CHAPTER V

BISHOP MAR IVANIOS AND THE REUNION MOVEMENT

The previous chapter discussed in detail the attempts made by many leaders of the church for reunion. But, all of them failed for one reason or another. At last, the reunion movement under the leadership of Mar Ivanios achieved the desired goal. This chapter takes a look at the efforts of Mar Ivanios, under whom the Malankara Church re-entered into the communion with the Apostolic See of Rome, and also at the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The chapter also discusses the existence of the Malankara Catholic church as a particular church in the Catholic communion, its identity, liturgy etc. With the canonical acceptance of the Malankara Church into the Catholic unity, the Holy See accepted not merely its ecclesiastical structure, but its liturgy and particular laws and traditions as well, ie, the existence of a particular church within the Catholic church. Such an understanding being really significant, in the Kerala context, any movement in the field of Ecumenism, especially when the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church are its partakers, is deeply influenced by the existence of the Malankara Catholic Church. There are many who see her to be a hindrance to the attempts at unity, and yet others approach her as
an exemplar of Ecumenism. Going not to the extremes, let us look at her and see what she is. This chapter is a search into the reunion movement (Malankara Catholic Church), its founder, growth, hierarchical structure, factors that make her a church and her role in the Catholic communion. What we try is not to have a mere historical overview, but to go further and look at the Malankara Catholic Church as a particular church in the Catholic communion with all the implications of the term.

5.1 The Malankara Church

The revolt of 1653 divided the Thomas Christians into two groups, one remaining in communion with the Pope, and the other, for a few years, with no allegiance to any one. This latter group tried to keep up the autonomy and traditions which they had enjoyed in the undivided church, and they came to be known as the Malankara Church. It eventually adopted the Antiochene liturgical traditions and came under the supremacy of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch. The other group, known as the Syro Malabar Church, remained under Latin rule, thereby remaining in Catholic communion, though its liturgy was latinized and its autonomy was weakened. In 1992, the Syro-Malabar Church was elevated by the Holy See to the status of a major Archepiscopal church with Cardinal Padiyara as its first major Archbishop. From the Malankara Church, a small group became independent in 1972, under the leadership of Mar Coorilos Kattumangatt. It is known as the Independent Syrian Church of Malabar, or the “Thozhiyoor Church”, a name given after the village where this community had mainly settled.
In 1836, some of the Malankara faithful joined the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) due to Anglican influence. Again, in 1875, another section became independent, also because of Anglican influence on their theology and on their tradition. They are known as the Reformed Syrians, or the Mar Thomas Syrian Church. This church can be rightly called “The Anglicanized Malankara Church.” From this church in 1961, the St. Thomas Evangelical Church broke off, accusing the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of deviating from the reformation spirit. The remaining Malankara Church was divided into three churches, namely, the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church under the Patriarch of Antioch, and the Malankara Catholic Church which came into Catholic communion in 1930.

5.2 The Reunion Movement: its Contribution to Christian Heritage

The existence of a Christian community in India, especially in Malabar, from very early times is today generally admitted by historians, though there is difference of opinion among them on the exact date and nature of its origin. That this ancient christian community owes its beginning to the preaching of St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, is a solid tradition firmly believed and strongly adhered to by many, especially the Thomas Christians of India. The St. Thomas Christians formed one church with one faith and religious traditions till the advent of the Portuguese. Their encounter with the Portuguese missionnaries, though pleasant and agreeable in the beginning, ended up in disagreement and quarrels with far-reaching results. The sad effect of this dissension was not only that the Christians in Malabar
were divided, but also that a part of them were alienated from the communion of the Catholic Church. The group of the St. Thomas Christians, separated from the Catholic section, got into ecclesiastical communion with the Antiochene Jacobite Patriarch and formed themselves an autonomous church\textsuperscript{5}. Ever since this rift took place, there were efforts to restore the original harmony and communion with the Catholic church\textsuperscript{6}. But only after three centuries of strenuous efforts at reunion, all of which met with varying degrees of failure, could this community regain catholic communion. This was in 1930 when a representative group of the community, under the heroic leadership of the late Archbishop Mar Ivanios, got reunited with the Catholic church, paving the way for an organised reunion movement\textsuperscript{7}. It is this event that is known in history as the Reunion Movement of the Malankara Church in India. With the Reunion Movement the Malankara Church, through the reunited community, entered again into the catholic communion. This paved the way for the canonical emergence of the Malankara Church. Hence the Reunion Movement is usually identified with the Malankara Catholic Church.

5.3 The Growth of the Reunion Movement

The Reunion Movement could put a solid foundation in spite of opposition and difficulties. The priests and laity who embraced the Catholic unity after the model of Mar Ivanios and Theophilos had to undergo many difficulties\textsuperscript{8}. But each reunited had already become a zealous missionary. The difficulty was all the more acute with the financial crisis they had to face. Mar Ivanios also had to face the
displeasure of the political leaders. The permission of the government was necessary for establishing a church or cemetery. All these maintained when the leaders and bishops of the Jacobite and Orthodox Churches stood firm against the reunited. Despite all these difficulties the Reunion Movement flourished day by day. The support and paternal help of the Catholic bishops of Kerala and outside are to be specially remembered here. The Syro - Malabar bishops of Ernakulam, Changanacherry, Kottayam and Trichur dioceses and Latin bishops of Verapolly, Quilon, Vijayapuram and Calicut were very helpful to the rapid growth of the movement. In spite of all difficulties, the church combining both spiritual and material areas of human life, goes forward with an integral vision of human development. The growth of the Malankara Catholic Church in the last forty five years is an indication of the care and grace of God. At present, the Malankara Catholic Church has 846 churches, 389 priests, 542 religious and more than 3 lakhs faithful. She is also active in the areas of education, medical care and other social works. In short, the church which began only with five persons has become a big movement today. A significant development in the recent past has been the establishment of parishes for the members of the Syro-Malankara Church in different parts of India and in the United States of America.

