

THE JURIDICAL FIGURE OF CATHOLICOS IN THE SYRO-MALANKARA MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHURCH

George Thomas Kochuvilayil*

Introduction

The Holy Catholic Church is a communion of twenty three individual Churches *sui iuris*, both of the East and West that are united in the same faith and sacraments, under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff (O.E.2). All these twenty three Churches have their own liturgical patrimony, discipline and tradition and most of the Eastern Churches are very particular in safe-guarding them. Nonetheless, from ancient times onwards the heads of the different Eastern Churches were known with special titles according to the traditions of the Churches. There are historical backgrounds for the use of different titles such as Patriarch, Catholicos, Maphrian, Major Archbishop, Metropolitan etc. While addressing the head of the Church with a particular title, it bears witness to the rich tradition of that Church.

Holy Father Pope John Paul II of happy memory raised the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church on 2 February 2005 as a Major Archiepiscopal Church and its chief prelate who is its Father and Head as Major Archbishop.¹ When it was raised to the status of

*George Thomas, a member of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, Kerala, India was ordained a priest in 2004. He had his philosophical and theological training at St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum, India. He holds MA in English Literature and Licentiate in Oriental Canon Law (Institute of Oriental Canon Law, at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, 2009). At present he is a lecturer in Canon Law and Animator of the students at St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary; adjutant judicial vicar of the Major Archieparchial Tribunal, Trivandrum; judge of the Major Archiepiscopal Ordinary Tribunal and promoter of justice of the Eparchy of Mavelikara, Kerala.

¹ John Paul II, *Ab ipso sancto Thoma* (Apostolic Bull No. 570.809, 10 February 2005); *MALANKARA*, Synodal Acts and Voice of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, Vol.1, n.1 (July 2005) 10.

Major Archiepiscopal Church, a *sui iuris* Church having the Synodal Administrative system headed by a Major Archbishop, it used the title Catholicos to designate its Father and Head according to the Antiochean tradition.

Since the head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is known as Major Archbishop-Catholicos, a study is the need of the time to understand the juridical status of the figure of Catholicos according to the Antiochean-Malankara tradition, a tradition which differentiates the Malankara Catholic Church *sui iuris* from other Churches *sui iuris*. Through this study we aim to understand the historical background of the evolution of the figure of the Catholicos in history and to elucidate the juridical status of the Catholicos of various Churches and to study whether it is fitting to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church to use the special title Catholicos by the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The evolution of the titles Patriarch, Major Archbishop and Maphrian is also analysed to make a comparison.

1. Evolution of the Title Catholicos

After the great event of Pentecost the Church began to spread from Jerusalem to the different parts of the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire and India. Historical and geographical influences play a prominent role in the growth of the Churches and evolution of the ecclesiastical titles. Based on the socio-cultural setup the prelates came to be called by a particular name in a particular place. This title showed the liturgical, spiritual, theological and disciplinary patrimony of the individual Church, which flourished in that certain area.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia gives this description of the Catholicos: "Catholicos in its first usage signified the head of a Church who was dependent on a patriarch but also acted as his vicar. Later the titles of patriarch and Catholicos had the same denotation."² The institution of the Catholicos originated first in the Armenian Church.³ But this Office was fully developed in the Seleucian Church. The title Catholicos was used to designate some ecclesiastical leaders outside the ancient Roman Empire. The heads

²Beggiani, S.J., s.v. "Catholicos," *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Second Edition. (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2002) 294.

³Alex Paul Urumpackal, *The Juridical Status of the Catholicos of Malabar* (Rome: PIO, 1977) 2.

of the Armenian, Georgian and Persian Churches were known as Catholicos. Later on all these three Churches added the title Patriarch to the title Catholicos. Thus they use Catholicos-Patriarch.⁴

The title Patriarch is the most ancient title for the supra-episcopal authority. Likewise, the official status and rank of the Catholicos is a status that evolved particularly in the Eastern Syrian Churches. The earlier reference of the title "Catholicos" appears from the beginning of the third century. In the Roman Empire there was a government official called Catholicos who administered a great territory.⁵ He had the jurisdiction over a precise geographical area. This title also got into the ecclesiastical realm in the same way other titles like diocese, province, etc. found acceptance in it.

