

THE MOTIVES OF MAR IVANIOS FOR THE REUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Chapter I. Historical Factors and Reasons that contributed to the Reunion of Mar Ivanios

1. The sad plight and the spiritual stagnation of the Orthodox Church.
2. The Church of Malankara must restore its former glory with Rome.
3. Many of his glorious predecessors had tried to reunite with Rome.
4. Mar Ivanios was enthralled by the Holy Synod to reunite with Rome with a view to corporate Reunion.

A Paper presented to the Institute of Spiritual Theology of the Gregorian University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Diploma in Spiritual Science under

the direction of Rev. Fr. J. Masson for Serapion.

Life at Serapion 1966 Spiritual Warfare.

Unsanctified clergy and laity.

Mar Vision broadens: The urgent need is a vision of the East.

Not just a Missionary Society but a religious institution.

Bethany poses spiritual problems.

Perfection of humility and religious obedience as a spiritual attainment.

Need of fraternal communion with all the Churches of Christ.

Conclusion.

By

Rev. Fr. Athanasius Ayrookuzhiel

Our Lord founded only one Church.

Unity of the Church is centralised in the Holy Spirit.

Divine Tradition transmits the Faith to the Church.

May we be united.

From the Library of
Rev. A.V. Abraham
Ayrookuzhiel

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Christians, all over the world, conscious of the great dangers of their unhappy divisions, are prayerfully waiting and working for the restoration of perfect union and concord in Christendom. In these circumstances, it would be almost a necessity to study the motives and the spirit that inspired Mar Ivanios, the Newman of the Orient to initiate the greatest Reunion Movement of our century. In his reunion, we have a concrete case of the ways of the working of the Holy Ghost and of the response of a great and sincere soul despite tremendous personal difficulties, prejudices, loss of wealth, prestige and friendship to effect and realize the Holy Will of Christ 'that they all may be one'. So we may find here important elements which could be guide lines for our ecumenical action.

A study of this kind, which touches the realm of conscience of a human being in its relation to God, is bound to be extremely complex by its very nature. First of all we get glimpses of the mysterious working of the Divine Grace, threads of which, we mortals cannot define or fully grasp; but we are nevertheless obliged to point to them, precisely because some of the very facts, whose understanding we seek cannot be explained on a purely natural level and because the persons acting in such divine dramas explicitly acknowledge them. The reader may say: 'Well, we never want to study this divine part of the drama'. Ofcourse I agree. But I wrote this to suggest that the human part of the drama cannot be totally separated from its supernatural counter part and so our explanation of the motives and the spirit of Mar Ivanios to reunite with the Church, is to that extent beyond our grasp.

However we shall now try to explain in our own human way why Mar Ivanios, born and brought up and made an archbishop in the Malankara Orthodox Church embraced the Catholic Church, and account for the historical, sociological, theological and spiritual reasons that inspired this great soul to take the plunge.

Actually, with this paper, I have done little more than to establish the broad lines of the theme I have undertaken, trusting that this beginning could serve some future undertaking in which they could be given a fuller, more adequate treatment.

Chapter I.

Historical Factors and Reasons that contributed to the Reunion of Mar Ivanios.

1. The Sad plight and the spiritual stagnation of the Malankara Orthodox Church

The Malankara Orthodox Church ever since its separation from the communion with the Church of Rome was a fertile field for periodical quarrels and divisions (1). This pitiable state reached a climax at the time when Mar Ivanios, as a young priest, was beginning his service in it. Two warring factions appeared, known as the parties of the Catholicos and of the Patriarch. They were fighting each other tooth and nail about the jurisdiction over the temporalities of the Church. "The latest division," writes Fr. Placid, "was caused in 1910 by the action of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Abdullah, who claimed jurisdiction over the temporalities of the Malabar Church. One half of the Malabar Jacobites protested and were, therefore excommunicated by the Patriarch. The Excommunicated came to be known as the Bishop's party (Catholicos party) while those who agreed with the position of the Patriarch were called the Patriarch's party. Interminable quarrels and law suits followed between the adherents of the two groups" (2). Mar Ivanios, then Fr. Givargheese Panicker was on the Catholicos side and was the chief aid and adviser to Mar Dionysius Vattasseril, the Metropolitan of Malankara, the highest office in the Malankara Church. Being a brilliant young priest, he had planned many of the strategical moves of his party and was the principal spokesman of his side. This made him the object of attack and even the victim of thuggery. Things had gone so far that once he had to face even an attempt at murder contrived by his opposition party members (3). Although he was saved, a body-guard of Mar Dionysius Vattasseril and of himself, named Ana Pappy was beaten to death. Referring to events of this sort he wrote: "These experiences gave me the occasion to see and smell the hideousness lying at the bottom of Malankara Church of which we glory as a Church founded by St. Thomas the Apostle and teaching apostolic, catholic and true faith" (4). These

(1) Fr. Placid, The Syro-Malankarites: The Silver Jubilee of their Reunion, Unitas, Vol. VII, No. I, p. 19.

(2) Ibidem, p. 19.

(3) Cfr. Mar Ivanios, Girideepam, pp. 1 - 24.

(4) Mar Ivanios, Girideepam, p. 1

experiences shock the spiritual sensitivities in Mar Ivanios who as a seminarian had taken the following vow: "I vow to dedicate my life to the spiritual uplift of the community that gave me birth. This I hope to accomplish by means of the education and sanctification of its clergy"(1). He reflected: "What is the meaning of this thirst in my Community to drink human blood? To what it points? Indeed to the absence of the fear of God and the love of God. The lack of these two broke the head of Mar. Pappy into 13 pieces. His blood has stained our Community. But why do so many of us still not repent? When I reviewed the conditions of the Malankara Church since the year 1872, I suffered unbearable pain. I saw, like waves in the ocean, one after another quarrels, law-suits, competitions and group fighting appearing on its scene. I understood that even the true canons of the Holy Church are being overlooked. As I pondered over these, I wondered if it was possible to fulfill the ultimate intentions of God in founding Christianity in Kerala already in the first century, or to uphold the essential ideals and interests of the whole Community in Malankara, or to secure its continuous prosperity. I knew the present stage of the Malankara Syrian Community was such that, if one or two self-interested men so wished, they could twist it into any awkward form without any difficulty. As it is difficult to see the ocean without waves, it appeared to me impossible in the foreseeable future to restore a pleasant calmness, ending the quarrels and quenching the thirst for law-suits. If the members of the Community quarrel, the Church must suffer; the suffering of the Church in turn affect the Community. Are these not real impediments in the acquisition of true devotion and Christian holiness?"(2). He began to ponder over evils of this sort, and question himself about them. Nay further it was a source of great anguish to him. "The spiritual apathy into which the Jacobite Community had fallen, was always a source of great anguish to me" (3). In those moments he prayed: "Jesus Christ, O God, bring peace and tranquility to your holy Church. Protect it lovingly so that there may not arise in it quarrels and law-suits. Give refuge to it under the shadow of your cross. Lay your holy hand on it in blessing. Illumine its eyes that it may see your holy face. O Redeemer of the world, look into the depths of its heart and aid it that it may realize that your Holy Will

(1) M. Gibbons, Mar Ivanios, p. 10

(2) Mar Ivanios, Girideepam, pp. 70 - 71

(3) M. Gibbons, op.cit. p. 12

(4) Mar Ivanios' letter to Miss Brock Smith, dt. December 1, 1927, (1927-1930, p. 7).

is its sacred duty" (1).

