In this second volume, we treat the life of Mar Ivanios from the time of his reunion until his death. In other words, through this biography, I present facts steeped in history to the students of history.

I regret that due to the dearth of space, I am not able to record the names of all those who helped me in the writing, verification and printing of this book. However, I must express my gratitude to a few. My thanks are due to the Metropolitan of Trivandrum, Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios OIC, MA, DD, who encouraged me in the publication of this book. I express my gratitude also to Most Rev. Zaharias Mar Athanasios, the Bishop of Tiruvalla. Rev. Fr C A Abraham

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MA, DD (Principal, Bharatha Matha College, Trikkakkara) who thoroughly examined the manuscript of this book once and Shri George Onakkur MA (Professor of Malayalam, Mar Ivanios College) who corrected the linguistic mistakes, deserve my gratitude on this occasion.

Finally, expecting the generous help and encouragement of thousands of readers, Catholic and non-Catholic, I place this book in their hands.

Thiruvananthapuram
7 – 8 – 1971

Fr .Thomas Inchakkalody
Author

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Chapter 1

The Post-Reunion Scenario

Let me begin the second part of this biography by quoting from the English writer Thomas Carlyle. "History of the world is nothing but the history of the great men that lived there." Behind the success of any organization there would be a history of relentless effort, sacrifice and service rendered by an individual or a group of individuals. That the life of Archbishop Mar Ivanios is inseparably linked to the Reunion Movement in Kerala is a fact beyond contention.

The World Renowned Reunion

In the last twenty centuries, many events of importance have been recorded in the history of Christian Churches in Kerala. Among these the Catholic Reunion on 20 September 1930 that took place at Kollam was an event of prominence. It was a blessing to the future generations. News media across the world published stories on this phenomenal event. It was hailed as, 'the most praiseworthy and successful missionary movement in the world. *Sign* magazine published from the US records the event thus, "A most notable event in modern ecclesiastical history is the conversion of Mar Ivanios Archbishop of Bethany" (*Sign*, Sept. 1930). Mar Ivanios' Reunion Movement was compared to the 'Oxford Movement' by Cardinal Newman, who was a professor at the Oxford University, England. From then on, Mar Ivanios began to be hailed as the 'Newman of India' in the Western world.

The Message from the Pope

The apostolic delegate Mon. Edward Moony informed the pope about the reunion in Kerala. The immediate response from the elated

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pope was, "WELCOME! A BIG WELCOME!!" It was a greeting to every new member who embraced the Catholic Church.

Following this a telegram was sent by the Holy Father to Mar Ivanios through his secretary: "Apostolic blessings to Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos. Let them be elated in God. The pope rejoices along with them on the divine grace showered on them. This blessing is a pledge of spiritual relief and abundant privileges"

The Letter Sent to the Pope

Mar Ivanios gratefully wrote to the pope thanking him for accepting him and Mar Theophilos into the Catholic Church's fold, and thereby initiating the Reunion Movement in Kerala.

Most Holy Father,

> The most merciful Lord God through the great benevolence of Your Holiness has granted to us the privilege of being re-united with the Holy See. On the 20th of Sept. 1930, we made our profession of faith before the Rt. Rev. Dr Benziger, the Lord Bishop of Quilon. Our hearts are full of joy and thanfulness. We are most grateful to Your Holiness for the kindest thoughts towards both of us and for all the facilities so generously and paternally granted to enable the Jacobites of this country to return to the bosom of the Holy Mother Church. We know that our Blessed Lord desires and deserves our whole-hearted love and devotion, and that in cherishing them towards Your Holiness's person and apostolic throne, we shall be serving Him and pleasing Him most. Trusting in his liberty and depending on Your Holiness' blessing, we venture to assure Your Holiness that all the days of our life it will be our most sincere effort for the glory of our Lord to be give Your Holiness our utmost love, loyalty and devotion.

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We need all the help that Your Holiness's prayers and blessings can fetch us from the Lord. We shall be most grateful, if when this humble letter is placed in Your Holiness's hands, Your Holiness will take it, that we are both personally present at Your Holiness's feet to render our humble homage of the most cordial love and respects, and graciously bless us. The glory of God through his Holy Church shall be our motto.

In prayer to God for the most abundant blessings on Your Holiness and commending ourselves to Your Holiness most affectionate regards,

We remain

Most dear and Holy Father,

Your Holiness's very humble children

Sd/

✠ Mar Ivanios

Sd/

✠ Mar Theophilus

23 Sept. 1930,

Tiruvalla, Travancore

It is quite evident from the letter quoted above, how devoted, respectful and obedient Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos were towards the Roman See. In the chapters to come we see that they maintained the same level of devotion throughout their lives.

Reasons for Ecclesial Conversion

No sensible man will migrate from one country to another or leave one party to join another or leave one's own home to live in another

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without just reason. No conscientious man will renounce one's religion and embrace another or renounce one's Church to embrace another without sufficient reason. Mar Ivanios, a very wise man, had ample reasons to renounce the Church for the benefit and growth of which he had donned the roles of a deacon, a priest, a monk and a metropolitan for more than 20 years. He was always confronted by inquisitive people in search of truth to elaborate on these reasons. His Grace used to give sincere, satisfactory and brave answers to such queries. Given below is an extract from an interview of Mar Ivanios to a reporter of a news agency called '*Fides*'

Question 1:"Your Grace, What were the major reasons for you to join the Catholic Church from the Jacobite Church?

Answer: I embraced the Catholic Church, as I understood the origin of the Catholic Church, its long history, the impact it had on many saints – modern and ancient, the services it rendered and the glorious results it produces. The article of faith that "the Church is the living body of Christ" is, in a practical way manifested to the world, through the Catholic Church. It is the Catholic Church, which relentlessly tries to reveal to the world the purpose of the incarnation – the salvation of individuals and community. Even though there are many political, racial and financial organizations in this world, there is only one organization which exists beyond these divisions and which strives towards the unity of the human race, perpetuating peace and divine grace on human beings. That is the Catholic Church. Keen observers will realise that it is the stronghold which in future should work for the unabated progress and peaceful existence of the world.

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Question 2: What features of the Catholic Church attracted you the most?

Answer: The Catholic Church situates itself between power and obedience, between divine interpretation and papal infallibility, between individual and society and decides and teaches the world about the rightful position of each of these in the world. The Catholic Church alone advocates strongly the need to work for the progress of science and culture, and gives due importance to family as the basic unit of society. It is this conviction which made me leave the Jacobite Church into which I was born and join the Catholic Church.

Question 3: How many people have so far embraced Catholicism following Your Grace's lead?

Answer: Besides, my suffragan Mar Theophilos, two rambans who were selected to be ordained bishops in the Jacobite Church, nineteen out of twenty four members of the Order of the Imitation of Christ that I established, thirteen nuns, many priests and several of the laity followed me into the Catholic Church's fold. Several non-Catholics are waiting for such an opportunity. We are especially praying for these people. With the abundant blessings of our Lord, the hope that the reunion of Churches in Kerala will become stronger and stronger, inspires us to work harder towards this end

First Christmas Message

In the early years of the Reunion Movement, the priests and the laity who followed Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos had to go through several hardships. Consoling them all and holding them in good faith, Mar Ivanios sent them a Christmas message.

"...The Catholic Church is the only institution upon earth founded by our Lord Himself to glorify God in the

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highest, to give heavenly peace to the children of men and to redeem human society establishing it in God on the principle of mutual good will. Let us therefore during this Christmas season unite with the heavenly hosts and offer special thanks to God for the mercy so abundantly granted to us.

The difficulties and trials that you are experiencing on account of your conversion to the Holy Church vanish into insignificance when you consider the blessedness of the supreme privilege of the communion of the saints in the Catholic Church. We know that in many places you have no churches or chapels or schools, not even cemeteries to bury your dead. Have confidence in God. He has your best interests in the warmth of his heart. He will provide you with everything you need and will bless you abundantly for all the privations that you suffer now for the sake of our Lord and His Truth.

Celebrate this our first Christmas in the unity of the Catholic Church by adoring the Infant Jesus with the heavenly hosts and with all the saints, and practise a special devotion to the Holy Family, and to the Holy Mother the Catholic Church, which is the family of God upon earth.

Pray regularly for the grace to love the Lord and His Church, and the pope His vicar upon earth..."

Bethany Ashram and *Ashramites*

We have already seen in the first part of this biography, how the ashramites, priests and brothers who abandoned everything along with Mar Ivanios, reached Vennikulam and began to live in a rented house. One month after the reunion, the ashramites bought five acres of land in Vennikkulam and they constructed two or three temporary houses and began to live there. Even though, living in a small building in Thirumoolapuram, the archbishop was busy propagating the Reunion

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Movement; he used to visit Vennikkulam and enquire after the well-being of the ashramites and guide them spiritually. Given below is an extract from an article, written by a reporter who visited the ashram and wrote on it, titled 'The Real Bethany'. It appeared in the newspaper *Satyadeepam.*

The Real Bethany

"I just returned from Vennikkulam. The first thing I saw was yesterday's *'Manorama'*. In it was the news in large letters about a Bethany ashramite returning from Rome. The report mentions that the name of the ashramite is Fr Barskeeppa. However, this person, after his birth, has not ever gone to Rome nor has he joined the Catholic Church. We cannot be sure about whether he was thinking along these lines. But, it is doubtful whether there would be any *Puthankuttukar* who has not thought thus. So it was a mistake to portray Fr Barskeeppa as a Catholic. To say that he returned from Rome was a grave mistake".

What attracted me to Vennikkulam was not Fr Barskeeppa. It was the ashramites, who to embrace truth, like true followers of the Lord, left their house and Perunadu and took refuge in a rented house of a friend and then bought four and a half acres of land from a noble Nair. It was yesterday that these 'Imitators of Christ' occupied their newly built houses. This is what attracted me to Vennikkulam.

Yes, I saw three buildings there - postulant house, novitiate house and professed house. Each house has seven rooms. Each one is made of mud and wild rock and is raised two feet above the ground. The roof rested on branched columns. It is enclosed and thatched with coconut leaves. The floor is hard-pressed to perfection. There is a chapel and a visitors' room built similarly. There is a spring nearby, for the monks to take bath and appealing natural scenes to look on and meditate.

However, I could not find a satisfactory answer to how the ashramites supplied themselves with provisions. Since there is some misunderstanding, the ashramites, who made both ends meet from

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alms, are going through a difficult situation. Jacobites have stopped helping them. Since they are living in an area where there are no Catholics, they cannot have help from them either. But the Bethanians are not distressed. They trust fully in God. Their sacrificial lives are attracting good people. Some of them have even decided to join the ashram. Their trust in God is worthy of appreciation..." (*Satyadeepam*, 9 November 1931).

The First Annual Meeting

The first annual meeting of the Reunion Movement was organised at Thirumoolapuram for three days from 20 September 1931. This meeting was conducted together with the fifteenth centenary celebrations of the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus held in the year 381. The Ecumenical Council was convoked to excommunicate from the Universal Church, Bishop Nestor who taught that the Blessed Virgin Mary was not the Mother of God. It is to be remembered that the "Nestorian Church" founded by Bishop Nestor in his name and reduced to a number that can be counted on fingertips in the last fifteen centuries, exists only in Syria and in Trissur, Kerala.

A large number of people, bishops, priests and laity from different rites, participated in the first anniversary of the Reunion Movement. Bishops of Verapoly, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Changanacherry, Kottar and Vijayapuram presided over different meetings and spoke on the occasion. Given below is the last part of the eloquent speech His Grace made in the meeting presided over by His Grace Dr Angel Mary, Archbishop of Verapoly.

> 20 September 1930 is a day, that can never be forgotten, in my life. It is on this day that I was blessed with the supreme fortune of submitting myself to the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth. A gulf that was there in my inner soul for a long time was filled up on that day.It is not only my experience; it is the experience of all those with me who got reunited (with the Catholic

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Church). As the loving God used me, his humble servant, and Most Rev. Mar Theophilos, as an instrument in His hands, we could lead many non-Catholic brethren into the Catholic Church. It is a doubtless fact that the division among the Christian Churches is a great sin. It has caused many wounds in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, the Lord. We consider it as a golden opportunity, the chance the good Lord gave us to heal, at least a little, those wounds...

We have endured much maltreatment because of this; we are still to face them. All these nourish the Catholic Church of this country. Each reunited Catholic, man or woman, irrespective of gender, is transformed into a fervent missionary. The history of persecution of the apostolic days is repeated, at least in a small way, among us today. We can gladly proclaim that the financial difficulties that we face and the different persecutions that we endure have become the means for God to shower His blessings on us.

I request the Most Rev. bishops present here to glorify God for the blessings God showered on us for the last one year. I request you to pray, not only for me, the weak one, for Most Rev. Mar Theophilos, for all the faithful who reunited with the Catholic Church and for all those non-Catholics who should get reunited, but also for the lakhs of non-Christians of this land. Your prayers are what are now urgently required above all. Greetings to all!



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Chapter 2

FIVE LETTERS PENNED WITH GREAT SINCERITY

The archbishop, after the reunion wrote many letters to many of his Catholic and non-Catholic friends. Most of these letters deal with the reasons that inspired him for the reunion, the greatness of the Roman throne and the need to unite with the Catholic Church. The archbishop's wisdom and resourcefulness can be understood from these letters written to the following individuals, all men of great stature.

1. The Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch
2. The Indian Apostolic Delegate
3. The Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church in America.
4. A Greek Orthodox Priest in New York.
5. Shri. M.A. Chacko - Police Superintendent Kochi.

I

Letter to the Jacobite Patriarch

The letter sent to Patriarch Elias II, the head of the Jacobite Church of Antioch and Kerala, on 31 January 1931, from Tiruvalla is given below.

Your Beatitude!

I trust Your Beatitude is aware of the great step the Holy Spirit enabled me to take; I made my submission to the pope, the successor of St Peter the Prince of the Apostles and was thus re-united with the One, Holy,

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Catholic and Apostolic Church. I am supremely happy in that the most merciful Lord gave me this privilege. But my joy and happiness can never be complete unless, and until Your Beatitude, and all the Jacobites forsake their schism and enter into unity with the true Church.

Our Lord founded only one Church. He founded it on St Peter. He entrusted the keys of the kingdom to St. Peter. He authorized St Peter to confirm his brother apostles in the true faith. He gave the Universal Pastoral charge to St Peter. The Pope is the true successor of St Peter. He is the Universal Bishop of Christendom and the divinely appointed centre of Unity for the visible church on earth and the infallible guardian of the Catholic Truth.

For verse I, chapter 7, of the Nomocanon says, "There shall be four Patriarchs in the four corners of the world, the head and chief of them all shall be the Patriarch of Rome. The canons of this code, which is recognized by Your Beatitude as the authoritative guide to the Canon Law of the Jacobite Church bear ample testimony to the doctrine of the unity of the visible church in its corporate life and organization...

Kneeling before you, I implore Your Beatitude to consider this true doctrine which is clearly set forth in the Sacred Scriptures and in the above quoted and hundreds of other passages in the ecclesiastical and dogmatic books of your communion. Ask our Divine Saviour for the grace of humility of heart! This alone can give the light to see and the strength to obey the will of God and enable you to make due submission to His Holy will and heal the wounds in His Body.

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I believe that if Your Beatitude prayerfully reflects on the subject, you will definitely receive the divine grace. Reunion of all the Christian Churches is the will of God. This week, the Holy Father and all the Catholics all over the world are praying for the unity of the separated brethren...

Our Lord established the Church on a rock; the rock that is St Peter. Since the pope is the true successor of St Peter, any attempt to separate from the Holy Father, is an attempt to stay separated from the Messiah.

Your Beatitude!

Again, I humbly request Your Beatitude to reflect deeply on this and act accordingly. From my own experience, I understand that the Holy See is exceedingly willing and eager to grant all privileges to the Eastern non-Catholics who come to communion with the Church. The Holy See received with great compassion our letter of request for communion with the Catholic Church. With what great love, the Holy Father received the non-Catholics from Syria who belong to the real Syrian rites! Your Beatitude also knows this. They still follow the Holy Qurbono *Thakso* and the order of liturgy of the Jacobite Church. They also received a hierarchy of their own. They have progressed much after their reunion with the Holy See. On the other hand, those who continue in the non-Catholic Church showed no progress.

Your Beatitude! May you receive the providence, to return to the true house of God! Then you will be fortunate to bring thousands to the Catholic Church and thus Our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified ever more.

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May it be known to Your Beatitude that I am inspired to write this humble letter to you due to the immense grace of Jesus Christ our Lord! I request you in all humility within my ability, to use all your powers for the reunion of all the Jacobite brethren with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. It is our Lord's prayer that they may all be one.

With the hearty prayer that Your Beatitude be inspired by the Holy Spirit in this matter and with great love and veneration,

Your Beatitude's humble servant in Lord Jesus the Messiah

Sd/

Mar Ivanios

II

Letter to the Delegate Apostolic of India

The letter given below is the one sent by His Grace Mar Ivanios to Most Rev. Edward Mooney, the Pope's Apostolic Delegate in India and an American citizen

Your Excellency,

I am writing this letter to inform you some good news about America, your motherland. I am in correspondence with two Orthodox priests in New York. I have come to know that they have decided to submit themselves to the Holy Father. They have requested me to receive them into the Catholic Church and to place them under my jurisdiction. Since there is a great distance between India and America and since they belong to the Greek rite and

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I belong to the Syrian rite, I have written to them about the impossibility of bringing them under my jurisdiction. I have also told them that I shall write to Cardinal Sincero on this matter. Accordingly, I have written to the cardinal and instructed these priests to write to him directly.

I am informed that these priests have already written to the cardinal requesting that they be permitted to join the Catholic Church in their own rite. One of them, Rev. Fr Barnabas PhD, is the Superior of a Russian Orthodox monastery and a member of the Archaeology-Ethnology Association, New York. His colleague is Rev. Fr John Pety Kanyan who is well versed in many European languages and very zealous in religious matters. His brother who is in America also desires to come to communion with the Catholic Church.

I am already in correspondence with His Grace Metropolitan Appollinarios, the Archbishop of the Orthodox Faithful in the United States of America and Canada. I believe that in the near future this archbishop, who is convinced of the dangers of the positions he has accepted and the evil effects of the division within the Church, and the value of the communion with the Catholic Church, will submit himself to the Holy Father. I pray for it.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Bethany

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III

Letter to Archbishop Appollinarius

Given below is the letter written by His Grace Mar Ivanios to the Most Rev. Appollinarius, Archbishop of the Russian Church in America, as mentioned in the letter given above.

Your Grace,

I send this letter to inform you of the reasons that inspired me to reunite with the Catholic Church. There is only one Church established by our Divine Lord Jesus Christ. This Church is indivisible and one. Since "oneness" is a note that the true Church should have, indivisibility is also a great quality. It is only after the greatest division in the Church history that certain theologians began airing their opinions against the unity of the Church.

Our Divine Saviour in his priestly prayer prayed in anguish to the Father that everyone be united. It is the will of God that the Christian world should be reunited. It is undisputable that there should be a leader in the reunited Church. It is decided by God that the head of the Christian world – the supreme head of the Universal Church – should be the pope, the true successor of St Peter. The foundation of the existence of the Church and the head of its centrality is the power of the pope.

It is high time to restore life to the Eastern Church. Only through reunion with the Catholic Church, will we be able to fulfil the lofty divine mission entrusted to us by our Divine Saviour. What we need now essentially is the balanced cooperation of the Christian powers under the leadership of the Holy See, its integral centralisation and the sweet and beautiful unity and real peace ensuing from it.

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Our Lord said that the quality of a tree could be known from its fruits. If we judge according to this rule, the visible fruits of the supreme institution of the Catholic Church are peace and unity. This is the main reason why we see obedience and total submission of all the faithful under the pope. In all the fights against the diabolic powers of the world, all bishops, priests and the laity of the Catholic world joyfully co-operate with the pope. The hope of our Saviour to uplift humankind to goodness and prosperity bears its real fruits only in the Catholic Church. Today we see in the Catholic Church alone, the wonderful growth of the religious congregations, apostolic activities that bring forth prosperous fruits and widespread mission activities.

It is doubtless, that the division of the Christian Church is a terrible sin, which wounds the heart of our Divine Lord. Today Christian religion is facing fiery trials and tribulations. Never before have Christians faced such excruciating trials. Our spiritual values, such as the faith of our religion, its divine origin and its supernatural character are subject to challenges everywhere. What are we doing to protect perpetually the rights of Christ and his Church? Only through the unity of the Church can we lead the world to Christ - to assert victory over Communism. Can we afford to be vainglorious when our house is set on fire? Can we quarrel for trivialities? Our Lord himself had said that a house divided against itself will not stand. The diabolic powers have always worked hard to divide the house of God. Our fathers sinned.

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Should we now continue in that sin? We should atone for all the sins that we committed and for those sins that we are now committing. We should prostrate ourselves before the Lord of love and unity and plead forgiveness. It is high time now to approach unity with the Catholic Church - to come to a blessed relationship with the pope. One finds true unity and peace only there.

Your Grace,

Each step towards this goal will be like the steps towards Calvary. But, why should we fear? Are you not anointed to be crucified for Christ and his Church? In submitting to the Holy Father you might have to undergo many sufferings. But they are only temporary. When you become an instrument to end the divisions in the Church, God will be working through you. As a result, you will have great joy, which will wipe out your great sufferings.

Dear Bishop,

Forgive me that I have taken a little liberty in writing this letter. There is a chain that binds us together. It is our shared love for Christ. That is why I am praying for you and dared to write this letter. With great respect and devotion, I submit this letter to you. I request you to keep this letter beneath your altar.

Yours humbly in the Lord

Sd/-

Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Bethany

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IV

Letter to the Russian Orthodox Priest

Given below is the excerpts from the letter His Grace sent to the Russian Orthodox Priest Barnabas on 20 March 1931 from Tiruvalla.

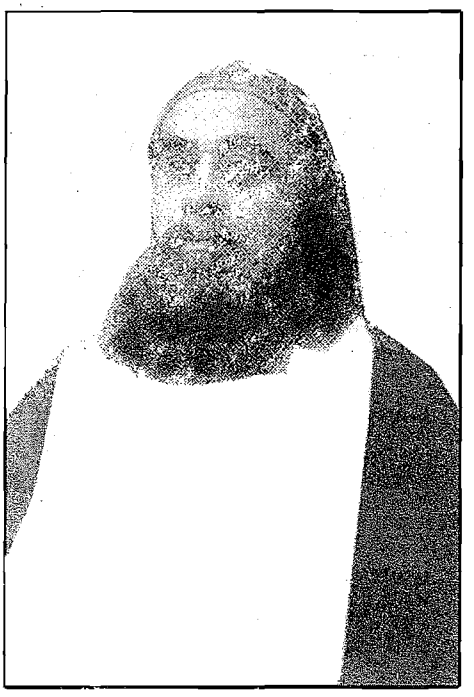
Dear Very Rev. Fr Barnabas,

> ... Our Divine Saviour founded in this world only one visible Church. That visible Church is one and indivisible. It fosters unity in faith, organization and activity. In visible unity with the Divine Bridegroom – by sacramental unity of its members, the faithful – she shines forth as the Kingdom of God on earth externally united. The head of this visible Church on earth is the pope. He is also the centre of the universal unity of the Christian world and the supreme authority of the Church of Christ.
>
> The Holy See never wanted that the children of the Eastern Church, like you and me, to renounce our ancient rites and customs; nor will it ever desire so. On the contrary, the Holy See continuously advocates us to protect them intact. As a beautiful garden has many colourful flowers, the garden that the Catholic Church is, has many beautiful rites. I assure you that a reunion with the Catholic Church will not result in our accepting the Latin rite. There is no reason for anxiety or fear in this. The Holy See is not an institution that changes its policies according to time and opportunity. Its life is anchored on its ideals. Once it has declared its policy the Holy See manifests its firm commitment in following that ideal.
>
> The loving heart of Christ pulses in the bosom of the Church. The divisions in the Church from the beginning of the history of Christianity until today inflicted brutal

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Mar Ivanios

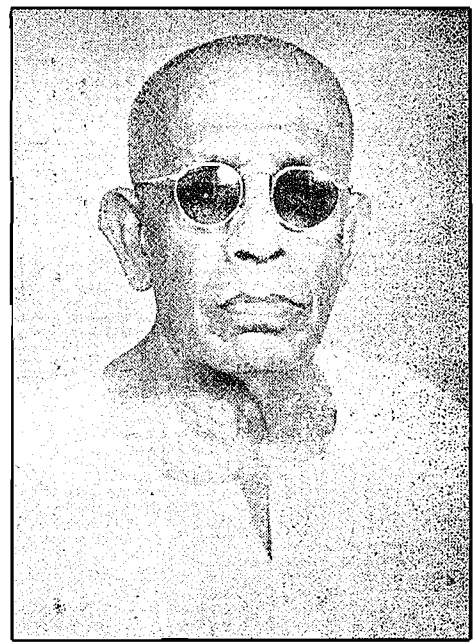


Pulikottu Ramban Joseph

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Cheppattu Ramban Philipose



Mr MM Varkey

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wounds in the mystical body of Christ. The Church now wants to heal those wounds. St Peter, the foundation stone of the Church and St Paul, the architect of faith are laid to rest in Rome. It is the centre of the visible Church. The pope, the Holy Father, represents these Apostles. The loving heart of Jesus is beating incessantly for the conversion of the idol worshippers, false teachers and schismatics. His heart of love is burning continuously to see that humankind redeemed by the loving passion, death and resurrection of the loving Lord, embraces the Holy Catholic Church.

His Excellency Mar Theophilos who joined the Catholic Church along with me, the religious priests, brothers and sisters of Bethany and I pray together, to see you become a Catholic. We pray that you return to the arc of St Peter like us.

Sd/-

Archbishop Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Bethany

V

Letter to MA Chacko

Given below is a letter written by His Grace to Mr MA Chacko BA, one of his bosom friends, a leader of the laity of the Orthodox Church and an important officer of the government of Kochi.

My dear Chacko,

I write this letter seeking your co-operation in submitting some matters for the prayerful consideration

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of His Beatitude the catholicos and leaders of his group. My heart is aware that you are in favour of reunion with the Catholic Church. Your efforts to get the people of the Bishop's party reunited with the Catholic Church are still fresh in my memory. I believe that now the same problem has come before you again for your prayerful and free consideration.

By now you must know that the Holy Roman Church has recognised the Malankara Syrian rite. Hence, our rite has gained perpetuity and the privilege and freedom to govern itself. The Malankara Syrian Catholics are now a self-governing community in the Catholic Church. It will have its own individuality and merit. Similarly, now we can flourish and progress fast into a social organisation that operates on its own. Roman See shows such generosity for the reunion of the brethren who remain separated from the Church. The present pope sincerely hopes to end this ancient division in Kerala and seeks the reunion of all the eastern Christians protecting their rites and customs.

Had His Beatitude the catholicos, the bishops, priests and laity thought prayerfully about reunion with the Catholic Church, it would have been a great service rendered to them and to the Christian religion of this land; I write this letter to remind you that you can advise them on this and that you yourself can reflect on it. Remaining in communion with the pope would help our community to maintain its individuality.

His Beatitude the catholicos should take a decision to come into communion with the Pope of Rome, whom the canons of the Jacobite Church accept as the head

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and chief of the patriarchs. If so, I do not have the slightest doubt, that the Holy Father would accept His Beatitude the catholicos with all respect worthy of his position. With the recognition, blessing and approval of the Holy Father the catholicos will be accepted as the head of our rite. Everyone with me and I will submit ourselves fully to his authority.

God bless you!

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Archbishop Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Bethany



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Chapter 3

SOME MEMORABLE SPEECHES

Mar Ivanios, in his various statuses like MA Deacon, Fr PT Geevarghese MA, Professor at Serampore College, the founder of the Bethany Ashram, Abo Geevarghese OIC and Bethany Metropolitan Mar Ivanios MA, DD delivered many speeches in different countries. These countries include India, Rome, England, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, the USA, Canada and Australia. A compilation of those speeches will run into many volumes. He was blessed with great scholarship and eloquence. He was well-versed in many languages. He had a simple and elegant style, which was a vehicle of grand ideas. His long speeches mesmerized his listeners. Many religious publications used to summarize those speeches. From among them a few speeches made in Kerala, America and Canada are reproduced in another chapter of this book. The following are four speeches by Mar Ivanios delivered in Kerala during the early days of the Reunion Movement.

I

Presidential Address at the Anniversary of the Catholic Congress

The archbishop spoke at the 32nd Anniversary Meeting of the All Kerala Catholic Congress held at Muvattupuzha. The following are extracts from the presidential address given by the archbishop. He has referred in short, with sobriety the greatness of the Catholic Church and the Roman See, the happiness he experienced on embracing the Catholic Church, the duties of the Kerala Catholics, and the need to help the Reunion Movement in Kerala. The first part of the speech is given below:

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I heartily praise God, that I got the fortune to enter into holy communion with the Catholics all over the world by God's all merciful grace and by the privileges granted by the mercy of the Holy See, and submit myself to the pope, the vicar of Christ and the successor of St Peter. I express my boundless gratitude to the office bearers of the Congress for inviting me to preside over the anniversary of the AKCC. I am thankful, that by the grace of God, I could not only come to know the stars of the milky way of the Kerala Catholic Church, but also see and enjoy each one's shine and glow.

We can say that the Catholic Church is a lively attractive garden of incomparable beauty. It is great luck for a person to see the beauty of these flowers in the mornings and evenings as the gentle breeze caresses them. The state of those who have gone out of this garden is awful. It would be incomparable fortune if they could return to their paternal home, the Catholic Church. At present due to the special interest of the Holy See, the non-Catholics of Kerala have a new track open to them for entering in to the garden. It is a joy to watch such newcomers come into the garden. Their costumes, nature, and upbringing are different. Looking at them would remind the Catholics of the bliss of a family life that went on for a thousand and six hundred years.

It deemed fitting for God the lover of his children that the sons separated for years without any contact should be brought to unity. It is his will that they be united like the ancient Christians. The tears of the Apostle St Thomas must have inspired this reunion. Thousands of people, alive and dead, with their warm breath corroded that old rope of division.

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There is no difference of opinion that the Catholic Church is a grand cathedral of unique size and beauty. Though you are within it by birth, it is possible that you might not have seen its artistic perfection and fine decorations. But I have viewed it from the distance for a long time. Thereafter I have begun to see so many joyful and wondrous sights. An outside view would give us an idea about its great height, the spires that are united to the heaven. Its roof glitters in the sunlight and is home to multi coloured clouds of different shapes. Who can witness that gigantic cross, brighter than sunlight without tears in one's eyes. Now listen to the words of St John (Book of Revelation). "The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst" (Rev 21:18-21). Have you not heard, the ancient holy souls who from their respective places speak to you about the vision of human life? The ascetics of the ancient time quench the thirst of souls of those who live in the modern world. They raise humankind into soulful ecstasy. The earthlings experience divine joy. The Church alone makes all these possible in this world. You must have seen saints from different nations speaking different languages standing in line in the service of God's will. They prove to the world that the differences vocations and social status are not hindrances in the service of God. They are saints like Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Benedict, Pachomios, Baselios, Anthonios and many others. Great emperors like Henry and Louis, who are in the list of

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saints, preach the Gospel to the kings. The lords known to have received divine grace say that God is not against lordship. It can also be seen that businessmen, farmers, warriors, artists and painters who fought in the battle of life are listed among the holy souls. There are old men and women, young boys and girls and there are popes, patriarchs, and bishops among them. In the midst of this huge congregation, one can see the holy Virgin Mother of the Lamb in her golden garments sitting on a golden throne. In the words St John, she is like a priceless diamond emitting great lights of crystal clarity.

The Church was born on earth along with Jesus Christ. Catholics all over the world adore Christ and accept the pope as his visible representative and do their duty in unity in the love of our Lord. There is no institution as ancient as the Catholic Church. If you compare other societies and countries with the Church they are like mushrooms that sprouted yesterday. Smiling, she sets each of her feet on the two civilised eras. No royal family can be compared to the ancient lineage of the popes, which stretches long and is connected to a rock. The Catholic Church is ever young and bright and is untouched by old age, poverty and disease. She has been a witness to the rise and fall of communities and nations. She alone will survive all other human institutions and look at them and beyond with unblinking eyes.

It is a matter of true pride for us that the Kerala Catholic Church remains equal in dignity and nobility with the Universal Catholic Church. From the ancient times, like any other community in Kerala, Christian religion also has deep links with Kerala. The Catholic People in Kerala have a duty and obligation to work for the welfare and

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progress of the nation. We have to break all barriers and fight an ideological war for the wellbeing of our nation and community.

II

The Speech at Ernakulam

The archbishop spoke in a meeting of the Catholics in Ernakulam congratulating him on the reunion. It was presided over by Mar Augstine Kandathil.

It is a historical fact that St Thomas came to Kerala to spread the Gospel and established seven churches. Nazranis are the descendants of these early Christians who lived in brotherhood for centuries. Not because of spiritual or faith issues, but due to local issues a discord set in among them and ultimately they were divided through the "Koonan Cross Oath". This is a fact well-known in history. One group among these divided Christians got reunited soon with the Catholic Church and they got indigenous bishops. From the very same pulpit where I now stand the apostolic visitor from the Holy See made the declaration of the reinstatement of the hierarchy of the Syrian Catholics. Another group of these divided people remained stubborn. This group gradually came under the power of the Jacobite Church of Antioch. Today, the reasons for the division from the days of the "Koonan Cross Oath" do not exist. Hence, there is no need for the people to stay divided. Although, having a rite is just a sentiment, those who had been rooted in it for two or three centuries may find difficult to part with it.

I acted on the conviction that reunion should be made possible by removing these obstacles. My strong desire

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was that our brother bishops, priests and the people, all together should get reunited. I worked hard for the past five years for this. I never dreamt that I and my brother His Excellency Mar Theophilos alone would have to embrace this movement. I had consulted with other bishops and shown them all the correspondence. I fell unto their feet and requested tearfully. It may be the will of God that the fortune that we have received will be delayed to them. Since I felt that such a delay was against divine will, I along with Mar Theophilos and others rejoined the Catholic Church. I stand in the presence of God and declare that our endeavour has no selfish motive. The *pazhayakur* community is the elder brother and the *puthankur* is the younger brother. It is the duty of the elder brother to bring back the younger one to the unity of the Church. I believe that all of you will pray for the return of the *puthankur* community in to the sacred heart of Jesus in the near future.

III

The speech at Kothamangalam

Mar Ivanios was accorded a grand reception at Kothamangalam, a centre of Catholics and non-Catholics. His speech to the mammoth meeting is given below.

After our reunion with the Holy Catholic Church, the non-Catholics especially the Jacobite brothers are spreading scandals against us. I am a thief and a betrayer according to them. They tell the Catholics, "He will betray you just like he betrayed us". The Holy Spirit has indeed betrayed us considering that we had left the Jacobite Church which is a nest of pride, quarrels, competition, and disobedience. If my Jacobite brothers submit their

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mind to God the Holy Spirit will betray them also! Truth can only be one, not many. It is true that I have collected some money from some members of the Jacobite Church for the establishment of Bethany. I have kept Bethany independent, for I feared that litigation will rise from a relationship to the Jacobite Patriarch. If one can be a Jacobite and perform the Jacobite liturgy without accepting the authority of the Jacobite Patriarch, I am such a Jacobite. When I started Bethany I had no intention of joining the Catholic Church. It was meant to uplift the Jacobite members spiritually. First I constructed the ashram and then the convent and the church. The Jacobite Patriarch had no power over this institution.

People belonging to all religions contributed to the establishment of Bethany; even the Hindus and Muslims gave us contribution. But mostly I collected money from Jacobites. In one instance a miserly Jacobite gave me Rs. 500/- telling me that Bethany should never be under the power of the Jacobite Patriarch. I did everything needed for Bethany even before I joined the Catholic Church.

On 20 September 1930 I reunited with the Holy Catholic Church. Afterwards for a few months I attended only on spiritual matters. I spent days in prayer seeking God's grace and blessings for the new movement. I started my work from the month of December. This means that our movement is only four months old and that it should be nursed like a child. Since the Church belongs to God I am not worried about its progress. I am convinced that whatever I have done is according to divine will and the desire of our fathers. God will look after his children in these journeys. During the past four months more than

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a thousand Jacobites have joined the Mother Church. There are already 22 priests and 20 chapels established. You may wonder where the money for all this came from; you may understand that the money was donated by the children of God who love him and who want to establish his kingdom on earth.

Many who are convinced of the need of the reunion of the Nazrani community and the reunion of the Christian Church, especially the Catholic churches and people, have helped us.

In his speech the Rev. Fr Vicar exaggerated a bit when he said that I am the person who cut the old rope tied to the "Koonan Cross". The fact is that it is not my work; the tears of the forefathers of the Catholics present here that fell drop by drop on to the old rope resulted in its breaking. Hence, I am not the main author of this act. It is a miracle performed by St Thomas the Apostle from his heavenly abode.

I have a special word for the Catholics. Do not stay content that you are the members of the Holy Church; instead, sanctify your life, so that you could be a model, a guide to all the non-Catholics in Kerala. By your life, there should never be cause for the Holy Church to be tainted!

IV

The Speech at Kalluppara

In the early days of the Reunion Movement, the archbishop received into the Catholic Church two eminent personalities. One was Shri K V Chacko BA, LT, a close friend of Mar Ivanios, secretary to Metropolitan Mar Divannasios, headmaster of M D Seminary, and

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Principal of Teachers' Training School at Niranam. The other was Shri A Philipose MA, BL, a District Judge of Travancore, a leading religious writer and an ideal devotee of religion. Shri Chacko died within a few months after the reunion due to diabetes. The following is part of the speech delivered by Mar Ivanios in remembrance of Mr Chacko and congratulating Mr Philipose.

> ... It is a very happy and blessed day for us. I have many close friends in the Jacobite Church. Among them, Shri K V Chacko and Shri Philipose are prominent. I met Mr Chacko for the first time in Tiruvalla when I was the principal of the MD Seminary High School. He was the Headmaster of the SC Seminary High School. On hearing his beautiful conversation, I felt that an invisible chain binds us. Born as a Jacobite with a Marthomite mother, he spent his young days at his mother's house and that gave him a protestant bend of mind. I invited him to the MD High School. He became a tower of knowledge in the MD Seminary. His reunion was the result of reading of Catholic books and the relationship with the MD Seminary. When Patriarch Abdullah came to Malankara and placed Metropolitan Mar Divannasios under decree of interdict, Mr Chacko, Philipose, a few others and I were mentally afflicted by it. It was a public secret. We consulted one another in the matter of reunion with the Catholic Church. At last, I took a decision for reunion and manifested it in action. I have never compelled these close friends of mine to join the Catholic Church. I knew that it took great mental power, tolerance and divine grace to cut away community relation. How painful it was to be separated from my bosom friends in the Jacobite Church as I reunited with the Catholic Church! I place all my terrible mental agony before Christ knowing that

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nothing is possible without his grace and blessing. There were many times when Mr Chacko and Philipose came to visit me. One day Mr Chacko came and expressed his wish to join the Church. I happily fulfilled that desire. Right now Mr Philipose has also joined us. I have a great sense of loss and sorrow at the demise of Mr Chacko. He might now be very close to God as he died as a good Catholic.

All the priests in the Bethany Ashram have got an unbreakable relationship with Jacobite Church members. The priests of the Bethany Ashram who served the Bethany churches used to celebrate Holy Qurbono, hear confessions and give speeches and they were beloved to the Jacobite people. The Bethany people cannot dislike them and now they love them. Until recently Fr Barsleeba of Bethany was the priest in the Puramattam church. I told him to look after the souls of his flock. The church community loved him. Fr Barsleeba was also completely dedicated to them. Since that church belonged to the Jacobite Trust, I told him, immediately after the Catholic reunion to leave that church and comeback.

Until the reunion I was most respected by the Jacobites. Today they think that I have done a heinous crime. A few days back as I was journeying to Puramattam, some youngsters surrounded my car and howled at me. My heart felt great pain as I wondered how the children who loved me like a father could behave like that. Men are made enemies by ignorance and misunderstanding. However, in course of time they will come to know the truth. There is only one truth.



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Chapter 4

STONES AND LAURELS

It is a historical fact that the leaders of great movements for the welfare of humankind undergo many difficulties in the beginning. Examples for the same can be found in the field of politics, science, and community. Archbishop Mar Ivanios too was not spared of such experiences. The difficulties that Mar Ivanios, who initiated the Reunion Movement for the unity of Christians in Kerala to bring them together as "one flock and one shepherd", had to face were indescribable.

Strong Opposition

The archbishop said occasionally, "I joined the Catholic Church with only the sky above my head and the earth below my feet." His mind was focused on the progress of the movement he started. His prayers, speeches and actions focused on this. Meanwhile, many leaders from the non-Catholic communities campaigned against the reunion, calling it a cheating and instigating the people to destroy it.

Many advertisements, pamphlets, and books were published insulting the Reunion Movement and its founder in abusive language. Many non-Catholic churches and convention groups conducted talks against the archbishop and the Reunion Movement. They called him a tiger in sheep's clothing, who intended to devour the trusting Syrian flocks. There were also conspiracies to kill him.

Rs. 500 Promised for a Car Accident

There were many attempts to cause an accident to the archbishop's car. On his journeys, some tried to block his path with timber, some booed and yelled, "here comes the cursed" and some tried to capsize the boat he travelled in.

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Once, a person told the Muslim driver of the Archbishop's car, "I will reward you with Rs 500/- if you set up the car in which the archbishop is travelling into have an accident." The trustworthy driver replied thus, "Even if you pay me Rs 5000/-, I will not do that". When he came to know of this, the archbishop smiled and said, "Is my life so cheap, just worth Rs 500/-?"

Financial Crunch and Government Prohibitions

Besides direct oppositions, the archbishop also had to face a number of indirect difficulties. It was his obligation to build churches for the reunited and to establish cemeteries. He also had to build monasteries for the *sanyasis* and *sanyasisns*. He had to meet the daily expenses and build educational institutions, and look after the priests' needs. He was in need of lakhs of rupees. Nevertheless, money was not available.

In addition to all this, he had to face the grudge of political leaders. Government sanction was needed for constructing churches and cemeteries. His enemies complained to the Government and blocked the construction of churches. Many cases were filed against buildings that were converted into churches and even against burying the dead in farm lands. Some priests were even arrested. The government was the defendant in many cases. The Reunion Movement had to experience all these sufferings and the enmity of many non-Catholic bishops.

The Visit of the Jacobite Patriach

On hearing about the Reunion Movement, the Jacobite Patriarch Elias III immediately arrived in Kerala from Antioch. He spoke in many important churches against the reunion. But he died in Manjanikkara near Pathanamthitta due to high BP and was buried there.

The Pastoral Letter of the Catholicos

After the reunion of Mar Ivanios, the catholicos, the Head of the Malankara Orthodox Church sent a pastoral letter to be read in all the

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Orthodox churches. Though it expresses the pure intention, innocence, and the depth of the faith of the ccatholicos, it is regretted that it became a weapon in the hands of enemies of the reunion. The pastoral letter reads:

> To all the vicars of Malankara churches and priests and people, my blessing to all of you!
>
> Beloved,
>
> Metropolitan Mar Ivanios who was the head of the Bethany ashram, his friend Bishop Mar Theophilos, their associates Ramban Pulikottil Joseph, Ramban Vanchiyil Philipose and the nuns of the convent and some priests and *sadhus* have left our Church and embraced the Roman Church. The news of the secret and open activities of such people are now well known in the land. As King David laments, "I am insulted not by an enemy but by my own bosom friends[1] "Like him, I too lament. These bishops and their followers look like us. However, they are up to destroy our Church. They are dressed as lambs. You, my spiritual children should recognise them and should know this truth and beware of them. They say that there is no difference between our faith and the Roman faith. They are trying to trick my spiritual children through books, pamphlets, indirect and open advices, luxuries and money. You shall never allow yourself to be cheated by them. Do not read these books; do not listen to their speeches. You should have no have contact with them. Do not frequent their divine services. This is our decree to our spiritual children! I will inform you of the rest the later.

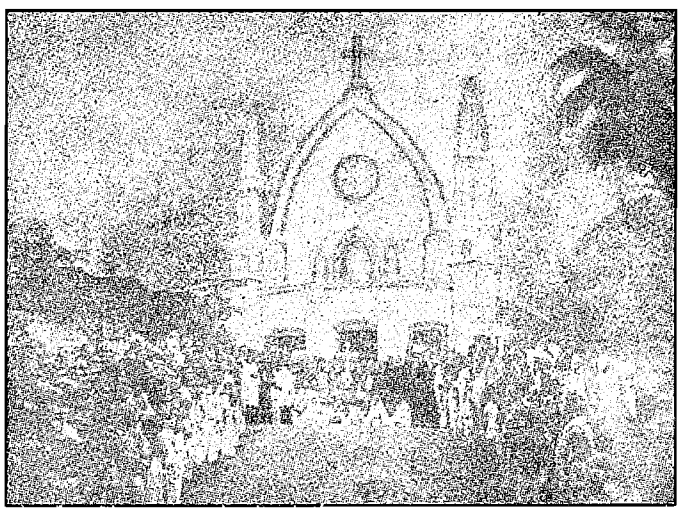
[1] Ps 55:12,13

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The funeral of the parents of the Archbishop



(His mother Annamma died when he was in Bombay (1932) on his way to Rome)



(His father Thoma Panickar died in 1939 at the age of 94)

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The Archbishop in Rome
with the inmates of the Passionist Monastery



With Pope Pius XII
(the then Cardinal is at the left end)



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The pastoral letter increased the resistance to the Reunion Movement. As the saying goes, "persecution increases quality" and the Reunion Movement progressed day by day.

The Undaunted Archbishop

Amidst all this enmities the Archbishop stood resolute. The following is a letter to Mr EJ John Elanjickal BA, BL, a very close friend of the archbishop.

Dear Mr John,

Those who object to my reunion with the Church of Christ may say whatever they want; I am sure that my endeavour is subject to divine providence. Even though it is not deliberate, those who oppose and insult me are fighting, not only against truth and progress, but also against themselves. I pray, may God forgive them and lead them!

Yours Sincerely

Mar Ivanios

The next letter is written to Mr A Philipose BA, BL, a learned man of the Jacobite Church and Mar Ivanios' bosom friend, who reunited with the Catholic Church later.

Dear Philipose,

I have nothing in particular to tell you now. I experience many difficulties, but I am very happy. When compared with the grace and blessing God has showered upon me, the difficulties are nothing. Resistance is cropping up from all sides.

