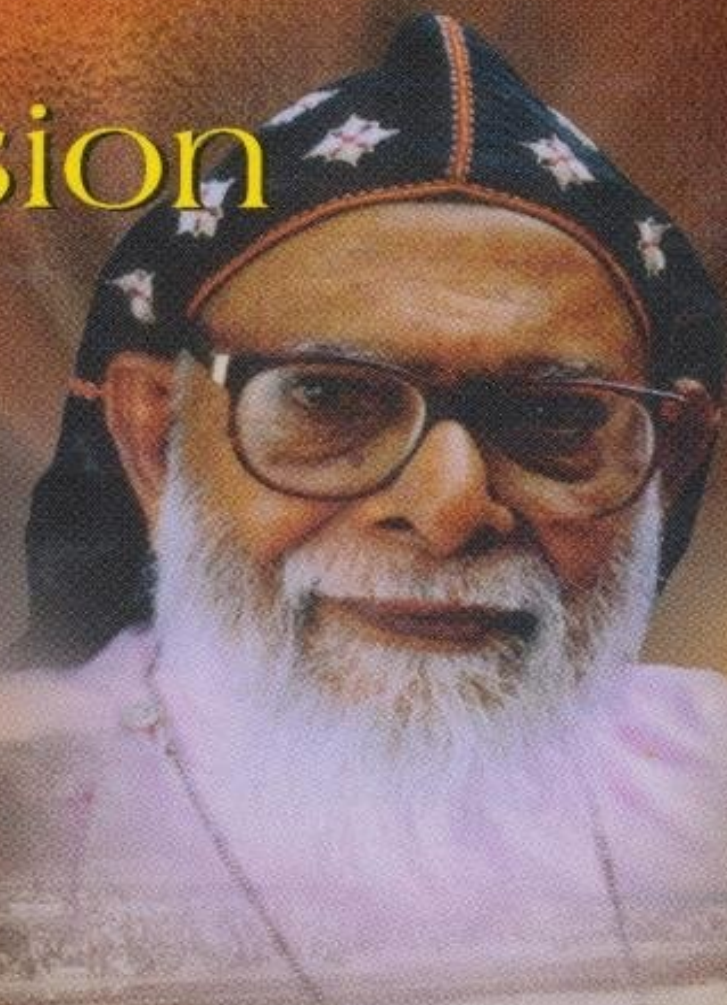


THE MARTHOMA CHURCH



Heritage and *Mission*



ALEXANDER MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN

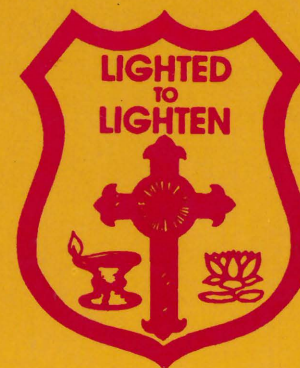


THE MAR THOMA CHURCH - Heritage And Mission

ALEXANDER MAR THOMA

THE MARTHOMA CHURCH

HERITAGE AND MISSION



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THE MARTHOMA CHURCH

Heritage and Mission



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THE MARTHOMA CHURCH

Heritage and Mission

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THE MARTHOMA CHURCH

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THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

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THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

- Heritage and Mission -

By Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The History of the ancient St. Thomas Church in Kerala has been written by different eminent persons in Malayalam and in English. One of the latest among them in English was written by Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan. This Book takes the story only up to 1968. Important developments have taken place since then and the need has arisen to bring the story up-to-date. This is an attempt to do so.

This year the Mar Thoma Church is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Reformation in the Church. This is an occasion to look back to the great heritage that we cherish, and to evaluate the present situation in the light of the vision and sacrifices of our forefathers. It also presents to us challenges for fulfilling the Mission of the Church in the world in the future. We have to grasp the opportunities, and work with a sense of urgency.

With the expansion of the Mar Thoma Church beyond the borders of Kerala, and even overseas, a new generation of our members is growing up in those places who have to be told the story of the Church in a way that they can understand and appreciate. This book is written mainly with such young people in view. The intention is that this new generation, growing up in many countries, who cannot read Malayalam may catch a glimpse of the heritage and mission of our Church.

I am indebted to many who have helped in different ways in writing this book. My Secretary Rev. T. A. Koshy and the staff in my office, and Mr. P.M. Mammen, Deputy Secretary of the Church, have rendered invaluable help. Mr. Thomas Daniel typed and got the manuscript ready for the press. The Manager and Staff of the T.A.M. Press, worked hard to get it printed in record time. I offer my sincere

John Joseph, Advocate
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NALLOOR,
KURIANNOOR. P. O.

thanks to all of them.

I shall deem myself fully rewarded if at least some young people will realise the riches of our heritage, and will dedicate their lives to work for the Kingdom of God, and to fulfill the Mission of the Church in our day.

Tiruvalla

July 1, 1985.

Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition which was published in July 1985 was all sold out within one year. The need for a second edition was evident. Some material had to be added regarding the expansion of the Church to regions outside Kerala and the general administration of the Church. Rearrangement of some passages also became necessary. Some of the developments during 1986 had to be added. So this revised edition is presented with these modifications which we believe will be useful.

The revision became possible during a few days of much needed rest that I had at the end of the year, in the quiet precincts of the Christukula Ashram, Tirupattur. I am very grateful for the hospitality and fellowship enjoyed at the Ashram. Rev. T. A. Koshy, my Secretary, also rendered valuable service in the revision and by typing the manuscript for the press. I am thankful also to Rev. P.T Thomas and the Ashram Press, Manganam, for the excellent work of printing that they have done. I am grateful to all who have helped in various ways.

It is my hope that the second edition will be an improvement on the first, and will be of help to many.

Christukula Ashram,
Tirupattur,
29-12-1986.

Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition which was published in July 1985 was sold out within one year. The need for a second edition was evident. Some material had to be added regarding the expansion of the Church to regions outside Kerala and the external administration of the Church. Reorganisation of some dioceses also became necessary. Some of the developments during 1985 had to be added. So this revised edition is presented with these modifications which we believe will be useful.

The revision became possible during a few days of much needed rest that I had at the end of the year, in the quiet precincts of the Christ the King Ashram, Thiruvalla. I am very grateful for the hospitality and fellowship enjoyed at the Ashram. Rev. T. A. Kishor, my Secretary, also rendered valuable service in the revision and typing the manuscript for the press. I am thankful also to Rev. P. T. Thomas and the Ashram Press, Manganam, for the excellent work of printing that they have done. I am grateful to all who have helped in various ways.

It is my hope that the second edition will be an improvement on the first and will be of help to many.

Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Christ the King Ashram,

Thiruvalla,

20-12-1986

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

More than seven years have passed since the publication of the Second Edition of this book in 1986. Many important events have taken place since then in the world and in the church. Significant changes have happened in many nations such as in Europe, South Africa and West Asia. India also saw change of many governments during this period. The Mar Thoma Church too had many meaningful developments during the past seven years. So there is a pressing demand for a third edition bringing the book up to date.

The sudden demise of Bishop Easow Mar Timotheos in April 1988 was a great shock to the church. With the expansion of the church to many parts of the world, re-organisation of the Dioceses became a pressing need. Under the guidance of God three more Bishops were consecrated both in 1989 and 1993, so that there are now ten Bishops, for the first time in the history of the Mar Thoma Church. The story of the recent expansion in the mission of the church is narrated in a new chapter entitled a "Septennial Review", added as Chapter XIII in this edition. I am grateful to Dr. K.V. Varghese for the valuable help which he rendered in adding this chapter. I record thanks also to the National Press in Tiruvalla for the efficient work of printing and producing this edition.

I believe that the record of what God has done through the church till now will inspire many to continue the work and witness of the church in the coming years.

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Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan

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CHAPTER I

THE STORY UP TO THE 15TH CENTURY

It is traditionally believed that St. Thomas, the Apostle of Jesus Christ came to India in A.D. 52 and established the Church on the Malabar Coast. Historical documents are not available to prove this conclusively. Some historians believe that St. Thomas came to the North West part of India. Milne Rae who was a Professor in the Madras Christian College has written in the book, "The Syrian Church in India", that St. Thomas worked in the Kingdom of Gundaphorus, King of Indo-Parthia. Excavations conducted by the end of the 19th century have established the fact that a King by name Gundaphorus ruled in that part of India in the middle of the first century. So he was a contemporary of St. Thomas. 'Acts of Thomas' narrates the story that Apostle Thomas was engaged by King Gundaphorus for building a palace and was given money for that purpose. However, Thomas used the money to help the needy. The palace was not built. So the king shut up Thomas in prison. The king's brother had a dream in which he saw a palace built for the king in heaven by Thomas and he told the king about it. Thereupon the king released Thomas. The king accepted the Gospel and was baptised. Thomas was allowed to go about preaching the Gospel. There are such other apocryphal stories which cannot be taken as historical facts.

There are others who hold the view that St. Thomas came to South India and landed at Cranganore which was a port near Cochin, on the Malabar coast, which had trade connections with Middle East in those days. F. E. Keay in his book, "A history of the Syrian Church in India" has established, from the mention in the book of Kings, of the articles brought to the court of King Solomon from India, that even before the time of Christ, there was trade between the Malabar coast and Palestine in spices and luxury articles like ivory. Therefore it was quite natural for Thomas to come to India with the Gospel when the disciples went to different parts of the world according to the commission given to them by Jesus Christ.

One story mentions that Thomas was staying with a colony of Jews who had settled at Chavacadu, a place near the important Hindu

pilgrimage centre at Guruvayoor. One day while Thomas was passing by the side of a bathing ghat, he saw some Brahmins who were, while bathing in the tank, throwing up water in pooja. He went in to the tank and said that he could throw up the water and keep it from falling down by the power of God. On doing so some believed and others fled from the place shouting curses. So the place came to be known as a place of curses "Sapacadu". The place is now called Chavakadu. There is now a Christian Church at the place where we can see the remains of ancient sculpture on granite stones. Such stories are interesting but their authenticity is not established.

It has been believed from very early days that Thomas established seven Churches on the Malabar coast at: (1) Cranganore (Malankara), (2) Chavakad (Palur), (3) Parur near Alwaye (4) Gokamangalam, (5) Niranam, (6) Nilakkal (Chayal), (7) Quilon (Kalyan). All these places except Nilakkal are near the sea coast. Nilakkal is in the ghat region near Sabarimala, the Hindu place of pilgrimage. It is believed that Nilakkal was an important trading centre for export of spices and other items like ivory, and that the route extended to Tamil Nadu across the ghats. Remains of ancient human dwellings and places of worship are still discernible among the ruins in this area which is now covered with forests. Ancient folk songs tell the story of dwellers in the area fleeing to the plains for fear of robbers from outside, or a disease like plague. Many Christian families in Kanjirappally, Ayroor and other places trace their origin to Nilakkal. There is a Mar Thoma Church at Ayroor which is still named Chayal (Nilakkal). Efforts were made recently to rebuild a church at Nilakkal which led to opposition from the Hindu community, even though there are evidences of a Christian Church and a Hindu temple which existed there side by side in olden days, as can be found now in many other places in Kerala. The difficulties were solved by the magnanimous approach from both Hindu friends and Christian leaders, and the help extended by the Kerala Government. Following this a new church has been built under the joint auspices of all the Christian denominations at the site agreed upon by all concerned, a little distance away from the earlier site. This church is having historical significance as the first Church built and dedicated by all the denominations together as a symbol of the heritage from St. Thomas.

It is believed that St. Thomas proceeded to the East coast of India and died a martyr's death at a place called St. Thomas Mount, and was buried at Mylapore in Madras. The remains were later taken to Edessa.

Scholars are divided in their opinion as to whether St. Thomas himself founded the Church on the Malabar coast. So Bishop L. W. Brown in his book, "The Indian Christians of St. Thomas," states that "we cannot prove that the Apostle worked in South India any more than we can disprove the fact; the birth of the tradition is a reasonable probability because of very considerable commercial contact between the Western world and the Malabar coast in the first century A.D. and the presence of Jewish colonies at the period." Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan concludes the Chapter on St. Thomas Tradition in his book as follows: "The History of the Christian Church in the first century does not depend entirely on historical documents. Tradition is often more true and more compelling than plain historic proof. In this sense St. Peter's founding of the Roman Church and St. Thomas founding of the Malabar Church, may be said to stand on the same footing. Both are supported by traditions which are sufficiently early and sufficiently strong."

In the year 189 A.D. Pantaenus who was a missionary sent by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria arrived in Malabar. He found a Christian group with an Aramaic version of the Gospel of St. Mathew. The visit of Pantaenus has been mentioned in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, and St. Jerome. Mention is made in the records of the Council of Nicea, of the presence of a Bishop John of India (A D 325). More clear evidence is found in the writings of Cosmas who was a merchant from Alexandria and sailed in the Indian seas in 522 A.D. He records that he had seen Christians in the Island of Taprobani (Ceylone) with clergy and a congregation of believers, and also in the land called Male (Malabar) where pepper grows. He has written that there the clergy are ordained by a Bishop sent from Persia. From the mention of Malabar as the place where pepper grows it is quite clear that he mentions the presence of a strong Christian community in this area in the early years of the sixth century with strong connections with the church in Persia.

There is a tradition that a group of 400 immigrants from Persia arrived in Malabar in 345 A. D under the leadership of a merchant named Thomas of Cana, known as Knaye Thommen. They came as a result of persecution of Christians in Persia at that time, and they were received kindly by the Hindu rulers. Mention is made also of another immigration from Persia in the year 825 A.D under the leadership of a Persian merchant named Marwan Sabrison with two Bishops named Mar Sapro and Mar Prodh. They landed in Quilon. King Cheraman Perumal gave them land and extended to them special privileges, inscribed in two sets of copper plates. Three of these are still in the Old Seminary in Kottayam and two are with the Mar Thoma Church, Tiruvalla. The rulers were interested in encouraging trade. That was why these immigrants were given special privileges.

Unfortunately these privileges made the Christians regard themselves as a special privileged class in a caste-ridden society and caused them to remain isolated from the lower classes.

Very little is known of the condition of the Church in those early days. There was connection with the Church in the Middle East from where Bishops came and rendered spiritual ministrations and ordained priests. The local administration was by the Archdeacons. One sign of the Persian connections is the existence of Persian crosses, one of which is to be seen at the Valiyapally at Kottayam with an inscription in the Pahlavi language. As a commercial community the Christians were not very much concerned about the theological nuances of the Bishops who came from the Middle East, some of whom were Nestorian in their views. Some others held Monophysite doctrine regarding the person of Jesus Christ. Irrespective of such differences they were welcomed for such help as they could render. There is an interesting quotation given Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma in his book, "Christianity in India and a brief history of Mar Thoma Syrian Church" (page 6).

"The Malabar Church suffered practical isolation with the rise of Islam and the dominance of the Indian seas by the Muslims. The Syrians, however, clung tenaciously to their traditions and made desperate attempts to get Bishops from Western Asia. Of the geography

of Western Asia they knew little; of the theological niceties that rocked that ancient centre of Christianity, perhaps less. What they apparently wanted was a Bishop of Western Asian appearance who did not understand their language, Malayalam; and as long as a person of this description came to them by sea they were not interested in his doctrines or his bonafides."

Many travellers from the West including the famous Marco Polo have written in their travelogues about the Church in Malabar.

Up to the 16th century there was ecclesiastical connection between the Church in West Asia and the Church in Malabar. The Bishops who came from Babylonian Patriarchate were Nestorian. Those who came from Antioch were Jacobite. Some hold the view that the connection was neither with the Nestorians nor the Jacobites, but with the Catholicos of the East who was independent of the Patriarch of Antioch and who was Orthodox in faith. What is certain is that the Malabar Christians and the Persian Christians had ecclesiastical connections. Even now there is a Nestorian Church in Trichur and neighbouring areas called Chaldean Syrian Church. They have connection with the Nestorian Patriarch. Though there were such ecclesiastical connections and ministrations, the church in Malabar was independent in administration under the Archdeacons.

CHAPTER II

ROMAN CATHOLIC CONNECTION

Travellers in the middle ages wrote about their visit to the Christian Church in Malabar. Mention of Marco Polo has been made earlier. A Franciscan Friar John of Monticorbino who was sent as a missionary to China by the Roman Church, on his way to China, stayed in India for 13 months. He wrote about the Church of St. Thomas in India. A Dominican Priest, Friar Jordanus visited Malabar and wrote about the Christians in India. Later Jordanus was sent by the Pope as a Bishop to the Christians in Quilon, for urging them to enter the Catholic Church. But there is no record of the Christians at Quilon accepting the Pope.

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the Church in Malabar began with the arrival of Vasco de Gama who landed in Calicut in 1498. At this time the Portuguese were powerful in the eastern areas and had control of the sea routes. The Pope wanted to use this opportunity to bring the Church in Malabar under the supremacy of Rome. St. Francis Xavier came to Goa in 1542 and hundreds of people along the sea coast were baptised. He gained many converts in India, Ceylon, Malacca and Japan. On his way to China, he died and his mortal remains were brought to Goa where his body is preserved, and exposed on special occasions for veneration by devotees. Even though Francis Xavier was filled with a passion to gain converts to Christianity he was not so keen to bring all under the authority of Rome. The Roman Church started Seminaries where young men were trained for ministry in the church, but the St. Thomas Christians did not accept them. Then the Portuguese used their power to prevent Babylonian Bishops from coming to India. One Bishop Mar Joseph was deported to Portugal. Another Bishop Mar Abraham who came from Persia was severely persecuted. Archdeacon George still continued as the administrator.

A powerful Archbishop Alexio-de-Menezes arrived in Goa in 1592. He managed to win over to his side many of the leaders of the Church by friendly visits, bribery and threats. He also won the support

of the Raja of Cochin. He then convened a Synod at Udayamperoor, south of Ernakulam, in the year 1599, called the Synod of Diamper. The purpose was described as the destruction of the errors and heresies, and the purging of books from false doctrines, and the perfect union of the church with the whole church Catholic, and for the yielding of obedience to the supreme Bishop of Rome. The representatives sent from the various congregations were forced to accept the decrees read out by the Archbishop. Thus the Syrian Christians of Malabar, (the Malankara Church) were made part of the Roman Catholic Church under the Pope. The records and prayer-books of the old church were destroyed. The decrees passed in the Council of Diamper shed light on some of the earlier practices in the Malankara Church which differed from the Roman church. These, as mentioned in the History of the Church written by Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma, are as follows:

The Malabar Church

1. Never accepted the Papal supremacy,
2. Denied the Doctrine of Transubstantiation,
3. Condemned the adoration of images,
4. Knew nothing of masses and prayers for the dead,
5. Knew nothing of the intercession of saints,
6. Did not use the holy oil in Baptism,
7. Looked with horror on auricular confession,
8. Did not practice the celibacy of the clergy,
9. Recognised only two orders, the priesthood, and the diaconate,
10. Believed in the activity of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of the elements in the Holy - Communion,
11. Had Communion in both kinds,
12. Admitted to the Communion members of other Churches,
13. Accepted three sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist and Holy Orders,
14. In all questions of doctrine accepted the authority of the sacred Scriptures as decisive.

The Malankara Church was under Roman power for half a century. But many smarted under the Roman yoke. Gradually the power of the Portuguese empire declined and the Syrian Christians yearned for regaining independence.

The leaders of the Syrian Church made frantic efforts to get a Bishop from West Asia. The Patriarch of Babylon sent a Bishop named Ahatalla to Malabar in 1653. On his arrival, the Portuguese caught him before landing in Cochin and deported him to Goa. It was rumoured that he was tried by the Inquisition and burned at the stake. The Syrian Christians were infuriated and people gathered from different places in their thousands and marched to Cochin under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas. Even though the gates of the Cochin port were closed and cannons were mounted on the fortress the people gathered in front of the church in Mattancherry, where there was a cross. They wanted to take an oath that they would have nothing to do with the Portuguese any more. So they tied ropes to the cross and touching the ropes took the oath severing their connection with Rome. The granite cross was slightly leaning and so this incident is known as the oath of the Coonan Cross (1653) (Coonan means bent). Thus independence was re-established in 1653. But later yielding to the propaganda of the Catholics, a large number of those who took the oath re-entered the Roman fold.

