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## The Eastern Churches in India A Chronicle, 1977-1982\*

### *Chaldeo- or Syro-Malabar Church*

On February 26, 1977, the Metropolitan eparchy of Changanacherry was divided. The new *eparchy of Kanjirappally* came into being covering the eastern part of the civil district of Kottayam and the high ranges belonging to the district of Idikky. Mar Joseph (Powathil), born in 1930, who was raised to the episcopate in Rome by Pope Paul VI, until then titular bishop of Caesarea Philippi and auxiliary to Metropolitan Mar Antony (Padiyara) of Changanacherry, became its first eparch. The eparchy of Kanjirappally has 135,000 faithful living in 97 parishes. There are 97 eparchial and 22 religious priests, and 41 major seminarians prepare themselves to join their ranks.

In 1978, on June 22, the eparchy of Trichur was again divided, and the *eparchy of Irinjalakuda* was established. Mar James (Pazhayattil), born in 1934, became its first shepherd. There are 226,000 faithful in 122 parishes which are served by 107 eparchial priests and 47 religious priests; the number of major seminarians belonging to the new eparchy is 35.

With these two extensions, the Chaldeo-Malabar Church has now eleven eparchies in Kerala belonging either to the metropolies of Changanacherry (4) or of Ernakulam (7), and seven mission eparchies outside Kerala which belong to Latin ecclesiastical provinces.

It is said that a division of the eparchy of Tellicherry in the North of Kerala is beforehand.

Due to old age and ill-health, Mar Matthew (Pothanamuzhi), the first eparch of *Kothamanagalam* (since 1956), resigned from his see in 1977 and was succeeded by Mar George (Punnakottil) who had been professor of New Testament exegesis at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam-10. The bishop is 46 years old. The eparchy has 179 parishes with 28,500 faithful. There are 200 eparchial and 50 religious priests serving

\* This chronicle continues that published in *Oriens Christianus* 61 (1977) 117-127.



the Church of Kothamanagalam, and 62 major seminarians prepare themselves for their ordination.

There was also a change in the *eparchy of Palai* (established in 1950). Its first eparch, Mar Sebastian (Vayalil), having reached his 75th year of life, resigned from his see in early 1981. His successor is Mar Joseph (Palikka-parampil), born in 1927, until then auxiliary and vicar general. Dr. Palikka-parampil became known as Vice Rector of the Collegio Urbano in Rome and Rector of the St. Thomas Seminary. The eparchy of Palai is said to be the richest in the world in priestly and religious vocations. There is even a good number of Latin bishops in India who hail from the eparchy of Palai and are originally Orientals. Religious orders and congregations of the Latin rite are propagating their ideals among the Thomas Christians to attract youths for their communities. The eparchy of Palai has 271,000 faithful in 131 parishes who are served by 331 eparchial and 76 religious priests. For the service in this eparchy, there are 97 major seminarians in different seminaries. On November 7, 1981, after a heart attack, Bishop Jonas Thaliath CMI of Rajkot near Bombay died on a sudden. After having served the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India (CBCI) in Delhi for many years, he became the first bishop of this newly erected eparchy, in 1977. As he did not care for things Oriental, his eparchy is more a Latin diocese than an Oriental eparchy.

As many Thomas Christians, for professional and economical reasons, have left Kerala and settled down in the big commercial and industrial centres of India and even abroad, there is an acute pastoral problem which is being felt by both the faithful themselves and far-seeing prelates and priests. The faithful living in centres like Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore etc., do not feel at home in the Latin rite milieu of their new surrounding, and many have left the Church either into indifference or they have changed their ecclesial allegiance by becoming Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite), because there they found their mother tongue in the services. To study the situation of the *émigrés*, Pope John Paul I, during his short pontificate, appointed Metropolitan Mar Antony of Changanacherry Apostolic Visitor for all the Malabarians outside Kerala. Prof. X. Koodapuzha of the St. Thomas Seminary became his secretary for this purpose. Pope John Paul II renewed the metropolitan's mandate, and so this mission was duly performed. Mar Antony (Padiyara) gave his report to the Holy Father, and recently the Prefect of the Oriental Congregation, Cardinal Władysław Rubin, was given a reception by the Kerala Catholic Union of Bombay, on January 13, 1981. The Cardinal addressed the Orientals living there expressing his concern for their situation and thanking at the same time the Latin ecclesiastical authorities for their assent, that pastoral work of the Oriental mother-



Churches for their children in the diaspora has become possible. It is a known fact, that the Orientals consider this state only as provisional and continue to strive for bishops of their own (eparchs or exarchs).

Before coming to Bombay for the above mentioned meeting, Cardinal Rubin had been in Kerala as the pontifical delegate for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Union of the Syro-Malankara Church (*see below*). Profiting from this journey, he visited all the Chaldeo-Malabar eparchies as well. He blessed the newly erected *Minor Seminaries* of Kanjirappally and Irinjalakuda. He also consecrated the new cathedral of Palai.