After years of prayer like this, study and experiments about which we shall speak later he came to the conclusion that " Social and moral degradation has been the consequence of spiritual degeneration. Systematic rejection of divine grace on the part of the schismatics has met with its inevitable reward" (2). This, he wrote to no less a person than the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Elias. So he felt that his duty was: " It is only the uplifting power of a great ideal that can save any Community. To show forth this ideal is, I believe, my vocation now" (3). This he wrote to Mamman Mappilay, the editor of a leading daily paper and a man of great standing in India. The ideal, he spoke of, was reunion with Rome. It is clear from another of his letter to Miss Brook Smith: " I hope you very well know about the miserable state of the Syrian Church. I firmly believe that only the uplifting power of a great ideal can save this Church. I could such an ideal only in a reunion with the Catholic Church. Such a reunion can only redeem our Church from quarrels and law-suits. Then only we will obtain a broader vision about religion and human life and the divine graces as members of a universal Church engaged in mission work all over the world" (4).

2. The Church of Malankara must restore its former communion with Rome.

As we have already seen, Mar Ivanios had to defend his party in the law court against the Patriarch's side. This duty required an exhaustive study of the historical and canonical position of his Church. This was one of the ways chosen by divine providence to give him an understanding of the real nature of the Church and to think of the claims and future of his own Community. In Girideepam he himself writes: " it was at a time, when preliminary steps were being taken to found Bethany Ashram, that the proceedings of the formidable law-suit over 'Vattipanam' were opened in the District Court of Trivandrum. Since I had been a witness on behalf of the defendant party in matters related to the canonical aspects of the case, I spent a long time during my stay

(1) Mar Ivanios, op.cit. p.36

(2) Mar Ivanios' letter to Ignatius Elias, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, dt.19th January, 1931, Archives, Archbishop's House, Trivandrum.

(3) Mar Ivanios' letter to Mamman Mappila, quoted by T.Inchakalody, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, pp. 407 - 409

(4) Mar Ivanios' letter to Miss Brook Smith, dt. December 1 927, (19-5-1105.K.V.)

at Serampur reading many books on church history and as well as commentaries on canon law, to prepare myself for giving evidence in court. In those days and during my stay at Trivandrum and even afterwards my task of giving testimony forced me to think over and over again about the future of the Malankara Church! (1)

The result of his study was his conviction that Christians all over the world should unite on the basis of history. " I believe in the reunion of christendom on the basis of historical christianity. There cannot be reunion of this kind if Rome is left out, as Rome is the most important factor in such a reunion" he wrote to Mamman Mappilay.(2).

A general idea of what he meant by historical christianity may be gathered from a speech he delivered about a year before his reunion. Since it was given to a general public, it states merely the general outlines of his thinking. " Lastly", he said, " I must say a few words on the rumour running rampant everywhere about my reunion with the Catholic Church. Jesus Christ, Our Lord founded one Church in the world for the redemption of mankind. It grew and spread slowly. In the Synod of Chalcedon the Christian Church was divided. All ancient books of history without exception testify that it was caused by a minority group because they failed to get their views admitted by the whole Council. Those who separated formed another Church. But in the course of time, due to conflict of opinions and undue desire for independence, it was further divided into numerous sects. In short, we could say, one of these sects is the Jacobite Church. It is interesting to note that the history of Christianity came into existence in Kerala with the arrival of St.Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Until the 17th century all Christians in Kerala were living in complete union and harmony, as if members of one great family. It was, in this situation that some of them, because of a trifling matter - on unfounded rumour - went out of it. WE should remember that it was no question of faith that caused this division. Those who were separated came to be known as Puthenkuttukar (New Party) and the others as Pazhayakuttukar (the Old Party). The spiritual head of the Old Party is the Pope, the supreme head of the Patriarchs

(1) Mar Ivanios, op.cit. p.70

(2) Mar Ivanios' letter to Mamman Mappilay dt(Jan.1928) K.V.14.1.1106, Archives of Malayala Manorama.

of the Universal Church. The absence of a permanent spiritual head was badly felt in the New Party. This led them to invite the Jacobite Patriarch to Kerala and thus the Jacobite Church found its way to Kerala"(1).

Although this speech was actually delivered a few months before his reunion, the historical vision conveyed by it had settled down in his mind long before as a result of his readings in Serampur. This is clear from other speeches he made many years before his reunion. With a view to preparing his Church as a whole for corporate reunion, on the very day of his episcopal consecration as a Jacobite Bishop, addressing a great gathering presided by the Catholicos himself, Mar Ivanios called upon the Catholicos and his brother bishops to work for the restoration of the old unity which once existed in Kerala. "As Syrian Christians in Kerala," he said, "in olden times belonged to one Church, so it should again become one. I take this opportunity to request his Holiness the Catholicos to work for this end, so that the Scriptural text 'One Church and One Shepherd' may be fulfilled as far as the Syrians in Kerala are concerned. All present in this meetnig have a grave obligation in this matter. There is great unity among the Syrian Christians in Kerala with regard to their social customs, political responsibilities, ancient history, language, and liturgical tradition. They are actually one Community. Only in ecclesiastical matters, division and separation took place. So I call upon your Excellencies and the people of our Church to work earnestly for unity also in matters of faith.

"I know that people who are interested in divisions and parties may find fault with me. But it is my wish that such difficult moments create in me humility, patience and unshakable confidence in God - you may pray for that - so that God may be glorified and I may become a good example to you". Referring to the recent break between the Catholicos and Patriarch's parties he continued, "We should not allow, in our generation, that the Malankara Church be again divided. We should do everything possible in our power as Christians to obstruct division and to increase fraternal charity. We should be ready to forgive and to suffer as much to the utmost. The majority of Syrians in Kerala belong to the world wide Roman Catholic Church. They are our own flesh and blood.

(1) Cfr. T.Inchakalody, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, pp. 365 - 366.

A union between this great Community called 'Old Party' and the rest of the Syrians called 'New Party' is extremely important. Even people interested only in political and social welfare consider the union of all Syrians into one Church a necessity. But I am proposing it not merely because of political and social motives. You know, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world had prayed to God the Father, 'That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us'. If His Holiness the Catholicos and we all together try in humility and with confidence in God that this prayer of Jesus may be fulfilled in our generation in our country, could any greater joy be obtained for us, the Syrians in Kerala?