The ancient Malankara Church was thus divided into two branches viz. those who sided with Rome known as Roman Catholics and those who preferred to be independent known as Malankara Syrian Christians.

The Malankara Syrian Christians who were eager to maintain their autonomy despaired of getting the help of a Bishop from West Asia, so long as the Portuguese had power. So as a temporary measure 12 priests joined together and raised Archdeacon Thomas to the Episcopate, and he was called Mar Thoma I. In 1693 the Dutch who were Protestants defeated the Portuguese and established their power in Cochin. Now the way was open for Bishops from abroad to come to Malabar. So the Malankara Christians sent an appeal to the ancient Patriarchate to send a Bishop. Mar Gregorios Metropolitan of Jerusalem

who was under the Patriarch of Antioch was sent and he was welcomed heartily when he landed in Cochin in 1665. He duly consecrated Mar Thoma I as Bishop. Thus the Episcopal continuity was restored with Mar Thoma I as the first Indian Metropolitan. His successors were known by the name Mar Thoma up to Mar Thoma V, and there-after four of the Metropolitans were known by the title Dionysius between the years 1665 and 1843. Some of the consecrations were conducted by visiting Bishops from West Asia as before, and some by the local Metropolitans.

The Independent Syrian Church of Malabar

During the time of Mar Thoma VI who took the title of Dionysius I, Mar Gregorios a foreign Bishop who was in Malankara at that time consecrated a priest of the Kattumangattu family as Bishop with the title Mar Koorilos. Mar Dionysius raised objections and Mar Koorilos had to go away to British Malabar area. He established his seat at Thozhiyoor on the British Malabar border, 3 miles from Kunnamkulam. This Church continued as an independent church from that time and they have helped to consecrate Bishops in the Malankara Church when necessary.

CHAPTER III

THE MISSION OF HELP FROM THE C.M.S.

Towards the end of the 18th century the power of the Dutch in India declined and the British became powerful. When Tippoo Sultan began to invade the small states in Kerala the Rajas of Travancore and Cochin sought the help of the British and entered into treaty relations. British residents were put in charge of the states and they gave protection to the states. Colonel Macaulay was the first British resident in Travancore State, till 1810. Claudius Buchanan, a Chaplain of the East India Company, visited Travancore and Cochin in 1806. He was very much interested in the ancient Church of Malabar and published a book in England entitled "Christian Researches in Asia". He took the initiative to translate the four gospels into Malayalam. These were printed in Bombay in 1811.

Colonel Macaulay was succeeded by Colonel Munro. He was the Resident from 1810 to 1819. He was a very devout Christian. He took a very keen interest in the welfare of the Syrian Christians. A Seminary was established at Kottayam in 1813, on a property given to the Church by the rulers through the influence of Colonel Munro, for the education of those who were to be ordained in the Church. He made an endowment of £ 3000 (Rs. 10300), the interest of which was to be used for training the clergy. This amount was deposited in a bank in Madras and was known as "Vattipanam". Later on there arose a prolonged litigation as to who had the right to receive the interest on this endowment.

The Malankara Church at this time was at a very low spiritual level. Public worship was conducted in the Syriac language. People understood very little of it. The clergy had very little training. Even young boys in early teens were ordained at the behest of interested parties. Some of the vestiges of the Roman connections remained even though independence was established. Celibacy of the priests was insisted upon, prayers to the saints and masses for the departed continued. Compulsory fees levied on the occasion for rites and ceremonies like baptism, marriages and masses for the departed, were

the main sources of income for the clergy. There was no regular stipulated salary for them. The Bible was a closed book. So there was no exposition of the word of God during the services and the people continued in their superstitions. Religious life consisted of certain ceremonies, rituals and festivals. People were steeped in ignorance and superstitions. Offerings were made to the saints to avoid calamities and to gain personal advantages. Special festivals were held on the feasts of certain saints when the images of the Saints were taken in procession to please them and to win their favour.

Colonel Munro was deeply interested in bringing the light of the gospel to such a situation. He wrote to the Church Missionary Society in London to send a mission of help and the Society readily responded. The C.M.S had come to know of the ancient church through Claudius Buchanan. Thus in 1816 they sent Rev. Thomas Norton, as the first C.M.S. Missionary. The purpose of the mission of help was only to bring the light of the gospel to the ancient church and not to create a new denomination in Kerala. Norton was a very able person and his wise conduct earned the respect of the Metran. He lived and worked at Alleppey. Three more missionaries came in the following years and they stayed at Kottayam. Rev. Benjamin Baily was active in literary work. He got the New Testament translated into Malayalam. He established the first printing press, making it with his own hands, for printing the Bible. The New Testament was published in Malayalam and later the whole Bible was published in 1841. Rev. Joseph Fenn was the Principal of the Seminary and was engaged in the training of the clergy. Rev. Henry Baker was active in educational work starting primary schools in villages. An English school for higher education was started at Kottayam. The Metropolitans Pulicote Mar Dionysius and Punnathara Mar Dionysius were highly pleased with the services rendered by the Mission of Help.

Between the years 1826 and 1833 these Missionaries had to return to England and two younger Missionaries Rev. Joseph Peet and Rev. W. J Woodcock arrived in their place. They were rather impatient about the slow progress being made and were sometimes rash in their actions. This caused friction in the relationship with Cheppat Mar Dionysius who was the Metropolitan at that time.

There were also some people who did not favour change. For example, the missionaries had insisted that only those who had received theological training in the Seminary and got certificate should be ordained. They also wished to bring more order into the financial matters of the parishes and so arranged that the accounts should be submitted to the British Resident. Some interested parties began to play a double game. They went and told Rev. Peet that the Metropolitan was about to take away the documents of the Seminary (now known as Old Seminary) to keep them in his custody. So Rev. Peet went to the Seminary and rashly took away the documents and kept them in the custody of the Resident. Immediately these persons went and told the Metropolitan that the documents had been removed by the missionary. Such duplicity continued and it strained the relationship which came to a breaking point very soon. Even from the beginning Cheppat Mar Dionysius did not take kindly to the reforms suggested by the Missionaries. Now the situation reached a climax. A reconciliation effort was made by Bishop Wilson, who came down from Calcutta in 1835 for the purpose. But this did not yield the desired result. Following this the Metropolitan called a Synod of the Church at Mavelikara in 1836, in which they resolved not to accept the reforms suggested by the Missionaries. In the resolution they reiterated their allegiance to the Patriarch of Antioch. Thus the relationship between the Metropolitan and the Missionaries was sundered.

It was decided to settle the claims on the properties between the Metropolitan and Missionaries by arbitration. According to the award of the arbitration, the Seminary with its compound and the endowment fund for the education of the clergy "Vattipanam" were allotted to the Metropolitan. The Missionaries received the Manro Island, the education fund and the school for higher education at Kottayam. Thus the Missionaries and the Malankara Church parted company.

The Church Society had to decide what to do next. Their intention was not to form a new denomination, but the Malankara Church rejected their help. So they decided to work among the non-Christians. There were some members of the Malankara Church who were strongly drawn to the Missionaries because of the new light that they received through the gospel preached by the Missionaries. The

Missionaries could not refuse them help. So a Church was built at Mallappally for those who preferred to use the Anglican prayer book in their worship, and to adopt rituals according to the Anglican rites. Other churches were subsequently built at Mavelikara and other places where similar congregations of the Anglican Communion were formed and the Anglican Diocese of Travancore and Cochin was formed in 1878. The headquarters of the Diocese was at Kottayam. The Missionaries started educational institutions and hospitals. Those who joined the church from non-Christians were mostly from the backward classes, as they saw in Jesus Christ the way of liberation from the social bondages of the caste-ridden society of Kerala. At that time the backward classes did not have the opportunity for education or even the freedom to walk on the public roads near the Temples. Untouchability was observed by the higher castes. Bonded labour was in force. In accepting Jesus Christ a new life was found by these people.

Abraham Malpan who was a Professor of Syriac in the Old Seminary in 1836, and others desired that changes must take place in the Church according to the light of the Gospel. They decided to work for the changes while remaining within the Malankara Church instead of joining the Anglican Communion. This is what led to the reformation under the leadership of Abraham Malpan and others.

CHAPTER IV

REFORMATION IN THE MALANKARA CHURCH

As mentioned in the previous chapter the study of the word of God led many in the Malankara Church to see the need for Reformation in the Church. They saw that the Christian Church as the Body of Christ must witness to Jesus Christ and present the light of the Gospel to others. The Church was sadly lacking in this and therefore there was need to go back to the study of the word of God, and for renewal of life based on faith in Jesus Christ. The Church had to realise that salvation is by the grace of God received by faith and not through mere observance of rites and ceremonies. By accepting Jesus Christ, a person becomes a new creation. He is accepted as a child of God and his life is renewed according to the life of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This must result in loving God with all one's heart and loving one's neighbours and serving them in the fellowship of the Church. The pre-reformation Church was satisfied with the observance of certain rites and ceremonies. It was believed that by praying to the Saints and by celebrating special festivals connected with them, benefits could be derived and evil could be avoided. This was very much like the festivals observed by the non-Christian community around them. They just formed another social group observing Christian ceremonies, but having no special message for the world.

The professors who were teaching in the Old Seminary, Kottayam, Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan from Maramon, and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan from Kottayam were very much concerned about the need for reformation in the Church. (Malpan means Professor). Their study of the word of God and association with the CMS Missionaries helped them to realise fully the meaning of the gospel and the freedom of the children of God. After the Metropolitan decided at Mavelikara to sever the connection with the Missionaries, 12 priests under the leadership of Abraham Malpan submitted a memorandum to the British Resident suggesting necessary changes. This is called the Trumpet Call of Reformation.

This did not have the desired effect. Therefore Abraham Malpan

decided to take steps for the reformation remaining within the Church and not leaving it. He started by celebrating the Holy Qurbana in Malayalam in his own Church at Maramon, making a few alterations in the liturgy where there were references to prayers for the departed and invocation of Saints and Virgin Mary. Any suggestion of transubstantiation regarding the elements of the Holy Communion were also removed. The main changes are given below:

All prayers for the dead and to the blessed Virgin Mary were omitted. According to the old liturgy, before receiving the communion the priest says, "Thee I am holding Who holdest the bounds. Thee I am grasping Who orderest the depth. Thee O God, I place in my mouth". This prayer was removed. In another prayer the priest says, "We offer Thee this unbloody sacrifice for Thy Whole Church all over the world". Here "prayer" was substituted for "unbloody sacrifice." At one place the priest lifting the veil addresses as follows: "Thou art the hard rock which was set against the tomb of our Redeemer". This prayer was replaced by one addressed to our Lord: Thou art the tried and precious stone which was set at naught by the builders". A rubric to bless the incense was removed. With regard to practice also certain changes were made. The Communion was to be administered in both kinds. It was not to be celebrated when there was no one to partake. The service was to be conducted in the vernacular and not henceforth in Syriac'. (Quoted from the Mar Thoma Church and its Doctrines by K.K.Kuruvilla).

In continuation of the changes made by Abraham Malpan, further changes on the same lines and principles were brought about in the Thaksa (Liturgy) and the Thaksa so revised is now in common use. The changes are:

1. Relating to incense, the old liturgy gives it great importance, giving the impression that it is something which effects reconciliation with God. The invocation 'Accept our incense out of Thy mercy, O Lord' was changed into "Accept our worship, O Lord" 'and' 'be reconciled to us through the incense offered by Thy priests' into "Attend unto the prayer of Thy priests".

2. The word 'sacrifice' wherever it expresses the idea that the

sacrifice of Christ is being repeated, is either dropped or explained. It was replaced by the expression 'the bloodless sacrifice of grace, peace and praise'.

3. a) With regard to the words of institution, the words of Christ as given in the Gospels alone are retained (Luke 22:19; Mathew 26:28).

b) The word 'mystery' is dropped from all places where it occurred, as it was feared that this word might encourage the worshipers in the belief that some magical change took place in the bread and wine during the Communion Service.

c) With regard to the Epiclesis (The prayer of invocation of the Holy Spirit) the following prayer was accepted: 'May the Holy Spirit sanctify this (bread, wine) to be the (body, blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ'. The word 'transform' and 'descend on' were specially omitted.

4. With regard to the Person of Christ all passages suspected of Monophysitism were dropped from the Liturgy. To take one example, the statement 'Emmanuel is one and the same after the indissoluble connection, He is not divided into two natures' was removed.

5. Regarding the priesthood, in all prayers which the priest offers in his own name for the people, the first person singular is deleted and either the first person plural or the second person plural signifying the congregation is substituted. This change was made in order to emphasize the priesthood of the laity (1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6). This change also affirms that Christ alone is our Mediator, and that the Church does not recognize the 'mediatorial' priesthood'.

But he insisted on making only the minimum of changes and on retaining the form of the liturgy so that continuity would be felt by the worshippers. This can be seen from the opening words in the liturgy. In the earlier liturgy the opening prayer was, "Mary who gave birth to Jesus and John who baptised him, pray for us". Abraham Malpan changed it as "O Lord Christ, born of Mary, and baptised by John have mercy upon us". The names familiar to the worshippers, Mary, John and Jesus Christ were retained, though the idea was changed as a prayer to Jesus Christ. The form of the service was very much the same.

Vestments, candles, incense etc. were retained as before. The oriental form of the service and liturgy was continued. Even though they learned many things from the teachings of the C.M.S. Missionaries, they did not want to adopt the western form of worship but insisted on continuing the oriental nature of the Church. Some other parishes besides Maramon also which favoured Reformation made the changes in the liturgy and conducted services in the mother tongue.

In the Eastern Church tradition, clear-cut formulation of doctrines was not common. Doctrines were expressed through the prayers and meditations in the liturgy. Therefore, there was no attempt to define clearly doctrinal statements. However, a new emphasis was given to preaching the word of God, and the exposition of the Bible. Formerly this aspect was sadly missing in the worship services. So people knew very little of the Christian message. Prayer groups were also organised in the parishes where the study of the word of God took prominent place.

Laymen also became keenly interested, and some of them became able exponents of the Bible and convincing preachers. As new light was received through Bible study, people began to be convicted of sin. They repented of their sins and began to make restitution for past wrong conduct. The work of the Holy Spirit became evident in the changed lives of many. There was cleansing of evil ways, and renewal in individuals and in the community.

Most prominent elements in the Reformation were:

1. Return to the gospel message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ;
2. Cleansing of wrong ways of life, and
3. Taking up responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to others;
4. All these were centred in the study of the word of God.

Thus the Reformation movement was started. It was a return to the purity of the life and practice of the early Church.

The emphasis on preaching the word of God led to revival meetings which were led both by the clergy and laymen. The

domination of the clergy as custodians of grace became a thing of the past. More and more groups were formed for Bible study; and conventions for preaching and hearing the word of God became common.

The spiritual joy and power of the early Church was realised again. There was much to be cleansed in the life of the Church. People used to look upon religious life as a means of obtaining favours from God, instead of obeying the will of God. Prayers were offered to Saints to protect them from evil. The image of one such Saint which was kept in the Maramon Church was considered to be of special power. So people came in large numbers with offerings both in money and kind to please him. This was a means of large income for the clergy and the Church. Abraham Malpan who came to realise the futility of such practices, threw the image of the Saint (Muthappan) into a well even though it meant great financial loss.

The practice of ordaining young boys was to be stopped. It was insisted that only persons with adequate theological training and commitment be ordained as clergy. The celibacy of priesthood which was imposed during the period of the Roman Catholic domination was given up. The challenge to holy living was to all members of the Church, clergy and laity. Evils of alcoholism and bribery were rejected. Observance of Sunday as a day for worship and Christian fellowship was very much emphasised. Abraham Malpan's biography gives instances of people who were chastised for breaking strict Sunday observance. Those who went to catch fish on a Sunday after-noon were severely reprimanded. So strict was the insistence on keeping Sunday as a holy day, set apart for worship, fellowship, and religious functions.

The realisation of the responsibility of the Christian Church for taking the Gospel to others was the main aspect of the renewal in the life of the Church. The Gospel was formerly regarded as the private possession of the Christians. The clarion call to make disciples of all nations, teaching and baptising them and accepting them as members of the Church was heeded. This led to the formation of many evangelistic organisations in the Church. The caste system which had kept the people in different social levels and kept the low castes almost

on the level of animals, was seen to be completely against the spirit of the gospel. It was noted that Jesus Christ proclaimed liberation for people from all kinds of bondage, social, economic and cultural, as well as political. All are to be united in one family in the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ initiated the Kingdom of God by his coming; and the Church is to work for its extension throughout the world.

Metropolitan Chepat Mar Dionysius was not prepared to accept such changes. So he refused to ordain the deacons who had undergone training with Abraham Malpan. He also excommunicated Abraham Malpan. So Abraham Malpan went to his mother-parish at Maramon. He stood strong in faith and convictions when faced with serious challenges and great difficulties. However the whole parish stood with him. Others who favoured the reforms went to hear his preaching and were strengthened by his exhortations. Some other parishes also decided to adopt the programme of reformation.

At this time of difficulties and great financial strain, the Missionaries offered Abraham Malpan the post of a teacher in their school on a very good salary. He rejected the offer courteously, because he wanted to go forward with the reformation already started. Some of the deacons whom he taught followed him faithfully. One of his strongest co-workers was Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan, who was teaching with him in the Seminary. The movement was led by Abraham Malpan from his parish at Maramon.

Abraham Malpan realised that for the continuity of the Church in the Episcopal tradition there was need for a Bishop favouring reformation. He decided to send his nephew Deacon Mathew who was then studying in Madras, all the way to Mardin in Syria where the Patriarch of Antioch resided. The journey to Mardin in those days was full of perils. He undertook the journey trusting in God. He travelled with a group of soldiers up to Bombay; then he took a ship. After landing he had to travel through the desert. He fell seriously ill. God sent two kind friends to help him. Finally he reached Mardin. He was received kindly by the Patriarch, who appreciated his intelligence, dedication and hard work. He ordained him as priest and consecrated him as Metropolitan, with the name Mathews Mar Athanasius. After working

in Syria for one year, he returned to India, reaching Cochin in 1843. Abraham Malpan wished that he should celebrate Holy Communion only according to the revised liturgy. But with a view to get the goodwill of the majority of the members of the Church he celebrated Holy Communion at Cochin using the old liturgy before reaching Maramon. This was a matter of disappointment to Abraham Malpan.

The new Metropolitan went to Trivandrum and tried to obtain the Royal proclamation declaring him as the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church. Chepat Mar Dionysius opposed this. Mathews Mar Athanasius got the royal proclamation in 1852 declaring him as the Metropolitan of the Malankara Church. Abraham Malpan was disappointed at the slow progress of reformation, and by Mar Athanasius' seeking power and authority, rather than trusting only God in the cause of reformation. Abraham Malpan died at the early age of 49 years, in 1845.