By the fifth century A.D. the bishops in major cities like Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch etc. gained control over the Churches in the surrounding cities. Gradually they became the heads of each independent regional Church and were called Patriarch. The same rank in the Churches outside the Roman Empire was called Catholicos. There were three ancient Catholicates in the Church before the fifth century. They were the Catholicate of the East (Persia), the Catholicate of Armenia and the Catholicate of Georgia.

As we said earlier the institution of the Catholicos originated first in the Armenian Church. But this office was fully developed in the Seleucian Church. The difficulty in keeping contact and communication with the mother Church is an important reason for the rise of Catholicate in Seleucia. Another reason was that the vast area which the diocese of Orient covered really necessitated another hierarch who might rule over it. And also the decisions of Nicea I, especially, canons 4, 6 and 8 gave them the urge for autonomy. The Catholicos of the Seleucian Church enjoyed Patriarchal authority. Later the Catholicos added "Patriarch" to this title and thus came to known as Catholicos-Patriarch.

The Catholicos has all the authority over his faithful which the Patriarch has over his faithful. The so called Nicene-Arabic Canons⁶

⁴ Ronald Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches* (Bangalore: TPI, 2004) 21, 28, 97.

⁵ Catholicos, <http://www.Wikipedia, Free encyclopedia.htm> (15.07.2008); Paulys Wissova, *Real-Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 10, cited in Alex Paul Urumpackal, *The Juridical Status of the Catholicos of Malabar* (Rome: PIO, 1977) 22-23.

⁶ Jean Baptiste Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale Ou Recueil De Synodes Nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902) 272; Henry R. Percival, ed. *The Seven Ecumenical*

speak about the authority of the Catholicos: the Catholicos is the Supreme authority in the Catholicate.⁷

The term “maphrian” is derived from the root word *pharoh* which means “to bear fruit” or “to increase.” Thus Maphrian is “one who gives out fruit” or “one who causes to increase.” In West Syriac *maphryon* or *maphryono* literally signifies “a fruitful, fertile, generative, begetter, progenitor, or parent.” *Maphryono* means the one who gives fecundity or one who produces. *Maphryonuso* means the maphriyanate i.e., the office of the Maphryan or the primate. In the ecclesial context the word signifies that one who has authority to install metropolitans and bishops.⁸

The *Motu proprio* CS acknowledges the juridical status of the Maphrian while it says, “The metropolitan who has the title and dignity of maphrian is equal to an archbishop, without prejudice to the duties, which come from his subjection to the authority of the patriarch, and excluding the rights mentioned in cc. 331, 334, and others regarding the pallium.”⁹

When the number of non-Chalcedonians increased in Persia, there came the need of a bishop to take care of their spiritual needs. A synod was convoked in 629 and a Maphrian was enthroned in Persia for the care of them. Bar Hebraeus, the Maphrian from 1264-1286 AD, added the title Catholicos to his name. It was he who used it for the first time. He used “Maphrian” and “Catholicos” indiscriminately. After him the title “Catholicos” was very frequently used by the Maphrians. While the Catholicos of the Seleucian Church eventually adopted the title Patriarch, the Maphriyanate remained without further growth. Moreover it was terminated in the 19th century.

Councils of the Undivided Church, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. A Select Library of The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series, Vol. 14 (Edinburgh: T & T CLARK, 1991) 46-50.

⁷ The word is derived from the Greek *katholikos*, meaning “wholeness.” Catholicate is the jurisdiction of a Catholicos. A Catholicate or Catholicosate is the area of responsibility (territorial or otherwise) of a Catholicos, a leader within any of the several Churches of Eastern Christianity, especially those regarded as Oriental Orthodoxy.

⁸ Payne Smith (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 292.

⁹ CS, c. 335 §2.