" A tendency in the Christian religion, which has been growing ever stronger in the last thousand years, is one of division and conflict. I believe that all responsible people throughout the world are now convinced of the foolishness of Christians in yielding to this tendency.

" A great desire, now taking root in the hearts of many leaders of Christian Churches is that the reunion of all Christians should be effected as early as possible. Roman Catholic, Greek, Anglican and many other small Churches desire reunion and try to remove difficulties standing in its way without prejudice to fundamental truths. I hope His Holiness the Catholicos will take the necessary steps that this zeal for reunion now spreading in the Christian world, may acquire new strength and vitality in Kerala" (1). So we need here no commentary to explain why he wanted his Church to reestablish its lost communion with Rome.

3. Many of His glorious predecessors had tried to restore Communion with Rome.

The Church of Malankara was in communion with the See of Rome until 1653, when part of it separated from Rome in revolt against the undue intervention of the Latin Missionaries, who being ignorant of Syrian practices and customs, wanted to reform their traditional liturgy.

However an earnest desire to reestablish the lost communion with Rome was a constant feature of this separated Church ever since its separation. " For more than a century", writes J.Kollaparampil, "from the very start of the schism, every pseudobishop of this group - except the one who remained in power only a week - insistently requested the Holy See to admit him and his followers to the Catholic Church

(1) T. Inchaugale, op.cit. pp. 258-261

conserving however his episcopal dignity"(1). Even after this period about which J. Kollaparambil speaks, though every single bishop did not attempt at reunion, the consciousness of the need and the endeavours for an eventual reunion with the Catholic Church was always present in the Jacobite Church. Mar Ivanios understood this spiritual inner need of his Church. Before his reunion, in a speech highlighting the necessity of reunion, he defends his intention of reuniting with the Catholic Church on the ground that many of his predecessors had tried to obtain reunion. "It is good to remember, in this context, that among the spiritual heads of the Malankara Church, some have tried for reunion before us. It may not be out of place, if I mention some of their names; Pulikot Mar Yousep who died in 1909, Chepad Mar Dionysius who was Malankara Metropolitan about 30 years before Mar Yousep, Mar Thoma VI in 1770 who is also known as Mar Dionysius the great, Mar Thoma V and so many others had done their best to promote union with the Catholic Church. If such efforts of theirs are now universally admitted as laudable and respectable, I am confident that a time will come, when the purity of our own intention to reunite also will be understood"(2). In the 19th century Mar Dionysius of Chepad, Mar Dionysius of Pulikod, Mar Ivanios of Kandanad, Mar Severios, the Archbishop of the Cananite Community all tried to reunite with the Catholic Church. Under Mar Dionysios of Pulikode the Catholics and the Jacobites in a great ecumenical programme made plans and projects to collaborate in social, cultural and educational fields in view of preparing all the people emotionally for an eventual reunion of these two Churches. "The motives for reunion in these attempts", writes T.Inchakalody, "were the strong belief ~~for~~ that the Church is one, that they owe obedience to the Pope as the chief Patriarch - Rish Patriarch. The state of Malankara Church and the undue interference of the Jacobite Patriarchs of Antioch also helped them to think of reunion"(3). During these periods, many individual priests and laymen also embraced the Catholic Church.

(1) J.Kollaparambil, Mar Dionysius the great of Malabar for the One True Fold, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Vol.XXX, Fasc.I, 1964.

(2) T.Inchakalody, op.cit.p.367

(3) Ibidem, p.233

4. Mar Ivanios was authorised by the Holy Synod to open correspondence with Rome with a view to corporate reunion.

On November 1, 1926 at an episcopal synod at Parumal in which the bishops were studying plans for the spiritual betterment of their Church, Mar Ivanios put forward for discussion his conviction of long standing, namely corporate reunion with the Church of Rome as the best and only remedy for the ill of the Jacobite Church. The other two bishops, present in the Synod, were also convinced of the necessity of such a move. Consequently Mar Ivanios was authorised to open correspondence with Rome to that effect. Mar Ivanios himself testified to this fact in a speech given a few months before his reunion.: " Some of you", he said, may already know that there are also other people who though brought up like myself in the Jacobite Church, have an inner conviction about the necessity of reunion. I know very well how anxious and impatient the late Catholics was in this matter. The present Catholics is also convinced that it is the only way to peaceful Christian living. As a result of our discussions we started correspondence. We hoped that the Metropolitan of Malankara would also agree with us in this as it would be pleasing to God. We have desired and expected to remain as a particular Church in the Universal Church, but accepting the supremacy of His Holiness the Pope. We also wanted permission to continue to use our ancient Rite and liturgical practices. Though I was doing all the correspondence myself, it could be proven absolutely even from the replies that I was doing it in my capacity as the representative of the Holy Synod in pursuance of our discussions"(1).

So Mar Ivanios did not initiate correspondence with the Holy See as personal or private movement of his own. He corresponded with Rome on behalf of the whole Church. But it is to his credit that, when favourable reply came from Rome, he had the courage to remain true to his earlier commitments even when the other bishops went back on their word.

(1) T. Inchakalody, op.cit. 367 - 368

cfr also p.65.

5. The attitude of the Holy See towards Eastern Churches.

In the second Memorandum submitted by Mar Ivanios to the Holy See, expressing his desire to be united with the Catholic Church, he said one of the chief considerations weighing with his mind and which must be written, was the sympathetic attitude of the Holy See towards the Eastern Churches. He himself elaborated in the same memorandum what he meant by this. His words have no need of commentary. "The attitude of the Holy See", he wrote, "towards the Eastern Churches has been sympathetic. The following passages in the Catholic Encyclopedia, as well as similar announcements, have greatly encouraged the writer of this memorandum.

" The Council of Florence has not been forgotten in the East. It showed the Eastern Christians what the conditions of reunion are, and it has left them always conscious that reunion is possible and is greatly desired by Rome. And, on the other hand, it remains as an invaluable precedent for the Roman Court. The attitude of the Holy See at Florence was the only right one; to be quite unswerving in the question of faith, and to concede everything else that possibly can be conceded. There is no need of uniformity in rites or in Canon law; as long as practices are not absolutely bad or immoral, each Church may work out its own development along its own lines. Customs that would not suit the West may suit the East very well; and we have no right to quarrel with such customs as long as they are not forced upon us. So, at Florence, in all these matters there was no attempt at changing the old order. Each Church was to keep its own liturgy and its own canon law as far as that was not incompatible with the Roman Primacy which is de fide. The very decree that proclaimed the primacy added the clause, 'the Pope guides and rules the whole Church without prejudice to the rights and privileges of the other Patriarchs'. And the East was to keep its married clergy, and its leavened bread, and was not to say the Filioque in the Creed, nor use solid statues nor do any of the things that they resent as being Latin. This has been the attitude of Rome ever since. Many popes have published decrees, encyclicals, bulls that show that they have never forgotten the venerable and ancient Churches cut off from them by schism. In all these documents consistently the tone and the attitude are the same.