Please pray especially for me and for the success of my endeavours.

With love

Mar Ivanios

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Messages of Encouragement and Letters of Congratulations

While on the one side there were insults, abuses and false propaganda, on the other side, there came in huge receptions, plaques of good wishes, messages of encouragement and promise of prayers. The whole world became aware of the reunion in Kerala. Consequently, cardinals, bishops and priests from various parts of the world sent thousands of telegrams and letters to Tiruvalla. From Rome, the pope, through the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Church, His Eminence Cardinal Sincero sent a letter to Mar Ivanios and to all the Catholics of the Reunion Movement. An excerpt from the letter is given below:

> ... The Holy Father heard with much happiness and satisfaction the news of the reunion of the priests and laity with the Catholic Church. The Holy Father has asked me to convey to Your Grace, His Excellency Mar Theophilos, priests, religious and all the faithful, that he imparts his paternal blessings. The Holy Father views with keen interest and congratulates you for your committed efforts inspired by Christian love and spirit. The Holy Father exhorts all the faithful, to join him, to glorify God in the greatness of His mercy and fullness of His gifts.
>
> - Cardinal Sincero

Receptions and Meetings

Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos attended grand welcome meetings in Catholic centres like Ernakulam, Changanachery, Athirampuzha, Kuravilagad, Kothamangalam and Thrissur. Thousands of people attended these meetings and they presented scrolls of felicitations (*mangalapatram*). Outside Kerala, Trichi, Madras, Bangalore, Goa and Madurai are the cities where such meetings were convened. The archbishop spoke at length about the reasons for his reunion with the Catholic Church. He wanted all people to pray for

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the success of this movement. The following is a report of such a meeting at Changanachery on 2 October 1930 organised by the people, priests and the Bishop of Changanachery who in the beginning of the Reunion Movement showed great interest and selflessly supported it.

The Bethany Bishops at Changanachery

Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos travelled by boat from Ernakulam to Changanachery (Jetty). They were given a warm welcome at the Cathedral church. The three bishops concelebrated the Holy Qurbono in the Antiochian rite. Thereafter a huge meeting presided over by Bishop James Kalassery was conducted, attended by priests, Catholics and non-Catholics. Very Rev. Fr Antony read out a scroll of felicitation prepared by the parishioners. In reply, Mar Ivanios spoke for a long time about the modern status of the Jacobite Church, the Koonan Cross Oath, the endeavours at communion with the Mother Church from early times, the foundation of Bethany, his correspondence with the Holy See, the reunion that took place at Kollam and the vehement opposition of the non-Catholics. Afterwards Mar Kalassery delivered the presidential address, which was interestingly humorous. It is given below.

> Respected People!
>
> Isaac and Jacob quarrelled and separated from each other at first but reunited later. Today, one of the dear brothers who separated from the family in the year 1653 at the Koonan Cross for a trivial difference of opinion is now united with me, who bears the name Jacob.
>
> About a century back there was a church in the place of this huge Cathedral. A Jacobite bishop and his followers came here to confiscate the church. Our ancestors, then entered the church, shut all the doors, and began praying to God and thus they saved this church. Today two

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bishops from the Jacobite Church have embraced the Catholic Church and they have indeed conquered our Cathedral. Is it not a wonder, when we compare the event of those days with today's great event? During those days, we made the bishops run away from here. Today we are welcoming these two bishops, their successors, in a grand manner. How different these two events are!

We must pray for the success and fruitfulness of this Reunion Movement initiated by these bishops. On this occasion, I appeal to everyone that all should lend their co-operation and help for this.

Visit to Goa

The body of St Francis Xavier was displayed to the public from 4 December 1931 to 10 January 1932. The archbishop visited Goa on this occasion and participated in the various celebrations. He celebrated the Holy Qurbono on the altar near the saint's body and he was one of the metropolitans selected to lead the procession carrying the body. He returned to Tiruvalla and wrote the following letter to Fr John who was doing his studies and formation in *sanyasa* in the ashram at Pangodu.

Catholic Metropolitan House

Tiruvalla, 11 January 1932.

My dearest Fr John,

I spent some happy days in Goa. The Patriarch of Goa was kind and loving to me. They gave me a chance to see the body of St Francis Xavier and kiss his face, hands and feet. I celebrated the Holy Qurbono before his sacred body and prayed for all the members of the Bethany and Carmelite monasteries. I also prayed for Archbishop Dr Benziger and many others. I entrusted to

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the holy feet of St Francis Xavier, the Bethany Ashram and convent. I prayed that all of us receive the intensity of his living faith and apostolic fervour.

The Patriarch of Goa gave a small piece from the cloth that adorned the saints' body from 1922 to 1931to all the bishops. I also got one piece. Not being satisfied with this, I requested the Goan Patriarch for a piece of the saints' body. After due consultation with the Canon who was the guardian of the holy body, the patriarch gave me a part of the saints finger. Thus, I have come back from Goa very rich.

Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Bethany



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Chapter 5

SOME INTERESTING REAL LIFE ANECDOTES

The following chapters narrate some humorous events that took place during the early days of the Reunion Movement. The real names and locations have been left out for the sake of propriety.

The Coffin Procession

This event took place in a parish where the flock loved and respected their archbishop; a place where he was very influential.

As people gathered around the church, hearing the funeral bells, and queried about the dead person, they saw a very strange sight, four persons carrying a coffin, over which was written with chalk "Archbishop Mar Ivanios". There was a gathering around the coffin singing a funeral hymn. Someone asked what was inside the coffin and got the answer that it was the trunk of a plantain tree.

The funeral procession moved on. The demonstrators knew that the archbishop was coming to the place to participate in a meeting to felicitate him. They intended to ridicule him. Though the archbishop did not know of this scheme, he reached the venue of the felicitation through a different path. The mourners with the coffin went on singing funeral songs and carrying the coffin. On not seeing him, they threw the coffin away and retreated to their homes. On the very same evening, one of the masterminds of this procession had a tussle with another man and was stabbed to death. The next morning saw the funeral procession of this man, through the same road where he had mocked the archbishop.

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A week passed. A car came to a halt in front of the dead man's home. The archbishop came out of the car and consoled the widow and the orphaned children. He gave them some money. When the people heard about this, their devotion and respect for the archbishop increased.

"Go back"

This incident took place on the banks of the Achankovil River where there was a ferry. People heard that the archbishop was coming there to a mission centre to receive some people into the Catholic Church. They wanted to block the archbishop's car and insult him in public, and planned accordingly. They also trained some kids to shout 'archbishop go back'. Meanwhile a car arrived and the DSP 'Tiger Subramanian' got out wearing the khaki uniform. He called the ringleaders of this drama and made enquiries. They told him the reason, hearing which the DSP laughed aloud and ordered the children to be silent. Within a few minutes, another car arrived and the archbishop got out. He saw the DSP, shook hands with him and had a little chat. The DSP, a friend of the archbishop told him of the events and both of them had a hearty laugh. Meanwhile the ferry arrived to take the DSP's car to the opposite bank of the river. However, the DSP told the police officer to first take the archbishop's car to the other side. The archbishop told him that he could go first since he had arrived first. But the DSP sent the archbishop in his car first, to the other side.

"Oh! The Rite is Coming!"

Due to the efforts of Mar Ivanios, a new rite (Malankara rite) was bestowed to those who belonged to it. Those who were fortunate to belong this community were called "Rithukar" (the people of the rite). Though more than twenty rites exist in the Catholic Church, only the 'Malankara rite' is addressed as 'the rite' even by the Catholics. There are also synonyms like 'rite qurbono' (*rithu qurbana*) 'rite church' (*rithu palli*) and so on.

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The following incident happened during the early days of the reunion, in a small town. Two ashramites who were priests from the Bethany Ashram were treading wearily through a town towards their ashram. Some inhabitants of the town decided to insult them. They procured a tin drum and got some kids to beat it in front of the monks. They were told to shout, "The rite is coming" as they drum. The kids did as they were told and spectators gathered on the roadside. The monks walked for about a mile suffering this insult. The kids got tired and leaving their drums went home. The monks forgave this insult and prayed to God for the reunion of these non-Catholic people. Today there are more than a hundred families reunited with the Catholic Church in this town.

Buried Alive

The early days of reunion saw the reunited flock suffering from a dearth of cemeteries. In those days, it was not possible to have cemeteries without government sanction. Opponents used to send complaints to the government trying to block allotment of cemeteries. They cited reasons like, a school being nearby, homes in great numbers or pollution to wells nearby for blocking the cemetery. Hence, the government rejected most of the requests. It is due to this lack of cemeteries that many families were unwilling to join the Church. The following is an incident that happened during the funeral of one reunited parishioner. The author is also a witness to this.

The body of a reunited faithful was being carried to the cemetery; the land was only recently purchased. Many priests, Mar Theophilos and a huge crowd were gathered there. Some people plotted against the burial of the body by instructing a poor Dalit to obstruct the burial. After the prayers of the last rite, just as the body was about to be lowered into the pit, he screamed aloud, "Don't bury the body here." The people did not heed him and started lowering the body into the pit. He jumped into the pit and lay there. At that instant someone in the

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crowd shouted, "Take the spade, let us bury him also alive." He poured soil into the pit. The Dalit screamed aloud, "Don't kill me". He scrambled out of the earthen pit and bolted towards his home. The group that had gathered for the funeral could not resist laughing aloud forgetting the sombre mood. Henceforth the funeral went on without any interruptions.

The Snoring Dog

During those days Mr A Philipose MA, BL had started an organisation named 'The Evidence Guild', in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla for spreading the truth of the Catholic Church to the non-Catholic brethren. The members had to give speeches on the Catholic faith and truth in various places. These speakers had to face many obstacles and hindrances at various places. The following is one such incident:

It was advertised that speeches on Catholic faith were to be conducted in a village which was a hub of non-Catholics. Naturally, the opponents planned to disrupt this event. They decided to tie a howling dog to the pillar of the *pandal* of the venue. They did accordingly just before the commencement of the speech. Many non-Catholic truth-seekers came to listen to the speech. The speech started. Like benediction from heavens a drizzle fell bringing with it coolness. The dog fell into a peaceful slumber and the speeches went on uninterrupted. The miscreants tried to wake the dog up by striking it with a stick. Yet it neither barked nor woke up. The people in the gathering began to laugh. The talks went on smoothly. After the meeting, the ones who had brought the dog untied it and took it home hanging their heads in shame.

The Rameswaram Shaving

This is a real life story of a person who embraced the Catholic Church. It resembles the tale of the 'Rameswaram shave.' During those difficult days, workers who did jobs like haircutting, washing

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clothes and cleaning the courtyards were banned by the local goons from doing these jobs in Catholic households. One day a Catholic teacher was getting a haircut at home by a barber. A non-Catholic leader was passing that way and he ordered the barber to instantly get away from this job. Due to fear, he went away leaving the haircut half-finished. The teacher had to stay indoors with his partially cut hair for a day. Anyway, the next morning he got a barber from the next village paying double the charges and made his head presentable to his students.

The archbishop heard of this incident after a week. He smiled and said, "Had he informed me the same day, I myself would have done the rest of the hair cut."

The Contribution of the Good Thief

After the reunion, the archbishop was given numerous receptions, felicitations and even awarded gifts by many Catholic parishes. This is an incident at such a reception where he met with a good thief. A parish held a meeting to felicitate him and he was gifted with a gold cross and chain. The archbishop after the meeting went to take a nap in the room arranged for him there. A local resident entered the room and after kissing his hand, requested him to show the golden cross and chain. The bishop gave it to him without any apprehension. As he was admiring the craftwork, the bishop fell asleep due to fatigue. An hour later he woke up and there was no trace of the cross and chain. The archbishop felt that this was a master thief and kept his silence about the incident. After a month, a man came to the Tiruvalla Bishop's House and kissed his hands.

Archbishop : Where are you from?

He : I'm from (Place). Do you remember getting a gift of a gold cross and a gold chain?

Archbishop : I do remember it well.

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He : I'm the one who admired the cross and chain. Since Your Grace slept, I decided not to wake you up and took it to my home. I know that you have misunderstood me.

Archbishop : It is all right. Tell me why you are here.

He : I knew that it was not befitting the parish to give you such a small cross and chain. Therefore, I decided to add on a little more gold and to redesign it. I got the new cross and chain a bit late and hence the delay in coming here. I have brought the new cross and chain (He himself garlanded the archbishop with the new cross and chain).

Archbishop : Good. You are a good thief. May God bless you, your family, and the parish!

The Cross and Crown

The initial days of the Reunion Movement saw many meetings held at various places against the movement. In one of these meetings held at a non-Catholic centre, a prominent priest talked of the Reunion Movement with great spite. He asked a question to the Catholics who had reunited. It is given below:

"Respected people! You know that bishops who join the Roman Church get palatial homes and beautiful cars. The priests would get monthly salary and mass stipend. But you poor laity, what will you get?"

A layman on hearing this question instantly stood up and took hold of the cross on his own neck and shouted aloud, "Father we will get a cross".

When he heard the answer, the orator stood silent for a moment and redirected his elocution process in another direction. The listeners understood the real meaning of the answer given by the poor lay

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brother; that those who joined the Catholic Church will get a cross in the earthly life and a crown in the heavenly life.

The priest who was an eminent speaker of the Jacobite Church studied about the Catholic Church and as a result, after a few months he arrived at the Trivandrum Bishop's House, made the profession of faith before the archbishop, and there by reunited with the Catholic Church. I happily report this here.



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Chapter 6

THE TELESCOPE, MICROSCOPE, AND X-RAY OF THE MALANKARA CHURCH

These are the titles of three books published during the Catholic Reunion Movement initiated by Mar Ivanios. They created a furore among the various sections of Christians. The books were titled *The Telescope of the Malankara Church*, *The Microscope of the Malankara Church* and *The X-ray of the Malankara Church*. Rev. Ramban Pulikkott Joseph and Rev. Ramban Chepatt Philipose wrote the first book. The author of the second book was P John Mathew (Kottayam) and Mr M Varkey edited the third book. It is relevant to provide a brief review of these three books here.

The readers who get a peripheral view of both the Jacobite and the Catholic Churches from the book *Telescope of the Malankara Church* get an inner vision of these Churches from the book *X-ray*. They get a chance to compare these two Churches and there by develop admiration and respect for the Catholic Church. These two books provided strength to the Reunion Movement in its early days.

Telescope of the Malankara Church

This was a book written and published before the Archbishop's Catholic Reunion Movement. The book gives in detail the different reasons that led Mar Ivanios to embrace the Catholic Church and the discussions and documents that inspired him to it. The book in three parts has 200 pages. In the first part of the book, the problems in the Jacobite Church are described. The second part narrates the ancient history of the Churches in Kerala. The third part holds information about the Catholic reunion attempts. The practical advice of Mar

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Ivanios, the grand ideas of Ramban Philipose and the simple and flowing style of Ramban Pulikkott make it fascinating to read.

This book got a huge readership as is evident from the three editions published within a short time. The publisher of the book was Shri Ittoopp of Kunnamkulam, the brother of Ramban Pulikkott. The following is a critical opinion of the book by Shri MM Varkey, editor of *Nazrani Deepika.*

> Numerous books dealing with religion and community matters have been published in Malayalam recently. I have read and examined many of them. But, the foremost among the many such works is *The Telescope of the Malankara Church*. It deals in summary the ancient and contemporary history of the Malankara Jacobite Church, its present day tragedy and certain events that are related to the *vattipanam* case. The authors with great effort have critically examined and brought out the truth of these historic events. It is a respectable and praiseworthy endeavour by these authors.

Journey in a Little Boat

The Telescope begins with a simile calling the Jacobite Church a small boat.

> The boatmen feared even the name of the Vembanad Lake due to its vastness and its powerful waves. It is said that many a traveller has met with untimely death in these waters. Even in summer, no one can sail through it with steady heartbeat. So one can imagine the situation in the months of *Midhunam-Karkadam* when a traveller moves in abysmal darkness amidst the gigantic down pour accompanied by hurricane. The Malankara Syrian Church is such a boat in rain. It is now placed in the Vembanad Lake, incapable of moving neither backward or forward.

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It is now caught in the swirling water. The travellers are like living corpses neither crying nor screaming. They are not even thinking of escape. Caught in matters of their own, they think of the end in whatever manner it comes. We can see some in abject hopelessness. Who is responsible for this? Who is to be blamed for it? There is none. It is only a pointless discussion" (*Telescope,* pages 1 and 2)

Koonan Cross Oath

The following is an interesting description of the Koonan Cross Oath that happened at Mattanchery in the year 1653 and the reasons for it.

This is for the information of the descendants of those who tied the rope to a cross and made an oath. After this, we shall look at the Antiochian relationship. The friction between the Portuguese and the Nestorians has been mentioned in the previous paragraph. It was then that our forefathers tied the rope on the cross, cried out and made the oath. The oath was performed not just because the metropolitan was killed by being drowned in water. Perhaps that too was one reason among many. Historians agree that he was a metropolitan named Ahatullah and that he was a Nestorian bishop. There are no traces of his name in the annals of Antioch, but the Nestorians claim him as their bishop by their own records. Some fools spread the news that the metropolitan was murdered by the Portuguese. But, the Western historians state that the very same Ahatullah lived in Rome and Goa afterwards. In these circumstances, the readers themselves can decide on the truth of these matters. The plain truth is that this Nestorian bishop, who proclaimed his allegiances to the pope, was kidnapped by the

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Portuguese to Goa and then taken to Rome, where he spent his days in relative comfort. He was not killed and thrown into the whirlpools of Cochin Lake. But, it caused some people to tie the rope and wail aloud and take the oath. Meanwhile, let us see what their oath was. As long as they have descendents, they will have no business with the Portuguese. Any way the Roman Catholics from Portugal stopped coming to Malankara. What was the ultimate result of all these endeavours? The pope was able to realise why the flock of Malankara hated the Portuguese bishops (pages 31-31).

The Reunion Negotiations

The Telescope narrates the early history of the Reunion Movement, in the words of the rambans, who really know its secrets. It is quoted verbatim here.

> The Excellencies who are the pillars of the Malankara Church have done their work for reunion. Acknowledging this, let us examine whether someone among them have turned their faces away from reunion. If there is someone inclined to that, let us look into their logic and reasoning. We can find proof of this in the Bishops of Bethany. We are sure that the readers would neither congratulate nor criticise the Bethany people for making the reunion an invention, a medicine for the existence and progress of the Jacobite Malankara Church. Many bishops of yore played a drum named 'reunion'. It is true that now the Bethany bishops beat that drum in broad day light. We doubt the argument that it is a new idea and discovery. However, if the attempt for reunion is so bad and insulting – if the real devotees in the community could only think so – it not only concerns many late bishops and the Bethanians, but also those now living with their face set

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on the Reunion Movement. They may attempt a new Koonan Cross Oath, including all of them or some of them. They need not hesitate to take the oath that "as long as they have progeny, they will have no association with those communities". We are going to expose all those community lovers, these people in the Jacobite Church. As readers, you may remain calm. These people who are known as the foundation of the Jacobite Church, in course of time, will speak the truth to the readers of the *Telescope* (page 224).

Further, the authors put in the witness box all the Jacobite metropolitans who attempted reunion. As this was discussed in the first part of this book, they are not quoted here.

Conclusion

For the readers to know how the *Telescope* is concluded, its last part is included below:

> We have shown that the members of the Malankara Jacobite Church should think of the future. Opinions differ regarding the anchor for a just future. Let us hope that a good path will appear before us. Let us sit, think, and do nothing in haste.
>
> Meanwhile a rumour has spread about sanctions against the followers of Bethany. We too, will not be spared especially due to this *Telescope*. We are expecting it any minute the talks around us are clear in our ears. There are some tidings in the air. Now a *Pulikkodan* and a *Cheppadan* have jumped into the raging ocean that the Malankara Church is. Whatever happens, St Thomas and the founding fathers will not let down these infants, isn't it so, readers? (page 247)

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The Microscope

Someone by the false name P John Mathew (Kottayam) wrote the book *The Microscope of the Malankara Church* in response to the book *The Telescope of the Malankara Church*. This book uses abusive language to insult the Bethany Bishops, *ashramites*, the sisters and all others of the Reunion Movement. Mr MM Varkey made a balanced criticism showing the true colours of this book.

> About two months back I had a conversation with an eminent Jacobite from Kottayam on issues related to Bethany. Incidentally, he expressed his wish to see the Bishop of Bethany. I asked him, "Then why don't you go and see him?" He said, "Oh!, Have you read the *Microsope*? If they hear of it what will happen?" And this person was known to be a courageous one! At first, I thought that he was playing a trick on me. Now after reading the *Microscope*, and knowing the dirt in it, my attitude has changed. There is no surprise in this man fearing the authors of the *Microscope*. They give value to neither truth nor ethics.

The *Hari-sree*[1] of the *Microscope*

If there is anyone who views the opinion of Mr Varkey with doubt, the first and the second pages – the first part only – of the *Microscope* is quoted below for their information:

> Many might have come to know, that Mar Ivanios, one of the prime movers in the internal strife in the Malankara Syrian Church, who worked tirelessly to bring the Patriarch Abded M'siha to Kerala to install firmly the Catholicate institution, along with Mar Theophilos who pulled the strings and became a bishop, a puppet in the

[1] *Hari-sree* means a b c

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hands of Mar Ivanios, certain rambans who dance to any tune, and a few saffron clad persons said to be Bethany *ashramites*, in their "unbearable grief for the decadence of the Malankara Church" have left the Bethany Ashram and are living in a rented house somewhere in Tiruvalla and now for their comfortable living, are gearing themselves up, to jump into the Roman Church.

After the collapse of his castles in the air, Ivanios was dejected, and knew not what to do. Then he got Ramban Pulikkottu as a companion. The rest is left to your imagination. 'The slaughtering king has a cannibal minister.'

Probably he might have been lured by the prospect of becoming a bishop by jumping to the Roman Church. Why make him suffer for this? Let him enjoy the benefits. Some of us do not understand their anxiety about their future, after the time of Mar Divannasios, which made them perform these actions.

Now, let us conclude this section after analyzing the situation of Ramban Cheppattu and Bishop Theophilos. There is no mistake in calling Mar Theophilos, "His Master's Voice" who is only a puppet of Mar Ivanios. This nickname stuck to him during his school days and now this simpleton has become a bishop due to the help extended to him by Mar Ivanios. Now his status is even more helpless and tragic. It was due to his gentle nature and devotion to God that nobody objected to his episcopacy. Anyhow, it is now time for the Syrian community to learn a lesson from their action of bestowing titles on cowards who are weak and helpless (pages 1-2).

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The X-Ray of the Malankara Church

Shri M M Varkey wrote a reply to the *Microscope* titled the *X-Ray*. There is a quote in this book regarding the mastermind behind the Reunion Movement, Mar Ivanios. This is given below:

> "This (reunion) should be written in golden letters in the history of the Malankara Church and inspire happiness in the heart of any Christian who innocently aspire for reunion" (*Satyadeepam*). It is a great event in the history of Christian churches in Kerala and a great harbinger for the Reunion Movement" (*Satyanadam*). "The Bethany movement has wiped out all the disappointments felt by the people. It is a new chapter in the history of the Malankara Church" (*Nazrani Deepika*). "Oh! Bethany Ashram, you who could become the cradle of the reunion, for which the Kerala Christians were praying with tears and hope for a long time, be extolled in the history of the Christian Church" (*Cherupushpam*).
>
> An eminent figure in the Jacobite Church, Mr KC Mamman Mappila rightly says, "There is no event that has touched so intensely the members of the community as the separation of the Bethany *Sanyasa Sangham* (group) from the Jacobite Church" (*Manorama*).
>
> It can be said with resolute faith that Mar Ivanios was known not only to Malayalees, but also to the scholars of Italy, England, Ireland, Germany and America as the pride of the Malankara Jacobite Church, a leader of the community, a man accepted by the public, a brave sufferer, a brave man who strived to create peace in the community, one who knew and felt the stench and filth at the bottom of the Jacobite Church due to his acquaintance with the patriarchs Abdulla and Abded M'siha and the

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Syrian bishops Mar Osthathios and Mar Julios, the right hand of the Bishop's Party in the *Vattipanam* case. He was extolled as MA Deacon, Panickarachan, Headmaster of the Manorama High School, Abo P T Geevarghese, Professor at Serampore, a scholar in Syriac language, the author of the book *Syriac Robinson Grammar*, the examiner of Syriac at the University, the founder of the Bethany Ashram, Balikamadhom and orphanage, an altruistic man, a famous orator, a man of generosity, an open-minded man, a scholar in the history, faith and constitution of the Jacobite Church, a *satyagrahi* who had to suffer a lot as a result of his service to the community, etc. (*Nazrani Deepika*).

Those who do not know him may think the above statements exaggerated or biased. But, these are the opinions the Jacobite brothers stated about him. In my humble opinion, these descriptions are incomplete. As a Jacobite who knew him and followed him for a long time, I can say that these descriptions are only a shadow of his qualities. Though he is not a Jacobite any more, his qualities are still valued by many Jacobites. Mar Theophilos, who is his saffragon, is an epitome of devotion. Besides other communities, the Jacobites also endorse it. Many Reformists approached *Kochuthirumeni* (Mar Theophilos) for his blessings. Even those who enacted the role of his enemies knew that he was devoted to his master Mar Ivanios, and this was the only crime, if it is a crime, charged to his person. We get the right perspective about his life from this very action of obeying his leader. No wonder that a flock who has no training in obeying their elders accuse him of disobedience".



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Chapter 7

JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Mar Ivanios had an ardent wish to go to 'The Eternal City', Rome and seek the blessings of the Holy Father. Many of his well-wishers, laity, and priests through their letters and conversations had informed him that such a visit would be good for the Reunion Movement. But the adverse conditions of the early times were a hindrance to such a visit. Moreover, he did not want to orphan the Reunion Movement in its childhood. Hence, he could make this journey only after a year and a half following the Reunion Movement. He had mainly four purposes to take up this tour of foreign countries.

1. To Visit the Holy Father

The first and most important aim of Mar Ivanios in his foreign travel was to see in person Pope Pius XI, who had promoted the Reunion Movement in Kerala, and recognised the Malankara Syrian Rite, and who had welcomed the reunited and their generations with the telegram message "WELCOME, A BIG WELCOME" and to express the devotion, respects and gratitude of his followers.

2. To Obtain Permission for the Malankara Hierarchy

The second aim of his visit was to obtain permission from the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church to initiate the Reunion Movement all over Kerala, from an Ecclesiastical Province centred in Thiruvananthapuram. He was not sure that he would get permission for the Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram, as there was no inch of land or a single person who had reunited with the Catholic Church or

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any other institution under him for support in Thiruvananthapuram. Even the of non-Catholics was few in Thiruvananthapuram.

He had his apprehensions about the possibilities of getting Thiruvananthapuram as a Metropolitian See. Therefore, he tried to propose Adoor, a centre of non-Catholics, as the heaqduarters of the Archieparchy. But Mar Augustine Kandathil insisted that he try to get the See in Thiruvananthapuram just as Ernakulam is the Metropolitan See for the Syrians. He advised Mar Ivanios to work for this when Mar Ivanios visited Rome. Mar Ivanios decided then to try to get Thiruvananthapuram as the Metropolitan See.

3. To Make Speeches

Many European Universities had already invited Mar Ivanios on hearing about his scholarship, sterling personality, and oratorical skills. These invitations required of him to speak on socio-educational subjects along with topics on religion. A letter written by Pulikottu Ramban Joseph, the Secretary of the archbishop, to Sardar KM Panickar, a senior Government official in Delhi, asserts this point. The following is an excerpt from the letter:

Rev. Pulikottu Joseph Ramban

Metropolitan House, Tiruvalla

Dear Mr Panickar,

I am glad to inform you that the Bethany Archbishop Mar Ivanios has been invited to some renowned Universities in Europe. He is requested to talk about the following subjects: 1. Indian literature, 2. Malayalam literature, 3. Indian philosophy and religion, 4. Indian architecture and sculpture, 5. sacred advaita, 6. fine arts of India, 7. ancient Indian political institutions, 8. renaissance of Indian art, 9. Kerala - its history, economy and culture. His Excellency intends to start his

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journey from Bombay on 11 April by ship. First, he will go to Rome to see the pope. He also wants to attend the Holy Eucharistic Convention in Dublin in June 1932. From Europe he will proceed to America...

With immense gratitude and best wishes,

Joseph Ramban

M R Ry, K M Panickar, AVL

Secretary to the Chamber of Princes

NEW DELHI.

4. To Attend the Holy Eucharistic Congress

Mar Ivanios was invited to the 32nd International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin and to celebrate the Holy Qurbono there. He therefore got the opportunity to meet with millions of Catholic faithful who streamed into Dublin from all the corners of the globe. He wanted to see for himself the great love and faith they had for the Lord who dwells in the Eucharist.

Thus arrangements were completted for the foreign journey in the month of April 1932. A room at Kunnukuzhi, Thiruvananthapuram, belonging to Dr Manuel was taken for rent at Rs. 15/- per month. Fr Joshua and Fr Barsleeba were delegated to live there. Mar Theophilos stayed in a rented house at Tiruvalla. Rev. Pulikottu Ramban Joseph and Cheppattu Ramban Philipose stayed at Thirumoola, Tiruvalla. All of them were entrusted to carry forward the reunion activities and Mar Ivanios got ready for the journey. He arranged Fr C K Mattam, a scholar in different languages, a literary luminary, and professor at St Berchmans College Changanachery, to be his translator and helper. 11 April was the day set for the journey from Bombay; but certain hindrances affected it.

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Conspiracies and an Arrest Warrant

Enemies wanted to thwart the journey of Mar Ivanios fearing the progress of the Reunion Movement. They prepared a game plan. There was an ongoing case regarding the Vanachira Chruch at Mavelikkara in Alapuzha magistrate court. The archbishop was the first witness in this case. Twice summons were issued to the archbishop which was not accepted. Therefore, the enemies decided to get an arrest warrant against the archbishop so that they could block the journey. Finally, they succeeded in getting the court to issue an arrest warrant against the archbishop. They were elated in their success.

Meanwhile the archbishop came to know of the warrant and he wanted to cross the border of Travancore. He was to conduct the vestition of the residents of the Vennikulam Ashram. But he had already published his travel schedule. So he decided to perform this function a week earlier than scheduled. He arrived at the Venikulam Ashram at midnight. The *ashramites* woke up at midnight hearing the bell ringing. At night itself, the ashramites received their religious habit from the archbishop. Early morning he decided to journey to Kottayam along with Mathai Panickar, his brother and Kilileth Chacko. They travelled in a car owned by Melamparambil Oommen.

Meantime, the rivals bent on obstructing the archbishop's journey tried to issue the arrest warrant to the archbishop. Influencing the person the court had designated to serve the arrest warrant, they arrived at Thirumoolapuram. At the same time the archbishop's car broke down at Chingavanam. Mathai Panickar was sent to the Bishop's House in Kottayam to get another car. At that time, Kilileth Chacko and the archbishop got out of the car and walked through a narrow sideway. His enemies were in hot pursuit and they went to Kottayam to catch him. They saw the broken down car but they could not see the archbishop. They arrived at Kottayam and enquired about the archbishop. Since they did not get any information, they returned disappointed to Mavelikkara via Tiruvalla. Meanwhile, the archbishop

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arrived at the Bishop's House, Kottayam in the car brought by Mathai Panickar and he visited Bishop Choolaparampil and told him about the details of his journey. Then he left for Ernakulam. At the Ernakulam Bishop's House, he met Bishop Mar Augustine Kandathil and informed him of all details. Thereafter, he changed his plan to travel to Delhi, instead he travelled to Bombay by train and arrived there safely.

Demise of Parents

The archbishop heard of his mother's death two days after his arrival in Bombay. He decided to return to Travancore to perform the funeral services of his mother. Nevertheless, circumstances were not suitable for this. Everything was arranged for the journey to Rome by ship. He was also afraid that his enemies would try to issue another arrest warrant. Due to these reasons, he could not return to Travancore. Yet he celebrated the Holy Qurbono for the repose of his mother's soul. He also sent a telegram to his brother instructing him to conduct the funeral in a grand manner.

The following is a note about the funeral as given in the biography of Fr Mathew Purakkal. "As Mar Ivanios started his journey to Rome, via Bombay, he was informed of his mother's demise at their home at Mavelikara. Fr Purakkal was informed of it by Manager Chacko. Fr Purakkal, immediately set out with numerous priests and eminent citizens, with numerous umbrellas and crosses, reached there and gave her a funeral befitting the mother of an archbishop. The local people were surprised by the pomp and splendour of the funeral services.

Though he could not be present at his mother's funeral, the archbishop was fortunate enough to care for his father as he lay in his sick bed. He also performed all the last rites and the funeral service of Tharyath Thoma Panickar who died on 9 December 1939, at the age of 93.

He commenced his journey to Rome on 4 April. After seven days of travel by sea, he arrived in Rome safely on 12 April.

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In Rome, the Eternal City

What intense feelings must have arose in the heart of Mar Ivanios as he touched the soil of Rome! He and Fr Mattam stayed at the monastery of the Passionist Fathers. In his three-week sojourn in Rome, he visited numerous churches, universities and other important institutions. He also met with bishops and cardinals, ambassadors and statesmen. He met the Pope five times, got his blessings, and informed him of details regarding the Reunion Movement.

Mar Ivanios - In the Eyes of the People of Rome

What the experience of the Romans who had the fortune to see the archbishop while he stayed in Rome was, can be understood from the letter that Brother Vadasseri sent to his home. A part of it is given below:

> I had the good fortune to travel in the city of Rome many times in the company of Mar Ivanios and Fr C K Mattam. People stared at us; the mothers, holding their children in their hands pointed at us and said, "Look, look..." These children watched us with curiosity. Travellers reduced the speed of vehicles to watch us. Kids ran out of homes to watch us. Some peeped at us from within their rooms. All of them were fascinated by the attire of Mar Ivanios (*Monsignor Vadassery*, pages 42-43)

Archbishop, an Untiring Worker

The 3-week stay in Rome found Mar Ivanios working ceaselessly. Each day was filled with numerous programmes. He met the pope many times and held discussions with him. He communicated with the political leaders and ecclesiastical authorities. He tried to get permission for the Syrian Hierarchy. He delivered talks on countless topics. He spoke in churches, big universities, and seminaries and participated in conferences. Mar Ivanios wrote to Augustine Kandathil, his bosom friend and adviser, about those days.

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I was invited to the Gregorian University to deliver a lecture. The audience comprised of bishops, metropolitans, priests, men, and women. Even as I began my lecture, the hall was full. The doors, windows and the veranda were full of people. As I finished the talk, Msgr Helbing invited me to lecture in Dublin, where the meeting was to be presided over by Cardinal Boon. He arranged a Pontifical Holy Qurbono for me there. Many Lords of Italy invited me to reception. Lord Toneti, Lord Mirinjoni and the British Ambassador to Vatican were some of those who invited me.

I spoke at the Beda College, Scottish College, English College and the Propaganda Seminary. The next week I got invitations from the Irish and North American Colleges. I celebrated the Holy Qurbono at the major Basilicas of Rome. I delivered a sermon at St Sylvester Church. Next week, I am also to speak at St Susanna's Church.

The Roman Experience

He gave a statement to the journalists summarizing the various experiences of his visit of Rome. Excerpts from it are given below.

My visit and stay in Rome was a great joy to all the faithful, from the pope, the head of the Holy Church to the humblest beggar alike. Hundreds gathered around me, who, throughout my life has sought truth and embraced the Catholic faith, realising the graceful path of light towards divinity. It was with immense joy and hope that I set foot in Rome. I got an opportunity to show a great example to my non-Catholic Christian brothers, who are away from the true Church. I believe that I have shown a path of light to the brothers who are away from

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the Catholic faith, more due to historical blunders than individual shortcomings.

I was a chief guest at many important religious celebrations in Rome. This increased my love and respect for the Church and gave me a firsthand feel of the working of divine grace in the Catholic Church.

The reception given to me by the Holy Father touched my heart. It was not just a reception of friendship, but an affirmation of the Catholic Church's kind attention to the children of God who are away from the Church due to division. The mother Church embraced the stray flock as they returned to her fold. I felt great happiness in knowing this. I felt it whenever I visited the pope in private. When I met him for the first time, I said, "Holy Father, I come to you like the prodigal son". The Holy Father, then helped me to my feet, embraced me and said, "You are my good son."



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Chapter 8

BEFORE THE POPE

Thousands of people, irrespective of caste and creed, from several parts of the world, throng every day in Rome to see in person, the Supreme Head of the Holy Catholic Church, the universally honoured and revered Holy Father, and to listen to his benevolent words, and, to receive his blessings with raised hands. They include not only, cardinals, patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, priests and other such leaders; but also heads of nations, emperors, kings, presidents, ministers, and, monks, ambassadors, scientists, artists, literary men, agriculturists, labourers, students, representatives of various organizations and those occupying various positions in all walks of life. The loving father shows special regard in receiving every one of them cordially and giving them relevant and suitable instruction. The visitors leave the eternal city, immensely happy with the golden opportunity which they had there.

Four Types of Visits

It is mandatory that, those who visit Rome with a view to meeting the Holy Father have to obtain prior appointment. This is because, the Holy Father has such a hectic schedule every day. Four types of visits are generally allowed.

1. Confidential Visit

This type of visit is allowed only to those who occupy high positions, namely cardinals, heads of dioceses, heads of religious congregations, national leaders and such others. On such occasions, the Holy Father discusses relevant issues of global importance, with them.

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2. Special visit

Special visits are allowed to officials, ambassadors, members of religious congregations and priests who accompany confidential visitors. The Holy Father interacts with these visitors and blesses them.

3. General visit

General visits are allowed to pilgrims, workers, university students and such others who reach in groups. The Holy Father gives special instructions suited to the status of the visitors.

4. Open visit

In the evening on every Sunday, the Holy Father appears on the portico of St. Peter's Basilica and blesses with raised hands the thousands assembled in the courtyard. He also gives a talk for about 15 minutes.

Procedures to be Observed by the Visitors:

Rev. Monsignor Vadasseri (then a deacon doing his seminary formation in Rome) who had accompanied Mar Ivanios in Rome, in a letter he sent home, has given details of the steps to be observed by visitors. The relevant portion is quoted below.

How Bishops Visit the Pope:

"It is a rule that those bishops who come from other countries have to celebrate a *qurbono* in the St Peter's Church. Even if this was not possible, in urgent circumstances, their visit is allowed. The time of visit would be informed to the bishops sufficiently early. At the appointed time, the bishops reach the Vatican palace. Passing through many doors and rooms they reach the visitors' room or in the chamber of the pope. The guards

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in the palace greet them by raising their lances. The Secretary to pope takes the bishops to the pope. Usually the pope would be standing near a table in his room. Those who call on the pope alone greet the pope by bowing their heads and receive blessing by kneeling. The pope would talk to them standing. The visit cannot exceed half an hour. After the conversation, the secretary calls those who accompanied the bishops, to the pope, in the presence of the bishops. There may be a photo session also. The photo would be published in the newspapers on the same day. The photographs of the visits of Mar Ivanios, Mar Theophilos and our Maharaja, were published by the local press here."

How Ordinary People Visit the Pope:

For ordinary people, if they want to visit the pope, they have to obtain a ticket issued from Vatican. It is issued based on a recommendation letter from a priest who is known in Vatican and cannot be purchased for cash. Usually letters from rectors of seminaries or superiors of monasteries are obtained for the purpose. It is not a difficult task. Non-Catholics obtain tickets through their representatives residing in Vatican. Delegates from many nations are there in Vatican. When our Maharaja and Maharani reached Vatican, they obtained permission through the British Emissary in Vatican. These visitors have to reach, half an hour prior to the appointed time, the Vatican palace, near St Peter's Basilica. The guard near the steps examines every ticket and allows the visitor to go inside. The visitors reach a big hall, where there is a throne on a stage decorated with red silk and gilt. Soon the pope comes in to interact with everyone and offers his hand for kissing. He also gives a talk, standing near

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The Archbishop in Rome



With the Pallium

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In the Propaganda College with the Seminarians from Kerala



on the left of the Archbishop is Msgr Luke Chittoor and in the row of seminarians standing, second from the the right end is Msgr Vadassery

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the throne." (*Mon. Vadasseri, biography* pages 55-58; editor Fr Kilichimala).

When Mar Ivanios was in Vatican, he got the privilege of meeting the pope five times in two and half months, from 12 April 1932 to 2 July 1932. Of them, the fourth was a general visit; all other visits were confidential visits.

The First Visit

Mar Ivanios was permitted to meet the pope for the first time on 26 April 1932. The Holy Father was immensely pleasant and Mar Ivanios was excitedly happy. Mar Ivanios has spoken about this on many occasions. Inthose days, this first visit was a news item in many papers. To quote:

> The cordial welcome that I received in Rome has excited me. I consider it evidence to the fact that the Holy Church loves and honoures her children very much. It was more than a personal honour to me. There I was convinced of the fact that the Holy Catholic Mother Church shows firm affection and rejoices at the return of her children separated by schisms like 'the father in the parable of the prodigal son.'
>
> Soon after I reached Rome, I received permission to make a confidential visit to the pope. I kissed his hand and expressed my regards. At once he hugged me and held me close to him and said "You are my good son", and we had a warm conversation for quite some time; and I became convinced of the fact, I had heard earlier, that the pope had deep regard for the Catholic faithful and their bishops all over the world.
>
> I requested the Holy Father to grant me a patron saint for my mission. Immediately he proclaimed "let it be Peter, the chief of the Apostles as well as the first

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bishop and protector of Rome". I became exceedingly happy that I felt that my aspiration would bloom and spread fragrance".

Before departure, Mar Ivanios requested the pope for permission to do many things for the growth of his mission. The Holy Father directed him to submit these requests in writing. Thus the visit ended successfully.

The Second Visit

Mar Ivanios was allowed to visit the Holy Father, the second time on 2 May. First, he submitted his memorandum to the pope. After reading it the Holy Father declared, "permitted", and handed over the memorandum to his secretary. It is pertinent to note that the memorandum included the request for a Syro-Malankara hierarchy, an archdiocese with its See in Thiruvananthapuram and a diocese with its See at Tiruvalla.

Thereafter the Holy Father with his own hands placed a pallium around the Archbishop's neck. A brief explanation of a 'pallium' is given below.

A pallium is a vestment round in shape with a width of 2 inches, white in colour to be worn around the neck and made of sheep's fur. On request, the pope gives it to patriarchs and metropolitans and rarely to bishops. This is to make them aware of their responsibility of their episcopal ministry. It is made from the fur of two sheep and six small crosses are woven on it.

The Third Visit

Four days after the second visit, on 6 May, Mar Ivanios received permission for his next visit. Regarding this visit, he has recorded in his letter addressed to Mar Augustine Kandathil, the then Metropolitan of Ernakulam, thus:

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It was along with the university students of Italy that I was allowed to visit the Holy Father, the third time. Many delegates from many universities in Italy had assembled in Rome and I was invited to talk on the Catholic communion. I talked to them on religious matters. They listened to me attentively. It was on their request that I accompanied them to visit the pope. The Holy Father received us rejoicing and talked for a while. He said explicitly that my presence in Rome had given him much pleasure. He continued to praise me and exhibited his benevolence to me.

The Fourth Visit

It was on 11 May that Mar Ivanios got permission to visit the pope, the fourth time. Since the birth anniversary of the Holy Father was on the next day, hundreds of visitors namely cardinals, bishops and ambassadors had come to Vatican to greet him. It is worth mentioning that Mar Alexander Choolaparambil, the Bishop of the Diocesse of Kottayam, was one among them. I called on the pope and in a short time the visit was over.

On this matter, Mar Ivanios wrote to the Metropolitan of Ernakulam as follows: "I was fortunate to visit the Holy Father the fourth time, when I was invited from Vatican on the occasion of his feast. After receiving the cardinals, he specially received me. When I requested for more visits he told me, "Son you are always welcome."

The Last Visit

The fifth and the last visit was on 2 June. Compared to the previous visits the last visit was longer. The pope and Mar Ivanios talked about various topics. At last Mar Ivanios informed the pope that he would be going to Ireland to participate in the International Eucharistic Congress and that enroute he would call on Emperor George V. The Holy Father handed over a message to Mar Ivanios to be delivered to the emperor. This message will be given in the next chapter.

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Extracts from the conversation, between the Holy Father and Mar Ivanios recorded by the latter in his diary, are given below.

Holy Father : Were you happy with your visit to Rome?

Mar Ivanios : Holy Father, I can say that these days which I spent here were definitely the happiest in my life. I enjoyed it as a sweet dream. So pleasant they were.

Holy Father : Yes, good dreams become reality at times.

Mar Ivanios : Yes, Holy Father. I have seen the love of Jesus Christ in action in Rome, and I have seen here the living image of Jesus Christ crucified.

Holy Father : It appears that you have further dreams for the future.

Mar Ivanios : Holy Father, my dream and aspiration is to bring the whole of India to the faith in Jesus.

Holy Father : Yes, to the Holy Feet of Christ, the King of India.

Mar Ivanios : I am convinced that the Reunion Movement that has begun in Kerala will grow becoming a big movement. Holy Father, if India becomes Christian, she would not be behind any other nation, spiritually. I believe that our motherland will become a bright and fruitful field of saints. Indians have much respect for religions. Therefore, if monasteries are established there, there will be immense vocation.

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Holy Father : Yes, I know that Indians are zealously religious. They have inherited the ancient culture of *rishies* (monks).

Mar Ivanios : Yes, they and their culture require conversion (baptism). As the ancient culture, philosophy and civilization of Rome were transformed, our culture also requires a transformation.

Holy Father : I have special regard towards eastern nations. I feel happy to hear that new monastic orders are founded in India and in China.

Mar Ivanios : I think that there is no need of being afraid of Bolshevism and atheism in India at present. The people of India are spiritually proficient. But it is not that easy for them to abstain from their old rituals.

Holy Father : Let me say a word about the predicaments of Bolshevism. Everybody has to be very careful. There should not be overconfidence. I am personally familiar with the Russians. I have personal experience about their piety and spirituality. Their piety and habit of prayer have attracted me very much. I have personally seen them praying for hours continuously. I was at times amazed at their firmness in prayer. Despite all these, what eventually happened there? It is from them that Bolshevism with atheism and challenges to God have emerged. In India, too you must

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be cautious. However religious the people are, false prophets may deceive them. I lived in Russia for three years. I am familiar with all places from Caucasus to the Baltic. As I have said earlier, I had wondered at the prayer habits of those innocent people. Irrespective of all this, Russia produced Bolshevism.