Despite the strong latinization the Chaldeo-Malabar Church had to endure for more than three centuries, there is a reawakening of the Oriental consciousness, especially among the well-educated clergy. In early 1978, both Malabarian and Malankara theologians, among whom there were also some hierarchs, established, during an informal meeting at Vadavathoor, a preparatory committee in view of the foundation of an association called "*Oriental Theology Forum*". The first meeting of the association took place on December 14 of the same year. It was decided to hold regular meetings. Because of the great interest, the number of the participants had to be restricted. Professor J. Koikakudy was elected convener and Professor X. Koodapuzha treasurer. A quarterly theological review "*Christian Orient*" was started by the association in 1980 which publishes studies on ecclesiology, liturgy, spirituality and ecumenism under the responsibility of its section editors, Prof. X. Koodapuzha (Vadavathoor), J. Vellian (Vadavathoor), V. Pathikulangara CMI (Dharmaram College, Bangalore) and G. Panicker (Rector, Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Alwaye) respectively.

Closely linked, but independent of the Oriental Theology Form is the "*Ecumenical Biblical and Oriental Study Centre*" (EBOSC) at Kottayam, founded and directed by the zealous Prof. G. Kaniarakath CMI. Some 3,000 volumes, 30 periodicals in different languages and audio-visuals are at the disposal of the interested public. A biblical museum is attached to the centre, too.

In August, 1980, the *ad-limina-visit* of the hierarchy of the Malabar and Malankara Churches took place. It was connected with a conference of the Chaldeo-Malabar hierarchy with representatives of the Oriental Congregation. The Prefect of this dicastery, Cardinal Rubin, presided. The main topic of this reunion was the reform of the Chaldeo-Malabar liturgy. The present situation is more than deplorable. The Oriental Congregation, after having made a profound study of this question, has proposed guidelines for discussion and an analysis of the aberrations. It seems, however, that



the majority of the Malabar hierarchy, who were educated in Latin rite seminaries, were not willing to give in. The hierarchy is divided into three groups: a) a strongly latinized group whose members pretend to "indianize" the Church, b) an indifferent group who will follow the majority, c) a genuinely Oriental group who is following the appeal of the Council Vatican II "to aim always at a more perfect knowledge and practice of their rites, and if they have fallen away due to circumstances of times and persons, they are to strive to return to their ancestral traditions" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 6). The last group is composed by Mar Sebastian (Vayalil), retired eparch of Palai, Mar Sebastian (Valloppilly) of Tellicherry, Mar Joseph (Powathil) of Kanjirappally, Mar Joseph (Palikkaparampil) of Palai, Mar Abraham (Mattam) of Satna, Mar John (Perumattam) of Ujjain and Mar George (Punnakottil) of Kothamangalam<sup>1</sup>.

In the northern parts of Kerala, an organization called "*St. Thomas Academy for Research*" was inaugurated after the ad-limina visit of the Malabar bishops in the presence of the bishop of Trichur and the auxiliary to the Metropolitan of Ernakulam, Cardinal J. Parecattil. It seems to be a concurrent institution which is rather opposing the aims of the "Oriental Theology Forum" the centre of which is at Kottayam-10. Prof. Mathias Mundadan CMI of the Dharmaram College, Bangalore, was elected convener, Dr. Joseph Veliyathil and Rev. J. Akkarakaran, both of Alwaye Pontifical Institute, joint conveners. The Academy is publishing a series of pamphlets, i.a. "The Draft Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana (1981)" by Professor G. Nedungatt SJ of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, who tries to convince that the prepared draft basing on the text of the Divine liturgy mutilated in 1968, is better than that of 1960/1962 prepared by Oriental scholars and approved by the late Pope Pius XII. This St. Thomas Academy should not be confused with the "*Indian Institute of Christian Research*" founded in 1978 and studying the culture and antiquities of Christianity in India. The latter has its headquarters also in Trichur. Its president is the Metropolitan of the (Nestorian) Chaldean Syrian Church, Mar Aprem; the writer and historian P. Thomas is the vice-president, Prof. G. Menachery, editor of the "*St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia*", acts as secretary, Dr. J. Kolengadan as joint secretary, Prof. C.L. Antony as treasurer. Prof. M. Mundadan CMI and Prof. K.M. Tharakan are

1 Cf. J. Madey, The Reform of the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Holy See of Rome: *Ostkirchliche Studien* 30 (1981) 130-168. After an introduction, the entire text of the Documentation prepared by the Oriental Congregation is presented. — See also V. Pathikulangara, Liturgical Reforms in the Chaldeo-Indian Church: *Diakonia* 16 (New York 1981) 147-157



members of the committee, too. This institute is ecumenical with regard to its members and collaborators<sup>2</sup>.

In December, 1980, after more than 25 years of service in Rome, the well-known Chaldeo-Malabar historian, liturgist and canonist, Prof. Placid J. Podipara CMI, professor emeritus of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome and consultor to the Oriental Congregation and the Pontifical Commission for the Recodification of the Oriental Canon Law, returned to Kerala taking his residence in the Carmelite Monastery of Chethipuzha near Changanacherry where he had taught for many years in the Major Seminary of his congregation (which is now at Bangalore). Father Placid who is over 80 now, can be considered as the "Father of the Oriental Reawakening in the Chaldeo-Malabar Church"; he was given a warm welcome by the members of the Oriental Theology Forum. In spite of his old age, he is now actively cooperating with this association, and during the reunion of July, 1981, he lectured there on the connection of the Chaldeo-Malabar Church with the Chaldean Church of the Middle East<sup>3</sup>.

To give the candidates for religious life a better religious and theological formation, Mar Joseph of Kanjirappally inaugurated on the feast of St. Thomas, July 3, 1981, the first *Theological College* at Podimatam near Kanjirappally. The pre-postulants and the postulants of four female religious congregation will be trained there. A team of theologians will ensure the lectures. Mar Joseph of Palai was also present.

