

ORIENTALIUM ECCLESIARUM: **AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract:

Orientalium Ecclesiarum (OE) is an important document of the Second Vatican Council, especially in the context of the pluralistic ecclesial traditions of India. The reception of OE by the Indian Church was very slow and selective. With the elevation of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches to the status of Major Archiepiscopal churches and the formation of the Synod of Bishops, the Oriental Catholic churches in India could show fidelity to the teachings of OE. The publication of CCEO in 1990 added momentum to the implementation of OE in India. The letter of Pope Francis to the Indian bishops on October 9, 2017, facilitated the solution of problems related to the All-India Jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Church. To be faithful to the teachings of OE, the Syro-Malabar Church is to be raised to the status of a patriarchal Church.

Keywords: *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Reception, Apostle Thomas, *Padroado*, Major Archiepiscopal, Udayamperur, All-India Jurisdiction.

Introduction

Orientalium Ecclesiarum (OE), the decree on the Eastern Catholic churches, of the Second Vatican Council, has special importance and

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relevance in the pluralistic ecclesial traditions of India. The Catholic Church is the communion of 24 *sui juris* churches, 23 Oriental churches and one Latin Church. India has three ecclesial traditions, Syro-Malabar: East Syrian or Chaldean tradition, Syro-Malankara: West Syrian or Antiochian tradition and Latin, the Roman tradition. The first two churches trace their origin to Apostle Thomas, and the Latin Church in India had its origin because of the missionary work of the Western missionaries in the sixteenth century. India may be the only country in South Asia where there is a prevalence of ecclesial pluralism in the Catholic Church. Therefore, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and its reception is very complicated and at the same time, a topic worth studying. The implementation of the decree became more complicated because of the colonial hangovers. In this article, an attempt is made to explore the reception of OE by the Indian Church after sixty years of its convocation.

Historical Background

St Thomas Christians include the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic Churches and a few other churches which are not in communion with Rome. The division in the Church occurred with the revolt of 1653. At present, these Christians are spread throughout India and even all over the world. This Christian community was the only hierarchically structured community in India till the arrival of the European missionaries in the sixteenth century.

St Thomas Christians were ruled by bishops from Persia, probably from the middle of the fourth century, and the title of the Metropolitan was *Metropolitan and Gate of All India*. They got involved only in the spiritual life of the community. But the effective administration of the Church was in the hands of the native priest, the Archdeacon, known as the *Prince of the head of the faithful*, the *Lord of the Nation*, *Archdeacon of All-India and its Confines*. These titles were used by them even after the establishment of the Latin Church in India. The Archdeacons were traditionally from the Pakalomattam family.¹

With the arrival of the Portuguese colonial power in India in May 1498, a new chapter was inaugurated in the history of the St Thomas Christians. Along with their colonial interests, the Portuguese also had ecclesial interests. The diocese of Goa was established in 1534, and in 1558 it became an archdiocese. With this ecclesial jurisdictional arrangement *Padroado* began to claim All-India jurisdiction and tried

¹ Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Rome:1794, 88; G.Beltrami, *La Chiesa Chaldea nel Secolo dell'Unione*, Rome, 1933, 256.

to do away with the All-India jurisdiction of the *Metropolitan and Gate of All India* of the St Thomas Christians. With the Synod of Udayamperur in 1599, St Thomas Christians were cut off from the Persian bishops, and *Padroado* jurisdiction was introduced with the appointment of Francis Ros S.J. as their archbishop.² On December 10, 1610, India was territorially divided among the *Padroado* Prelates of Goa, Kochi, Kodungallur (Cranganore, old Angamaly), and Mylapore. "Thus the All-India of the Metropolitan and the Gate of All-India of the Syro-Malabarians was *de facto* and *de jure* abolished. The Syro-Malabarians were divided between the Sees of Cochin and Cranganore, under which there were also Latins."³

In 1886, when the Indian Latin hierarchy was established, the archbishop of Goa was made the Patriarch of the East-Indies - the former All-India of the St Thomas Christians in some sense. When three Vicariates were established and native bishops were appointed in 1896 for the Syro-Malabar Catholics, Msgr. Ladislao Michael Zaleski, the Apostolic Delegate in India, was very resolute in restricting the territorial jurisdiction of the newly established Vicariates between the river Pampa in the South and Bharathapuzha in the North of the present Kerala State. When the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was re-established in 1923, the name Syro-Malabar was adopted to avoid misgivings regarding the claims of the Chaldean Church.