Mar Ivanios : Holy Father, the people of India view Catholics and their various activities respectfully. Since we are Indians, our activities are not viewed suspiciously. It is highly essential to reorganise our priests and to prepare them theologically.

Holy Father : How is Mar Theophilos? Is he well?

Mar Ivanios : Yes. He is continues with his ministries. Since it was not wise for us to leave India together, he could not accompany me.

Holy Father : Please convey him my sincere greetings for all his ministries and objectives. Tell him that I am personally interested in all his activities. Hope you are comfortable with the climate of Rome.

Mar Ivanios : Yes, Holy Father. I was quite well here.

Holy Father : Please take care of your health so that you may perform great divine work for our Lord and for India.

Mar Ivanios : I have only one ambition in my life: to serve our Lord and His vicar on earth.

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Holy Father : Good, my son, before we depart...

Mar Ivanios : I intend to visit you again. Hope, I will be permitted accordingly.

Holy Father : Son, you are always welcome. I am only happy to receive you. Dear son, in the words of St Paul we say farewell for now. "Pray for me, I shall pray for you. For our salvation we both shall pray."

After return from England and Ireland, Mar Ivanios had a plan to visit the pope again. But due to various reasons, it did not materialise.



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Chapter 9

VISITS TO VARIOUS NATIONS AND RETURN

After visiting the pope, Mar Ivanios left for Ireland. One of the intentions of his Western tour was to take part in the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. In this context, a few words, about the Eucharistic Congress, are given below.

International Eucharistic Congress

International Eucharistic Congress is an assembly, organized for two or three days, in which millions of people from many parts of the world participate, openly adoring Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist and offer themselves with love, piety, and thanksgiving. Right from the beginning of the Church, provincial Eucharistic Congresses were held in many dioceses and nations. It is now ninety years, since the inception of the Eucharistic Congress with all facilities and large-scale arrangements for a large number of devotees to take part in this pious exercise. The first Congress was held in 1881 at Lille in France. One Marie-Marthe Tamisier, a poor lady, who was a native of France and an devotee of the Holy Eucharist was the first to express her desire for a large scale assembly. She mentioned her intention to Philibert Vrau a leading industrialist in France. He obtained permission from His Holiness Pope Leo XIII and with the favour of Bishop Gastal of Segur, the first Congress was convened at Lille. Thereafter within the last ninety years, more than forty Holy Eucharistic Congresses have been held in many places all over the world.

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At the Dublin Congress

Mar Ivanios got the opportunity of attending the 31st plenary session at the Holy Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in Ireland, in 1932. Regarding this, Ms Gibbons, who composed in English "*Biography of Mar Ivanios*" has written as follows:

> During his stay in Dublin, Mar Ivanios was the guest of the Jesuit fathers in Rathfarnham Castle. It was owing to the generous co-operation of these fathers that the Syro-Malankara Archbishop was enabled to offer publicly the solemn Qurbono in all its impressive ceremony. They had provided beforehand the built screens and other paraphernalia which transformed the Latin sanctuary of their Gardiner St Church into a place of eastern worship for the occasion. They had also with the adaptability which distinguishes them, supplied a supporting choir throughout the long Antiochene Rite, so that members who formed part of the congregation that day and to whom we have spoken recently, still remember that Qurbono rather wistfully. After speaking of its grandeur they add with a sigh, "If only it did not take much time!" But in the East, time is not the slave-driver the West finds it. Mar Ivanios always looked back with a special appreciation the liberal spirit shown by the Jesuit community in Dublin, who arranged for a demonstration of that ancient rite at a period when but little interest was being manifested in the West for the rites of the Eastern Christendom.[1]

[1] Quoted from the Original text: Margaret Gibbons, *Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Apostle of Church Union*, Second Edition, Bethany Publications, Kottayam 2002, page 97-98.

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Opinion of Mar Ivanios about the Congress

How much the archbishop was impressed with the Eucharistic Congress is evident from his letter addressed to Msgr Anleto Cicognani, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church in Rome. A portion of this letter is as follows.

> I am forwarding to you a souvenir published in connection with the Eucharistic Congress... I can say that the Congress was a grand success. News was spread all over here, that the Holy Father had been watching all the activities thereof and was communicating off and on with his delegate appointed for the purpose. This news has also added to the success of the Congress. Many of the participants of the Congress were eagerly expecting to hear the message of the Holy Father, on the closing day of the Congress. Certainly, the message and the blessing of the Holy Father conveyed after the celebration of the Holy Mass, crowned the victorious closing, on the last day, of the Congress. All these evoked a conviction in me, that all the faithful from all parts of the world, together, were worshipping the Holy Eucharist, and that the Holy Father was conferring an apostolic blessing on all of them. It was a divine experience to me. Glory be to the holy name of the Lord! Prayers from thousands of devotees were elevated to heaven on behalf of the Holy Father and for the fulfilment of his intentions. On this occasion, I also prayed for the Holy Father, for the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church and for the reunion of the separated Christian brothers.

After the conclusion of the Eucharistic Congress, Mar Ivanios made the following statement in an interview with press reporters.

> "I view the Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin as a most charming demonstration of the power, solidarity,

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and stability of the Catholic Church. I consider the Holy Eucharist as an explicit expression of the living faith of the Holy Church. The divine adoration, the blessing with the Holy Eucharist and the devotional expressions organized here, before the Catholics and non Catholics as well, will never fade from my mind. More than one hundred thousand devotees arrayed, in the form of a cross, on the four roads, which unite at the O'Connell Bridge and worshiped openly the Holy Eucharist. The altar for the celebration was a raised platform from where the divine mercy of the Holy Eucharist was conferred, and the blessing from the Holy Father was conveyed"

It was after attending the Eucharistic Congress that Mar Ivanios got the opportunity of meeting GK Chesterton the famous English author. This occasion was reported in the newspaper, '*Universe*'. Chesterton's letter to the newspaper is reproduced in the coming chapter.

In England

After attending the Eucharistic Congress, Mar Ivanios left for England. During his two-weeks stay in England, he delivered many speeches at various institutions, in a great meeting presided over by Lord Fitzalan, a parliament member and political leader as well as a prominent Catholic, Mar Ivanios gave a detailed account of the circumstances of his reunion. Thereafter the Archbishop had enough opportunities of meeting and being acquainted with many political leaders of England, heads of Churches and lay leaders of England. Subsequently he called on King George V of England and the Empress at the Buckingham Palace. For quite a long time he interacted with them at a garden party. A part of the message of the Holy Father from Rome, sent through Mar Ivanios is given below.

When you visit the King during your tour of England, convey on my behalf that I remember his last visit to Rome. Tell him that very often I pray for his health, for England

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and also for his subjects. I still remember, what he said on the occasion when I thanked him for his visit, "As there are so many Catholics among my subjects, I take it as my obligation too, to visit you, the Head of the Catholic Church. Certainly, his visit evoked great pleasure in me. Therefore, I greet His Majesty with best wishes for peace and growth to the nation, which he rules.

Soon after reading the message, the Empress asked Mar Ivanios to convey in return, their love and gratitude towards the Holy Father. In London, at a garden party, in honour of the archbishop, hosted by the Indian Ambassador, many officials participated and felicitated him.

After three weeks in England, Mar Ivanios left for Belgium. During his one-month stay there, he delivered many speeches and visited many politicians and heads of Churches. He also visited the King and Queen of Belgium and interacted with them, for a long time, on various topics. The King expressed his enthusiasm and joy in the missionary activities and charitable work conducted by the Christians of India.

Telegram of Embarrassment

A telegram message received by the archbishop when he was in Belgium caused perplexity, sorrow, and confusion. It was a telegram sent by the Very Rev. Pulikkottil Ramban Joseph who had been appointed as the administrator in the absence of the Archbishop who was on foreign tour. It read:"Reliable information Trivandrum See given to Carmelites. Pulikkottu Joseph Ramban."

This telegram made the archbishop deliberate on many possibilities. Many things passed through his mind one after the other.

"Without authentic information, Ramban Pulikkottu would have never sent such a telegram. What more can I do? Through letters, I have informed my home land that Rome had issued the decree for an archdiocese with headquarters at Thiruvananthapuram. How can I go back to my homeland? How shall I dare to face priests and

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laity who are my followers and all the Syrian Catholics without shame? Moreover, my opponents will insult me with much publicity. I was disappointed as if the bird I had in my grip had flown away.

The Holy Father had already accorded the sanction to me orally. The officials of the Oriental Congregation too had told me in person that they would send the Bull on the matter, soon. I have received the letter from Msgr Cicognani stating that the Apostolic Bull, in this regard, was already sent on 11 June to the Appostolic Delegate in India. Probably, in the meantime, some interested parties might have influenced and got the Bull cancelled and managed to obtain sanction issued for a Latin diocese at Thiruvananthapuram. At this stage, if I go to Rome and implore the Holy Father I may be able to obtain permission. But the adage is, *Roma locuta est causa finita est* (Rome has spoken, the case is closed). Hence, even if I reach Rome it may not be fruitful. I will send a letter to Msgr Cicognani seeking information on the real position.

A Consoling Reply

Immediately I sent a letter to Msgr Cicognani requesting information about the telegram from Thiruvananthapuram. A portion of the said letter runs as follows:

> "I am in receipt of the following telegram from my administrator in Thiruvananthapuram. In this matter, the information he got may not be true. Kindly inform me of the details so that I may be consoled. I believe that, by this time, the decree dated 11 June 1932, of the Sacred Congregation, appointing me as archbishop, has reached the Apostolic Delegate in India. As soon as I reach India, I hope, I will receive the same".

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Mar Ivanios received a reply to the above letter in Belgium itself. It was as follows:

> That telegram from Trivandrum is not to be considered. Your Grace is the Archbishop of Trivandrum as it is proved by the Apostolic Bulls sent to the Apostolic Delegate, no doubt ...

On receipt of this reply, Mar Ivanios became happy and made arrangements for his return to India.

Journey by Air

With a view of reaching Trivandrum at the earliest and establishing the headquarters of the Archieparchy Mar Ivanios opted for the journey by air, instead of a journey by sea. The travel account published at that time in the magazine 'Bethany Letter' is given below:

> "Archbishop Mar Ivanios and his secretary, with Fr Maytherts – he is the director of ADF – proceeded to Cologne in Germany. From Cologne, he travelled to Karachi by air. The aircraft called 'Pelican' belongs to Royal Dutch Airways. In the plane, there were two officials and a wireless operator in addition to the main pilot Mr VG Handong. All of them were highly cordial. The plane passed through Budapest, Athens, Cairo, Bagdad, and Bahrain. His Grace and his secretary celebrated Holy Mass on the flight itself. The aircraft flew an average of eight hours a day. On the fifth day, they reached India. The Jesuit fathers in Karachi received the Archbishop. From there he travelled by ship to Bombay. Dr D'Lima SJ Metropolitan of Bombay accorded a cordial reception to His Grace. After spending a day in Bombay, His Grace proceeded to Madras. In Madras, the archbishop visited the Archbishop of Madras and the Bishop of Mylapore. From Madras, he proceeded to meet Most Rev. Peter Kierkels the Apostolic Delegate to convey his regards. The Delegate received His Grace

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very cordially and expressed great enthusiasm to listen to the details of the European tour of His Grace.

(Bethany Letter)

After meeting the apostolic delegate, the archbishop and his secretary proceeded to Thiruvananthapuram. Before leaving Bangalore, he sent a letter to his brother Mathai Panickar. It is given below.

Apostolic Delegation
Bangalore
Tuesday

Blessings to our beloved brother Mathai!

I reached here today morning. Tomorrow evening I will return to Madras. After staying in Madras on Thursday, Friday, I will reach Madurai on Saturday and after the Holy Quorbono on Sunday, I will be proceeding to Thiruvananthapuram. Therefore, you need not wait for me at Kottarakkara. I will be reaching Thiruvananthapuram directly from Madurai.

As a house has already been hired at Thiruvananthapuram it will be convenient for my stay. Please do me one more favour. See whether there is any possibility of purchasing the building and the adjoining land where Fr Joshua and the ashramites are staying. You need not try this personally. Let our manager who got the house on rent try at a reasonable value. Negotiate before I reach there.

The Apostolic Delegate is very happy. The compassionate God is with us. Glory to Him!

Though an attempt was made to purchase the land which belonged to Dr Manuel, on the basis of the letter given above, it was in vain. Therefore, a double storey building owned by Dr Raman Thampi was hired for six months at a rent of Rs 70 per month.

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Reception at Thiruvananthapuram

At 10 pm on 30 October the Archbishop and Fr Mattam, reached Thiruvananthapuram by train. As the time of arrival had been informed by wire to Ramban Pulikkottu, the administrator, he arranged for a grand reception. A large crowd of Christians as well as non-Christians had thronged at the railway station to receive the Archbishop who reached the capital for the first time after his foreign tour. Present among them was Mahakavi Vallathol, a close friend of the Ramban, who had been specially invited. A bit earlier to the arrival of the train, somehow, the lights in the station went off and hence there was darkness everywhere. Everybody became panicky. There spread a rumour that some miscreants among the opponents of the Archbishop were behind the abrupt outage. Immediately sufficient number of candles were provided and everybody waited with lighted candles, to receive the archbishop. The train arrived exactly at 10 pm. As the Archbishop was about to alight the electric lights came back on. All were amazed and were happy at the sight of their beloved father. Mahakavi Vallathol while garlanding the archbishop recited an instant poem. A rough translation:

"Amidst darkness there rose to console us
O golden star, win and be victorious on earth!"

Thereafter the archbishop proceeded, in a large motorcade, to the newly hired house. There he made a small speech about his foreign tour and also conferred the Pontifical blessing to all assembled there. Thus ended the six-month long successful foreign tour! The archbishop reached his headquarters, jubilantly. It is worth remembering that the greetings of the Mahakavi on that day was fulfilled significantly throughout the life of Mar Ivanios'



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The Archbishop at the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin



In eyes of Chesterton



Besides the Archbishop we can see Dr Alexander Choolapparampil, Bishop of Kottayam and a few priests from Kerala

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The Archbishop in Englamd



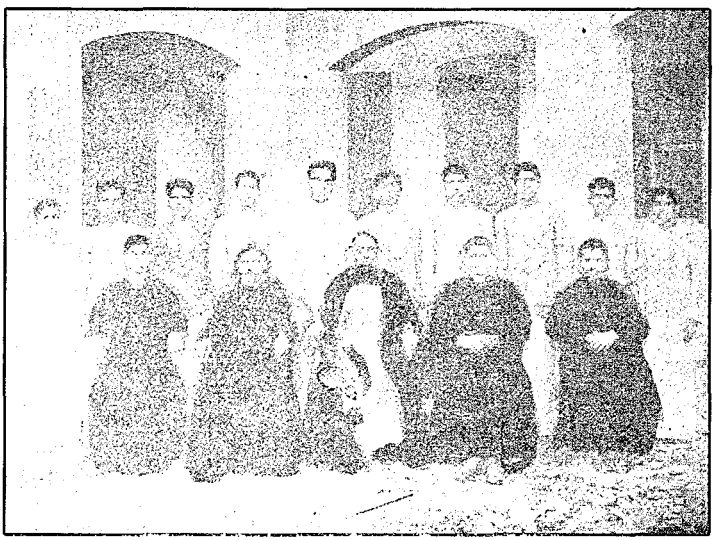
Visits King George V and Queen Mary

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A few photos from the beginning



A reception given to the Archbishop
by the people of a mission in South Travancore



On the two sides of the Archbishop are Ramban Philipose and
Rector Rev Fr Mathew Pothanamuzhi (now Bishop of Kothamangalam)

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Upadsesis of South Travancore at the beginning



With the Archbishop are Rev Fathers Barsleeba OIC, Joshua OIC,
C K Mattam, Zachariyas Poovathumkal and Koshy OIC

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Chapter 10

THROUGH THE EYES OF GK CHESTERTON

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that an acquaintance was formed between Mar Ivanios and the famous English author and journalist GK Chesterton on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. Apart from their similarity in the realm of deep scholarship, psychological expertise and universal renown, both were religious thinkers who had embraced the Catholic Church from non-Catholic Churches. Chesterton converted to the Catholic Church from the Anglican Church and Mar Ivanios reunited with the Catholic Church from the Jacobite Church. While Chesterton's conversion was highly sensational in England, the reunion of Mar Ivanios became sensational in Kerala. The inspiration of their conscience was the only cause for their conversion. Chesterton's conversion was four years before Mar Ivanios' reunion. At the time of their meeting, Chesterton was 58 years old and Mar Ivanios was 50 years old. Chesterton expired four years after their meeting.

After their meeting, Chesterton wrote in the journal *Universe* about the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. In one essay titled, "People I saw in Dublin", he has depicted the meeting and interview with Mar Ivanios. That portion of Chesterton's portrayal of the aspect and outward appearance of Mar Ivanios was highly impressive and interesting to the readers.

Mr IC Chacko, a well known man of letters in Malayalam translated that portion and published in the daily *Dasan*, edited by Mr MM Varkey. (This translation has been reproduced in the original Malayam text of this biography). The relevant excerpt of Chesterton's journal in the original is given below after a brief biography.

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Gilbert Keith Chesterton

GK Chesterton, the famous English essayist and thinker was born at Kensington in England in the year 1871. He began his literary career as a journalist, earned renown in novel, poetry, drama, and essays. In his books, about 30 in number, and in his numerous articles, he has dealt with various topics touching modern life. He has projected his thoughts in political, social, economical, cultural, and philosophical domains, as well as, in matters pertaining to faith. Aesthetic style, humorous expressions, witty sentences, and contemplative thoughts are the main characteristics of his articles and writing. Even Bernard Shaw who criticized him relentlessly called him "the Dr Johnson of the 20th century".

In the Catholic Church

Born and brought up as a member of the Anglican Church Chesterton embraced the Catholic faith at the age of 48 in 1922. Famous men of literature namely Msgr Knox, Hilaire Belloc and Fr O'Connor were those who inspired him for his conversion. From them, Chesterton could learn about the faith and doctrines of Catholic Church. His visit to the Holy Land in 1920 was an occasion, which attracted him to the Catholic Church. Chesterton's conversion caused a major impact in the Anglican Church. After his conversion, he faced his adversaries through his many books on faith matters. Even Bernard Shaw congratulated openly his famous compositions, namely, '*Mishap of the Modern World*', '*Reply to the Abuses against Catholics*', '*Francis Assisi*', '*The Everlasting Man*' and '*St Thomas Aquinas.*'

An Excellent Catholic

GK Chesterton lived as an excellent Catholic until he expired, at the age of 62, in the year 1936. In his book *The Spiritual Diary* which was composed during the last days of his life, he appears neither as a man of literature nor as a philosopher, but as an excellent Catholic faithful. "I believe in everything which the Catholic Church believes

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and teaches and I am immensely happy that I could live as a Catholic; I fully believe in what you despise with contempt as superstition." He recorded these typical sentences in the book. In the year 1936 when he expired, the world lamented the demise of a renowned journalist. In a letter of condolence, His Holiness Pope Pius XI wrote, "The Church has lost a protector of faith"

The pen picture of Chesterton about the Mar Ivanios in the original is given below.

PEOPLE I SAW IN DUBLIN

(GK Chesterton)

Another strange figure, and unfamiliar name, raises the point still more pointedly. Suppose an ordinary English man or for that matter an ordinary Irishman, were told that there was a Jacobite Priest in Dublin, his mind would instantly go back to Patrick Sarsfield and wars of Derry and Limerick, in the days when the Catholic Irish were Jacobites. He would think that the Jacobite priest was perhaps a little too much concerned with the past. But it is a complaint often made about the Irish. And since the Northern Irish continue to remember the Boyne, there seems no reason why the Southern Irish should not continue to remember the Stuarts.

And then he would suddenly discover that a Jacobite does not mean a Jacobite. It means something enormously older, infinitely remote, something apparently quite alien from the other side of the world. It concerns the reconversion to Catholicism of an ancient Asiatic heresy, which wandered away and lost itself somewhere at the beginning of the Dark-Age; probably following the forgotten mysticism of the Monophysites.

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The dignified Indian gentleman, who represented this far off triumph in the Orient, had changed his neighbours by bringing them back into the Roman communion; but he had changed in nothing else. By the look of him, he might have walked that moment out of any Hindu temple covered with bulbous imagery or any Persian mosques scrawled with fantastic script. He wore a sort of tall turban for a mitre; his keen and vigilant face looked browner and darker behind his grey luxuriant beard; his vestments were of a cut and pattern new to all the Western World.

At the first careless glance, he might have been anything-the private Chaplain of Genghis Khan or the High Priest of the cult of the Holy Monkey or Sacred Snake. For we in Europe are generally very vague about distinguishing one Asiatic dress or dignity from another. Only in his hand he carried something that was not the sign of the snake or the ape or any wild cult of the sort that had perhaps surrounded it for centuries; it was that strange sign that was once the shape of the Roman gibbet and still represented to him the divine paradox of Rome.

I began to feel quite creepy about the man with the turban and the cross; remembering that he was from the talismanic land of India looked like a Raja and yet had the charisma of a Christian priest, I wondered if it was Prester John after all.

At that point Prester John disturbed my dream, by suddenly coming up to me and saying in excellent English that he read some article of mine in a newspaper. I soon discovered that this conversion of the Jacobite had been a highly intellectual and even modern process; a part of a quite lively contemporary controversy now going on all over the world. And in spite of his reading the newspapers,

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even my articles in the newspapers, he was exceedingly well read.

I felt a certain vague confusion and I still feel that I never thanked this distinguished prelate adequately for his remarkable courtesy and kindness; but there is something disproportionate in finding one's own trivial trade or tricks of the trade, amid the far reaching revelations of such a trysting-place of all the tribes of men.

But it is typical of the intellectual unity of that religious world that this strange priest from the land of sunrise instantly tackled me about all sorts of immediate and important questions and so magnanimous as to ask me to be photographed with him on the steps of the Vice Regal Lodge. I could imagine on reason for his selection; unless it were that we were in very difficult ways the most curious objects in that landscape; I had a vague idea that I might be acting as a sort of mascot as if he were being photographed with the sacred White Elephant for a background.

But as I bowed myself away from his only too gracious conversation I admit I had another disturbing thought. I remembered that in Asia the presence of a half wit or lunatic is regarded as lucky, or a protection against the evil powers. And though I can't suppose a Catholic Bishop especially so intellectual a bishop, to be subject to superstitions, the doubt did recur to me afterwards from time to time. (From '*The Universe*')

Mr IC Chacko translated the above into Malayalam and published it in his newspaper '*Dasan*'. Only the introduction for the same is given below.

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Introduction Given to the Malayalam Translation

Mr GK Chesterton is a famous critic and author, well known among the moderns in the English language. He has been writing in the newspaper '*The Universe*' about the Holy Eucharistic Congress held recently in Dublin. In one such writing, he describes the universal religiosity of the said Congress. In his exposition, he includes Mar Ivanios without mentioning his name. I am rendering it here, as it would be interesting to our people. It is a difficult task to translate the writing of Chesterton. His ideas seem to be dancing exhilaratingly. In his writings, his erudition flows uninterrupted as hints with embodiments of humour. It is difficult to maintain the original quality when such writing is rendered into Malayalam. Still, with a view to apprise our people, how such a renowned author assesses our great archbishop, I am endeavouring to translate, may be with less originality, giving brief explanations of hints hard to comprehend.



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Chapter 11

THE MALANKARA SYRIAN HIERARCHY

It has been stated in the previous chapter that the main intention of Mar Ivanios in his western tour was to obtain permission for a Malankara Syrian Hierarchy with its See at Thiruvananthapuram. The archbishop was lucky enough to return with his intention realised, though there were activities against it from certain corners. The said ecclesiastical province was inaugurated at Thiruvananthapuram on 12 March 1933. Before going into its details, a few words are appended below, about the administrative system in the Catholic Church.

The Administrative Structure in the Catholic Church

The spiritual administration of about 600 million Catholics of the Universal Church is vested with the hierarchy of about 450 thousand presbyters and about 4000 bishops under the supreme head, the pope. For this purpose, the continents in the world are divided into around 2000 dioceses/eparchies. An ecclesiastical province comprises of many such dioceses. The Holy See has appointed one metropolitan each for every province. In our motherland India, there are 75 dioceses in twelve ecclesiastical provinces. There are four such provinces in Kerala, (Ernakulam, Varappuzha, Changanacherry, Thiruvananthapuram) with a total of 16 dioceses / eparchies. The general administration of the ecclesiastical territory in every nation is executed by the Holy Father through his apostolic delegate.

An Occasion of Surprise to the Cardinals

The reader's attention is invited for a moment to an incident, which took place at Vatican during the visit of the archbishop. In the previous

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chapter it was mentioned that, the Holy Father had already accorded sanction, directly for establishing a Malankara Syrian Hierarchy. After calling on the pope, the archbishop went straight to the office of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church. A few officials including cardinals and priests were present there. The archbishop told them that he had made his western tour with the main intention of obtaining sanction for an archieparchy with its See at Thiruvananthapuram and an eparchy with its See at Tiruvalla. The cardinals told him that this involved a process in which a written application had to be given first. It would be forwarded to the Apostolic Delegate for his remark in the matter. He would consult with the bishops in the nearby area and forward his recommendation either in favour or against. The matter would be discussed and if found necessary the matter would be submitted to the Holy Father. If the Holy Father accords sanction, a bull will be prepared and forwarded to the apostolic delegate for execution. Only then can a new hierarchy be established in the Catholic Church.

The archbishop gave them a patient hearing with a smiling face and finally told them, "I understand that you are speaking from canon law. I have not studied the canon law of the Catholic Church well. I am happy, you can take all legal steps in the matter. But one thing I have to tell you. The Holy Father has already accorded sanction in the matter."

The cardinals were surprised to hear that the pope had given sanction directly. They told the archbishop that there had been no such precedence in the Catholic Church. They confided among themselves that it was because of the personal affection of Pope Pius XI for Mar Ivanios and concern for the growth of the Reunion Movement.

The magnanimous personality of Mar Ivanios could reverse the maxim, "Rome moves slowly" to "Rome moves suddenly". Consequent to this, the bulls for establishing the Malankara hierarchy, the Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram and the Eparchy of Tiruvalla, were sent to the Apostolic Delegate in India within a few days.

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A translation of those bulls are given below.

The Apostolic Constitution Concerning the Erection in Malabar, East Indies, of a New Ecclesiastical Province of the Antiochene Rite for the Syro-Malankara Faithful

PIUS BISHOP

Servant of the Servants of God

Unto Everlasting Memory

To Christ, the Chief of Pastors, We rendered the most humble and fervent thanks when two most illustrious Syro-Malankara prelates, namely, Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Bishop Mar Theophilos, happily entered the bosom of the Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, together with several priests and a very large number of people from their flock, who with the help of Divine Grace followed the footsteps of their pastors; and We heartily congratulated these prelates that they listened with docility to the most kind Father of Lights, who deigned to illumine their minds and their hearts, and that, in all ways and by all means, they laboured assiduously for the further extension of the Kingdom of Christ among the faithful of those parts. Therefore, a few months after the time when these faithful had embraced Catholic unity, We, wishing to provide for their spiritual welfare, issued under Lead Seal the Apostolic Letter *Magnum Nobis*, dated the thirteenth February of the current year, whereby We, in the meanwhile, established within the limits of the Malabar country and entrusted to the said venerable prelates two ordinariates separated from each other by the course of

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the river Pampa. Now, since the number of these Syro-Malankara faithful of the Antiochene Rite become fortunately and happily greater day by day, and within a short time, the Lord acting and has already reached some thousands, it has appeared opportune and salutary to dispose and ordain ecclesiastical matters in a manner more fitting and more stable by erecting in that country of Malabar an Ecclesiastical Province of the Antiochene rite. Accordingly, favouring the wishes of the said prelates and desiring to give to the most noble Oriental Churches a new testimony of Our love and having previously had the favourable opinion of Our Brother Leo Kierkels, Titular Archbishop of Salamina and the Apostolic Delegate in the East Indies, and the advice of Our venerable brethren the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church appointed to the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church and having supplemented, as far as it may be necessary, the consent of those whom it concerns or of those who may presume that it concerns them, in the fullness of the Apostolic power, We decree and establish these that follow:

I. Having suppressed the above-said ordinariates in the country of Malabar to the north and the south of the river Pampa, We erect out of their territory a new and distinct Ecclesiastical Province for the Syro-Malankara faithful of the Antiochene Rite, which shall consist of two Sees, namely, the Archiepiscopal See of Trivandrum and the Episcopal See of Tiruvalla.

II. The Archdiocese of Trivandrum, the limits of which will be the same as those of the Dioceses of Quilon and Kottar and the limits of the southern part of the Diocese of Cochin, shall comprise the districts of Trivandrum,

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Kottarakara, Adoor, Pathanamthitta, Mavelikara, Kayamkulam and Chengannoor.

III. We fix the See of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum, in the city of Trivandrum, whence the archdiocese itself takes its name.

IV. We constitute the Archiepiscopal Church of Trivandrum as the Metropolitan Church of this new Ecclesiastical Province; therefore, We grant to it and to its archbishops in office all the rights and privileges, honours and prerogatives, which by common law and the legitimate customs of the Syro-Antiochene Church belong to them; in the first place, the faculty for its archbishops of using the pallium within the limits of their Ecclesiastical Province, according to the liturgical laws, after, it has been applied for and obtained from the Apostolic See in Sacred Consistory.

V. The Diocese of Tiruvalla, the limits of which will be the same as those of the Dioceses of Verapoly and Vijayapuram and the limits of the northern part of the Diocese of Cochin, shall comprise the districts of Tiruvalla, Niranam, Kottayam, Moovattupuzha and Kunnamkulam.

VI. We fix the See of the Bishop of Tiruvalla, from this city the Diocese itself takes its name.

VII. To the Cathedral Church of Tiruvalla and to its bishops in office We grant all the rights and privileges, honours and prerogatives, which by common law and the legitimate custom of the Syro-Antiochene Church belong to them.

VIII. We constitute this Cathedral Church of Tiruvalla as the suffragan of the Metropolitan Church of Trivandrum, and We subject its bishops in office to the metropolitan right of the Archbishop of Trivandrum.

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IX. We lay on the Metropolitan Church of Trivandrum with its archbishops in office and on the Cathedral Church of Tiruvalla with its bishops the burden and obligations which bind other metropolitan and cathedral Churches and their prelates.

X. We fix the *Cathedra* of the prelates of Trivandrum and of Tiruvalla, the former in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God in the city of Trivandrum and the latter in the Church of St John the Evangelist in the town of Tiruvalla. Therefore, to these Churches, until other provision be made, We grant all the rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other metropolitan and cathedral churches.

XI. The Archiepiscopal or Episcopal *mensa* shall be made up of the gifts usually made by the faithful and by the revenues and all goods which in future will by any title come to these Churches.

XII. With regard to the administration and government of the Churches of Trivandrum and Tiruvalla, the election of the College of Consultors, the institution of seminaries, the rights and burdens of the clerics and of the faithful, and other such matters, We order the observance of what the Sacred Canons ordain. As regards, chiefly, the clergy, We ordain that, as soon as the erection of the aforesaid Archdiocese and Diocese has been executed, the clerics be by the very fact regarded as attached to the Church in whose territory they legally reside.

XIII. Finally, to Ourselves and to the Apostolic See We reserve the faculty of altering and otherwise defining, according to the circumstances of the times, the above-said circumscriptions whenever this will seem expedient in the Lord.

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Therefore, having disposed matters as above, We depute, for the execution of all these, the above mentioned venerable Brother Leo Kierkels, the Apostolic Delegate of the East Indies, and to him therefore We grant all the necessary and opportune faculties, not only for preventing all controversies that may arise in any way in the actual execution, but for sub-delegating for the purpose in question another person, established in ecclesiastical office or dignity, and on the same We lay the duty of transmitting to the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church, within six months from the receipt of this letter, an authentic copy of the act of the actual execution.

We will and decree that any persons whosoever, whom it concerns or who may presume that it concerns them notwithstanding, if they have been heard or have consented to the things above, although they be worthy of express and individual mention, these bull and whatever is therein contained shall never at any time be censured, impugned or called into question as containing a defect of subreption, or for any obreption, or of nullity, or of Our intention, or for any other albeit substantial and unthought-of defect; but that they be and shall be forever valid as having been made and issued from Our certain knowledge and with the fullness of power and that they must inviolably be observed by all those whom it concerns; and that, if, on the other hand, anyone, of whatever authority, should wittingly or unwittingly act there-against, it be and shall be wholly null and void. Finally, We will that to extracts, even printed, from this letter, provided they be signed by the hand of some notary public and stamped with the seal of some person established in ecclesiastical dignity or office, the same faith be given as would be given to this Letter, if it were exhibited or shown

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in its original. Notwithstanding, in as much as may be necessary, the rules published in synodal, provincial, general or universal councils, the special or general apostolic constitutions and ordinations, and whatsoever other dispositions of the Roman Pontiffs our predecessors, and whatsoever other things to the contrary.

Let no one infringe or resist this Our letter of erection, of evection, of concession, of statute, of derogation, of order, and of Our will. If, on the other hand, someone should rashly presume to attempt this, let him know he will incur the wrath of the Almighty God and of His Apostles, the Blessed Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome at St Peter's in the year one thousand nine hundred and thirty-two, on the eleventh day of the month of June on the Feast of the Apostle St Barnabas in the eleventh year of Our pontificate.

Frater Andreas Cardinal Frühwirth

Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church.

A. Card. Sincero

Secretary to the Sacred Oriental Congregation.

Joseph Wilpert

Dean of the College of
Protonotaries Apostolic

Hector Castell
Protonotary Apostolic

Lead + Seal

Registered in the Apostolic Chancery, Vol. XLVI, n. 17-M. Riggi

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Bull Appointing Mar Ivanios as the Metropolitan of Thiruvananthapuram

PIUS BISHOP

Servant of the Servants of God

To Our Venerable Brother Mar Ivanios, hitherto Titular Archbishop of Phasi, elected Archbishop of Trivandrum, health and Apostolic Benediction!

The office of the Supreme Apostolate, Divinely committed to Our humble self, by which We preside over the entire Christian World, imposes on Us the duty of procuring with the greatest diligence that prelates should be appointed for all churches, who know and are able wholesomely to feed, rule and govern the Lord's flock entrusted to them. Wishing, therefore, to give a proper prelate to the Church of Trivandrum, which We have erected this day as a Metropolitan Church in the region of Malabar for the Syro-Malankara faithful of the Antiochene Rite by the Apostolic Letter *Christo Pastorum Principi* under lead and seal, with the advice of Our venerable brethren the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church and in the plenitude of the apostolic authority, We elect thee, who wert working hitherto among those faithful with so much pastoral zeal for the good of souls, to the aforesaid Church of Trivandrum and appoint thee as archbishop and pastor, and also fully commit to thee the care, government and administration of the same Church both in spirituals and in temporals with all the rights, privileges, burdens and obligations inherent in this pastoral office according to the laws and legitimate customs of the Syro-Antiochene Church. We absolve thee, therefore, by the same Our supreme authority, from the bond of the Archiepiscopal Church of

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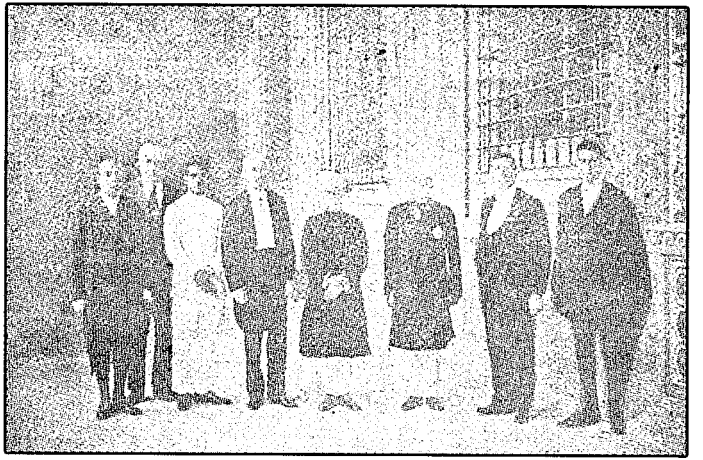
Phasi, whose title with the ordinariate, for the Syro-Malankara faithful, of the Antiochene Rite in the region of Malabar, dwelling south of the river Pampa, thou hitherto heldst. We wish, however, and command that, other matters to be observed by law having been fulfilled, thou art entirely bound, before taking possession of the Archdiocese conferred on thee, to emit the profession of the Catholic faith and deliver the usual oath of fidelity according to the form prescribed for the Orientals into the hands of some Catholic prelate in race and communion with the Apostolic See and to send, within six months, copies of these with the signature and seal of both thyself and the said prelate to the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church. For this we commit by these presents to the Prelate elected by thee the office and mandate to receive in Our name and in that of the Roman Church the said profession and oath. We exhort, in the Lord, the Venerable Brother the Bishop of Tiruvalla that he, elected as thy suffragan Bishop, may, according to the sacred canons, show reverence and render obedience to thee so that the mutual grace between thee and him may produce abundant effects to the good of souls. We admonish and bind by obligation the beloved children, the clergy and the people of thy archdiocese, that they should render due obedience and show reverence to thee so that thou, finding in them devoted children, and they, a benevolent father in thee, may rejoice. We wish that this Our letter be read publicly from the pulpit in the Metropolitan Church on the first feast day of obligation after its receipt. We conceive a firm hope and confidence that, the right hand of the Lord propitiously assisting thee, the Church of Trivandrum will be ruled usefully by thy assiduous pastoral industry and fruitful zeal

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Pope Pius XI

The Holy Father who approved the rite
and installed the Heirarchy
of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church



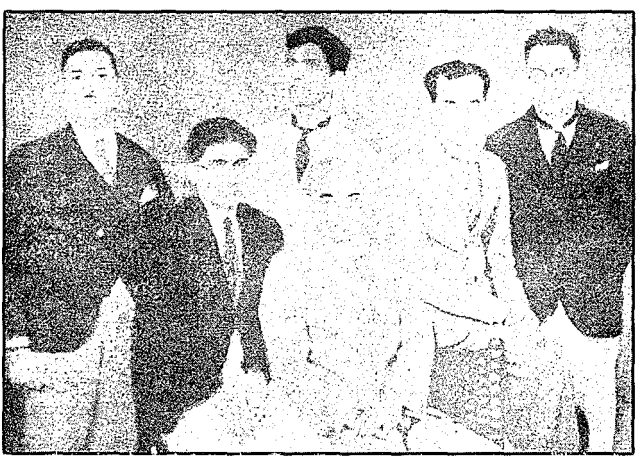
A photo taken in Vatican after His Highness Sri Chithira Thirunal
the King of Travancore and Sir C P visited the Pope

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The Jubilee Celebrations of Sir C P



Also seen in the photo are
Mar Augustine Kandathil, Archbishop of Ernakulam,
Mar James Kalachery, Bishop of Changanassery and
Archbishop Mar Severios, Bishop of Tiruvalla



The Jubilee Celebration Committee

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and obtain greater increments day by day both in spirituals and in temporals and that, in that country, all Christians still separated from the See of Peter will return to the Catholic unity and all infidels still involved in the darkness of error will be illuminated by the evangelical light.

Given in Rome at St Peter's in the year one thousand nine hundred and thirty-two on the eleventh day of June in the eleventh year of Our pontificate.

Frater Andreas Card Frühwirth
Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church.

Joseph Wilpert

Dean of the College of Protonotaries Apostolic

Hector Castell
Protonotary Apostolic

Lead + Seal

As specially directed by the apostolic delegate, the inaugural ceremony, of the constitution and bull quoted above, was held by His Excellency Dr Benziger, Bishop of Kollam on 12 March 1933 at the St Mary's Cathedral Thiruvananthapuram.



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Chapter 12

THE INITIAL PROGRESS OF THE REUNION MOVEMENT

The Reunion Movement, which Mar Ivanios initiated, attained amazing growth, despite it passing through unfavourable circumstances and internal difficulties. Not only the number of priests and laity, but also the number of mission centres, parishes, churches, educational institutions and various other establishments, increased year by year. The growth of this movement within four years, from 1930-1934, can be estimated from the statistics given below.

	1930 September 20	1932	1934
Metropolitans	1	1	1
Metran (bishop)	1	1	1
Priests	1	43	54
Mission centres	1	67	159
Laity	1	5850	183776

Grounds for Reunion

Those days, many people commented abusively on the grounds for the reunion of many priests and laity from the non-Catholic Churches within a short period. But careful observers could note that these comments were baseless. A few might have united with the Catholic Church aspiring for a job, coveting wealth and some others desiring position and status. But such persons have returned, in the same

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manner as they had come, when they failed to attain their aspirations. However, the real grounds, for thousands of people who joined the Catholic Church, are given below.

1. Eagerness for Christian Unity (Ecumenism)

   The splitting up into several minor factions was a hindrance for the internal and external progress of the Church, and the only solution was reunion with the Catholic Church, which is also the will of our Lord Christ, the founder of the Church. This firm consciousness was the prime and primary ground, which prompted many for the Catholic reunion.

2. The study of and impression about the Catholic Church

   A perfect study of the history of the Catholic Church; its faith, spiritual practices, constitution and charitable work resulting in an extraordinary impression became an aid for the reunion.

3. Affection towards the Malankara Rite

   The fact that the very same liturgy, rituals and the rite, that they learned, heard and practised from their childhood were approved in the Catholic Church. This gave impetus for many priests and thousands of laymen to reunite with Catholic Church.

4. Influence of Mar Ivanios

   It so happened that many who were thick friends of Mar Ivanios when the latter was in the Jacobite Church and also those who honoured him, became his followers and co-workers in the Reunion Movement. The extraordinary personality, eloquence and strategy of Mar Ivanios added to the energy of the reunion current.

5. The turmoil in the non-Catholic Churches

   The awareness, that the cases and lawsuits which arose after splitting the Jacobite Church into the Patriarch Group and the

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Bishop Group would be impediments for peaceful spiritual growth, was an impetus for many Jacobite brethren for reunion. Similarly the conflict between the orthodox and heterodox within the Marthoma Church in those days, gave inspiration to many Marthomites to reunite with the Catholic Church. In brief, the troubles in the administration of the Jacobite Church and the dispute on faith matters in the Marthoma Church paved the way for many to enter the Reunion Movement.

6. The missionary zeal of the 'Pazhayakur' Catholics

The attempts made by the Catholics of Kerala, to bring their brothers who had been separated from them, for about three hundred years, to the mother church, became successful with the reunion of Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos. They became happy and volunteered for aiding the Reunion Movement. The bishops, priests, and laity of the Chaldean Syrians came to the forefront and worked for it. Similarly, the Latin Catholics of Kerala also took sincere efforts for its promotion. In this context, the service rendered by the Carmelite priests requires special mention. As a result of the efforts and prayers of all those mentioned above so many got the blessing to enter the Reunion Movement.

The history of the progress achieved in the Reunion Movement, within the first four years is described below.

Bethany Ashram and Convent

After the Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram was inaugurated, Mar Ivanios bought twelve acres of land at Nalanchira for shifting the Bethany Monastery from Vennikkulam to the capital town. He constructed a few temporary buildings and shifted the ashramites from Vennikkulam in 1933. Many youngsters joined the monastery to be trained there.

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The desire of Mar Ivanios to found the Bethany Convent at Thiruvananthapuram was materialised only in the year 1936. He constructed a building in the eight acres of land he bought at Nalanchira and shifted a few nuns there from Thirumoolapuram. With this, many young women joined them there for *sanyasa*. Eventually Mar Ivanios established the foundation for the growth of the 'Order of the Imitation of Christ' and the 'Sisters of the Imitation of Christ' in Thiruvananthapuram. Both congregations progressed and grew.

The Minor Seminary at Tiruvalla

The priests, who reunited from the Jacobite and Marthoma Churches, except for a few, were married priests leading family life. It is to be acknowledged with gratitude that because of their influence and efforts, thousands of people reunited with the Catholic Church at the initial stage itself. His awareness, that unmarried priests staying in the church itself for carrying out missionary work are required for making the Reunion Movement more effective and for giving guidance in spiritual matters to the reunited Catholics, prompted the archbishop to found a minor seminary. Because of this a minor seminary by name 'Infant Jesus Minor Seminary' was founded in 1931, in the Tiruvalla town. For this purpose, His Grace Dr Mar James Kalassery, Archbishop of Changanachery was kind enough to hand over a piece of property with a building there in it, which Rev. Fr Dominic Thottassery, the then Mission Director of the Archdiocese of Changanachery, had bought with his earnest efforts. The minor seminary started there, functioned under the leadership of Mar Theophilos and Rev. Fr Geevarghese OIC. Rev. Fr Jacob Vellaringattu (now Monsignor) who was Vice Rector of the Kottayam minor seminary and also a prominent priest of Archdiocese of Changanacherry, and Rev. Fr Cyriac Kottarathumkuzhy were appointed as Rector and Vice Rector respectively. Only very few from the reunited members could be received for priestly formation. Therefore, many youngsters who

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belonged to *Pazhayakur* Syrians, who came forward to devote their life for the Reunion Movement, were received in the seminary for priestly formation.

The Thiruvananthapuram Minor Seminary

After the Malankara Hierarchy and the Thiruvananthapuram Archieparchy were established, the desire of Mar Ivanios to found a minor seminary at Thiruvananthapuram was fulfilled in 1934. The 'St Aloysius Minor Seminary was inaugurated in the temporary sheds, on either side of the Pattom Church, on 21 June 1934. A few youngsters were received there and they were given formation. He appointed Rev. Fr Mathew Pothanamuzhi as the first rector and Rev. Fr Mathew Chennattu as the vice-rector. Rev. Fr Mathew Pothanammuzhi was appointed later as the secretary of the archbishop and then raised as the Bishop of Kothamangalam. Thus, the minor seminaries at Thiruvananthapuram and at Tiruvalla grew fast. The Reunion Movement drew benefit from them in due course. Those who completed two years training in the minor seminaries were sent to the major seminaries at Aluva, Kandy, Thiruchirapally, Mangalore and Rome, for higher studies. Most of them were ordained priests. It is worth mentioning that about three hundred priests, among those engaged in missionary activities in the Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram and in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla, are those who were trained in priestly education and spiritual formation at the above seminaries.

The Reunited Priests and the Mission Areas

Given below are the names of priests who embraced the Catholic Church within the first four years and the names of the mission areas begun. These names have been taken from a leaflet published in those days by the Very Rev. Pulikottu Ramban Joseph, under the title, "The Advancement of the Catholic Reunion in Four Years". A few of these priests have expired. Their names are given below with prayers for the repose of their souls.