During the past fifty years of its communion with the Universal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church could grow up considerably and establish its position as an individual church, regaining vitality and spirtual strength. Growing as a vigorous Christian community, the Malankara Catholic church at present consists of 3 dioceses,
about 250,000 laymen, 710 churches and mission centres, 385 priests and about 800 religious. As part of the ancient Christian community of India, it is deeply rooted in the spiritual traditions and cultural values of India. Hence the Malankara Catholic Church, while keeping its Christian antiquity, enjoys the creative force of a renewed church in the emerging culture of India. In assessing the contribution of the Reunion Movement, attention could easily be directed to several of its achievements, especially in terms of the number of institutions and other gains in the field of missionary activities and developments works. It is true that the missionary perspective of the Malankara Catholic Church has been revolutionary and innovating, against the background of the age-old vision the community of Thomas Christians has entertained. The starting of the missionary apostolate of the Malankara Catholic Church among the low-caste Hindus and scheduled castes, especially in South Travancore, was really a breakthrough in the history of their organised apostolic works. A large number of university colleges and technical centres, several primary and high schools, and higher secondary schools are all effective signs of its service in the educational field. Through its various industrial and agricultural projects and model schemes, the Malankara Catholic Church has shown keen interest in the integral human development of the people and thus remains a source of inspiration.

### 5.4 The Reunion: Restoration of an Apostolic Church

The Church in Malabar, because of its origin from the apostolate of St. Thomas, has been claiming the rights and privileges of an apostolic church down through the centuries. The revolt of the people
of the Malabar Church in 1653 was the result of the interference of the Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities in the affairs of the ancient church of Malabar. In fact, the revolt in 1653 was an attempt to protect these rights and defend this autonomy. If we study closely the history of the attempts at reunion with the Catholic church made by the leaders of the Malankara Church, we could learn that they had been insisting that the Holy See of Rome should acknowledge the ecclesial status of the Malankara Church as one having inviolable rights based on apostolic faith and traditions. In the successful reunion of 1930, while the prelates of the Malankara Church accepted the primacy of the Pope, he being the successor of St. Peter in the Holy See of Rome, the Holy See readily acknowledged the status of the Malankara Church accepting its legitimate traditions and spiritual legacies. In fact, it is by this acceptance and acknowledgement of the Holy See of Rome that the reunited Malankara community has received its canonical existence in the Catholic communion. By the canonical emergence of the Malankara Catholic Church through the reunion in 1930, therefore, the ancient Malankara Catholic Church, with its apostolic traditions and spiritual heritage, was restored to its authentic ecclesial dignity and status as an apostolic church. If the original image of an ancient Christianity was blurred by the taints of a division, it was redeemed and reinstated by the reconciliation and reunion effected in the Malankara Church.

5.5 The Reunion Movement: Affirmation of an Ecclesiology

One of the most striking points in the ecclesiology propounded by the Second Vatican Council, was its affirmation that the Catholic
church is a communion of particular churches. In the event of the Coonan Cross Oath, which had later brought about undesirable and unwanted results, it was this individuality and autonomy that were claimed and affirmed by the Malankara Church, on the basis of its apostolic origin and antiquity. In the reunion of 1930, therefore, through the reunited Malankara community, the Malankara Church regained its status of an apostolic individual church in the Universal Church. But in the process of regaining communion with the Holy See of Rome, the Malankara Church defended its own spiritual heritage and patrimony, maintaining its individuality and autonomy. The agreement arrived at in the reunion event between the Holy See of Rome and the Malankara community was a loud and anticipated proclamation of the Second Vatican Council’s ecclesiology that each individual church has its own right of being individual and autonomous as long as it remains in communion with the Universal Church through its communion with the Holy See of Rome.

5.6 The Reunion: An Ecumenical Movement

That Christianity remains divided today is a painful fact, and even a most scandalous one, contradictory and detrimental to every message. Efforts for reconciliation have unfortunately turned out to be causes for further division and estrangement. A closer study of the situation reveals that, apart from the doctrinal differences, prejudices and misunderstanding play a great role in keeping the communities away from one another, preventing them from a closer contact and mutual acceptance. Finding themselves in this state of alienation and
division, the churches are getting more and more aware of the need for coming together, to understand each other, to share with each other the riches they possess as Christian communities. The goal of ecumenism, therefore is to restore unity among Churches and achieve universality of their heritage through dialogue, mutual enrichment, acceptance of each other in each one’s unique reality and individuality. Understanding ecumenism in this way, one cannot fail to realize that the Reunion Movement of 1930 was a significant event of ecumenism in our day. For the event was the crowning point of a continuous and active dialogue between the Malankara Church and the Apostolic See of Rome. Ever since the separation of the Malankara Church from the Catholic communion, the former was making strenuous efforts to re-establish that communion, safeguarding its individuality, while accepting the primacy of the Holy See of Rome. During the course of these discussions and dialogues the Holy See of Rome was gradually led to approve and accept the ecclesial identity of the Malankara Church and acknowledge its spiritual traditions and Christian heritage. The Reunion Movement of the Malankara Church remains, perhaps, the only event of the 20th century, in which ecumenism has reached the goal it purposes to achieve.

By the entry of the Malankara community into the Catholic communion, the Catholic Church and the non-Catholic Churches were brought closer together setting an ecclesial ground for real sharing and dialogue. The reunited Malankara Church provides a common forum for the Catholic beliefs and the Malankara traditions to meet. Rooted in the spiritual tradition of the Malankara Church and enjoying
the Catholic communion, the Malankara Catholic Church paves the way for a deeper understanding between the Catholic and non-Catholic communities. Similarly, through the Malankara Catholic Church, the other churches in the Catholic communion get a closer contact with the life and spiritual heritage of the Malankara Church. Hence, the process of the restoration of Christian unity through dialogue, mutual understanding and acceptance has been considerably promoted and accelerated by the Reunion Movement.