On July 19, 1981, Metropolitan Mar Antony of Changanacherry opened a *Theological Institute for the Laity* at Parel near Changanacherry. It is really a historical event in the life of the Church in Kerala, because for the first time, laymen are offered regular courses in theology; an immatriculation of lay people in the courses of the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy at Alwaye which enjoys the rights of a faculty, and at the St. Thomas Seminary of Vadavathoor is not yet possible<sup>4</sup>.

The first Chaldeo-Malabar religious Congregation which is known by the name of *Carmelites of Mary Immaculate* celebrated its 150th birthday on May 11. In 1831, Father Thomas Porukara laid the foundation stone for a monastery and chapel at Mannanam near Kottayam. Malpan Thomas Palackal and his disciple Kuriakos Elias Chavara were the first to propagate the religious ideals. The original community was named "Servants of Mary Immaculate", but in 1855, the simple rules were replaced by the adapted rules of the Carmelites. The Thomas Christians were at that time under

<sup>2</sup> Voice of the East 25/4 (Trichur 1978) 8.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Orient 2 (Kottayam 1981) 48.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 131f.



the Latin rite Carmelite bishops of Verapoly. In 1861, the congregation was officially affiliated to the Carmelite Order with the title of Third Order of the Carmelites Discalced (TOCD). Only in 1958, it changed its name into Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). The Congregation has several provinces in Kerala and five mission eparchies outside Kerala (Bijnor, Chanda, Jagdalpur, Rajkot and Sagar). It has 250 monasteries with 1,415 members of whom 886 are priests.

Two outstanding personalities passed away. The famous Syriac scholar, Rev. *Thomas Arayathinal* of Aruvithura (eparchy of Palai) whose "Aramaic Grammar" made him known in many countries, died at the age of 78, on September 30, 1980. On May 22, 1981, the Catholic lay leader and historian, Chev. *V. C. George*, died at the age of 97.

On February 7, 1982, Mar Mathew Pothanamuzhi, retired bishop of Kothamangalam, unexpectedly passed away after a strong heart attack.

From January 9 to 16, 1982, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) assembled at Trichinopoly. The key subject of its deliberations was "Inter-ecclesial relations". The Chaldeo-Malabar Bishop of Kanjirapally, Mar Joseph Powathil, and the Syro-Malankara Eparch of Battery, Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios, explained the Oriental point of view in the light of Vatican II, referring also to the liberty of other Oriental individual Churches to care for their faithful in other parts of the world. Archbishop Henry D'Souza of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar defended the Latin standpoint that Oriental priests and laymen living outside Kerala should adapt to the given circumstances. The full text of the interventions was published by the CBCI Centre at New Delhi and in the quarterly *Christian Orient* 3 (1982) 5-59, in the latter together with a "Theological Evaluation of Certain Points Brought up in the Paper of Archbishop Henry D'Souza", by Prof. X. Koodapuzha and M. Vellanickal (ibid. 60-70). In the meantime, two meetings of the subcommittee established by the CBCI, in which all the three individual Churches are present, took place. The Latin side does not show any understanding for the concern of the two Oriental Catholic Churches to enjoy the same rights and obligations as other Oriental Catholic Churches elsewhere. It seems some of the Latin bishops in India are bent on a collision course. In this, the above mentioned Archbishop Henry D'Souza is taking the leadership.

In spite of the opposition of the Latin hierarchy of India, the Oriental Catholic St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary of Kottayam-Vadavathoor was given the right of a Pontifical Faculty with specialization in Oriental and Biblical Theology, on July 3, 1982. On the same day, the seminary completed two decades of its existence. Rev. Dr. Joseph Koikakudy, professor of



Moral Theology and Canon Law, consultant to the Pontifical Commission for the revision of the Oriental Canon Law, was appointed Rector. President of the faculty became Prof. Mathew Vellanickal, member of the Pont. Biblical Commission. There are more than 300 students attending the courses of the philosophical and theological sections. St. Thomas Seminary is the only Oriental formation centre in India enjoying the rights of a faculty.

### *Chaldean Syrian Church*

The Chaldean Syrian Church considers herself as a part of the (Nestorian) Church of the East. Her headquarters are in and around Trichur. Due to the migration of her faithful in and outside Kerala, she had to *extend her pastoral care*. At present, this Church has 24 churches and chapels in India. Monthly services (Holy Qurbana, i.e. Divine Liturgy) are held at Coimbatore, Chalakudy, Palghat and Alathur, occasionally also at Bombay, Bangalore, New Delhi, Kottayam, Trivandrum, Calcutta, Jabalpur and Goa, either in churches and chapels of protestant denominations or even in private houses.

The *split* of the 15,000 faithful has not yet come to an end. While 13,000 are with Metropolitan Mar Aprem who is in communion with the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Addai II (Baghdad), successor to the late Mar Thoma Darmo who had been Metropolitan of India, there are 2,000 faithful with Bishop Mar Timotheos who is in communion with Patriarch Mar Denha, successor to the murdered Mar Šimūn. Mar Denha is not belonging to the Mar Šimūn family and is the first non-hereditary patriarch of that line of succession. After his election, he was in Rome for the enthronement of Pope John Paul II.