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The Reunited Priests in the Initial Period

Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram

Very Rev.Cheppattu Ramban Philipose
Rev. Pampooreth Chandapilla Kathanar
Rev. Kilinnamannil Yakob Kathanar
Rev. Kallada Mathai Kathanar
Rev. Pampooreth Alexandrayos Kathanar
Rev. Perumpral Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Padippurakkal Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Elanjileth Yacob Kathanar
Rev. Parambil Thomas Kathanar
Rev. Cheravallil Mathai Kathanar
Rev. Mankavil Samuel Kathanar
Rev. Vilayil Mathai Kathanar
Rev. Mujinattu Mathai Kathanar
Rev. Puthenveettil Yacob Kathanar
Rev. Karingattil Mathai Kathanar
Rev. Ezhiyath Zachariah Kathanar
Rev. Perumala Thomas Kathanar
Rev. Vadakkekkara Thomas Kathanar
Rev. Melethil Philiposee Kathanar
Rev. Charuvilethu Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Ambanattu Thomas Kathanar
Rev. Puthanpurakkal Varghese Kathanar
Rev. Kilannamannil Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Mannikkarottu Lukose Kathanar
Rev. Cheravallil Yohannan Kathanar
Rev. Karichal Thomas Kathanar

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In addition to them

Rev. Fr Joshua OIC
Rev. Fr John OIC
Rev. Fr Abraham OIC
Rev. Fr Barsleeba OIC
Rev. Fr Job.OIC
Rev. Fr Seraphion OIC

Eparchy of Tiruvalla

Very. Rev. Pulikottu Ramban Youseph
Rev. Fr Geevarghese OIC
Rev. Fr Kalayakattil Thomas Kathanar
Rev. Fr NV Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Fr Marettu Abraham Kathanar
Rev. Fr Elavattu Philiposee Kathanar
Rev. Fr Cheriamadathil Anthrayos Kathanar
Rev. Fr NG Kuriakose Kathanar
Rev. Fr Purakkal Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Fr Thaikkadavil Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Fr Cheriyamadathil Yacob Kathanar
Rev. Fr Akkarakalathil Zacharia Kathanar
Rev. Fr Konattu Abraham Kathanar
Rev. Fr Thombra Geevarghese Kathanar
Rev. Fr Tharayapattackal Kuriakose Kathanar
Rev. Fr Ramanattu Pathrose Kathanar
Rev. Fr Karimbalakunnil Zacharia Kathanar
Rev. Fr Ezhuvathaikulathu Yacob Kathanar

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Rev. Fr Vakkanambadathil Philiposee Kathanar

Rev. Fr Thevarvelil Geevarghese Kathanar

Rev. Fr Thamarachalil Pathrose Kathanar

Rev. Dn Thekkekara Paulose (Semmasan)

Mission Areas

Archieparchy of Thiruvananthapuram

Puthencavu	Harippadu	Muttom
Chengannur	Karthikappalli	Karichal
Karakkad	Pallippad	Ramapuram
Ullannor	Cheppad	Evur
Chennithala	Nangiarkulangara	Eerezha
Vathikulam	Thumpamon	Nagarcoil
Kattanam	Omalloor	Merukummal
Elanjimel	Chandanapalli	Kottakam
Nariyapuram	Ezhamkulam	Kanjirampara
Mullanikkadu	Nannuvakkad	Uliyazhithara
Kaipatoor Kumbazha Muttathukonam	Thumpamon vadakkekara Thatta Konni	Ulloor Vattiyoorkavu Karakulam
Naranganam	Mylapra	Anchamada
Elanthoor	Pathanamthitta	Nemam
Vadasserikkara	Pattom	Kattakkada
Vadakkupuram	Thiruvananthapuram	Muttada
Ayur	Ranni-Thottamon	Eruthavur
Kurathiad	Perumala	Pongummoodu
Kadammanitta	Vamanapuram	Athanimangalam
Pandalam	Irumpa	Pampukala
Kuttamperur	Kandamankadavu	Pavodu

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Kollakadavu	Malayinkizhu	Vellanad
Puthiyakavu	Chettikunnam	Vellayambalam
Vanachira	Kannanmoola	Vithura
Edapone	Balaramapuram	Manikkal
Kalayapuram	Avanakuzhi	Uzhamala
Puthoor	Poova	Vellayani
Anchal	Nalanchira	Marthandam
Parakootam	Kulappada	Katttachivila
Adoor	Mithakummal	Kavadithala
Pazhakulam	Mankodu	Ambalathara
Kizhakketheruvu	Palodu	Kazhakoottam
Thalavur	Alachamkodu	Arasuparambu
Thalachira	Vattathala	

Mission areas begun within the Eparchy of Tiruvalla

Eparchy of Tiruvalla

Tiruvalla	Koothattukulam	Karakkal
Kaviyoor	Kuruppampadi	Kanakappalam
Pullad	Piravom	Olassa
Kadamankulam	Krareli	Kollad
Mallappalli	Thelliyoor	Muvattupuzha
Payippad	Mannumthottuvazhi	Karivannoor
Vembala	Mazhukeeru	Perumbavoor
Mannar	Kolencherry	Kunnukkurudi
Nedumpuram	Thirumoolapuram	Kothamangalam
Chennankari	Kottoor	Anchalpetti
Kottayam	Kallooppara	Puthenkurishu
Meenadam	Thachamath	Kunnamkulam

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Puthuppalli	Ayiroor	Vennikkulam
Puthuppadi	Othara	Pulikkezhu
Onakkoor	Niranam	Thiruvammantoor
Ramamangalam	Valanjavattom	

The Fourth Anniversary

The fourth annual day of the Reunion Movement was celebrated on 20 September 1934, together with the opening of the newly constructed building at Pushpagiri in a meeting of many priests and laity, presided over by His Grace Mar Augustin Kandathil, in the presence of His Grace Mar James Kalassery and His Grace Mar Theophilos. At the meeting the Very Rev. Pulikkottu Ramban Joseph delivered a speech about the history of the Malankara Church. The concluding part of this speech is given below.

The reason for the split among the Christians of Kerala

> Here it should be mentioned with emphasis that the cause for the 'Koonan Cross Oath' and the split into *Pazhayakur – Puthankur* was mainly suspicion, hatred and misunderstanding of the Portuguese priests towards Chaldean Syrian Bishops who received the honour, sincere piety and love of the Malankara Nazranis. The Chaldean Syrian priests were sceptic about the Portuguese priests, because of their ignorance of the Syriac language. The latter were under the impression that the active area of Nestorian heresy was Babel. The Oriental liturgical rules were also unfamiliar to them. The Malankara Christians were provoked by the spurious activities of the Portuguese. The recalcitrance of the Portuguese, that there shall not be liturgy in Syriac and there shall not be Syrian bishops, distorted the peaceful

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atmosphere in the Malankara Church. The Malankara Nazranis joined hands with the Chaldeans and opposed the Portuguese who persecuted the Chaldean Syrian bishops and those who were suspected to be their close associates, by considering them Nestorians and saying '*maharon*' (ex-communication) and deporting them. Not only did they submit a memorandum, to the See of Rome, complaining against the misdeeds of the Portuguese, but they also requested that they required nobody other than the Syrian bishops. These attempts did not fetch any results, probably because they were insufficient, or that they were not properly routed. The demise of Mar Abraham of Malankara in 1597 AD, and, later, the arrival of Dr Alexis de Menezes the Metropolitan of Goa, in 1599 caused the Malankara Church to fall into deterioration, which is evinced by the Synod of Diamper and its consequences. Though the religious zeal of the capable and cunning Metropolitan Menezes was appreciable, his hasty actions and lack of knowledge about others' interests darkened his good qualities. It is a consolation that the Malankara Nazranis did not do any overt act, other than taking an oath, that in future, they would have no communion with the Portuguese, though they were provoked and furious, when somebody spread a rumour that Ahathalla who came up to Kochi as a Bishop for Malankara, was not allowed by the Portuguese, to disembark and was drowned (The western historians have proved it reasonably that the said Ahathulla died, later, somewhere else). In the said oath majority of the Nazranis of Malankara took part; only a few close associates of the Portuguese kept away and there is historical evidence that many of the ancestors of the present day *Pazhayakur* people took part in it.

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The Jacobite Relation

We can guess that those Malankara Nazranis who abandoned the Portuguese connection by way of the Koonan Cross Oath suffered much due to the non-availability of bishops. When the Portuguese began to rule without allowing any Oriental Chaldean bishops to disembark on this land, the Nazranis began evading and thought of ways to get a Syrian bishop or to ordain a bishop from among themselves. They were so disappointed that they desired even to receive any Eastern Syrian bishop, if not a Syrian bishop from Babel. As a result of the correspondence made by the then Archdeacon of Malankara, in 1665, Mar Gregorios, the Jacobite Patriarch from Jerusalem came to Malankara. From then onwards Jacobitism flourished in Malankara and Patriarch Mar Gregorios was its originator here. Attempts, made by two Jacobite-supporting historians, to attribute Jacobite guise to certain Oriental bishops who came to Malankara earlier, were not successful. It is evident from the above that Jacobitism does not have a history of more than 300 years, in Malankara. More over observing the origin of the term *'Puthankur'* it is evident that the title was intended for those who followed the new *Qurbono Takso* brought by Mar Gregorios. As such, Jacobitism in Malankara is not older than 300 years.

Majority of the Malankara Nazranis, who revolted against the Portuguese, cordially received Mar Gregorios and they became happy as their desire to receive a Syrian bishop was fulfilled. As, during this period, the might and power of Portuguese was shaken, and the See of Rome became convinced of their wrong policies; they had to leave the place; and , in their place the Carmelites

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happened to reach here. The Carmelites learned that, Jacobitism originated here as a result of the activities of the Portuguese to curb Nestorianism. The Carmelites with a view to countering it, ordained Chandi Kathnar of Pakalomattam as bishop. On receipt of an indigenous bishop, many of the new groups began to return to the old group. Eventually the old group was strengthened and the new groups became weak.

Because the new group had received a Jacobite bishop, they had to face, many risks and obstacles to which the revolts and internal crisis and splits bear witness. The grounds, on which, many from the new group floated to Protestantism and many perched on the "Thozhiyoor Independent Church' and the new Marthoma Church sprouted, need not be explained here.

The Very Rev. ramban continued his talk explaining the grounds for the Reunion Movement and its amazing growth attained within four years. The fourth anniversary meeting concluded with various spiritual events.



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Chapter 13

THE ARCHBISHOP AND SIR CP RAMASWAMI IYER

In the ensuing chapters, the intention is to state how the relationship was between Mar Ivanios and Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer, the Dewan (administrator) of Shri Chithira Thirunal Maharaja, who controlled the administration for about twelve years in such a way that he earned the contempt and hatred of the majority of the people of the kingdom of Travancore.

Discourtesy towards the Archbishop

It was in 1934 that Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer reached the capital of Travancore as the adviser of Shri Chithira Thirunal Maharaja. Sir Austin was the Dewan at that time. After his tenure, Sir Habibullah became the Dewan. He left the dewanship in 1937 and Sir CP was installed as the Dewan. It was in October 1932 that Mar Ivanios reached Thiruvananthapuram after obtaining permission for the Malankara Syrian Hierarchy and after his Western tour. Thereafter he stayed at Vellayambalam, for about six months, in a building owned by Dr Raman Thampi and thereafter shifted to a building at Saravanakkunnu at Pattom.

It was in this context that Sir CP reached the capital as the adviser of the Maharaja. For greeting with success in the new job and for getting acquainted with him, the archbishop visited Sir CP and they talked about many topics, for quite a long time. But Sir CP was not polite enough to make a visit in return, to the Archbishop who had visited him with greetings. The archbishop decided to teach Sir CP a lesson and he waited for a suitable opportunity.

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Occasion of Mutual Dispute

The archbishop decided to host a farewell meeting in honour of his personal friend Sir Austin who had just retired and was about leave for England. For this, he sent invitation letters sufficiently early, to officials and prominent persons of Thiruvananthapuram. The send off meeting and tea party was proposed to be arranged on the evening on 5 February. The invitation to Sir CP was intentionally delayed. On the proposed day at 3:30 pm an invitation along with a letter was sent to Sir CP through a messenger. Sir CP sent a reply immediately. The two letters are reproduced below.

The Invitation Sent by the Archbishop

Most Rev Dr Mar Ivanios MA, DD
Archbishop of Trivandrum

5 February 1934

To,

Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer KCIE
Legal and Constitutional Advisor
to His Highness the Maharaja, Trivandrum.

"Dear Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer,

Please pardon this delayed invitation owing to the fact that my invitations were mainly issued from my visitor's book. I now observe that yours has been omitted. I sincerely trust that you will find it convenient to accept my hospitality. I send this by express messenger for favour of reply.

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
Sd/-
Mar Ivanios

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The Reply from Sir CP

Trivandrum,
5th Feb.1934

Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer has received the invitation of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Trivandrum at 3:40 pm and therefore regrets his inability to attend the function this evening especially as he is presiding over a meeting at the Arts College at about the same time.

It is pertinent to note that it was a letter unattested and unauthenticated even by a secretary. It is also clear that Mar Ivanios intented to teach Sir CP, who had not made a return visit to him, a lesson.

All important persons of Thiruvananthapuram except Sir CP attended the farewell party. The concluding part of the speech delivered by the archbishop in the meeting is given below.

"This is a grave and crucial period in which large scale and organized attempts are made in various parts of the world, to overturn legitimate authorities and to eradicate religion. Faith in God, devotion to the King and subjection to legal authority are factors which have to exist together. Therefore, it is highly essential that governments have to provide all facilities for religious practices. Such aid would successfully protect and preserve the social set up and the well being of the nation.

To build temples for worship for those who are alive and construct burial places for the dead are essential. The restrictions against them, including those remaining weaknesses of earlier times, in any kingdom like Travancore where development oriented governance is done, have to be removed. I firmly believe that this will be done.

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The haughtiness of Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer could not tolerate, not only the insult in the improper and discourteous invitation but also the talk criticising the religious persecution by the Travancore Government. Therefore, Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer decided to take revenge against the archbishop. His first plan was to drive him away from the capital city. The contemptuous attempts made by him to evict the archbishop, are given below one by one.

The Cruel Eviction

The first decision taken by Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer was to evict the archbishop from Saravanakunnu. The owner of the said plot and building was a widow belonging to an artisan community. Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer summoned her and asked her to hand over the building to the government for running an orphanage. The poor woman consented unwillingly. She sent a notice to the archbishop requesting the latter to vacate the building within one month.

The archbishop knew that it was not possible to stay there obstinately. Therefore, without any counter argument, he bought on sale ten acres of land with a few, small buildings therein, which was owned by a Muslim at Kattachakonam for a consideration of ten thousand Rupees. He shifted his residence boldly, though a bit sorrowfully, with his companions and movable properties to Kattachakonam.

The Bold Archbishop

CP carried on with his attempts to trouble the archbishop to the maximum. He issued orders to his officials to acquire the newly bought land and to evict the archbishop. In this regard a portion of an article written by press editor Mr MM Varkey is given below.

When he found that his policy of reconciliation was not sufficient enough to make the barbarian rulers be cultured and duty bound, the archbishop did not wait for a single moment to turn against them and

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even to oppose them boldly against their cruelty. When I remember such instances, I become emotionally excited.

When the autocrat understood that Mar Ivanios was not a clown to laud and support him in his fake politics and cruel persecution launched against the public, the former targeted the latter directly. The barbarian government decided to drive him away from Trivandrum depriving him of his tenement and place of abode. For this, they devised a plan of acquiring the residential property of the archbishop for official purpose. Without complying with the official formalities, they sent revenue staff and police officials to threaten the archbishop. He neglected all these attempts with contempt. Surprisingly one day revenue officials and a police party with arms and other instruments reached the Bishop's House and began surveying the property. Mar Ivanios never anticipated this much barbarianism.

> His Grace who was engaged in his personal matters in his room, on coming to know about the trespass of the officials, took a cane stick, approached the officials, and commanded them to go out immediately. Mar Ivanios was reluctant to listen to them. The firmness and commanding power of Mar Ivanios made the officials inactive and they returned. The archbishop retired to his house only after the last man of the party passed the gate (*Kraistava Kahalam*).

However, Sir CP continued his efforts to acquire the said land. At this stage the Archbishop sent an envoy to Sir CP to give him the following message. "I have bought this land paying the money which Pope of Rome sent me. In case the Travancore Government requires it, special permission has to be obtained from the pope. Otherwise, it is impossible." On receipt of this message, Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer retracted from his efforts. Because he knew that, it was not easy to obtain permission from the pope. Moreover, CP was aware of the

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influence of the pope among world nations, and, that he would invite serious consequences, if the land is acquired without the permission of the pope. He stopped the acquisition plan and plotted another ploy to trouble the archbishop.

Prohibitions and Arrests

The new Archieparchy of Thiruvanthapuram, and the Eparchy of Tiruvalla required many churches and chapels. Similar was the case of burial places for all mission centres. But, Sir C P Ramaswami Aiyar made it mandatory that permission from government had to be obtained for the above. Churches for open worship and burial grounds are essential to Christians. Those who embraced the Christian faith panicked. Many, who were about to reunite, retracted because of this predicament. The archbishop was also much disturbed and perturbed.

To the applications for permission to construct churches and burial grounds, the officials at the direction of Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer, denied permission on flimsy reasons including objection from neighbours, presence of schools and institutions nearby. Many priests and faithful were punished on cases charged against them for open worship and burial of bodies without permission. The opponents misused this opportunity to abuse the new converts. All these made the archbishop pensive and troubled.

To counter the restrictions imposed by CP, the archbishop issued special order; printed and published it. Government permission is required for open worship. It is for the bishop to decide what open worship is. He explained that '*Triqurbono*' (*moonninmel qurbono*), ordination service, blessing of myron are open worship and that the Holy Qurbono is not an open worship. As permission is not required for Hindus to bury dead bodies in their land, the archbishop is competent to accord permission to bury dead bodies at any place of convenience. But these explanations were not sufficient to overcome the government order. Sir CP continued with his fight against the archbishop.

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To the British Parliament

In the mean time, there was a debate in the Upper House of the British Parliament, on this matter. It was Lord Fitzalan, a prominent member of the Parliament, who asked the question first. The question was, "Is it true that in Travancore a small local kingdom in India, religious persecution is going on against Christians?" The Chairman (Speaker) of the Parliament replied, "The government has no information about this. Parliament would be informed about it after due enquiry."

The questioner Lord Fitzalan was a political leader who became acquainted with Mar Ivanios while the latter was in London. While Mar Ivanios was in London, during his Western tour, it was he who presided over a felicitation meeting in honour of Mar Ivanios and spoke laudably. Thereafter, they maintained their mutual relationship through letters. It became public that, it was Mar Ivanios, who got the question asked in the British Parliament. In the Lower House of the Parliament Lady Atholl on another occasion asked the same question. Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer who was aware of the power of the British government over the local kingdom here became much provoked and furious. His anger towards the archbishop increased day by day.

Thereafter, Christians, Ezhava and Muslims joined together and started an abstention agitation against Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer. It became public that Mar Ivanios was the brain behind it. More details of this will be given in the chapter 'Archbishop and Politics'. The news that one archbishop of this place submitted a memorandum to the Indian Viceroy against Travancore government and that the Viceroy called for explanation from the Government of Travancore, created an atmosphere of conflict between Hindu and Christian newspapers. Details will be stated in the next chapter.



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Chapter 14

VICEROY MEMORIAL AGITATION

Various reasons for the displeasure between the archbishop and Sir CP have been stated in the previous chapter. Another instance, in continuation, became an adding cause, just like pouring oil into fire, to augment their hatred. In some of the newspapers in Travancore news appeared that one archbishop had sent a letter to the Indian Viceroy alleging that there was communal discrimination against the Christians here, by persecution, disallowing worship, refusing permission for the construction of new churches and cemeteries for the burial of the deceased and that priests under him were prosecuted and punished for celebrating mass in places for which there was no sanction and therefore the Viceroy had called for explanation from the government of Travancore. The news was first published in the '*Samadarsi*', a newspaper from Trivandrum. It is reproduced below:

> "A memorial sent by an archbishop of this place, to the Viceroy stating that the government of Travancore is financially aiding Hindu missions for converting Christians into Hinduism, has been forwarded by the Government of India, to the political agent here for enquiry. The political agent will be summoning a few bishops and Christian leaders and their statements will be obtained. The Government is preparing a memorandum in this matter for submission to the Government of India." (*Samadarsi*, 20 *Meenam* 1110)

Publication of this news paved the way for conflict among a few newspapers edited from Trivandrum, Kollam and Kottayam. Papers

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'Samadarsi', *'Malayalee'* and *'Malayala Rajyam'* published articles and editorials against the archbishop and *'Kottayam Pathrika'*, *'Kerala Kesari'* and *'Malayala Manorama'* published articles favouring the archbishop.

The paper *'Service'* published from Trivandrum wrote a letter openly alleging that the archbishop was a man of sedition, that he was against the King and the Kingdom, and therefore, that he had to be imprisoned. The relevant extract is given below.

> As a snake falls upon its provider to bite him, now a Christian archbishop has come up declaring himself to be showing 'contempt' in addition to 'ingratitude' against the Maharaja and the Government of Travancore, by submitting a memorial to the Viceroy, alleging many offences, ignoring the generosity of the Kings of Travancore, especially the noble impartiality and benevolence of the magnanimous Chithira Thirunal Maharaja. It is impossible to say whether it amounts to ingratitude, sedition, hurt to the Hindu religion or senselessness that has been projected in these activities.
>
> A group born and brought up with the aid of the government, when it reached maturity, has come forward once again against the government. The result of any further inaction on the part of the government would be terrible. There is no meaning in wasting time pondering over the ungrateful attitude of this group and there shall not be any delay in suppressing their threats and false propaganda.
>
> It is our opinion that the indifference and tolerance of the government is the reason for the formation of such an attitude in the said group, which grew to the level of an archbishop becoming courageous to accuse even the

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Maharaja. Tolerance is not a remedy for sedition but bold action is required. The government has to contain and suppress this type of evil doings. The wicked will misunderstand tolerance as weakness. The wicked deserves strict and serious action.

It is the duty of the government to teach a lesson to the archbishop, who is involved in abusing the Maharaja with false allegation to harm his reputation and esteem. It is quite unpleasant to hear that such miscreants are there among the subjects. It is our precedence that Keralavarma Valiyakoil Thampuran, a born Kshatriya and a close relative of his Majesty was imprisoned for the only reason that he made correspondence against his Majesty. Therefore, an archbishop involved in such false propaganda against the Maharaja and against the Kingdom shall not be spared even for a moment. Deserving punishment has to be awarded immediately. The government shall not be reluctant in this matter any longer. It is already late and has reached an uncontrollable stage. We exhort the government to suppress these types of coteries and to restore peace and tranquillity in the Kingdom and exhort the Hindu religion especially the Brahmins and such other communities of Hindus to gain strength with unity and solidarity to counteract the aggravating oppression against Hindu religion (*Service*, 30 *Meenam* 1110).

Quoted below is a reasonable editorial in this regard published in the *Malayala Manorama*.

Undesirable Propaganda

News has been spread through some fellow beings that a Catholic archbishop of Travancore has sent

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a memorial to the Viceroy of India stating that the Christians of Travancore have been suffering due to various difficulties pertaining to the construction of churches. As it is felt, that certain newspapers are striving to fabricate allegations against Christians, that it is because of ingratitude towards the favours already received from the royal family, and lack of patriotism of the Travancore Christians, we propose to record our opinion.

We have no information whether an archbishop from Travancore or anybody else had sent such a memorial to the Viceroy and if so what are the allegations stated there in. However, blaming the alleged acts, the mentality in attempting to abuse the Christians, ignoring their patriotism and gratitude to the royal family, we feel, is highly contemptible. There is no need of mentioning that agitations were held by various individuals and groups belonging to many communities demanding solutions for their sufferings. History proves that Christians like other communities were highly loyal to the King. Like other communities among the subjects, the Christians also have enjoyed royal favours. Royal favours are for all subjects irrespective of community. Kingship as a mighty and impartial power prevailed everywhere, over community discrimination. The Christians hold it proudly that they could work in the forefront in the educational activities because of the favour they had received from the Travancore Kings. But it is difficult to understand the statement that bringing genuine complaints to the higher-ranking government is not befitting to the subject's loyalty to the King. Those who know the history of Travancore need need not be told that such a case does not have precedence. It is a universally known fact that the

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Christians of Travancore have been suffering in many ways, politically and communally. The agitation recently conducted jointly by three major communities of Travancore is sufficient evidence for this. There are many instances, which can be referred to about the difficulties faced by Christians legally in matters relating to the construction of churches. As such, if at all somebody had thought of informing the hierarchy about the restrictions, there is nothing unnatural in it. If any group among the subjects are discontented, it would be a wise policy to eradicate the causes for such discontentment. In this context, we can say only one thing, that, the newspapers and leaders of the public should detract from propaganda based on this rumour, which is likely to disrupt the communal harmony in Travancore (*Malayala Manorama*, 9 April 1935).

A few extracts from the editorial of *Malayala Rajyam* published from Kollam.

Midnight Murmur

A rumour has been spread throughout, that an Archbishop who is a subject of Travancore has sent a letter to the Viceroy, containing many allegations against the Maharaja such as that the latter is inimical to the Christians and that the British Government has begun to take action on it. This has caused varied emotions in the heart of those subjects who are patriotic and loyal to the King. Some newspapers have opined that if what is heard is true about the archbishop, action should be taken as rule for sedition. Mr. KN Chacko has written an article 'Don't Misunderstand' in '*Malayali*'. The *Malayala Manorama* of Kottayam has raised sword under the title "Undesirable Propaganda" against the newspapers which

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had posted the letter of the archbishop. On reading the article of Mr Chacko and the editorial of *Malayala Manorama*, it appears that, both were written by persons of the same idea and spirit. *Manorama* is owned by the Kandathil family. How can the *Manorama* say, "that the Christians of Travancore have been suffering in many ways, politically and communally, is a universally known fact which cannot be forgotten. If at all somebody has thought of informing the hierarchy about the restrictions, there is nothing unnatural in it". Whether the archbishop has written it or not, it is proved that the *Manorama* is strongly in favour of sending such a letter.

Some archbishop has sent a letter, but see, what help and cooperation the government has given to an archbishop. The correspondent from Kozhenchery has written in the *Nava Bharati* of 4 April as follows:

> Perplexing thoughts have been going on for the last two weeks regarding the burial of the body of an old priest of the Jacobite Church at Kattoor in Cherukol Pakuthi. His children have united with the Catholic Church. The new Catholic Church has no cemetery there. The argument was that if the deceased was buried at the behest of the Catholic Church, it would open a new cemetery which has to be prevented. He expired last Friday. As ordered by the Travancore Dewan Shri M Habibullah, he was buried at the newly constructed Cherupushpavilasam bungalow owned by the new rite.
>
> Observe the help and favour rendered by Dewan Shri M Habibullah to the archbishop. The followers of KN Chacko may argue that these aids were given by Shri Habibullah and not by the Maharaja. There may be newspapers and persons in our land to put forward

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arguments accordingly. The adage that "the age is *kaliyugam*" may be true (*Malayala Rajyam*, 14 April 1935).

The paper *Kerala Kesari* published from Thiruvanthapuram wrote an impartial editorial about the allegation. It was as follows:

> In some newspapers, editorials were seen stating that a Catholic archbishop has sent a memorial to the Viceroy of India alleging that in this State there were obstacles in getting Christian churches sanctioned and that the said memorial was forwarded to the Travancore Darbar, through AGG. An article of a particular individual was also seen, cautioning the Hindus that the Christians in general were unpatriotic and thankless and that there was a coterie including Christian leaders, bishops and certain political leaders of England attempting to malign the reputation of Travancore.
>
> We have no information about the actual position. However it may be, it is quite fantastic that it was made an occasion for rebuking the Christians in general and abusing their loyalty to the King. The Maharaja is the Maharaja of the Christians also, as of the others. The State of Travancore belongs to Christians as well as to other communities. It is unnecessary for any group to abuse the other, alleging ingratitude and lack of loyalty. Agitating for the redressal of the suffering of each, does not amount to the lack of loyalty to the King. It is known to everybody that non-Christian communities also have conducted agitations many a time. Articles stating that the Christians are unpatriotic and that they are to be considered as immigrants, will only help aggravate communal disharmony and cause disrepute to Travancore.

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We remember having written an editorial ourselves to get the difficulties removed in establishing churches. We do not think that it causes worry to non-Christians. Similarly, there is no information that the receipt of a donation of Rs 10,000/- by the Hindu Mission was intolerable to Christians. Instead of co-existing cordially and lovingly, this type of news reports will only enable in aggravating communal enmity. Here it is suggested that the non-Christians have no license to insult the Christians who are a prominent group in Travancore, in a matter which affects religious leaders and the universally honoured Maharaja (*Kerala Kesari*, 6 April 1953).

Baseless Allegation

Quoted below is a statement given by the archbishop in this matter, published in those days.

Here and everywhere the subject of discussion is a memorial sent by a Syrian archbishop to the viceroy. First it was mentioned, and then stated doubtfully and, finally it was confirmed and commented about. It could be seen that based on this hearsay information, certain newspapers of Nairs have written articles and criticisms at length, about the ingratitude of the Christians. Admittedly, possible efforts have to be taken for the propagation of Hindu religion. But articles which increase communal hatred would not help religious propagation. It is detrimental to the development of the State. Yesterday I made a visit to Dr Mar Ivanios, to ascertain the truth about the alleged memorial forwarded to the government through the AGG.

The archbishop stated, that through some visitors he came to know about such news published in some newspapers. He was on tour and as his name had not

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been mentioned specifically he had kept quiet. He added that neither himself personally nor anybody in his knowledge has sent such a memorial. Arrangements would be made with his secretary for removing the misunderstanding and to make the public aware that the news is baseless. He stated that some miscreants fabricated this propaganda (Report of a press reporter who had visited the archbishop).

Editorial of '*Vidushakan*'

Quoted below is an editorial under the title "Is this an archbishop or an archdevil" in *Vidushakan Masika* (a monthly named 'Jester') published from Kollam.

"Mar Ivanios is a man, who has become a publicity in Malayalam newspapers, who has ascended now under the proper name Metropolitan Mar Ivanios, a man of divinity, who became popularly known in the north division of Travancore and was less known in its south division, in his various positions such as, a professor in a college at Calcutta for a few years, a priest Fr Geevarghese (MA) for a few years, as an Arjuna who fought for many years for one faction in the litigation of *vattipanam* and *rishiswaran* of Bethany Ashram, who survived on the food cooked by himself, in the likeness of a Hindu monk. It appears that so far none of the indigenous Christians could reach such a high position in the priestly hierarchy. It can be stated with certainty, that when the greatness of his position and status, hitherto, is considered, if at all there is anybody in Kerala who is fortunate and qualified to attain the most eminent position of *Mar Pappa* (pope) in the Catholic world, by climbing the *Pathinettampadi* (18th step = ultimate step) it would be nobody other than this archbishop. Our opinion is that it is sheer foolishness

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and unfounded to think that this great man, who is a much revered and learned priest would tell, write or act against reality, detrimental to his position and status. We grieve and wonder seeing that some newspapers, here, are publishing false allegations against him. We do not know how much truth there is in hearing that Archbishop Mar Ivanios has sent a big memorandum to the Viceroy, which contains serious complaints that the Travancore government is an enemy to the Christians and it does not accord sanction to construct churches in this state and also that it obstructs Christian propagation and growth and that it is not encouraging Christians by providing government jobs and that, the memorial has now reached the political agent here. It has become difficult for us to believe that a much respected and learned Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Ivanios would be prepared to project a combination of unreal and baseless falsehood and foist stories to frighten the Travancore government with such tricks and illusions. Only when the enquiry and evidence collection by the political agent about the memorial is complete, will we be able to understand who owns its patronage, the archbishop or the archdevil. Therefore, it is declared loudly that until it is proved beyond doubt that the Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Ivanios and the archdevil who is the originator of the said memorial is one and the same person, '*Vidushakan*' is not prepared to misunderstand the archbishop or to believe such news published and declared beating drums by the newspapers (*Vidushakan*, *Meenam* 1110)

What Shall the Archbishop Do?

In a letter addressed to Colonel Garstin who took charge as the successor of Colonel Field as the political agent of Travancore-Kochi

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(Tirukochi) the archbishop has specifically stated about what he had done in the matter. The relevant portion of the said letter is given below.

Thiruvanthapuram

4 April 1935

Dear Colonel Garstin,

When you reach Thiruvanthapuram on your visit, you are likely to hear that an archbishop of Travancore has sent a memorial to the respected viceroy. It may be a memorial about the refusal of sanction for Christian churches by the government of Travancore. Without mentioning my name, it is said in some newspapers that I was the originator of the said memorial. But the truth is that I have not even thought of sending a memorial to the Viceroy.

I hope that you have come to know about what I have done in the matter. The Archieparchy of Thiruvanthapuram has been established recently by His Holiness the pope. The Catholics of this archdiocese are reunited from the Jacobite Church, and as they are desirous of attending Sunday liturgy, churches are highly essential. But all the twenty six applications I have sent recently to the government of Travancore requesting sanction to establish churches were rejected. Of them twenty applications were sent within the last fourteen months.

I called on Shri Kunjan Pillai who was the Chief Secretary of Travancore and showed him a list of all the rejected applications. In addition to that, I visited, in person, the Dewan, the administrative authority of Travancore and talked to him explaining the difficulties faced by the Christians here, about the construction of churches. These difficulties are not only for the Archieparchy, but applicable to all Christians in Travancore. I also gave a letter to the Dewan containing a request to re-examine all the rejected applications. In addition to that I requested him to withdraw the order issued to prosecute my suffragan bishop His Excellency Mar Theophilos and two priests under

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me. Since no information was received in this connection either from the Chief Secretary or from the Dewan I have sent a reminder to the Dewan, subsequently.

Recently during my visit and conversation with your predecessor Colonel Field I made a mention of this matter. Also, I handed over to him copies of letters which I had sent to the Dewan. In the said letter, I have only stated the difficulties of Christians in the construction of church buildings. Apart from that, there were no references to political matters. As you know, I live much distanced from political matters. In my letters to the Dewan I have extolled the religious tolerance shown by the kings of Travancore and especially by His Majesty the present Maharaja. As I have stated about this in my conversation with you, even now we have a very good impression about the administration. I am very confident that if matters relating to these things are submitted for his attention, immediate redressal of these types of religious complaints can be obtained ..."

Yours sincerely,

Mar Ivanios

(Metropolitan of Thiruvanthapuram)

It is clear in this letter that Mar Ivanios had not sent any memorial to the Viceroy against the Maharaja of Travancore or against the Dewan. As and when this news became public, the editors and journalists who wrote editorials and journals saying "Archbishop is seditious and he should be arrested and punished immediately", became silent



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Chapter 15

CELEBRATIONS OF SIR CP'S 60TH BIRTHDAY AND THE SPEECH

It was getting impossible for two persons constantly at loggerheads to remain in the capital city at the same time. Both Sir CP and Archbishop Mar Ivanios were quite decided on making the other flee from the city. It was elaborated in the previous chapter how Mar Ivanios had attempted to bring an end to the rule of Sir CP with the aid of the British government. Almost similar in magnitude were the efforts of Sir CP to evict the archbishop from the two properties occupied by the latter as explained earlier. It was in this period of mutual fear that Sir CP made the following comment –"If I ought to fear anyone in Travancore, it would be none other than Archbishop Mar Ivanios, for he is so shrewd and influential an administrator."

Efforts towards a Truce

Understanding the gravity of the situation, many selfless well-wishers of Sir CP and of Archbishop Mar Ivanios took initiative to bridge the gap. Taking into account the future of the archdiocese, many priests and elite laity requested the archbishop to enter into a friendly relationship with the Dewan. Some religious heads in Kerala too gave counsel to the archbishop in this regard. His Excellency Rt Rev. Dr Francis Vazhapilly, the then Bishop of Thrissur, asked Justice A Philipose to meet the archbishop as soon as he reaches Trivandrum and explain that it would be best to maintain a healthy relationship with the ruling government. He also made it clear that bad blood with the Dewan could only mean trouble. Mr Philipose came to Trivandrum and conveyed the matter with due importance. In the same manner,

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CP's well-wishers also implored him to maintain a healthy relationship with Archbishop Mar Ivanios. Thus taking into account various opinions from numerous thinkers and selfless people, both persons of eminence were awaiting for a favourable situation.

60th Birthday Celebrations

It was during these days that Sir CP turned sixty. As a result of the efforts put in by certain people with vested interests and by the disciples of Sir CP his birthday was celebrated in various parts of Travancore. Meetings were organised at various corners to honour Sir CP through felicitations and presentation of citations and garlands, irrespective of caste or creed. Many groups including the Syrian Catholics and members of the Marthoma Church were reluctant to do so. Efforts were in progress behind the stage to make the Syrian Catholics also celebrate this occasion. Mr Joseph Kunjupadiyara who was then a resident of Trivandrum and an intimate friend of Sir CP took initiative in this regard. A committee consisting of certain prominent figures of the Syrian Catholic community in Trivandrum was formed.

It was decided to conduct the celebrations in the premises of the Archbishop's House and the same was informed to the archbishop. The archbishop granted consent for this as he himself was waiting for an opportunity to be in good terms with the Dewan. Thus on 15 November 1939 Sir CP was offered a grand welcome which was followed by a felicitation meeting. Thousands of dignitaries attended the function including the Metropolitans of Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram, Bishops of Changanacherry and Thiruvananthapuram, His Excellency Mar Severios, who was the administrator of Tiruvalla, His Excellency Mar Dioscoros, Vicar Generals, Prior General of the Kerala Carmelite community, judges of the high court, advocates and elite among the laity. After the welcome speech, congratulatory speeches and offering of the citation, Sir CP gave a scholarly reply to the toast in which he lauded the Catholic Church, the leader of the Church, the pope, and the saints of the

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Catholic Church. The same speech was then broadcasted in different languages by the Vatican Radio.

Kerala Varma Valiya Koi Thampuran, who was present at the meeting, laid the foundation stone for a new school. This is the St Mary's High School, which is still being run effectively. It is a notable fact that all classes from preparatory to the sixth grade were begun on the same day adding yet another record to the educational history of Travancore.

The Vatican Broadcast

The speech of Sir CP was broadcasted in various languages like Italian, English, French, Spanish and German. After giving a brief report of the reception accorded to the Dewan at the Archbishop's House the Vatican Radio described the relationship between the Throne and the State of Travancore as described.

Foreword

It is a well known fact that a cordial relationship had always existed between the royal family of Travancore and the Holy Roman Throne. The recent visit paid by His Highness the King of Travancore and the members of the Royal Family to the Pontiff had further strengthened this relationship. This relationship that was maintained for so long had been strengthened when the capital city was made the head quarters of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and a subject of His Highness the King himself was appointed the first archbishop of the same by His Holiness the pope.

The Catholic Church under the reign of the Holy Father remains forever a member of the global culture, protecting the cause of social justice and in obedience of the true abode of power. The Papal Throne has always been keen in service all through these centuries in the social and cultural revival of humanity and in the establishment of peaceful and amiable co-existence. The relationship that developed recently between Thiruvananthapuram and the Papal Throne would definitely be an impetus to the further development of the country.

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It was with such a statement that the speech of Sir CP was relayed by the Vatican radio. The scholarly words of Sir C P reflecting on the Papal Throne, the Catholic community and the Catholic saints are given below.

Sir CP's Speech

Most Rev. bishops, respected fathers, ladies and gentlemen!

"... Sirs, I have been a diligent student of your ecclesiastical history and an admirer of the papacy as an institution that subserves to the general human craving for authority and direction in the conduct of life. I am a devoted adherent of my faith, but I have held it to my duty to study reverently all that has been achieved by your Church in the making of the ancient and modern world. Those of you, friends, who may not be aware of the contribution that the Catholic Church has made to the human civilisation, may not also be aware of the manner in which that Church has stood throughout the ages for stability, for strength, and for faith and charity. It was your great Redeemer that said on a memorable occasion to Simon Bar Jona who called Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church"; and the church built by Peter and strengthened by Paul has continued with growing strength, with undiminished vigour, unto this day.

Most Rev. Sirs, you have alluded to the visit paid by his Highness the Maharaja to the Vatican. I had the good fortune of having known His Holiness the pope (Pius XI) in another capacity when he was bishop, before he translated into papacy. It was therefore with special gratification and with respect that I approached him. The kindliness of his reception, the extreme interest he took

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in his spiritual adherents in Travancore and the manner in which he extended his support to His Highness, was beyond all praise; and neither His Highness nor those who accompanied His Highness can forget what I would venture to call the historic journey to Rome, the historic interview. His Holiness was great in physical hardihood, for he was one of the great mountaineers of Europe, and he was mountaineer in another sense also; he was mountaineer of thought and he was a stabilising influence.

These are the days when we are face to face with many perils, face to face with attempts to subvert authority, face to face with the reshaping and remodelling of ideals – old ideals are crumbling and aggression is assuming a defiant and all-devouring attitude. We do not know the future. Therefore, statesment, administrators, rulers and common men keep their head cool and fight for the right and have faith and charity, the issue would be dismal. You, Sirs, represent what may be called dyke or bund, checking the torrent of communism and all those influences destructive of society, and the goodwill that should unite all communities and races and which depends on charity and tolerance. St Paul in his first epistle to the Corithians spoke thus of charity: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

That should be our guiding rule in this world; it is incumbent on us to cultivate the spirit of charity, the spirit of tolerance for those who differ in religion, in politics, charity and tolerance in those many relationships of man

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with man, and man with the humbler creatures of the world; without such charity and tolerance this world would be a difficult place to live in. And, in the translation into actual practie of faith and hope, and of charity, what is needed is an organisation, a strong, well-knit organisation tending to unity, tending to strength which is born of that unity. If the Catholics typify anything, if Catholicism means anything, signifies anything, it means, it signifies such organisation, close-knit fellowship, union.

The history of Catholicism is wonderful. Its leaders have been makers of miracles in many ways. It is not for me, Sirs, to refer to the great popes, to personages like Pope Innocent II and Pope Leo XII. But, just at this juncture, I think it is my duty to refer to two or three great men who have profoundly influenced the Catholic faith and practice. One of them is St Benedict; he brought into the world the ideal of social service, the combination of manual labour and agricultural work with study and devotional exercises, what amounted to the union of self-abnegation with actual social service amongst the poor and the lowly. Work of another type was done by the great Revivalist St Francis of Assissi who emphasised by himself and through his fraters minores, love for children, animals and flowers, that all-embracing love which has made the work of St Francis of Assissi an abiding possession of humanity apart from the religious aspect of his work. Then came sterner men like St Dominic and Ignatius of Loyola for whom the pope issued the Bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* that originated the great Jesuit Order. The Catholic saints have always been the exemplars of learning, faith, charity and social service in the extreme degree. That has been their history; and – you not only have ancient examples – from St Peter and St Paul, through SS Augustine, Benedict and Francis,

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Pope Innocent III and Leo XIII down to Cardinal Newman. The spirit is the same amongst those now living – I shall not mention names...[1]

The Providence of God

His Grace with the intention to construct the Archbishop's House and to stay there, bought a few acres of land and a building with a few rooms at Saravanakunnu and stayed there for one and half years. However, as stated above, due to the hostility of Sir CP the dream of His Grace did not come true; the archbishop and the priests had to vacate the building and shift their residence to the land and building newly bought. Who knows the course of destiny! It was the will of God that the See of Mar Gregorios, the successor of Mar Ivanios, should be at Saravanakunnu itself.

After evicting the archbishop from Saravanakunnu, a few government institutions were established there. However, all those ended in failure. When the land and the buildings were in a dilapidated condition, a religious congregation from France reached Trivandrum to open an institution of theirs in Kerala. They bought the four acres of land and the old building and set up their residence there. While they were living there for a few years, due to some reason, they had to abandon the institution. With it, Archbishop Mar Gregorios, successor of Mar Ivanios, got that land and building for the archieparchy. Following this, Mar Gregorios, built a beautiful building there and transferred his See there in 1969. From where Mar Ivanios had to leave sadly, to that place itself, his successor could joyfully enter; such is destiny! It is God's providence that the author of this book could sit in the same building where Mar Ivanios lived and write his biography!

*

[1] Quoted from a Souvenir published on the occasion.

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Chapter 16

THE REUNION OF TWO METROPOLITANS

It had been described in detail in the first part of this book how Mar Ivanios had attempted the reunion with the Catholic Church together with all the bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church. But when these efforts could not be successfully completed it caused much mental agony for Mar Ivanios. Still he was satisfied that he was able to reunite many priests and ten thousands of people in a short span of time. As a result of his continued efforts he could bring two eminent bishops to the Catholic Church. The two were Mar Severios, the Metropolitan of Niranam of the Orthodox Church (Bishop's Party) and Mar Dioscoros, the Metropolitan bishop of Knanaya Jacobite Church (Patriarch's Party). This chapter intends to include the brief biographies of these two Metropolitans.

Metropolitan Mar Severios

(Biography)

- **Childhood and Education**

He was born at Mallappally in Tiruvalla Thaluk, in the prestigious family of Valakuzhy on 7 April 1899 as the son of Oommen and Accamma. Though he was christened with the name, Joseph he came to be known as Iypachan from his early childhood onwards. He resembled both his father and mother. It was noticeable even from his childhood that his personality was a mixture of selflessness, innocence, fellow feeling, and sincerity.

He completed his primary school education from MD School

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and CMS Middle school. In the year 1912, on 15 April, he was ordained deacon at the Kottayam Cheriya Pally. The parishioners took an interest in him due to the character-culture that shone forth in him, his smartness, and service-mindedness. Then he continued to stay at the Old Seminary in Kottayam to pursue his studies at MD High school. At that time, reverend Fr PT Geevarghese was the principal of the school and Mr KV Chacko, a native of Mallapally, was the headmaster of the school. His stay at the Old Seminary and his companionship with Metrapolitan Vattasseril Mar Divannasios who was his maternal uncle helped him in attaining more knowledge and interest in the spiritual matters of the Church. The principal of MD Seminary showed special love and concern and gave him special prizes for his good conduct.