After Mathews Mar Athanasius was proclaimed by the Government as Malankara Metropolitan, he was more active in the cause of reformation. Then Chepat Mar Dionysius sent Rev. Joseph Pulicot to Mardin to get him consecrated by the Patriarch. He returned to Malabar with the name Joseph Mar Dionysius to work against Mathews Mar Athanasius. The latter consecrated his cousin Abraham Malpan's son, as Thomas Mar Athanasius in 1868. The reformed party had possession of the Old Seminary as Mathews Mar Athanasius had been declared as the Malankara Metropolitan. The Patriarch of Antioch himself came to Kerala in 1875. A prolonged litigation followed, as to who was the rightful Malankara Metropolitan. Mathews Mar Athanasius died in 1877 and Thomas Mar Athanasius had to carry the burden of conducting the court cases, for the possession of the Old Seminary and Church property. The case was decided in the royal court of appeal in Trivavandrum, in 1889. Two judges in the high court decreed that Joseph Mar Dionysius was the rightful Metropolitan of the Malankara Church as he expressed allegiance to the Patriarch of Antioch. One Christian Judge gave the verdict in favour of Thomas Mar Athanasius because of his conviction that the Malankara Church has been an independent Church from the beginning. The majority view prevailed and Thomas Mar Athanasius had to leave the Old Seminary and the properties there, because he upheld the autonomy of the Church. It was

suggested that Thomas Mar Athanasius would be recognised as Malankara Metropolitan, if he agreed that future consecrations of Bishops should be by the Patriarch of Antioch. He did not agree to this proposal as it was against the autonomy of the Church.

Again court cases continued for the possession of individual churches. The reform party got only Maramon and Kozhencherry churches by court decision, and the Kottarakara church without contest. Five churches were to be used by the two parties on alternate Sundays. They put up small sheds in other places to hold worship services.

Even though the reform party lost their hereditary and rightful possession it became the occasion for the people to turn to God and to go forward in faith, trusting in the power of God. This led to spiritual revival and great joy in spite of difficulties. It was this spiritual fervour which sustained the people. The Maramon Convention was started about this time in the year 1895. The losses were forgotten in the zeal of spiritual fulfillment. The concern for the spread of the gospel gave momentum to the reformation movement. The successive Metropolitans of the Church also continued in the same spirit, with the help of dedicated clergy whose leadership and sacrificial lives were deeply appreciated by the people in the Church.

There are some who view the reformation in the light of the spirit of modernisation (renaissance), which was spreading through many countries at that time. The scientific outlook which questions things taken for granted so far, and which tests everything in the crucible of reason, was challenging old beliefs and practices, both in religion and in society. Monarchies and feudal systems were being thrown down and people's Government were being established. The spirit of freedom and democracy was becoming dominant, not only in the political realm, but also in the social and religious fields. These changes were being reflected in the life of the Church also. Dr. M.M. Thomas in his analysis of the reformation in the Mar Thoma Church points out parallels of similar changes in the Hindu society about this period of time. The development of the Nair Service Society and the work of Narayana Guru Swami led to great changes and progress in the life of

different communities in Kerala. We have to see the hand of God working in history in every change for the better, as declared by the prophets of Israel, and announced by Jesus Christ in his message of the Kingdom of God. All changes for social justice and human liberation should be understood as the work of the spirit of God. Without this understanding, social change can lead to tyranny, as it happened following the revolutions in Russia and China where those who struggled against tyranny themselves became tyrants and exploiters of others. The message of the Kingdom of God calls for repentance as all stand under the judgement of the love of God. The cross is the true way of change. This is why we have to be guided always by the message of the Gospel which is God's way for human salvation.

CHAPTER V

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BISHOPS OF THE PRESENT CENTURY

Metropolitan Mathews Mar Athanasius and Thomas Mar Athanasius gave sterling leadership to the Church in times of great stress and strain during the early days of the Reformation. This has been dealt with in the previous chapters. Their successors also have given very valuable leadership and significant contributions in the development of the Church.

Titus I Mar Thoma

When Thomas Mar Athanasius, the second Metropolitan after the Reformation, died suddenly without consecrating a successor, the choice of a successor, in those days when the church was passing through great hardships, was really difficult. In the circumstance, another son of Abraham Malpan by name Titus agreed to accept the heavy responsibility. He was consecrated in 1893 by the Metropolitan of the Independent Church of Thozhiyoor. He was a man of great spiritual fervour and a powerful preacher. The Church continued to grow under his leadership. In the place of the Old Seminary which was lost to the Mar Thoma Church, a new site was bought for the Seminary in Kottayam itself and a school was started in a temporary shed in the premises. This school has since developed as the M.T Seminary High School, Kottayam. Another school was started in Tiruvalla which since grew to the Syrian Christian Seminary High School, Tiruvalla. The Sunday School Samajam was started in 1905 for the Christian education of the children in the Parishes. The Evangelistic work in Central Travancore was started in 1890. As a result of it 85 persons accepted Christianity and took Baptism at Othara in 1892. The work spread to other areas also viz. North Travancore and the sea coast area under a wave of spiritual revival. The challenge to take up Evangelistic work in a Mission field outside Kerala was accepted and work was started in North Kanara in 1910.

Titus I Mar Thoma escaped death narrowly on two occasions.

The first instance was when the Church building collapsed when he was resting in the Maramon Church. The other was when the roof of the room in which he was sleeping was set on fire by some miscreants. The Metropolitan could coolly face adversities since he had deep faith in God. He also got the support of faithful and dedicated friends among the clergy and laity. One of the most important of them was Vicar General Ipe Thoma Cathanar, an outstanding personality with a record of distinguished service to the Church and the State. The Constitutions of the Mar Thoma Church was drawn up on democratic principles, retaining the Episcopal tradition during his regime. The official publication of the Church called Malankara Sabha Tharaka (Star of the Malankara Church) began to be published under the editorship of Mr. K.N Daniel who was an able exponent of reformation principles. Titus I was a Sainly Bishop noted for his deep devotion, intimate fellowship with God and love towards all people. He passed away in 1910.

Titus II Mar Thoma

He was the nephew of Titus I and was consecrated by him in 1899, assisted by Metropolitan Mar Koorilos of Thozhiyoore. He worked with Titus I as his Suffragan Metropolitan, and became Metropolitan in 1910. He worked vigorously for the building up of the Church. In those days when it was difficult to travel from place to place he visited Churches in out-of-the way places and organised the Parishes on constitutional lines. He took measures to ensure that the Parish officials maintained the Parish accounts up-to-date; and he fostered various programmes of the Parishes. The Mar Thoma Sevika Sangam was organised in 1919 and the Voluntary Evangelists Association in 1925. The Mar Thoma Theological Seminary for the training of the Clergy was established at Kottayam in 1926. Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma was consecrated as Suffragan Metropolitan in 1917 and the two Bishops worked together tirelessly for the growth of the Church. Titus II Mar Thoma passed away in 1943 after being Metropolitan for 33 years.

Abraham Mar Thoma

Abraham Mar Thoma was known all over India for his burning passion for Evangelism, for his zeal for spreading the gospel through the

length and breadth of India. He was the first Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church with a University Degree. He received Theological training in Canada. It was during his time that the Mar Thoma Church became well known in the Western world.

He was consecrated Bishop in the year 1917 and he worked untiringly as Suffragan Metropolitan for the spiritual strengthening of the Church and for its witness. He was installed Metropolitan in 1943 when Titus II passed away.

He was born in an illustrious Orthodox family but his father passed away when he was very young and he was brought up in his mother's house at Eraviperoor, a home which cherished the blessings of the reformation. Thus from his early days he was inspired with Evangelistic zeal. Even as a student in High school at Kottayam and in the Madras Christian College, he was a spiritual leader among his fellow-students.

He strongly believed that evangelism was the responsibility of every member of the Church and not of the clergy alone. He emphasised that every man and woman was called to be a witness to Jesus Christ, irrespective of his secular occupation. It was this conviction that led him to organise groups of men and to give them specialised training in personal evangelism. Thus the Voluntary Evangelists Association was established as a voluntary lay movement of the Church. The women of the Church also were encouraged to take their part in fulfilling the mission of the Church. He encouraged the formation of the Mar Thoma Suvisesha Sevika Sangham, which is the women's auxiliary of the Evangelistic work in the Church.

One of his greatest aims was to find proper persons for both the ordained ministry of the Church and for lay activities. It was through his influence that many educated persons came to join the ministry of the Church, when they could have got lucrative positions elsewhere. After finding out suitable young persons he arranged to send them for appropriate higher education and theological studies. He organised special summer schools for lay people engaged in secular jobs, for Bible study and training. The Vanithamandiram for training women

workers also was developed with his active encouragement. The call that he gave to young men and women to go and live in the villages of India in different language areas, resulted in the establishment of Ashrams in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and up to the borders of Tibet. His help was sought by Christian friends all over India to lead evangelistic conventions. Such assignments took him from Cape Kanyakumari in the South, to Kashmir in the North. He was a friend of every missionary in India and all of them looked up to him for inspiration and guidance. The Tiruppathur Ashram and the Kodaikanal Ashram established by members of other Churches regarded him as their friend, guide and philosopher.

He was President of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association and the National Missionary Society. Even though he was suffering from acute diabetes for many years, he went on working without a pause with the motto "it is far better to burn out than to rust out". The Abraham Mar Thoma Bible Institute established for the training of Voluntary evangelists in the Church was named after him. Though he was Metropolitan only for four years, his long ministry as a Bishop strengthened the Church in all its missionary enterprises. He was called to eternal rest in 1947.

Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan

The Church saw remarkable growth during the long Episcopal administration of Metropolitan Titus II and Abraham Mar Thoma. Many new church buildings came up in different places and parishes became well organised. The whole region in Kerala was divided into administrative divisions under the charge of Divisional Secretaries. The need for consecrating more Bishops was keenly felt and Rev. C.M. John and Rev. C.T. Mathew were selected. They were consecrated Bishops of the Church in 1937 with the names Juhanon Mar Timotheos and Mathews Mar Athanasius. This was the first time in the Mar Thoma Church when two Bishops were consecrated together. They were given charge of two Dioceses. On the expiry of Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan in 1947, Juhanon Mar Timotheos was installed as Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, with the title Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

Juhanon Mar Thoma had his theological education in the United Theological College, Bangalore, and in the Union Theological Seminary, New York. He taught in the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary at Kottayam before he was consecrated as Bishop. He was reputed for his deep concern for social justice derived from the study of the message of the prophets and of the message of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. During the days of revival in the Church, emphasis was primarily on individual relationship to God and personal holiness. With the new understanding of the message of the kingdom of God, there came an awareness of the wider implications of the Gospel, and a deep social consciousness. The gospel of liberation proclaimed in the Nazareth manifesto made its impact on the life of the Church.

The national struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi for freedom from foreign rule was at its peak. Juhanon Mar Thoma made no secret of his identification with the national aspirations and he encouraged those who took part in the political and social struggles. His influence was widely recognised and acclaimed, even though many in the older generation thought that Christians should side with the ruling party.

While being deeply committed to the principle of reformation, his friendship and affection crossed all denominational barriers. Ecumenism was a reality with him and he appreciated the good points in other Churches and also in other religions. Therefore he was looked up to with respect and admiration by Christians belonging to other denominations and also by non-Christians. His advice was sought in social and political concerns as well as in spiritual matters. He actively participated in the ecumenical movement from its very inception in the first Assembly of World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, in 1948. In the second Assembly at Evanston, in 1954, he was elected as one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches and was in the presidium when the Third Assembly met at New Delhi in 1961. Thus he rose to great eminence in ecclesiastical and national spheres. It was during his regime that full communion relationship was established with the C. S. I. and C. N. I.

He had strong convictions and he was fearless. When the national emergency was clamped on the country by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Metropolitan saw that the country was in danger of losing its hard-won freedom. He was the only Church leader in India who took courage to write a personal letter to the Prime Minister asking that the emergency should be lifted in the interest of democracy. Thus he faced the risk of being placed under arrest. Before long, emergency was lifted. We are not sure how much the above letter weighed with the authorities in deciding the issue.

He made his mark as an educationist also. Four institutions of higher education in the Mar Thoma Church (The Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla, St. Thomas College, Kozhencherry, Christian College, Chengannur and Titus II Teacher's College, Tiruvalla) were started under his leadership. They have grown in a marvellous way and reached postgraduate level. Even when facing tremendous strain to raise funds for development of the institutions, he adhered to the principle that no money should be collected as donation or capitation fee as basis for appointing teachers or giving admission to students. Technical institutions also were started to give job oriented training to young people to help them to find employment.

His concern for the poor and the needy in the society found expression in action. He started the project to provide land for the landless and houses for the houseless, even before Vinoba Bhave undertook it on a national scale. He appealed to the people and many came forward in response to the call. When a new house was constructed for him and also to provide accommodation for guests, he wanted that before staying in the new house, a house should be built and donated to a poor man preferably to a non-Christian. This was done and the key of the house was handed to a Hindu friend simultaneously with the dedication of the new bungalow for the Metropolitan. The project of the Church for providing at least 100 houses per year to the poor irrespective of religion and caste was started on that occasion. It has been achieving more than the target, in the past 18 years. The Government of Kerala followed this example and started a scheme to build one lakh houses, with Government resources. Thus Juhanon Mar Thoma was a pioneer in this social programme. Individual parishes and

members of the Church also have followed this good example and many thousands of houses have been constructed for the poor. Considering the housing situation of Kerala this is just a beginning and there are many more lakhs of people in need of houses.

The Metropolitan appealed also for funds to help people in distress owing to fire accidents, natural calamities like floods, road accidents illness etc. This fund was called Relief fund. It is to be raised by practicing abstinence by denying at least one meal a week so as to identify with the sufferings of others. Many responded to this appeal following his personal example, and have contributed to the fund which have given help to thousands in their need. Another appeal was to contribute money to help in the marriage needs of poor girls. This contribution is usually given by people on the occasion of the marriage of their sons and daughters as a thank offering to God for providing for their own needs. He also appealed to people to curtail their personal expenses as much as possible and to live in a simple style, and to contribute liberally for the help of the needy. He himself lived a very simple life, almost ascetic in nature, and was an example of high thinking and simple living. Truly it can be said that he raised the prophetic voice in our generation.

He provided the Church with an emblem having the motto: "Lighted to Lighten". This has been appreciated by many as showing both our privilege as lighted and our responsibility to lighten.

As the Church grew, many service institutions medical and other projects developed. This caused anxiety in the minds of some people that institutionalism was developing as a danger to the evangelical zeal of personal faith in Jesus Christ emphasised in the reformation. The hierarchy of the Church was alleged to have deviated from the purity of the spirit of the reformation. Under the leadership of an influential lay leader, Mr.K.N.Daniel, Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was accused of leading the Church in the wrong direction; and this was the saddest crisis in his life. Sad to say that the matter was taken to the law courts. When the lower courts decided in favour of the Metropolitan it was taken up to the Supreme Court, and ultimately the Supreme Court gave the verdict clearly stating that the Metropolitan had not deviated

from the path of reformation and the true faith of the Church. All along, the Metropolitan faced the situation with courage and trust in God, and kept loving relationship with those who opposed him, and showed great personal affection and concern for them.

Formation of the St. Thomas Evangelical Church

One unfortunate consequence of the prolonged litigation was that a group who sided with a views of Mr. K.N. Daniel left the church and formed themselves as St. Thomas Evangelical Church. Some members of the clergy also joined them. One of the leaders among them was Rev. John Varghese who was in charge of our Ashram at Palghat. He later became a Bishop of that church. There have since been further division within the new church. Some of the priests and layman have come back to the Mar Thoma Church having become disillusioned with the claims made by the new Church.

The leadership of Juhanon Mar Thoma in combining the two emphases of Evangelism and Ecumenism and keeping them in balance has been a great blessing to the church in upholding its purity along with its Catholicity and Ecumenical nature.

A Centre has been established in Trivandrum, in his name for study and a research on the social implications of the Gospel and its relevance in national life.

Mathews Mar Athanasius Episcopa

As mentioned above, he was consecrated in 1937 with Mar Timotheous (later Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan). He was noted for his deep personal dedication to Jesus Christ and his zeal for the spread of the Gospel, continuing in the Evangelical tradition of the Mar Thoma Church. He was full of energy and sacrificial spirit. At the age of 21 he left home to go to the North Travancore which was a very undeveloped area. It had been selected as a mission field of the Evangelistic Association. Soon he started a School at Keezhillam as means of reaching and helping the people in that area, with a band of fellow workers, having only trust in God as their resource. They worked hard

and opened the way for education for hundreds of children in poor families. In those days education was not free. Many of them could not find the money for paying the school fees. By giving concessions in fees to such students they were encouraged to study and the money for the concessions was taken from the meagre salaries of the teachers who gladly accepted it as their way of serving the Lord. Gradually education began to spread in those areas and people began to see the truth of the gospel in the lives of their teachers. Many from that area like Very Rev. A.A. Pylee, who was one of the Vicars General of the Church bears testimony to this fact. The school at Keezhillam developed to be a High School with a well-managed boarding home.

Thereafter Rev. C.T. Mathew (Mar Athanasius) moved to Perumbavoor seeing the need of that area. He was supported by a small group of friends including Mr. A. Cherian who later became a judge. A High School was started there with no resources, but trust in God. By voluntary contributions a beautiful piece of land was purchased in due course, and a High School was developed in which the teachers worked on a fellowship basis, on the pattern of the Union Christian College, Alwaye. A group of dedicated teachers under the leadership of Rev. C. T. Mathew, the Headmaster, became the nucleus of an Ashram. The school was known as the Ashram High School. The teachers shared everything in common and lived a life of fellowship as the first century Christians, devoting all their time to the welfare of the students. The boarding home and the School became highly reputed all over the State. It was from there that Rev. C.T. Mathew was called to be a Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church. His deep devotion and sacrificial life and the spirit of fellowship were the special characteristics of his service as Bishop.

The spirit of adventure and trust in God made him a master builder of the Church. Wherever he saw the need, he launched out into action even when no resources were in sight. Undeveloped areas in Malabar became his concern as the Diocesan Bishop. He went to unreached areas and helped small congregations of people who had gone there from Central Travancore, seeking opportunity to make a living. They were helped to settle down and develop as small communities in a spirit of co-operation. Nilambur and Chungathara

and other places up to Guadalloor were all reached by him and the small congregations were encouraged and supported in various ways. Later when he was in charge of the Diocese in Central Travancore, he concentrated his efforts in developing the congregations among the new settlers in Chittar, Seethathode, Angamoozhy and other places which were very difficult to reach in those days. He opened dispensaries and clinics and schools while also caring for their spiritual needs. The Olivet Aramana at Chengannur, the Retreat Centre at Maramon and the Kalalayam at Ayroor came into being as a result of his enterprising spirit. It was owing to his far-sight that the Charal Mount which has since become a favourite camp sight was bought and made available for the Church.

When the Evangelistic work of the Church expanded he was the first Missionary Bishop of the Church, travelling all over India, visiting the scattered congregations and encouraging the Ashrams. He was present in many international Evangelistic conferences as in Tokyo, and other places. He was the first Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church to visit our congregations in Malayasia and Singapore. Even though suffering from diabetes for many years, nothing could stop him from all-out endeavour in the cause of the spread of the gospel. He followed closely in the line of Abraham Mar Thoma and surpassed him in developmental activities of the Church. After a short period of illness, he was called to his heavenly reward in 1973 at the age of 73.

Consecration of Three New Bishops in 1953

By the year 1940 the members of the Mar Thoma Church had spread into most of the cities in India and to Malaysia and Singapore, in search of work. In organising congregations in Malaysia, Rev. T. N. Koshy played a very significant role. By 1950 many of our people had taken up employment in the Arabian Gulf countries also. Pastoral care had to be extended to these far-flung regions. It became necessary for more Bishops to be consecrated. The Sabha Mandalam decided that three more Bishops should be consecrated. Rev. M. G. Chandy, Rev. P. Thomas and Rev. Philip Oommen were chosen. They were consecrated in 1953, with the names, Alexander Mar Theophilus, Thomas Mar Athanasius and Philipose Mar Chrysostom. Now there

were five Bishops in the Church with Juhanon Mar Thoma as the Metropolitan. The Bishops were given charge of different Dioceses. These charges were changed in about five to seven years. Four Dioceses were in Kerala and the area outside Kerala constituted the other Diocese. The Bishop in charge of the Diocese outside Kerala was then known as Missionary Bishop as he had also the responsibility to look after all the Missionary work of the Church in the vast area. Mathews Mar Athanasius was the Missionary Bishop. Alexander Mar Theophilus was in charge of the Central Diocese except the parishes in Thiruvalla and Niranam centres which were under the charge of the Metropolitan. Thomas Mar Athanasius Episcopa was in charge of the Diocese in Kerala, south of Adoor. Philipose Mar Chrysostom was in charge of the Northern Diocese.

Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan

He was born in 1914 in the Panampunna family at Kottayam. He was a deep Scholar and continued his reading and studies to the end of his days. He was known for his deep devotion and great ability to build up the Church. He had his earlier education in the C. M. S. College, Kottayam, and later in Trivandrum where he took post graduate degree from the Arts College, in History.

He had his Theological training in the Bishop's College, Calcutta and in Oxford, England. He taught in the Vaidika Seminary and the M. T. High School, Kottayam. He was ordained as a Deacon of the Church in 1944 and as Kasseessa in 1946 and continued his teaching in the Theological Seminary.

On his consecration as Bishop in 1953 with the other two Bishops, he was first in charge of the Diocese in Kerala, South of Adoor, called the Southern Diocese at that time. After six years in this capacity, he functioned as Missionary Bishop from 1959 to 1963. Since then he has been in charge of the Northern Diocese with head quarters first at Kottayam, and later at Manganam.

He attended the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948, and also the Assembly in New Delhi in 1961.

He was a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches since 1961. Thus he made significant contributions to the cause of ecumenism. He has attended many other international conferences of the Churches. He was a delegate to the Melbourne Conference, where he made a distinct contribution as one of the leaders of Bible study. He also attended the sessions of the second Vatican Council on special invitation.

He was designated as Suffragan Metropolitan in May 1978 together with Philipose Mar Chrysostom.

He has been President of various organisations of the Church, such as the Evangelistic Association, Sunday School Samajam, Sevika Sanghom and Yuvajana Sakhyam on different occasions. He guided the evangelistic activities of the whole Church for many years.

He was also a great builder. He opened up many centres for the development of the Church, raising funds by personal appeals. Thus were established the Diocesan Headquarters at Adoor, Manganam and Kunnamkulam. The Church centre at Chungathara, the Convention Speakers suites in the Retreat Centre at Maramon, and the St. Augustine Study Centre at Manganam were all constructed with funds raised by his personal efforts. He raised funds for the St. Augustine Study Centre with the view that the Clergy and Laity should take time off to stay at the centre and read the latest books on theology and allied subjects. By his personal efforts he collected a library of over 6000 valuable books.

The College for women at Perumbavoor was established under his inspiring leadership and patronage.

He gave leadership to the parishes in the Ranny area to establish a centre for the Church. He was Chairman of different Colleges of the Church and of the Vaidika Seminary for many years and gave valuable contributions to their development. The last months of his life were spent in organising and developing the parishes in North America. His sudden death on 27th November 1984 dealt a severe shock to the whole Church and to the ecumenical world. The loss is irreparable.

He was awarded a Doctorate by the Serampore University,

considering his meritorious services to the Church in India, and in the ecumenical cause.

At the time of his consecration as Bishop a controversy was started by Mr. K. N. Daniel who questioned his loyalty to reformation principles. After closely observing his life and work for some years. Mr. Daniel himself admitted that his fears were unjustified and he had full confidence in Mar Athanasius's personal commitment to Jesus Christ, his evangelical zeal and loyalty to the Church.

Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan

He was born in 1913 as the son of Rev. M. C George, Kuriannor, a devout Minister of the Church, who passed away in 1923. After his graduation and teacher's training, he taught in the C.M.S. High School, Kottayam for 12 years. He resigned his teaching job and studied Theology in the United Theological college, Bangalore. There after he secured S. T. M. Degree from the union Theological Seminary, New York, and Ph. D. on the Bhagavad Gita from the Kennedy School of Mission of the Hartford Seminary foundation.

He had the opportunity to travel extensively in the European countries. After returning from the States, he was in charge of the Manganam parish for a year, and thereafter he worked as the first Principal of Mar Thoma College Tiruvalla. In 1953 he was consecrated as Bishop with the name Alexander Mar Theophilus together with Thomas Mar Athanasius and Philipose Mar Chrysostom.

He has attended the Assemblies of World Council of Churches representing the Mar Thoma Church at Evanston in 1954, Nairobi in 1975 and Vancouver in 1983. He worked as Missionary Bishop for four years from 1955, and for another term of four years from 1969, which involved extensive travel in India and abroad.

He was President of the Bible Society of India for nearly 10 years. He was also one of the Vice-Presidents of the United Bible Societies. He has also attended the Central Committee of the W.C.C. on different occasions. He attended the Lambeth Conference in 1980, and the Anglican Consultative Council held in Nigeria in 1984.

He was designated Suffragan Metropolitan in the year 1973, and on the demise of Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan in 1976, he was installed as the Metropolitan with the name Alexander Mar Thoma. Together with the responsibility as Metropolitan, he has also the charge of the Niranam-Maramon Diocese with 82 Parishes.

He spends several weeks in the year with the youth giving leadership in camps and conferences and challenging them to personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

He takes special interest in the developmental activities and the social concerns of the Church, its educational institutions, its missionary and evangelistic outreach, its witness, and its ecumenical concerns.

Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan

He inherited the missionary zeal of his father, Vicar General K.E.Oommen. After graduating from U.C.College, Alwaye, he took up work in the Ashram at Ankola along with Rev.P.J.Thomas. Then he received Theological education at U.T.C. Bangalore, and St. Augustine's College, Canterbury. He became an ordained minister of the Church in 1944. He was consecrated as Bishop with Alexander Mar Theophilus and Thomas Mar Athanasius in 1953.

He was in charge of the Dioceses in Kerala, and also was Missionary Bishop for two terms. He was President of the National Christian Council of India and has attended the Assembly of World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954, and at Upsala in 1968. He has been President of the Evangelistic Association and other organisations of the Church and the Governing Councils of different Colleges. He has attended the second Vatican Council and has thus made very valuable contributions to the ecumenical cause. He has deep concern for the uplift of the backward communities. Through a registered organisation named STARD (South Travancore Agency For Rural Development) he has helped the economically backward communities of South Travancore to improve their lot and achieve self-reliance.

Joseph Mar Irenaeus

In 1975 two more Bishops were consecrated. They were Joseph Mar Irenaeus and Easow Mar Timotheos. Joseph Mar Irenaeus belongs to the Palakunnathu family in Maramon from which have come Abraham Malpan the reformer and the first four Bishops of the Church after the reformation. He had his theological training in the United Theological College, Bangalore and Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia of U.S.A. He has also studied in Theological institutions in Canterbury and Oxford. At present he is the President of the National Council of Churches in India and member of Executive Committees of different development agencies like CASA and ECLOF. He is in charge of the Trivandrum Quilon Diocese. He has been awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Virginia Seminary, where he has studied.

Easow Mar Timotheos

His zeal for mission made him dedicate his life for missionary work. He worked as a member of the Christa Panthi Ashram, Sihora for 21 years, commencing at the age of 20. He had his Theological education at the Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, and later at St. Augustine College, Canterbury, U. K. His life of prayer and deep spiritual experience are his special characteristics. He is deeply interested in rural development activities. He has been in Japan on two occasions to obtain training in this subject. He was consecrated Bishop along with Joseph Mar Irenaeus in February 1975. He was given charge of the Kunnamkulam-Malabar Diocese where he worked strenuously for the uplift of the parishes in those undeveloped areas of Malabar. He has been Chairman of the Governing Board of the Mar Thoma College Chungathara, which was started out of his personal interest in the development of that region. He has been Chairman of the Committee directing the Wandoor Project for the integrated development of five Panchayats in that area.

Being also in charge of the parishes in the Arabian Gulf area, he raised funds from there for the development of Malabar area. On the

rearrangement of the Dioceses, after the demise of Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan he took charge of the Adoor-Mavelikara Diocese. He helped many to find new life in Jesus Christ. He was very much in demand as a convention speaker and for leading retreats and conferences. His sudden demise at Port Blair, Andamans on 11th April, 1988 is a great loss to the church.

Zacharias Mar Theophilus

After graduation, he took teacher's training and worked as a teacher in the Ashram High School, Perumbavoor, till he went for Theological training at the Theological College, Jabalpur. After teaching for some more years at Perumbavoor, he went for higher Theological training at Princeton and took Doctorate from there. He has worked as Vicar of parishes in Bombay and Kozhencherry. He was consecrated as Bishop on May 1, 1980. He was given charge of the Adoor-Mavelikara Diocese till 1984. As the Bishop in charge of the Diocese, he organised a project at Pathanapuram for helping disabled persons. He also organised Projects to help the poor people along the sea coast in Thrikunnapuzha area. He helped in setting up a working women's hostel at Haripad. Mar Theophilus is in charge of the newly formed Diocese of North America and U.K. He is a member of the Central Committee and of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches.

CONSECRATION OF NEW BISHOPS AND FORMATION OF NEW DIOCESES.

The sudden demise of Thomas Mar Athanasius in 1984 and Easow Mar Timotheos in 1988 was a great loss to the Mar Thoma Church. The need to consecrate more Bishops was felt by the Prathiniithi Mandalam as administration of all the Dioceses in India and abroad fell on the shoulders of four Bishops. As the number of parishes in each Diocese was on the increase, there was the pressing need to bifurcate some of the existing Dioceses and to form new ones in order to ensure more viability and better pastoral care. In response to these requirements 3 Bishops were consecrated on December 9, 1989. Four

years later, consecration of three more Bishops took place on 2nd October 1993. Now we have 11 Dioceses. They are : Niranam - Maramon -, Ranni - Nilackal, Kottayam - Kochi, Chengannoor - Thumpamon, Adoor - Mavelikara, Trivandrum - Quilon, Bombay - Delhi, Madras - Culcutta, Kunnamkulam - Malabar, North America, and Europe, and Malaysia, Singapore & Australia.

Geevarghese Mar Athanasius

After graduation from Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla he went for Theological training at the Theological College, Jabalpur. He was ordained as 'Kasseesa' in 1969 and subsequently served as Vicar of many parishes including Bombay, Kottayam and Madras. From 1975 - '76 he was in Toronto, Canada, for higher theological training. On December 9, 1989 he was consecrated as Bishop and was given charge of Bombay - Delhi Diocese. At present he is in charge of Kottayam - Kochi Diocese.

Mar Athanasius served as Vice President of the Governing Board of Leonard Theological college and as President of the National Missionary Society. He took a keen interest in completing the Diocesan headquarters at Delhi.

Geevarghese Mar Theodosius

Mar Theodosius studied in Baselius college, Kottayam and Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla. After taking a degree in Science he joined Leonard Theological College and took the B.D Degree in 1972. His ordination as 'Kasseesa' was in the year 1973. In 1980 he took a Masters Degree in Comparative Religions from Viswa Bharathi University and Doctorate from McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada in 1986. He was consecrated as Episcopa on 9th December 1989, with Mar Athanasius and Mar Coorilos.

From 1973 onwards he was in charge of several parishes - Bombay, Calcutta, Toronto and Nanthancode and served as Director of Thomas Mar Athanasius Orientation Centre, Manganam. On consecration as Episcopa he was given charge of Kunnamkulam -

Madras Diocese. Now he is in charge of the newly formed Kunnamkulam- Malabar Diocese.

Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius is a good scholar and his books on Reform movements in Kerala, and their impact on the socio-economic and religious life of the people have made a mark in academic circles.

Euyakim Mar Coorilos

After completing his degree and post graduate studies from Sacred Heart College, Thevara and Christ College, Iringalakuda, he joined the Mar Thoma Seminary for Theological education. He became a Deacon in 1978 and subsequently served as parish priest at Jalahali, Palarivattom, Colaba and Staten Island, and other parishes. On December 9th 1989 he was consecrated as Episcopa and at present he is in charge of Adoor - Mavelikara Diocese.

Mar Coorilos is a man of prayers. As President of the Yuvajana Sakhyam he leads many young people to Jesus Christ.

Joseph Mar Barnabas

Mar Barnabas took his degree from CMS College, Kottayam and later studied in Bishop's college, Calcutta. He was ordained in 1976 and served in different parishes in India such as Anakulam, Bombay, Chempur, Thuruthicad and North Madras. He was also in charge of Edmonton parish in Canada. He was consecrated as Bishop on 2nd October 1993 along with Mar Timotheos and Mar Philoxenos. He is in charge of the newly formed Chengannoor - Thumpamon Diocese.

Thomas Mar Timotheos

Mar Timotheos had his college education in Gujarat from where he took his post graduate degree. He joined Union Theological College, Bangalore for his theological studies. He worked as a lecturer for a short period in Gujarat. He was ordained in 1983 and served as a parish priest in various places - Surat, Barooch, Vapi and Gudalur. He was consecrated as Bishop on 2nd October 1993. He is in charge of the newly formed Diocese, Madras - Calcutta.

Isaac Mar Philoxenos

Mar Philoxenos had his college education in Mavelikara and Benaras and studied theology at Bishop's college, Calcutta and Princeton University. Dr. Philoxenos was ordained in 1976 and subsequently served in Rajhara, Bilaspur, Allahabad and Bombay. He was consecrated as Bishop on 2nd October 1993. He is in charge of Delhi - Bombay Diocese.

CHAPTER VI

THE CLERGY OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

From the early days, the clergy have played a very important role in the life and mission of the Church. The Mar Thoma Church has been especially blessed with a band of deeply dedicated clergy, who asked for no rewards except that of serving God and His people. They were prepared to suffer any hardship in the cause of Jesus Christ. This was most evident in the life and work of Abraham Malpan and those who stood with him for reformation in the face of loss and suffering. The same spirit of service has characterised the clergy of the Church ever since. Four brilliant graduates came to accept ordination in the Church, following the lofty example of Abraham Mar Thoma. Several others came in rapid succession in the same spirit of dedication and self-denial, setting aside offers of lucrative jobs in secular life. When the old system of levying compulsory fees for religious rites and ceremonies for the support of the Church was proposed to be stopped the priests were in the forefront of the campaign, and they willingly upheld the principle that the church should be supported by purely voluntary contributions of the members.

THE VICARS GENERAL

The Bishops of the Church function in association with, and with the full co-operation of the clergy and the people. Some of the leading clergy who have rendered eminent service in the Church have been designated Vicars General. In the early days when there were no Bishops permanently residing in Kerala to oversee the administration of the Church, the Archdeacons and Vicars General performed this function. They shouldered immense responsibilities and commanded great respect.

Vicar General Kovoory Iype Thoma Kathanar.

During the difficult period following the reformation, he was a tower of strength. With great farsightedness he acquired the property which is now at the heart of Tiruvalla and where the headquarters of the

Mar Thoma Church is situated. Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan was helped and strengthened by the Vicar General and a group of other able clergymen.

Very Rev. V.P. Mammen

He was one of the first four graduates who accepted ordination together in the Mar Thoma Church. The others were Rev. V.T. Chacko, Rev. K.E. Oommen and Rev. George John. They could have secured very lucrative secular posts in the state, but they opted to serve the Church. Rev. Mammen spent his life and resources in building up the Sunday School Samajam and he made it one of the best Christian education organisations in the whole of India. He was also for some time the Secretary General of All India Sunday School Union.

Very Rev. V.T. Chacko

He worked as one of the Division Secretaries of the Church and helped in the general administration as the Sabha Secretary of the Church during the days of Metropolitans Abraham Mar Thoma and Juhanon Mar Thoma. He was a very able administrator, and offered valuable assistance to Abraham Mar Thoma.

Very Rev. K.E. Oommen

He was one of the Division Secretaries up to 1939. With his evangelistic zeal and wise counsel he gave great support to Abraham Mar Thoma and later Metropolitans. His was a long and fruitful life. He died in 1984 at the age of 103.

Rev. George John was one of the four graduates who were ordained together as mentioned above. He was a spiritual leader of deep faith, and great ability to communicate his faith to those who came into contact with him. He passed away in 1930 at the age of 49.

Very Rev. T.N. Koshy

After getting his B.D. degree from the Bishops College Calcutta,

he was ordained and sent to Malaya, to organise the parishes there. There he performed dedicated service for 26 years. Travelling through the length and breadth of Malaya and Singapore he established 27 parishes, which later formed the Diocese of Malaysia and Singapore. He came back to India and worked as Sabha Secretary for 6 years. This ecclesiastical statesman passed away in October 1979 at the age of 78.

Very Rev. P.J. Thomas

He is a deep scholar and gifted linguist, besides being an ardent evangelist. He passed B.D. degree examination from U.T. College with distinction and joined the ministry of the Church. The call came to him to take up the mission work in Ankola when he was Vicar of the Kottayam Jerusalem Mar Thoma parish. He readily accepted the challenge and went to Ankola with his family and established the Ashram there with two young graduates as fellow workers, Mr. Philip Oommen (now Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan) and John Thomas late Rev. P. John Thomas, (retired missionary). Rev.P.J.Thomas was designated Vicar General in 1976 after he came back to Kerala. He passed away on March 7, 1990.

Very Rev. C.G. David and Very Rev. A.A. Pylee

They were made Vicars Generals in 1981 in consideration of the illustrious services they had rendered to the Church and also their work in the Dioceses. Earlier Very Rev.C.G.David was General Secretary of the Evangelistic Association and Very Rev.A.A.Pylee was the Principal of the Christian College, Chengannur. Very Rev.C.G.David took over as Vicar General of the Bombay Delhi Diocese in 1982 and of the Niranam-Maramon Diocese in 1983. He died suddenly on 9 July 1983 on board an Air France plane while on his way to Amsterdam to attend an evangelistic conference. Very Rev. A.A. Pylee was the Vicar General of the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese. He died on May 11, 1991.

Very Rev. C.G. Alexander and Very Rev. K.V. Jacob

These two senior clergymen were installed as Vicars General in 1984. Rev.C.G.Alexander had rendered distinguished service as Sabha

Secretary for three consecutive terms involving a total period of nine years. From 1984 he was given charge of the Niranam-Maramon Dioceses and subsequently Ranni-Nilakal Dioceses. He retired in March 1994. Very Rev.K.V.Jacob served as Vicar General of Adoor-Mavelikara Dioceses and Trivandrum-Quilon Dioceses. After a brief period of illness he passed away in Oct.1991.

Very Rev. P.M. George

He was born in 1928 at Mekozhoor. He graduated from the U.C.College, Alwaye. He had theological education affiliated to the Serampore University. He received further theological training at Lincoln Theological College, London. He has worked as Vicar in different Parishes in India and Houston in U.S.A. He has also worked in the Mission Field in Malabar and as Bishop's Secretary, Clergy Secretary etc. As Sabha Secretary (1990-93) he has been alert and efficient in carrying out his manifold responsibilities. He is working as Vicar-General from 1993.

Rev. C. V. John and Rev. K. J. Philip

Before new Bishops were consecrated in 1937, these two clergymen were given charges as Division Secretaries of the North and South Divisions, having responsibilities almost equal to those of the present Vicars General. Rev. C.V. John later served as the Principal of the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, and worked for upgrading it to the B. D. level. Rev. C.V John passed away on 2-8-'79 at the age of 70.

Rev. K. J. Philip worked as Sabha Secretary for six years 1978-84. He has helped by teaching in the Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism Kompadi. He passed away on 15-9-1988.

There are many more clergymen who have rendered highly distinguished service to the Church over long years. But owing to constraints of space it is not possible to mention all of them here. They are mentioned in the Directory of the Mar Thoma Church, published

in 1969 and revised in 1983 and 1991.

Clergy Conferences

Clergy Conferences are held on a Zonal basis in the Dioceses once in two months and for the entire Diocese annually. The Clergy Conference for the whole church is held once in a year, usually in December, which provides occasion for retreat, study, and fellowship. A limited number of clergy from the C. S. I. also participate on invitation.

There was no retirement age for the clergy in earlier years. But now the clergy retire at the age of 65. They are re-employed if they are physically able to continue in service, and when necessary.