Due to the latinization policies of some missionaries the St. Thomas Christians in India were divided into two Churches and one group got affiliation to the Antiochean Church in their attempt to safeguard their autonomy and tradition. When the Antiochean prelates tried to impose their full authority it was a blow to the aim of the leaders of the Malankara Church to keep their autonomy. This ill feeling heightened the tendency towards the autonomy which found its full expression in the creation of an independent Catholicate in Malankara Church. The establishment of the Catholicos and the formulation of the constitution are for regaining the self-governance of the Malankara Church and to ward off the undue interference of the Antiochean Patriarch in the administration of the temporalities of the Church. Basing on the *Nomocanon* of Bar Hebraeus and the *sthatihicons* given by the Antiochean patriarch, the Malankara Orthodox Church promulgated a *Constitution* and made the juridical figure of the Catholicos the supreme head of the Malankara Orthodox Church. According to *the Constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Church*, the Catholicos is the supreme prelate of this Church¹⁰ while the Catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Church) is only a Maphrian who is a subordinate of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

According to the pre-Vatican mentality it was impossible to recognize the autonomy of the Malankara Apostolic Church. After receiving the rather negative reply to the issue of the Catholicate from Rome, Mar Ivanios, the pioneer of the reunion movement, wrote: "May I venture therefore humbly to submit a suggestion for the most kind consideration of the Holy See that the position and title of the Catholicos be allowed to continue, his function being defined as corresponding more or less to that of the Primates of the National Churches in Europe and America, and consisting only of the authority to convene conference of all the ordinaries of our rite in this country and presiding over all these conferences."¹¹ But after 75 years the autonomy of the Malankara Church was recognized by raising the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church to a Major Archiepiscopal Church having synodal structure of governance.

¹⁰ *The Constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*, Art. 2.

¹¹ Louis Mooleveettil, *The Malankara Catholic Church* (Kottayam: Bethany publications, 1988) 49.

The word Catholicos originated from the Greek *Katholikos*, which means “head of the Church” or “universal head”. In Western Syriac *Kathulico* means “catholic, general, universal, or primate.” According to the ancient tradition of a Church *sui iuris* its head is called Catholicos. The Catholicos is a suprametropolitan rank in a Church *sui iuris*.

The study on the legislation of the early Eastern Synods which refer to supra-episcopal prerogatives and particularly on the figure of Catholicos prove that at the very beginning itself the Catholicos had all the authority which the Patriarch had. One of the juridical sources of the Malankara Church, *Hoodaya Canon*, says “the Metropolitan of the East should be called Catholicos.”¹² It also gives an explanation concerning the terminologies that the term “Maphrian” is same as “Catholicos” and vice versa.¹³

Cleri sanctitati c. 335 states:

§1 The Catholicos who does not have the title of patriarch is equal to an archbishop.

§2 The metropolitan who has the title and dignity of a maphrian is equal to an archbishop, without prejudice to the duties which come from his subjection to the authority of the patriarch, and excluding the rights mentioned in cc. 331, 334, and others regarding the pallium.

2. The Figure of Catholicos in *Motu Proprio Cleri Sanctitati*

The previous code, CICO, included the juridical institution Catholicos in the code itself and not for the particular law to decide. According to CS, the Catholicos is a juridical Institution endowed with powers of Patriarch but he doesn't have the title Patriarch. The title of Catholicos was given to the chief hierarch of a Church either because he made use of the universal jurisdiction of Patriarch, or was considered a delegate of the Patriarch *ad universitatem causarum*.¹⁴ In

¹² Bar Hebraeus, *Hoodaya Canon*, Trans. Yacoob Mor Julius Metropolitan (Mulanthuruthi: Seminary Publications, 2003) 64.

¹³ *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*. Placidus A.S. ed., (S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Typis Polyglotis Vaticanis, 1939) 41; Bar Hebraeus, *Hoodaya Canon*, Trans. Yacoob Mor Julius Metropolitan (Mulanthuruthi: Seminary Publications, 2003) 66.