5.7 Mar Ivanios: The Pioneer of the Reunion

5.7.1 Person and Activities

It is good to have a glance at the person and life of Mar Ivanios, the pioneer of the Reunion Movement in brief. He was born at Mavelikara in the famous Panicker family on September 8, 1882. His parents were Thomas Panicker and Annamma. His name was P.T. Geevarghese. He was very brilliant at studies. He was very bold, obedient to elders and priests and always willing to help others. After his school education, he joined the Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam. He did his F.A. at the C.M.S. College, Kotayam. As a Deacon he was sent to the Christian College, Madras from where he took B.A degree. After successfully finishing M.A, he was appointed the Principal of the English medium M.D. Seminary High School, Kottayam. When he was a Deacon, he was called “Koodasa Semmassan” as a priest he was called a “M. A. Father” and when he became Bishop, “Bethany Metran”. His scholarly sermons on the sacraments, when he was a Deacon, gained him the name “Koodasa Semmassan”. He was the first Syrian priest, who got
M.A. degree and hence he was called M.A Achen. He was called a “Bethany Metran” because he was the founder of Bethany Movement in the Jacobite Church and the first Bishop from that order. On 15th August 1908, he received his priestly ordination from Mar Dionysius Vattasseril. He worked hard for the development of his community. With this aim he formed the Bethany Movement. The re-institution of the Throne of Catholicos (1912), and the beginning of the rule of Catholicos, were the outcome of his planning and intelligence. Thus, through the manifold creative activities, he could gain the appreciation of all from the very beginning of his priestly ministry. When he was actively working for the Bethany Movement, he was appointed the Bishop of Bethany. On May 1, 1925, he was consecrated at Niranam church by the Catholicos of the East, as the main celebrant, and Mar Ivanios of Kandanad and Mar Gregorios, Kundara, as co-celebrants. He received the name Mar Ivanios. On February 13, 1929 he was raised to the position of Archbishop. As a member of the separated Kerala Christians (Puthenkoottukar) he took the task of bringing his people back to the mother church. He tried his best for it and at last, attained his goal in 1930. From the beginning till 1953, he led the Reunion Movement bravely and successfully. On 15th July 1953, he entered eternal rest.

5.7.2 Quest for Unity

Mar Ivanios was one of the leaders of the Malankara Orthodox Church who tried to regain the identity of his Church. Even in his attempt to regain the identity, he never pulled down his work to establish
peace among the two parties, namely, Malankara Orthodox and Jacobite Churches. He was bold enough to express his convictions in public by delivering a speech which showed the sincere wish and concern of this greatman. The following are the main points of his speech:

5.7.2.1 Unity: Orthodox and Jacobites

After mentioning about the divisions in the Malankara Church, he continued,

“......... we should be mainly concerned with our unity with those who are against our opinions......... We must try to achieve unity among the two groups and acknowledge and respect the Catholicate too......” 28.

5.7.2.2 Unity: Orthodox and Mar Thoma Church

Mar Ivanios remarked,

“......... we should be always ready to come into union with the Mar Thoma community which was separated from us due to wrong policies of the foreigners......... Our sin is greater than theirs before God........” 29.

We also accepted that the division took place due to lack of real sense of witness among his own church men.

5.7.2.3 Unity: Orthodox and Catholic Church

Mar Ivanios was so much concerned about the unity among the Thomas Christians. He used to speak about Pazhayakoor and Puthenkoor as one family.
“........We should not be satisfied with the unity with Mar Thoma Church alone; the majority of the Syrians are in communion of the Catholic Church. They are also part and parcel of our community. The unity between Pazhayakoor and Puthenkoor is a must. Now all the Christian leaders are having the wish to have the communion of churches as early as possible........I firmly believe that the Catholics will take steps to get done in Kerala.........”

The speech was the clear expression of the concern of Mar Ivanios.

### 5.7.3 Proponent of Reunion

Mar Ivanios worked hard to bring the sons of St. Thomas who were divided and existing in many churches, back to the mother church. He induced all who came into acquaintance with him, to embrace the mother church. He prayed for reunion. His last word in his deathbed to his successor Mar Gregorious, reveal his zeal for Reunion. “I will impede before God, even after my death for the reunion of my non-catholic brethren”. Mar Ivanios was a good educationalist and scholar. His versatile talents and activities gained him many reputations and names. He was called “The Lion of Malankara”, Abo Geevarghese, etc. He was the most oriental ecclesiologist. Being a preacher and scholar, he shone as a star among others. He could gain the recognition for the Malankara traditions from the Universal Church. In fine, he tried his best for the growth and nature of the Malankara Church.
5.7.4 Realization of Reunion

Mar Ivanios sent an official memorandum to Rome in 1926, in order to feel the pulse of Rome\(^{32}\). In that memorandum he clearly demanded two things.

1. The entry of the Jacobite Church into the unity of the Catholic church, preserving their ancient rites and rituals, and

2. Conserving the jurisdiction of the uniting bishops over their flock\(^{33}\).

From these very demands, the nature of the reunion the Malankara Church wished can be understood. Then Rome asked for certain clarifications. In reply, Mar Ivanios presented the complete history of the Malankara Church to Rome\(^{34}\). In July 1930, the meeting of the Oriental Congregation in Rome accepted the request of Mar Ivanios and conveyed the decision to the Apostolic Delegate. It was through Bishop Benziger (Bishop of Quilon) that Mar Ivanios knew this decision\(^{35}\). The demands raised by Mar Ivanios were accepted by Rome. Since the Catholicos was not ready to be reunited, Rome kept mum about the appointment of a Catholics and the throne of the Catholicos. As he got a positive reply from Rome, Mar Ivanios could go forward with his attempts. But things did not have such an easy going, though the attempt begun in 1926 had a positive reply in 1930. The situation of the Metran Party became much better within this short period. Though they failed in the “Vattippanakkesu” in 1926, they could gain a verdict in their favour through the judgement of Justice Chatfield\(^{36}\). Following this, many withdrew themselves from the reunion attempts. Even
Mar Vattasseril changed his position with the success in the suit. He was not ready to leave the property, churches, seminary etc.