" Pope Pius IX in his Encyclical, 'In Supreme Petri'

(Ephiphany, 1848) again assures non-uniates that " We will keep unchanged your liturgies, which indeed we greatly honour"; schismatic clergy who join the Catholic Church are to keep the same rank and position as they had before".

"In the Encyclical 'Praeclara Gratulationis' of June 20, 1894, that has been often described (as Leo's) Testament, he again turned to the Eastern Churches and invited them in the most courteous and gentle manner to come back to communion with us. He assures them that no great difference exists between their ~~existing~~ faith and our and repeats that he would guarantee for all their customs without narrowness". (Vol.V.pp.238-239)
(17)

(1) Second Memorandum sent by Mar Ivanios to Rome on 22-1-1927, Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

Chapter II.

Foundation of Bethany Ashram and the Spiritual Problem it Posed.

When Mar Ivanios was engaged in the foundation of Bethany Ashram, some cynical lay leaders of the Jacobite Church predicted that he with his ashram would end up in Rome, meaning his new move would lead him to reunion with the Catholic Church. They naturally had in mind his taking inspiration as well as the general pattern for his religious Congregation from the Catholic religious Orders and Congregations. In fact Mar Ivanios read a lot of literature on most of the important schools of spirituality in the Catholic Church and he was greatly inspired by it. "If I found", he said, "St. Basil laying great stress upon Religious Chastity as the foundation of monastic life, St. Francis of Assisi seemed to be pointing to Holy Poverty as its basis, and St. Ignatius Loyola seemed to be teaching that Religious Obedience, which means living in the closest possible union with God, and enabling the perfect accomplishment of His Holy Will, was the be-all and end-all of the means of attaining perfection. St. Benedict, however regarded stability as so fundamental to the religious state as to make it one of the four vows of religion. As if to crown it all, came St. Francis de Sales, teaching that the sanctification of the common actions of every day life was indispensable to the attainment of sanctity in the religious life, nay in any life. I felt myself drawn by special ties of admiration and veneration for these saints and craved for the heavenly joy of communion with them".(1)

But his critics, when they voiced their fear and suspicion about his new enterprise, had absolutely no idea of the spiritual communion and of the consequent anguish and problems of soul which he and his companions experienced later in their religious life. To understand and appreciate the depth and the acuteness of his spiritual problems in their true colours, we shall now follow up the history of Bethany Ashram right from the time of its foundation.

(1) V. Karipayil, The Reunion Movement in India, p.56

(2) Mar Ivanios, *Christians in the East*, p. 100.

(3) *Ibidem*, p. 101

(4) *Ibidem*, p. 101

(5) S. Gibbons, Mar Ivanios, p. 20.

The Historical Circumstance.

According to Mar Ivanios himself, his bitter experience (1) in the service of his community, and his consequent disappointment were a kind of preface to the foundation of the Bethany Ashram (2). At one stage, he even asked himself: "Should I not love God more than the community?"(3) There seems to have been no doubt in his mind about the proper answer to this question. It only indicates that he was troubled by a vague feeling of being deeply involved in the affairs of his community and that too, after the fashion of men. And this, he sensed, may not be the fashion of God. Should not God's Church be built according to his own plan?

Actually he did not know what to do at this stage. At this juncture he was offered a professorship at the University College of Serampur, Calcutta, by Principal Dr. Howels. At first he hesitated to accept it.

Leaving for Serampur.

On the one hand he feared that if he withdrew from the scene of church management, it would be construed by his people as disloyalty on his part, especially since his venerable master Mar Dionysius Vattasseril had great need of him. Besides he was the principal of Mar Dionysius High School, an institution in which Mar Dionysius had a paternal interest. He was also conducting many conventions in view of the spiritual well-being of his people. Could he leave all these things?

On the other hand, he saw numerous advantages and opportunities in his going to Serampur. It would provide him the time and the tranquility he ardently longed for to explore the possibility of some other ways - God's ways - of improving the lot of his Church. Speaking of this, Rev. V.T. Thomas writes: "Whilst Mar Ivanios was principal of the M.D. Seminary high school, Kottayam, he was very much preoccupied with the litigation that was going on between the two parties in the Jacobite Church. He had to go around, meet many people, procure witnesses and attend to so many matters that he had neither rest nor peace"(4). Moreover Mar Ivanios thought that if he would accept the offer, he could take many young

(1) These experiences are described in chapter one under the subheading 'the sad plight and spiritual stagnation of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

(2) Mar Ivanios, Girideepam, p.1

(3) Ibidem, p. 21

(4) M.Gibbons, Mar Ivanios, p.20.

clerics and youths with him to Serampur for University studies. This would be a step towards his long cherished desire of educating the Clergy of his Church and eventually opening a theological seminary in Kerala.

He spent many months in anguished prayer, he tells us in his book 'Girideepam'(1). At last with the permission of Mar Dionysius Vattaseril, he left for Serampur University College to hold the chair of Syriac Language, Church History and political economy.

Life at Serampur: A Spiritual Voyage

Educated Clergy and Laity. As we have seen, the motive force in Mar Ivanios' decision to come to Serampur was his hope of finding some ways to remedy the spiritual stagnation of his Church. His conviction was that only education could heal the spiritual wounds of his community. So as soon as he arrived in Serampur, he persuaded many young men, clerical as well as lay to come to Serampur to take up studies in a variety of subjects.

But his mind did not rest satisfied there. It is interesting to read his own account of his thoughts at this stage. He writes: "The long cherished objectives, because of which I left my native place and came to Serampur, namely to create schools and found a theological seminary, are they possible in the present conditions? Even if they are, can they last? And if they do, can they bring about the true progress of the community? Do the real interests of the community consist in these things? Would not be better to employ the clerical students here with me for something more important and urgent for the community and more pleasing to God than merely founding schools? These young men are of different types. Each one's nature and bent also differs. All may not have the same taste nor would they equally acquire proficiency in a teaching profession. I could persuade those, that are gifted, to take up the schools. But what about the others? Should I not suggest to them other ways of serving the community?"

His Vision broadens: The Urgent need is a Missionary Society.