On December 19, 1976, an *ecumenical service* was broadcast by All India Radio from the Chaldeo-Malabar (Catholic) Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes in Trichur. Mar Joseph (Kundukulam) of Trichur, Metropolitan Mar Aprem of the Chaldean Syrian Church, and Mr. Nambiyar explained the significance of Christ's birth. The songs of the Chaldean Syrian Church were broadcast on January 7, 1977, which is, according to the Julian Calendar, Christmas Day.

On the occasion of the *birth centenary* (August 28, 1977) of Metropolitan Mar Abimelech Timotheos, the first Assyrian hierarch who ruled this small Church (†1945), an auditorium was inaugurated on October 15, 1978, by the governor of Kerala, Mrs. Jyothi Venkattachelam (Hindu). The Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (which has broken off communion with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch some



years ago<sup>5</sup>), Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews, presided. Mar Aprem welcomed the distinguished guests at the beginning of the celebrations.

In connection with this event, a multi-coloured souvenir was released by the metropolitan on December 31, 1978. It contains articles in English and in the local language Malayalam and is richly illustrated. Metropolitan Mar Aprem who is very engaged in the field of ecumenism, has particularly good *relations with the Presbyterian Church* in India and the United States. They invited him to preach in the "Good News Festival" in Solchar, Assam, and Aizawi, Mizoram, in November 1978. About 96% of the population of Mizoram are Christian, though the message of the Gospel was brought there by missionaries only in 1896.

The *diamond jubilee of the St. Thomas College* of Trichur which belongs to the Chaldeo-Malabar eparchy, was presided over by the Chief Minister of Kerala, E. K. Nayanar, on the first day and by the former Chief Minister, C. Achuta Menon, on the second day. The President of the Republic of India, N. Sajeewa Reddy, agreed to inaugurate the jubilee celebrations on the first day. The celebrations of the second day were inaugurated by Mar Aprem who is a former student of this College.

In summer 1980, Mar Aprem left India to attend the third international *Symposium Syriacum* in Germany. He visited also other countries then. A report of his journey appeared in the monthly "Voice of the East", edited by the Youth's Association, Church of the East, Trichur.

On September 20, 1981, Mar Aprem laid the foundation stone for the new building of the *Chaldean Syrian College* in the premises of the Mar Johannan Mamdhana Church, East Fort, Trichur. This church was built as early as 1912, a few years after the secession of this community from the Chaldeo-Malabar Catholic jurisdiction.

It is worthwhile mentioning that a *cassette of 12 devotional songs* (60 minutes) in Malayalam was published by the Chaldean Syrian Church recently. Another cassette of 60 minutes with Assyrian songs is planned. The Assyrian songs will be executed by Indians, accompanied by musical instruments. Besides, Mar Aprem published a book entitled "Christiya Bhakti Ganangal" containing 100 songs.

To foster the knowledge of the traditional liturgical language, Chaldean or Aramaic, Mar Aprem published a course "Teach yourself Aramaic" in the monthly "Voice of the East" which is also available in book form (Mar Narsai Press, High Road, Trichur 680001, Kerala India (US-\$ 6.00 incl. airmail postage).

5 J. Madey, Background and History of the Present Schism in the Malankara Church : Oriens Christianus 60 (1976) 95-112.



The metropolitan is preparing for publication a book entitled *Christian Directory of India* which certainly will be helpful also in the field of ecumenism in India<sup>6</sup>.

### *Syro-Malankara Church*

On August 28, 1977, Metropolitan *Paulos Mar Philoxenos III*, the head of the Independant Syrian Church of Malabar, was *received into the Syro-Malankara Church* by the hierarchical head of this Church, His Beatitude Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum, together with his secretary, Rev. George Vadakkan. Father Vadakkan's family and some other families joined them one week later. The metropolitan who had prepared himself for this decisive step for years, was given the title of Chayal, one of the seven churches which, according to the local tradition, St. Thomas the Apostle had founded. Until recently, Mar Philoxenos served as Archbishopal Vicar at Trivandrum. For some time he was in Rome to do theological studies. Since spring 1981, he is again residing at Anjoor, Thozhiyur, where he is engaged in pastoral and social work among his countrymen. (On the Independant Syrian Church of Malabar, *see below*).

Exactly one month after this event, on September 28, the eparch of Tiruvalla, *Zacharias Mar Athanasios*, *passed away*, after a heavy heart attack. He was the third hierarch of Tiruvalla. Born in 1909, in a pious Malankara Orthodox family, Zacharias Polachirakal joined the Malankara Catholic Church in 1938 as a bank employee in Kottayam. He studied for priesthood at the Pontifical Seminary of Kandy, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), which was later shifted to Poona. He was ordained priest in 1946 and raised to the episcopate on April 22, 1954, as titular bishop of Sarepta and coadjutor to Archbishop Mar Severios whom he succeeded in 1955. Shortly before his demise, Mar Athanasios paid a visit to Pope Paul VI and stayed for some time in France, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States and Canada. He laid hands on the newly elected Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger of Munich and Freising at the latter's episcopal ordination on the eve of Pentecost and attended the 12th centenary of the Archdiocese of Paderborn. As Mar Gregorios was in Rome for the Synod of Bishops, the burial of the hierarch at St. John's Cathedral, Tiruvalla, built by him, was conducted by Metropolitan Mar Philoxenos who had joined the Syro-Malankara episcopate one month earlier and in the presence of Mar Athanasios.