A fellowship of the retired clergy is functioning since 1981. This fellowship has been recognised by the Mandalam as an organisation of the Church entitled to send a representative to the Mandalam. There are 550 clergy at present in the active list and 80 in the retired list.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Mar Thoma Vaidika Seminary

The Vaidika Seminary at Kottayam was established in 1926 to provide Theological education and pastoral training for the clergy. In the early days the facilities for boarding and lodging were at the minimum, but all accepted it in the spirit of Christian joy and service. Theological teachers shared these hardships as members of a happy family. Mr. K. K. Kuruville who was the first principal of the Seminary served in that capacity for about 20 years. The traditions established in those days are still followed in the same spirit. The Seminary was since raised to the B. Th. level and then to the B. D. level in 1974. Now M. Th. courses are also offered in co-operation with Orthodox and C.S.I. Churches through a Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture. Residential accommodation is limited. Hence only 18 students can be admitted each year for the B.D. Course, although the Faculty is capable of catering for many more students. So providing additional

residential accommodation for more students is the urgent need of the Seminary. So far more than 400 persons have received theological training in the Seminary and have served as ordained ministers of the Church.

Till recently admission to the Vaidika Seminary was restricted to those who were selected for training with a view to ordination in the Church. Requests were received from women who wish to have Theological education for serving in the Church, in various other fields. This was considered by the Sabha Council and now permission is given to women students also to attend regular courses in the college, and residential accommodation is available. Accordingly one student, sponsored by the Sevika Sanghom is studying in the Seminary.

Through the Federated Faculty, facilities are offered now for Doctoral studies and research in the Seminary. It is of special interest that the first Doctoral student was Mrs. A.P. Athiyali who completed her studies in 1993. She was a Lecturer in Theology in the Bishop's College, Calcutta, after taking M.Th. degree. At present she is on the Faculty of the Luthern Theological Seminary, Madras.

United Theological College, Bangalore, Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, Bishop's College, Calcutta and Serampore College have all been generous in accepting students sent by our Church and providing scholarships. Now although we have our own Theological Seminary offering Degree courses, we continue to send students to these Seminaries, since our Seminary cannot meet all our needs, and since we like to continue the connection with these institutions.

Training of Evangelists (Lay Workers)

Mention has been made about the A.M.M. Bible Institute and the Vanitha Mandiram where lay men and women receive training for short periods for evangelistic work. The Episcopal Jubilee Institute has been founded to give three years' training for those who are to be appointed as full time Evangelists by the Evangelistic Association, and the Dioceses. 'Women students also are admitted on the

recommendation of the Sevika Sanghom. As part of the training, the students are sent for six months to mission fields after two years of study in the E.J.Institute. This gives them opportunity to get first-hand experience of work in the mission fields.

CHAPTER VII

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH

Abraham Malpan felt the need for reformation in the Church on the basis of the Word of God. At the same time he wanted to preserve the values of the heritage of the past. He decided that the Church should retain the Episcopal traditions, as it was an ancient apostolic Church founded by St. Thomas in India. That was why he sent his nephew to Mardin to be consecrated by the Patriarch of Antioch and to continue Episcopal traditions.

With regard to administration a constitution was adopted emphasising democratic values. All decisions affecting the Church concerning both faith and administration are made by the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam, consisting of 65 per cent elected lay members from the parishes and 35 per cent clergy including the Bishops. At the same time the Episcopal Synod has to approve the decisions of the Mandalam, before these can be implemented. The Metropolitan has special power to send back the decisions, for reconsiderations. Thus there is a combination of democratic values, and Episcopal authority.

There is an Executive Committee called the Sabha Council, elected by the Mandalam, for a period of three years, to assist the Metropolitan in implementing the decisions of the Mandalam and in the general administration of the Church. Each Diocese will have at least three members in the Sabha Council. The Mandalam elects one from the Clergy and one from the laity, who with the Metropolitan form the Trustees of the Church. The Sabha Secretary also is elected by the Mandalam.

There are Diocesan Assemblies and Diocesan Councils to administer matters on the Diocesan level. All the clergy residing in the Diocese are members of the Diocesan Assemblies. Lay members are elected from all the parishes, the number of which depends on the membership of the parishes. Where there are 3 representatives at least one has to be a woman.

Dioceses are divided into regional groups called centres, including adjoining parishes. The organisations of the Church like

Youth Department, Sevika Sanghom, Edavaka Mission and Sunday School send representatives from the parishes to these regional groups for united work. They have their committees on the Diocesan level entitled Samithies which plan and execute the work of the organisations. The Diocesan Bishops are the Presidents of the Samithies.

The administration of the parishes is conducted by the general body consisting of all the members of the parish in good standing, above the age of 21. There is also an Executive Body called the Kaisthana Samithi, elected by the General Body. The Vicar is President of both the bodies. The financial affairs of the parishes are handled by two elected representatives, one in charge of the funds and the other in charge of the accounts. There is also an elected Secretary for the parish. The four organisations have their activities based in the parishes. The Accounts are to be presented to the Executive Committee after every 3 months. Auditors elected by the General Body audit the annual Accounts. They are passed in the annual meeting, which also passes the Budget for the next year. All the decisions of the general body can be implemented only after those are approved by the Diocesan Episcopa.

The parishes and the Church are supported by the voluntary contributions of the members. Before the Reformation stipulated fees were charged to be paid at the time of conducting ceremonies like baptism, burial, and weddings. The system of compulsory payments was found to be against the spirit of free offerings for supporting the Church. So, that system was changed gradually; subscriptions are now paid on voluntary basis. There was a practice till recently of paying to the Church one per cent of the parental property given to a daughter as her share, at the time of her marriage. This too has been stopped and now all Church affairs are to be supported by free will offerings and donations from members. These changes have considerably affected the income of some parishes. The members are exhorted to practice Christian stewardship of time, talents and money, and to offer these in the service of God and their fellowmen. The practice of tithing is also encouraged.

The Mar Thoma Church has been from the beginning practicing self-support in all financial matters, along with autonomy in administration and propagation of the gospel. The three-self-

movements emphasised by the Church in China, self-support, self-government, and self-propagation have been the practice of the Mar Thoma Church from early days. However, it is a fact that when the members strain very hard to raise funds for the local parish needs, amounts raised for serving others and for missionary efforts are much less. A great change has to come in this.

CHAPTER VIII

EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH TO REGIONS OUTSIDE KERALA

(a) Expansion of the Mar Thoma church to regions outside Kerala, in India

The Mar Thoma Church was mostly confined to the Travancore and Cochin States on the Malabar coast, in the South West corner of India, till the end of the first world war. The introduction of English education and the uniting of the country under the British rule opened the way for members of the Church to move to other parts of India for higher education and employment. With the starting of Schools all over the State, under the leadership of Missionaries and later of the Church and the State, Kerala became foremost in the level of literacy among all the States in India. Institutions for higher education also were established. A sense of adventure and freedom was felt among the members of the Church with the awakening associated with the spirit of Reformation. There was an air of renewal throughout the country with modernisation and the influence of progressive and liberal movements. All these had their influence on the life of the Church also. Members of the Church made use of the new opportunities for higher education. They also found new power by faith in the love of God. They had the courage to leave their homes and dear ones and go even to distant places to take up work among strangers. Thus members of the Church went to different cities of India to establish themselves where suitable jobs could be found. One remarkable feature is that young women also went for training in Nursing and other professions. Many of the hospitals run by Missions and Government had to depend upon their dedicated service. Mention has been made above about the team of four persons who responded to the call to take up the work of the German Missionaries in Karwar in North Kanara, when they were interned during the first world war. It was this spirit of adventure that helped to start evangelistic work through the Ashrams at Palghat and other places.

Wherever the members of the Church went they remained devoted to the faith which they had received in their childhood. They joined in worship with fellow Christians where they had opportunities to do so. But when the number increased and there was a small community of believers speaking the same language, they started groups to worship using their mother tongue and the forms of worship which were dear to them. Gradually Congregations were developed in most of the large cities in India. They appealed to the home Church to send them Ministers to lead them in worship. This was difficult in the early days. With the establishment of Ashrams at Ankola on the West Coast and at Sihora in Madhya Pradesh, Ministers from these Ashrams travelled long distances to help the newly formed Congregations in Bombay, Delhi and other places. The presence of Theological students from our Church in Bangalore, Serampore, Calcutta and Jabalpur was helpful for the development of Congregations in those places. These Congregations were offered facilities for worship in Church buildings mostly of the Anglican Church, Methodist Church and Roman Catholic Church. The Mar Thoma Church is grateful for their help. In course of time the number in these Congregations increased and they built their own Church buildings in many of the cities in India, contributing sacrificially for the purpose, as they had to depend only on their own meagre resources. Meanwhile members of the Church expanded to almost all the language areas of India and Congregations large and small have been established, even in small towns and remote mining centres. As an example, in Gujarat there are now 13 Congregations, whereas in 1960 there were only two. This is the case also in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and other States. In large cities and industrial areas there are more parishes than the other States. In large cities and industrial areas there are more parishes than one and they are served by Ministers from Kerala.

In many of the places outside Kerala, the new generation that is growing up knows only the language of the area in which they are living. The older generation however wishes to continue worship in Malayalam. Thus there is a linguistic problem which has to be faced. Worship services have to be arranged in the language with which the young people are familiar, the language of the State or English, as the case may be. More flexibility in forms of worship also will be needed in the spirit of indigenisation.

Need for Co-operation with other denominations also arises as people with different traditions live together. Co-operation with the members of the Church of South India and of the Church of North India and other denominations is necessary in these days of ecumenism. There are Congregations of the Mar Thoma Church which conduct worship services in Hindi, Kanarese or Tamil, besides Malayalam and English.

(b) Expansion of the Mar Thoma Church to Malaysia and Singapore

Along with the expansion to different parts of India, members of the Mar Thoma Church began to go to Malaysia, Singapore and Ceylone in 1930s seeking opportunities for work. It was mostly the educated young people who sallied forth to find employment in new places. They found work mostly in schools, hospitals or other offices. Small groups of them were formed in different places in Malaysia and Singapore. Rev.T.N.Koshy was sent to give them pastoral care. The pioneering work that he did in forming Congregations, travelling from Singapore to the Northern most parts of Malaysia deserves the highest praise. The hardships that he endured during the Japanese occupation in the service of Christ and of the Church are of the highest order in missionary history. Thus a Diocese consisting of about 30 parishes in Malaysia and one in Singapore was organised. Rev.V.E.Thomas joined the work later and together they built up the Diocese there. After the independence of Malaysia, and Singapore many members returned to India. So some of the Congregations in Malaysia became very small in number. These were joined with neighbouring Congregations. Those who remained have taken citizenship in Malaysia or Singapore. The present Congregations are strongly established with their own places of worship for most of them. Malaysia and Singapore have become two independent countries and the Diocese is divided into two zones with their headquarters in the capitals of the two States. Both the zones are progressing in Christian witness. Though evangelistic work is forbidden by law among the Muslims in Malaysia the gospel is presented to others with enthusiasm, by members of the Church in both the zones. The members of the Diocese have supported the work of the home Church with generous contributions. The youth work in both the zones

deserves special mention. Every year, a youth camp is conducted in which a Bishop from the home Church gives leadership. The young people are challenged to commit themselves to Jesus Christ and to grow in fellowship with Him and with the Church. Their witness also is strengthened by this. Four Ministers are working in Malaysia and three are in Singapore. The St. Thomas School in Singapore has presented the Gospel to the students and has helped many each year to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord. Evangelistic work done by the Malaysian zone is mentioned elsewhere.

Though the members of the Church went to Ceylone also at the same time when others went to Malaysia, there was no effort to organise them into Congregations. They worshiped with the Congregations in the places where they lived and most of them have returned to India. This is what happened in Africa also. Even now many members of the Mar Thoma Church are working in different States in East Africa and Australia, but no Congregations have been formed there. There were a considerable number of members of the Church in different places in Nigeria also. Most of them took temporary membership in the Anglican Church. But with the sweeping changes that have come, many are returning to India. While living and working abroad, they remained loyal to the home Church, and supported the Missionary and charitable activities of the Church with liberal contributions. The speakers' Block at the Retreat Centre at Maramon was constructed with the contributions of the members of our Church in Nigeria. Members of the Church in other countries in Africa also have borne active witness to Jesus Christ identifying themselves with the local Churches.

(c) Expansion of the Marthoma Church in the Arabian Gulf Area.

With the development of the Oil industry in the Arabian Gulf Countries, members of the Mar Thoma Church have gone to work there in large numbers during the past 40 years. They have established Congregations and regular worship services, though direct evangelism is not permitted by law in the Islamic countries. Due to visa restrictions more than one Minister could not be sent to one country. The parish in Kuwait therefore is at present the parish with the largest number of members in the Mar Thomas Church. There are about 2000 families and about 850 children in the Sunday School. All the parishes in

Arabian Gulf area liberally help the various activities of the home Church, and support the educational and other charitable institutions with generous contributions. With the fall in price of oil, the region is facing economic hardship. Retrenchment of workers has been started in different States, and many may lose their jobs. This will lead to serious economic and social problems, which the Church and the State will have to face with wisdom and compassion.

(d) Expansion of the Mar Thoma Church to the U.S.A., Canada and U.K.

Members of the Church have been going to U.K., U.S.A. and Canada for higher education in small numbers since 1930. Some of them found opportunities for employment also. But job opportunities became available to larger numbers in the 1970s when immigration rights were offered to Medical personnel and their families. So large number of members of the Church have gone to many cities in U.K. and North America. The policy of the Church at first was to ask them to take membership in the local Churches there with whom the Mar Thoma Church has communion relationship. When the numbers increased, the demand came to form Congregations in which they can worship in the forms familiar to them and in their mother tongue. This was heeded and now there are six Congregations in the New York city and one each in twenty other cities in U.S.A. There are five Congregations in Canada and one in London, England. Some of the Parishes have already established their own place of worship.

The needs of the growing generation in these parishes are similar to those in other immigrant situations. The problems of identifying with a culture other than that in which their parents grew up, is a serious one. The language of worship and adjustment in new situations tend to create tensions. This can be solved with understanding and with Christian love. Good leadership is very necessary to help the youth in such situations. Youth groups have been formed in the parishes. Annual youth camps are held attended by young people from various parts of North America. A Bishop of the Church gives leadership, as in other annual youth camps so that the youths are kept in contact with the traditions of the Church and challenged with the need for commitment to Christ.

As mentioned elsewhere an agreement has been reached with the Prelates of the Anglican Church in USA and Canada so that Pastoral care will be given to the members of our Church by them when necessity arises. This is possible due to the full communion relationships between the Mar Thoma Church and the Anglican Communion. As generations change, new problems will have to be faced. Churches in other countries may need different structures. The Church has to be open to such needs to be met under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

During this period many developments have taken place in the Church in Kerala in opening new avenues of work by the development of educational and charitable institutions. These are mentioned in the appropriate places. The influences of these have reached also the Congregations outside Kerala and affected their social and spiritual life.

CHAPTER IX

MISSIONARY OUTREACH

Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association

Until renewal took place in the Church as a result of the reformation there was very little effort to take the message of the gospel to those outside the Church. With the new life that came into the Church people began to accept the call of the Holy Spirit to present the gospel to others. A small group of 12 persons (Rev. Thomas Abraham, Kottarathil ad 11 laymen) met for prayer in 1888 at Kallissery, near Chengannoor and they were urged by the Holy Spirit to take up the challenge and they obeyed it by deciding to start evangelistic work among non-Christians. The first place that they chose as their field was Othara in Central Travancore. Rev. C.P. Philipose became the General Secretary of the Evangelistic Association in 1890 at the age of 22 and he continued to lead the Association in that position for 50 years. His wise counsel, deep faith and untiring energy have helped to further the cause of evangelism. Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan gave encouragement to the infant Association, although the Church was at the time passing through a crisis on account of litigation. By 1894 four full time paid evangelists were appointed and four teachers worked in schools belonging to the Association. By 1903 these numbers increased to 17 and 20. The work expanded on Central Travancore and reached out to the sea coast and North Travancore. By 1926 evangelists were sent to Palghat area. In spite of opposition from some quarters., many received the gospel gladly. At Othara itself a group of 85 persons were baptised in 1892. Gradually the work extended to Wynad in the Nilgiri area and Gudalloor. We praise God for Rev. P.I. Jacob, and the untiring work he did in the mission fields of Central Travancore and the Sea Coast areas till he became too old and weak to continue. Rev.C.I.Abraham of Venmony worked with a band of zealous evangelists in North Travancore area. The Palghat Ashram was established in 1924, under the leadership of Rev.P.John Varghese, who later left the Church and became a Bishop of the St.Thomas Evangelical Church. Work was started in South Travancore area under the

leadership of Rev.K.A.Varghese. Many people accepted Christ and new congregations were formed as a result of the work in these areas.

WORK OUTSIDE KERALA

North Kanara

Any missionary effort undertaken outside Kerala by members of the Mar Thoma Church is almost like foreign missionary work because of language and ethnic differences. The first call came from North Kanara in 1909 and the work was started there in 1910 in Karwar District. Mr.P.S.Mathai (father of Shri. Samuel Mathai- who was Vice chancellor of Kerala University), Rev. P.T. Varghese, Mr. K.K. Kuruville and Mr.P.O.Philip were among those who responded first. By 1919 the High School at Honavar was handed over by the Basel Mission to the Evangelistic Association,, and Rev.M.P Philipose took over as Principal. By 1940 the work extended to Ankola and the Christa Mitra Ashram was established by Rev.P.J.Thomas and two young graduates (Mr.Philip Oommen, now Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan and Mr.P.John Thomas, later Rev. P. John Thomas). The Ashram started a hospital, a home for boys and girls, and a destitute home and other services. Now 76 persons are working there.

Sihora

Christa Panthi Ashram, Sihora was established in 1942 under the leadership of Rev.K.T.Thomas, Mr.John Varghese and Mr.M.P.Mathew, who later became ordained ministers of the Church. The three pioneers are still with the Ashram. Now there are more than 40 members, including permanent workers and volunteers. In addition to gospel work, the activities of the Ashram include, hospital work, village schools, destitute home, agricultural work and rural development programme. A group of people from Abhani village have accepted the Lord and a place of worship has been built for them. Mr.Juhan Mishra from Sihora area who accepted Jesus Christ is working now as an evangelist in that village.

Satna

Christya Bandhukulam, Satna was started in 1952. A Group of 4 persons from Kaviyoor, near Tiruvalla, decided to work together in the State of Rewa. Before the independence of India, Rewa was a small native state, into which Christian Workers were not allowed entry. The four workers started work in Satna and surrounding villages. Rev. A.T. Chacko and family who were among the founders was working there along with others in evangelistic efforts and rural development programmes. There is a school up to the XII Standard which has a high reputation in the area, and provides means to reach many homes with the message of the gospel. Many villages in the neighbouring districts have been reached and some have accepted baptism and membership of the Church.

Saidganj, near Bhopal

The work was started among the village near Saidganj, about 25 km. from Bhopal city, in Madhya Pradesh. In addition to evangelistic work, rural development work is carried on and a school for village children is being run. Such work is being extended to other neighbouring villages also. The Bhopal Mar Thoma parish actively co-operates with the workers in this area.

Tibeten Border work (Suvatha Premi Samithi)

Rev.A.K.George and two lady workers went all the way to Tejam and Munsiri on the border of Tibet and started work among the Bhotia community. The Bhotias used to carry on trade with Tibet till it was occupied by China. The missionaries hoped to reach Tibet with the help of Bhotias. Some from the Bhotia community accepted the gospel and congregations have been founded at Munsiri and Tejam. At present two groups are working here. More workers are needed to take over from the early workers, who are advancing in years.

There is much scope for mission work in these villages. In connection with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the

reformation more workers have gone there to help in the work.