The Latin Church in India claims that India is a Latin territory, and their argument is based on the assertion that only with the arrival of the Western missionaries Christianity spread all over India. The counter argument is that till the arrival of the Western missionaries the only Christian community that existed in an organised way was the St Thomas Christians. The principle of "one territory, one bishop" which had its origin in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Canon 9, holds valid in India even today, even after the ecclesiological revolution of the Second Vatican Council. Due to the historic intervention of Pope Francis on October 9, 2017, the situation has changed a lot.

Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Catholic Church, who was a great lover of the St Thomas Christians and promoter of their cause, visited Malabar in 1953. After personally experiencing the jurisdictional problems of the Syro-Malabar Church, the territory was extended both in the North and

² P. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Aleppy: 1976, 93; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.II, Bangalore: 1982, 75.

³ P. Podipara, *The Hierarchy*, 119.

South with the establishment of the diocese of Thalassery. In 1955, a few more civil districts in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were added to the existing Syro-Malabar dioceses.

Due to the territorial restrictions, many Syro-Malabarians had to embrace the Latin Rite to realise their missionary vocation. The proper pastoral care of the immigrants outside the proper territory in their ecclesial tradition was also a serious problem. As an individual Church, these Christians were denied of their basic right to practice their faith, and preserve their patrimony, and preach the Gospel. I do not deny the generous heart of Eugene D'Souza, the Archbishop of Nagpur, in the establishment of the Chanda Exarchate, the first mission territory of the Syro-Malabar Church outside the proper territory, in 1962, even before the official inauguration of the Second Vatican Council.

At present, the situation has changed, and the Syro-Malabar Church is a Major Archiepiscopal Church with Synodal structure. Now there are 31 eparchies in India including four Metropolitans. Outside India there are four eparchies and one Apostolic Visitation. The total membership spread around the world is about five million. With the historic letter of Pope Francis on October 9, 2017 to the Indian Catholic bishops and with the establishment of the Shamshabad eparchy, on October 10, 2017, *de jure* and *de facto* the All-India jurisdiction is restored, and thus the long-awaited implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially the ecclesiological vision envisaged in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* is slowly being put into practice.

Syro-Malankara Church, another Eastern Catholic Church in India, which reunited with the Catholic Church in 1930, follows the West Syrian or Antiochian liturgical tradition. The Syro-Malankara hierarchy was established in 1932, and this Church has half a million followers. Syro-Malankara Church also is a Major Archiepiscopal Church and the Major Archbishop is also known as Catholicos.

Some Observations on the Decree⁴

The purpose of the decree is to emphasise the position of the Catholic Church that the various Eastern churches, though numerically small, are equal and integral parts of the Universal Church. It is also an attempt to remind the Eastern churches to go back to their original tradition and to restore their pristine identity if, in the course of history, they lost it. The dominant Latin Church in the course of time introduced many Latin

⁴ Cf., V. J. Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches of the II Council of Vatican*, New York: Fordham University, 1965.

customs and practises in the Eastern churches, very often as agents of colonial powers, and the decree makes an effort to go back to the pristine purity of the Church traditions. The Council did not subscribe to the teaching of identifying the Church with the Roman Catholic Church, which was very strong during the colonial period.