"The Syro-Malankara Community", he continues, "which takes pride in having St. Thomas the Apostle as its founder and in its antiquity of 20 centuries has not so far done anything substantial to achieve

(1) Mar Ivanios, op.cit. p.41

the object of its foundation. This must be considered a serious failure in its duty. That great light which was kindled here in 52 A.D. by the command of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, still remains in the same way. Its light and glory has not spread to the dark surroundings. Many from foreign lands, regardless of their health and wealth, have come to this great land of Bharatha to labour for its spiritual growth and to work here tirelessly to evangelise it. We see them. Some of them have even spoken to us about the unpardonable slothfulness and negligence of this our ancient Church. If we still do not want to arise and awake from this long slumber in shame and repent of our failure in duty, it is indeed unfortunate. Surely, one day we have to account for the infidelity and spiritual ignorance of Bharatha. Then, indeed, we may be at a loss to account for the lost spiritual progress which would have come to Bharatha, if we had acted with a sense of duty. But let us leave aside the negligence and the indifference of the past. If our fathers could not do much in this matter because of unfavourable circumstances, the Malankara Syrian Community must now rise to the occasion and make up for the past. The most important duty of the Christian Church is the spread of the Gospel. Its motto should be the witness of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Lack of schools is not a great obstacle to evangelisation. Whether we do or do not have schools and seminaries, the spread of the Gospel is absolutely necessary for the glory of God. The institutions which the community needs for its social welfare and timely progress would some-how be taken care of. There are people for it. There are opportunities for it. But I have to use my stay at Serampur to prepare labourers for the preaching of the Gospel. Such workers, in order to heal the wounds of the community, can do so many things; such as to go about the parishes preaching missions, find solutions for the spiritual problems of the people, create a religious attitude in children by teaching them catechism, proclaim the Gospel among the infidels, etc. Most of the deacons could be expected to have interest in such works. There cannot be two opinions that such a missionary society could lead the Malankara Syrian Church to greater glory in the future, provided that it is made up of people who have a divine vocation, ready to work without any desire for reward, and that those be excluded who are ready to do anything for the sake of their stomach. Such a missionary

Group could be formed of the deacons here at Serampur, once they finish their studies. Those who would like to work outside Malankara, proclaiming the Gospel, may do so. Others who prefer to work within the Church in Malnakara may so choose. Still others who like the field of education may follow it. However the members of the missionary society should not be allowed to live as they like. A missionary society should have a constitution according to its ideals. An institution which does not conform to its ideals and which is not united in fraternal union can hardly bring the people to the right paths".

Though I cannot definitely say why such a change of mind came about during the course of my stay at Serampur, I believe it is the result of my thought concerning the progress of the Community. Thoughts about such a missionary society occupied my mind for so many days. On holidays I used to give the deacons instructions aimed at making them good instruments in realizing this my ideal. After all it is my duty to try to make them work in a way pleasing to God since they of their own will have dedicated themselves to the service of God. This thought of the missionary society so possessed my mind and heart that I could not get rid of it even in my sleep. When I had to engage myself in any act of divine service, I was offering to God this heart of mine burdened with the thought of the missionary society".

Not Just a Group of Missionaries But a Religious Society of Missionaries.

"So to know the will of God about the formation of a missionary society, I maintained a programme, in those days, of many exacting and difficult practices and penances. It might have been due to such practices that my mind could not free itself of thinking about the missionary society. I felt that some invisible power had taken possession of my mind and was drawing it along the road of missionary society. So without bringing any forceful resistance against it or trying to keep it tied to any point, I prayerfully watched to see where my mind would at last find its goal. From a spiritual point of view, a missionary society is necessary for the progress of my community. But if we think about its practical sides, there are many things which hinder its growth in the future. When self-interest and popularity have a place in the hearts of its members, then its downfall has begun. It cannot be expected of all who join

the missionary society to continue for ever in the service of God in the same spirit. Worldly considerations and attractions may obscure their vision. In an institution in which all have to work as members of one body, misunderstandings, competitions, self-glorifications and the like may enter. If the members get married, they will be unable to evangelise with zeal. What will be the result of forming a society of men, who could not harvest in proportion to the vastness of the crop? What is the use of founding a society unless its members are both united in ideals and firmly determined in their career and in their daily life? Only a society formed of members who have service of God as their rule of life and who nourish it daily in true piety, can bring about true progress in the Syrian Community and achieve good results in evangelisation. The man in the pit can only be saved by a man standing outside the pit. Evangelisation should be done not merely by talking and preaching but mainly by virtuous behaviour and loving service of neighbour.

"To the tree with plenty of branches and leaves, naturally come all those who are exhausted by the burning sun. From the tree laden with good fruits, passers-by will pluck fruits.

"Virtues can be begotten by virtues. Virtuous life is more important than virtuous acts. Evangelists should have true piety and love of God, if they want to turn people to God.

"My mind again began to waver in pain, for I could have no guarantee that the missionary society would achieve my highest hopes for it. Since I had consecrated myself fully to God, I decided just to wait until God should reveal his holy Will about it. ~~xxxxxxixxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
In prayer, in meditation and above all in the holy mass I kept on waiting. I prayed God merely to make me and my disciples ready to live for the glory of His holy Name, whatever the cost, even if it should mean leaving our country and our people and suffering great hardships.

"Many months passed in this way. I felt that my heart, placed before God like soft wax, was acquiring the shape of an ideal and was assuming beauty in its concepts. I believed that He would assuredly give it form.

"My heart remained free. I offered it there and I waited. I had to pass through many trials. Only those who have experience, know the bodily and mental difficulties involved in the denial of oneself.

"I came to realize that union with God is more sublime than the service of God. Men have various objectives in life. Many strive for the enjoyment of happiness - pleasure; others for money; others for a livelihood. Hence motives may differ, but nobody remains idle. Though all who lead a Christian life cannot sever their relations with the world, those who want truly to serve God, should spend, if possible, all their life in acquiring union with God. There is nothing more sublime than union with God in this valley of tears.

"In^o faith man should be united to God; in hope he should trust in Him. Love of God should only be his vital principal. Sacrifice would be rule and guide for the man whose mind is so disposed. The one who wants to be close to God, must imitate Jesus Christ in everything. The self-sacrifice shown on Golgotha should be reflected in his own inner life. He must leave not only family and country but himself as well. Dying to the world and sacrificing oneself are one and the same thing. 'Having left everything we have followed you!', they said and they acquired union with God. They are the true evangelists. The world came to know Jesus Christ only through them. These are things that can be attained by one who accepts a religious state - Sannyasa pada. Only he can practise mortification both interior and ~~myxat~~ exterior. To a religious wealth, fame and popularity are synonymous with poverty, defamation and calumny. When he appears foolish and mad in the eyes of the world, he enjoys perfect happiness.

" 'World, parents, brothers, kin and family all left for the sake of Jesus'(1). Sacrifice and poverty are adornments for those who are indifferent to life and death. So I decided that God's holy Will is to found a religious society composed of souls consecrated to Him and that I should spend all the rest of my life and energy in realizing the fulfilment of this ideal. This ideal obtained after days and months of prayer and study, I considered a great pearl; I then strove onwards to obtain the knowledge necessary for carrying out this ideal" (2)

This is Mar Ivanios' own account of the various stages through which he passed and of the final spiritual vision, as he had described in his book 'Girideepam'.