- **Higher Education and Priestly Ordination.**

After High School education, he joined SPG College in Trichinopoly for two years in order to pursue his higher education. Afterwards as per the advice of the then Serampore College professor MA Achan (Mar Ivanios), he joined the same college for BA and procured his graduation. During this period when he stayed with MA Achan he was thoroughly inspired in matters related to faith and spirituality. After his graduation, he worked as a teacher in Tiruvalla MG High School for a few years. On 8 January 1929, he was ordained as a priest. After that, he successfully served as a high school teacher and as parish priest of Pathikkattu church.

On 17 April 1932 Fr Joseph was raised to the position of ramban by the Malankara Catholicos and the same Catholicos himself ordained Ramban Joseph as bishop in Tiruvalla Bethany Church on 25 May. From then onwards he came to be known as Joseph Mar Severios. After the Episcopal ordination, he resided at Parumala Seminary and governed the Eparchy of Niranam Parish. He efficiently administered the Eparchy of Niranam and commanded the respect of all.

- **Catholic Reunion**

During this period, he used to engage in several activities against the

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Catholic Church. Through the Reunion Movement, thousands of people from the Orthodox Church, especially from the Eparchy of Niranam, embraced the Catholic Church. This troubled him very much. In order to prevent this exodus he organized various conferences at various parts of the Eparchy. And in these meetings he made several people speak against the Catholic Church. Besides, he himself delivered several speeches of this kind. For this purpose, he continued to read many catholic books. This enabled him to come to the conviction that the Church that Lord Jesus had founded on the rock that is St Peter is the Catholic Church.

Earlier itself as part of his search for truth, his elder brother Mr VO Varghese had embraced the Catholic Church. In order to attract the Most Reverend Bishop to the Catholic Church he used to persuade him continuously. On 9 October 1937, Mr Varghese received a letter from the Bishop which contained the following lines. "At present I have nothing else to say; I am reflecting prayerfully without any prejudices." Following this, Mr Varghese had arranged a secret meeting with Bishop Mar Ivanios. Thus, the confidential meeting happened. During that time, he came to know more about the Church from his old *guru* (teacher) and spiritual father Mar Ivanios. This resulted in his firm decision to embrace the Catholic Church neglecting unfavourable circumstances and listening to the voice of his conscience. Thus, afterwards under the guidance of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, the following letter was prepared and sent to the Holy Father, from the Parumala Seminary.

- **The Letter Sent to the Pope.**

Travancore
31-10-1937.

Holy Father,

First of all, I humbly bow before your holy throne in reverence and veneration. I, who am governing the Eparchy of Niranam, am a Metropolitan of the Jacobite

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Church. By the blessing of the loving Lord, I am now fully convinced of God's will, that I should live in communion and obedience to the Holy Father, the true successor of St Peter, the head of the Apostles. Therefore, I humbly request Your Holiness to accept me kindly.

I sent this humble request to the Holy Father through my beloved teacher and now the Metropolitan-Archbishop of Trivandrum, His Grace Mar Ivanios. By bowing my head before the Holy Father, I assure you that I will serve Jesus Christ all my life through my obedience to you.

Craving for the blessings of the Holy Father,

Yours humble and obedient son in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Sd/-

Mar Severios

Metropolitan

A letter sent to Moran Mar Baselios Catholicos from Parumala is attached herewith.

- **Letters Sent to the Catholicos**

May it please Your Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Catholicos!

Whenever we had discussions between ourselves and with the bishops about the history, the present condition and the future of the Jacobite Church and the Orthodox Church, over which you preside over, your disappointment was evident. The only divine solution for that problem, in my humble opinion, which comes from the sincere conviction of my heart, is the reunion with the throne of St Peter in Rome, the centre of the Christian Church, the common centre of authority founded by God.

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With the grace of God and the vehement persuasion of my conscience, this conviction has engrossed me. Because of such divine guidance and the guidance of my conscience, I bow before the authority of the Pope and I wish to reunite with the Catholic Church. Since I am constantly overpowered by such divine intervention I consider it not fair to be the Metropolitan of the Eparchy of Niranam, which belongs to the Orthodox Church. Therefore, I have give up the responsibility of the same.

Nowadays atheism and irreligiousness are gaining strength more than ever before. I strongly believe that only the Catholic Church and the Apostolic Throne of the Pope can capably fight against the above said forces, and thereby spread, and sustain the faith in God in the entire world. Your Beatitude is one whom I love and respect in abundance. I am greatly concerned about my fellow bishops, all reverend priests who were till now under my authority and the common folk. I do not think that I am going to be separated from you all, because I am being reunited with the Catholic Church. I pray before God Almighty, who lead men through proper thinking, to bring Your Beatitude, my most reverend brother bishops and all priests and people into communion with the Pontiff, who is anointed by God as the Head of the Holy Catholic Church which is the real vineyard of Jesus Christ on this Earth, and into the obedience of the holy throne without any further delay.

What deep veneration and respect His Grace Most Rev. Metropolitan Mar Ivanios, who is now the Archbishop of Trivandrum, enjoyed in our community, before he reunited with the Catholic Church in the year 1930! But when he reunited with the Catholic Church, the eminent personalities of our community instigated

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people not to follow him by any means and therefore spread many untruthful and unjust accusations. This has pained my heart since then.

My gratitude is due to Your Beatitude forever for all the love and care that you bestowed on me. Though I am being separated from Your Beatitude in ecclesial matters, personally, I am very close to you. I believe that Your Beatitude has the strong conviction that I would not have dared this separation if I were not guided by God and by conscience. It would have been really a fortune for us, and glory to God, if Your Beatitude, my most reverend brother Bishops and all non-Catholics of Kerala could enter the same ship in which I enter now. Your Beatitude is entrusted with the great responsibility of the spiritual protection of yourself and all those who are under your authority. I strongly believe that the worry that Your Beatitude, the bishops, and the people have owing to my decision taken thoroughly based on the work of the grace of God and the vehement persuasion of my conscience, is merely temporary and that you all will soon realize the true path and will follow the same. I fervently pray for that.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

Mar Severios

Metropolitan

Parumala,

31-10-1937.

After writing these letters, he gave up everything under his custody that belonged to the Orthodox Church to the Parumala Seminary which was his residence. He took with him just one box with the things for

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the Holy Qurbono and left for Trivandrum. After that on 23 November 1937 he made the profession of faith before Archbishop Mar Ivanios and embraced the Catholic Church.

- **Administration of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla**

During this period Bishop Mar Theophilus who was the Bishop of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla became unwell to carry on the administration of the Eparchy. As a result, Mar Severios was appointed the Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla by the Holy See giving him all the powers of a bishop. On 20 November 1938, he took charge of the administration of the Eparchy.

He was appointed the Bishop of the Eparchy in 1950. Thus, he rendered 16 years of praise worthy service to the Eparchy of Tiruvalla. On 22 April 1954 Bishop Mar Athanasios was ordained his Auxiliary Bishop at Tiruvalla. In the administration of the Eparchy, he constantly consulted Archbishop Mar Ivanios, and took his opinions and suggestions in matters related to the Eparchy. He was able to establish many churches, high schools, middle schools, primary schools and convents in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla. Besides, he had the fortune of bringing many priests and thousands of the laity to the Catholic faith.

- **Death and Burial Ceremony**

His Grace Most Rev. Joseph Mar Severios passed away on Tuesday 18 January 1955 at 7.45 pm at the Marygiri Bishop's House in Tiruvalla at the age of 56. This happened quiet unexpectedly one hour after he returned from his visit to Palghat with regard to some mission activity. Bishop Mar Gregorios, who was engaged in a parish visit came to know about this bereavement and came to the Bishop's House at 5.30 am on Wednesday and offered the Holy Qurbono for the repose of his soul. Afterwards the Metropolitan of Changanacherry offered Pontifical Holy Qurbono. Many came to express their condolences including Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Metropolitan of Niranam, the Anglican bishop and other bishops, eminent persons of the community, political leaders and many thousands of people. On

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Wednesday evening, the Bishop of Tuticorin delivered a funeral speech in Tamil.

The burial ceremony started at 7 am on Thursday. *Triqurbono*[1] was offered by Bishop Mar Gregorios of the Archieparchy of Trivandrum, Bishop Mar Athanasios, Auxilliary Bishop of Tiruvalla and the Very Rev. Cheppattu Ramban Philipose. Afterwards Dr Mathew Kavukattu, Metropolitan of Chanaganachery gave a funeral oration. Followed by that was the *nagarikanikkal* (funeral procession) taking the mortal remains through the city after which they returned to the Cathedral. Later at the North side of the altar the body of the bishop was buried. Bishops from all Catholic dioceses, reverend priests and nuns and a sea of faithful from all over Kerala attended the funeral procession and burial ceremony.

- **Funeral Speech**

The following are extracts of the funeral speech by Archbishop Mar Mathew Kavukattu at the burial ceremony of Mar Sevarios.

> Bishop Mar Severios was a beloved disciple of the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios. He had great concern, respect and love for his teacher. In 1930 after reuniting with the Catholic Church Archbishop Mar Ivanios might have wished his dear disciple to follow him and might have advised him on this. But in the name of his love and respect for his *guru* he was not ready to give up what he firmly he firmly believed in. He did not hesitate to protest with all his might against the movement that was started by his most loved and respected Metropolitan Mar Ivanios. But in his prayerful spirit, in the light shed by God, he continued to learn the matters related to the Catholic Church. After seven years of sincere research

[1] *Munninmel Qurbono*, Holy Qurbono offered in unison by three priests on three altars

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The Archbishop in his official dress

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Archbishop Mar Severios



Bishop Mar Dioscoros

and prayers he was convinced that, he should also follow the same path opened by his respected *guru*. That was his strong determination. Nobody could deter him from that decision. It was not out of any urge for power but out of sincere learning and prayer that the call from his conscience resulted and that led him to give up the Church in which he was born and his favourite surroundings. Looking at it physically he knew that it was going to be a journey of hardships. But he could perceive the everlasting goodness that was waiting for him in spite of the darkness that covered him temporarily. He got courage from his confidence that he would reach there and he pledged that he would somehow reach his destination. Because of this hope, his heart did not waver in the face of any hindrance or temptation. His voice did not quiver and his feet did not falter. He got reunited with the Catholic Church in 1937. After one year, he took charge of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla which had a growth of only 4 to 5 years, from Bishop Mar Theophilos. He earnestly worked for the growth and prosperity of the Eparchy.

He worked hard for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls without any rest. And God blessed him for his service. As St Paul says, it was not by enticing words but by the power of the Spirit, that his efforts became fruitful...

Metropolitan Mar Dioscoros

A brief life history of Bishop Mar Dioscoros, the only metropolitan of the Jacobite Knanaya (Southist) Church and the reasons for his reunion are given below.

- **Life History**

Born in 1883, he hailed from renowned Jacobite Knanaya parents of the Ottathaikkal family at Chingavanam, Kottayam. After his high

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school education at the age of 18, he received diaconate from the Jacobite Metropolitan Mar Divannasios and at the age of 28 he received priestly ordination from Bishop Mar Severios. In 1926 at Jerusalem, he was ordained the Auxilliary Bishop of Metropolitan Edavazhikkal Mar Severios by His Beatitude Patriarch Ignathios Elias, the Head of the Jacobite Church. In 1927 after the expiry of Mar Severios he took charge of the Kerala Jacobite Knanaya Church. For the next 10 years residing at Chingavanam Bishop's House he rendered praiseworthy service as the Metropolitan of the Knanaya Church. Following this, because of his search for truth of a few years, he decided to reunite with the Catholic Church and did the necessary correspondence. Thus on 12 November 1939 he reached Trivandrum and made the profession of faith before Archbishop Mar Ivanios and reunited with the Catholic Church. Then for the next four years, he resided in a building at Thirumoolapuram in Tiruvalla in prayer and ascetic practice. On 21 February 1943, at the age of 60, he passed away. With Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Most Rev. Mar Severios as chief celebrants and in the presence of a lot of priests, nuns and laity, his mortal remains were laid to rest in a special tomb that was built near the chapel at Thirumoolapuram.

- **Reasons for the Reunion**

The bishop used to mention several times that the main inspiration for him to embrace the Catholic Church was his two brothers who joined the Catholic Church long before the commencement of the Reunion Movement. The following are extracts taken from a feature that came in *Satyadeepam* written by Shri Ottathaikkal Kuttappan who was his brother, detailing the above matter.

Catholic Reunion

> Everyone who know my brother, Bishop Thoma Mar Dioscoros will agree with the fact that he was innocent, kind and morally upright. As he was sincere

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and childlike, we his elder brothers, myself and Advocate Cherian, expected to bring him to the Catholic Church easily. Once, both of us approached him with this intention. In that argument, he could not prove himself right rationally, evidentially or historically. At that time, he became angry and asked us not to utter a word in this regard. Immediately, Advocate Cherian fell at his feet sobbing with the words, "Your Excellency you are drifting away from the right path. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul".

The scene thus ended. With mental agony, both of us left the Bishop's House. After that, we never had a talk with the bishop about ecclesial matters.

One day as usual on my way back from the Holy Qurbono at the Catholic church, the bishop clapped his hands and beckoned me from the Bishop's House and I went to him. He gave orders to his secretary that, as he was engaged in a conversation with Kuttappan on the issue of the Church, he did not want to be disturbed. "Is there any hindrance to being saved if one remained in the Jacobite Church" came the bishop's first question. I replied saying, "Yes, there is. It was this conviction that made me leave Your Excellency and my brethren to join the Catholic Church in spite of the protest and troubles that came my way". Moreover, in the discourse that continued it was affirmed that the Holy Father in Rome is the *Ris* Patriarch (Chief Patriarch) and that Jesus Christ will lead the Catholic Church till eternity by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The four notes of the Church are realised only in the Catholic Church. Thus, His Excellency lost his peace of heart leading to fear and shock. This was because my arguments were acceptable to him too.

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"Come, what may! I have made up my mind to join the Catholic Church," he acceded.

I came out of the meeting overwhelmed and satisfied. I met with Bishop Choolaparambil, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, and Bishop Mar Sevarios and consulted with them. Things progressed successfully. At midnight, my brother Advocate Cherian and I reached the Chingavanam Bishop's House and the bishop was already prepared. A priest and the servant Michael were ready to start with the bishop. We came out and locked the Bishop's House. In the silence of that night, we proceeded with serenity at heart and mirth in spirit towards the Catholic Church. Rev. Fr Chittakattu from Tiruvalla had reached there with a car. Rev. Fr Ooralil, Fr Karavatt and we sent him to Trivandrum. Thus on 12 November 1939, Bishop Dioscoros reunited with the Holy Church. According to the advice of the Bishop the crosier, *mudithoppi* (coronet), the hand cross and books that were at my house were returned to the trustee of the Jacobite Church as per the list and receipts. (*Sathyadeepam*, 26 March 1956).



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Chapter 17

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

As an eminent educationalist, a philanthropist and a scholar, Archbishop Mar Ivanios has rendered boundless service to the educational progress of this country. His activities as the principal the MD Seminary High School and as a professor at Serampore College, after the completion of MA degree from the Madras University in 1907 have been dealt with in the first part of this book. The correspondence he made on educational matters, the pastoral letters issued by him and the speeches he delivered were rich in ideas. He established many primary schools and high schools at Travancore and Kochi. Above all, Mar Ivanios College of Trivandrum remains his perpetual memorial. He had also served as the Chairman of the Faculty for Oriental Languages in Madras and Travancore Universities. Before going into detail about such activities I intend to discuss what real education is and who has the responsibility to implement it.

Proper Education

Real education is the all-round development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers of a human being. Nation and religion have equal roles in it. No one can question the role of the nation in determining the secular development of its citizens. In order to study language, history, geography, mathematics, etc. one has to attain mental discipline. Physical education helps to maintain health. Those who do not do these cannot lead the life of the real citizens of the nation. Therefore, there is no doubt that the political authorities should seriously encourage education, and generously help and control it properly. But the spiritual element in each man too should be given due importance. The development of the spiritual element needs proper guidance and this

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is the responsibility of religion. If that responsibility is not carried out properly, it will be considered a serious dereliction of duty.

For those who respect and revere their religion, can never ignore the religious education of their children. The institutions managed by the government will be secular in nature. Secular nations can only run such schools. The call to nationalize schools means the secularization of education. This differs from ideals of true education. Therefore, the nationalization of schools is an idea unacceptable to the educationalists.

Unacceptable Educational Reforms

The government had issued two reforms against the private school managements at the time of the archbishop. They were the Primary School Nationalization Programme implemented by the then Dewan of Travancore, Sir CP and the other one was the Secondary School Educational Programme by Shri Panampalli Govinda Menon, chief minister of Thiru-Kochi. The archbishop vehemently fought against these and at last, victory was his. In another chapter, the Panampally Programme is mentioned, so an attempt is made here to outline the programme implemented by Sir CP.

Primary School Nationalisation Programme

It was the scheme of Sir CP to hinder the educational development of Christians in Travancore, especially of the Catholics. He decided to nationalize all primary schools as the first step to bring all the private schools under the control of the government and he sugar coated the whole programme claiming it was a policy to give free and compulsory education to everyone. Sir CP succeeded in passing the bill in spite of severe criticism by the members of the Shri Moolam Assembly and Shri Chithira State Council.

As a result of this, many private schools in Travancore were compulsorily taken over and brought under the control of the government. But the Christians of Travancore, especially the Catholics, were determined not to surrender their schools under any circumstance

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to the government. The main argument behind this attitude was the desire to give proper spiritual education to the next generation in a true Catholic environment. But all these arguments were rejected.

Sir CP started various measures to bring all the schools in Travancore under his control. As a result of this move Christians of Travancore started protests and sent signed resolutions to the Maharaja of Travancore and to the officials of the British government in India against the programmes of Sir CP. They also started to publish many articles and editorials in newspapers in India and abroad against Sir CP.

On this occasion, the representatives of the Travancore Christians arranged a protest meeting under the patronage of the Calcutta Anglican Bishop Dr Westcott and sent resolutions to high officials. Archbishop Mar Ivanios played a key role in arranging that meeting. All the Catholic Metropolitans and Bishops of India held a meeting in Bangalore under the guidance of the Indian Apostolic Delegate and prepared a memorandum to be sent to the government of Travancore. Mar Ivanios was assigned to deliver this to the Maharaja of Travancore. He handed over the memorandum to the Maharaja ignoring the threats of Sir CP. When the protests gained momentum, Sir CP declared that the denominational schools, that do not need any aid from the government, will be given sanction. But this was not acceptable to the Christian community and the protests continued.

Letter Given By Mar Ivanios

The representation given by the confederation of Indian bishops is given below

Archbishop's House
Thiruvananthapuram-4
26 October 1944

May it please Your Majesty!

As a member of the Standing Committee of the Catholic bishops, I would like to bring to your kind

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attention the circumstances that are given below which have led us to approach you with this letter.

1. The majority of the members in the state assembly are against the reorganization and nationalization of primary schools. They are of the belief that the government will accept their stand.

2. The stand of the government is against the religious and economic interests of the Catholics.

3. Our greatest fear is that the religious education given to our children during or after school hours may lead to the loss of grants.

4. To relieve these fears three prominent Catholic metropolitan bishops who exercise their authority in Travancore have submitted a memorandum to the government on their own behalf, and also representing the other nine Catholic bishops.

5. As a decision of the majority in the legislative assembly, the government is giving unnecessary importance to their claims. As a result the voice of the minority is not getting heard in this issue.

6. For Catholics, this is a matter of grave importance. So, this matter was given much concern in the Bangalore meeting of the Indian Bishops' Conference. As we have great belief in your jurisdiction the conference has assigned me, the Metropolitan of Trivandrum, to deliver this letter and bring this matter to your attention.

Let me humbly submit this before your noble self.

With regards and respect,

Mar Ivanios

Metropolitan of Trivandrum

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Speech by Sir CP

On 15 June 1945, Sir CP inaugurated his nationalization policy. A part of the speech made by him on that occasion is added here.

> It makes me happy that I was able to inaugurate the nationalization policy with the help of organizations like LMS, Salvation Army etc. The Catholics are going ahead with their protests. A representative of the *Catholic Herald* came to meet me and today I have met many Catholic leaders. I told them clearly that their protests are in the wrong path. They have published many articles against me in many British and American dailies and have approached the Viceroy and State Secretary and they are not ready for a compromise. The '*Madras Mail*' daily now stands completely for this issue and a whole page is dedicated to articles related to this issue. Many dailies from Bombay are also used for the protest. They have also sought the help of the communists and other political parties and they are trying to make it appear as the struggle of all Christian communities.
>
> They have sought the permission to submit a mass petition before the Maharaja. But the Maharaja will never accept this deputation. It's my request to my Catholic friends to approach the government in the established manner. If the LMS is ready to compromise why can't the Catholics? Do not think that you can change the government policy by threatening. A friendlier approach or a compromise will bring great benefits to the Catholic community. Let them approach through the proper channels; otherwise, they will not be taken into consideration. I hope that they will recognize that it is futile to protest against me. I request once again to my Catholic friends to approach the government through the proper channels.

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All these protests want me to be removed from this position. But I will never resign due to these protests. The argument of the Catholics is that they want complete control over their educational institutions and they think of it as their right. They are holding protests all over the world for this.

Every community has the right to establish schools. But the government is of the opinion that it should have complete control over matters related to primary education. To provide basic education to all children is now the responsibility of the government. When the government takes control of primary education of all children, there arises the question, whether the government should provide grants for denominational schools. So whatever be the argument the consideration of the matter will happen only when they are ready for a compromise.

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Kalachery

After this declaration by Sir CP, a letter to the faithful was published by the Bishop of Changanachery, Dr James Kalachery. He made clear with relevant examples the adverse effects of nationalization of primary schools. The letter logically argued and affirmed the evils against God, the mother and children and the decimation of the *guru* perpetrated through this. This made Sir CP furious and he sent a notice to Changanachery asking Bishop Kalachery to withdraw his accusation. But his Lordship responded with a letter which explained that his stand was right and that he would never consent to the decision of the Dewan. Sir CP took this reply as an insult. He was so infuriated that he decided to arrest Bishop Kalachery and an order was issued to arrest the Bishop and to send him to jail.

As soon as people came to know about this decision of Sir CP they started to gather in groups near the Changanachery Bishop's

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House. They decided to protect their spiritual father. But Bishop Kalachery was quite aloof in all this. He was not perturbed. Those who understood the seriousness of the situation were perplexed. What will happen if the police force of Sir CP set their feet in Changanachery to arrest the bishop? Lathi charge! Arrest! Shooting! Death! The warm blood of Catholics on the roads and the compound of the Bishop's House! The faithful fervently prayed for divine intervention to avert such a fierce situation.

Archbishop as a Mediator

Mar Ivanios who knew the mind of both was really worried of the existing tension and he decided to meet and convince the Dewan. He immediately made an appointment with Sir CP and made him aware of the adversities. A glimpse of his conversation with the Dewan is added here.

Bishops are the representatives of the Almighty. There are many people under their guidance and care. It is the duty of bishops to give them the needed instructions and guidance through pastoral letters and decrees. If the government authorities scrutinise and begin to take action on them, they will not have time to do anything else. It is impossible to issue all the instructions and articles related to the Church after consulting with the government officials. You should understand the tension in Changanachery. You cannot so easily arrest Bishop Kalachery and put him in prison. If a conflict takes place, you will not be able to arrest the bishop. If you try to use force it will lead to a fight between the people and the police. Then, by chance, if you succeed in arresting the bishop, it will create a negative impression about the Travancore government all around the world. This could lead to the intervention by the British government. So think well before you take action.

The archbishop's reasoned thinking and intelligent advice made Sir CP pensive. He replied, "OK, I will think it over and act on it." In

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reasoning and discussions held after that, he withdrew the foot set forward. Thus the details of a fight that would have taken place in Changanachery, which would have affected many thousands of people, were blotted out of the annals of the history of the kingdom of Travancore and the Kerala Christian Church. These words of the archbishop made Sir CP reconsider his decision.

Formation of Various Schools

During the 22 years of his life as an archbishop, Mar Ivanios played an important role in founding 78 primary schools, 18 middle schools, 15 high schools, 2 training schools and one college. Even though some of them are in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla, he was a key figure in their conduct and development. Mar Theophilos and Mar Severios of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla gave great importance to the advice of Mar Ivanios in matters related to education. For the school buildings, land and furniture he spent thousands of Rupees. When we recall that the archbishop began to build them up from nothingness, we esteem his philanthropic character, service mindedness, zeal for education, and untiring efforts.

There are many educational institutions in Kerala which are the result of the hard work of social leaders. But they all got immense help from the local people and from the community members. But this support was not there for Mar Ivanios. Many of his achievements are the results of great struggles. The greatest example of his foresight and dedication is the Mar Ivanios College in Trivandrum. He bought the land and imported the steel for the construction much before the actual commencement of the construction. The details of the college will be discussed in another chapter.



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Chapter 18

AMERICAN TOUR

During his lifetime, Mar Ivanios got the opportunity to visit foreign countries twice. By God's grace both the visits were successful. His visit to Europe in 1932, his meeting with the pope and the emperor, has been detailed in the three previous chapters. His second visit to a foreign land was to America, which lasted for a year. The important happenings during this one-year tour to America, Canada, and Australia are dealt with here. If his various visits, the speeches he delivered, the interviews he gave, the press statements he made etc. are collected and compiled, it would amount to another volume to be published like this. Hence, only a few important events and visits are included in this chapter.

Beginning of the Journey

Fr Joseph Vadakkekkuttu, the Secretary of His Grace gives an interesting account of the American tour of Archbishop Mar Ivanios that started from Thiruvananthapuram. It was published in the special issue of *Kahalam*. The following is an excerpt from it.

> On 26 May 1947, the Archbishop's House at Pattom was full of people from various walks of life. There were bishops, priests, advocates, farmers, teachers and students. All were excitedly talking about the tour. On one side preparations were going on and on the other the Archbishop was giving administrative instructions. The atmosphere was throbbing with energy and noise.
>
> The clock struck twelve. The archbishop is ready for the journey. We held a prayer in the chapel of the

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Archbishop's House. We started the journey to the airport in ten or twelve cars. He was given a farewell by the teachers and students of the English High School, Pattom, who stood on either side of the road waving to him. The procession reached Palayam and we prayed for the mercy of God almighty there at the St. Mary's Cathedral. We reached the airport at 12.45 pm. There were many people present to bid him farewell. Many photos were taken. The flight arrived. We entered the plane by 1.10. Our journey started and our flight was flying over the sea.

In America

We reached Bombay by air and stayed there for four days as the guest of the Bishop. On 5 June we set off to America in a flight of the Trans World Alliance. We reached New York after travelling for 50 hours covering 8420 miles and also landing in the airports of many countries like Bahrain, Libya, Cairo, Algiers, Madrid, Lisbon, Santa Maria, Newfoundland and Philadelphia. We stayed in New York as the guests of Cardinal Spellman for a few days. Then we travelled to Ottawa, the capital of Canada by train. The volunteers of the Eucharistic Congress received the archbishop and made the necessary arrangements for his stay in one of the best hotels there.

The Ottawa Congress

Ottawa is the most beautiful town in Canada and it is a centre of Catholics. Half the Canadians are Catholics and the rest of the population consists of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists and members of the United Church. There are ten Archdioceses and forty-five dioceses and seventy eight bishops in Canada.

The Eucharistic Congress, which started on 19 June 1947, lasted for three days. The arrangements there really impressed the archbishop. Many acres of land were transformed into a beautiful temporary church

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and meeting ground. More than 75000 people attended the Holy Mass. 84 priests were deputed to distribute the Holy Communion. On the last day 500 priests did this ministry. Prominent Government officials of Canada participated in the Congress. Not only from America, but people from all over the world came to attend the Congress. The Cardinals Spellman, Mooney and Mindszenty and thousands of priests were present. Eighty-five special trains were allotted for the smooth passage of visitors.

Opinion Regarding the Congress

Aetter, sent by Mar Ivanios, giving his opinion and experience regarding the Congress, to the Apostolic Delegate in India, Martin Lukas, is added here. His regard for the Congress is evident in this letter.

Canada

6 July 47

Your Excellency,

After stopping over in New York, we reached on time at Ottawa for the Congress. The arrangements there were perfect. I stayed in one of the best hotels there called 'Chateu Laurier' along with other cardinals and bishops. In Ottawa, in an open place, Holy Mass was offered continuously for 96 hours. The Cardinal of Toronto was the papal representative. There were 154 bishops and 9 cardinals from different parts of the world. Many thousands of priests and about three lakh people participated in the Congress. From the human community offered to the altar of the Queen of Peace, deep devotion and prayers for world peace were rising up to heaven. A statue of Mother Mary was brought to Ottawa from Cap-

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de-la-Medeleire, a famous holy place 224 miles away from there. The statue, on its way, visited many churches and places. In all those places Triduum was observed and thousands of people received the Holy Eucharist. One priest told me that in one parish 25000 people received the Holy Eucharist. In this way, the Eucharistic Congress was a great spiritual success. For me, it was an indescribable spiritual experience and a manifestation of deep devotion to God and to his Mother. In the Prayer book of the Malankara Rite, the Mother of God is known as "the Second Heaven." When cardinals and bishops heard this appellation of the Mother of God, they praised the concept and beauty of it. Everyone appreciated the Holy Qurbono celebrated in the Malankara rite.

I paid a visit to Lord Alexander, the Governor General of Canada. We spoke for more than half an hour. I also visited Prime Minister Mackenzie King and had a discussion for 45 minutes. I also visited the president of the Senate, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Members of the Parliament and many foreign diplomats in Canada. I could understand their interest in India. A few Members of the Parliament visited me and enquired about the present condition of India. I told them that India would remain in the British Commonwealth and would become a centre of world power. After visiting a few important places in Canada, I will soon leave for the United States.

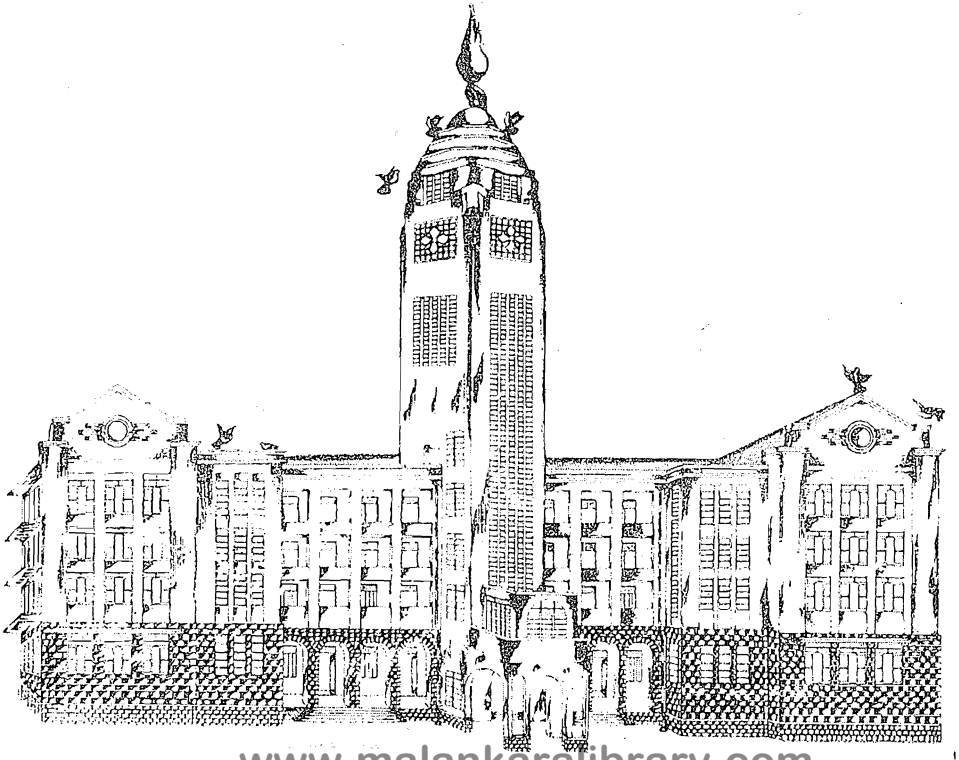
Yours faithfully

Sd/-

Mar Ivanios

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Mar Ivanios College - Main building

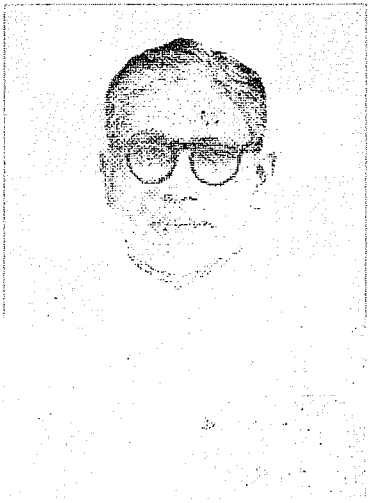


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The four Principals



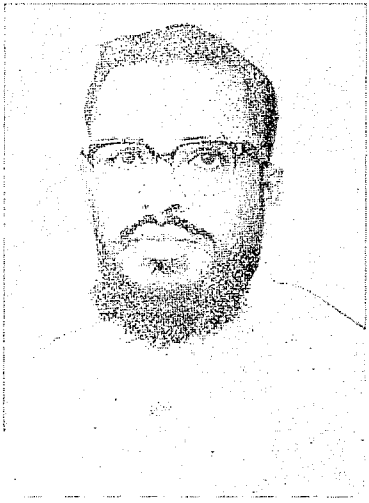
Fr Benedict OIC
(1941 - 1951)



Fr Thomas Nangachiveettil
(1951 - 1955)



Fr Francis Kalachery
(1955 - 1961)



Fr P T Geevarghese Panickar
(1961 -)

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On his visit to the United States of America, he met many important personalities. Some of the most important meetings are mentioned here.

Who Is This Bishop? From Where Did He Come?

The archbishop was travelling through the streets of New York. He saw that the place was beautifully decorated and wanted to know the reason. He alighted from the car and asked, "What is the matter?" They replied, "There was a reception for the Irish President, de Valera."

Archbishop	:	Where is he now?
Answer	:	(pointing to a huge building nearby) he is staying on the third floor.
Archbishop	:	Will I be able to see him now?
Answer	:	I do not think so. He is discussing some serious issues with our leaders.
Archbishop	:	"Oh, that's ok. Please give him this visiting card".

Saying so, he handed over to them his visiting card. It read: Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Trivandrum, India. The watchman of the building took the card to de Valera. He stood there hoping that the President will call him.

After a few moments de Valera came down and bowed in front of Mar Ivanios. Both parted after a few minutes' conversation. People who witnessed all this asked in wonder, "Who is this bishop? From where did he come?"

Visit to the UNO

The archbishop visited the UN buildings and he got a chance to see and understand the UN Assembly procedures. Fr Thomas Nangachiveettil mentions the details of this visit in a letter.

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I got the opportunity to visit the UNO along with the archbishop. When he entered the Assembly Hall Mr. Gromyko from Russia was vehemently criticizing America and Britain on the Czechoslovakian issue. For the next few minutes, everyone's attention was on the archbishop. When he came out after the assembly photographs were taken and he was asked questions related to his visit to the UNO and America.

Another meeting of interest was that of the Common Wealth Relations Minister Mr Noel-Baker. He came to know about the archbishop from newspapers and sent a message expressing his desire to meet him and we went to see him. Many photos were taken during the meeting and were published in many newspapers. Mr Noel requested him to visit England and to stay there for sometime as his guest.

The Daily News, a daily with a circulation of almost two crores, published the photograph of the archbishop under the title "The Most Photographed Person of the Year". Many other magazines including *Life* and *Time* also published details about his visit. Many people came to visit him after reading about him from newspapers. Many of them addressed him as, "A very great man from India and the greatest missionary of the 20th century". They also expressed their joy in meeting him, the key figure behind the Reunion Movement of 1930.

The Churches in India

Father Nangachiveettil continues in his letter thus: "Americans showed great interest to know about the formation of India's Ancient Church by St Thomas. Msgr MaCarthy said in a speech, "Mar Ivanios has made a mark in Christian history. It is my honour to talk about the

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Apostolic Church of Malabar. It was founded by St Thomas. They are fortunate to conduct their services in the holy language. They are using their mother tongue, Malayalam, for other religious activities which ensures the involvement of people in all the church activities. They have a unique and elegant heritage. To know the New Testament in its true sense one should know the language spoken by Christ and the Malakara Catholics are lucky in that respect"

Meeting with Truman

The archbishop also visited the President of America Mr. Truman. He was accompanied by Fr N A Thomas. The meeting was arranged by the American Ambassador to India, Mr Grady. The meeting lasted for about an hour. Truman was really impressed by the personality of the archbishop and paid great attention to his words.

The archbishop had done a study on ancient coins and he discussed the result of his research with Truman and others. He made clear with examples that Kerala had good trade relations with the Mediterranean countries in the ancient times. The first people who came for trade were Phoenicians. After them came the Jews. It is written in a travelogue. "They had naval centres at Tarshish and Hiram and many items like gold, silver, peacocks etc were being brought there". The archbishop proposed that these were from Kerala. He also said that the gold used in the construction of the temple of Solomon was from a place near Mavelikkara called Poovar. He also said that it is the same as the place called 'Ophir' mentioned in the Bible. He also entertained them with his stories on the temple of Jerusalem. They were reluctant to part with the archbishop (From *The Bethany Letters*).

Other Visits

He got the chance to visit many important buildings during the tour. Many of them were ranked the world's number one at that time. The details of those visits are added here in the hope that it will be interesting to the readers.

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I. **The Empire State Building**: It is a skyscraper with a height of 1350 ft and 106 floors. He visited the Empire State Building as the guest of its owners. He was taken to the 106th floor in the lift and it took only a minute to reach there. The archbishop enjoyed the view of the New York City through the telescope there. He also visited the "National Catholic Welfare Association" in the 85th floor. There was also a War Relief Service Office there. In 1944 a flight hit the building and in that accident many people were killed and three floors were destroyed.

II. **Most number of children**: He got the chance to meet many parents with a great number of children. He visited a couple who had 27 kids. There were many families with more than 13 children. He also met the Dionne kids also known as the Quintuplets. They are five girls born together in one birth. They are Cicily, Anette, Yvonne, Marie and Emilie. They have three sisters and four brothers. They were present during the Ottawa Congress and made people happy through their songs.

III. **Largest Missionary**: Maryknoll, a congregation of the religious in New York is one of the largest missionary communities in the world. It was founded in 1911 by Fr James Antony and Fr Thomas Frederick. The community consists of three groups – priests, nuns and brothers. They run many schools and hospitals all around the world.

IV. **The Largest Hotel**: He was invited for a party at the St George Hotel in Brooklyn. More than 750 guests were there and many including the Secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association felicitated the archbishop. It is the largest hotel in the world and has more than 4500 rooms.

V. **The Largest Archdiocese**: He stayed in New York as the guest of Cardinal Spellman, the cardinal of the largest archdiocese, the Archdiocese of New York. Cardinal Spellman has 6 auxiliary bishops. There are 7229 priests, 22597 nuns, 2222 brothers

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and more than 6 million believers. They have 33 universities, 6995 schools and 156 other institutions.

LLD Degree

The University of San Francisco awarded the archbishop an LLD degree. During the ceremony, the principal of the University made a speech and a part of it is included below.

> We joyfully salute you, the Metropolitan of Trivandrum, a famous son of the great Indian nation, a follower of St Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, a constant researcher of the renowned philosophic knowledge of his motherland, an earnest philosopher, hailing from the land of the sacred Ganges decorated by rich and ancient temples, making a pilgrimage to the dome-tower of St Peter that rests on the banks of the Tiber. He has also gained fame as the one who famously secured a Masters Degree from the University of Madras and as a professor of Economics and Syriac, the language of Jesus Christ, the Universal Master, at the University of Calcutta. He also heads a religious congregation dedicated to the cause of 'the Imitation of Christ'. An apostle who tried to be a link of love between the West and the East, he is also the Head of the ancient Malankara Church which received its recognition from Pope Pius XI and a good friend of Rabindranath Tagore, an apostle who bonded in love the East and the West and the greatest poet of his country. He attained nobility of character due to his spiritual and secular relationship with scholars from the East and West and due to his intense desire to serve God and human beings. He is heir to the glory of Robert De Nobili and Francis Xavier who shine bright even in the pages of the history of ancient India. He is a firm patriot and great scholar, a renowned Eastern philosopher anda famous theologian. He is our guest of honour today.

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> Just like the glad cries of *Oxios* that rose high into the air on 12 March 1933 when Your Grace was enthroned as the Archbishop of Trivandrum, today we at the University of San Francisco repeat the same for you, the interpreter who makes mercifully intelligible the ineffable divine aims of Christianity and who harmoniously unifies the cultures of the East and West. The president of the University of San Francisco with its administrative organs acting with the powers conferred by the State of California, do hereby honour the Metropolitan of Trivandrum, a resident of Travancore, India and member of the Order of the Imitation of Christ by conferring on him the title of 'Doctor of Laws' and all its rights and privileges.

Conferred in 1948 AD at the 93rd Anniversary of the University in San Francisco, California.

Australian Visit

The archbishop decided to return to India and on the way to meet the Pope in Rome. But he was invited by the Archbishop of Melbourne, Mannix to participate in the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. So, he altered his plan and went to Australia. He set off to Australia on 27 April 1948 along with Cardinal Spellman and Msgr Fulton Sheen and Msgr Thomas McMahon. On the 28 he reached Honolulu and on the 29 the Suva in Fiji Islands. From there he boarded the flight to Sydney. During the flight, he crossed the International Date Line and this lost him a day. He started his journey on Wednesday and instead of reaching there on Thursday, he reached there on Friday.

The Centenary Celebration

He received a warm welcome in Australia. The dailies published reports and photos regarding his visit. The Archbishop recorded his visit to Australia in a letter to the Apostolic Delegate in India.

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Your Excellency,

As per the invitation of Mannix, the Archbishop of Melbourne, to be a part of the centenary celebration of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, I travelled to Australia from the USA. I will return to India shortly.

The celebration was a great success. His Eminence Cardinal Spellman was here till the last day of the celebration. About one hundred thousand Catholics attended the Eucharistic adoration and blessing at night in the Coalfield Race Course. It is said that about twenty thousand Catholics had to return disheartened from the Coalfield Race Course as they did not get a place inside. The celebrations lasted for one week. Yesterday was the concluding day of the celebration.

Cardinal Spellman offered the Pontifical Mass at the exhibition hall. More than twenty-five thousand Catholics participated in it. His Eminence Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney gave the homily at the Holy Mass. His Eminence was welcomed at a banquet in Canberra hosted by the Prime Minister.

The former Prime Minister of Ireland, Mr de Valera is here. He took part in the celebration,

After a one-month stay in Australia, he started his journey to India on 8 June 1948 in a ship. He wrote about this to his friend Mr Albert Louis:

I started my journey from Perth in a ship called 'Sthrath Shen' at 5 pm on 8 June. I am writing this letter from the ship. The supper in the ship was excellent. At that time, a huge storm blew across the ocean. As a result, plates and food items flew away. Some people slipped

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and fell down. There were such incidents in all the rooms. In the morning, I had some trouble in celebrating the Holy Qurbono in the ship. The ship was swaying from one side to the other. I poured a little water in the chalice and observed the situation. When I was convinced that the chalice would remain steady, I began the Holy Qurbono. It was on Wednesday, the 7. Thereafter, until today (Friday) I celebrated the Holy Qurbono. There were one Catholic bishop and eight priests and many lay Catholics in the ship. They were going to England and Ireland.

Back in the Capital City

The ship reached Colombo on 15 June. From there he went to the Papal Seminary in Kandy. After a stay of two days, he took a flight to Madras and stayed there for one week. He reached Trivandrum by flight on 24 June. There were many people present to receive him. He was led to the St Mary's Cathedral in a procession. After the prayer there, a tea party was arranged. There was also a felicitation ceremony.

Thus the archbishop's second foreign visit also ended successfully and he engaged himself completely in the administrative affairs.



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Chapter 19

SPEECHES DELIVERED IN AMERICA

During his visit to America the archbishop made many speeches in the United States and Canada. They were published with big captions in the newspapers and magazines. They captivated the audiences. Of them a selected four, which are rich in ideas and erudition, are given here.

I

CHRISTIAN REUNION AND WORLD PEACE

(This is the speech made in Washington by Mar Ivanios during the eight-day prayer on the occasion of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. This was transmitted by the Columbia Radio)

All Churches that follow more or less the same apostolic faith, celebrate the martyrdom of St. Peter and St Paul on the same day. It is a fact that has been broadly admitted by historians that the two Apostles who possessed amazing skill in the proclamation of the Gopsel, had not become martyrs on the same day and thereby upheld the credibility of the Gospel. Therefore, that they are commemorated together in the liturgy is not a mere precedence in history, but it also has a quality that is worthy of consideration. The reason for this is that St Peter was the Apostle of the Jews and St Paul that of the Gentiles.

By venerating both of them together, the Christian Church teaches us that, "there is only one Lord, one faith and one baptism." As a result, the feast of St Peter and

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St Paul can be justifiably declared as the feast of the universality, catholicity and unity of the Church. Perhaps, keeping these ideas in mind, the promoters of the "eight-day prayer" movement for the unity of the Churches, have selected, according to the liturgical calendar of the Latin rite, the days from the feast of St Peter to the day of the conversion of St Paul, as the days for intense prayers, as per the words of our Lord, "that they all may be one".

Various Christian Churches

It can be undoubtedly stated that the major hindrance for the conversion of the whole world today is the disunity and division in the Christian world. It is because of this reason that the movement started for the unity of the Churches strives from its beginning to bring all the Faithful under the power of a common father. In Western Europe and the continent of America, this is a call for all protestant groups to be united into one Church under the leadership of the successor of St Peter. Except for a few groups, protestants in general accept the Christian faith to a great extent. But they do not share the same faith in priesthood, Divine Liturgy and the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

But this is not the case of tens of thousands of people in the Eastern Churches. Even today, the majority of them safeguard the apostolic faith. They still preserve the apostolic succession, priesthood, Divine Liturgy and the Holy Eucharist. They too have holy sacraments as their brethren in Catholic communion. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Christian denominations were able to survive several horrid religious persecutions. The history of certain Eastern non-Catholic Churches is to a certain extent the history of courage and unshaken faith. History

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bears witness to the fact that they could keep the flag of Christ flying in front of those who endeavoured to destroy their fidelity to Christ through force or praise or violence. There is no surprise that the Popes in Rome, the followers of Peter the Fisherman, always have shown empathy towards them. It is because of their various sacrifices for Christ that the popes have from time to time taken pains to lead them to the fullness of the blessings needed for the communion with the Throne of St Peter.