Criticisms levelled against the decree even by the members of the Commission who were in charge of the drafting of the decree are the following: "The decree does not correct the prejudices held in the Catholic Church in respect to the Eastern churches. The decree repeats unnecessarily many common places that are already widely known in the Church. The decree does not attempt to resolve true, and therefore, difficult, problems. The specific regulations contained in the decree, are mostly unsatisfactory."⁵

However, one should acknowledge and appreciate the fact that the decree is the first official declaration from the highest authority of the Church that the entire Catholic Church is proud of its integral component, the Eastern churches. Article 3 clearly speaks about the right of each individual church in mission activities. This article specifically deals with the problem in India where Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches were denied the basic right of each Christian to preach the Gospel. "Now it is expressly permitted to them and to other Eastern rite Catholics to propagate freely the faith in their rite, of course, under the direction of the Roman Pontiff..."⁶. Unfortunately, the Oriental churches in India had to wait for more than fifty years to enjoy the teachings of the Council. Article 5 speaks about the need to preserve the spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches. In the course of history, many of the Oriental churches were brought under Latin jurisdiction Western or Roman or Latin practices were introduced, and many Churches were Romanized. The restoration process is a painful one, and many Oriental churches face serious identity crisis as many members of these Churches are at home in Latin customs and practices. Even during the time of Pope Pius XI, deliberate attempts were made to restore the lost Oriental identity.

The Oriental Catholic Churches are making the Universal Church as Catholic as the Latin Catholic Church is. The Second Vatican

⁵ V.J. Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches of the II Council of Vatican*, 6-7.

⁶ V.J. Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches of the II Council of Vatican*, 14

Council has awakened the conscience of the Universal Church to recognise the individuality of the Oriental Catholic Churches.

The decree is usually referred to as *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* from the initial words. Its full title is *on the Oriental Catholic Churches, (De Ecclesiis Orientalibus Catholicis)*. The first draft proposed to the Council fathers was *De Ecclesiis Orientalibus*, on the Oriental Churches. The Fathers had the intention of dealing with only the Churches which are in communion with Rome, not with all the Churches of Oriental traditions. Catholic was added to make this point clear. The identity of an individual Church is marked by its rite, which includes theology, spirituality, liturgy, and discipline (CCEO 28 # 1).

Orientalium Ecclesiarum expresses the love, admiration, and respect which the entire Church has for the Eastern Churches. Their obligation to faithfully preserve their genuine traditions is underlined. The decree speaks about the right and duty of the Eastern Catholic Churches to govern themselves according to their own special disciplines and according to their age-old traditions. "This Council solemnly declares that the churches of the East, like those of the West, have the right and duty to govern themselves according to their own special disciplines. These are guaranteed by ancient tradition and seem to be better suited to the customs of their faithful and to the good of their souls" (OE 5).

One of the achievements of the new understanding of the Church as a communion of Churches is that the Congregation called so far the *Congregation for the Eastern Church* has changed its name to the *Congregation for the Eastern Churches*. Thus, the name of the decree itself had an impact on the name of the Dicastery.

The very first sentence of the decree itself seems to affirm the age-old concept that the Catholic Church is essentially Latin. The Eastern writers consider the decree, a Latin 'concession' and 'magnanimity' based on which they do not find it possible to make an effective reawakening of Oriental ecclesial culture. The reception of OE by those churches who faithfully stick on to their Oriental identity needs no further certification; it is not, in fact, a reception but just accommodation or adjustment.⁷ The decree begins by appreciating the unique traditions of the Oriental Churches. However, the first number is misleading, as if the Oriental Catholic churches are not Catholics. Article 2 speaks about the local

⁷ J. Koodapuzha, *The Reception of Orientalium Ecclesiarum with Special Reference to the Syro-Malabar Church*, in *Revisiting Vatican II Orientalium Ecclesiarum after Fifty Years*, Francis Thonippara CMI (Editor), Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 126-146, 137.

churches or rites, which also needs further clarification and discussion. The same article speaks about the essential characteristics of Rite. In the course of time, the terms Particular Church and Rite have taken on distinct meanings. Particular Church in *Lumen Gentium* is a diocese; *sui juris* is to denote individual church. Particular Church – should have the following elements: same faith, same sacraments, same government, held together by a hierarchy.⁸

One of the major achievements of OE is the recognition of Oriental/Eastern churches as individual Church and Church as communion of churches. (OE 2, 4 and 7) Also refer LG, 13 for an understanding of these articles, where we read: “Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular churches that retain their own traditions, without prejudice to the Chair of Peter which presides over the whole assembly of charity, and protect their legitimate variety while at the same time taking care that these differences do not hinder unity, but rather contribute to it.”