6 Cf. Voice of the East 1977-1981, *passim*.



The vacancy, after the death of Mar Athanasios, lasted longer than one year, also due to the consecutive deaths of Popes Paul VI and John Paul I. The late bishop had wished, since long, a division of his large eparchy into two or even three ecclesiastical units. A few days before being taken to Tiruvalla Pushpagiri Hospital (also his foundation), he had been in Delhi to submit the necessary papers to the Pronuncio.

At last, on October 18, 1979, it was simultaneously announced in Rome and at Tiruvalla, that the northern parts of the eparchy of Tiruvalla would henceforth form the new *eparchy of Battery*. This new ecclesiastical circumscription would comprise the civil districts of Malampuram, Kozhikode (Calicut) and Cannanore in Kerala, of Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, and of Mysore, Mandya Coorg, Hassan, Chikmangalur, South Kanara and Shimoga in Karnataka : a territory of 69,642 km<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the *new eparchs* of Tiruvalla and of Battery were appointed. Rev. Isaac Koottaplackil, an eparchial priest, became eparch of Tiruvalla with the name of Mar Youhanon and Dr. Cyril Malancharuvil, Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ, first eparch of Battery with the name of Mar Baselios.

The ordination of the new bishops took place at Thirumoolapuram, a part of the township of Tiruvalla, on December 28, 1978. They were ordained by the Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church, His Beatitude Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum, assisted by the Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Damascus, Mar Ostathios Joseph (Mounayer), and Metropolitan Mar Philoxenos of Chayal, in the presence of about 12,000 people, Catholic and non-Catholic. Among those present was also the Jacobite Syrian bishop residing in Tiruvalla, Mar Kurilos (in communion with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch), while the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ostathios appeared only for the reception. It was for the first time in the history of the Syro-Malankara Church that a hierarch of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch participated in an episcopal ordination as concelebrant. It is noteworthy that Mar Ostathios Joseph communicated the new bishops not only the congratulations on behalf of his patriarch, Mar Ignatios Antonios II, but also of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, the late Mar Ignatios Ya'qōb III. On the following day, Mar Youhanon was enthronized at St. John's Cathedral, Tiruvalla. Mar Baselios was enthronized at Battery on February 2, 1979. The enthronization (*suntrōnīsō*) was done by Archbishop Mar Gregorios in the presence of many hierarchs of the Chaldeo-Malabar Church and the Latin bishop of Calicut, Msgr. Aldo Patroni SJ, the then last European bishop serving the Church in Kerala. The Malankara Orthodox parish and the parish of the Church of South India also took part in the functions.



On December 27, 1980, during the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Syro-Malankara Church at Kottayam, Archbishop Mar Gregorios, together with the other three Malankara hierarchs, ordained the rector of the Minor Seminary of Trivandrum, *Rev. Lawrence Thottam*, as his auxiliary with the name of *Mar Aprem*. The new bishop, born in 1928, who is of the Nadar tribe, was ordained priest in 1953. He is a Christian of the first generation. It is much expected that, after an eventual division of the Archeparchy of Trivandrum, the new bishop will become the eparch of the present southern part which goes as far as Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari), where the Syro-Malankara Church is involved in fruitful mission work among the Hindu Nadar population. The episcopal ordination took place in the presence of the Papal Envoy, Cardinal Władysław Rubin, Prefect of the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Maximos V, who attended the jubilee functions.

One of the first companions of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, the "Father of the Reunion Movement" in the Malankara Orthodox Church and first Syro-Malankara Archbishop of Trivandrum, was *Ramban Philippos Cheppatt*. He passed away on June 24, 1979, at the age of 93 and was buried in the cathedral of Trivandrum close to Mar Ivanios. A celibate priest of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, he was elected bishop by the Holy Synod and had already received the ordination of Ramban (Abbot) which is normally preceding the episcopal ordination. Just before the episcopal ordination, he and another elected bishop, Ramban Joseph Pulikottil († July 6, 1941), made the profession of the Catholic faith. Ramban Philippos was a prolific religious writer who had published numerous books and brochures in Malayalam. For many years, he also was the editor of the monthly "Christava Kahalam". He served the Archeparchy of Trivandrum also as Vicar General and Administrator.

The Syro-Malankara Church had the joy to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone for her new parish at Padi near *Madras* in early 1978. Archbishop Mar Gregorios presided over the functions, in the presence of the Latin Archbishop of Madras, Msgr. Rayappa Arulappa. The latter addressed the Oriental community acknowledging its right to worship God in its own language and religious culture. "No bishop, no priest, may deny this right", Archbishop Arulappa said. At the same time, he expressed his esteem for the Oriental liturgical and spiritual heritage, congratulating at the same time Mar Gregorios on the occasion of his episcopal silver jubilee.

At *Alleppey*, in the eparchy of Tiruvalla, on May 1, 1979, Mar Philoxenos consecrated the newly built St. Mary's Malankara Catholic Church which reminds of the late Mar Athanasios († 1977). The construction of this



parish church is due to the generosity of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, then Archbishop of Munich and Freising, who donated it in token of episcopal communion beyond continents and even death. Attached to the Mar Athanasios Memorial church is a flourishing kindergarten attended by Christian, Muslim and Hindu children and a school (Primary and High School) under the direction of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ.