The Reunion in Malankara

By God's grace I myself bear witness from experience for the great interest that the Roman Throne had shown to the Eastern non-Catholics. As you know, I was born and brought up as a member of one of the non-Catholic Churches in Malankara. As a result of certain historical and geographical events a group from the Church founded by St Thomas the Apostle got separated from the Catholic Church. I was born, brought up, and educated and I later became a priest and was finally raised to the position of bishop in such a faction that was separated. For men and women I founded religious congregations. I became an instrument in restoring religious (*sanyasa*) life in the foresaid Church. I had initiated prayers in these religious congregations from their very onset for the unity of Churches. Without much delay, the other bishops in that Church entrusted me with the duty of studying possibilities of communion with the throne of Rome. It was then that I came to know the great paternal affection with which the Holy Father awaits the reunion of the Eastern Churches. When some of us came to communion with the Catholic Church His Holiness personally sent me a telegram. It read, "Welcome, a big welcome". The present

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Cardinal Archbishop of Detroit was then the Apostolic Delegate in India. He played a major role in the fulfilment of our attempts for reunion. His Eminence on his own took up several hardships towards this end. He even made a long journey to Rome for our sake. Having known all these and having experienced all these, what more could be said about "the other sheep that are not of this fold" and about the traditional interest of the Holy See towards them. We, having joined the Malankara Catholic Church, by the blessings of the Holy Father, we safeguard intact our ancient liturgy. We follow our ancient customs. We confess our ancient (orthodox) faith. We venerate the Mother of God, whom we address as "the second heaven".

We have not made any change (in our ecclesial life and liturgy) except for the fact that we exist in communion with Catholics all over the world. There was no need to give up any of our customs that we had been following for generations. This has been the stand of the Holy See towards the various Eastern Catholic Churches. The Roman See is ever committed to preserving the existing tradition of these various Churches. What His Holiness Pope Benedict XV said is true: "the Church of Christ is not the Latin, neither is it Slav nor Greek, but it is Catholic". This is always reflected in the policies of the Roman Church. The Church being the Bride of Christ is adorned with the liturgies of its Churches. In the words of the Psalmist, she is encircled by diversity.

The Conversion of India

It is not surprising that the Holy Father considers most important the unity of the Eastern non-Catholics who belong to various Churches with the Throne of St

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Peter, since they have always preserved their faith, priesthood and sacraments. The Holy Father has a strong conviction that when the members of these Churches come to communion with the Catholic Church they can lead hundreds of thousands of their brethren yet to know Christ into the light of the Gospel. For example, if we take the case of India, one sixth of the population of the world lives in this wide geographical area. There is no doubt that with God's grace the traditional Christians of India can easily lead their countrymen to Christian faith. They are all Indians. Their Christian culture is a blend of the teachings of Christ and the good aspects - certainly, there are many good aspects - of the ancient Indian culture. They themselves are the living testimony that Christianity is not foreign. It is not an import of the inner and secular European culture. Instead, it is a lovely flower, which has thrived in the fertile soil of pure Indian culture. Christianity has not hampered Indian culture but has tried to perfect it by bringing out its full potential.

The fullness of Catholicity is in its unity with the See of St Peter. The slogan of a Catholic is, "think with the Church". As in the matters of the Holy Church and those related to Christians in general, in matters related to the unity of the Church, also the Holy See gives directions to the faithful. First, we ought to have love towards all Christians, separated from the Holy Church for no fault of their own. Above all we ought to have Christian love. When we love everyone in the name of Christ, in particular those who follow Christ imprfectly, the day is not far when all will enter the house of faith. We have to try hard to solve the problems of the Christian brethren who stand separated from the Catholic Church. We should help organizations that work as missionaries towards the

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purpose of the reunion of Churches. If these seem not possible, we must take up a prayer-strike with heaven. We should humbly implore our Heavenly Father, the Mother of God and St Peter and St Paul. Until the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, as we are one" is fulfilled, we should fervently pray for it.

II

CANADA IN MY PERSPECTIVE

(This is a speech delivered by the Archbishop during his visit to Canada. His regard for the country and the Catholic Church there is evident here.)

Your Grace Archbishop, Honourable Ambassador of France, Honourable Chief Minister of Quebec, Rt Rev. Monsignori, Reverend Priests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I express my regards to the Mayor Mr Rousseau for inviting me here to speak a few words here on this auspicious occasion. I have been here in your beloved country for only three weeks since my arrival from India. It was my sincere devotion to the Blessed Mother whom we address as "the Second Heaven" that made me accept the invitation of the Archbishop of Ottawa to attend the Marian Congress celebrated here. I hope to return with the sweet memories of this grand Marian celebration. The true devotion of the Canadian Catholics towards "the Second Heaven" has enlivened and inspired me. The hearty welcome given to the Papal Delegate His Eminence, the Cardinal of Toronto by the Dominion Government, and the cordial felicitations accorded to him on behalf of the Government of Canada by your honourable Chief Minister Mr Mackenzie reveal your

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special veneration to the Holy Father. Thus, I could understand the real state of the good relationship between the Catholic Church in Canada and the politics of the country. The visit also helped me to understand the generous attitude of the Government towards the various religions of this great country. I have visited places like Ottawa, Montreal, Trois-Rivières, etc. The visit to Cap de la Madeleine was a spiritual ecstasy for me. The waterfall of Shavanshile impressed me a lot. Nicolet is indeed a beautiful entity. From these regions I learned some things about the social and economic aspects of village life that progresses with enthusiasm, in a lively manner through narrow path of religious thought.

It was only yesterday that I got the chance to enjoy and understand village life in Canada. Mayor of Trois-Rivières Mr Rousseau and his wife invited me to their farm in Nicolet. I also visited some nearby houses and farms. It was only then that I got a true picture of the harmony and beauty of Canadian village life and the happiness of the Canadians. Canada can do a lot in the reordering of the world. While helping humanity progress in spirituality and moral discipline, Canada anchored in religious faith is capable of proposing solutions to global social and economic problems. I saw a very impressive quote on a wall of Mr Rousseau's village house. "My country and my Church is my love" – a country, which believes in this, can sow the seeds of true freedom and Christian culture in this world.

We have survived two terrible world wars. Let us not see the victory of these great wars as that of a country or of a people, but as a struggle to protect the high values of Christian culture and for the gradual progress of

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humankind. The Allies should not use their victory for their personal gains alone. Noble values should gain from it. It should not be used as a means to gain domination over others. Through that victory, we should safeguard the true religion revealed to the world by Christ the Lord, the integrity of the family and social justice. If it can bring all people who scurry around contrary ideals in dilemma, to the right path, then that will be the real victory of the Allies. Thank you.

III

FAREWELL TO CANADA

(A day before leaving Canada, Mar Ivanios, the Archbishop of Trivandrum, who came to attend the Marian Congress gave a message after he visited important places like Quebec and Ontario. The following is an excerpt from the message, which the newspaper *Catholic Record* published)

With immense gratitude, I am happy to inform the people of Canada, my sincere appreciation for your great nation, the enormous joy of being with you and the hearty welcome I received everywhere.

As you know, I came to Canada in June on the invitation of Archbishop Vachon to participate in the Marian Congress. As a member of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in India, I represented the Catholics of India at the great international Marian Congress dedicated to the noble cause of universal peace. Without any hesitation, I can tell you, what a laborious task it was and at the same time, what a wonderful success the Marian Congress was! I would like to share with you my incomparable fortune, in attending the historic event in Canada – in those holy days of June – as a pilgrim of the Virgin whom we venerate with the appellation "the Second Heaven".

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The strength of the Catholic Church of Canada and the reverence the Faithful have towards their bishops and priests attracted me very much. The Church can have a lively and dynamic influence in your political life. It can influence greatly the policies in the ethical problems of your country and family. It would definitely provide a security to your social life and strength to your institutions.

Does any other voice, that challenges the moral authority of our Holy Father, the vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter and the Head of the Christian Church, echo in the world? No. It is doubtless. Which institution, other than the Catholic Church, the ark of truth, has the right to give meaning and value to human life, to recognize human laws and to attribute ultimate value to the human ethical code?

Truth, righteousness and justice are what the world needs most today. Truth sets us free and faith perfects us. Our political wisdom ought to be formed and renewed. The domestic and international code of laws should be founded on the natural law that reflects the divine eternal law in the human mind. The people and the nation are subject to that eternal law. Without international law, we cannot achieve intra-national peace and security. It is impossible to sustain international law not founded on justice. The Catholic Church is an institution that argues constantly for the subsistence of such nations. The castle of peace can never be built on any other foundation. Today, humankind aims at and clamours for peace.

When I speak about my beloved people of India, economic freedom and peace are our national needs. We know, how eagerly all nations have focussed their eyes on us! We know with what empathy the people of Canada

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desire to bring to a prudent end the endeavours of our national leaders to reinstate peace in our country which smoulders in the oven of revolution. Your great nation which has attained a unique position in the world, by now, has gone through various problems. The government you have formed for the unity of the various races, without revolution or internal struggle for religious freedom, is a model for all nations. The special feature of your constitution is the security assured to the minorities. I see here, how two races, two religions, two languages and two cultures stand shoulder to shoulder and protect and enrich your national life, develop your culture and contribute very much to national progress.

Though you had your differences and limitations, to protect the culture you had developed, you fought bravely two wars and to face future challenges and dangers, you fought under prudent and inspiring leadership and marched forward in unity.

Today, the people of India comes forward with a huge project. Under the discipline and frame of the constitution that we have accepted, we have become independent forever. Without any external interference, we are strong enough to form our own destiny. That strength confided in us and in our friends across the world a great responsibility. In our difficulties today, we request your empathy and attention.

Let us work together for the success of the system that we have accepted. Let us enter into a new generation with confidence. We are tirelessly working to maintain the ultimate unity of our nation, to form loving relationships with other peaceful nations, to spur the progress of the people of different castes and religions and to protect the human dignity of Indian citizens.

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Before bidding farewell to your great country, I assure Canada my prayers and request your prayers for my noble mission in India.

God bless you.

(*Catholic Record*, 23 September 1947)

IV

MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE WORLD

(On the day of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, known as the Father of independent India, the archbishop was on a tour of America. At the huge meeting gathered in the University of Fordham to express condolence at the death of Mahatmaji, the archbishop spoke of Gandhiji. An Excerpt from the speech is given below)

On the day of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, in the editorial written in *Commonweal*, a famous journal in America, it was said, "Long live Mahatma Gandhi!"

Gandhiji was born to and brought up by parents who were strongly rooted in the noble culture and tradition of India. Until his death, he led the life of a devoted Hindu. His innocent desire and endeavour to follow the light (truth) and, as he once stated, the circumstances of his disciplined life made him a Great Man (Mahatma). As a student in England and as a barrister in South Africa, he had many experiences. The nonviolent and inspiring activities he undertook in the whole of India paved the way to the struggle for Independence and enlivened it. When he was working as a barrister in South Africa, he tried hard to reconcile mutually opposing clients. He never pleaded for untrue and unjust matters. He used the weapon of nonviolence to oppose apartheid and injustice in the society. All these helped him give leadership for the Indian

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independence struggle. With the power of love that emanated from truth and justice - yes, based on the tenets of Christianity - he could create a spiritual movement among the people of India.

Jesus Christ taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ..."

Gandhiji had shown much interest in reading the Holy Bible daily. Thus, the teachings of Christ had a great influence on him. To endure evil patiently and to confront enemies not with force, but with love that resurges out of nonviolent activities, one needs extraordinary courage. Mahatma Gandhi understood integrally these sacred commands of Jesus the Lord and tried to implement it not only in his own life but also in all social and political matters of India.

Gandhiji clearly understood the truth of this most noble teaching of Christ. He showed perfect readiness not only to offer everything he had but also to commit himself fully to follow the noble ideals of Christianity. He followed Christian teachings and commandments as he understood them. He was an innocent believer in God and a great devotee who firmly believed in his own religion. He believed that the foundation of the teachings of all religions is the same. Hence, he took part in prayer meetings of thousands of people of different religions. He used to quote the parallel teachings of various religions like Hinduism, Islam, etc and made them comprehensible to his audience. Until his death, he tried to make all people

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accept these teachings and thus to attain perfect unity among the people of India. In following noble life-ideals, he had great respect for the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Even towards the end of his life, he said, it is imperative to know Christianity's own principles of self-abnegation and devotion. Gandhiji sees His Holiness the Pope with great respect. He accepted with innocence the statements of the pope. However, before he could receive the grace to accept Christ as the only Redeemer of the world, he had to depart from this world.

The social and political teachings of Mahatma Gandhi on universal peace and progress of the undeveloped countries could be clearly seen in the teachings of Christianity and in the encyclicals of the popes. He strongly proclaimed that values like truth, justice, love and peace ought to reign in matters of human transactions and relationship of races. Only through this can humankind attain salvation. On receiving the fatal wound, what Mahatmaji did first was to fold his hands as a sign of forgiving his murderer and of praying to the Omnipotent. His life was an invitation to all peoples and nations to lead an innocent life according to one's conscience, relying on God. He strongly opposed communism, family planning and materialism. It could be said without doubt that his life was a preparation to lead India gradually to Christ and to Christ's teachings.



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Chapter 20

MAR IVANIOS COLLEGE

His Grace had always cherished the desire to establish an eminent college in Kerala. In order to teach in the college the archbishop sent for higher education a few brilliant priests and lay people to various colleges in India, and helped them. When His Grace was the principal of MD Seminary Kottayam, he desired to develop that school into a college. As the atmosphere of the Jacobite Church was not conducive, this did not happen then. But he worked hard towards his goal after his communion with the Catholic Church. Because of the initial financial troubles he had to wait for fifteen years for the success of his dream. At last, he decided to establish a college in Trivandrum and started the correspondence and attempts for it. Thus the Mar Ivanios College, that has today become famous in Kerala, was born. This chapter deals with the efforts of His Grace for its inception.

Land Acquisition

The initial efforts were to find a spacious and beautiful place for the buildings of the college and hostels, playgrounds, etc. A few acres of land, near the Bethany Ashram Nalanchira in the city of Trivandrum came to his notice. The place was beautiful and it stood on seven small hills like Rome and it was owned by a Chettiar from Devakottai. The archbishop bought the place and applied for sanction to build a college there.

Around the same time Shri Avittam Thirunal, the nephew of Maharaja Shri Chithira Thirunal, an infant, died a premature death. The royal family decided to establish a hospital for children in his memory and started the search for a suitable place. They were informed

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of the place in Nalanchira bought by Mar Ivanios. They visited the place, liked it and decided to acquire it for the Shri Avittam Thirunal Hospital. The archbishop came to know about this and he met Dewan Sir CP and got an assurance from him that the government would not acquire the land. But a few government officers came to the plot to survey it to acquire it for the government. By this time, His Grace had shifted his Bishop's House to a small building at Nalanchira. Following this, a letter was sent to the Dewan. It's translation is given below:

Archbishop's House Trivandrum

21 May 1945

Dear Sachivottama,

I have discussed with you my anxiety over the place I bought from Devakottai Chettiar. As per your assurance given last year that the government has no intention to acquire the land and that I should complete the transaction to own the land, I have paid the price to the owners and bought the land and have started living there. I had informed you last year that for the growth of the English-Malayalam High School at Pattom the whole land is needed and hence I am shifting my residence from there. The land at Nalanchira was bought for building the Archbishop's House and for a college for which sanction is applied. You are also aware of the second proposal. I have shifted my residence to Nalanchira. I am surprised to see that the authorities of the government surveyed the land and drew up plans. On your assurance to acquire ownership of the land, I obtained approval from the Holy See, bought the land, and acquired it.

In this situation, if I were to be deprived of the land, it would be regretful. Since I heard that the land will be acquired to build a hospital for children in the name of

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His Highness Shri Avittam Thirunal to perpetuate his memory, I submit these for your consideration.

I request you to do your best, so that what was done on your assurance and with your encouragement will not become fruitless so as to cause mental agony for me.

Yours faithfully

Sd/-

Mar Ivanios

As a result of the correspondence and the recommendations of Sir CP the government dropped its decision to build the Avittam Thirunal Hospital at Nalanchira.

Medical College Hospital

It is worth mentioning the suggestion to build the Medical College complex comprising of the Medical College, Avittam Thirunal Hospital and Medical College Hospital at Ulloor. It was the archbishop, who first informed Sir CP and the government officials about the suitability of the place at Ulloor near Kumarapuram to establish the Avittam Thirunal Hospital in Trivandrum. His letter to the Dewan on this matter is added here.

Archbishop's House

Trivandrum

26 March 1945

Dear Sachivottama,

On this occasion, I would like to point out a 100 acre area called Dresser Plot, which is owned by Dresser Palpu. Now it is owned by Dr Palpu's son, Ponnuswami Pillai. The land is about four furlong north of Kanjipura of Kumarapuram. The land has a few cheap buildings. It is under the Corporation limit and is densely populated. I think it's the best place for a children's hospital. It has not only the provision for ample water supply and access

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to road but it is also only a little elevated from the road. Close by are available water and electricity connections. If necessary, the surrounding land also could be acquired. The land is mostly a plain.

Hence, I bring to your attention this land.

Yours faithfully
Mar Ivanios
Archbishop of Trivandrum

Sir CP brought the matter to the attention of the royal family and the government bought the land. It led to the establishment of the Avittom Thirunal Hospital, Medical College Hospital and Medical College there.

Application Sent For Sanction

Given below is the translation of the application for permission sent by the archbishop describing the various aims and objectives and plan of activities of the college he wished to establish in Trivandrum.

To the Pro-Vice Chancellor
University of Travancore
Trivandrum

Sir,

I have been rendering my service for the last thirty-seven years in the educational activities of Travancore. There are about 3600 children studying in 70 primary schools run by me. There are 5 English high schools, 6 English middle schools, 2 Malayalam high schools and 5 Malayalam middle schools under my management. I believe that time has come to expand my service in the educational activities of Travancore into the field of higher education. For this, I am planning to upgrade the Pattom English High School to a first grade college. I plan to

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conduct this college in a way different from the existing educational institutions. I fully accept the opinion that only a few selected students who pass out from the high school shall go in for higher education in the university. However, that the rest may not be deficient, they should be given all facilities that prepare them for the various spheres of life.

As the students who pass out successful from the high schools of this state, including those from my high school, belong to the community that does not hesitate to emigrate to distant places seeking profitable jobs, they would be interested in higher education that helps them to succeed in their life. I will able to provide them the best for their development without changing the course structure. Hence, without increasing the courses in the college, for the good of such students, I can choose the subjects that can develop their talents. The present students of the colleges in Travancore are not given training for the commerce degree. By offering such a new course, I will be opening a new path. The foundation for a degree in commerce is the study of history, economics, geography, etc. This is evident from an assessment of the course in commerce in any university in India and elsewhere. The study of geography naturally leads to subjects of commerce. The study of economics leads to the many practical domains of life. The study of history is a stepping-stone to social sciences. As a remedy to the antisocial ideas that permeate the practical and intellectual domains of the youth, I propose social science that discusses the history and organisation of the human community.

If we start a course for learning scholastic philosophy and eastern and western philosophy along with Hebrew and Syriac, it will be useful for those in my archdiocese. At present, there is no chair for Scholastic Philosophy in

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any University in India. Its importance in politics and ethics is evident. If we promote its study, the University of Travancore will excel the other universities in India. I wish to offer courses in History, Economics, Commerce, Syriac, Hebrew, Scholastic Philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology. I will strictly follow all the rules and regulations of the University of Travancore in matters related to grading and administration of this college. As we establish a college that offers courses that seriously affect human life, we will be able to eliminate the evil effects that stem from partial, limited facts.

I own a spacious place surrounded by beautiful scenery in Trivandrum. Steering clear of the difficulty in getting land in the densely populated city, the land I have chosen for the college has all the advantages of being at the city-centre. The college will have hostel facilities and facilities to participate in the external activities of the University of Travancore. I also inform you that I am ready to deposit Rupees One Lakh in the bank for the construction of the college.

Hence, I request you to grant permission to upgrade the Pattom English High School to a first grade college under the University of Travancore.

Yours Faithfully

Mar Ivanios
Archbishop Trivandrum

Archbishop's House,
Pattom, Trivandrum
22-4-1945

A Description of the College

According to the application and the investigations thereafter, the archbishop got the approval for the college from the University. On

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completion of the most needed buildings the college was inaugurated on 27 July 1948. A newspaper report regarding the college is added here.

> After waiting with hope for two years, the authorities have decided to start the college next July. After the unification of Travancore – Kochi is implemented the formation of a "University of Kerala" is also expected. In this context, in these two realms, which are in the forefront of education, it is necessary that many colleges are established to give admission to students without depending on outside institutions. We can hope that the college that rises up at Nalanchira, the periphery of the city of Trivandrum, in the name of His Grace Mar Ivanios, who established many schools in the various parts of the country for the good of the students and who tirelessly works towards their maintenance, will shine forth in all aspects as a model. This institution built according to the advice and activities of His Grace, who visited many civilized cities in the western world and has understood well the administration and pedagogy of teaching of the universities, will certainly help the mental and physical development of the youth.
>
> The college is situated on a sprawling site of many acres of land that is away from the public roads always congested by vehicles which might hurt the youth. The place around this house of arts, blessed by serenity and natural beauty, is apt for all the infrastructures of a residential college. Any person who visits this place will be reminded of Santhiniketan and Sabarmathi Ashram, the noble centres of learning. It is to be specially noted that this college has the most favourable atmosphere that spurs the power of thinking of the students. It is to be accepted that it is a rare place that can create an atmosphere that can develop in the hearts of the students

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moral consciousness and faith in God. American houses of arts might have been the models for the authorities in establishing the college. When, according to plan, all buildings and hostels are completed, this college will attain an honourable status among the colleges in Kerala. It is known that the admissions to the college are restricted to Junior Intermediate and Junior BA. May this college shine forth for long as a centre of formation of a community of students who would work towards the prosperity of India! (*Deepika*, 12 June 1948)

Present Position

Mar Ivanios College exists in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala, perpetuating the name and fame of its founder for the past 22 years. Three efficient and eminent Principals have so far praiseworthily governed this college. Rev. Fr Benedict OIC, MA (the present Archbishop of Trivandrum), Rev. Fr Thomas Nangachiveetil MA, Rev. Fr Francis Kalassery MA (now Monsignor) were those Principals. Among them Fr Benedict was the Principal for two years from 1949-'51, Fr Nangachiveetil for five years from 1951-'56 and Fr Kalacherry for five years from 1956-'61 governed the college. Rev Fr Geevarghese Panicker is the present principal from 1961. Under his able and diplomatic leadership, the college is developing well in all spheres.

This college has at present 200 well-educated and eminent scholars as teachers and about 2000 students. It offers P G courses in Chemistry, Zoology and English. There are three three-storeyed well-furnished and equipped hostels here, which house about 500 students, who are guided by three able priests who give them efficient training. The college bags praiseworthy success in the annual examinations. In sports and games the college leads other colleges. Thus, it is a matter of pride that the college founded by His Grace progresses in all spheres.



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Chapter 21

THE ARCHBISHOP AND THE PANAMPALLY PROGRAMME

This chapter deals with an educational reform programme that seriously tortured the mind and body of the Archbishop on his return to Kerala from America.

The governments that came to power one after another planned various programmes against the managements of primary schools that had praiseworthily carried out education service in Kerala. But they had to face failure because of the strong opposition of the managements. Further, the governments that proposed them could survive only short terms. Shri Kumbalath Sankupillai, a famous politician and thinker once stated, "The education problems of Kerala are like an electric line. Whoever touched it died instantly of shock." That Shri Kumbalath's statement is literally true has been proved by past experiences of Kerala.

Three educational policies were initiated against private managements. The first was the "Primary School Nationalization Programme" of Sir CP, the Dewan of Travancore. The second was the "Secondary School Reform Programme" of Panampally Govinda Menon, who was the Minister for Education in Thirukochi and later Minister in the Central Government. The third one was the "School Reform Programme" by Shri Mundassery, the Minister for Education in the first

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Communist Government of Kerala. Of the three, the first two were planned during the life time of His Grace. In chapter 17 is described the programme of Sir CP, the activities of His Grace against the programme and the final failure of the programme and its initiator. This chapter aims to describe the programmes initiated by Shri Panampally, how His Grace faced them and how it ended.

The Panampally Programme

Shri Panampally initiated the policy to help the secondary school teachers in matters of their appointments and salary. It contained mainly six points.

1. Eighty % of the fees collected by the private managements should be deposited in the government.
2. This will be counted as the share to be given to the government.
3. The remaining 20% should be used for the needs of the school and the accounts should be submitted to the government.
4. The appointment of teachers should be done from the list prepared by the Public Service Commission.
5. Appointment is done on the basis of community representation.
6. The government will directly pay the salary of the teachers.

There arose a tug of war between the government and the managements as this programme was published. The private managements, especially the Christian managements, opposed the 2nd, 4th and 5th clauses of the programme. His Grace played a key role in the opposition.

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Here, in brief, is given His Grace's activities in this regard, and the resultant failure of the Panampally programme.

Press Statement

As soon the programme was published, the archbishop called a press conference at the Archbishop's House, Trivandrum and gave the following statement to the newspapers. A few extracts of the press note is added here.

The government has established a policy which will adversely affect the private managements. It is a problem worse than the policy enunciated during the time of Sir CP Ramaswamy Iyer. The then government asked the private managements to hand over their schools to the government and some managers did so. Most Christian managements did not hand over their schools to the government. The problem that came up in those days has not found a solution even today. Now the government has announced a new programme concerning the secondary schools. The inclusion of ways to solve the worries of the teachers is praiseworthy.

This programme has completely ignored the fundamental rights of the managers in the propagation of education. It destroys even the little freedom left for the managers in running the schools. The government enjoys great control over private schools even now. This policy destroys the little freedom left for the managers to appoint teachers in schools run by them, without getting any grant from the government and getting only its approval. There are many restrictions from the government in existence now. The government already exercises control over such managements, as it has the right to determine the eligibility of teachers, to compel for license, to prescribe text books,

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The Founder of Relegious Congregations in his last days

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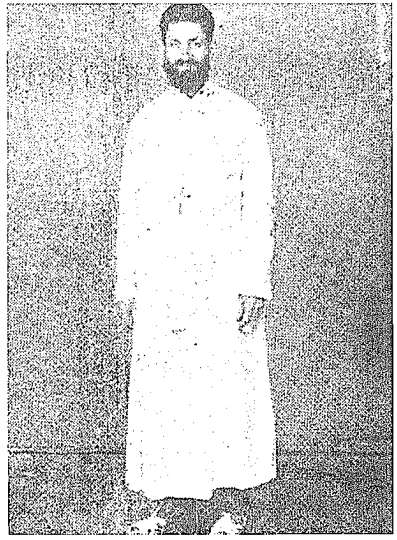
Members of the three Religious Congregations



The Congregation of the
Daughters of Mary (DMC)



The Congregation of the Sisters
of the Imitation of Christ (SIC)



The Order of the
Imitation of Christ (OIC)

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to prepare the time-table, to approve the site and the plan of school buildings, to determine the school equipments, to determine the fees to be collected from the students, to limit the number of students in each class, etc. Most of these help the development of the school. But, the new policy destroys the little freedom that was left for the managers and ignores their very existence.

Very many difficulties crop up from implementing this programme in this form. Besides the directive of the government to the managers to remit 80% of the fees collected in the government treasury in the name of the department, a circular issued on 25 September by the director of Education states that 80% of the fees collected is the share of the government. It can be inferred from the circular that private schools are in the ownership of the government and it is the right of the government to get the lion's share of the fees collected. There is no such system in Europe, America and in the other states of India, to pay salary to the teachers, after compelling the managers to remit the fees in the government treasury. The hidden idea behind this programme is to appropriate for the state the properties of the citizen; the appropriation of the wealth of the institutions for the state is a prelude to this. It may satisfy a few hardliners who advocate nationalisation. However, it is doubtless that it will hamper the country's progress in the field of education. Thinkers are yet to be convinced of the benefits of nationalisation. Let it be a good lesson for us that the application of this programme in certain countries met with failure...

If it is the intention of the Minister for Education to help the teachers and to give them a just salary, the government should rectify the demerits of this programme

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and should help the managers pay the salary to the teachers in the prescribed way. This programme can be prepared respecting the just rights of the managers and without sacrificing the principles of democracy.

The management should have the right to appoint headmasters and teachers. This freedom is essential to maintain the status and objectives of the school. We have spent, in a short time, an enormous amount of money to establish secondary schools in the Archieparchy of Trivandrum. This was done without any profit motive. We have received neither grants from the government nor donations from the public. We have received this money from philanthropists abroad. These schools are of the Catholic Church. We do not intend to manage schools accepting as such this new plan, harmful to the true vision of education and to the Catholic Church's ownership over these schools.

As the above-said statement was published in all newspapers, there arose vociferous debates in Thiru-Kochi. Editorials and articles began to appear in favour of and against the statement of the archbishop. Given below is an excerpt from the editorial of the newspaper "*Malayali*" written in strong language.

Declaration of Protest by the Archbishop

The editorial begins by quoting the last part of the press note by His Grace, where he argues for a revolt against the policy.

In Malayalam there is a 'mar' denoting the plural form. But, it comes only at the end of the word. Although the archbishop who uses '*nam*', a word that denotes respect in plural form, he also uses a 'Mar' as prefix to

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his name. This 'Mar' shall not be considered as a plural form of respect. In English 'mar' means to destroy, spoil, deface etc. If the 'Mar' in Mar Ivanios is the English word, it is now realized in him. Because, his long statement is intended to destroy or deface the new secondary education policy. '*Nam*' reminds us of the pastoral letter of the Archbishop of Changanacherry to take the sword and the purse against the Primary School Nationalization Programme of Sir CP.

The archbishop, first of all, argues that this programme denies the fundamental right of the managers in the propagation of education. The fundamental right of the managers! It has become a fashion to quote the Constitution of India when it comes to educational matters. We are not sure whether the archbishop refers to fundamental rights of the managers accordingly. We do not understand what more fundamental rights a headmaster, a peon, a sweeper has besides his/her human rights. It is not clear to us whether by fundamental right of the school managers, they intend the abuse of freedom to subject teachers to starvation and to fill their own pockets.

The statement expresses the lamentation, "It destroys even the little freedom left for the managers in running the school". It seems that he considers the right of the government to determine the eligibility of teachers, to compel for license, to prescribe text books, to prepare the time-table, to approve the site and the plan of school buildings, to determine the school equipments, to determine the fees to be collected from the students, to limit the number of students in each class, etc. as an infringement of the fundamental rights of the managers.

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He is of the opinion that the manager should be free from all these. What "little freedom left" is the fundamental right to appoint teachers at will, to pay them something and then get the aquittance register signed for a double or triple amount and thus to reduce educational activity into a business.

How good, if "the drum gets the beating, the percussionist gets the money!" The manager establishes the school, appoints the teachers, collects the fees, prospers and nurtures his own financial status! The government pays regularly the monthly salary of the teachers! Once a man, on being asked his opinion on polygamy, is said to have replied, "Very good! Very good!" Our question is, why are they who are so interested in the fundamental rights of the managers to propagate education, unwilling to provide the teachers who are so essential to this propagation, the proper salary, respecting their fundamental right to have a full meal. If the propagation of education as one wills is a fundamental right, they should also accept their obligation to meet its expenses. One party gets all the rights and the obligations are for the government and so to the public – this is not acceptable. It is good that all remember this.

The main intend of the displeasure of the managers is that they should necessarily have control over the appointment of teachers. The archbishop points out, "The management should have the right to appoint headmasters and teachers. This freedom is essential to maintain the status and objectives of the school." In the status and objectives are hidden the appeasement of the people of the same community, protection of self-interest and propagation of one's own religion. They are not ready to

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pay for the teachers appointed for this. The public should pay the money for it! Time has come to explain that it will not work. We advice the government to take a firm stand on this.

We do not understand why the archbishop who takes pride that he "received neither grants from the government nor donations from the public", does not intend to manage the schools? If he does not depend on the government to pay the new scale of pay, why can't he run those schools? The real reason is manifested here. There should be no control over the appointment of teachers. That underlies all these agitations. The public has to be aware of it. (*Malayali*, 10 October 1950)

A Dangerous Scheme

The Madras Mail daily published an article titled 'A Dangerous Scheme', against the policy and it is given below.

The secondary education policy of the Thiru-Kochi government is a good example for the nationalization scheme of government. The policy has made the managements anxious of the future of their schools. The scheme wants the managements to pay 80% of the fee amount to the government and the government will give the salary from that amount. The appointments of the headmasters and the teachers are to take place according to the service commission list. The protests of the managers are firmly rooted on their services to the educational development of the state.

The educational development of Travancore and Kochi is a result of the activities of Christian managements. The first English school in Travancore was started by the

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Christian missionaries in 1816. The English school by the government was started only 18 years after this. The Christian missionaries are doing a great service to the society and government. As Mar Ivanios said in his press note they are not availing any grant and the schools are run with the help of contributions from the community members.

The need for good schools is increasing and the private managements can do a lot in this respect. But the government is trying to hinder their development. The freedom to run the school in a meritorious way is affected by this decision.

His Grace wants to maintain the ideals of the institutions. Other managements also agree with this view. It cannot be expected that the teachers selected from the PSC list will stand for the ideals and beliefs of these institutions. As the managements are following the government norms in their appointments it is unnecessary to create such a law. The government has enough control already over the managements under the grant in aid code. So it is unnecessary to implement the new policy (*Madras Mail*, 11 October 1950)

Archbishop's Pastoral Letter

Following this, His Grace sent a pastoral letter to be read in all churches in the Archieparchy of Trivandrum. Excerpts from it are quoted below:

Beloved in the Lord!

You are all aware of the efforts undertaken beyond our strength to establish schools in our Archieparchy to provide facilities for the education of the boys and girls of our community and that of other communities. These

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schools are established and managed to give knowledge on matters of faith to the children of our Church and to give general education to all children founded on culture of character and principles of civic life of good citizens. The Catholic Church enters into educational activities throughout the world in accordance with the command given by Jesus Christ to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all the creation" at the time of his ascension into heaven. Now the government has issued a policy concerning the private secondary schools that would hinder the Church from conducting them according to the ideals of the Church...

Though belated, it is gratifying that the government under moral obligation has taken up steps to alleviate the hardships of the teachers. But I am sorry to say that the new policies chalked out for this interfere with the freedom of activities of the schools. What the government should have done was to sanction grants to the schools to find the excess amount over the fees collected, to pay salaries according to the fixed pay scale. Instead of that, the government demands that the fee collected should be remitted to the government. We have great concern and wonder at the attitude that inspires the government to implement in the state an extraordinary rule. While trying to resolve the hardships of the teachers, they have also included the clauses that hamper the freedom of the private schools...

Though there is the call for boycott of the schools, most of the schools in our management are functioning without hindrance due to the co-operation of the teachers. I appreciate heartily the sense of responsibility shown with self-restraint by these teachers. I have come to know

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that the teachers in two or three of our schools participated in the boycott of the school and teaching was hampered in these schools. However, it is very much gratifying to us that there were teachers who behaved with responsibility there also. We also state with grief, that due to the outcome of this policy, the activities of two or three of our schools were paralysed.

As we are one family in Christ, we were in a moral relationship where the managers who established the schools, the teachers and students were united as one family. However, recently, ideals contrary to this have crept in, teachers are alienated from the managers and an artificial atmosphere is created where the managers are seen as the enemies of the teachers. No decadence can be greater than this.

To consider some privileges that the teachers can avail immediately, and with a view to cooperate with the government to the best extent possible, a full meeting of the bishops of the state of Thiru-Kochi on 10 November made certain proposals to resolve the issue. However, from the Minister, we came to know that the government was not prepared to accept the proposals of the bishops. Hence, it has become imperative that we completely reject the programme. Only if the just rights of our schools are protected, can the schools survive and progress.

In this context, I advise you, our beloved, as the Holy Church considers churches and schools as sacred, and as schools are to be managed according to the ideals of the Holy Church, it is the duty of each one of you, the members of the body of the Holy Church, to protect our schools. To get the evil effects of this policy remedied, approach the government through well-accepted means,

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and persuade them to give the necessary grant to each school to pay the private school teachers the new scale of salary.

That the economy of God that directs human hearts be formed in our rulers, that they may understand well our stand and reach a just and empathetic decision, we advise you to pray humbly to God daily, until a solution is found for this problem.

May the grace and the blessings of God be upon you!

Mar Ivanios
Archbishop of Trivandrum

Archbishop's House
Trivandrum
1-12-1950

The daily called *Congress Yugam* published an editorial in favour of the views of the Archbishop. It is quoted here.

We invite the attention of the government and the people to the pastoral letter issued by Mar Ivanios, the Archbishop of Trivandrum, on the "New Secondary Education Programme", which we have published in this paper. The Archbishop states, "Though belated, it is gratifying that the government under moral obligation has taken up steps to alleviate the hardships of the teachers". He points out that the proposed policy will be injurious to the smooth management of the schools, and invites the members of the Church to get the harmful effects of this policy remedied approaching the government through well-accepted means. Archbishop Mar Ivanios is a person

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who gives, until today, perfect support to the activities of the government. As he has practical knowledge of running schools, his opinions should be given due consideration. Whatever be the plus and minuses of the new policy, even the group supporting the government has accused that it was without giving detailed information in the tripartite meeting that, the consent of the management was obtained. It is also pointed out in the pastoral letter. May be, this is the one reason, that gave an opportunity for many unwarranted debates and facilitated them. The government is not in a financial position to take over and manage all the secondary schools. Hence, it won't be intelligent and desirable to discourage the agencies that immensely contributed to the educational growth of the state through private schools. Hence, it is our opinion that it is not unthinkable for the government to make the necessary adjustments without changing the essentials of the policy initiated and executed by it (*Congress Yugam,* 26 *Vrischikam* 1136).

Lost Schools

Demanding that the Panampally Policy be executed fully, the teachers of a few schools under the management of the archbishop and a few students indulged in strikes, boycotting of classes and making chaos. The archbishop was firmly determined that even if he had to lose all schools, he would not yield to the Panampally Policy. Because of the strike by teachers and students, schools were closed down for a few months. As he did not obtain the desired result, he wrote a letter to the government informing that he had put an end to three schools. These schools were the English Middle School at Irezha, Mavelikkara, the Middle School at Nemom, Trivandrum and the English High School at Nellimmoodu, South Travancore. Following this, the land and buildings at Irezha were entrusted to Bethany Sisters for establishing

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an orphanage. The school and land at Nemom were sold off. The English High School at Nellimmoodu was entrusted to the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, and from the government succeeding the Panampally Government, permission was obtained to run a Girls' High School there.

Terms and Conditions for Settlement

At many places, Panampally declared that he would not deviate an iota from the educational policy he proposed. About such statements *Malayala Manorama* commented like:

> In an interview with Shri Panampally Govinda Menon, he has stated that he will execute the Secondary School Education Policy, whatever powers oppose it. He declared that the public supports sincerely the policy and that only people with vested interest opposes it (*Malayala Manorama*, 11 October 1950).

Many attempts for negotiations between the representatives of the Private School Managers and the representatives of the government ended in failure. At last, the wise Shri Panampally agreed to delete certain clauses from his policy. The 80% of the fees collected and remitted to the government will be considered as contribution, not as share. The Management has the complete freedom to appoint teachers. These appointments need not be on a community representation basis. Minister Shri Panampally agreed to accept these three conditions. Thus His Grace's erudition, determination and tireless efforts led to final victory.



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Chapter 22

THREE RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

In his lifetime, His Grace Mar Ivanios founded and nurtured three religious congregations. This chapter aims to outline the origin and growth of these congregations and trace their development to the present day. Before that, an overview of the various religious congregations in the Catholic Church in general and their functions is called for.

Religious Congregations

Observing the triple vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, millions of religious men and women, live across the globe, accepting the essential means for a life of self-sanctification and engaging in works of charity in various institutions. Their selfless and assiduous services have won them admiration and appreciation from people all over the world, irrespective of caste and creed. These religious congregations can be classified into three: communities of priests (priesthood), communities of women (sisterhood) and non-clerical communities for men (brotherhood). They engage in various activities aimed at the greater glory of God, salvation of souls and the uplift of humanity.

The observances, life-practices, and discipline of *sanyasa* have undergone tremendous changes since the beginning of Christianity. In ancient days, there were thousands of monks, who withdrew into the solitude of deserts and caves to immerse themselves in prayer, meditation, and ascetic life. Their failure in the practical aspects of life, led to the establishment of monastic communities, where monks lived together. Succeeding years saw many contemplative orders, cloistered

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forever within the monastic walls, becoming active orders and reaching out to the common man. They took their acts of charity and social service to the midst of the masses. Although there are still contemplative orders in the Catholic Church, their number is very few.

Statistics

Given below is the statistical data regarding the approximate number of Catholic religious congregations for men, their membership, as well as the countries and institutions in which they do service:

Name of the Congreation	No. of Countries	No. of Institutions	Membership
Society of Jesus	95	2239	35,919
Franciscans	80	2754	25,777
Salesians	49	1390	22,624
Dominicans	93	600	9,946
Redemptorists	64	728	9,052
Society of the Divine Word	34	171	5,748
Augustinians	36	413	4,504
Passionists	45	211	4,340

In addition, there are many smaller religious congregations too. The Catholic Church recognizes over 2200 religious congregations for women with a membership of over 1.5 million. The three orders founded by His Grace Archbishop Mar Ivanios are:

1. Order of the Imitation of Christ (OIC)
2. Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (SIC)
3. Congregation of the Daughters of Mary (DM)

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A brief history of each order is given below.

I

Order of the Imitation of Christ

His Grace Archbishop Mar Ivanios, who was known as Fr PT Geevarghese when he was a priest in the Jacobite Church, founded this congregation at Perunad, near Ranni in 1919. To fulfil his dream of establishing a priestly missionary organisation, His Grace took a select group of eligible and efficient young men to Serampore for their education and formation for priesthood. But, on discerning the failure of this dream he was inspired to found a religious order. Many Oxford Mission (Protestant High Church) fathers engaged in evangelical mission and charity service in Serampore motivated him in this mission. Upon His Grace's invitation, many of these fathers came to preach at various parishes in Kerala. His numerous visits to Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram and Tagore's Shantiniketan also served as an inspiration to him.

• The Aims of the Foundation

Apart from the self-sanctification of the members of the *sanyasa* order, His Grace had three special purposes regarding the foundation of Bethany Ashram.

1. Spiritual Renaissance of the Jacobite Church

During that time the Jacobite Church was being torn apart by the rift between the Patriarch party and the bishop's party, and the ensuing legal hassles. Such problems stood in the way of the spiritual progress of the members of the community. His Grace hoped that the establishment of a new monastic order will not only solve the problem to an extent, but would also encourage the spiritual progress of the followers.

2. Evangelisation among the Non-Christians

His Grace was aware of the fact that unmarried priests or monks

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are better capacitated to engage in evangelisation activities amongst the non-Christians and to bring them to Christ and to his Church, as they have more time and convenience at their disposal. He understood well how efficiently and fruitfully the religious of the Catholic Church engaged in evangelisation activities all over the world. Hence, he reckoned that founding a new *sanyasa* order in the Jacobite Church would facilitate the preaching of the Gospel successfully in and outside Kerala.

3. Various kinds of Social Activities

By founding many charitable organizations attached to the new *sanyasa* order, His Grace aimed to reach out to the needy in society. He aimed to start new hospitals, schools, printing presses, orphanages etc. But his vision was not successful altogether, due to the unfavourable ambience that prevailed then within the Jacobite Church.

- **Bethany in the Jacobite Church**

The rise, growth, and activities of the Bethany Ashram and the Reunion Movement have already been recorded in detail in the 11th and 12th chapters of the first volume of this book. Hence, I do not wish to repeat them here. It has been mentioned beforehand that, though evangelisation among the non-Christians and the all-inclusive progress of the Jacobite Church were the aims of the founder of the order, they could not be implemented effectively due to many reasons. However, the Jacobite Church remembers with fond gratitude the benefits they received through of the Bethany Ashram.

- **Bethany in the Catholic Church**

The Reunion Movement, in which the founder of the Bethany Ashram, His Grace Mar Ivanios, accompanied by Mar Theophilos, and the other ashramites Father John, and Deacon Alexander embraced the Catholic Church on 20 September 1930, have been detailed in Chapter 31 of the first volume. Readers can get an idea of the post-reunion days in the introductory chapters of this volume.

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The various services and activities rendered and the innumerable sacrifices endured by this monastic order during the nascent days of the Reunion Movement will be remembered forever with gratitude. They worked tirelessly living alone in mission stations, to build churches, buildings, to receive non-Catholics and non-Christians into the Catholic Church and to teach them matters of faith and devotions. Their dedication will never be erased from the annals of the history of the Reunion Movement. His Grace Mar Ivanios, the founder of the Bethany Ashram himself has acknowledged it in a pastoral letter. An excerpt is given below.

Everybody should remember with gratitude that the cradle of the Reunion Movement was in the Bethany Ashram. Many members of this Order have co-operated with me through intense and selfless service with a sense of sacrifice and zeal for this Movement. Unfortunately, due to many problems that the *ashramites* and I had to face during the early days of the Reunion Movement, we could not carry on the disciplined routine of the Order with diligence; nor were we able to train new members for our Order. (Pastoral Letter, November 1946)

- **Members and Activities of the Order**

The Order is indeed privileged to have been able to gift the Catholic Church three world-renowned Bishops (Mar Ivanios, Mar Theophilos and Mar Gregorios). The monks of this order are engaged in mission services all over Kerala. In addition, they are also involved in social service and care of the sick and the needy in various parts of Kerala.

As recognition for the various commendable services, His Holiness Pope Paul VI raised this Order to the Pontifical status on 14 April 1966. Papal Internuncio Most Rev. James R Knox presided at the event in Trivandrum on 31 May 1966.