¹⁴ Victor J. Pospishil, *The Law on Persons* (Ford City PA: St. Mary's Ukrenian Catholic Church, 1960) 159.

the present day understanding CS c. 335 can be better read as 'The Catholicos who does not have the title of a Patriarch is equal to a Major Archbishop'. Because in order to distinguish the archbishops, who enjoyed an independent status, from he who enjoyed quasi-patriarchal jurisdiction, the latter are called by Acacius Coussa, Major Archbishops.¹⁵ At the time of the codification of the previous Oriental Code, CICO, the need was felt to find a precise designation for such archbishops. Among the several designations proposed by the consulters, the one proposed in 1930 by Cyril Korolevskij¹⁶ was "archiepiscopus maior." It was finally accepted and officially used in CS cc. 324-334.

From the analysis of different volumes of *Nuntia*, we get the reason for the omission of the term "Catholicos" in the redaction process of the Eastern Code. The relator, Ivan Žužek, proposed to add a paragraph on Catholicos who is equal to Major Archbishop according to CS, c. 335 §1. But the *coetus* decided to keep a single title in the entire Code to designate a hierarchical head who, though not patriarch, presides over an entire Eastern Church.¹⁷ The *coetus* felt that the maintenance of different titles like Catholicos, Archbishop, Maphrian, Metropolitan etc., adds nothing new except the indication of principal sees.

3. Prerogatives, Rights and Obligations of the Major Archbishop-Catholicos

As the Father and Head (*pater et caput*), the Catholicos holds the highest position in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. So in tune

¹⁵ Victor J. Pospishil, *The Law on Persons* (Ford City PA: St. Mary's Ukrenian Catholic Church, 1960) 156; *Nuntia* 2 (1975-76) 31-52; *Nuntia* 3 (1976) 70-71.

¹⁶ Acacius Coussa, a member of the first Code Commission published a manual on Eastern canon law (*Epitome praelectionum de iure ecclesiastico orientali*, Vol. I, Grottaferrata, 1940, 2 ed. 1948, 1958), in which he used the designation "archiepiscopus maior" (p. 212). Since this manual was published before CS was promulgated, Coussa has generally been credited to have coined this term. However, George Thanchan has shown, pursuing a tip given by George Nedungatt, consultant of PCCICOR, that the credit should rather go to Cyril Korolevskij, who on analogy with "patriarchatus maior" and "patriarchatus minor," invented the term "archiepiscopus maior" (George Thanchan, *The Juridical Institution of Major Archbishop in Oriental Canon Law*, Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Oriental Canon Law (Rome: PIO, 1998) 75-76). George Nedungatt, ed., *A Guide to The Eastern Code*, *Kanonika* 10 (Rome: PIO, 2002) 202.

¹⁷ *Nuntia* 2 (1976) 46.

with the traditions of the St. Thomas Christians in India he is having special prerogatives. Since he is a Major Archbishop, he is having all the powers according to the stipulations of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO. c. 152). Here we see the relevance of the title as part of the rich patrimony of the Antiochean-Malankara tradition and what position it does occupy today juridically. The Catholicos of the Malankara Catholic Church has the following honorific titles:

3.1. His Beatitude

The Father and Head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is also addressed "His Beatitude". From ancient times onward the chief bishops of the Eastern Churches were addressed as "His Beatitude".¹⁸ His beatitude which comes from the Latin word 'beatitudo,' means "supreme blessedness" or "happiness." A Major Archbishop with the powers of a Patriarch can be very well called "His Beatitude". Through this addressing the authority of the supreme primate of the Malankara Catholic Church is well expressed.

3.2. Moran Mor

This is an addressing strictly according to the Syro-Antiochean Tradition. This is the common patrimony of the entire Syrian Church. The Syriac word *moron* means "lord, owner, master, ruler, prince" etc.¹⁹ The word *mor*, means, "my lord, sir" and is used not only in addressing a superior but as a title of ecclesiastics and saints.²⁰ So *moran mor* means "Lord my lord". Malankara Church, which has its root in the Syro-Antiochean tradition, has to address its head as *Moran Mor* Baselios (N).