Vapi Mission

Vapi is a developing industrial area, located in Valsad District, Gujarat. A hospital which was started by an American Mission was handed over to the Evangelistic Association in 1968 as they could not carry on the work. The medical work is being continued with the co-operation of the parishes of the Mar Thoma Church in Gujarat and Bombay.

Hoskote Mission

Hoskote is a Taluk headquarters, 25km from Bangalore city. The work was started there in 1946. Now there is a good congregation in Hoskote, a chapel and medical work. Over 700 leprosy patients from the nearby villages are given treatment. Six congregations have been developed in those villages and many more people are showing keen interest in the gospel. The work was started by Rev.A.C.Zachariah and Mr.M.T.Joseph. It developed further when Rev.E.J.George went there and Dr.Mrs.Sophy George took over the medical work. One was notable feature of the work there was that two Hindu Swamies accepted the Gospel and were baptised and they spread the gospel with zeal and in a purely Indian Style. The villagers responded to them freely, as their life style and way of preaching appeal to them in a special way.

Santhi Mandiram, Secunderabad

The only mission centre of the Evangelistic Association in Andhra Pradesh is at Santhi Mandiram situated about 10 km from Secunderabad city, very near the military centre. A school for the children in the village nearby was conducted at Santhi Mandiram and the Gospel was presented to the community. Medical help for the villagers also was given by doctors and medical personnel from the Mar Thoma parish in the Secunderabad Hyderabad cities.

Andamans

The mission work in Andamans is done mainly among the

colonies of settlers from the main land, who live in the scattered islands. Without proper attention and spiritual leadership many of them were open to all types of temptations. By presenting the gospel to them many have come to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and they now live in fellowship and brotherhood.

Nepal

Nepal is the only country in the world today ruled by the Hindu ruler with the declared intention to keep it as a Hindu country. Preaching of the gospel publicly is prohibited by law and anyone leading others to conversion from Hinduism may be punished with imprisonment for six years. In spite of such rigid laws, work was started there by a small group of young men of the Mar Thoma Church under the leadership of C. K. Athiyali, who was later ordained as a minister of the Church. The group approached people personally with the gospel and many were attracted to Christ. The first Christian Church in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, was constructed by this group. Later the United Mission to Nepal was started by missionaries from various countries, who made an undertaking with the Government that they would do only social service activities. Now there are more than five centres of Christian worship in the city, in spite of the legal restriction still in force. The last worker there of the Mar Thoma Church, Mr. K. S. Eapen, was held in jail for 27 days when it was found that baptisms of Nepali citizens have been conducted in our Church. He was however released from jail and he had to come away in 1984 and since then there is no worker from our Church there. Still the believers come together for worship and Christian fellowship in the Church building there. Other workers have to be sent to help those who have accepted faith in Jesus Christ.

Port Swettenham in Malaysia

A mission centre has been started in Port Swettenham near Klang in Malaysia, by the Diocese of Malaysia-Singapore of our Church. The work is done mostly among Tamil speaking people and the Chinese, as Gospel preaching to Muslims is strictly prohibited by the Government. Many young people come eagerly to study the Bible and

attend Sunday School classes organized by the Mission Board of the Diocese. Sunday School classes have been organized for the workers in many rubber estates where the Evangelists and those interested in the work go as a team with musical instruments and audiovisual aids in a van bought for the purpose.

The work through St. Thomas School in Singapore

The Secondary School run by the Mar Thoma Parish in Singapore has provided occasion for teaching the Bible to the pupils in the School. More than a score of students every year accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and are baptised. They join the different Churches conducting worship in their language in the city. It is mostly the Chinese young people who are coming to the Lord in this way.

Rajasthan Work

A group was sent to Rajasthan in 1980 and when they started work they were stationed in the capital city Jaipur. In 1983 a property was bought near Bhambhori village, 25 km from Jaipur. A mission centre has been established there and work has been started in the villages nearby. The villagers come to help in the agricultural work of the centre and thus contact with them is established. Literacy work is done among the illiterate people. Gradually the gospel message is being presented to them. In 1985 the work was started in the villages near Rawalpetta with the co-operation of the Parishes in Rawalpetta and Kota.

Shadol and Siddhi

Special effort has been made in 1986 to reach more villages in North India in connection with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Reformation. The work has been expanded to the districts of Shadol and Siddhi in Madhya Pradesh, with Satna as the centre.

Congregations formed by Mission Work

As a result of the work of the Evangelistic Association, 117 congregations have been formed in various parts of Kerala. These

remained under the care of the Evangelistic Association. Under this arrangement, the congregations could not get adequate pastoral care. So the Evangelistic Association decided to hand over the congregations to the Dioceses in which they were situated. The Church gladly gave them recognition as parishes in the Dioceses and appointed pastors in charge of them. This was an important step taken in the year 1980. The new Parishes have already shown signs of steady growth under the new system. The parishioners are taking keen interest in the development of the parishes.

The Dioceses have resolved that each parish must have its own place of worship by the end of 1986 as there are even now a few parishes who worship in schools and other places since they don't have church buildings of their own. This project is progressing satisfactorily with the help of the Evangelistic Association and members of the Church.

THE MARAMON CONVENTION

The Maramon Convention is conducted annually by the Evangelistic Association since 1896 on the banks of the river Pampa, near Kozhencherry, usually in the month of February when the river bed is dry for the pandal to be erected to accommodate about 80,000 people. It is an occasion for listening to the Word of God, preached by Evangelists of world renown and eminent exponents of the Bible. The call to Evangelism is heard in those messages, and people dedicate their lives to go forth as witness to Jesus Christ in their own places of work or in the mission fields. Missionaries of the Evangelistic Association also come from their mission fields for sharing their experiences and renewing their strength. It is thus an occasion for renewal of the whole Church. People from far and near look forward to this great annual event.

In addition to Evangelistic messages, Bible study classes are held every day for different groups, such as pastors and Christian workers, women's groups and children. On three days in the week special meetings are held for youth. Afternoon sessions are held to high-light the programmes of the different organizations of the church, such as Evangelistic Association, Voluntary Evangelists Association and Sevika

Sangham. There are sessions to urge people about social responsibilities and to exhort them to abstain from alcohol and drugs and to high-light the service programmes of the Church. The housing scheme for the poor, and the charitable institutions such as destitute homes and orphanages are promoted. Book stalls run by the publication department of the Church and other agencies help the propagation of Christian Literature. Rev. T. Walker, an Anglican Missionary was a regular preacher for many years, and his messages help to keep the members of the Church from following sectarian views. The messages of Dr. Stanley Jones who was a speaker for 50 years combined Evangelistic challenges with social concerns. World famous Missionaries like Dr. Kagawa of Japan and Sadhu Sunder Singh have preached in this convention. Thousands of people every year respond to the call to dedicate their lives in the service of the Lord. The centenary of the Maramon Convention will be celebrated in 1995.

Given below are some of the institutions under the Evangelistic Association:

Educational Institutions:

Schools:

No. of Primary Schools	27
" U.P. Schools	5
" High Schools	5
Total	<u>37</u>

Industrial Training Centre at Mylachal
M.T. College for Women at Perumbavoor

Hospitals:

1. Bishop Abraham Memorial Hospital
Coyalmannom, Palghat
2. Hoskote Mission Hospital, Hoskote, Karnataka
3. Asram Hospital Ankola, Karnataka
4. Sarvajanic Mission Hospital, Vapi, Gujarat
5. Asram Hospital, Sihora, M.P.

Destitute Homes:

1. Dharmagiri, Kumbanad
2. Carmel Mandiram & Orphanage, Ayroor.

Orissa Mission

The Niranam-Maramon Diocese decided to start work in Orissa at Khariar Road on the border of Orissa, adjacent to Madhya Pradesh. This place was selected as already Dr. Thomas Mathew had started Medical work there. Rev. M.P. Mathew from Sihora Ashram helped to start the work which was formally inaugurated in October, 1985 by the Metropolitan. In 1986 Rev. V.T. John and family and Mr. M.T. Mathukutty took up the work. They were doing literacy work and taking the Good News of the Gospel to the villagers. The Diocese is actively supporting the work, besides the work in the Kuttanadu area of the Diocese. Later developments in Khariar Road are mentioned in a subsequent chapter.

Labis, Malaysia

Recently a work has been started at Labis, in Malaysia, in co-operation with the Lutheran and Anglican Churches there, as an ecumenical effort.

CHAPTER X**OTHER ORGANISATIONS OF THE CHURCH****1. MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL SAMAJAM**

The reformers realised the importance of Bible Study, as essential for spiritual renewal and growth. The opening of Sunday Schools thus became a natural development in the way of Christian nurture. The formal inauguration of the Sunday School Samajam comprising all the Sunday Schools which had already been started in the parishes took place at Maramon Convention in 1905. Mr. V.P. Mammen (Later Vicar General V.P. Mammen Kasseesa) was elected as the General Secretary. The growth and development of the Sunday School Samajam as one of the leading Christian Education organisations in India was the result of the extra-ordinary organising ability of Rev. V.P. Mammen and his untiring efforts during a period of 47 years. In those days of very limited travel facilities he visited churches in different places travelling in bullock carts and riding bicycles. He organized syllabuses for the different grades and published the lessons to be taught in various classes. A publication entitled "Sandarsini" began to be published in 1911 containing articles helpful to the pupils, teachers and parents and lesson notes for Sunday School teachers. Since 1952 text books are published for the various classes. From 1977 the curriculum of the Christian Education Council of India is followed by the Sunday School Samajam.

Rev. Dr. K.K. George joined the work of the Sunday School Samajam in 1952 and was General Secretary of the Samajam after the demise of very Rev. V.P. Mammen, from 1952 up to June 1982. Both of them laboured in this great cause dedicating their extraordinary powers of head and heart to the cause of Christian Education of children. Classes are arranged for a period of 15 years from the age of 5, so that by the time the Sunday School course is completed, the pupils will have sound knowledge of the scriptures and the doctrines of the Church.

Sunday Schools are arranged in every parish. In larger parishes there will be two or more Sunday Schools according to need. Inspectors

are allotted to supervise the work of the Sunday Schools in a given area, and organisers are appointed in each Diocese. Examinations are held every year, arranged from the Central Office and competitions are held at the Diocesan and Central levels.

The Sunday School Samajam celebrated the Platinum Jubilee in 1980. The Christian Education Centre was established at Charal Mount, Kuriannoor, in 1972, providing one of the most attractive camp sights for children and for the training of teachers. The High School at Edakulam and the boarding house attached to it are run by the Sunday School Samajam.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible Schools (V. B. S.) have been started as a project of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The classes extend for a period of ten days during summer holidays. The syllabus is carefully prepared. The children look forward to these classes where they get opportunity for learning new songs and for participating in work projects. The children are led to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. 289 V.B.S. Centres were held in 1994, and 44,915 students attended.

Rev. Moni Mathew directs the work of the Sunday School Samajam as General Secretary at present.

There are 945 Sunday Schools and 137263 students.

2. MAR THOMA VOLUNTARY EVANGELISTS ASSOCIATION

(Lay Ministry)

The spiritual renewal in the Church created a yearning to present the gospel to others. It was realized that this could not be fully achieved by the services of a few full time evangelists. On the other hand every member of the Church should be a missionary filled with such joy and assurance of salvation as to be Christ's witness to those who come into contact with him, irrespective of one's work or profession, in secular life. Such people have the opportunity to come into contact with others in ordinary human situations and to communicate the gospel message in a natural setting.

A group of people who came to realise this met together for prayer and fellowship in 1925. They decided to be organised as Voluntary Evangelists to bear witness to Jesus Christ along with their secular duties. This organisation was called Voluntary Evangelists Association. Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma became the ardent supporter of this movement and Titus II Mar Thoma Metropolitan sent a circular letter to all parishes encouraging the formation of branches of the Association in all parishes.

The object of this Association is that every member of the Church should be a witness to Jesus Christ, whatever his occupation may be. Those who volunteer to be members of the Association meet together in each parish at least once a week for fellowship, intercessory prayer, Bible study, and sharing of experiences. Then they go out and contact those who work with them and share the gospel with them. They help with various services in the parish, such as Sunday School, Youth Fellowships, and cottage prayer meetings. They visit the sick and the needy and give spiritual fellowship and material help to them. They work for reconciliation where people are estranged from one another. They also seek opportunity to convey the message of the gospel to non-Christian friends.

Where such groups are active, the parishes experience joy and spiritual power. The Vicars encourage and strengthen them by helping them with Bible study and giving leadership in other ways. The branch of the Voluntary Evangelists Association in the parish is called Edavaka Mission.

The Edavaka Missions from all the parishes in one regional group called Centre, meet every month for Fellowship and for planning further work. The centres send their representatives to the Diocesan organisation called the Samithi of the Voluntary Evangelists Association at the Diocesan level. The Executive Committee of the Diocesan Samithi co-ordinates the work at the Diocesan level. There is also the annual meeting of the representatives from all the Dioceses arranged by the central organisation of the Voluntary Evangelists Association.

The central organisation has been responsible for running the Abraham Mar Thoma Memorial Bible Institute at Kompadi, Tiruvalla

which gives training for lay persons in personal evangelism. There are courses of different durations, which were originally started by Abraham Mar Thoma himself, before these were organised on the present level. The Gospel Team of the Organisation conducts parish tours and evangelistic work in non-Christian areas and lay persons give their witness. Bible study notes are published every three months to be used in the prayer groups in the parishes. Annual lectures are arranged as Abraham Mar Thoma Memorial lectures to high-light the emphasis that Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan gave on the witness of lay members.

Thus the Voluntary Evangelists Association serves as the organisation in the Church emphasising the ministry of the laity in the Church. The Diamond Jubilee of the Association was celebrated in 1984.

Joseph Mar Barnabas is the present president and Rev. N.I. Mathai is the General Secretary.

3. MAR THOMA SUVISESHA SEVIKA SANGHOM

(Women's Auxiliary)

The women in the Mar Thoma Church also shared the spiritual power generated by the Reformation. They also felt the need and responsibility to take part in the spread of the gospel. Therefore, an organisation for women's participation in evangelism was inaugurated during the Maramon Convention in the year 1919, under the leadership of Abraham Mar Thoma Suffragan Metropolitan, who gave the women's organisation continued support and inspiration.

All women in a parish are members of the Sevika Sanghom in that parish. The Vicars of the parishes give support to the association as Presidents of the branches, and the members of the Committee including a Secretary and Treasurer are elected from among the members. The Committee organises and executes various activities with the full co-operation of the members on the pattern of the general organisation of the Church, branches in the parishes are grouped together to form a Centre, and a number of Centres constitute the Diocesan Samithi. Central office bearers and committee members are

elected by representatives of the branches, once in three years. This organisation can very well claim to be one of the most active organisation in the Church.

The organisation owes much to the self sacrificing work of Mrs. Kandamma Varghese who worked untiringly as the Organising Secretary for over 20 years travelling far and wide, organising branches in the parishes, doing evangelistic work among Christians and non-Christians, and building up the work in parishes.

The need for training women workers was realised early. So a property was acquired in Tiruvalla and a centre was established in 1925 with the name Vanitha Mandiram as the head quarters of the organisation and for the training of workers. It was by God's special providence that an Australian lady named Miss. Kellaway came to serve with the help of the C. M. S in the Vanitha Mandiram to give training to the women workers. She served the Sevika Sanghom for 20 years before she returned to her home in Australia. The organisation always remembers with deep gratitude her distinguished services and deep Christian dedication and labour of love. The library attached to the Vanitha Mandiram is dedicated as a memorial to her. After Miss. Kellaway, Miss Mariam Samuel worked as Principal of the Vanitha Mandiram. Earlier she was a teacher in the Baker Memorial High school at Kottayam. She had also worked for seven years for the spread of the gospel in villages north of Calcutta. As principal of the Vanitha Mandiram she has trained many women as efficient evangelists. She is now living in the Visranthi Bhavan, which is the home for retired workers of the Sevika Sanghom. She is now 92 years old and is still helping in the work of the Sevika Sanghom by her wise counsel.

Along with evangelisation, the work of bringing relief to the needy was also taken up. Naturally concern for orphans became one of the first priorities. A home called Salem Bhavan was opened in 1923 with 6 children. Now it is a big institution taking care of 80 children. Boys who reach the age of 8 are sent to the Boys Home at Punalur, which is another institution under the care of Sevika Sanghom. The various needs of the children as they grow up have all to be met, their education, placement in jobs, marriage etc. This is a very heavy

responsibility. Some who had the ability to study have become graduates and have reached good positions in life. As girls grow up the Sanghom takes responsibility for their marriage and many have been settled in happy families. Salem Home is their parental home, and they are warmly welcomed when they come for short visits.

Medical work also was started to serve the poor in the sea coast area, at Cheriazhikal, near Karthikappally, and at Puthuppally, near Kayamkulam. Later when the Medical Mission work was started by the Church, the Sevika Sanghom discontinued this work.

Educational work was undertaken in 1950 at Punalur and at Kottarakara. Later these have been placed under the Corporate Management of the Church. A kindergarten was started in 1955 and a boarding school in 1963. In 1979 the International Year of Children, a Nursery Teachers Training School also was started, giving training for 30 teachers every year.

Hostels for working women became a great need and the Sevika Sanghom responded by starting a hostel at Kottarakkara in 1970. Besides working women, students in the neighbouring colleges also live there. Now 65 persons are accommodated there. There is great need for expanding it. Another hostel has been started at Haripad, by the Sevika Sanghom of the Adoor-Maveilikara Diocese, and a third one is working at Chungathara, under the Diocese there. There is need for many more hostels of this type to provide accommodation for women, under Christian auspices.

Vanitha Bodhini is the official monthly magazine of Sevika Sanghom, and has wide circulation. An English edition also was published.

The organisation has also tried to provide employment for a few unemployed women. A development department has been formed. It is registered under the name, "Streejana Vikasana Samithi" (S.V.S.). Training is given to a few selected girls in cutting and tailoring, and dress making. The programme of curry power production has been functioning well. A Snack Centre near the S.C.S Junction, Tiruvalla provides wholesome food. A composing and printing unit gives

training to girls. A bakery unit also has been started. In this way girls are helped in getting training for self employment.

Evangelistic Work

Women workers are engaged in evangelistic work in 11 Centres in Kerala. Outside Kerala they participate in mission centres at Tibetan border, Satna, Sihora, Ankola and Hoskote. Besides this, the different Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Samithis have organised work of their own. They take part in evangelistic work and developmental activities for the uplift of the backward community.

As years passed by, more workers reached the age of retirement. As they are mostly unmarried, they have to be provided with accommodation to stay together in Christian fellowship. The Kuwait Home at Elanthoor can accommodate only 4 persons.

The Sevini Mandiram attached to Vanitha Mandiram provides a centre for the workers to come and rest for a short while. There is not sufficient accommodation for the workers when they retire. The Sevika Sanghom therefore decided to provide accommodation for at least 20 more workers. A property was bought in 1984 near the Vanitha Mandiram for a home, with the title "Vishranthi Bhavan" to provide accommodation for twenty persons. This was inaugurated in December 1986.

The Sevika Sanghom is deeply aware of the evangelistic and other needs in the society and is taking progressive steps. Mrs. Annamma Joseph is the General Secretary, and Miss Susy David is the Principal of the Vanitha Mandiram. They are helped by an able Managing committee, which gives full support and co-operation.

4. MAR THOMA YUVAJANA SAKHYAM (The Youth Department of the Church)

The Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam was organised with a view that all the young people in the Church should accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and bear witness to His saving power. It was organized in 1933 by a resolution of the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam.

The first President of the Sakhyam was Rev.V.P.Mammen and the Vice-Presidents were Rev.K.E.Oommen and Rev.C.M.John (later Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan) and the first Secretary was Mr.V.E.Thomas (now Rev.V.E.Thomas, residing in Singapore). Branches of the Sakhyam were set up in the parishes, with a four fold programme of worship, study, witness and service. Mr.M.M.Thomas (now Dr.M.M.Thomas) was appointed as Organising Secretary in 1945 and he was the full time worker of the Sakhyam. Under his dynamic leadership the Sakhyam struck deep roots and spread its branches far and wide.