The current statistics of this Order is as given below:

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The Archbishop in Canada with the Mayor of the City



The Archbishop with Bishop Nicholate
and his Secretary (left) and Fr Joseph Vadakkekoottu (Right)

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The Archbishop in America



Speaks in Syriac
through the microphone



A photo taken after his return from America
Adv Joseph Thaliyath and AJ John are seen standing behind
on the right and left of the Archbishop

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The Archbishop when he celebrated the Episcopal Jubilee (1950)

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The Archbishop at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (Bangalore)



The President Internuncio Dr Peter Kierkels (sitting, centre)
Dr Joseph Attipetty, Archbishop of Verapoly (sitting, right)
Dr Alexander Choolapparampil, Bishop of Kottayam (standing, left) are seen in the photo

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Ashrams	- 12
Priests	- 44
Deacons	- 43
Brothers	- 12
Novices	- 14
Seminarians	- 60
Health Centres	- 3

II

Sisters of the Imitation of Christ

During his tenure as a college professor at Serampore College, Fr PT Geevarghese (as His Grace was known then) got an opportunity to meet the Oxford Mission Sisters who were then working at Barisol in East Bengal. He informed them of his intention to establish a sisterhood in his community and the Mission Sisters happily promised him their co-operation and assistance in his endeavour. Soon, he selected a few women and sent them to Barisol to be trained by the Oxford Sisters. Mother Edith, of the Oxford Sisters, took particular interest in their training. After four years of training from 1915 to 1919, the group of women finished their training and returned to Kerala along with the Oxford Sisters. They chose a building near the Thirumoolapuram Baalikamadhom near Tiruvalla, for their stay. Very soon, they took charge of the education of the boarding school girls in the Balikamadhom High School. They also engaged in the care of the needy and desititute.

• The Founding of the Order

It was in 1925 that Father Geevarghese was raised to the Episcopate at Niranam. In the same year, three young women staying at Thirumoolapuram received the names, Sister Shaina, Sister Huba and Sister Danaha, and made their *sanyasa* profession of vows before Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Bethany. Sister Shaina was chosen as the first Mother Superior of the new Order. The name, 'Sisters of the Imitation

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of Christ', was given by His Grace himself. He also codified the monastic rules of the Order, adapting it from the rules of St Basil. With that, His Grace inaugurated the first ever Sisterhood Order within the Jacobite Church. It is worth recording here the invaluable service rendered to the sisterhood in its fledgling days by Mother Edith and Sister Helen.

There was no major progress or development for the sisterhood in the five years of its existence within the Jacobite Church. It was only after joining the Catholic Church that this Order could make great progress with rejuvenated vigour.

- **Entry into the Catholic Church**

In 1930, some days after the founder of the order, His Grace Mar Ivanios and his followers embraced the Catholic Church, the thirteen nuns of the order decided to join the Catholic Church. They decided to undergo this seemingly difficult task by following the advice of His Grace and listening to the inspiration of their conscience. As a result, they had to bear much ridicule and scorn even from their families, relatives, and friends. But they decided to bear it with dignity and courage, in the name of Jesus and the Church.

In 1936 the headquarters of the Order was shifted from Thirumoolapuram. The Order has since then undergone a rather surprising level of progress and development. Innumerable women joined the Order as novices. They established numerous convents and found time, space and facilities to engage in social and charitable services.

- **Present Status**

Bethany Sisters are, to this day, in their humble manner, engaged in service to humanity, with a firm faith in the power of God's love. They have been able to extend their charitable services through the establishment of schools, orphanages, hospitals, social welfare centres etc. In recognition of their honourable service, the Sacred Congregation

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of the Oriental Churches granted and blessed the Order with the Pontifical Position on 6 August 1956.

Given below is the current statistics of the Order

Nuns	- 329
Convents	- 35
Novices	- 27
High Schools	- 6
Primary Schools	- 4
Nursery Schools	- 14
Orphanages	- 3
Hostels for women	- 4
Boarding Houses (for girls)	- 13
Hospitals	- 2
Press	- 1

III

Congregation of the Daughters of Mary

The Malankara Syrian Hierarchy and the Archieparchy of Trivandrum were established and installed in 1932 with Trivandrum as the See. The details regarding their inception have already been recorded in the 11th chapter of this volume. When Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, was made the See, the archbishop decided that the Reunion Movement so far limited to the regions of the North, should be extended to South Travancore too. South Travancore was the region to the South of Trivandrum and to the North of Kanyakumari. 90% of the population of this region were non-Catholics. Of the remaining 10%, Latin Catholics formed 8% and Protestant groups like Lutheran Mission, London Mission, and the Salvation Army formed the remaining 2%. Hence, His Grace decided to extend the Reunion Movement in these areas, targeting the conversion of the non-Christians and the non-Catholics in South Travancore.

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• The South Travancore Mission

Many mission centres were established all over South Travancore and many *Upadesis* were appointed there. In some places, even priests were appointned in mission centres. As a result of their evangelisation activities, thousands of non-Christians and hundreds of Protestants embraced the Catholic Church. To assist His Grace in this mission, Chaldean Syrians and experts in missionary activities, including many selfless priests, stayed in various parts of Trivandrum and engaged in missionary activities. Rev. Fathers Pothanamoozhi, CK Mattam, Plathottam, Aramchery, Chennattu, Thottumkal Maniyamkode, Poovathungal, Teelar are a few noble souls who deserve a special mention here. In addition, many Carmelite priests and Franciscan brothers started their work in Trivandrum. Notable among them was Rev. Fr Joseph Kuzhinjali, from the parish of Pravithanam in Bharananganam. He was ordained Priest in 1932 for the Eparchy of Changanachery and came to Trivandrum in 1934 to offer his services to the Archieparchy of Trivandrum. The Archbishop entrusted him the missionary activities in areas around Marthandam. Within a span of 4 years, Father Kuzhinjali was able to receive over 3000 souls into the Catholic Church. In addition, he had the privilege to establish many mission centres with the advice and under the supervision of His Grace Archbishop Mar Ivanios.

• The Establishment and Growth of the Congregation

It was during this time that Fr Kuzhinjali thought of the necessity of founding a new sisterhood to assist him in his mission activities. He submitted his request before His Grace, and the archbishiop, the visionary that he was, happily acceded to his request. Father Kuzhinjali was ready to work toward this aim with a firm faith in God. As a result of his work, 2 young women from Pala and a young woman from the Kattoor Parish reached Trivandrum and expressed their willingness to become the first members of the newly established Sisterhood. They were Rev. Sister Mary, Sister Agnes and Sister Teresa. On 8

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May 1938, His Grace, assisted by Rev. Fr Mathew Purakkal and Father Kuzhinjali, laid the foundation stone of the convent at Marthandam. Thus, the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary was officially inaugurated.

Subsequently, many young women, especially from the *Pazhaykur* Syrian Church, came forward, willing to join the Congregation. Mother Basim SIC was appointed by Mar Ivanios to form the young women in the ways of *sanyasa*, discipline and precepts of life. Mother Basim stayed at Marthandam for two years and supervised the studies and formation of the young novices. The founder of the Congregation modified a few rules of the Franciscan Order in accordance with the need of the time and place. In addition, he also visited Marthandam and gave the members of the Congregation suitable advice, help and encouragement. The history of the Congregation records with fond gratitude the invaluable assistance and support provided to it in its infant days by Fr Kuzhinjali.

- **Various Activities of the Congregation**

Like the Bethany Sisterhood, the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary too attained rapid progress and development. They built numerous schools, convents and charitable centres at various places. There was also an increase in the membership of the Congregation. To take better care of the sick, the needy and the destitute, many nuns of the Congregation underwent training to become nurses. The work of the Congregation initially confined within South Travancore later spread to places to the North of Trivandrum. The hospital at Anchal that functions in a highly noble manner is a crowning example of the charity services of this Congregation.

The various mission activities carried out by this Congregation are widely appreciated and greatly valued by others. To assist the priests in their evangelical work in mission parishes, to visit the houses of the Christians and non-Christians alike and to give them suitable

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advice, to give spiritual guidance to non-Catholics and prepare them for Baptism, and to train them in the spiritual way of life, are some of the many services rendered daily by the Congregation in the name of God and for the honour of the Catholic Church.

- **Current Statistics of the Congregation**

Nuns	- 210
Students	- 27
Convents	- 18
High School	- 1
Middle Schools	- 6
Nursery Schools	- 9
Hospitals	- 4
Orphanage	- 1
Hostels	- 3
Mission Stations	- 84
Social welfare centres (for women)	- 7
Press	-1



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Chapter 23

THE ARCHBISHOP AND POLITICS

His Grace Mar Ivanios was a true patriot and a political thinker. However, his involvement with the politics of the state was erroneously understood and invited unjust resentment from many quarters. Those who know him and are familiar with his life will not hesitate to maintain that none of his activities in this matter were motivated by his vested interests or were against the principles of the Catholic Church. This chapter intends to examine the Archbishop's engagement with the politics of the time. However, a brief examination of the relation between the Catholic Church and the state is called for before we venture into the topic.

The Church and the State

Our Lord Christ exhorted his followers thus: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mk 12:17). Not only His Holiness the Pope, the supreme authority of the Universal Christian Church, the representative of Christ on earth, but also the cardinals, bishops, and the priests exhort the laity that they are expected to respect and to pledge allegiance to the authorities of their respective states, whose citizenship they bear. The Church and the state are two visible organizations on earth inevitable not only for the existence of humankind but also for its development. Therefore, it goes without saying, that both should co-exist with mutual respect and help each other and co-operate. However, any transgression of the mutual respect for boundaries or interference in the other's affairs beyond what is deemed fit have always resulted in chaos and revolution. In the early years of its inception, the state tried to exert control over the Church. Medieval ages saw the Church

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tightening its grip on the state. Duly instructed by the unfortunate consequences of unsolicited interference, in the succeeding ages both institutions decided to co-exist in harmony within their boundaries and exercising their own rights. But a few countries like Russia, China, and a few Eastern European countries have been engaging in activities contrary to this stand.

A study of the history of the past 2000 years makes it clear as to who will emerge victorious in this tug-of-war between the Church and the State. The Catholic Church, which has witnessed since time immemorial, the decline and rise of numerous kings, kingdoms, empires and states will stand proud and erect, without 'the gates of Hades prevailing over it'[1] till the end of the world. Remember the words uttered by the Italian dictator Mussolini after his defeat in the long war against the Church: "My experience has taught me that, if ever the Church and the state choose to wage a war, the Church will always emerge victorious."

The Clergy and Politics

Certain innocent, people, who pride themselves as political thinkers, have been heard saying that spiritual leaders including cardinals, bishops and priests are always expected to stay clear of politics and political issues. But such uninformed opinions proceed from those who are clearly ignorant of the principle of the Catholic Church regarding the same.

Three Kinds of Politics

Three kinds of political activities are seen today: 1. Active politics, 2. Party politics 3. Politics of ideology

1. Active Politics

Active politics is to be engaged in political matters round the clock, to hold any government position disregarding clerical duty, to be affiliated to any political party etc. It goes without saying that it is undesirable

[1] Mt 16:18.

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for the clergy to get involved in active politics, neglecting their pastoral duties assigned to them by God and the Church.

2. Party Politics

Party politics often include membership in any particular political party, to be employed in the service of the party, to be involved in opposition-bashing through speech or writing. Since the believers of a particular congregation may have different political inclinations and affiliations, the involvement of a spiritual leader in party politics may lead to resentment against the clergy and conflicts between the parishioners, which may ultimately evolve into a threat against faith itself. Hence, clergymen should stay clear of party politics.

3. Politics of ideology (*Adarsharashtreeyam*)

To exercise the right of franchise as a citizen of the country and according to his conscience, to voice approval for the party which is most democratic among the entire corpus of political outfits, to oppose those groups whose policies are against both God and the Church etc. come under the definition of politics of ideology.

The Duty of the Clergy

The Church allows the clergy to get involved in politics of ideology (*Adarsharashtreeyam*) without getting involved in active politics or party politics. Hence, it becomes the duty of the bishops and the clergy to engage in it for the benefit of the country and the Church. If any political party or leader works against the stand adopted by the Church in issues like evangelization, birth control, divorce, it is expected of the clergy to fight against such forces with all their might. The Church and the clergy have come under censure many times for the stand adopted in the aforesaid matters. Such baseless accusations rise from a serious lack of proper study and understanding of the ideal relationship between the state and the Church.

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Certain incidents, which bear testimony to the services and activities of His Grace Mar Ivanios as a political thinker and as a patriot, are worth mentioning here. He managed to influence politicians regarding matters of importance for the prosperity of the country and the uplift of the Church, without getting involved in active politics or party politics.

Archbishop and his Devotion to the Monarchy

Given below is an excerpt from a speech Mar Ivanios gave before a massive audience in Thiruvananthapuram, which reflects his devotion and respect for the King of Travancore and the Travancore royal family.

> I use this opportunity to express our heartfelt respect and devotion to the Travancore royal family. Devotion to monarchy is in fact a religious duty of a true Catholic. Every Catholic practices the words of Saint Paul: "Fear God, honour the king." In our daily worship of our heavenly Father, we pray unto him to protect and guide the monarchy in the path of righteousness. We, the Syrian Catholics of Travancore are the proud owners of a two-thousand year old devotion and heartfelt service for the Travancore royal family. Since the early days of the inception of Christianity, this ancient community has rendered valuable and selfless service to the Royal Family, as evidenced by the "*Chembupattayam* (Copper Plate)" gifted by the royal authorities. In addition, many historical episodes can be pointed out as evidence of our honest allegiance to the rulers of this country.
>
> On this occasion, it would be worthwhile to remember the congratulatory and encouraging speech made by His Highness Visakham Thirunal of privileged memory, venerated as the king among scholars and the scholar among kings. "Yours is a historic and an ancient community reputed for its meritorious history as a model of peace, prosperity, and devotion for monarchy.

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According to legends, Kerala was created by sage Parashurama. If the great Sage himself deigns to visit this country again, he would fail to find a community to equal yours in worship for righteousness and monarchy."

These meaningful words help us in understanding our past as well as to be proud of its glorious heritage. It is my duty to remember with gratitude the religious tolerance and infinite kindness exhibited by the kings of this land towards the Christian Church as well as the bounteous measures adopted by them for the welfare of our community. Such acts of benevolence and encouragement serve as our inspiration for the internal and external development of our nation. The recent visit made by His Royal Highness and the Queen Mother to the Holy See as part of their European Tour and the details of the meeting with the Holy Pontiff as published in our newspapers have filled us with gratitude and immense joy. It is a sign of their boundless love towards the Catholic people under their reign. We use this opportunity to express our respect and love for Your Highness and also to express out indebtedness for the immense love Your Highness has always had for our Church and our community.

The archbishop maintained a personal bond of love with the Travancore Royal family. Upon receiving the news of his passing away, His Highness Shri Chithira Thirunal is said to have remarked, "The death of Mar Ivanios is a personal loss for me and a great loss for the Travancore Royal family."

The Archbishop and Politics

His Grace never interfered in pure political issues. However, he was never averse to voicing his opinions or expressing his views and convictions. Following is an excerpt from an article on His Grace

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written by Shri NV Joseph BA, BL, the chief editor of *Deepika* newspaper and one of the leading political activists of Travancore:

> Anybody who has got an opportunity to associate with Mar Ivanios will agree that he was remarkably intelligent. Since his life was devoted to the service of the Church, it was in ecclesiastical as well as religious matters that his keen intelligence and astuteness were reflected. However, he had the markings of a multi-faceted genius. He never interfered in overtly political issues. But he never shied away from conversations with political activists. In the early days of the launching of *Nivarthana Prasthanam*, I happened to have a chance conversation with His Grace about the movement. It was, as a result of that conversation, that the movement came to be called 'Abstention Movement' in English and *Nivarthana Prasthanam* in Malayalam. Not many people are aware of this fact. For, the office-bearers of the Movement considered imprudent to relate the name of the archbishop with the Movement at that time...

Mr Joseph has further elucidated the valuable service rendered by the archbishop for the success of the Abstention Movement in its fledgling days in its fight against the Travancore Government. His article continues:

> Two days prior to a meeting at the LMS Hall I happened to visit His Grace. He lived then in a building belonging to Saravana Swami at Pattom. When I reached there, I think literary laureate Chevalier CK Mattam was with His Grace. Gradually the conversation turned to the current political movement. I led the deputation that met Dewanji on 9 January 1933. I was quite aware of the nuances of the subject. His Grace asked me, "How do you propose to ensure the success of the Movement?" I replied, "We might need help from the British Government

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in the final phase." The British were always against the various techniques of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress like nonviolence, non-cooperation, boycott etc. His Grace raised another question, "Is it just representation in the legislature that you demand or do you want to curtail the power of the royal reign?" I assured him that the demand for representation was the only current objective of the Movement. He asked me whether the British government would raise any doubt on my allegiance to monarchy. It passed my mind that His Grace had very lucid conviction regarding the matter. I was only slightly acquainted with him. Hence, I felt His Grace was not openly stating his opinion. Our Movement had already earned the displeasure of the government and the royal family. After the conversation, I walked back to my place at Palayam. I thought over my conversation with His Grace. My mind was focussed on two aspects. The name non-cooperation should be revoked. I thought that the meeting at the LMS Hall should commence with a motion supporting allegiance to the Monarchy. That very night I discussed the matter in detail with Mr IC Chacko. Next evening at the meeting held at the residence of Mr EJ John, I raised the matter regarding the change of name. It was decided that the movement would hereafter be known as Abstention Movement. The next day, I went to see Mr IC Chacko to get a suitable Malayalam name for the Movement. After referring the English and Sanskrit dictionaries, he suggested the word *Nivarthanam*. The word 'Abstain' was used in the meeting at the LMS. Later I published articles in various newspapers elucidating the essential differences between Gandhian non-cooperation and *Nivarthanam*. This is how the term *Nivarthanam* gained prominence in our language and political history.

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For the Church and the Nation

When India gained independence and Pakistan separated from India to form a separate nation, His Grace was on a tour in America. Realizing the importance for the two countries to send their respective representatives to Vatican, he started taking the measures for this while in New York. Explaining his actions in this direction, he wrote a letter to the Apostolic Delegate to India in Bangalore from New York. Given below is an excerpt from the letter.

Your Grace,

The Indian Ambassador to Russia Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had come to New York to represent India at the UNO. Many dignitaries from the Near East and Middle East, including many politicians, had organized a party in honour of Mrs. Pandit. I too was specially invited to the function. I have had the privilege of being acquainted with her for several years. Hence, I got an opportunity to converse with her for a long time.

I pointed out to her that while many non-Christian nations have already sent their representatives to Vatican, the newly independent India has not taken any step in that direction. America, under President Truman has its representative at Vatican. She replied that she supported my opinion and suggestion completely and assured me that she would write to the Indian Government on this matter without any delay.

Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister of India is her brother. I had sent him a few letters while I was in Canada. In none of those letters had I mentioned the necessity for India to send an ambassador to Vatican. I deem it appropriate for Mrs Pandit to introduce the matter to the Indian Government through proper bureaucratic channel.

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I have an appropriate reason for this. Mrs. Pandit is a Hindu. She is not only the Indian Ambassador to Russia, but is also the chief of the representatives of India at the UNO. Hence it will be more helpful if she directly writes to Nehru on this matter.

I intend to suggest to the two Pakistan representatives at the UNO who are currently in New York to send their ambassador to Vatican. I wish to do this as an Indian citizen without violating any law. As a Muslim country, Pakistan has mostly followed the foreign policies adopted by other Muslim countries. Hence, I firmly believe that Pakistan will respond positively in this matter too.

In the near future, India and Pakistan will decide on the suitable course of action in this matter. I write this letter since I strongly believe it to be of utmost urgency and importance for Your Grace to be aware of the circumstances related to this venture.

It should be added that, as a result of the tireless efforts of Mar Ivanios, both India and Pakistan appointed their representatives at Vatican.

India in the Commonwealth

His Grace was keenly aware of the necessity for India to join the Commonwealth of Nations. Even when he was in New York, His Grace used to express his opinion that India should express willingness to join the Commonwealth. A letter sent by him from Canada to the Apostolic Delegate in India regarding this says thus:

The controversy over Indian independence, which raged in the British Parliament, prior to 15 August 1947 when India won independence, brought India and Canada together. India has been given a year's time to decide whether to join the British Commonwealth. It is necessary

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and desirable that India joins the Commonwealth in the future and establishes friendly relations with other member nations like Canada, Ireland, Australia, and South America. If India chooses to remain outside the Commonwealth, in all probability it might come into contact with the influence of Communist Russia. As it is, Russia is trying to gain strong footholds for Communism in Middle-Asia and the South-West frontiers of India. Should China too join the India-Russia alliance, India might become negligent regarding the demands, hopes, and rights of the Catholic Church. To avoid such an unfortunate situation, I am trying to the best of my ability, without actually interfering in politics at all, to persuade and convince our political leaders of the necessity of joining the Commonwealth.

Soon, India became a member of the British Commonwealth.

The Archbishop on Communism

Given below is an extract from a speech made by His Grace addressing a mighty audience regarding the harmful consequences of communism.

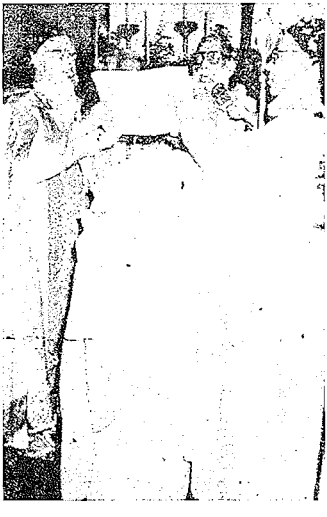
> Today communism based on atheism has become a major stumbling block for nations and communities in their progress towards development. The deleterious impact of revolutionary principles threatens all nations of this world. The half-baked visionary ideas and vulgar songs violate the peaceful harmony of our communities and their iconoclastic attitudes threaten to uproot and destroy the sacred values and beliefs that form the keystone of our society. The Catholic Church is continually fighting this enemy of the state and religion. It is my firm belief that the Church and the state need to combine forces to

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The Ordination of the Auxiliary Bishop



To the venue of the Ordination



Prayer over the Ordinantee



The laying on of hands
over the Ordinantee
by the three celebrants

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After the Episcopal Ordination



Besides the Ordained Bishop, the chief celebrant, the concelebrants can be seen the Bishops of Verapoly, Thoothukudi, Thiruvananthapuram (Latin), Kollam, Pala, Kottar, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Thrissur, Alappuzha and Kochi

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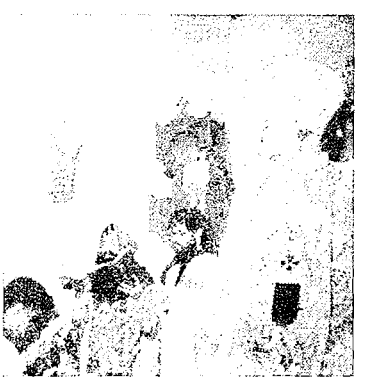
The last photo of the Archbishop



Fr Zachariyas Kileeleth and Fr Lawrence Thottam, the first two priests Ordained by Mar Gregorios are seen on the left and right



The first photo taken after the demise of the Archbishop



Mar Gregorios prays the office for the dead

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Before the mortal remains







The Bishops and relatives pay homage

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eliminate the progress of this nihilistic movement. It should not be forgotten that without the authority of God, there is no place for the voice of the conscience. In the absence of just laws, the community, families and the culture and civilization can only perish. Hence, it becomes the moral duty of everyone, who believes in God and in the sanctity of righteous law, to fight this movement, which is hazardous to religion, its immense riches and to the nation. Enriched by its experiences gathered over generations and with principles that have stood the test of time, the Catholic Church, as directed by His Holiness the Pope, is committed to fight god-less communism to ensure the stability of the nation and its government and to protect and uphold the sacred values of our society.

A study of the above letters and speeches prove that His Grace stayed clear of active politics and party politics and has only engaged with the politics of ideology (*adarsharashtreeyam*) for the glory of God and the welfare of the Catholic Church, as befitting a head of the Church.



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Chapter 24

SOME THOUGHT-PROVOKING ANECDOTES

Though Mar Ivanios was by nature a man of grave disposition, His Grace had the ability to tell jokes, which would make the listeners burst into laughter. American writer Garespy referred to His Grace as "The king of wits among the eminent". His jokes were not only noted for their humour, but they were also thought provoking. Given below are a few of them.

I

In 1930 a massive function was organized at Changanachery to felicitate His Grace on achieving the Reunion with the Catholic Church. The function was presided over by His Grace Kalassery. In his speech, he stated, "On this occasion, we express our heartfelt love and respect for His Grace Mar Ivanios and his followers on achieving the Reunion with the Catholic Church. Apart from our love and respect, we should also render all our service. In return, they too will offer us their help and co-operation." In his reply speech, His Grace Mar Ivanios responded, "We promise to do as His Grace has said. Through our actions, we will express our mutual love, help and co-operation. Hereafter, everything that belongs to His Grace will be ours and anything that is ours will be His Grace's".

The audience was moved to laughter at this joke loaded with meaning. But His Grace Kalassery closed his eyes and shook his head, indicating that it is not possible.

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II

Once, during his European tour, at a meeting with his friends, His Grace made the following statement. "You Westerners slaughter your mothers and eat their flesh. We, the people from the East do not do any such thing." The listeners were shocked and puzzled. "What is he saying? We are murderers? Are we cannibals who devour our own mothers' flesh?" The archbishop said, "Let me explain. We have two mothers. One is our own mother who gave birth to us. The other mother gives us milk. You people slaughter and eat the flesh of this second mother, which is the sacred cow." With a smile, the listeners agreed with the observation made by His Grace.

In imitation of the Hindus of India who abstain from eating cow's flesh (beef), Mar Ivanios gave the rule to the Bethany religious congregation, of abstaining not only from beef but also from all sorts of meat.

III

A certain priest who was engaged in mission activities was staying at the Archbishop's House in Trivandrum. Once, His Grace asked him to go to a certain mission parish the next day and offer the Holy Qurbono. The priest agreed to do so. However, as the mission parish was far away, he did not go there the next day. His Grace somehow got wind of this news. During his evening walk that day, he saw the priest on the way. The priest was worried that His Grace would reprimand him.

Archbishop : Father, did you not go for the mission today?

Priest : No, Your Grace.

Archbishop : May I know the reason?

Priest : I had a bad cold and was feeling feverish.

Archbishop : It was wise of you not to go have gone today.

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Had you fallen sick, we would all have been worried. Please take some medicine and rest for a few days.

The priest who was scared of being reprimanded by His Grace was relieved and was happy at the words of His Grace. After that incident, he never went against the words of His Grace.

IV

Now the author wishes to relate a few of his own experiences. One day, I went to visit His Grace to request him financial assistance for a new church. His Grace already understood that I had come to ask for some money. He told me, "Father, I am hard pressed for money now. Moreover, I am in a huge debt too. What should I do now?" I told him, "Your Grace, there is a way out. You have bought many plots of land. One of those plots is unoccupied. If we sell that plot, we will get at least ten thousand rupees. You will be able to clear some of your debts too." His Graced laughed and told me, "Father, please go to that place and find out whether the neighbouring plots are on sale too. If so, we will acquire those plots too at any cost. Never mind however huge our debts may be. It is important for the future of our mission." I was amazed at the far-sighted vision of the archbishop. Also, I was embarrassed at the lack of it in me.

V

Another day, as soon as I met him, His Grace asked me, "Father, could you raise some money urgently? I am in a huge debt and I need money urgently to return the borrowed money." I told him, "Your Grace, it pains me to hear this."

Archbishop : "What is there to feel sorry about?"

I : "Your Grace, you are a mortal being. After incurring huge debts, if something happens to you all of a sudden, would it not

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affect the future of the archdiocese? The Missions will be in trouble and we will have to starve"

Archbishop : "Father, none of you need to worry about it. Aren't we the members of the Catholic Church? The Church will take care of it. If I die, someone else will replace me. The Church will definitely clear the debts.

What a firm faith in the power of the Catholic Church! I was thrilled at his high impression on the activities of the Catholic Church and his conviction that the Church was indeed strong to take care of itself.

VI

During his American tour, His Grace attended a party attended by many people. During the course of the conversation, His Grace remarked, "We Indians are more hygienic than Americans." They were surprised and said, "But, we have heard that Indian people generally lack cleanliness" The archbishop said, "I will explain. You people use again and again the plates used during feasts and parties. But we Indians never use the same plate twice." They said, "So, you mean to say that not only do you people excel us in cleanliness, but also that you are economically better off than us." The archbishop laughed and said, "We normally eat in plantain leaves."

The audience understood the import of his words and they too laughed.

VII

His Grace had taken with him 48 silver *chakras* (smallest denomination of coins in Travancore) corresponding to the number of States in America, to present them to Truman, the President of the United States of America. When he visited President Truman, he presented the coins to him. Truman was surprised to see the small

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coins and asked His Grace how people would handle such small coins. The Archbishop replied that the small coins were minted expressly to protect them from being robbed. "Our people safeguard the coins even with their eyes." President Truman asked, "But how is that possible?" His Grace immediately took a coin, opened his eyelid and placed the coin inside it and said, "This is how we safeguard them." President Truman and the other guests were surprised at this act.

VIII

While in America, His Grace visited a book shop in Washington to buy a rather expensive book. The saleswoman at the shop was not impressed by the dress and the appearance of His Grace. She sarcastically said, "Even Jesus Christ himself would not choose to appear in such clothes, should he choose to make his Second Coming." Without missing a beat His Grace replied, "Jesus Christ might appear wearing this or similar clothes. But the first thing he would do will be to whip and drive out traders like you."

The arrogant lady was left speechless and the archbishop left the shop.

IX

Once a prominent leader of a parish met His Grace and made numerous accusations against the Parish priest. His Grace listened patiently and carefully to such vilifications and accusations. At the end of the conversation, His Grace told him, "Fine. I intend to found a new seminary here. And I will recruit some angels directly from heaven, and train them to become priests."

Hearing these thought-provoking and poignant words, the man refused to speak further ill of the priest, paid his respects to His Grace and left the scene.

Priests too, like other men, are born of parents, who are human beings in this world. They have the same frailties and foibles as any other human being. Hence they should not be judged, but rather, a

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kind and lenient view of their actions should be taken. This is what His Grace had implied through his statement.

X

Once His Grace's manager, Kileelethu Chacko entered the room of His Grace in the Bishop's House. His Grace was scolding a servant at the Bishop's House for some offence. On seeing the manager, His Grace told him, "Mr Manager, this fellow is a dullard and bird-brained."

Manager : Your Grace, that is why he is a servant here.

Archbishop : Why do you say so?

Manager : Had he been intelligent he would have gone on to run a newspaper like KC Maman Mappila or become a lawyer like Ilanjikkal John.

Archbishop : You are right. That is why I keep him here.

The archbishop was implying that we need to try to find out the real reasons for shortcomings in our servants and have to deal with them likewise.

XI

Given below is an incident that was narrated not by His Grace, but by Right Rev. Pulikkottu Joseph Ramban. This story is taken from *Smaranakiranangal* (Rays of Memories) written by Rev. Fr CK Mattam. This story shows what can happen to people who try to take advantage of the goodness in others.

In those days, nothing much happened in the archdiocese without the presence of Pulikkottu Ramban. He was the soul and life of the Church. His Grace had great fondness for him. Whenever he saw us together, he used to make fun of us by saying, "You two are inseparable."

The ramban was a good friend to many people. Some of the priests who reunited with the Catholic Church used to visit the

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Archbishop's House frequently. Among them the ramban used to be the cynosure of all eyes. The leadership of the group of priests would naturally fall upon the ramban. But the ramban, who was always polite and humble, would not even realize it. His Grace Mar Ivanios was an extraordinary man who worked round the clock tirelessly for the Church. Sometimes when His Grace was too stressed and overworked, he would go to the ramban to unwind himself and ask him, "Ramban, do you have any new jokes or stories to tell?" His Grace would summon all other priests too. The ramban would entertain the crowd with his numerous funny stories, jokes and anecdotes. Rejuvenated and fresh, His Grace would return to his duties. Given below is a humorous episode related by the ramban himself.

"Priests are divided in their opinion regarding accepting remuneration for conducting wedding ceremonies. A priest, who is a friend of mine, does not accept any money at all. He feels that a wedding is a ceremony that he should officiate without accepting remuneration. I don't agree with him. Refusing to accept the money offered is against the custom. A wedding is such a beautiful and joyous occasion! Nothing can surpass the joy of the bride and the groom on their wedding day. When they offer a gift of money as a token of their happiness, to refuse the gift will hurt them. It is not right to spoil the happiness of people.

However, a fellow-priest, who is also a good friend of mine, accepts the money as soon as it is offered to him by the groom. But he would immediately hand it over to the bride. The priest's wife expressed her displeasure at this arrangement. When other priests accept the gift of money and hand them over to their wives, why does her husband choose to act different? Finally, after listening to her taunts for a long time, the priest promised to hand over the gift to her thereafter.

A young man and woman waiting to get married the next day knew nothing about this decision of the priest. They engaged in the following conversation.

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Bride : What do you plan to give the priest tomorrow?

Groom : Why should I tell you what I am going to give the priest?

Bride : Well then. You can keep it to yourself. Let us see tomorrow what that big gift is.

Groom : Wouldn't ten rupees be enough?

Bride : Ten rupees! What's ten Rupees for me? Now if you will add a zero to it, then...

Groom : Right then. Hundred it will be.

Next day, the priest solemnized the wedding. The groom offered him the gift of 100 Rupees. He accepted the gift and told the assembled crowd, "My respected parishioners must forgive me. I have decided to change my usual practice. Hereafter, like other priests, I too will handover the money to my wife."

The groom was chagrined. The bride went pale. Can the priest be blamed for this? What about the bride and the groom? They too are not guilty."



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Chapter 25

THE PERSONAL AURA OF THE ARCHBISHOP

A leading thinker published recently in a newspaper an article, which elucidated the essential qualities to be possessed by a political, community, or religious leader. These are as follows:

1. Strong self-confidence built upon knowledge gleaned from experience and spiritual power.
2. Dexterity and ability to work tirelessly.
3. Acute power of observation, enthusiasm and imaginative power
4. Extraordinary ability to arrive at correct decisions using discretion.
5. A strong resolve to overcome obstacles and to ensure the success of his plans.
6. An active interest in the affairs and problems of his followers.
7. A higher level of morality inspired by a clean and pure conscience.
8. A personality, magnetic enough to attract and influence those around him.
9. Firm faith in the motives and intentions behind the actions of those under him.
10. Finally, the self-motivation to be a true and able leader.

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Beyond any doubt, the aforesaid ten qualities were harmoniously blended in the dynamic personality of His Grace Mar Ivanios. Hence, he was fortunate to don the mantle of a true leader. Space would prove insufficient to record the facts and reasons that favoured his rise to the position of a leader of the Catholic Church. Hence I intend to record some excerpts from the innumerable comments made by eminent men regarding the personal nobility of Mar Ivanios.

In the Spiritual Realm

A prominent member of the Marthoma Church and a cousin of this author, Shri Inchakalody Abraham once made the following remark about His Grace Mar Ivanios, "Had His Grace been born in England, he would have become the Prime Minister of that nation." He opined so, after his interaction with the archbishop on different topics.

Had he channelled his numerous talents towards material pursuits and benefits from his childhood, he would have reached a very eminent position in the same. But he did not concentrate on them and employ his talents for this. His interest in spiritual matters right from his childhood motivated him to devote his entire life in the same field. Hence, he could excel in the field and be crowned with success.

He gave 22 years of selfless and sincere service to the Jacobite Church in which he was born and brought up. Later, when the voice of his conscience led him to the Catholic Church, there too he spent about the same period, offering his life and blood for the Church. Glory of God and the salvation of souls were his only motives. To attain his goal, he laboured to the last day of his life.

In the Jacobite Church

The various services rendered unto the Jacobite Church by His Grace during his tenure as a deacon, priest and superior of Bethany Ashram and metropolitan, have been dealt with in detail in the first volume of this book. A testimony to the high esteem in which His

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Grace and his numerous services were viewed by the Jacobite Church, was given by the citation dedicated to His Grace at a felicitation function organized in his honour at Mavelikkara in 1925. Given below are the words of the citation.

Most Reverend Father,

Mavelikkara, as an allied territory of Travancore, gifted the mother land many great kings and loyal queens, statesmen, artists, educationists etc. In the same way, the diocese of Mavelikkara in Malankara made great contributions in the field of education, population, service to society, and above all to unity, the cornerstone of the edifice of the community. When the dark storm clouds of factionalism, tribulations and legal hassles loom large over the Syrian Church, Mavelikkara has always enjoyed relative peace and stability and has been able to ensure a peaceful and easy lifestyle for the leaders of the Church, thanks be to God Almighty. Inspite of all this, it is only now that Mavelikkara has obtained the privilege to enjoy the mother-status of a bishop. We congratulate Your Grace on your attaining the status of episcopacy. It is indeed a jewel in the crown for this parish. Hence we thank God Almighty for the blessings showered on this parish caused by Your Grace's achievement. We sincerely rejoice in this event, and praise Our Lord who made this happen; we also extend you our heartfelt congratulations.

Our association with Your Grace goes a long way back into our childhood. Even as we marvelled at Your Grace's acute intelligence, innocent devotion to God and great community consciousness, we were convinced that Your Grace was set apart by Our Lord Jesus for a distinguished mission. You were the beloved of two most intelligent and eminent churchmen, Metropolitan

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Pulikkottil Mar Divannasios and the present Metropolitan Mar Divannasios. You were the first one among our community to obtain a Master of Arts degree. You assumed the administrative leadership of the most prominent school of our community and through your efficiency you earned the Malankara Syrian Church the respect of many eminent Western people and famous institutions. Persuaded by many of these eminent men, you taught for a brief while at the Serampore College and enabled many Malayali students to get educated at various colleges in Serampore and Calcutta. It was as a result of your zealous efforts that many priests who were members of the Malankara Syrian Church were able to obtain BA, MA and BD degrees. Later, after years of experience and thinking, when you realized that serving one's community is a noble and blessed life-enterprise, you decided to return to Kerala from Serampore and paved the way for the Bethany Movement thus marking a new chapter in the history of the Malankara Church.

The want of adequate institutions, that teach and testify to the world the noble teachings of Jesus Christ who revealed to the world that love is what influences and purifies the hearts of people and leads them to a noble life, and that love is more powerful than royal authority and it means service and the suffering for it, have created lack of lustre and great hindrance to the growth of the Malankara Syrian Church. The Bethany Order which has its foundation in the ideals of service and sacrifice will, no doubt be able to attain this goal. Moreover, since the modern world respects the alms bowl and the staff of a servant rather than the crown and sceptre of a king, this becomes your mission too as an ascetic of Kerala. Hence we offer our sincere wishes and promise

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our co-operation to Your Grace who has set true examples of sacrifice and is now world renowned as the up-lifter of the ancient monastic movement of the Syrian community.

We request your apostolic prayers and blessings for us. At the same time we pray to God Almighty to help you in all your endeavours. As a token of our love and devotion towards you, we offer you this purse of money, though measly it is, like the two copper-coins offered by the poor widow. We also humbly offer you this citation.

Your spiritual children of the Mavelikkara Malankara Syrian Church

Puthiyakavu – Mavelikkara

12 June 1925

Archbishop's Courage in Self-sacrifice

Given below is an excerpt from the article written on the archbishop by Rev. Father Jacob Njayalloor in the special issue of *Sathya Sabha Kahalam.*

It is a truth, beyond any doubt, that men are the creations of their circumstances. However, only very few people have the real will and power to create their own circumstances and to move ahead with such conditions. Hence, real great men are categorized into two - men, who became great because of their circumstances and men who, created their own circumstances and became great.

However, I do not think His Grace Mar Ivanios fits into the aforesaid groups. He was created by his circumstances and circumstances created him too. Those conditions are much different from yours and mine. It

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was with the highest and mightiest of the Jacobite Church that he came into contact at a very young age. What he had seen before him was a church getting tossed in the turbulent currents of divisive politics and factions; a church that was caught in the web of politics and legal hassles for a long time. Days passed. Slowly he created circumstances. We saw him first as a man on the mission to uplift a Church ripped apart by pitiful circumstances and as a noble monastic head, who went about with a magnetic aura of sacrifice. But later we saw him as an ascetic hero of the Reunion Movement, who embraced truth, disregarding the opposition or criticism of millions of people.

His Grace is the man who gave shape to the great event that was the eager expectation of thousands of people who died as non-Catholics. After those unfortunate episodes in the history of the Malankara Church, many valiant heroes endeavoured day and night for the Reunion Movement. Even then, the Malankara Church had to wait with expectation for His Grace Mar Ivanios.

I urge you to imagine the situation. A man, who was one of the first men from his community to acquire a higher degree, who had earned the respect and devotion of his community, a wise sage who had led the flock to spiritual enlightenment, a spiritual guru who had initiated thousands of people onto the path of sacrifice – and he decides to embrace another Church, leaving his native Church and community! It should not be forgotten that he had led many hundreds of people with him to the Catholic Church. Some ignorant minds label it as a betrayal, some as a lack of love for the native community and ingratitude. Not only that, he was forced into dangerous situations in

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which his life was at stake. How many of us will have the courage to challenge such odds? His Grace Mar Ivanios was brave enough to challenge the adverse circumstances. And he is still continuing his onward victory march.

These are the reasons why we call him a courageous hero. His will power, his refusal to bow to adverse situations, his utter disregard for problems, criticisms and oppositions, will surely amaze those who observe him carefully.

Each time you observe and study His Grace, you will definitely encounter new psychological aspects. I have heard many people claiming to be closely associated with or acquainted with His Grace Mar Ivanios. I have heard many of them say, "I know His Grace well." Pitiable people! They do not realize that their words are like the opinions of the blind men in the parable who shared the description of an elephant after they touched and felt it.

You might not agree with some policies of His Grace. But can any one of you raise doubts regarding the purity of his motives? Even those who distance themselves from religious matters will never question the nobility of his personality. He is a great man, and also a man with a great personality. Hail to you, O great one!

***Kooppukai* (Folded hands)**

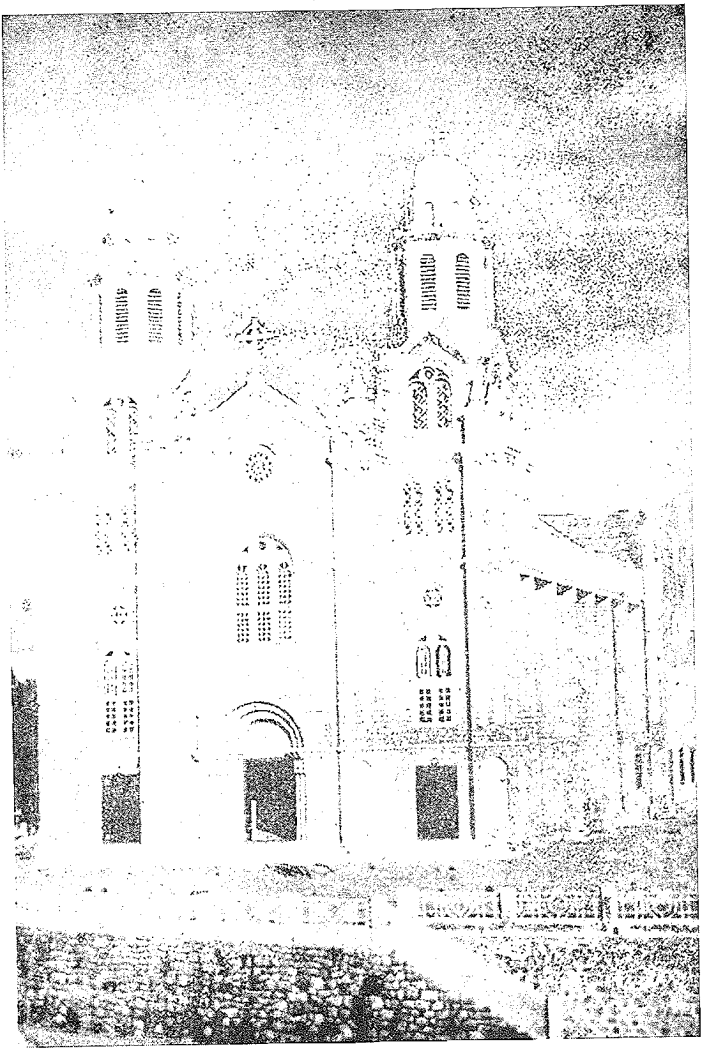
A few lines from a poem recited by the noted poet Idayaranmula Shri KM Varghese BA, LT at a function held to felicitate His Grace soon after his return from America are given below:

Holy cross adorned with golden stars decorate the mitre,

That sits resplendently on your beautiful head

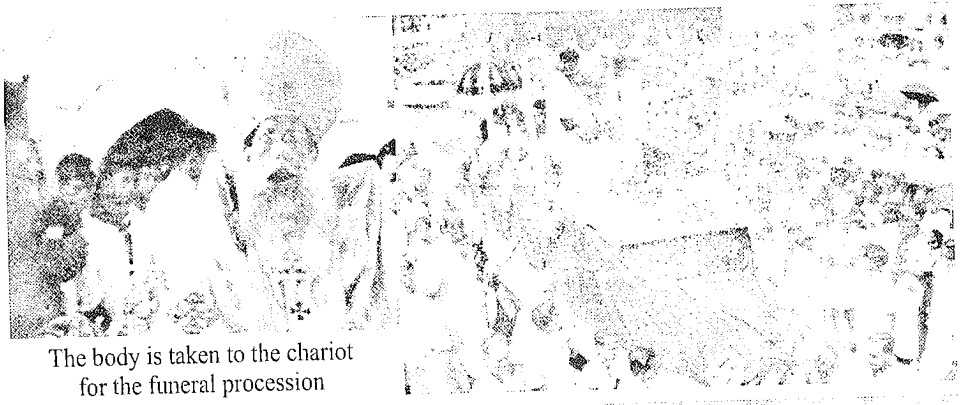
Forehead radiating keen intellect

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The Archbishop is laid to rest in the tomb at the centre of the crypt below the sanctuary in the eastern end of this church

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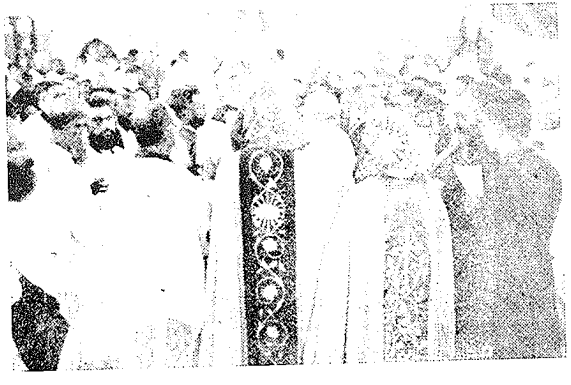


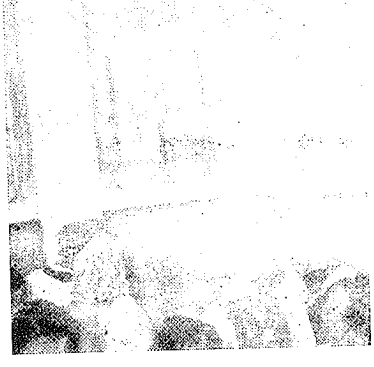
The body is taken to the chariot for the funeral procession

The funeral procession through the city

Down :

1. The last *dhoopaprarthana*





2. The body is laid to rest in the tomb

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Two lovely eyebrows as beautiful as the earth
Your nose indicates boldness, and your eyes,
Radiant and bright, enthrals others.
Your beard trumpets your spiritual radiance
The red cloth beautifully adorned with
And woven into the pure white robes.
Shining golden cross in one hand, the other holding
The sceptre with a hooded snake at the tip.