3.3. Baselios

Before we enter into the importance of the name "Baselios," some knowledge about the Syriac language is inevitable. The Syriac²¹

¹⁸ The Synod of Mar Ishoyahb (587 AD), Jean Baptiste Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale Ou Recueil De Synodes Nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902) 318.

¹⁹ Payne Smith (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 298.

²⁰ Payne Smith (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 298.

²¹ Syriac is still used nowadays as ritual and literary language by speakers of Neo-Aramaic in Syria. The Malankara Catholic Church still uses Syriac in their liturgy and the faithful are well aware of the meaning of the terms used in liturgy.

language is the liturgical language of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. In Syriac there are no symbols for numerals. The letters of the alphabet are used to express arithmetical figures.²² The first letter is *olaph* and its value is 1 and the second letter *baeth* stands for number 2. There is a custom that those who come to the position of the Patriarch take a name beginning with "Ignathios," a name that starts with the first letter of the Syriac dialect, which shows the prominence of the Patriarch of Antioch in the Church. When there emerged "Catholicos" in the Syriac tradition, they took a name that starts with the second letter *beth*, in order to show that his position is just near to the position of the Patriarch of Antioch. Thus this custom came to exist in the Syro-Antiochean tradition and is still followed.²³ So the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church which follows the Syro-Antiochean tradition has to use this name for their Catholicos.

3.4. Catholica Bava

The word "Catholicos" means "universal." "Bava" is a Malayalam word which means, "a venerable father, a patriarch."²⁴ So the Supreme prelate of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is *Catholica Bava*, meaning, universal Father of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. This address also shows that he is the Father and Head of the Malankara Catholic faithful wherever they may be. Usually referring to the Catholicos, the faithful say *Catholica Bava*, which shows their filial attachment to the head of the Church.

4. Insignia of a Catholicos

In addition the insignia of a Bishop,²⁵ those of a Catholicos shall be a pectoral cross at the centre and two medals with the icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and St. Thomas, the Apostle. So altogether the insignia of Catholicos of the Malankara Church are a pectoral cross at the centre and two medals, ring,

²² Gabriel of St. Joseph, *Syro-Chaldaic Grammar* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1984) 8-9.

²³ Thomas Mar Koorilos, "Sarvatrika Sbhayil Sreshtayakunna Malankara Catholica Sabha", *AIKADEEPAM*, Vol. 32 No. 3, (March-April 2005) 18-24.

²⁴ *NBC Malayalam-English Dictionary* (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarttha Co-operative Society Ltd., 1993) 750.

²⁵ The insignia of a Bishop according to the Malankara Catholic tradition is a pectoral cross, ring, turban, *sleebo*, rose sash and pastoral staff with one snake-head. The Bishop will be wearing a saffron cassock. Saffron colour is the most holy colour of the world and it is the symbolic representation of Sacrifice and Honesty. Many religious saints of India were wearing this holy colour.

turban, *sleebo* (cross), rose sash and pastoral staff with two snake-heads. According to the Particular Canons, to put on the insignia of the Catholicos is the right of the Catholicos.

5. Legitimacy in holding the title “Catholicos”

From the historical background one is able to conclude, from where the office of the Catholicos originated and the title is used at present. Originally the Catholicos is an Institution in the Catholic Church. So also we will be able to understand that it is meaningless to claim the title Catholicos solely as its own by any Eastern Church. None of these ranks and titles is the monopoly of any Church. The Catholicos and Catholicate have had their origin by self-declaration, that is, the Synod of bishops of a particular Church declared that their metropolitan was Catholicos. The acceptance of this self-declaration by any of the other Churches was not a necessary condition for the validity of this institution. So the Synod of Bishops of the Malankara Catholic Church can decide the best suitable title for its Father and Head in accordance with the tradition of the Malankara Catholic Church. The title is a common heritage of the Malankara Churches which follow the Antiochean tradition.