On September 20, 1980, was the 50th anniversary of the historic day when Archbishop Mar Ivanios of Bethany, Bishop Mar Theophilos of Tiruvalla, a priest, a deacon and a layman made the profession of the Catholic faith before the Latin Bishop of Quilon, Msgr. Benziger. The *Golden Jubilee Celebrations* of this union were from December 26 to 28, 1980, at the Mar Ivanios Nagar, Nehru Stadium, Kottayam. The inauguration took place at the St. Mary's Forane church of Kuravilangad with the solemn liturgy celebrated by Metropolitan Mar Philoxenos, during which the sermon was held by the Chaldeo-Malabar eparch of Palai, Mar Sebastian (Vayalil). At the St. Thomas Ecumenical Centre belonging to the eparchy of Tiruvalla, a religious exhibition was opened. Five youth rallies from all over Kerala reached Kottayam. At 4 p.m., the Papal Legate, Cardinal Rubin who had been received at Cochin Airport by a delegation lead by Archbishop Mar Gregorios, was offered a liturgical reception. Thereafter, a solemn Chaldeo-Malabar liturgy concelebrated by several bishops of this sister-Church was presided over by Metropolitan Mar Antony of Changanacherry. It was followed by the vestition and profession of Sisters of the Imitation of Christ and of the congregation of the Daughters of Mary, the two Malankara religious institutes for females. On the following day, December 27, the Malankara hierarchy concelebrated in the morning. In the afternoon, there was a Latin concelebration with Cardinal Rubin as the main celebrant. After the Latin Mass, the Malankara hierarchy proceeded to the episcopal ordination of Lawrence Mar Aprem, the new auxiliary to Archbishop Mar Gregorios (*see above*). The day ended with a cultural programme. On Sunday, December 30, another solemn concelebration took place. As the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, Moron Mar Ignatios Antonios II (Hayek), who had been expected as the main celebrant, could not come to India, this liturgy was concelebrated by the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Maximos V, the Malankara hierarchy (now five hierarchs), the Vicars General of the three eparchies, the Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ, and three priests who were among the first followers of Mar Ivanios: Corepiscopa Alexander Valiyaveettil, Father Jacob Cheriamadom and Father Thomas Kurizumoottil. In the afternoon, there was a solemn religious procession through the streets of Kottayam which ended at the Mar Ivanios Nagar by a public meeting presided by



the Governor of Kerala, Mrs. Jyothi Venkadachalam, who praised the socio-educational services rendered by the Malankara Catholic Church to the people of Kerala irrespective of their creeds. Other speakers were Cardinal Rubin, Patriarch Maximos V who presented, under the rising applause of the thousands of participants, Mar Gregorios with an enkolpion expressing his hope to see the present Archbishop of the Malankara Church soon as Catholicos or Patriarch!, Archbishop Luciano Storero, Pronuncio Apostolic in India etc.

Just before the jubilee, the traditional Syrian institution of *Corepiscopa* was reestablished by the appointment of Father Alexander Valiyaveetil to this dignity. He is the first corepiscopa appointed in the Catholic Malankara Church. A married priest, now retired, the dignitary was a very active missionary who founded about 50 parishes and missions during his service in the archeparchy of Trivandrum.

At present, this living Church in South India is preparing her first *Synod* since taking up the ecclesiastical communion with the Apostolic See of Rome in 1930. This Synod was to be held in 1982 which was also the 50th anniversary of the erection of the Malankara hierarchy. Some twelve expert commissions have been appointed to prepare the work of the Synod by formulating the drafts on the following topics: Individual and Universal Church, Liturgy, Hierarchy, Religious life, Priests, Seminarians, Laity, Family, Religious instruction, Ecumenism, Education, Youth, Social action, Health, Missions, Communication. As general convener, the present vicar general of the eparchy of Tiruvalla has been appointed. The synod is still in the stage of preparation.

So far the Malankara seminarians studied philosophy and theology in different Latin seminaries and at St. Thomas Seminary, Vadavathoor, which is entrusted to the Chaldeo-Malabar hierarchy. This state could not be satisfactory and was always considered as provisional. Cardinal Rubin, prefect of the Oriental Congregation, encouraged the Malankara hierarchy to erect a *major Seminary* for the three eparchies and the Order of the Imitation of Christ. It opened its gates at Trivandrum in 1982.

### *Independent Syrian Church of Malabar*

This Church came into existence when the Syrian Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Mar Gregorios, who had ordained the Malankara Metropolitan Mar Thoma VI with the name of Mar Dionysios I in 1772, ordained also his enemy, Ramban Kurien Kattumangatt, with the name of Mar Kyrilos. Mar



Dionysios protested against this clandestine ordination, and being supported by the governments of Travancore and Cochin, there was no other choice for Mar Kurilos than to escape into the British dominions of Malabar and to settle in Anjoor (Thozhiur), in the present district of Trichur. There he established an independant Syrian Church. In the course of history, more than once the metropolitans of the Independant Syrian Church served the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church by ordaining her metropolitans. The ecclesiastical communion was interrupted only, when the independant Metropolitans assured the apostolic succession also to the seceding heads of the protestant-minded Mar Thoma Syrian Church, as this happened since 1894.