(1) This quotation he has taken from our Liturgy.

(2) Mar Ivanios, op.cit. pp. 43 - 57.

One sees that his early ideal of the progress of his community had undergone extensive purification and spiritual sublimation. He is now totally possessed and motivated by the love of God and the will to serve him.

Bethany poses spiritual problems.

In consequence of the spiritual vision he had obtained, he founded Bethany Ashram. He understood that the ills of his community were more radical than he thought them to be. They could not be remedied by winning law-suits or by merely raising educational institutions or by having a group of missionaries; they required men fully dedicated to the service of God. When he began to put his plan for the founding for the founding of a religious society - Bethany Ashram - into execution, he was led to a deeper reflection on the nature of the Church. In other words, the foundation of Bethany posed spiritual problems for him, and their solution led him to embrace the Catholic Church.

'Perfection of humility and religious obedience were impossible of attainment'

The first problem he faced was the question of authority in his Church. He first faced this problem on a canonical level. The authority in his Church was divided. Two rival groups had contrasting claims for it. To whom then did Bethany owe obedience? The solution Mar Ivanios found was an independent Bethany. "I wanted Bethany to be independent and founded it independent"(1). But the problem did not stop at the canonical level. It had deeper dimensions. He met the same problem of authority in his Church at a spiritual level, when he and his companions wanted to consecrate themselves under the three of religious life. "The question", writes Fr. Placid, "as to whom the vow of obedience to be made by the religious was to be directed, caused Fr. Geevarghese (Mar Ivanios) some anxiety about the position of the Church to which he belonged" (2). We can understand how very intense his anxiety was, only if we keep in mind how seriously he took his religious life. We had a glimpse of it in the previous pages where he talks about the way he came to found Bethany. He was so

(1) T. Inchakalody, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, p. 360

(2) Fr. Placid, The Syro-Malankara Reunion, Unitas, Vol. VII, N. I

filled with that religious ideal, that on the day of his episcopal consecration as a Jacobite bishop, referring to the ashram, he exclaimed: "the most important thing that lay in my heart, even as a child, was to raise myself to the stature of a saint in the religious life of an ashram" (1). It does not matter to us how much he really thought about ashram life when he was a child; but it indicates how earnest he was of becoming a saint in his newly founded ashram. Now as a grown up man he saw the plan of God about him. God wanted him to bind himself under the three vows of religious life in perpetual consecration to Him. But now, who is to accept this consecration in the name of God? Is his Church divided on the question of authority, authorised by God to act in his name? It was for him a problem of his personal spiritual life. It took him many years of prayer and study to solve this problem. When he discovered the root of his problem, he wrote: "The Holy Spirit later taught me and my brother bishop Mar Theophilos and the religious congregations of monks and sisters that God guided me to found, that perfection of humility and religious obedience were impossible of attainment in the Jacobite Church, which itself was founded on pride and disobedience. We discovered that all the work we did in the Jacobite Church was simply building on sand" (2)

Need of fraternal communion with all the Christians in the world.

Other reasons, also of a spiritual sort, urged the members of Bethany Ashram to pray and work for reunion with the Catholic Church. Being drawn by a sense of spiritual communion with the 'Whole Church', they could not bear the sight of the divisions existing among Christians. One of the first members of the ashram writes: "When correspondence was going on at a high level for reunion with Rome, we (members of Bethany) were all being interiorly drawn to it. We wanted to be united with all the religious in the world, instead of living isolated in a small community. Our souls desired the union of all the faithful redeemed with the blood of Christ. Division, we felt, is sin. We also thought that our religious life would have more firm foundation in the Catholic Church, where so many

(1) From a speech delivered by Mar Ivanios at Miranam, on the day of his episcopal consecration. Cfr. T. Inchakalody, Mar Ivanios, p. 169.

(2) From a letter Mar Ivanios wrote to His Beatitude Ignatius Elias, Patriarch of Antioch.

religious Orders and Congregations flourish. These and similar thoughts forced us interiorly to press Mar Ivanios to speed up the attempts at reunion and to give him moral and spiritual support" (1). Such spiritual experience, obtained by Mar Ivanios and his disciples in Bethany, gave them a deep understanding of the mystery of the Church. A mystery, ^{in which,} they felt, if they would have fuller participation, would in turn, enrich and enhance their spiritual experience. This interior vision and spiritual communion experienced in the community of Bethany urged Mar Ivanios to introduce the prayer of the Church Unity Octave into his Congregation, while they were still in the Jacobite Church. " The Movement of the Church Unity Octave sponsored by Father Paul Wattson was known to me at that time I observed it in the ashram and in the convent of nuns which I founded in the dissident Church without any personal knowledge of or correspondance with Father Paul. A daily prayer for the reunion of Christendom was introduced by me in my religious communities. God answered these prayers and guided us all to seek communion with the Holy See" (2)

Conclusion

All these things point to the conclusion that the founding of the Bethany Community must certainly have been a providential act of God. Through it Mar Ivanios was aided and further enlightened in the development of his initial convictions based upon historical arguments: He was led to an appreciation of the rich and vigorous spirituality existing in the Catholic Church, and gained a fortaste of it as well for himself and his consecrated folloeres; this comprehension of Catholic spirituality and its causes in turn afforded him a clear notion and a yet stronger conviction on the nature of the One Church.

(1) Fr. Abraham, CIC, Bethany Ashram, p.23. (not yet published)

(2) M.Gibbons, op.cit. p.43 - 44.

Chapter III.

THEOLOGICAL MOTIVES FOR RE-UNION

Our Lord founded only one Church

In the second memorandum sent to Rome Mar Ivanios speaks of three considerations which have weighed upon his spirit and impelled him to seek reunion (1). The first of these deals with the necessity of unity in the Church. "The conviction that it is the will of Our Blessed Lord that all Christians should be united, and that the sooner the reunion is effected the better for the glory of Our Blessed Saviour. The present condition of the Christian world cannot but break the heart of any person who desires to love Our Blessed Lord"(2). He was firmly convinced that Our Lord founded only one Church. He had declared this conviction both in speech and writing on numerous occasions. Divisions among Christians contradict the will of Christ. He could not understand how we could all claim to love Jesus Christ and remain divided among ourselves. He says in this regard: "The present condition of the Christian world cannot but break the heart of any person who desires to love Our Blessed Lord". Thus it is only when we really love Jesus Christ that we feel the pain of the wound of schism in the body of Jesus Christ. He felt this pain as he wrote to the Bethany Fathers "Even if I were to be cut into thousand pieces, in order to heal a small wound in the body of Christ, I feel it should be done"(3). For Mar Ivanios as for many early Eastern Fathers, schism is a wound in the Holy Body of Christ. A schismatic group is a dismembered limb of Christ's body.