Most of the parishes, both inside and outside Kerala have branches of the Sakhyam. A group of such branches form a Centre. There are a number of such Centres under each Diocese. The Constitution of the Sakhyam prescribes that the President should be a Bishop of the Church. Yuyakim Mar Coorilose Episcopa is the present President and Rev.V.T.John is the General Secretary.

The Sakhyam publishes a monthly magazine called Yuvadeepam with articles of interest to the youth and with focus on the needs of the Church and society. It contains also Bible reading notes for daily devotional study. An annual calendar is also published by the Sakhyam. The establishment of Youth Centre, Adoor, has been an important achievement of the Sakhyam. It provides facilities for the youth to hold study conferences, retreats and other meetings. The Centre has accommodation for about 200 young people to camp there.

The Sakhyam has its own printing press, which also provides training and employment for some young people. The Sakhyam provides incentive for the development of the varied talents of young people by organising studies on topics of current interest, and competitions in sports, games and cultural activities.

Gospel tours are arranged to mission centres so that the young people get a first hand knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of the mission fields. Gospel distribution squads are trained to distribute the scriptures in different places. Youth conventions are held on Diocesan and regional basis to promote study, and dedication of life. Campaigns are held against alcoholism and other social evils. In pursuance of such projects a vigilance corps is operating. Vocational

guidance is being provided in a few branches. There are also self-employment projects under the auspices of the branches and centres. The Yuvajana Sakhyam works for meeting the varied needs of the growing generation.

The Golden Jubilee of the Sakhyam was celebrated in 1985. An Administrative block of the Sakhyam was completed near the Sabha Office in Tiruvalla as a Jubilee Memorial project. It was inaugurated in 1986.

5. MAR THOMA STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

The Students' Conference was started by Metropolitan Titus II who was a great builder of institutions. Since then, Abraham Mar Thoma, Juhanon Mar Thoma and in fact all the Bishops of the Church, past and present have given active leadership and made significant contributions to the Conference. Dr. M.M. Thomas, Prof. C.P. Mathew, Mr. K.A. Mathew, Prof. Titus Varghese, and many other eminent laymen also have given leadership and taken active part in the programmes of the Conference.

The Conference holds its session annually for 4 or 5 days during midsummer vacation at a venue which changes from year to year; and an average of 300 college students from all over India attend. Leadership is given by all the Bishops of the Church, a large number of Achaens and other senior friends. This is a conference in which all the Bishops of the Church are usually present throughout so as to understand the problem and the thinking of the young people and to enable the young people to come into contact with the Bishops.

Bible studies in the context of contemporary concerns elicit much interest. Group discussions help the participants to analyse and assess topics of interest in the Church and Society, and in the national life. Such group discussions offer challenges for selfless service to the society and quite a number of students accept the challenge. Cultivation of friendship, Church loyalty, prayer life and dedication of life for great causes-these are some of the values the young people imbibe from the Conference. The students' Conference inspired many young men and women to participate in the movements including the freedom struggle

during the 1940s. A number of young persons have been motivated to offer dedicated service in the cause of social justice and up-lift of weaker sections of society.

1985 was the Platinum Jubilee Year of the Mar Thoma Students' Conference. Through the work of the Students' Conference, many young men have dedicated themselves for full time ministry in the church. A large number of people in various walks of life who render effective witnesses through their secular jobs were influenced and moulded by the Conference.

In the Jubilee Year, a hostel for tribal students has been opened near the Students Centre at Thrikkakara. This is a new and bold venture of the Students' Conference. The hostel is a memorial to Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan.

It is significant that the Students' Conference celebrated its platinum jubilee in the International Year of the Youth.

Regional Conferences of the Students Conference are held in different places for follow-up work.

As an offshoot of the Mar Thoma Students' Conference, Students' Conferences are now held annually in Malaysia-Singapore Diocese and in different zones in India, and also in North America. These Conferences held outside Kerala also serve a very useful purpose in giving inspiration and motivation to our young people to be loyal to Christ and to the Church and to be His witnesses in different walks of life.

6. DEPARTMENT OF SACRED MUSIC

The Department of Sacred music was organized in 1968 with the object of developing Church Music. It was organised under the leadership of Rev. K. P. Philip and has progressed during the recent years with the dynamism of Rev. V. M. Mathew who devotes much of his time and energy in this cause. Music is said to be the language of the soul. It helps us to express our praise and joy in the worship of God.

It also cheers us in moments of dejection, and consoles us in sorrow. Music has helped people down the centuries to make worship meaningful and attractive.

In Church music congregational singing has to be promoted because Christian worship is corporate worship. The presence of a well trained choir is very helpful in public worship. There is also need for standardisation of the tunes of songs and hymns. The Department of Sacred Music has done a good deal during the past years to help Church singing to become attractive and devotional. For this the following steps have been taken.

1. Rules and regulations have been codified regarding the formation and working of church choirs.
2. Classes are arranged for varying periods of time, to give training to individuals and choirs.
3. The tunes of hymns have been fixed by the use of notations. These have been printed for the use of choirs.
4. Cassette tapes have been prepared of the songs and hymns used in worship and also of chants used in the worship services. These have helped to standardise tunes.
5. The last Sunday in the month of May is celebrated each year as Sacred Music day. During the worship service the importance of music is emphasised, and choirs are formed where necessary. Choirs from the different Churches meet in the evening on that day and present programmes of Sacred Music.
6. Composing of new hymns is encouraged by arranging competitions.
7. A central music team has been organised to present programmes in different churches, to help raise the standard of music in the Churches.
8. Music is also used as a means of evangelism. People are attracted when the Gospel is presented by songs more than by mere narrations or speeches. The Music team helps in this respect also.

- 9 Broadcasts have been made of programmes, specially prepared with short talks and singing. These programmes are popular and have been helpful to reach thousands of people.

The Department of Sacred Music is badly in need of a recording studio, where recording could be made of programmes, so that these be duplicated and sent to different places. More equipment also is needed to provide good musical background and accompaniment to singing. There is need also for a van so that the members of the Music Team can move about carrying their musical instrument and equipments. The Department is making progress, and it hopes to achieve better results from year to year.

7. DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Besides extending charitable service to the needy, people have to be helped to help themselves. Though charity is necessary, it shouldn't lead to dependence on the part of the receivers. Christ always tried to raise the sense of dignity of everyone who came in contact with Him. He looked at a person not only as what he was but also as what he could become under God's grace. That was why he called Simon by the name Peter, meaning rock. The task of the Christian Church is to develop the sense of dignity in every person, however low his social status may be. Development has thus become one of the major concerns of the Church. The Church has to see that the poor are helped to grow and to develop. Thus projects for self-employment have to be initiated, with a view to uplift the poorer sections of the society. This includes helping individuals and communities to raise their earning capacity with the aid of loans arranged through banks and other sources. Collective and co-operative projects like irrigational facilities, making roads, drinking water facility, libraries are to be promoted. The help of those trained in social sciences is needed to organise and execute such projects. In recent years the Mar Thoma Church started the Development Department, with Mr. P. George a retired Development officer as the first Director. Mr. M. P Joseph the present Director has received special training in organising and directing such programmes. A charitable society also has been registered with the name, Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD) to help in the work of development.

The main projects undertaken are :

- (i) Wandoor Rural Development Project, at Nilambur in Malabar;
- (ii) Mothiravayal Project at Ranni;
- (iii) Thalamkandam Tribal Development Project in Iddukki District;
- (iv) Khrist Seva Kendra (KSA) at Indore in Madhya Pradesh;
- (v) Thekkummala Community Development Project in Vadasserikara;
- (vi) Backward People Development Programme (BPDP) in three Dioceses in Kerala
- (vii) Kuttanad Rural Development Project in the Niranam-Maramon Diocese
- (viii) Development Programme in the Kottayam-Ranny Diocese.

CARD also co-ordinates the following programmes of the Development Department of the Church and of the Dioceses.

- (i) Sea-cost Development Project of the Adoor-Mavelikara Diocese;
- (ii) Tribal Development Programme, Ankola, in North Kanara;
- (iii) Vadattupara Community Health Programme of the Emakulam parish in the hill areas near Iddukki;
- (iv) Housing scheme for economically backward sections conducted by the Church;
- (v) Vocational Training Centre at Tiruvalla for training in printing and book binding.

The programmes of CARD involve:-

- (i) Formation of social structures in villages, youth and children's clubs, village development associations, rural women's unit etc. to empower the people to struggle for justice, self-reliance and improvement of living conditions;

- (ii) Promotion of agriculture by supplying seedling and arranging credit through banks;
- (iii) Village improvement programmes such as village roads, drinking water wells, community irrigation programmes etc.
- (iv) Community Health and Sanitation programmes and preventive health care;
- (v) Programmes for the welfare of women and children such as creches, Balawadies, Mahilasamjam, Balasamajam etc.
- (vi) Social education, non-formal education, tuition centres, adult education, leadership training etc.
- (vii) Training for improvement of skills such as tailoring, weaving, mat-making, book binding, composing, printing etc.

The Wandoor Project was started in 1978 and has completed two phases of 3 years each, covering a large area of 5 Panchayats in Nilambur region. Village Development Associations, Mahila Samajams, Creches, Youth Club, Library and Reading rooms, Co-operative societies etc. have been formed. Milk producers association, Rubber growers associations, Self employment schemes and leadership training were all promoted. Similar work is extended to other places also to suit local conditions and needs. Where children are backward in study, free tuition classes are arranged to help them overcome their handicap. People who have had no idea of making a saving are encouraged to start community saving schemes on a small scale and they are offered incentives by giving them 25 percent more of what they have saved for productive and income earning activities. Thus many of the low-income groups have begun to make savings and to acquire thrift habits.

Development programmes are taken up at the Diocesan level to help people to find self-employment. Loans are given for purchasing sewing machines and starting small shops and these loans are repayable in installments. Many families are helped to earn a living in this way. The Ashrams in different places also engaged in rural development work. Sihora Ashram has an impressive record of rural development activities in 16 villages.

The Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese under the leadership of Mar Irenaeus Episcopa is engaged in developmental work among the parishes in the South Travancore area. They have started small scale industry which gives employment to a number of economically backward families.

CHAPTER XI

CHURCH IN SERVICE OF COMMUNITY

The message of the Kingdom of God calls upon us to serve others in all their needs-physical, mental and spiritual. This involves working for the integrated development of the community, to eradicate poverty and unemployment and to provide education and health care for all. Responding to this challenge of the Gospel, the Church has taken up educational, health and rural development programmes.

Educational work of the Church

After the reformation in the Church, a few primary schools were set up with a view to offering literacy. These were subsequently developed into Secondary schools. Later the Church entered the field of University Education. Some schools were started and run by parishes under their management. Some schools were opened by the Evangelistic Association and also by the Sunday School Samajam. Later, all these schools were brought under one Corporate Management under the Church.

Initially scripture lessons formed part of the curriculum. Thus Christian and Non-Christian pupils had the opportunity to learn the Bible. In recent years however, after the Schools came more under the control of the Government, scripture teaching is not allowed to be conducted during school hours. It has now to be done outside school hours. Teachers and pupils are not enthusiastic about working extra hours for scripture classes and this is tantamount to a failure in our witness. We should endeavour to remedy this situation. It is heartening to state that we have a number of teachers with a spirit of dedication and they are a source of inspiration to their wards.

No. of Schools:	High Schools	15
	U.P.S.	15
	L.P.S.	119
	B.T.S.	1
<hr/> Total		<hr/> 150

Colleges

The Church entered the field of higher education in 1952 when the Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla was started. Next year the St. Thomas College Kozhencherry, and in 1963 the Christian College, Chengannur were started. These colleges are all now first grade Colleges. The first two colleges have post-graduate courses, in various faculties. Titus II Teachers College Tiruvalla, started in 1956 offers post graduate course in Education (B.Ed.degree). The concern of the Church in starting College education in the less developed areas was manifested by opening a College in Chungathara, in Malabar, in the year 1981. A College was started in Perumbavoor in 1982 under the auspices of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association. The Seminary for Theological education started in 1926 was upgraded to the College level in 1974.

The Mar Thomas Church is irrevocably committed to the principle that no funds will be collected as donation or capitation fee for admission of students or appointment of staff. So all the money needed has to be raised by voluntary contribution from the public, which is a hard proposition as the expenses for constructing buildings and running the College are escalating, year by year. The normal maintenance grant which was promised by government is not forthcoming since 1972. As a Church we are committed to the cause of education, and we have to find ways and means to face the challenge. The Parent-Teacher Association, it is hoped, will do their best in the circumstance.

Technical education is provided through the institutes at Kozhencherry, Anchal and Mylachal. More such institutions are necessary to improve the lot of the educated unemployed. But running such technical institutes involves considerable outlay and the Government has strictly limited the fees to be collected from students. Therefore these institutions are struggling to pay even the salaries of the instructors, not to speak of further development. Therefore starting new institutes is very difficult indeed.

Medical Mission

The ministry of healing was part of the salvific programme of

Jesus Christ. The commission of Jesus Christ to his disciples was to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, to heal the sick, and to make disciples of all nations. The compassion of Jesus Christ reached out to all in need of help and He healed all the sick who were brought to Him. The Church also from the earliest days took up the ministry of healing as an integral aspect of the manifestation of the love of God.

In remote areas where the need was most felt medical work was started by the Church in a small way. Some parishes also started medical work, as an expression of Christian concern. When Ashrams were established in different language areas of India, in rural situations, medical work also became necessary. Thus medical work was started by the Ashrams at Palghat, at Ankola in North Kanara, at Hoskote near Bangalore, at Sihora and Satna in Madhya Pradesh, and at Vapi in Gujarat, as also on the borders of Tibet at Munsiri and Tejam. Finding doctors with dedication to live and work in remote areas and primitive surroundings is a real problem. But some doctors and paramedical staff have come forward to live and work in these villages.

The only hospital of the Church with more than 100 beds is the St. Thomas Mission Hospital, Kattanam. It was started in a rural set up, with the free gift of some land and a small building donated by Mr.C.G.Kurian, Changathara, Kattanam. Since then more land was acquired and buildings were put up. It has now grown to be a large hospital with 10 special departments, 15 specialists and 25 doctors in all. There is also a school for Nursing where training is given to 17 girls in General Nursing and 8 persons in Laboratory technology and 30 girls in Community health. The hospital has been recognised for Senior House Surgeoncy training. The hospital at Kumbanad and at Chungathara are developing steadily. They also render valuable service to the community. Emphasis is now laid on community health projects. Community Health Centres function in different places to reach nearly villages under the auspices of the various hospitals.

Small Hospitals were started at Kidangannoor, Chittar, Malayalapuzha, Kochukoickal, Angamuzhy, Keezhillam, and Valakom. More work has to be done in promoting community health among the poor. The Niranam-Maramon Diocese has a community project in the Kuttanad area. The Ranny Centre parishes and the

Kunnamkulam Centre parishes are running hospitals with more than 50 beds each. The parishes of Kozhencherry and Maramon also started hospitals and developed them with their own resources. Mention has already been made of the medical work started by the Sevika Sanghom at Cheriashikal and at Puthuppally near Kayamkulam, which were later discontinued.

Charitable Homes

Along with the healing ministry the Church extended service of love to the destitutes. Large numbers of beggars used to gather at the site of the Maramon Convention in the hot sun and appeal for alms, displaying their sores and disfigured bodies. The organisers of the Convention, moved with compassion, got them to rest at a convenient site while the volunteers collected money from the people and distributed it among the beggars. It was felt that there should be an arrangement to give permanent help to such people. Thus was started a home at Kumbanad. Those who were willing to come and stay there were taken care of, and the centre was called Dharmagiri Mandiram. Now there are 110 inmates with various kinds of disabilities. Some are blind, and some are bed-ridden and need help all the time. Some have no one else to take care of them in their old age. These are from different religious persuasions. All who genuinely need help are taken care of, irrespective of their caste or creed. There is a group of dedicated persons who serve them day and night. Funds come by voluntary contributions. The Government also gives a grant.

In this way there are other homes, one at Carmel Ayroor, one at Kottarakara and one at Anaprampal west of Tiruvalla. A home was started at Manganam near Kottayam 50 years ago by a Primary School teacher Mr.P.C.George and his sister. Its first inmate was a person who was found lying helpless on the road side. That home has now grown into a large institution of service to the poor, with more than 100 inmates. A small dispensary which was started to take care of the needs of the inmates has now developed into a large hospital, with many departments and specialities. This Home and the Hospital are run by an interdenominational group of which the Mar Thoma Church is one of the constituents. There is a similar home at Trichur which was first

started by other agencies and later handed over to the Church for continuing the service. These institutions need the self-giving services of dedicated men and women who are moved by the love of Christ. The question is how many will accept this challenge.

Destitute homes with a few inmates each are run by Ashram at Hoskote, Ankola and Sihora. The Good Friday offerings from the parishes of the Church are set apart for helping these Mandirams. There is a Committee under the the Chairmanship of Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan, to co-ordinate the work of these Mandirams and to give training to the workers.

Orphanages

Mention has already been made of the orphanages conducted by the Sevika Sanghom at Tiruvalla and Punalur. Homes for children are also run at Elanthoor, Perumpavoor and Ankola. Creches are run by different Dioceses to take care of the children of agricultural labourers, when they go for work in the fields. Much more has to be done along these lines. Availing of aid from donor agencies, the Sevika Sanghom provides noon meals for needy children in primary schools at different localities.

Care of the Disabled

The celebration of the International Year of the Disabled by U.N.O. created a new awareness of our responsibility towards the disabled in the society. In 1978 when the Church considered how to celebrate the silver jubilee of the consecration of the three Bishops, it was decided to start a home for the mentally retarded children who were in great need of special care. Thus a home was started at the Mar Thoma Centre for Rural Development (M.C.R.D.). It is named 'Navajyothi School.' Buildings have been put up for providing boarding facilities and for school office and class rooms. Teachers were sent for training in Japan. These teachers now teach in the School and take care of the boarders. Now there are 40 children and soon there will be facilities for more. There is great demand for admission and it is necessary to extend the facilities so as to admit at least 100 children.

Besides giving custodial care with boarding facilities, provision has to be made to give day-care and hold classes for children who come daily from their homes in the locality. This special school requires much financial support. Already there are sponsors who take care of the needs of a few children, which is a great help. More financial help is needed. The Bangalore Parish is running a day school called "Opportunity School" for mentally retarded children. At present there are 80 children on the rolls.

School for the Deaf and Dumb at Kasergode

In 1979 the Mar Thoma Church started at Kasergode a school for deaf and dumb children, under the initiative of Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa. A priest of the Church with special training in this line is in charge of the institution. Much has to be done for the development of this work.

The school gives instruction to 110 students from pre-primary level to standard X. The Church gave Rs. 5 lakhs to the development of this institution from the Projects Development fund in 1993.

The Adoor-Mavelikara Diocese under the leadership of Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa started an institution at Pathanapuram, for the physically disabled due to polyo. Training is given for jobs that they are able to do. This institution is still in the infant stage, and needs much money and support for development. Recently the Church sanctioned an amount of Rs.4 lakhs for the development of this institution from the Projects Development Fund.

Old Age Home

Another area of concern is the care of the senior citizens in society whose near relations are all working in distant places. This problem is getting more and more acute in our society, as in western countries. Mr.T.G.Kurian of Puthencavu, donated all his properties worth 10 lakhs of Rupees to the Church for starting a home for such persons. Mr. Kurien desired to reside in this home when it is completed but passed away in May 1985. The Sneha Bhavan is nearing completion

at Kompady near the A.M.M.Bible Institute, Tiruvalla. At present 13 persons are staying there.

The Sevika Sanghom branch at Bahrain has started a senior citizens' home at Kalluvathukal, near Quilon, with the name 'Sneha Sadanam' with accommodation for 14 persons.