The 12th Metropolitan of the Independant Syrian Church of Malabar was *Paulos Mar Philoxenos III*, born on April 28, 1928 at Marathamode, who was the hierarch of this Church since 1967. After a long preparation, he was received into the Syro-Malankara Church on August 28, 1977 (*See above*). The solemn function took place in the chapel of the Chaldeo-Malabar Bishop's House in Trichur. Before leaving his episcopal palace and cathedral in Anjoor, the nice hospital which he had built during his episcopate and all the other works, Mar Philoxenos took leave from his faithful by a long, printed circular letter (15 pages) explaining therein his religious convictions and the reasons why he felt bound in conscience to join the Catholic Church (retaining, of course, his liturgical rite). This letter was reprinted in the October-November 1977 issue of the monthly 'Kathiroli', edited by the Pastoral and Catechetical Centre of Changanacherry.

A successor, *Mathews Mar Kurilos*, was consecrated by Metropolitan Alexander Mar Thoma assisted by Thomas Mar Athanasios and Isho Mar Timotheos of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. He had been a candidate for episcopate already in 1967, when Paulos Mar Philoxenos was elected. The metropolitan has no theological formation. He was a teacher in a Malayalam medium Lower primary school and does not know any foreign language (Mar Philoxenos is well-versed in English and Syriac). The episcopal ordination is neither recognized by the Malankara Jacobite nor by the Malankara Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

After six months of ruling the Independant Syrian Church, Mar Kurilos has created *a lot of problems*. He suspended the Ecclesiastical Trustee, Father V. V. Joseph, and the layman-trustee Mr. Mathew who is also the treasurer of the Church. The suspension was declared null and void by the Civil Court. Since his relations with priests and lay people are not good, quarrels arose between different groups. At present, it is thought of having another bishop ordained. The election of the representatives of the "Sabha Mandalam", the electoral body composed by representatives from the parishes and priests, is going on.



## *Non-Catholic Malankara Churches*

### *I. Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church*

This is the name of that portion of the Malankara non-Catholic hierarchs and faithful who are professing allegiance to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch residing in Damascus, Syria. They consider as essential to be in communion with the patriarchate as a continuation of St. Peter's see<sup>7</sup>.

The past years were filled by a great number of *suits in different courts* of Kerala. After the split between the Patriarchal followers and the autonomistic group under the Catholicos who is residing at Kottayam, had become manifest again, the two parties claimed monopoly in matters ecclesiastical and temporal. In 1977, a special court was set up by the Government of Kerala. In consultation with the parties concerned and with their agreement, the special court picked out eight cases. The work of the special court came to a close in 1979. Since the opposing party (Kottayam) questioned the credibility of the special court, the dispute went to the High Court, where the work began on November 13, 1979. On June 6, 1980, the 739 pages verdict was read by Justice J. Chandrashekaramenon. Although everybody had rather expected a verdict in favour of the Catholicos party of Kottayam, the judgment proved to be a free one, independent of public opinion. Its contents is: (1) The Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church are independent Churches; (2) the Malankara Church is episcopal in spiritual and congregational in temporal matters; (3) Patriarch and Catholicos can validly ordain bishops for those faithful accepting their jurisdiction; neither has authority on those who do not accept him; (4) each parish is free with regard to its temporalities; (5) the 'Cananite', i.e. Southist Church is a part of the Malankara Church.

The non-Catholic Cananite or Southist community has always been faithful to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. Its centre is at Chingavanam near Kottayam. From May 12 to June 6, 1980, the Metropolitan of Cananite Community, Abraham Mar Clemis, accompanied the Patriarch Mar Ignatios Ya'qōb III during his last trip to Austria, Rome, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland.

After Mar Ya'qōb's death, the Holy Synod of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church elected the then Archbishop of Baghdad, Mar Severios Zakka Iwas, as his successor. *Patriarch Mar Ignatios Zakka Iwas* was

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5.



enthroned by the Mafryōnō-Catholicos Mar Baselios Paulos II, the hierarchical head of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church, at Damascus, on September 14, 1980.

From November 17 to 24, 1981, a *Synod of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church*, presided over by His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatios Zakka I, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, was held at Damascus. There were 32 hierarchs present, including the Catholicos Mar Baselios Paulos II and eight metropolitans of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church. According to the daily "Malayala Manorama" (Kottayam) of November 26, the synod took the following decision in regard of the Church in India :

"1. The Knanaya (Southist) community in Malankara under Metropolitan Abraham Mar Clemis will be a separate unit under the direct control of the Patriarch. — 2. A metropolitan will be appointed by the Patriarch to be in charge of the churches and other properties that are in Malankara in the name of the Patriarch. — 3. Mooron (chrism) consecrated by the Patriarch alone will be used in the Malankara Church".

In February 1982, H. H. Moron Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, paid an Apostolic Visit to the eparchies of the Malankara Church in communion with him. The high dignitary was treated by the Indian Government as a State guest. He was accompanied by a delegation of more than 50 persons, composed of hierarchs, priests and laymen among whom a Minister of the Syrian Government. During his visit which lasted several weeks, the patriarch was welcomed not only by his own faithful headed by H. B. Mar Baselios Paulos II, but also by other Christian bodies, as the Catholic Syro-Malankara Church and the (Reformed) Mar Thoma Syrian Church. The Orthodox Syrian Church of Malankara (or of India) which had broken away from the communion with Antioch a few years ago, disapproved the patriarch's visit and refused all his attempts to achieve reconciliation among the two separated parts of the Malankara Church.