For this reason he viewed the quarrels and divisions in the Malankara Church as well as in the Universal Church as so many wounds in the Holy Body of Christ and implored both the Catholicos of Malankara and the Patriarch of Antioch to join him in his efforts to heal these wounds in so far as it lay in their power (4).

(1) Cfr. Second Memorandum sent by Mar Ivanios to Rome on 22-1-1927, Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

(2) Ibidem

(3) Mar Ivanios' Letter to the Bethany Fathers at Vennikulam, 1927.

(4) Cfr. Mar Ivanios' Letters to His Holiness the Catholicos and His Beatitude the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Archives of the Archdiocese, Trivandrum.

For want of space I quote portions of only one letter he wrote to the Jacobite Patriarch to illustrate his idea on the unity of the Church: "May I on bended knees implore Your Beatitude to consider this true doctrine which is clearly set forth in the Sacred Scriptures and in the above quoted, and hundreds of other passages in the ecclesiastical and dogmatic books of Your Communion and to ask our Divine Saviour for the grace of humility of heart which alone can give the light to see, and the strength to obey the will of God and enable you to make due submission to His Holy Will and heal the wounds in His Body. If Only your beatitude will prayerfully consider this matter, I am confident that divine grace will not fail you. For, the reunion of Christendom is God's Holy Will. There are then two schisma which your Beatitude can heal by a single act. The first of these is primarily concerned with your own people in Syria and Turkey. It is the great schism which took place in the East in the middle of the Fifth Century when the followers of Eutychus and Dioscours disobeyed the Universal Church and repudiated the Pope and the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. Although the Jacobites anathematized Euthychus later, the schism has nevertheless continued to this day.

" The second is one that is confined to the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar. In the Seventeenth Century a section of these Christians revolted against the Catholic Church and went into schism for merely personal and social reasons. This schism had nothing to do with faith and dogma. Later on, the schismatic Christians of St. Thomas accepted the supremacy of the Jacobite Patriarch and thus nominally became Jacobites. The ~~immediate~~ immediate cause of the schism was a false rumour that the Portuguese had drowned a bishop come to Malabar from the East. This bishop was not a Jacobite and was not sent here by the Jacobite Patriarch. Providence has called your Beatitude to your present position. I believe the Holy Spirit invites your Beatitude to surrender yourself entirely to his guidance and forsake your schism and enter into the unity of the Catholic Church by confessing the entire catholic faith and making your submission to the Pope - the one centre of unity for Christendom. The Church of Christ is one and indivisible, one in faith, one in organization, one in the unity of its life as manifested interiorly in her mystical union with her bridegroom, and exteriorly in the corporate sacramental unity that subsists among the members of the visible Church establishing them in to the one kingdom of God upon earth. The Pope, the Vicar of Christ the King, guides and rules the entire

Church on earth with the joyful cooperation and the loyal support of all the Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops who constitute the hierarchy of the Catholic Church" (1).

Unity of the Church is centralized in the Authority of the Pope.

The unity of the Church, Mar Ivanios found in his studies, cannot be realized without Rome. He asserted this fact in a speech quoted in the first chapter (2). Soon after the reunion, in a press interview, he made his convictions on the subject very clear. "Rome", he said, "is the centre of Divine authority and of Catholic unity. Something essential was missing in the Jacobite Church. What that something was I could not find out. I searched and looked for it everywhere. I asked the advice of our theologians and ecclesiastical authorities. I had many sleepless nights and prayed fervently to God for the necessary light. Then suddenly it became clear to me what that something was which we lacked. It was the unity of the Church which according to the Divine Will is centralised in the Papacy of Rome" (3). So his conclusion was that the unity of the Church is intrinsically connected with the authority of the pope. Wherefore realizing unity means reestablishing the authority of the pope in his Church. This authority, which the Jacobite Church lacked, was understood by him as the special characteristic feature of the Church founded by Christ. He himself has developed this concept of Divine authority in the Church extensively in another press interview. Dr. Joseph C. Panjikaren asked him: "While you were still a Jacobite, what is it that especially struck your Grace as the outstanding feature of the Catholic Church?" "The outstanding feature of the Catholic Church", he replied is the fact of its sure Guidance on everything connected with life, both for individuals and for mankind".

"How did your Grace arrive at the conclusion that the Church is the surest guide?" "A number of considerations", he said, forced me to this conclusion. The Catholic Church is the only true and perfect embodiment of historical Christianity, the religion that Jesus Christ brought into the world. Again, there are forces at work in

(1) Ibidem.

(2) cfr. Chapter I, P.4

(3) J.C. Panjikaren, An interview with Mar Ivanios, Archbishop of Bethany, Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

the modern world that attempt to shake human society to its foundations. My studies and observations have led me to the conclusion that the Catholic Church is the only institution that has in the past withstood and can forever withstand successfully the onslaught of these disruptive forces".

" Will your Grace kindly explain further these points? My studies on the origin and the history of the Catholic Church, and particularly of the beneficial results it has produced in the society in general and in the lives of the saints, ancient and modern, in particular, led me to this conclusion. The concept of the Catholic Church as the Living Organ of Christ finds its practical expression at all its aspects only in the Catholic Church. She alone fulfills the purpose for which God became man, namely, the salvation of individuals and of society. She alone is the mystical Body of Christ on earth. In her alone can men have the assurance that Jesus Christ is the Way, teaches the Truth and gives the Life that is in Jesus Christ Our Lord and God. I found too that the non-Catholic types of Christianity were both inefficient and insufficient to fulfill the very purpose for which Our Lord founded His Church. Among the various warring forces, national, racial and economic, I found that there was only one force, supra-national, supra-racial and supra-mundane which could mould human society into a homogeneous whole and bring lasting peace and divine blessing to humanity at large. As far as one can at present peer into the future, the Catholic Church is the only force that can stabilize human society and ensure its progress"(1).

Jacobite Tradition Proclaims the Unity of the Church with Pope as its head.

In his research into the ancient canons and liturgical traditions of his own church, Mar Ivanios found ample evidence for the doctrine of the unity of the Church with the Pope as its head. In many public speeches and letters to the Jacobite as well as Catholic leading men, before and after reunion he cited the most important testimonies to this effect. I quote here some of these passages. Before his reunion, in a

(1) Ibidem.