Mar Gregorious, though at first he opined that there should be the reunion with the old church, after the favourable verdict, tried to persuade Mar Ivanios to stand firm in his attempts. He also had the strong support of his Suffagan, Mar Theophilos. Both Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos informed Rome of their intense desire. Rome took a positive stand to their wish. Rome promised that Mar Ivanios should be received as an Archbishop of Bethany. On 20 August 1930, Mar Ivanios, together with his colleagues Mar Theophilos and some faithful, left the Ashram of Perunad. They had to face so many difficulties and hardships. On 18th September, 1930, Mar Ivanios went to Quilon Bishop’s House with four others. Those four persons were, Mar Theophilos, Rev. Fr. John, Rev. Dn. Alexander and Mr. Kilieth Chacko, representative the of laity. They made a pledge before Bishop Benziger of Quilon on 20th September 1930, and thus reunited with the Catholic Church. With this event, the long-cherished attempts for reunion found their fulfilment. Through this historical event, the separated “Puthenkoottu” society got an entrance open to the Catholic communion.

5.7.5 Reunion: Not an accidental event

Mar Ivanios was one of the leading personalities among the Metropolitans the Malankara Church has ever seen. Its reunion caused much dispute and discussion among the Syrians. His deep studies,
the life at Serampur College as a professor, the sad plight of the Jacobite Church, etc., promoted his interest in reunion. He was convinced from his own experience and studies that many things done by the Jacobite Church were wrong. So he had a respectful approach to the Catholic Church. When he was elected Bishop, he informed the bishops of his church that he was not ready to curse the Chalcedon Synod and Pope Leo which every Orthodox Christian was supposed to do. If cursing the Synod and Pope was necessary for consecration, he would prefer not to become bishop. From this, his approach to the Catholic Church can clearly be understood. His researches in the history of the church without any presupposition was the most important factor that prompted him to embrace the Catholic Church. The excommunication of Mar Dionysius Vattasseril, the erection of the throne of the Catholicos, enthronement of the Catholicos, etc., intensified the tension in the Jacobite Church, and a section of the people went away from the Patriarch of Antioch. This situation intensified the attempts for reunion. Then Mar Vattasseril called Mar Ivanios and entrusted him with the mission of the efforts for reunion. Consequently, reunion efforts took a new form in 1926. Mar Ivanios was eager to act according to the truth he realised. In short, we can say Reunion was not an accidental event but the fruit of much prayer and sacrifice from the part of Mar Ivanios.

5.8 The Event of Reunion and the Emerging Truths

The ‘Church Union’ was held on 20th and 21st September, 1930 at Kollam under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios of Malankara
Church. It is needless to say that the historical facts of the division occurred in the hitherto one, holy, catholic and apostolic Malankara Church, and its reunion and the continuation of the same are realities concerning the whole Malankara Christian community. In this context, the Reunion Event of the Malankara Catholic Church held in 1930 and the ‘Reunion Movement’ and the Malankara Catholic Church born out of that event need to be viewed with interest by the Universal Church, especially by the whole Malankara Christian community. Though it is not possible to undertake a detailed study of all these factors here, we would try to underline certain important truths.

5.8.1 The Great Reunion Event

The inner meanings and the objectives of the Reunion event of 1930 held under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios of happy memory are still being unveiled to us. Since the event was instrumental in determining the course of the history of the Malankara Church itself, it is important that we are in the know of the historical details of this event.

5.8.2 The Ecclesial Character of Reunion

Surely, the Reunion that took place under the initiative of His Grace Mar Ivanios is a milestone in the history of the church. The truths that this event contains are extremely relevant as far as the life and mission of the Malankara church are concerned. The Reunion of 1930 was the fundamental fruition and response of the reunion efforts of 300 years led by the fathers of the Malankara church, begun after
the division of the church in 1653. On a theoretical basis, with the Reunion the ecclesial existence and identity of the ancient Malankara Apostolic Church was recognised within the communion of the Universal Catholic Church. Communion was re-established with the Pope who is the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the successor of St. Peter and the Bishop of Rome. On account of the same reason, the Malankara Church could also regain its communion with all the individual apostolic churches of which the Pope is the Supreme Head. As a result of the dialogue held between the Holy See of St. Peter and His Grace Mar Ivanios, who represented the Malankaras Church with approval of the Holy synod, the other churches recognised that the ancient Malankara Church is apostolic and for the same reason she has an ecclesial identity of her own. It was as a symbol of this reality that His Grace Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos were received into the Catholic communion of the Holy Church with the recognized heritage and the administrative rights of the Malankara Church. The ecclesial nature of the reunion event of 1930 has not yet been largely known or recognised. So also, only a small community of the Malankara Church is enjoying the Catholic communion which has been opened to the whole Malankara Church. As the ecclesial nature of the reunion event of 1930 becomes clearer, one gains deeper insights into the inner significance of the event. The truth that the divided Malankara Church community has been reestablished within the Catholic communion through the Reunion of 1930 has not yet been largely known or recognized. So also, a small community of the Malankara Church is enjoying the Catholic communion which has been opened to the whole Malankara Church.
It is here that the Reunion Movement and the unity efforts in Malankara gain greater relevance.