The patriarch, assisted by the Catholicos and many Syrian and Malankara hierarchs, consecrated the Holy Mūrōn at St. Mary's Jacobite Church, Mannarcadu near Kottayam, in sign of his supreme authority and communion in the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church of which the Jacobite Syrian Church is part. Mar Clemis, Metropolitan of the Knanaya or Southist community, was honoured by him with the title of "Khubarneethi Hakhimo" and the right of using also one "enkolpion".

In the Jacobite church of Kothamangalam, His Holiness consecrated an auxiliary bishop for the metropolitan of Angamaly under the name of Abraham Mar Severios. At Trivandrum, the hierarchical head of the Syro-Malankara Church, H. B. Benedict Mar Gregorios, offered the patriarch and his suite a dinner in his house. The patriarch also visited the Oriental



Catholic St. Thomas Seminary at Vadavathoor where he received a very warm welcome by professors and students. In his allocution to the seminarians, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch exhorted them to take serious the study of Oriental theology.

The visit of Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I to India was concluded at Delhi where he celebrated a solemn pontifical liturgy at the Roman Catholic Cathedral, attended by numerous faithful living there, in the presence of the Pontifical Pro-Nuncio and the local archbishop.

## II. *Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*

As already mentioned above, this community considers itself as *autocephalous*. Sometimes it is also called the Orthodox Syrian Church of India or even The Malabar Church. Its rank-highest prelate is Mar Baselios Thoma Mathews I, Catholicos of the East, residing at Kottayam, Kerala. The leading theologians of this ecclesiastical body are the hierarchs Paulos Mar Gregorios (Paul Verghese), Metropolitan of Delhi, Geevarghese Mar Ostathios (M. V. George), Metropolitan of Niranam (residing at Tiruvalla), and Father V. C. Samuel, former dean of the Theological School of Addis Ababa.

During the past years, this Church was involved in many *law suits* before different courts where it was opposing the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church (*see above*).

The split among the faithful of the Syro-Antiochian rite reaches also to the *countries of emigration*. Those who hold allegiance to the autocephalous catholicate while living in the United States of America, have a hierarchy of their own, Mar Makarios, while those who remain under the jurisdiction of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, have their parishes within the Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada the primate of which is Archbishop Mar Athanasius Y. Samuel who is residing in Lodi, New Jersey. In his list of "Parishes and Clergy of the Archdiocese" (1980), we find seven parishes for Malankara Jacobite faithful whose care is entrusted to seven Malankara Jacobite priests.

The fourth *ecumenical consultation* between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox (Pre-Chalcedonian or Ancient Oriental) Churches and the Roman Catholic Church took place at Vienna-Lainz from September 11 to 17, 1978. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was represented there by three theologians: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, Prof. K. M. George of Kottayam Orthodox Seminary and Prof. V. C. Samuel. Mar Gregorios and Father V. C. Samuel were among the speakers of the consultation<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> The papers were published in Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue Number 4, Vienna 1978, 15-22, 117-124 and 216-225.



Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ostathios who had been prevented from attending the Vienna consultation, took part in the fourth *congress* of the international *Society for the Law of the Oriental Churches* held at Regensburg, Federal Republic of Germany, from September 19 to 24. He delivered there a conference on "Autonomy and Autocephaly in the Theory of the Ancient Oriental Churches"<sup>9</sup>.

On July 3, 1980, a "Federated Faculty of Religious Research of Christian Churches" (FFRRCC) was inaugurated at the Theological Seminary of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church at Kottayam, which is a joint venture of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the protestant Mar Thoma Syrian Church and the (united) Church of South India (CSI). The lectures for M.Th. are held at the Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum (Old Testament), Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam (New Testament), and Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam (Christian Theology). Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios is the chairman of the new faculty, while members of the other theological institutions function as vice-chairmen and as registrar. The FFRRCC is the first non-Catholic institution of higher theological studies in Kerala.

In September 1982, this Church also had its solemn manifestation while celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholicate of the East in India by the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius 'Abd al-Masih (who had been dethroned by the Ottoman government as early as 1905) in 1912. The Roman Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was represented by Rev. Dr. Pierre Duprey W. F., while Bishop Michael B. Duraisamy of Salem, Tamil Nadu, India, was the representative of Pope John Paul II. The Oriental Orthodox Churches were present in the persons of the Ethiopian Metropolitan Nathanael and the Armenian bishop Agham. The participation of the Eastern Orthodox (Chalcedonian) Churches was more numerous. The most distinguished guest was H. H. Iliya II, Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia. The patriarchates of Constantinople, of Moscow, of Romania and of Bulgaria were represented by hierarchs, the Church of Finland by an archimandrite.

The public manifestation was inaugurated by the President of India in person. In his speech, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia addressed the Malankara Metropolitan and Catholicos of the East as "Catholicos-Patriarch of the East". In his reply, Mar Baselios Thomas I Mathews, announced that, henceforth, he is assuming the title "Catholicos-Patriarch of the East" (which traditionally is the title of the Assyrian "Nestorian" Patriarch). The most influential personality of this Malankara Church who had organized

9 Kanon, Vienna 1981, V 130-142.



and conducted the celebrations is, no doubt, not the hierarchical head mentioned above, but the Metropolitan of Delhi (who mostly resides at Kottayam), Paulos Mar Gregorios, widely known as Paul Verghese. In his company, those Orthodox delegates who had accepted the invitation of the Rector, also visited the Oriental Catholic St. Thomas Seminary, Kottayam-Vadavathoor.