There are two articles in OE, 2 and 3, which give some missiological implications. The growth of the Universal Church is possible only through the growth of the individual churches. Article 3 clearly says that the individual churches have the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with regard to the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world, under the direction of the Roman Pontiff. This article focuses on the growth of the individual churches and thereby, the growth of the Universal Church by fulfilling the mission command of the Lord. Articles 3 and 4 narrate the different rites and the rights of each individual church to engage in mission activities. This article is specifically dealing with the problem in India where Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches were denied the basic right of each church, to preach the Gospel and render pastoral care to all the faithful. Article 4 should read together with article 23 of *Christus Dominus*. One cannot say everything is well with the implementation of these articles, especially with particular reference to the members of the Syro-Malabar and Syro- Malankara churches, and especially the pastoral care of the migrants in the Gulf Countries. In the Gulf Region and Singapore, where there are a sizable number of Syro-Malabar faithful, the ecclesiastical authorities are rather sceptical or even opposed to implementing teachings of the Council, even after sixty years of its convocation. For pastoral care, the Syro-Malabar Catholics in the Gulf

⁸ J. Madey, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Kottayam: OIRSI, Vadavathoor, 1987, 29.

Region have to depend on the Latin Vicar Apostolic of Kuwait.⁹ Immediate steps should be taken to remedy and rectify this anomaly.

Articles 5 and 6 stress the importance of preserving the unique traditions of each Church and the need to preserve the spiritual heritage of the Eastern churches. Commenting on article 5, Victor J. Pospishil writes: "The Eastern churches also receive a general mandate to restore their genuine canonical tradition and to eliminate whatever has crept in from other rites, chiefly the Latin rite, and which cannot be considered to be due to organic progress."¹⁰ Cultural adaptations not hindering the organic development of its Oriental tradition (OE, 6) are to be further developed in the Indian context, especially in the mission context of North India.¹¹ The preoccupation with the restoration of rites should not hinder organic adaptation and inculturation. Article 6 has in view the liturgies of the Eastern Catholic churches which were distorted in the past, mainly due to the intervention of the Latin tradition. Hence, the central concern of OE is to restore the original tradition of the Eastern liturgies. OE insists on the preservation of the ancient liturgical tradition.¹²

Article 9 stresses the fact that the rights and privileges of the patriarchs should be re-established in accordance with the ancient traditions of each Church and the decrees of the ecumenical Synods. Canon 6 of the Council of Nicaea I, Canons 2 and 3 of Council of Constantinople I, Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon, Canons 17 and 21 of the Council of Constantinople IV, and Canons 5 and 30 of the Lateran Council IV speak of the patriarchs and their rights and privileges. Article 11 strongly recommends the establishment of new patriarchates where needed. The establishment of such is reserved for an ecumenical Council or the Roman Pontiff. Steps should be taken to raise the Syro-Malabar Church and the Ukrainian Church to the status of patriarchal churches as part of the implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. The Pope is given the power to do the same, and for the full reception of the OE at least these two Churches

⁹ J. Koodapuzha, *The Reception of Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 145.

¹⁰ V.J.Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Canonical-Pastoral Commentary*, New York: Bronx, 1965, 22.

¹¹ Cf. M. Kadavil, *A Retrospective Reading of Orientalium Ecclesiarum from the Perspective of Malankarra Catholic Church*, in *Revisiting Vatican II Orientalium Ecclesiarum after Fifty Years*, Francis Thonippara CMI (Editor), Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 146-156, 154.