5.9 The Malankara Reunion Movement

Today, various dialogues are being carried out on a church basis for regaining unity between the various local churches of the universal Christian community, and also various activities in connection with them are held. In this context, it is imperative that we specially evaluate the Reunion event of 1930, the consequent Reunion Movement, the Malankara Catholic Church which was born of that event, and also the reunion activities of that church. The ancient Malankara Apostolic Church has suffered divisions in the course of time and it exists today as various small church communities. Today’s Malabar Catholic Church, East Syrian Church, Malankara Orthodox Church, Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Malankara Catholic Church, Tozhiyur Syrian Independant Church, Malankara Mar Thoma Church, etc., are all parts of the ancient Malankara Church. Even in today’s C.S.I Church and in some other Christian communities one can see the faithful of the ancient Malankara Church and its heritage.

Of all these churches, only the Malabar Catholic Church has ever remained within the universal communion of the Holy Church. The Malankara community has lost the fullness of the Universal Church communion. It was the attempts to regain this lost communion, carried out under the leadership of the fathers of the Malankara Church for about 300 years, that became victorious in the Reunion of 1930 held under the leadership of his Grace Mar Ivanios. But it is a sorry fact
that this Reunion event could bring the unity attempts of the Malankara Church only to a partial success. On the one side, the Pope of Rome, who is the supreme head of the universal church and all the other apostolic churches of which he is the Supreme Head, recognized, and declared the apostolic foundation and heritages of the Malankara Church and all her ecclesial rights and privilege for her mission fulfilment as an individual church. But, on the otherside, only a small community of the Malankara Church under the leadership of His Grace Mar Ivanios is responding to this gesture positively. Only when the whole Malankara Church together so responds, does the Reunion of 1930 become a real success and begin to bear fruits. The Reunion Movement which includes the attempts to regain the unity and communion between the different church communities of Malankara, precisely because all are parts of an ancient individual apostolic church, is of a specific nature and it functions on a specific realm. Its style and procedure belong to those of the Malankara Church communities. It functions on a different realm from that of the ecumenical movement which is carried out on a universal basis between different local churches which include diverse people and cultures. This is because the Reunion dialogues are held not between different individual churches, but between the different communities of the same individual church, and it is here that the reunion activities are fulfilled.

5.10 Catholic and Orthodox Churches in India

We would argue that the specific relevance of the Malankara Catholic Church is as a bridge between the Malankara Orthodox and
the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church in order to bring about full Christian communion. We shall further argue that the Malankara Catholic Church is to fulfill its mission by being a spokesman of orthodoxy in the Catholic Church and of catholicity among the Orthodox Churches. We shall articulate the concrete ways in which the Malankara Catholic Church can fulfill this special task. We shall begin our discussion with a critical self-assessment, referring to the positive contributions of the Malankara Catholic Church in this regard, underlining the area where it lags behind or has deviated. An important section of this chapter deals with the immediate duties of the Malankara Catholic Church in promoting full communion.

5.11 A critical self-assessment

A critical self-assessment of the Sysro-Malankara Catholic Church, with respect to its present position is an important starting point. The Malankara Catholic Church is a Metropolitan Church sui iuris, governed by a Metropolitan Archbishop with the Council of Hierarchs of the same church, under the pastoral governance of the Supreme Pontiff. By following the Antiochene Liturgy, the Syro-Malankara Church intimately shares a liturgical tradition and riches with its Orthodox counter-parts, namely, the Malankara Orthodox church, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. In fact, the liturgical affinity to the Antiochene traditions makes the Malankara Catholic Church feel at home with the Orthodox Churches in India. The Orthodox Church leaders also accept this fact. The ecclesial vision of Mar Ivanios, the founder of the Malankara Reunion
Movement, was to have full communion of the Malankara Orthodox and Catholic Churches. This is very evident in the letter sent by Mar Ivanios on behalf of the Malankara Orthodox Church, to Rome for communion. Even the very name proposed by Mar Ivanios for the newly united Catholic Church, namely, ‘Catholic Orthodox Syrians,’ points to the fact that his desire was always for the full communion of the Malankara Orthodox with the Catholic Church. But the project of full communion could not then be fully realized as the majority of the bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church withdrew their support from Mar Ivanios in his attempt to have union with Rome. This withdrawal really affected the procedure. Still Mar Ivanios proceeded with the union project. In the course of time, the emphasis happened to fall more on individual reunions than on the ideal of full communion. This can be seen as the practical consequence of the withdrawal of the major part of the Orthodox Church from the unity movement. Ecumenically and ecclesiologically speaking, this shift is not the ideal, as we understand the role of the Malankara Catholic Church as a bridge-builder between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In this section of critical self-assessment we shall see first the positive contributions made by the Malankara Catholic Church in the ecumenical field. After that, we shall turn our attention to those areas which need special attention to give up certain attitudes and styles.

5.12 Spokesman of Malankara Orthodoxy

The Malankara Catholic Church, in order to work as a bridge between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches in India,
has to be a spokesman of the Malankara Orthodox and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox churches. In this section, we shall analyse how the Malankara Catholic Church can effectively work as a spokes-man of Malankara orthodoxy in the Catholic Church.

5.13 Fidelity to the Liturgy

First and foremost, in order to be a spokesman of the Malankara Orthodoxy in the Catholic Church, the Malankara Catholic Church has to be faithful to its liturgical traditions. By doing so, the Malankara Catholic Church will make the catholicity of the church more open and rich. In this context it is fitting to have a brief discussion on the Antiochene liturgy which the Malankara churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, are using. Since both share the same liturgy, they have reason to come closer. Roccasalvo affirms: “The oriental Catholic churches can proudly take their place with the Latin church in the ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox churches. Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Christians who share a common liturgical and spiritual heritage already enjoy a certain unity”. This liturgical affinity can make the process of unity between the churches really effective.