(1) Mar Ivanios' letter to His Beatitude Edward Menezes, Archives of the Synod of Trivandrum.

letter to His Excellency Edward Mooney, the Apostolic Delegate of the East Indies, he wrote: "For the historical causes of the schism are not connected with any heretical doctrine. And the primacy of St. Peter is expressly acknowledged in our ecclesiastical books. To us St. Peter is the Fisherman "whose net draws souls from death to life, he is the Rock on which the Church is founded. He holds the keys of the kingdom, he is the Prince of the Apostles, and is the teacher of the faith to the Bishops. An interesting passage of our prayer book reads thus:-

" Moses is the head of the old covenant,
And Simeon is (the head) of the New.
They resemble each other,
And God abides in them.
Moses brought down the tablets,
On which were inscribed the commandments,
And Simeon received the keys of the kingdom.
Moses built the Tabernacle,
And Simeon built the Church.
Glory be to Thee, O God,
From the Old Covenant and the New,
Halleluah!

May their prayers help us".

"The Bishop of Rome is the successor of St. Peter. Our ecclesiastical books repeat time and again that St. Peter died in Rome, in fact was crucified head downwards. The Bishop of Rome is also the Patriarch of the West" (1).

Again, in another letter to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, he wrote: "The Nomo-Canon of Bar Hebraeus, which is recognised by your Beatitude as the authoritative guide to the Canon Law of the Jacobite Church, bear ample testimony to the doctrine of the Unity of the visible Church in its corporate life and organisation. For verse I, chapter 7, of the said Nomo-Canon says, 'There shall be four Patriarchs in the four corners of the world, the head and chief of them all shall be the Patriarch of Rome'.

" The Breviary that is in every day use in your diocese says the following: 'I am built on that Rock of Simon, the Prince of the Apostles', says

(1) Mar Ivanios' letter to His Excellency Edward Mooney, Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

the Church, ' Billows and tempests struck against me, but they could not shake me, Heretics (names of heretics are often substituted here) fought against me. But they were vanquished'. Then he concludes his letter: " He who despiseth the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, despiseth also the head of the Church, namely Christ himself. Over this universal and Apostolic Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, the Pope rules as the successor of St. Peter, by the appointment of our Lord" (17).

Letter to His Beatitude Ignatius Elias, cfr. p. 20.

Chapter IV.

Spiritual Motives for Reunion

The reunion of Mar Ivanios cannot be understood merely on a theoretical or academic plane. Any amount of explanation, whether theological, historico-sociological, has its force only when related to his personal, spiritual conscience.

Mar Ivanios is often admired as a man endowed with rare and sterling qualities: gigantic intellectual power, tremendous strength of will, infinite capacity for intense and persevering toil, inflexible determination and unshakable courage(1). He was all these and there is no deny; but few people understood him as a 'Guru and Swami' - an enlightened teacher of religion and a man of great spiritual understanding and vision. Still fewer read his writings on religious matters - for the greater part they are still in manuscript form - and his discourses to the members of the religious Congregations he had founded. Indeed these discourses reveal the wonderful spiritual depths of his own interior life.

Unfortunately, the present work does not permit extensive treatment of the admirable spirituality of this great personality. For the purpose at hand, it is sufficient to consider a few general remarks on how his spiritual life was the deciding factor in his reunion with the Catholic Church. However these statements are not to be viewed as something abstract, but rather concretely in the context of the spiritual consciousness of the man, whose words they are.

" I felt that to remain in schism with her (the Jacobite Church) was a grave sin"

The Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Panjikaren, in an interview shortly after his reunion asked Mar Ivanios: " What decided your Grace to take the final step?"

His reply was: " The painful realisation of the sinfulness of schism. The Jacobite Church is one of those schismatic bodies that broke away from the unity of the Church in the early centuries. I knew the fullness of the Catholic doctrine, and yet I found myself unable to realize it in the schismatic Church. It was a cause of grave mental anxiety. The Catholic Church being the home of the Holy Spirit upon earth, I felt that to remain in schism with her was a grave sin. Divine Providence led me step by step,

(1) Cfr. Archbishop Mar Ivanios by T. Inchakalody.

almost imperceptibly, until at last I found myself in the Catholic Church"(1).

Mar Ivanios was convinced that the divisions in the Church are in explicit contradiction to the Holy Will of Christ. He once even said in a conference given to the Seminarians in Colombo " that it appeared to me monstrous that Christ, One Head, could have several bodies, each of which claim Him as their Head"(1). But in a deeper spiritual sense, he saw schism as a wound in the body of Christ, which he is called upon to heal as far as it lay in his power. To be a schismatic, he felt, is to be a dismembered limb of the body of Christ. 'Did not Jesus say that no branch can bear fruit by itself but only if it remains united with the vine?' He has experienced it in his own life. "Your Beatitude is aware", he wrote, that I spent all my life for the service and spiritual amelioration of the Jacobite Church. And later the Holy Spirit taught me that true Charity was impossible of attainment in a schismatic body; that perfection of humility and religious obedience were impossible in the Jacobite Church, which itself was founded on pride and disobedience. We discovered that all the work we did in the Jacobite Church was simply building on sand"(2).

Why was he building on sand? He saw the root of the failure in the true light. He is not joined to Christ. " Our Lord built ~~xxx~~ his Church", he wrote, " on Rock - on the Rock of St.Peter. Since the pope is the true sucessor of St.Peter, for any one to attempt to build apart from the communion of the pope, is to attempt to build apart from Christ"(3). Should not he , the lost sheep, now turn back to his pastor? Did not his Pastor, in bitter agony, pray for the unity of his flock? Seen against this background, with a spiritual eye, he could no longer suffer division and separation from Christ or from his vicar on earth. Division broke his heart. The great Mar Ivanios wept both in private and in public, like a child, ~~he~~ when he pleaded with others for reunion with the Catholic Church (4). At last he took the historic decision, because he said " Even if I must suffer, I cannot give up the guidance of God" (5)

(1) E.Fernandes, a seminarian who heard him on that occasion told me.

(2) His letter to His Beatitude Ignatius Elias, cfr p.21.

(3) Ibidem.

(4) cfr. Mar Ivanios Autobiography still in manuscript form, Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

(5) His letter to Mamman Mappilay, Archives of the Archdiocese, Trivandrum.

Guidance of God .

Herein is to be found the real and ultimate clue to his reunion. He was interiorly moved to feel that his vocation was to work for reunion. " I feel God is calling me to offer myself to this great ideal He is pressing me to sacrifice myself to this end ... He invites me to jump into the great ocean of his love"(1) Is it not our sacred duty to work for reunion with all those who accept our faith, wether they be Marthomites, Greeks or Romans?(2) Indeed, God's Holy Will had always been his own sacred duty.

All these point to the conclusion that once this great soul was possessed with a genuine love of God, the good Shepherd led him, ofcourse through unexpected ways, to the green pasture of his Church. So we could rightly believe that the soul of true ecumenism is a genuine love of God. "Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; There is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance"(Icor, 13,5-7)

" THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE"

From the Library of
Rev. A.V. Abraham
Ayrookuzhiel