¹² J. Mathew, *Impacts of Orientalium Ecclesiarum on the Restoration and Renewal of Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, in *Revisiting Vatican II Orientalium Ecclesiarum after Fifty Years*, Francis Thonippara CMI (Editor), Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 195-210, 198.

should be declared patriarchal churches. The Syro-Malabar Church has all the requirements needed for a patriarchal Church and one should not forget the fact that this Church has a history of two thousand years and the Catholic faith has never been compromised.

Article 6, C speaks about starting oriental provinces by Latin religious communities, which was being done by many religious communities except a few women's and a few men's communities, although they have a sizable number of members belonging to the Eastern Churches. Articles 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 speak about the Patriarchate, Major Archbishop, etc. and the Council fathers appreciate the synodal and participatory character of the Eastern Church administration, which is just opposite to the Roman centralisation. Article 12 speaks about the ancient discipline of sacraments, e.g., communion under both species. It is being practised in the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches.

Articles 6 and 12 insist on the restoration of ancient traditions, which are understood differently by different schools of thought. As one group stands for pure restoration without giving any space for cultural, linguistic, mission or global contexts, another group is too liberal, even in borrowing many Latin Church practices, even without being scrupulous about wearing Latin Rite vestments and celebrating the Eucharist in public. This tension is very much noticed in the Syro-Malabar Church and this is a constant headache for the leaders of the Church and causes division among the clergy and faithful. Adequate catechesis and formation in church traditions are needed for the proper understanding and implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

Articles 13 and 14 speak about the minister of Chrismation, and in the Eastern Church tradition, the priest can administer. Article 15 is about the sanctification of Sundays and Feast days. Article 16 is about the minister of Confession. Article 17 is on the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate, which, according to many Council Fathers from India of the Eastern churches, is not very relevant in the present context of India. As India is blessed with a large number of vocations to the priesthood, Indian bishops were not very keen about restoring the ancient Eastern tradition of the Permanent Diaconate. A lot of discussions were held on the topic, and opinions vary as we see in the following references.¹³ Article 18 is about mixed marriages of Oriental Catholics with Oriental non-Catholics.

¹³ P. Pulikkan, *Indian Church at Vatican II*, Trichur: Marymatha Major Seminary, 2001, 40-41, 90-92, 146, 157-158, 276-279.

Article 19 deals with Divine Worship and article 20 is about Easter date. Article 21 suggests adaptation to the prevalent discipline of the given place concerning the observance of sacred seasons. Article 22 deals with the Divine Office, article 23 on liturgical language, and article 24 on the duty of promoting Christian unity. Article 25 is on the reception of non-Catholic Easterners into the Catholic Church, article 26 and 27 are on *Communicatio in sacris*, admission to the reception of certain sacraments, article 28 is on extra-sacramental participation in worship, and article 29 speaks about the hierarchical direction of worship participation. Article 30 is the concluding one.

Reception of *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (OE) by the Indian Church

The Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church, two Eastern churches in India, could grow in their Eastern identity and individuality by implementing the teachings of OE. The reception of OE by the Indian Church was very slow and very selective because of historical reasons, which I have already mentioned above. Even today, the real spirit of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council is not properly understood, and one notices a prejudicial reception of OE in certain senses. Even today this creates a lot of problems in the fields of ecumenism, pastoral care, and evangelisation. The most difficult task in implementing the teachings of OE is article 3, which speaks about the equal dignity of all the individual churches and the equal right of each individual church to undertake missionary enterprise. Many commentators have made comments on this article, and reference is made to the Indian situation.

In footnote no.7 on OE Walter M. Abbott S J, the General Editor of the Documents of Vatican II says that:

By stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic Rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in the 18th century, taught that the Roman Rite enjoyed some kind of precedence over the others. In the past, the apostolate in the missions has been conducted exclusively in the Latin Rite. This practise has been resented by some Easterners, mostly in India, where the priests of the ancient Malabar Rite were always obliged to adopt the Roman Rite to undertake missionary apostolate.¹⁴

In his commentary on the OE, Dr. Pospishil has the following to say:

The situation is different for the flourishing Catholics of the two Syrian Rites in South India, in the State of Kerala. The Malankarians and the

¹⁴ W.M.Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York: 1966, 375.