5.14 Malankara Church and the Antiochene Liturgy

As already stated in the first chapter, till 1653, the St. Thomas Christians in India were part of one individual church, and because of their liturgical affinity with the East Syrian Church, they followed the East Syrian (Chaldean) liturgy. It was only after the arrival of Mar Gregorios from Jerusalem in 1665 that the Antiochene liturgy was
brought to the Malankara Church. Due to Latinization, the East Syrian Liturgy, which the St. Thomas Christians had been following, lost much of its oriental character. When in 1665 Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem introduced the Antiochene Liturgy, because they found many similarities between the new liturgy and the pre-latinized East Syrian liturgy, the bishops who came later from Antioch also continued the same strategy. As Cyril Mar Baselious comments,

“The Antiochene prelate turned down their attention first to restoring the neglected early Syrian tradition - thanks to their identity with the Antiochene - and thus prepared the ground. It was, therefore, through a restoration that they paved the way for new introductions.”

The Synod held in 1836 at Mavelikara formally accepted the Antiochene liturgy as the liturgy of the Malankara Church. The public document regarding this states: “We, the Syrian Jacobites, who are subject to the supreme power of the Antiochene Patriarch and who use the liturgy and rites instituted by the prelates sent by his authority cannot deviate from such liturgies and adopt a discipline contrary to them. Thus the Antiochene liturgy had taken roots in the Malankara Church. It is an interesting fact that, though many divisions took place in the Malankara Church, all sections still keep up the Antiochene liturgy presently. This liturgy is used in India by the Malankara Orthodox church, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, the Malankara Catholic Church, the Independent Church of Malabar and the Mar Thoma Church. It is this same liturgy that the Malankara Catholic Church
represents in the Catholic Church. In the Indian context, the Antiochene liturgy is also known as the Malankara liturgy.

5.15 Malankara Liturgy in the Catholic Church

The Malankara Catholic Church, in the reunion with the Catholic Church in 1930, did not abandon its liturgy; rather it resolved to preserve it in fact, because this liturgy is considered a great treasure for the whole church. The Holy See allowed the Malankara Catholic Church to continue to follow the same liturgy. By faithfully preserving this liturgy, the Malankara Catholic church has contributed to the enrichment of the liturgical treasure of the Catholic Church.

5.16 Autonomy of the Malankara Orthodox Churches

Another dimension of the Malankara Orthodox Churches is the autonomy which they enjoy in local administration. It becomes imperative for the Malankara Catholic Church in its role of bridging the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, to represent or make the Catholic Church aware that this great treasure the Malankara Orthodox Churches enjoy today is mainly the continuation of the autonomous character of the St. Thomas Christians’ Church before 1653 A.D.

5.17 Autonomy of the St. Thomas Christians Church

The Thomas Christians always kept their autonomy in church administration, though they received bishops from their sister church, i.e., the East Syrian Church. They were very conscious of their ecclesial identity and autonomy
“They had been leading a life at the core of which was an identity consciousness which, if not expressed in clear-cut formulas, was implicit in their attitude towards their traditions, their social, socio-religious customs and practices, and their theological outlook.”

It was this sense of identity which led them to assert their autonomy as a church. Bishops were considered as the spiritual heads of the church, whose main duties were conferring orders, celebrating the sacraments, and helping the faithful to grow in their spiritual and ecclesial life, and so on. Administration of the church was the responsibility of the Archdeacons. They were known as Jatikku Karttavian. According to Placid Podipara, the authority of the Archdeacon was exercised “not only in the ecclesiastical, but also in the civil and social fields.... As Jathikku Karttavian, there was only one Archdeacon, though there was more than one bishop at one time.”

The administration of the local churches was carried out by the local parish council (Yogam), and the local priest (Desathupattakkaran) being the president of the council. The Christian life of the parish was inspected by the local council, and it was this body that took decisions on the public sins of the faithful. A report of 1750, about these yogams (councils) by Fr. Boniface OCD sheds light on the matter. In every parish there is an assembly which deals with the
ecclesiastical affairs. It consists of the local clergy and laity. They discuss and decide on matters such as finance, constructions works, maintenance of the Church, approval of the candidate to Sacred Orders, absolution from ecclesiastical ensures etc.... In neighbouring parishes are assembled. For every important case, all the parishes of the kingdom are invited, at times all the parishes of the whole diocese\textsuperscript{57}.

\section*{5.18 The Autonomous Character of the Malankara Orthodox Church}

As we have seen, the St. Thomas Christians enjoyed a lot of autonomy in their administration, on both national and local levels. This autonomy was shattered with the intervention of the Portuguese missionaries in the local administration of the Thomas Christians. Eventually, the Thomas Christians who remained in the catholic communion lost the autonomous character of their administration. But, it is to be noted that the Malankara Orthodox Church has been keeping most of the autonomous character of the early church in India. V. C. Samuel says that three factors are important in identifying the nature of the autonomy of a church. They are: administrative freedom, liturgical forms and other issues connected with worship and church and its canon law\textsuperscript{58}. The leaders of the Malankara Orthodox Church tried and laboured tirelessly to regain the selfhood or autonomy of their church. The communion of the Malankara Orthodox Church with the Syrian Orthodox Church and the subsequent intervention of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in its internal administration brought about a series of struggles and civil cases between the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. The very establishment of
the Catholicate of the Malankara Orthodox Church should be seen as a victory in its struggle to regain its autonomous character. The Catholicate remains a symbol of the autonomy of the Malankara Orthodox Church. During the early years, when the Malankara Church found itself bereft of a valid episcopate, the relationship with the Antiochean church was nothing but mutual spiritual communion. However, later, owing to various circumstances, this was to bring about a dependence on the part of the Malankara Church, though in its innermost heart it was bitter about it. This feeling necessiated the affirmation of its autonomy more and more clearly, which found its full expression in the creation of the independent Catholicate of Malankara⁵⁹. The administration in the Malankara Orthodox Church is carried out on three levels, namely, parish, diocese and church. In each level, the laity enjoys an honourable place in its administration. The constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Church was promulgated by Moran Mar Baselios Augen I, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, on 26 June 1967, at Kottayam. It is worth mentioning here that in the Malankara Orthodox Church there is a democratic and episcopal administrative system, which is not so similar to the one in the Catholic Church. The Malankara Catholic Church, in its role to be the spokesman of the Malankara Orthodox Church, should clearly and sincerely communicate this autonomous character of the Malankara Orthodox in Catholic circles.