Has the occidental world heard of
The glorious exploits of the Nazrani lions?
Today, your holy sight has granted them,
O noble one, the privilege of seeing them for real.
Spellman and others have seen in you,
The message of unity and the sanctity of life.
They see in you Cardinal Newman, and
Saint Francis Xavier, jewel among the wise.
O! Crown among the good! Your words fall on human ears,
Like a shower of the holy nectar.
No place has remained unsanctified,
By the holy dust from thy feet.
Purity and peace fills every heart,
When you celebrate the Holy Qurbono.
Every knee bends before you in reverence,
O, Crown among the Sages!
America honoured you with a degree, and
Marked your arrival with feats and celebrations.

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May the Lord who rules over the blue skies above,
And the vast expanse of oceans
Protect you from sorrows forever.
May your mission reach its fruition!
For this, may He shower his blessings on you!

Welcome Speech made at the Jubilee Celebrations

In 1950, the silver jubilee of His Grace's episcopal ordination was held in various parts of the archdiocese. Given below is a part of the speech made by Bishop Mar Augustine Kandathil of Eranakulam, at a function held at Devikulam to felicitate His Grace Mar Ivanios.

Most Rev. archbishops, bishops, priests and other dignitaries,

The Silver Jubilee celebrations of the episcopal ordination of His Grace Mar Ivanios are being held in various parts of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. It would be inappropriate if the residents of Devikulam let the day go unmarked. Hence we decided to invite the residents, local dignitaries, priests, and His Grace Dr Bonaventura, administrator of the Diocese of Vijayapuram to this tea party. Everybody who is acquainted with His Grace would agree with me that this day calls for a greater and grander celebration. Had the world known whose Jubilee we are celebrating here, all the Catholics and non-Catholics of the world, ranging from President Truman to an ordinary peon would flock to this place to attend the function.

His Grace was born 68 years ago. He was an extraordinary student and shone forth like a star among his classmates. The scholarship of Deacon PT

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Geevarghese MA was renowned not only among the Jacobites, but also among men of other religions. After his priestly ordination, he attained fame not only as a *guru* of seminarians, but also as a professor in Serampore College. His influence and fame is evident from the fact that in Calcutta, students who failed to get a first class in examinations were able to secure seats for courses recommended by Father PT Geevarghese. It is his scholarship and devotion to God that enabled him to be worthy of the episcopal status. That was the day when he came to be known as Mar Ivanios, instead of Father PT Geevarghese. Bishops are the princes in the Kingdom of God. In the spiritual realm, they possess extraordinary powers. Today, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of His Grace being elevated to such an eminent position. What makes this event grander is the fact that His Grace, with his eminence added to the eminence of this high Episcopal dignity.

About three centuries back, all Syrian Christians were united. They lived undivided. It was during the time of the Portuguese that disagreement and dissension rose among the faithful. Hence, we, the Catholics who truly believe that Catholicism is the only true religion, experienced immense joy when many Jacobites were able to re-join the Catholic Church through the Reunion Movement initiated by His Grace. It should also be noted that after founding the Order of the Imitation of Christ, he decided to truly imitate Jesus Christ. It was then that he was inspired towards realising this. A metropolitan, who had earned immense fame and renown as the confidante of Metropolitan Mar Divannasios, who

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excelled as a brave lion in the Jacobite Church, chose to embrace the Catholic Church, without pausing to reflect on the future. After the reunion, he discarded the immense powers and position granted to him by the Jacobite Church and joined the Catholic Church empty-handed. There were many questions before him. Will he be able to exercise his Episcopal authority? Will people from his community follow him? How will he be received by the Catholics? In his congratulatory message written in his own hand by His Holiness Pope Pius XII, the Holy Father has remembered with gratitude the numerous trials and tribulations, experienced by His Grace before and after the Reunion Movement.

The archdiocese formed in the year 1932 is past its fledgling days. Today, he is the shepherd to a flock of over 70000 Faithful. The archdiocese is bejewelled by various schools and crowned with a college. Many mission stations and churches bear testimony to the prosperity of the archdiocese. In a congratulatory message sent by the Secretary of the Congregation of the Oriental Churches, His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant has praised the devotion, fortitude and noble nature of Metropolitan Mar Ivanios. He can be easily counted among eminent dignitaries like President Truman and Jawaharlal Nehru. He has obtained a position of respect among the eminent men of the world. People of America honoured him with the LLD Degree. As a result of his international tours, India is made known in other countries. For those Indians in Canada who did not have citizenship, His Grace was able to secure citizenship. When we consider these facts, his power of influence and efficiency become evident.

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He is always ready to help people of any caste or creed, who come to him seeking help. I consider it my privilege and good fortune to propose welcome to such an eminent Churchman. I am happy that we have been able to celebrate this silver jubilee in this manner, however simple it might be. Let Our Heavenly Father, for whose glory His Grace has laboured and sacrificed much be with him forever in this world and beyond! May His Grace be granted health, long life and happiness to work for the prosperity of all his endeavours dedicated to the glory of God and the betterment of man!



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Chapter 26

ON THE SICK-BED

Born as the descendant of Mavelikkara Mallitti Panicker, a soldier and a man of great physical fitness, the members of the Panicker family excelled everyone in physical health. The Archbishop's father, mother, brothers and sisters were healthy and physically fit. His father died at the age of 94, and his mother, when she was 73. His Grace Mar Ivanios also grew up healthy from his childhood. As a deacon and as the principal of the MD Seminary as a priest, no disease afflicted him. However, when he was professor in Serampore College, rheumatism afflicted him. The unfavourable climate at Serampore or the food habits there, or his tireless work could have caused the disease. Judge A Philipose, a close friend and associate of His Grace records in his autobiography, an account of His Grace's illness and subsequent treatment thus:

Afflicted by Rheumatism

> His Grace Mar Ivanios (then known as Father P T Geevarghese) returned terribly sick from Serampore to Kottayam in 1917. His condition was bad and his recuperation was rather doubtful. I had the privilege to bring him to my house in Kottayam and to take care of him for a few weeks. He was so ill that he could not even speak. He could be given only light food prescribed by his doctor. He was ordered to take complete bed rest. Sometimes, I used to sit near him and try to talk to him about his illness and the treatment. But, he was more interested in talking about his Bethany institutions. "Oh, My God! What incredible will power you had given him!

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With utter disregard for his health and life, he could think only about his mission for the glory of God...

After a few months' treatment, there was some progress in his condition. However, the doctor prescribed that he should undergo the ayurvedic treatment of massage every year and he did so. He used to travel from Vadasserikkara Bethany to Kottayam and stay in a rented house in Kottayam during the length of his treatment. Though the doctor had ordered dietary restrictions for about 90 days, after a few days he was allowed to receive visitors. His enthusiasm and our joy knew no bounds on such occasions. I was in Kottayam at that time. So, along with my friend the late Mr KV Chacko, I used to visit him and talk to him on certain matters. Sometimes, Father Parettu (now Mar Ivanios, Metropolitan of the Jacobite Church) too came from Puthuppally and visited him a few times a week and used to join us in our conversations about Church matters (Autobiography, page 83).

Had His Grace succumbed to that attack of rheumatism, the Catholic Church would have lost forever, a brave warrior who had much more contributions to offer to the religious, educational, political, and above all, spiritual development and progress of the Church. But the omnipotent and omniscient God did not allow that. For, Mar Ivanios was a great man chosen by God.

During the American Tour

In 1932, His Grace made a European tour. But neither the extreme harsh winter nor his tireless daily labour affected his health. However, a letter written by him shows that he stayed in Belgium for three weeks to recuperate from the trying journey. It was during his American tour that he showed the first signs of illness. Two letters written to the then

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Indian Aposotolic Delegate, His Grace Martin Lucas, prove this fact. One of the letters sent on 10 November 1947 says thus:

> His Eminence Cardinal Mooney had made all arrangements for my treatment at Providence Hospital. Doctor Forman Clarke examined me and ordered an X-ray test. He gave some directions regarding my diet and rest. I am expected to follow them. In addition, the doctor is of the opinion that I am healthy enough for my age. He advised me to follow the prescribed diet and asked me to sleep for at least eight hours a day and to do some exercises. It is with happiness that I inform you that the test confirmed my ability, God willing, to continue my humble service for him for some more time.

Another letter sent to the delegate on 24 January 1948 says thus:

> During my visit to Detroit and Chicago, I had to spend five weeks in a hospital. Apart from that, I spent only about 2 months in the USA. The doctors at the hospital of the Alexian Brothers have asked to see me for another round of examinations to give some instructions regarding my health, before I return to India. I intend to go to the Alexian Brothers Hospital from New York immediately. From there, I will go to San Francisco and subsequently, to India.

He wrote a letter from a Chicago hospital on 10 April 1948. It says:

> Last Saturday I bade farewell to Cardinal Spellman and now I am at the hospital of the Alexian Brothers for further medical tests and examination. Two months back, I fell sick and was admitted in this hospital for a few weeks. The doctors here had told me that it was important for me to undergo another examination before I left America

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for India. That is why I decided to come here for my treatment.

At the Bishop's House in Trivandrum

After a successful American–Australian tour, His Grace returned to Trivandrum in June 1948. During that time, he expressed his concern regarding his health to some of his close friends and associates. Though he was 67 years old then, it was beyond doubt that his illness had nothing to do with his age. It was not merely the symptoms of rheumatism. He had to refuse gratefully invitations for felicitation functions organized in various churches to mark his successful overseas tour. But, there were a few journeys which he could not avoid. As he was absent from the Archdiocese for about a year, he had to get done certain very important work for a few months. It was during this time that the Panampally plan rose up in the Thiru-Kochi region. For many months, he had a strenuous time organizing protests against this plan. The details regarding this incident have been recorded in the earlier chapters. Though he was content that his efforts succeeded, his health deteriorated day by day.

Rest at Devikulam

Though he was ill, none of the symptoms were visible externally. Hence, nobody took much notice of it. But at the advice of some people, His Grace decided to go to Devikulam for a month for rest and recuperation. It did not cause any major improvement in his health. Father Seraphion OIC who had been with His Grace during his stay at Devikulam recorded those days thus:

> During the summer holidays of 1952, His Grace decided to go to Devikulam for rest and convalescence. He invited me to go along with him. Since there was no tabernacle to keep the Holy Eucharist, he wrote to me to bring one with me. I took one with me when I went to Devikulam.

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There was no intention to build a Bishop's House and a Cathedral in Trivandrum during his lifetime. He used to say, "Who can afford to build big buildings now? We require more mission houses and new institutions and that should be our priority now. If we are not able to do it now, we may not be able to do it ever. If we plan to please anybody and everybody, we will not be able to achieve anything. If we try to arrange money before we plan to do something, we will not be able to put our plan into action".

His Grace did not have any intention to construct a Cathedral. But as he was aware that death was approaching, he expressed the desire to build a tomb before his death. He told me that he wanted to start the work on the Cathedral immediately and he wanted his tomb to be placed right beneath the sanctuary. Also, he told me at Devikulam that he wanted to lay the foundation stone for the Cathedral as soon as he returned to Trivandrum. Hence, the construction of the Cathedral and his tomb started immediately after his return to Trivandrum.

His Medical Examination in Trivandrum

His Grace returned to Trivandrum from Devikulam in June 1952. During this time, there developed a visible swelling above his stomach. Though he did some treatment for it, the swelling grew in size day by day. Immediately, Dr Keshavan Nair, the Superintendent of the Medical College Trivandrum, was brought in to examine him. Even after a thorough examination, the doctor was unable to diagnose the ailment. Meanwhile His Grace was experiencing physical fatigue, indigestion, loss of appetite etc. Since it was a matter of His Grace, the doctors in Trivandrum did not want to do any experimental treatment or surgery on him. They opined that His Grace should be taken to some speciality hospitals outside Kerala for further check-up and treatment. It was decided that His Grace should be taken to Madras to be treated by the eminent physician, Dr Masilamani.

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A Surgery Performed by Sixteen Doctors

His Grace was taken by car to Madras in the first week of July 1952. Rev. Fr Francis Sales and Father Philip Pantholil accompanied His Grace. In Madras, a team of doctors led by Dr Masilamani examined him. They were of the unanimous opinion that His Grace was suffering from an ailment in his stomach and it cannot be diagnosed by an x-ray test. Hence, he had to be operated upon immediately. The surgery was scheduled on the morning of 7 July. His Grace was shifted to a house owned by Dr Viswanathan, near the premises of the hospital run by Dr Pandala. As they were informed beforehand of the date of the surgery via telegram, His Grace Mar Severios from Tiruvalla and Fr Seraphion from Trivandrum had reached Madras.

The operation team consisted of sixteen doctors including Dr Masilamani, Mrs Masilamani, Dr Viswanathan, Dr Kalekkaattil Aniyankunju and Mrs Aniyankunju. Though the surgery was done safely, it was not altogether successful. But the doctors were able to diagnose the disease ailing His Grace. The upper portion of his liver was covered with small swellings. Since it is a vital organ, it could not be operated upon. A speedy recovery was also ruled out. The doctors opined in unison that treatments would give him only temporary relief.

Even the doctors were concerned by the terrible fever that afflicted His Grace after the surgery. However, due to effective and efficient treatment, they were able to control the fever in two or three days. His Grace stayed for three more weeks in Madras for further treatment and recuperation. Since the climate of Madras was intolerably hot, many people advised His Grace to go to Bangalore for rest, as the climate there was good.

At St Martha's Hospital in Bangalore

Towards the end of July, along with Fr Sales and Fr Seraphion, His Grace set out for Bangalore in a car. Since he was exhausted by the journey, they stopped at a Franciscan Monastery on the way and rested for a few hours. Later, they reached St Martha's Hospital in

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Bangalore. There he was carried by four people to a room arranged for him in the first floor. Even during his stay there, he experienced terrible exhaustion. Since the doctors there were unaware of the medical condition of His Grace, a telegram was sent to Dr Masilamani in Madras, asking him to come to Bangalore. Dr Masilamani came, examined him and prescribed a few medicines. But they did not have any effect on him. Since all were convinced that there was not much time left for the death of His Grace, they decided to take His Grace back to Trivandrum. Since he was informed of this decision, His Grace Mar Severios too reached Bangalore.

At the Bethany Ashram in Trivandrum

On 10 August 1952, His Grace was taken by flight to Trivandrum. He was accompanied by Fr Salas and Fr Seraphion. Hundreds of priests and laymen thronged the airports at Bangalore and Kochi to see His Grace. A large crowd comprising priests, nuns, and prominent members of the laity were present at the Trivandrum airport. He was carried into the waiting ambulance and was taken to the Bethany Ashram at Nalanchira. A room was specially arranged for him. Father Koshy OIC of the Bethany Ashram was chosen to take care of His Grace. Many eminent doctors of Trivandrum, including His Grace's paternal uncle Dr PT Chacko visited the Ashram frequently to examine him and to give him necessary treatment. In addition, Dr Masilamani used to come from Madras to visit him occasionally and give necessary directions and suggestions.

Pastoral Letter

Since he was convinced that his end was near, His Grace sent a pastoral letter for the faithful of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum on 15 August. It read like this:

> Beloved in the Lord,
>
> After my American tour, I understood that my health was deteriorating. Since, my services were unavoidable

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in certain urgent matters related to the archdiocese, I was forced to engage in those duties. As a result, I could not pay much attention to my failing health. My doctors and my beloved brother bishops persuaded me to seek further treatment in Madras. I underwent a surgery there, which was successful. Since the climate in Madras was unsuitable, I decided to go to St Martha's Hospital in Bangalore and rested there for a few days. Since it was my desire to be with you, my beloved children, I reached Trivandrum last Sunday and have been staying at the Nalanchira Bethany Ashram. To recover and to regain my health doctors have prescribed complete rest for a few days.

I understand that all of you are praying for me, your weak servant. I firmly believe that your ardent prayers will prove a blessing both for the archdiocese and for me, and that Our Lord Jesus will grant me strength and health once again.

May the grace and blessings of our Lord Jesus continue to be showered on you!

May all these be fulfilled through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints! Amen

Mar Ivanios
Archbishop

Bethany Ashram
Trivandrum
15 August 1952

***Kantheela* / Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick Administered**

Since he was down with extreme physical exhaustion and since everyone was convinced that his days on earth were numbered, it

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was decided that *kantheela*, the sacrament of anointing of the sick for bishops and priests, be administered to him. Mar Augustin Kandathil, an advisor and a close friend of His Grace was informed of this and he reached the Bethany Ashram at the appointed time. On 2 September, with a liturgical celebration lasting for about 2.5 hours, the *kantheela* was administered to him by His Grace Mar Severios as the celebrant and the Bishops of the dioceses of Kottayam and Thoothukkudy as co-celebrants in the presence of many priests, nuns and the faithful. Shri A J John, the Chief minister of Thiru-Kochi, Shri RV Thomas, Justice Joseph Thaliyath, Dr Jacob Thaliyath and many other prominent Catholics of Trivandrum attended the ceremony. His Grace was lying in his bed. But he was fully conscious. He said the prayers and received the anointing with devotion.

He rested at the Bethany Ashram for a fortnight more. Later, he expressed his desire to be moved to the Bishop's House, the same building which he had built and in which had lived for over 20 years. He was moved from the Ashram to the Bishop's House.

In the Bishop's House at Pattom

His medical condition after he was moved to the Bishop's House was reported in the *Satya Sabha Kahalam* magazine thus:

> His Grace has been moved to the Bishop's House on 14 September. Dr Masilamani comes from Madras occasionally to visit him. Eminent doctors like Dr Thaliyath and Dr Chacko have decided that a blood transfusion might improve the health of His Grace. As per their decision, His Grace underwent blood transfusion on Monday, 15 September. (Rev. Fr Jose Mathew, Principal of Mar Theophilos Training College donated the blood.)
>
> His Grace receives expert medical opinion and the latest treatment available. Though he is tired because of

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the ailment, he appears pleasant as always. He is on the path to recovery. We request the faithful to continue to pray for His Grace.

The January issue of the *Kahalam* reported thus:

His Grace is gradually recuperating from his illness. No further treatment is deemed necessary for him. Nor does he need frequent visits by doctors. Hence, by the year's end the daily check up by doctors too have been stopped.

Ordination of the Auxiliary Bishop

His Grace had thought of and decided upon his successor, who would lead the Archdiocese of Trivandrum, even years before he was bed-ridden. A letter written by him from America to the Apostolic Delegate of India on 18 November 1947 proves this fact. It should be mentioned specially here, that this letter was written almost six years before the ordination of the Auxiliary Bishop. Given below is an excerpt from the letter:

I have informed Father Benedict OIC to come here and meet me before I leave America for Rome. After his studies at the Papal Seminary in Kandy, he is now pursuing his postgraduate course in Economics at St Joseph's College, Trichinopoly. It is my wish to go to Rome and offer veneration to His Holiness the Pope. I intend to take Father Benedict with me, because I believe the trip to Rome will benefit him greatly. Moreover, I can introduce him to the Pope and the Cardinal as one of the most eligible priests in the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. I am doing this with a vision for the future.

However, since His Grace had to go to Australia from America, he was unable to go to Rome and meet His Holiness the Pope. Hence,

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Father Benedict was asked not to go to America. As a result of the correspondence, after His Grace's return from Australia, Father Benedict was appointed Auxiliary Bishop and the successor of Mar Ivanios. His Grace received the Papal Bull regarding the same from Rome through the Delegate Apostolic in India. Though the illness fatigued him, His Grace decided to do the Episcopal Ordination with his own hands. Though many people tried to dissuade him from the lengthy and strenuous ceremony, His Grace was inspired by his innate strength and decided to proceed with his plans.

Thus on 29 January 1953, at the floor of the Cathedral under construction, attached to the Metropolitan's House, the solemn Episcopal ordination was held in a two-tiered decorated *pandal*, and Rev. Fr Benedict OIC, MA was ordained as Benedict Mar Gregorios. Numerous priests, nuns and thousands of laity attended the ceremony. The ceremony was held along with the Holy Qurbono offered by His Grace. Mar Severios, the Bishop of Tiruvalla and Dr Thomas Tharayil, Auxiliary Bishop of Kottayam were the co-celebrants. His Grace disregarded his sickness and solemnized the two-and-a-half hours long ceremony.

Suffering During the Passion Week.

By March, the condition of His Grace aggravated for the worse. His condition was critical. On the day of the beginning of the Passion Week, he slipped into unconsciousness. Everybody was convinced that by the end of the week, His Grace would leave this earth forever. Fr CT Kuruvila, who had taken care of His Grace during that time, describes his medical condition thus:

> When I reached here, His Grace was lying unconscious in his bed. He was breathing hard frequently and he could not speak at all. I sat by him near his bed. His Grace Mar Gregorios, His Grace's special caretaker

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Rev. Fr Koshy OIC and other reverend priests in the Bishop's House were standing near him. Whenever we felt that he was partly conscious, we chanted the prayers and made him kiss the crucifix. Since we were sure that death may occur any time, none of us attended the church services on Good Friday.

Meanwhile the new Internuncio Martin Lucas, who came to India, heard about the ill-health of His Grace and came to Trivandrum to see him. But His Grace was unable to speak to the Internuncio. The next day, as I was sitting by his bedside, he suddenly opened his eyes and started talking to me. I immediately called in the auxiliary bishop. Suddenly everybody came into the room. How happy we were to hear him speak once again! We felt as if His Grace rose from his death. We immediately called the Internuncio too. When His Grace the auxiliary bishop informed him of the arrival of the Internuncio, His Grace said in English, "Welcome, a Big Welcome", in a low voice. His Holiness Pope Pius XI used the very same words to welcome His Grace Mar Ivanios, when the pope first met him in 1932. His Grace the Internuncio sat by his bedside and spoke lovingly for a few minutes. Though His Grace tried to say something, the words were not clear.

After that, at times, he used to lie with his eyes closed. At that time, I didn't chant the *sukrutajapam* (ejaculatory prayer). He thought I was asleep and told me, "Even if my eyes are closed, you should continue to recite the prayers." Sometimes he used to repeat the prayers after me. About ten days passed in this manner.

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After spending a week in the Bishop's House, His Grace the Internuncio planned to return to Delhi. Before leaving, he visited His Grace in his sick-bed, chanted prayers for him and imparted the papal blessings. His Grace, who was fully conscious then, remarked, "What a great privilege!" His Grace the Internuncio whispered in his ears, "Your Grace deserves it." Yes, what he said was absolutely true.



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Chapter 27

SOME CONVERSATIONS DURING THE ARCHBISHOP'S ILLNESS

The words spoken by His Grace during the days of his illness bear testimony to his keen intellect, far-sightedness, spiritual experience, compassion and his passion for the mission. Given below are a few such snippets of conversation.

I

Following his surgery, suffering excruciating pain, he stayed in Madras for a few days. Some priests from Kerala visited him in the hospital. As soon as he saw them, he recited a few lines from a famous Malayalam poem and welcomed them.

Alas! Here lies on earth

Spattered with blood

A goodly handsome boy

Radiant like the emerald stone.

Readers can imagine how meaningful and how appropriate these lines are!

II

At the time His Grace was hospitalized in Madras, the Catholics of Kerala were planning to celebrate in Ernakulam the 19th centenary of the arrival of St Thomas the Apostle, their father in faith. The papal representative, His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant was supposed to inaugurate the function. But, some people sent him a letter claiming

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that St. Thomas the Apostle had never come to Kerala, and hence the celebration of the same is meaningless. So, His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant cancelled his trip to Kerala. The news was broken to His Grace in his sickbed by a worried Archbishop Mar Severios. Instantly, he forgot his bodily pain. Inflamed by his love for his community and by his scholarship in history, he uttered loudly, "Who said that St Thomas the Apostle never came to Kerala? Have these people ever seen history? Isn't there anybody in Kerala to send a befitting reply to Rome?"

It is known to everybody that His Grace was a scholar who had written many books and conducted many talks tracing the lineage of the Syrian Christians in Kerala to Saint Thomas the Apostle, who had come to Kerala.

III

His Grace Mar Severios had made all arrangements to bring His Grace Mar Ivanios back to Trivandrum from Bangalore by flight. The date was fixed. When this was informed to His Grace, he said, "No, Archbishop Mar Severios needn't come with me by flight. If the plane crashes, the Malankara Syrian Hierarchy will be orphaned. Even for ordination, we will have to depend on bishops from other Churches. If so, all that alleged by the non-Catholics in the past will come true. So, Your Grace can travel to Trivandrum by train."

As a result of his persuasion, His Grace Mar Severios arrived in Trivandrum by train, instead of taking a flight from Bangalore. What great far-sightedness! How enthusiastic he was about the progress and prosperity of the Reunion Movement and the Malankara Hierarchy!

IV

Even when he was in his sickbed, His Grace used to discuss in private with His Grace Mar Gregorios important matters related to

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the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and the Reunion Movement. On one such occasion, he happened to remark, "When I reach heaven after my death, I will continue to pray in the presence of the Lord, for the reunion of my non-Catholic brothers."

Yes, even today everybody associated with the Reunion Movement are enjoying the fruits of the prayers of His Grace.

V

When he was resting at the Bishop's House following his treatment, His Grace was sometimes taken to the college to enjoy the fresh evening air. While sitting on a chair in the college courtyard, or while roaming the campus, leaning on the shoulders of his helpers, he used to revive the memories of the past. Once when he surveyed the huge sprawling campus with its numerous buildings and hostels, he thought about the remarkable progress made by the Reunion Movement and commented, "In those early days, many people used to make fun of me saying that the Bishop of Bethany would soon be seen with a begging bowl. But look at the progress we have made. Poor people! What do they know about the Catholic Church or the Reunion Movement? They are mere materialists".

Within twenty years His Grace could silence his critics because of the millions of Rupees worth of land, institutions, churches, ashrams, convents, charity homes, etc. the Reunion Movement could acquire.

VI

His Grace was resolute that the priests taking care of him in his sickbed should recite prayers to him frequently. If they made any mistake while reciting the prayers, he used to correct them. Once, Fr C T Kuruvilla chanted to him the following prayer: "My Jesus, I love you with all my heart." Upon hearing this, His Grace said, "That is not how it should be chanted. You should say, "My Jesus, I offer to you my entire heart. Give me your love."

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During the *kantheela* at Bethany Ashram, as per the custom, His Grace Mar Severios chanted the following line. "O God! Have mercy on his soul!" (*Daivame, ivannte atmavintemel karunathonnename*) Immediately His Grace corrected him and said, "You should say, "Have mercy on His Grace's soul." (Daivame, ***iddhehathinte***[1] *atmavintemel karunathonnename*) Mar Severios corrected and chanted the prayer as per the wishes of His Grace.

VII

His Grace had directed much before his death that his tomb should be constructed as soon as possible and that it should be below the Cathedral, towards the eastern side. However, when he found that the work was delayed, he said, "The pig won't wait until the moon rises. The tomb should be built as soon as possible." So the work of the tomb was stepped up. However, the tomb was being built on the eastern-end of the Cathedral, below the sacristy. When he came to know of this, His Grace immediately ordered the tomb to be dismantled and ordered one to be built beneath the main altar. As per his wishes, his tomb was built below the main altar.

One day, leaning on to his manager Chacko for support, His Grace visited the site to see the newly built tomb. Looking at the tomb where his mortal remains would be entombed till the world's end, he meditated for a few minutes. Then he said, "Oh, the little house for my eternal rest! Let me sleep peacefully within you! Let me also wake up to everlasting joy from you!"

It was indeed the real spirit of Christian hope and prayers that His Grace expressed through these words.

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[1] *Iddhehathinte* is a respective form of "his" in Malayalam and it cannot in fact be translated as "His Grace". But there is no other form of "his" in English.

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VIII

At the Bethany Ashram, when His Grace was suffering intense pain due to the illness, he used to recollect past events and memories. One such time, he was overcome with regret and he said, "I have made many mistakes in my life. I am sure the loving God will forgive my mistakes, because, my intentions behind those actions were pure." He thought about something else and then said, "I am convinced even now that my actions were just; somehow they were not affable. It grieves me even now."

IX

Once he remarked to his caretaker Fr Koshy, "Our dear Lord has granted every wish of mine. Now, I have two more final wishes. One, I want to celebrate a Holy Qurbono in our cathedral under construction. Also, I wish to ordain an auxiliary bishop by my own hands." Our Heavenly Father granted him these two wishes. Though he was in the sickbed, as a healthy man he stood up, celebrated the Holy Qurbono in the new Cathedral under construction and on this occasion he could ordain the auxiliary bishop. That he had been able to do both these things, even when he was extremely ill, was a matter of wonder to many. God Almighty, who had blessed His Grace all his life, had granted his wishes in the dusk of his life too.

X

According to the desire expressed by His Grace, a crucifix was placed on the right side of his bed. It helped him to meditate on the passion of Christ at the time of crucifixion. But he was not satisfied with one crucifix. He told his bystander, "I am able to see the crucifix only when I lie facing the right side. So, please place a crucifix on the left side too, so that I may be able to see it when I lie facing the left side." Even in his sickbed, he had the incredible fortune to join in spirit the passion of our Lord Jesus.

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XI

The author of this book belonged to the Pandalam mission. He visited His Grace once to see him and to seek his blessings. It was about a month before the sad demise of His Grace. After kissing his hand, we exchanged pleasantries for a few minutes. I told him of my intention to publish a new book. Immediately he replied, "That is good. I too will make a contribution. He told Mar Gregorios who was standing nearby, "Your Grace, Please give him two hundred and fifty rupees." I shed tears of joy. I was thrilled at the benevolence shown by His Grace and the encouragement given by him even in his sickbed. I knelt before him. I received the last blessings I would receive from him in this mortal world. After kissing his hand, I took leave of him. When I saw him next near the altar of Palayam St Mary's church, he was seated on a chair, his mortal remains dressed in the ecclesiastical garb befitting his status and holding the crosier. What I saw was the empty nest after the singing bird had flown away.



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Chapter 28

DEATH AND FUNERAL

We now enter the final moments of a pious soul who bade farewell to earthly life after 72 years of selfless service for God and the Church. It is with an aching heart and quivering fingers that this chapter is written. However, without recording these final moments, this book and this biography will be incomplete.

Man and Death

It is willed by God that every man born on this earth should leave it one day through death. No man can violate this maxim; no one will be able to violate this. This shows the deep relation between man and death. But God hides from man, the time, nature and manner of his death. May be, it is so, that man should be always prepared for death whenever, wherever and whichever manner God chooses, that He intertwined the certainty and uncertainty of death.

People of all caste and creed agree that a good and natural death is the luckiest thing that can happen to a mortal being on this earth. Death by accident is considered bad, whereas a natural death is deemed good. But, whatever be the manner of death, if a man dies with God's grace and hope in eternal life, it can be spiritually considered a good death. Merciful God will definitely grant the boon of good death to all those who spend their entire life in the love and service of God. His Grace Mar Ivanios, who had spent his entire lifetime for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, was granted this benediction of a good death.

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Preparing for his Final Journey

As he was bedridden for over a year, His Grace had enough time to prepare for his death. He had lived his entire life always ready to welcome the messenger of death. He chose to spend his final hours immersing himself more deeply in spiritual matters. His Grace showed keen interest in self-mortification, confession, the reception of the Holy Eucharist and prayers. To hear his weekly confessions and to give him spiritual advice, His Grace had already enlisted the service of the Latin parish vicar and the European priest, Fr Francis. Hence Fr Francis used to visit him weekly at the Bishop's House and spend an hour or so giving him spiritual guidance and hearing his confession. His Grace has also demanded that those who take care of him should recite to him aloud the canonical prayers. He also maintained that they should continue doing so even if he was unconscious.

For about three months from March 1953, His Grace had to suffer excruciating physical pain. The blood-coloured fluid that oozed from the liver stagnated in his stomach had to be drained frequently. The ailment impaired his power of speech. However, he tried to communicate important matters with others.

Visitors and Care-takers

People from all walks of life including laity, priests and nuns, flocked daily to the Bishop's House to visit him. Bishops of Catholic and non-Catholic Churches visited him and prayed for him. The Australian Cardinal Gilroy, who had previously presided over the Jubilee Celebrations at Ernakulam as the papal representative, visited His Grace, prayed with him and gave him spiritual advice. The Apostolic Delegate to India, Most Rev. Kierkels cancelled all his prior appointments and stayed for one week at the Bishop's House. He showed interest in taking care of His Grace and gave him his final benediction and blessing.

Many priests and laymen expressed their desire to be given a

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chance to take care of His Grace in his illness and their wish was granted. Due to the constraint of space, it is not possible to mention the names of everyone who took care of His Grace. However, as a historian, I am forced to mention a few names here. His Grace Most Rev. Mar Gregorios, Msgr Philipose Ramban, Msgr CT Kuruvila, Rev. fathers Francis Salas CMI, Philip Pantholil, Seraphion OIC and Koshy OIC were some of the eminent churchmen who took care of His Grace. He was also cared for by many prominent members of the laity, like Shri Kileelethu Chacko, Mathai Malancheruvil, the driver Geevarghese, G Chacko and KV Thomas. Chackochettan, the faithful servant of His Grace and a beloved of both the priests and the laity, deserves a special mention here.

Final Message

When he realized that his sojourn on earth is about to end, His Grace decided to deliver a message to his beloved people and all those who are associated with the Reunion Movement. He sent a lengthy final message to all churches. Of the three parts in it, the first part of the message deals with the circumstances that made him initiate the Reunion Movement, the work he had done associated with it, and the conditions that existed then. In the second part, he expresses his heartfelt gratitude to all those who had helped him selflessly in the Reunion Movement. The third part contains his final message to all those who were at that time involved with the Movement. The final part of the message is given here.

> Beloved in the Lord!
>
> Even now my heart aches for the non-Catholic brethren of Kerala, who are the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bone. I desired intensely, laboured tirelessly and prayed endlessly to see them reunited with our Catholic brothers. Unfortunately, it did not happen. I hope that our wish will be fulfilled in the near future and I pray to our Heavenly father for the same.

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Beloved in the Lord, as the Holy Spirit has said, "There is no one righteous, no, not one", we are also not different. If ever I have hurt or caused pain to anyone in my life, I appeal to your love, to forgive me in the name of our Saviour. Likewise, I forgive in the name of our loving God all those who had hurt me, intentionally or otherwise.

My beloved children, as the Apostle teaches, I too say, "Pray for each other and pray for me too." Even if I am cured of my ailment, or if I enter my everlasting rest, I will consider your heartfelt prayers as my refuge and my most valuable treasure. "As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day", said Saint Paul. I beseech you to pray for me so that these words will give me solace at my final moment. Beloved ones, let us work hard to attain that crown of justice.

Be proud of being a Catholic. May the sanctity of your lives and the good examples serve as a guiding lamp to non-Catholics! May each one of you reflect our Beloved Jesus Christ in you! Let each one of you strive to transform yourself into the Messiah. Let the parents be enthusiastic to raise up their children to be in the service of the Messiah. And they should place the spiritual growth of their beloved children in the Messiah – growth in grace - above their physical development. Dear children! May each of your families be the abode of grace, peace and prosperity, like the Holy Family in Nazareth. May the King Messiah dwell forever in your hearts and your home!

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Finally, I remember all our faithful and impart our paternal blessing with the words of blessing of our beloved Saviour.

May all of us, you, me and all those who have gone before us be able to hear the beautiful and consoling voice of God Almighty, who will say, "'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' and enjoy the deep and precious things of eternity "unseen by human eye and unknown to man's heart".

May our Lord the Messiah place his right hand over my hands, his weak and sinful servant, and raise them over you to bless you and your family and all your endeavours.

May all these be fulfilled through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of St Thomas, the Apostle and the guardian of India, and my patron saint, the golden tongued Mar Ivanios, and all other holy men and holy women! Amen.

✠ Mar Ivanios

Archbishop of Trivandrum

Archbishop's House

Pattom, Trivandrum

Last moments and Death

By July his condition worsened. He was unable even to sit up in bed. Everyone was certain that his end was near. Though he was in intense pain, he bore it with a calm and pleasant face. Since he was always thirsty, he was frequently given milk diluted with water. Medicines seemed to have no effect on him. Two weeks passed thus.

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On 15 July, on the eve of the feast of the Mother of Mount Carmel, his condition became worse at dusk. The signs of death could be seen. Immediately Most Rev. Mar Severios and Most Rev. Mar Gregorios in the presence of many priests and laity conducted special prayers. By 10 pm, his condition was critical. As everybody chanted the prayer at the time of death - "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, help my soul" and as the clock struck eleven, his head gently tipped to one side. He entrusted his soul into the hands of the Eternal Father!

His soul cast off its mortal body and started its journey heavenward, bidding farewell to the earth and all earthly things. The flame that had shone brightly for over half a century in the landscape of the Indian Christian Church was thus, extinguished. The "Nazrani Lion" and the "Indian Newman" who had spread his fame in Europe, America and Australia besides India, vanished into the curtain of time.

The man who yearned for the unity of the Churches, a promoter of reunion, a devout missionary, an educationalist, a lover of humankind, who had devoted tirelessly his entire life for the progress of the Church, society and the nation passed away from this world. The body that was always dynamic went lifeless; the blue-back eyes closed on their own, the hands that raised the golden cross to bless thousands of people in the name of God were rendered still; the tongue that had attracted many with its eloquence went silent. That pure soul that set apart its life for the glory of the name of God and the salvation of souls entered the other world. Thus that high priest - His Grace Archbishop Mar Ivanios - left for his heavenly abode, leaving behind his friends and followers in the fire of grief.

After his death, prayers were held for the repose of his soul. He was dressed in the vestments of a Metropolitan-Archbishop, and his body was instated on a chair following the tradition of the Eastern Churches. That very night his body was conveyed from the Bishop's House to St Mary's church at Palayam. His body was placed in the sanctuary, facing westward, where everybody could see it and a prayer

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vigil was held all night. Reading this news from newspapers next morning, hundreds of priests, nuns and laymen flocked to Trivandrum. With teary eyes, they saw the mortal remains of His Grace and prayed for the repose of his soul. The whole day and night, liturgical prayers of various rites were held continuously.

Funeral Services

The early morning of Thursday, 17 July saw St Mary's church tightly packed with women and children. To get a glimpse of His Grace, thousands lined up on the road and the church premises. The masses outside were informed of the various stages of the funeral service through the microphone. The tens of thousands of people who crowded there outside were of various caste, creed and religion. Considering the sanctity of the circumstance and solemnity of the service the people participated in the sacred rites in silence. Sighs and sobs could be heard from the multitude gathered for the funeral service.

Preparations for the Funeral

The services started at 6 a.m. with the Pontifical Qurbono offered by Most Rev. Mar Sebastian Vayalil, Bishop of Pala. This was followed by a Holy Triqurbono led by His Grace Metropolitan Mar Severios as the main celebrant and His Grace Mar Gregorios and Rt Rev. Philipose Ramban as concelebrants with him. Many priests, nuns and laypeople attended this. Most Rev. Dr Mathew Kavukkattu, Bishop of Changanacherry, delivered a poignant speech outlining the glorious and invaluable service rendered by His Grace Mar Ivanios to the Church and society and above all for the glory of God. He also highlighted the need for the Church to bring to completion and to universalise the mission embarked upon by His Grace Mar Ivanios.

After this, the body was taken in a funeral procession through the town, and this attracted many of the non-Christian population waiting outside. This was the touching ritual in which His Grace bade farewell to his country, his city, and his fellow country-men and above all to his

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Church. His Grace's body seated on the throne was placed in the sanctuary and at the centre of the church and the service of bidding goodbye was held. The solemn words of the farewell prayer uttered by the main celebrant, "City and city-dwellers, may you dwell in peace!", was heard by the thousands outside over the microphone. Thereafter, the body was conveyed to a canopied chariot.

The funeral service was attended by eminent Churchmen like Most Rev. Dr Joseph Attipetty, Archbishop of Verapoly, Bishops of the dioceses of Trivandrum (Latin), Kollam, Kottar, Tiruvalla, Vijayapuram, Alapuzha, Kochi, Thrissur, Pala, Changanacherry, Msgr Mathew Pothanamkuzhi, the representative of the Archbishop of Ernakulam and the Prior General of the Congregation of the Carmelites.

Funeral Procession

Precisely at 10 O'clock, the funeral procession started from St Mary's Church to the Cathedral at Pattom. Four gold crosses, 12 silver crosses, over two hundred sequined parasols, and black flags were brought from the churches at Alapuzha, Athirampuzha and Changanacherry for the procession. The procession was accompanied by the funeral marches played by the state police band. Dignitaries from various walks of life, teachers and non-teaching fraternity of Mar Ivanios College, nuns, priests, deacons, and people associated with the Catholic movement, and women and children lined up for the procession. Behind them was the chariot bearing the body of His Grace, the car used by him in his lifetime, followed by more cars with numerous bishops. His Grace Metropolitan of Verapoly, His Grace Metropolitan Mar Severios, His Grace Metropolitan Mar Gregorios and prominent priests were seated in the chariot. People on the four sides of the chariot offered numerous floral bouquets of many hues. Thousands thronged the streets and roads to get a final glimpse of His Grace and the funeral procession that covered the Town Hall reached Pattom Cathedral via LMS Junction and the Engineering College Road. All unanimously opined, that the capital city had never witnessed such a

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funeral procession before. Thus, the funeral procession that started at 10 O'clock from Palayam reached Pattom Cathedral by 12 O'clock.

Adieu, World!

Amidst a teary-eyed crowd, His Grace Mar Severios and His Grace Mar Gregorios and others carried the chair bearing the body to the tomb. The attenders had a tough time controlling the crowd who rushed in to get a final glimpse of their beloved Archbishop Mar Ivanios. The body along with the chair was placed in his tomb and the funeral rites continued. Large amounts of frankincense were placed in the vault and olive oil was poured on his body. One by one, the eminent churchmen said their final goodbye to the deceased. His face was covered with a silk cloth, the vault was sealed, the prayer of incense followed.

Thus, His Grace, our beloved archbishop, who, for half a century, gave us counsel, inspired and led us and who lived and worked among us for 72 years disappeared forever from us. No more will we be able to get a glimpse of his face; nor will we be able to receive the blessing from those raised hands and hear the advice that emanates from his tongue. However, his inner spirit and motivation will never been taken away from us. This much is certain!

The radiant lamp extinguished
But its divine rays will burn bright forever
Though the bell be broken,
Its sacred soothing wave will calm men
The lovely flower that melts in the dust will emit
Its fragrance that lasts forever (MuttathuVarkey in *Deepika*).

Funeral Oration

Here is the speech made by His Grace Mar Mathew Kavukkattu, Metropolitan of Changanacherry, before the commencement of the funeral procession.

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"His lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord'."

Respected people,

We are gathered here to express our condolences at the death of a high priest, who worked for a long time in God's vineyard and has been called unto God to settle the account of his activities, and to follow him till his tomb in his last journey. We are also gathered here to pray for the repose of his soul. A high priest who has been associated with us, known to us and beloved to us, has departed from us. Though we are gripped by extreme grief, at the same time we feel intense pride in his heroic achievements. As a multi-faceted genius and a man of keen intellect, he did not let rot the talent gifted him by the Lord. Rather, he laboured from his childhood to develop them. He could have chased earthly prosperity that his university degree would have guaranteed him half a century back. Had he willed, he could have attained any heights in life. But realizing the transitory nature of earthly prosperity, he decided to forego them in the name of God and to work for the progress of the Church. He realized the nobility of priesthood and decided to work upon his spiritual talents to multiply them. He also realized the importance of *brahmacharya* (chastity) and attracted as many people as possible to it.

The "still small voice" in his soul asked him to return to the fold of the Catholic Church, the temple of faith of his forefathers. Slowly, he was attracted towards the Catholic Church. The Reunion Movement is one of the major milestones in the ecclesiastical history of Kerala.

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He set his foot at the threshold of the Catholic Church in the midst of the challenges, conflict and obstacles. Like Cardinal Newman, he might have prayed, "Lead, kindly light, amidst the encircling darkness." Though he desired that all of his followers should join the Catholic Church along with him, he never interfered with the voice of the inner conscience of his followers. A good many of the faithful followed him. He advised them not to question the inner motivation of others and to be faithful to their faith and conscience. The full-grown plant with flowers that we see today was watered by the sweat of His Grace Mar Ivanios and manured by his own blood. He died seeing His Grace Mar Gregorios, in whom blossoms all humane and attractive virtues. He would be gratified in getting a right successor. His own hands ordained him, who is to exercise authority over the entire Malankara rite.

He ran his course well, bearing the responsibilities God entrusted him with. But, he was never tired. He could say, "Lord, let your servant depart in peace." So strenuous was his life.

Not only the Catholic Church, but also all the Christians lost a bright star today. And the star had shone brightly both in the religious domain and in the field of education. He erected many churches. The prayers that rise up to heaven from all those churches will provide him solace.

His services in the educational field are commendable. Look at the innumerable schools that stand bearing evidence for the vision and labour of His Grace! How many children pass out of these schools acquiring wisdom! Nobler than this is the founding of various religious congregations by His Grace.

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The man we lost today had commanded immense respect and reverence. He was widely appreciated and well known in Europe and America. We have seen and read of the respect paid to him by the great writers of Europe and America. Wherever his activities took him, he managed to leave behind an indelible stamp of his personality. Let me recount an incident. When I visited Rome, a good many of the people gathered enquired about His Grace and asked after him. An honorary doctorate was conferred on him by a university in America.

Great men live forever through their great deeds. The memory of His Grace will always be kept alive by his activities. As long as prayers rise up from the numerous churches erected by him, as long as children pass out of his schools backed with strong cultural and spiritual values, how can the memory of His Grace be erased. Will the *sanyasis* and virgins of the ashrams and convents founded by him ever forget him? No. Their services will proclaim his fame and efficiency.

Thus, he ended his work and died in peace. He fought the good fight, finished his race well and died a peaceful death. Our beloved and revered Grace has entered the divine blessing privileged for the chosen ones of God. Let us continue to pray for the repose of his soul!"



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