Malabarians, the Christians of the West Syrian and East Syrian rites respectively, were not permitted to extend their missionaries to their pagan Indian brothers because the territory had been assigned to the Latin rite missions, which after all reached back in that part of the globe hardly a few hundred years. This was considered not only unjust but also short-sighted because the Malabarian Church is going through a period of unprecedented of priestly and religious vocations. In addition, being denizens of India for so much longer than the Latin rite Church, the Syrian rites are not considered contaminated by the European background of so many Latin rite missions.¹⁵

Through the constant interventions, the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches now practically enjoy All-India jurisdiction and freedom to undertake mission work and pastoral care, although the Latin hierarchy in India is still not showing the generosity to accept the reality. With the historic letter of Pope Francis to the Indian Catholic bishops on October 9, 2017 and with the establishment of the Shamshabad diocese on October 10, 2017, comprising all the territories of India excluding the present dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, the long-awaited All-India Jurisdiction is achieved. "In the era of globalisation, reducing the boundary of an individual Church to a particular region is a fallacy. Whereas, the Church has to globally recognise the presence of the individual churches all over the world."¹⁶

Article 4 speaks about the preservation of the identity and heritage of each individual Church. "Since all the individual churches enjoy equal rights, they must be free to work everywhere and minister to their own faithful."¹⁷ There was an anomalous situation for the Syro-Malabar Church, where there were two Metropolitans for an individual Church. The Syro-Malabar Church had to wait twenty-seven years to realize the principle enunciated in the first phrase of Number 4 OE in December 1992, when it was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church.

Orientalium Ecclesiarum does not have references to episcopal conferences. However, articles 1 to 11, especially numbers 3 and 4 had a direct bearing on the deliberations on the formation of the episcopal conferences for each *sui juris* Church in India. *Christus Dominus* (CD) Number 38 speaks about episcopal conferences. In light of this number and in the context of the letter of Pope John Paul II to the Catholic bishops in India in May 1987, three independent episcopal conferences

¹⁵ V.J. Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 315.

¹⁶ J. Koodapuzha, *The Reception of Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 156

¹⁷ J. Madey, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 39.

have been established for all three *sui juris* churches. In the letter we read: "The bishops of each of the three rites have the right to establish their own episcopal bodies in accordance with their own ecclesiastical legislation."¹⁸ After being elevated to the status of Major Archiepiscopal Church and after the composition of the synod of bishops, the synod of bishops took the place of the episcopal conferences of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) is the episcopal conference for the Latin Church in India. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) is the common platform for all the three rites.

Some major developments as part of the reception of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council include: the All-India National Seminar on *Church in India Today*, held in Bengaluru in 1969. This national seminar was the result of many years of preparation aiming at preparing the ground for the reception of the teachings of the Council. Heated discussions emerged on the issue of the multiple jurisdictions, which was indeed a very sensitive issue. Letters of Pope John Paul II in May 1987 and Pope Francis in October 2017 addressed to the Indian Catholic bishops facilitated the implementation of the teachings of OE as far as Indian Oriental Churches are concerned.¹⁹ The Letter of Pope John Paul II in 1987 quoted the relevant articles from OE 2,3,4 and 6 and CD, 23 and 38 and CCEO. Canons 449, 283, 476 and 518 to bring home the urgency of the proper pastoral care of the faithful of the Catholic Oriental Churches outside the proper territory.²⁰

Other developments as part of the reception of the Council in collaboration with the three *sui juris* churches include the founding of the National Biblical, Catechetical, and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bengaluru, aiming to promote the study of the Bible, Liturgy and Catechism in an inter-ecclesial way. The National Vocation Service Centre (NVSC) in Pune is another centre operated on an inter-ecclesial basis, which is also another example of national collaboration between different churches. Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC) in Kochi, Kerala, is another typical example of the inter-ecclesial collaboration between

¹⁸ Cf., F. Thonippara, *Syro-Malabar Church and the Restoration of the All-India Jurisdiction*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2019. In 29-34 the text of the whole Letter is reproduced; Cf., 32.