CCEO c. 40 reminds the hierarchical heads of the various Churches *sui iuris* and all other hierarchs diligently care for the faithful keeping and observance of one’s own rite and that they may not allow changes except for its organic growth. The fidelity of the Oriental Catholics to their ancient traditions, common with the Orthodox Churches, is a sacred duty also in view of unity. Such fidelity shows that the Catholic Church intends and applies the principle of right and duty of Oriental Churches to govern themselves according to their own disciplines, commended by venerable antiquity in the Catholic communion.²⁶ We see the clear execution of this conciliar exhortation when the in conferring the title “Catholicos” to its head the Malankara Catholic Church was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church.

The Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church states that the Father and Head of the Malankara Catholic Church is Catholicos who enjoys the title the “Metropolitan of All India” and

²⁶ Dimitri Salachas, “The Ecumenical Significance of the New Code,” in J. Chiramel & K. Baharanikulangara, eds., *The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, (Alwaye: STAR Publications, 1992) 265.

“Successor to the See of St. Thomas”.²⁷ It was this status of the Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church that we wanted to clarify by explaining the juridical basis for it. If the head of the Malankara Orthodox Church exists in the official status and rank of the Catholicos, the head of the Malankara Catholic Church also exists and is acknowledged in the same official status and rank. From the enthronement ceremony of the Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church it is clear that the liturgy that is followed is that for the enthronement of a Catholicos.²⁸ Because of this the Malankara Catholic Church can understand and accept the position and status of a Major Archbishop as that of the status of a Catholicos. The figure of the Major Archbishop is alien to the Malankara Catholic Church.

The Catholicos confers honorary titles on those who contribute for the building up of the Church. He confers the titles of *Chorepiscopo* and *Ramban* on the Clerics of the Church as recommended by the Eparchial Bishop and approved by the Holy Episcopal Synod. In the same manner he confers *Malankara Sabha Ratnam*,²⁹ *Bar Itho Briro*³⁰ and *Bars Itho Brirtho* on the lay faithful. This is a revival of the ancient practice of the Malankara Church. It is well appreciated that the Church decided to honour both men and women, since many a time the women have been neglected from the main stream of the ecclesial activities. This is a new step taken by the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and this will be a model to other Churches.

It is the right and obligation of the Catholicos to consecrate Myron for the entire Malankara Catholic Church. This shows the highest

²⁷THE CODE OF PARTICULAR CANONS OF THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH (CPCSMCC), APPROVED BY THE HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD OF THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHURCH 20 SEPTEMBER 2010, MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA CATHOLICATE CENTRE, PATTOM, TRIVANDRUM - 695 004, KERALA, INDIA (Not yet promulgated) Can. 18. The Father and Head (*pater et caput*) of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is the Major Archbishop-Catholicos, canonically elected in and by the Holy Episcopal Synod of this Church and duly confirmed by the Roman Pontiff. He succeeds to the Apostolic See of St. Thomas in India. According to the ancient tradition of the ‘St. Thomas Christians’ the Hierarchical Head enjoyed the title of ‘The Metropolitan of all India’.

²⁸ *Malankara Catholica Sabhayude Aradhanakramam: Catholica Sthanarohana Susrusha*, Trivandrum: St. Mary’s Press, 2005.

²⁹ Gem of the Malankara Catholic Church.

³⁰ Great Son of the Church /Prominent Son of the Church.

rank of authority of the Catholicos in his Church. According to the Malankara tradition it is the head of the Church that consecrates Myron for the entire Church and each bishop receives Holy Myron from the Catholicos for his eparchy. This symbolizes the hierarchical communion between the head and members of the episcopate.³¹

The Church prays for the unity, tries to give fidelity to the ancient traditions for having better knowledge of each other and to give brotherly respect and collaboration with other Churches who are not yet in full communion with the Roman Pontiff. Without a visible foundation and centre of communion, it is practically impossible to achieve perennial unity. The Malankara Catholic Church should take courageous steps for the implementation of the conciliar teachings of Vatican II. This sort of initiatives will create a more amicable atmosphere and promote mutual respect and understanding which may lead to an atmosphere of ecumenism, for the union of all those who call upon the name of Christ. The Catholicos is the head of a Church having the principal See at Trivandrum, the State Capital of Kerala. He can raise his voice against the political policies that leave the marginalized ever more vulnerable and imposing atheistic thoughts in the minds of the children. More than that in co-operation with all people of good will, the Malankara Catholic Church has a vital part to play in relieving hardships and sufferings of the people. So as a citizen of India he has the right and duty to contribute to the progress of the civil society to which he belongs.