5.19 Reunion and the Establishment of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy for the Reunited

Mar Ivanios always visualised a bright future for the Malankara Church and also for the Indian church. In all his activities, he had
this aim in mind. The demands he put forward in the memorandum to Rome clearly show this fact. He wanted to preserve the customs and traditions of the Malankara Christians. Of the two reunited bishops, Mar Ivanios was received as an Arch bishop and Mar Theophilos as the bishop of Thiruvalla. But the dioceses were not separated then. But the Holy See was reluctant to receive the Catholicos retaining his position and titles. The reason was that, though at first he was lenient to reunion, then he went away from the efforts for reunion. It was agreed that the reunited bishops would be received with their own positions. It was made clear that the Bethany Metropolitan and the Bishop of Thiruvalla could not be under the Patriarch of Antioch. This clearly shows that the Malankara Church is immediately related not with the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, but with Rome. In this situation, it was very difficult to define the nature of the hierarchy for the reunited because the Catholicos was not ready to be reunited. But the Holy See was looking forward to receiving the Catholicos. So, Rome was not ready to appoint another head for the church. Thus Rome kept mum about the Catholicos and Catholicate and declared that the Bethany Metropolitan and the Bishop of Thiruvalla were directly related to Rome. One thing to be noted here is that the Holy See has taken only the initial steps to begin the movement. It is clear from the declaration on the local authority of each bishop. Rome declared:

“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 division of the diocese, after we see what the movement amounts to................."
5.19.1 Institution of the Hierarchy

On February 13, 1932, Mar Ivanios was appointed the titular bishop of Thasiensis and Mar Theophilos that of Aradenis, through the apostolic constitution “Magnum Nobis”. But this was not much welcome by the reunited who had the intense desire to be a particular church. So, this adjustment did not last long. Hence the Holy See decided to form a stable hierarchy without much delay. On 11th June 1932, Pope Pius XI declared the institution of the Syro-Malankara hierarchy through the Papal Document “Christo Principi”. This is an important historical event for the Malankara Church. Though the church was reunited in 1930, its canonical status was well defined and established only with this declaration. The special province given to the Malankara Church was the fulfilment of the promises given before reunion. After the institution of hierarchy the Holy See pointed out the need of having a solid canonical structure for the church. With this aim a suffragan diocese was established at Thiruvalla on November 6, 1933, besides the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. At that time itself, its boundaries too were decided. Thus Rome agreed to give a special province and thereby to accept the Malankara Church. The hierarchy included one Archbishop and one Suffragan Bishop, i.e., Archbishop of Trivandrum and Bishop of Thiruvalla. The Trivandrum Archbishop became the Metropolitan of the new province. These bishops had all the provisions according to the Antiochean tradition and rights and obligations according to the common code of canons. The Papal Document made it clear that the rule of the dioceses should
be in accordance with the canon law and any change of the boundary and extension of the province was reserved to the Holy See\textsuperscript{68}. The institution of this special province for the reunited is so important that Rome had the intense desire to get the whole Malankara Church reunited.

5.19.2 *Syro-Malankara Church: A Rite*

With the institution of the Catholicate in 1912, the Malankara Church became an autonomous church. It is clear from the statement submitted to Rome in the name of the Catholicate Bishops. The throne of Catholicos is free from the Patriarch. The power of the Patriarch is executed in the Catholicate by the synod of bishops which includes the "Catholicos and co-bishops\textsuperscript{69}". The petitions for reunion were sent by this synod of Bishops. Rome considered a different name to this new reunited community. Mar Ivanios already preferred the name Orthodox Syrian Catholics\textsuperscript{70}. It is in this situation that Rome sought different possibilities. In the "Papal bull", that proclaimed the institution of the new hierarchy, the Malankara Catholics were called Syro-Malankarites who used the Antiochean rite\textsuperscript{71}. Thus, the whole Malankara Church was considered as a special group. The Holy See accepted the ancient Antiochean liturgy, the canonical position and the peculiarities of the Oriental churches. After admitting the canonical status of the Malankara Church, the Holy See named her “the Syro-Malankara Church”, i.e., the Syro-Malankara rite\textsuperscript{72}. Thus Rome considered the Malankara Church as a rite.
5.19.3 Existence of the Malankara Church in the Catholic Communion

The Catholic Church is so universal that it seems unity in diversity. The church includes people of different churches, customs and languages. This shows that the church includes different local particular churches.

5.19.4 Vatican II’s Approach to the Particular Churches

Vatican II repeatedly says that the church is the communion of churches. Before Vatican II. The ecclesiology of the Catholic church was totally centred on Rome\(^73\). But the council could re-establish the dignity and position of each particular church in the communion of churches. This is the most important merit of Vatican II. The concept "church is the communion of the churches" includes two basic aspects: unity and diversity. All the individual churches are united in the matters of faith, sacraments, (morals) and hierarchy"\(^74\). But these are revealed in different ways in each church. The Council speaks of clearly.