¹⁹ For details on the topic, refer, Francis Thonippara, *Syro-Malabar Church and the Restoration of the All-India Jurisdiction*, Dharmaram Publications, Bengaluru, 2019.

²⁰ F. Thonippara, *Syro-Malabar Church and the Restoration of the All-India Jurisdiction*, 29-34, where the full text of the Letter is given.

the three *sui juris* churches in Kerala. POC aims to promote the study of the Bible and faith formation.

The following details may help to understand the reception of OE by the Indian Oriental Churches.²¹

1. Establishment of mission exarchates and dioceses outside the so-called proper territory in North India.
2. Elevation of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches to the Major Archiepiscopal churches (1992, 2005 respectively).
3. Establishment of the synodal structure of administration and, thereby, the Oriental tradition is restored to the apostolic Church of St Thomas Christians.
4. Promulgation of the Code of Canons of the Eastern churches in 1990 and the Particular Law for the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches in the light of the Code of Canons.
5. Establishment of Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Bishops' Conferences and Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Religious Conferences.
6. Restoration of *Palliyogam* and the establishment of a Pastoral Council for the active participation of the laity in Church matters.
7. Erection of parishes in certain metropolitan cities for fulfilling the pastoral needs of the faithful, and the first was established in Bengaluru in 1983, attached to Dharmaram College.
8. Erection of new dioceses outside Kerala, Kalyan in 1988, Faridabad in 2012, Shamshabad in 2017, and outside India, Chicago in 2001, Melbourne in 2014, the Eparchy of Canada in 2015, Eparchy of Great Britain in 2016, Visitor for whole Europe in 2016 for the pastoral care of the migrants of the Syro-Malabarians.
9. In the case of the Syro-Malankara Church, All-India jurisdiction was achieved with the establishment of the Exarchate of Pune-Khadki and the Eparchy of Delhi-Gurgaon in 2015. The Exarchate in America looks after the pastoral needs of the migrants in North America, Canada, and Europe.
10. Appointment of priests in Gulf countries for the pastoral needs of the faithful. However, a permanent solution has to be reached for pastoral care.

²¹ Cf., S. Rose, *The Impact of Orientalium Ecclesiarum on the Indian Oriental Churches from an Ecclesiological Perspective*, in *Revisiting Vatican II Orientalium Ecclesiarum after Fifty Years*, Francis Thonippara, CMI (Editor), Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 62-76, especially 74-76.

11. Establishment of Syro-Malabar Major Seminaries in mission territories for the formation of the Syro-Malabarians working mainly in mission territories.
12. Restoration and renewal of liturgical texts, sacraments, sacramentals and breviary.
13. Formulation of Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catechism texts.
14. Establishment of Syro-Malabar Provinces and formation houses for the Syro-Malabar religious who belong to the Latin Congregations like OCD, OFM Cap, Claretians, CSsR, St Anne's of Bangalore, etc. However, Societies and Congregations like Jesuits, Salesians, SVDs, MSFS, and many other men and women religious communities have yet to take the necessary steps in this regard.
15. Recruitment of vocations to Latin congregations and dioceses is controlled by definite norms.
16. Establishment of theological centres for the laity and women religious.
17. Greater ecumenical movements with non-Catholic Thomas Christians and other Christian denominations. The CBCI has a Commission for inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism. Regional Bishops Conferences too follow the same pattern.
18. Centres have been established to foster research in liturgy, history, and traditions.
19. Greater importance is given to the learning of ancient languages, especially Syriac.
20. More religious sisters, brothers, and lay persons specialise in theological subjects.
21. Most importantly, new awareness among the Church members regarding their Oriental identity and vocation.
22. Letters of Pope John Paul II in 1987 and Pope Francis in 2017 stressed the importance of cordial inter-ecclesial existence.
23. Missionary undertakings of the members of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches in global mission.
24. As a reciprocal act, efforts are on the way to establish Latin Regions and Latin Provinces in countries where there are many Latin rite members in the congregations belonging to the Oriental tradition.
25. In inter-ecclesial and inter-Church denominational relations, there are a lot of changes, especially among the churches of the St Thomas

Christian tradition. One example is the sharing of worshipping places where there are no places of worship for some churches.