From the codification history of the CCEO in *Nuntia*, it is evident that there were proposals from the relator to add a paragraph on Catholicos who is equal to Major Archbishop according to CS c. 335 §1. Even then, the Commission decided to keep one single title bringing thereby more terminological clarity and precision. But we would say elimination of the title "Catholicos" was unfortunate for the sake of a terminological clarity. They could have given a paragraph on the Catholicos to respect the genuine tradition of the Eastern Churches. So we suggest that in the next revision process of

³¹ *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*. Placidus A.S. ed., (S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Typis Polyglotis Vaticanis, 1939)53; CPCSMCC, c.429; It is the supreme head of the Church who had to lead the consecration ceremony of Holy Myron, Bar Hebraeus, *Hoodaya Canon- Chapter 3*, Trans. Abraham Malpan Konatt, (Pampakuda: Mar Julios Press, 1974).

the Eastern Code this title should be added so that the apprehension of the non-Catholic Malankara Churches could be avoided and open a way for the re-union of these Churches to the Catholic fold. They have an apprehension that the traditional titles will not be respected if they join the Catholic fold. Our study could gain the special advantage of bringing home to the Malankara Churches their position as particular Oriental Churches and of their absolute possibility of entering into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Catholicos of the Malankara Catholic Church is holding the authority equal to that of a Patriarch though he does not have the title of "Patriarch." Even if the Malankara Catholic Church is raised to the Patriarchal level in future there will not be any extra authority than that of a Major Archiepiscopal Church. But respecting the tradition of the Eastern Churches, an Apostolic Church having the tradition of two thousand years has to be raised to the status of a Patriarchal Church. Gaining of this status will definitely help the Malankara Catholic Church to work for the unity of the Malankara Churches under one Patriarchal head. This is not for personal gain, but for the wider interest of the Church and for the promotion of the ecumenical cause of the Catholic Church.

In the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, the Antiochean Rite was restored to its pristine purity and orthodoxy and the Church does continue to possess it as it was practised in the Malankara Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox Churches. And it will be unbecoming to the Malankara Catholic Church to imagine and act as if the Malankara Catholic Church being a new Church can establish a new ecclesiastical title for its head without considering the traditions that existed in the Church previously. We hope that this single individual Oriental Church will become a living reality of the traditions rather than allow the canonical sources to remain a mere object for the research of the experts in the history of law.

By raising the Malankara Catholic Church to the autonomous status, the Holy See leaves no room for any apprehension concerning its status, if divided Orthodox Churches come to the Catholic communion. The words of the Apostolic Nuncio to India are relevant in this context. While giving the inaugural address in the public meeting after the enthronement ceremony of the first Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, he said:

Now after it has been elevated to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, you are now being recognized by the Holy See as a fully independent community. Now you are in communion with the Holy Father, you are a Church in the communion of the Catholic Church but not depending on any Church, only on the Holy Father. This is the sense of today's celebration. This is a note of recognizing the fruit of your maturity in faith. You can go along by yourself living according to your traditions, liturgy and your ecclesiastical and juridical institutions under the Holy Father and not under any other Churches of the East or West. You are a full fledged Church.³²

Conclusion

A Church with integral autonomy has the right to decide on many things concerning the governance of the Church. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church raised to the status of an autonomous Church having its synod of bishops, can address its Father and Head with a title most fitting to its liturgy, spirituality, patrimony, tradition and canonical discipline. The Catholicos holds all the titles and prerogatives suitable to the rank of a Catholicos. To sum up, according to the common Code he is the Major Archbishop and according to the proper tradition of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church he is the Catholicos.

³² *MALANKARA*, Synodal Acts and Voice of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 2005) 43.