“The Holy Catholic church is the mystical body of Christ. Different churches set up in various places by the apostles and their successors joined together in a multiplicity of organically united groups which, while safeguarding the unity of faith and the unique divine structure of the Universal Church, have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony. Some of these, notably the ancient patriarchal churches, as mothers in the faith, gave birth to
other daughter churches, as it were, and down to our own days they are linked with these by bonds of a more intimate charity in what pertains to the sacramental life and obligations. This multiplicity of local churches, unified in the common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided church. All the particular churches are free to keep unity in faith and diversity in its own mode of expressing the faith. The Council strongly recommends that we have to foster the traditions of the oriental churches because tradition is the only link that unites us with the early Christian apostles.\textsuperscript{75}

By preserving these traditions, the church can always preserve the communion with them. Each church is bound to preserve its identity and traditions while being in the Catholic Church. Even though each church differs in liturgical languages and customs, the doctrines of faith are the same. Though the rite is different, all particular churches within the Catholic Communion are Catholic, apostolic, one and holy. The Syro-Malankarites have accepted the West Syrian Antiochean Rite.\textsuperscript{76} Each particular church is perfect in its order. Actually, an individual church is the full presence of the Universal Church to a particular people in a special culture. The church, therefore, is not a universal project, but the communion of individual churches.\textsuperscript{77} Thus every individual church involves the whole mystery of the church.
There have been ever so many reunions all over the world. But none of them was called “Reethukar”, except the followers of Mar Ivanios. The name of reunited Malankara rite became rite (Reethukar) soon. Mar Ivanios did not join the Roman (Latin) church. Rather he reconciled the Malankara Church with the Roman Church. Rite means a church which has its own identity and liturgy. It is not the same as a local church. A local church may have an identity, but all local churches do not have their own identity. The four aspects that determine the identity of a particular church are liturgy, spirituality, theology and hierarchy.

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is a particular church, which has accepted the West Syrian liturgy and hierarchical (jurisdictional) structure. Together with this, the Malankara Church has its own customs and traditions which are to be safeguarded. Every particular church has to understand its role and mission. The Malankara Catholic Church has a special mission in the Catholic communion. It has the special responsibility of showing other Eastern Christian churches, the dignity and meaning of the Catholic communion. At the very same time, each individual church has to grow in keeping its own identity, customs and traditions. The separated Malankara Christians entered the Universal communion, which they had lost earlier. We can’t deny the fact that, though the communion with the Universal Church could be gained through this movement of reunion, it could not keep the identity of the church fully. The custom of seeing the Malankara Catholics as mere ‘Reethukar’ and the reunion movement as a mere movement has to come to an end. Each Malankarite should be convinced of the fact
that they are an ecclesial community with a distinct paternity and characteristics.

We have been going through the Reunion Movement, which has been the most revolutionary and striking movement that originated in the Malankara Church. The speciality of Mar Ivanios’ movement is that it did not stand against the faith and teachings of the church; rather it was busy with curing the wounds caused by division. But the Malankara Church was careful in not causing still another division while curing the existing one. It remains a fact that the movement received not the appropriate and desired jurisdictional status. Though in books canonically, She is a particular church “sui juris” she does not enjoy the rights and privileges of an autonomous church. Everywhere she faces restrictions and hindrances. Such a condition is not desirable for particular church and least helping for the fulfilment of her particular mission. This affects worst the area of Ecumenism, especially in relations to the non-catholic Malankara Churches. Cyril Mar Baselios says:

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


2. The Independent Syrian Churh of Malabar has eight priests 5000 faithful in 6 parishes, and is governed by a Metropolitan, Their headquarters is in Tozhiyur near Trichur, Kerala. The Mar Thoma Syrian Church has a Metropolitan as the head, seven Bishops and 600,000 faithful in 820 parishes ministered by 490 priests. The Metropolitan palace is in Thiruvalla, central Kerala. The St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India, having its headquarters at Thiruvalla, has two Bishops, 38 priests and 15,000 faithful. The Malankara Orthodox Church is governed by the Catholicos. It has nineteen Bishops, 1,438,454 faithful, ministered by 925 priests. Its headquarters is at Kottayam. The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church is under the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch. It has a catholicos in India, II Bishops, 584 priests and 9,40,000 faithful in 10 dioceses. Their headquarters is at Muvattupuzha. For a detailed study on the Malankara Churches today ,see G. Chediath, Keralattile Kraistava Sabhakal (Mal) The Christian Churches in Kerala Kottayam OIRSI 1989. Since this is the latest study on the Malankara Churches we follow the statistics and information given in this book.


13. Kollaprambil Jacob, the Archdeacon of All - India, Kottayam, 1972 .


22. Ibid., p 43.
23. Ibid., p. 64.
25. Ibid., p. 400.
26. Ibid., p. 401.
29. Ibid., pp. 169-183.
31. Ibid., p 68.
33. Ibid., p. 122.
34. Ibid., p. 124.
36. Ibid., p. 391.
37. Ibid., p. 393.
41. Ibid., p. 397.

42. Ibid., 380.

43. Ibid., p. 383.

44. Ibid., p. 385.

45. Ibid., p. 386.

46. For a detailed study on the arrival and reception of the Antiochene Liturgy in the Malankara Church, see Cyril Mar Baselios, “Introduction of the Antiochene Rite into the Malankara Church”, I. Thottunkal (ed) Emerging Trends, op.cit., p. 76 - 110.


51. Ibid., p. 77.

52. P. Cherian, The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society (1816-1840) 390, quoted in Cyril Malancharuvil, Malanakara Church, p. 91.

53. A. M. Mundadan, Indian Christians’ Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy, op. cit., p. 28.

54. Jatikku Karthavian means one who is responsible for the community or one who governs the community. For a detailed elaboration on this


57. APF congregazione particolare vol. 109, f. 90; Report of Fr. Boniface of Infant Jesus in 1750; quoted in X. Koodapuzha, Oriental Churches: An Introduction, op. cit., p. 44.


62. Ibid., p.198.

63. Ibid., p. 200.
64. Malancharuvil Cyril, *Syro Malankara Church, op.cit.*, p. 132.