Suggestions

The Roman authorities should have intervened much earlier in a creative way for the implementation of the decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, and that clause should have been included in the decree. In the absence of a proper directive from the Holy See, the decree remained non-operational for many years, and a general impression was created that all measures taken were generous gestures on the part of the Latin Church. The decree gives general norms, which at certain points are very vague and not relevant to the context. There is no specific reference to concerned issues or concerned nations, which makes the reception more difficult.

Another comment may be the lack of proper preparedness on the part of the Council fathers from India due to various reasons, such as the absence of many *periti* for Eastern churches, the prejudices on the part of the fathers, the absence of an ecumenical commentary of the decree even after almost sixty years of the Council, and the absence of an ecumenical reading of the decree, at least with the churches of St Thomas Christian tradition. These are some of the lacunae one may notice in the reception of the decree. Further, the reception was not effective because of the lack of initiatives on the part of the hierarchs in introducing the decree on the Oriental churches and the decree on Ecumenism into the curriculum of the theological training. Efforts should be made to introduce Oriental topics in the Latin centres of formation, especially in theological faculties, so that mutual appreciation may be generated. In the same, Latin traditions should also be made part of the curriculum in the theological faculties.

Conclusion

The Oriental Catholic churches make the Universal Church more Catholic. In the footnote, Walter Abbott says, "The Council itself admits that its work is unfinished; this decree needs to be completed and adapted by the Holy See and by particular local synods."²² The reception of OE by the Indian Church was very slow and selective. The main reasons are the adamant attitude of some of the ecclesiastical authorities and the utter failure on the part of the Church authorities to understand the ecclesiology introduced by the Second Vatican

²² W. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 373, note 4.

Council. The reception was not done effectively because of the delay in the promulgation of the new Code of Oriental Canon Law (1990).

I may conclude this paper with the words of John Madey: "The decree on the Eastern Catholic churches has great importance for the Catholic Church as a whole. It has opened the minds of many to the existence of many particular churches of different origins and traditions which have the right and duty to develop themselves according to their own genius. The acceptance of this fact enables the Church of Rome to enter into a serious dialogue, especially with the churches of the East, Chalcedonian and pre-Chalcedonian."²³

The observations of one of the commentators on the decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches may be cited: "Concluding these deliberations, we must state that the Oriental Catholic churches were before the Council more or less treated as minor churches needing paternalistic supervision by the Roman Holy See. Of their own traditions, there scarcely remained anything important. They were considered *de facto* as suffragans to the Roman Pontiff. This is why they could not be esteemed among the non-Catholic Orientals, for whom nothing was as bad as an *uni-ate* Church."²⁴

The decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches is a turning point in the evolution of the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church. It has opened the minds and hearts of many members of the Latin tradition to recognise the fact of the existence of many individual churches of different origins and traditions. This decree also asserted and acknowledged the right and duty of each individual church to develop herself according to her own genius. Acceptance of this fact enables the Church of Rome to enter into serious dialogue with the Eastern churches.

The interventions of Bishop Sebastian Valloppilly and other Eastern Catholic bishops from India in the Second Vatican Council really produced good results in achieving the rightful autonomy of the Apostolic Church of St Thomas Christians. Let us wish and pray that a day will come when all the three churches will recognise each other and live in full sense the pluralistic ecclesiology introduced by the Second Vatican Council.

²³J. Madey, *The Particular Oriental Vocation of the Nazrani Church in Communion with Rome*, Alleppey: Prakasham Publications, 1976, 68.

²⁴J. Madey, *The Particular Oriental Vocation of the Nazrani Church*, 32.