In 1979 the Mar Thoma Church started at Kaserpady a school for deaf and dumb children, under the initiative of Rev. Fr. Thomas. A guest of the Church with special training in this line is in charge of the institution. Much has to be done for the development of the work. The school has moved from its primary level to standard A. The Church gave Rs. 2 lakhs to the development of this institution from the Project Development Fund in 1983.

The Adoor-Mavelikkara Diocese under the leadership of Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopus started an institution as a rehabilitation for the physically disabled due to polio. Training is given for jobs that they are able to do. This institution is still in the infant stage and needs much money and support for development. Recently the Church sanctioned an amount of Rs. 4 lakhs for the development of this institution from the Project Development Fund.

Another area of concern is the care of the senior citizens in society whose next relations are all working in distant places. This problem is getting more and more acute in our society, as in western countries. Rev. T. O. Kuttan of Puthencherry, donated all his properties worth 10 lakhs to the Church for starting a home for such persons. Mr. Kuttan desired to reside in this home when it is completed outpurchasing in May 1985. The scheme is now in the final stage of completion.

CHAPTER XII

ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Orthodox Church

Mention has already been made of the special character of the Mar Thoma Church as maintaining oriental traditions while being a reformed Church. Even though the Orthodox Church and the Mar Thoma Church have come from the same Malankara Church, there is no communion relationship between them. At the same time they come together in social and public concerns. Marriages between the members of the two Churches are very common although ecclesiastical authorities like to discourage such alliances, and do not grant proper documents after announcing banns. Conversations have taken place between leaders of the two Churches about the points that are to be cleared for mutual recognition of the ministry. Such conversations are continuing. The Orthodox Church in Kerala at present has two main branches - The Orthodox Syrian Church with the Catholicos at Kottayam, and the Syrian Orthodox Church owing allegiance to the Patriarch at Antioch.

Anglican Church

As a reformed Church with episcopal traditions, the Mar Thoma Church entered into dialogue with the Anglican Church in India. The Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops considered the question of communion between the two Churches. A commission was appointed by the Anglican Church in India in 1957 to study the possibility of intercommunion. After considering the report of the Commission a concordat was agreed upon in 1961 establishing Communion relationship between the two Churches. It was also agreed that in the consecration of Bishops by either Church the Bishops of the other Church shall participate. Thus ministry of the two Churches was mutually accepted in full. Later the Lambeth Conference declared acceptance of the ministry and full communion relationship. Thus the Mar Thoma Church is now in full communion relationship with the Anglican Communion all over the world.

In recent years when parishes of the Mar Thoma Church were organised in the United States and Canada agreements were made between the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church and the Prelates of the Anglican Church in Canada and of the Episcopal Church in the United States by which they will provide pastoral care for the members of the Mar Thoma Church in those countries, whenever necessary. The present Metropolitan attended the Lambeth Conference in 1978 by special invitation. He participated in the installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1980. Also he attended the Anglican Consultative Council held in Nigeria in 1984 with the Moderators of CSI & CNI. The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Kerala in February '86 and participated in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Reformation in the Church.

C.S.I.

After the formation of the C S I in 1947 conversations were held between C S I and Mar Thoma Church regarding mutual recognition of the ministry and intercommunion relationship. The Theological commission of the Mar Thoma Church studied the matter and made recommendations to the Sabha Mandalam. On the basis of the report the Sabha Mandalam decided on full communion relationship with the Church of South India in 1958, with the provision that full communion relationship does not mean that either Church accepts completely all the doctrinal positions and practices of the other Church.

C.N.I.

The Church of North India was founded in 1970. The organizers took special care that the ministry was completely integrated even at the formation of the new Church. The Mar Thoma Church was invited to participate in the inaugural service. The present Metropolitan accordingly took part in the service. Thus, the Mar Thoma Church had no difficulty in accepting the ministry of the new Church; and soon negotiations took place for establishing full communion relationship between the two Churches. The Sabha Mandalam passed the resolution establishing full communion relationship with the Church of North

India in 1972. The Synod of the C N I also passed a similar resolution and thus full communion relationship was established between the two Churches with the provision as with C.S.I.

Joint Council of the C.N.I.; C.S.I. and Mar Thoma Church

Having established full communion relationship with the two Churches as mentioned above, negotiations were started for establishing even closer relationship with these Churches. The Theological commission of the Mar Thoma Church met with the Theological commissions of the other Churches to consider the matter. At the very outset representatives of the Mar Thoma Church led by the present Metropolitan made it clear that they had no intention to enter into a union with the other Churches which would involve merging of the three Churches as happened in the case of the formation of the C.N.I. and C.S.I. The Mar Thoma Church wished to explore possibilities of working together especially in the field of evangelisation in India and other areas of co-operation in the fulfilment of the mission of the Church.

As the Mar Thoma Church has oriental traditions which it wishes to preserve, the Church did not agree to lose its identity by merging with the other Churches. The other two Churches which were formed by the merging of different denominations from the Western tradition, did not have difficulty in the idea of again merging to form a new Church. Still recognising the need for working together and growing together in the spirit of unity all the three Churches agreed to form a 'Joint council' of the three Churches consisting of 30 representatives from each Church including 5 Bishops, ten presbyters and fifteen lay members of which five should be women. A constitution of the joint council was drawn up and sent to the three Churches for their approval. Any decision of the Joint Council would be binding on any of the constituent Churches only when the Church's supreme legislative body accepted the decision. The three Churches considered the recommendation made by the negotiating body and accepted the constitution. Thus the Joint Council was formed and inaugurated at Nagpur in 1978.

One of the recommendations made by the Joint Council to the Churches was the adoption of a common name for the three Churches

This question was discussed by the different Churches. The CNI and Mar Thoma Church decided against having a common name. The CSI suggested the name "Church of India." The Mar Thoma Church did not accept the suggestion to have a common name as a new Church has not come into existence. The Sabha Mandalam which met in May 1985 however resolved to recommend to the Joint Council that the Joint Council may be renamed as "the Council of Churches in Communion - CNI, CSI, MTC" in order to express clearly the bond of unity realised by the communion relationship among the three Churches. The Joint Council did not accept the recommendation. It has appointed three Commissions to explore the ways of working together.

They are:-

(i) Commission on Mission to find out the possibility of opening new mission centers in different language areas of India in co-operation with one another.

(ii) Commission on Theological matters: to study the implication of closer relationships.

(ii) Commission on Peace and Justice : to consider national and international issues pertaining to Justice and peace and the response of the Church to such situations.

The second Sunday in November is set apart as Unity Sunday to celebrate the unity that has been already attained.

Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur

The Mar Thoma Church is in communion relationship with the Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur, although the doctrinal positions are not mutually accepted in full. When the Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius passed away without consecrating a successor in 1893, it was the Metropolitan of the Thozhiyur Church who consecrated Metropolitan Titus I Mar Thoma, and helped the Mar Thoma Church in a serious crisis. Mar Thoma Metropolitans have since then helped in consecrating the Metropolitans of Thozhiyur Church. According to the constitution of the Thozhiyur Church, when

difficulties arise the Thozhiyur Church should seek the advice and guidance of the Mar Thoma Metropolitan despite the fact that either Church has no authority over the other. Thus the relation between the Thozhiyur Church and Mar Thoma Church is unique. In recent years three Metropolitans of the Thozhiyur Church were consecrated by the Metropolitans of the Mar Thoma Church. The centenary of the fraternal relationship between the two Churches was celebrated in the Sabha Mandalom on 14th September 1994.

Relationships with Ecumenical Organisations

When the National Christian Council of India was formed, the Mar Thoma Church became a member and took active part in it. It continues its membership in it after it was reorganised as the National Council of Churches in India. The previous General Secretary of NCCI, Mr. Mathai Zachariah is a member of Mar Thoma Church. Earlier Mr. P.O. Philip a member of Mar Thoma Church has served as General Secretary of National Christian Council for many years. Mar Chrysostom has been the President of the NCCI, and at present Mar Irenaeus is the President.

Kerala Council of Churches

The Kerala unit of the National Council of Churches is the Kerala Council of Churches and Mar Thoma Church has been taking active part in it from its very inception. The Secretary of KCC at present is Rev. A.P. Jacob a Priest of the Mar Thoma Church.

World Council of Churches

The Mar Thoma Church has been a member of the World Council of Churches ever since the inauguration of the W.C.C. in 1948. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was elected as one of the Presidents in the Second Assembly. Dr. M.M. Thomas was the Moderator of the Vth Assembly which met at Nairobi in 1975. Representatives of the Mar Thoma Church including the Bishops have participated in all the Assemblies and in the Central committee and they made valuable contributions in the sessions of the Assemblies and the committees. Dr.

Thomas has been a consultant for many years. Thomas Mar Athanasius, has been a member of the Faith and Order commission. At present Zacharias Mar Theophilus is the representative of the Mar Thoma Church in the Central Committee and Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph is a member of the Faith and order Commission. Mr.T.K.Thomas, a member of the Church, was the Publication Officer of the Central Secretariat at Geneva.

Christian Conference of Asia

The Asia Pacific Regional Unit of the WCC is the Christian Council of Asia. The present Metropolitan represented the Church when the Regional Council was inaugurated at Kuala Lumpur in 1959. Since that time the Mar Thoma Church has taken a very active part in its deliberations and activities. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa was a member of the Executive Committee of CCA.

The National Missionary Society

The N.M.S. was organised on Christmas day, 1905, by a group of earnest Christians from various denominations, who had the conviction that the Mission of the Church in India is primarily the responsibility of Indians and that for fulfilment of this mission indigenous methods were to be adopted. As a completely Indian Church, the Mar Thoma Church appreciated this stand, and actively participated in the N.M.S. from the beginning. Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan was its President and Mr.P.O.Philip was Secretary for some time. V.Rev.P.J.Thomas has served as General Secretary for three years in recent time. The first missionary effort undertaken by the Mar Thoma Church outside Kerala was in co-operation with the N.M.S. in North Kanara District, in 1910. The co-operation still continues. Mr.K.Chandy, a member of the Mar Thoma Church was the organiser of N.M.S. in Kerala for many years. The Platinum Jubilee of the N.M.S. was celebrated in 1980 at Tiruvalla, the head-quarters of the Mar Thoma Church. The present President of the N.M.S. is Thomas Mar Timotheos Esiscopa.

Bible Society

The Bible Society is another inter-denominational organisation working throughout the world. The Mar Thoma Church has actively supported the work of the Bible Society. The present Metropolitan has been President of the Bible Society of India for nearly 10 years, 1973 to 1982, and has also served as one of the Vice Presidents of the United Bible Societies. Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church have been Presidents of the Kerala Auxiliary of the Bible Society and Rev.Dr.P.M.Mathew is the Secretary of the Bihar Auxiliary.

Active co-operation of the Church is extended to the international Christian Organisations, such as Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., S.C.M. etc. The Mar Thoma Church co-operates with the Salvation Army in the preaching of the gospel.

Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church

The Udayamperoor Synod and the pledge taken by our fathers at the Koonan Cross, Mattancherry, have remained fresh in our minds. Therefore, our relationship with the Roman Catholic Church has not been very cordial. However, the IInd Vatican Council called by Pope John XXIII marked a turning point. Representatives from the Mar Thoma Church also were invited to attend the Council. Thomas Mar Athanasius, Philipose Mar Chrysostom and Mr. C.P.Mathew attended the Vatican Council representing the Church as observers. Since then the relationship has steadily improved. When common issues involving educational or social problems affecting the work of the Churches, Bishops of the different Churches meet, discuss and agree upon the action to be taken. Also the week of Prayer and the Unity Octave in the month of January is an occasion when members of the different Churches meet together and join in intercessory prayer using orders of service approved by the W.C.C. and the Vatican.

Quite recently the need for common action arose in connection with the Christian centre at Nilakkal, where there was an ancient Church believed to be one of the seven Churches established by St.Thomas. In later centuries the inhabitants of Nilakkal left that area

for reasons undetermined, and the place became completely covered by thick forest. Keen desire to re-establish the Church there was felt by all the Christians who have the common heritage from Apostle Thomas. This proposal met with strong opposition from those who did not like the idea of a Christian Church being situated so close to the famous Sabirimala temple, a place of pilgrimage for devout Hindus. The leaders of all the Episcopal Churches in Kerala met together and considered how to bring about a peaceful settlement. They decided to accept another site at some distance from the original centre with a view to respect the sentiments of the Hindu friends. The Government offered such a site in the forest and it was accepted by all concerned. For the first time in history a Church was built there by all denominations together. It was dedicated in April 1984. This Church is a token of the sacred heritage which all Christians in Kerala share together from Apostle Thomas and is a symbol of the determination to work together in the future in witnessing to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

A SEPTENNIAL REVIEW (1986-1993)

The second edition of this book was prepared in 1986 when we were celebrating the third golden jubilee of the reformation in the Malankara Syrian Church. We took a number of decisions at that time to revitalise the Church and keep aloft the torch of renewal. After a period of seven years we look back with a view to making an overall assessment of what we have achieved during this period.

The Weaker Sections

Reformation in Malankara marked the beginning of an attitudinal change among Christians towards the weaker sections, particularly people of low caste origin, who were considered untouchables. Many among them were prepared to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. It was, of course, difficult to break the barriers of caste and age old customs and traditions at one stroke. The Holy Spirit gave us courage, patience and sagacity to tide over some of the major difficulties that stood in the way of integration. At present we have 120 parishes which cater specially to the spiritual needs of the Dalits. These parishes also are represented in the Sabha Prathinithi Mandalam, the supreme decision making body of our Church.

This is not enough. We have to do everything possible to help these parishes to be on their own. This may not be an easy task. A long term plan may be needed to mobilise more resources to the realisation of this objective. Meanwhile, we are not sitting idle. Until recently most of these parishes did not have good places of worship. It is in this context that the Church gave financial assistance to build, renovate or enlarge places of worship used by the Dalit congregations. Now almost all such parishes have pucca buildings which they can use for worship, Christian education and for other needs.

A word has to be said about the Backward Class Development Commission. It gives financial help to people from various dioceses to take up self employment schemes. A minimum of twenty five people

from different areas get benefit out of it every year. There is also provision to help students securing first class in the SSLC examination to continue their education. The commission also plans and implements programmes of remedial education at various centres with the help of CARD. Conferences for college going students are convened every year so that they can discuss their own problems and get to know one another. These are also meant to develop leadership qualities and to motivate them to take up responsible positions in the church.

The Girideepthi at Emakulam started on the initiative of the Mar Thoma Students Conference held in the year 1985 is yet another milestone in the history of our commitment to the weaker sections. This is a hostel which gives accommodation, food and clothing to Girijan (tribal) students who come to Ernakulam for education. As a matter of fact the spade work was done by the 75th session of the Mar Thoma Students Conference which raised funds for the venture. Subsequently the World Vision came forward offering help and the Mar Thoma Church granted an amount of Rs.3 lakhs from the Projects Development Fund. There is provision for remedial education to those who need it and the expenses will be met by Girideepthi.

'Bhoo Bhavana Danam' or movement for providing shelter to the homeless has been a major item in the agenda of our social development mission for over two and a half decades. It was a programme that quipped the State Government to launch the ambitious one lakh Housing Scheme. During the last 25 years the Central organisation of the Church alone completed 2500 houses for the poor and needy. Parishes and other organisations in the church have completed more than this number for the poor. We may note in this context that fifty percent of the fund earmarked for this purpose goes to the Dalits. This year also the plan of the centre is to construct 100 houses of which half would be reserved for the Dalits.

It is an Irony that those people who belong to the Scheduled Castes who have become Christians are denied the benefits of reservation which their brethren from Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh religions receive from the Government. India being a secular state this kind of discrimination on the basis of religion is a travesty of justice and

a negation of the spirit of secularism. Along with other churches and Christian social organisations we have brought this matter to the attention of the Government of India so that the necessary constitutional amendment may be made to ensure justice to all irrespective of religious consideration. A massive rally was held in Delhi in March 1994 to press the demand and many members of our church took part in it including two Bishops of our Church, Rt.Rev.Dr.Joseph Mar Irenaeus, President of the NCCI and Rt.Rev.Dr. Issac Mar Philoxenos, Bishop in Delhi.

From five to fifty: A leap in development

In September 1990 the Mandalam passed a resolution to raise an amount of Rupees Five Lakhs to support development projects taken up by the Church and various Dioceses. The amount was to be utilised for the development of the following: (1) Primary Schools (2) Asha Bhavan, Pathanapuram (3) Institutes for training Evangelists at Hoskote and Sihora (4) Deaf and Dumb School, Kasargod (5) Fiber Centre, Sreekariyam, Trivandrum and (6) Treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts at Kattanam, Kumbanad and Malayalapuzha. When the Sabha Council took up the matter it was proposed that the Hospital Guidance Centre at Trivandrum and the Girideepthi Hospital at Ernakulam may also be included in the list. Since the amount was meagre to meet all the requirements, a fresh proposal was mooted to raise the amount to 15 lakhs and it was accepted by the Prathinithi Mandalam which met in september 1991. Rev. A.C.Kurien was appointed as the convener of the Collection campaign. As people responded wholeheartedly, we could raise an amount of Rs.50 lakhs for this purpose.

There are a number of projects and programmes undertaken by the churches and Christian agencies in India which depend heavily on foreign help. Though we also receive money from foreign donor agencies to carry on humanitarian work, our tradition has always been to be self-reliant as far as possible. The fact that we could go beyond the target in raising money needed for Evangelical and humanitarian programmes is a convincing testimony of our commitment to this noble tradition.

We have noted earlier that the Mar Thoma Projects Development Fund is earmarked for the development of some projects taken up by the Church. It may be worthwhile to know what they are and how the amount allocated is being utilised.

(a) Primary Schools

The largest portion (Rs.15 lakhs) was allotted to the maintenance of our primary schools. Most of them were started about 75 years ago and are now in a dilapidated condition. As many children from middle class families join unaided English medium schools, the support base of the aided schools, is shrinking. In fact a majority of aided schools face a grave crisis. There is not only a sharp fall in the number of students but also a fall in educational standards due to the lack of facilities needed for primary education. What is more disturbing is the indifference shown by the rich and middle classes towards these centres of learning where mostly children from weaker sections study. They do not care because their wards are not to the beneficiaries. The result is that even in relatively affluent areas, the aided primary schools stand like tattered monuments of a bygone era. This is a sad reflection on our Christian witness. It is analogous to the attitude of the rich man in the parable who did not care for poor Lazar who was facing death a few yards away from his gate. The amount of Rs.15 lakhs has been utilised for renovating these schools. Local people also raised at least an equal amount to support this venture.

(b) Training in Evangelism

The institutes for training Evangelists, one at Hoskote and the other at Sihora, were commissioned as a memorial to late Bishop Easow Mar Timotheos. To the development of these institutions an amount of Rs.8 lakhs was allotted. In conformity with the tradition of the Mar Thoma Church there are many who offer themselves to work as Evangelists in different parts of India. They have to be well trained. The training centre at Hoskote teaches Kannada Language to prospective Evangelists who intend to reach the unreached in the Kannada area. Proficiency in the Kannada language is essential to communicate

effectively with the local people. So apart from teaching theology the Institute teaches them the art of effective communication by introducing them to the history, culture and traditions of the people among whom they have to work. A similar kind of training is given to the students at Sihora with a view to exposing them to the cultural and religious traditions of the people who live in the Hindi heartland. Trainees of these institutions have already begun work in villages where the gospel has not yet penetrated.

(c) Hospital Guidance Centre, Trivandrum

It was the Trivandrum - Quilon Diocese which started the Hospital Guidance and Counselling Centre at Trivandrum, near the Medical College Hospital. It was the fulfilment of a long felt need. Trivandrum being one of the major medical centres in Kerala, a large number of people come to the Medical College Hospital and Sri Chitra Medical Centre for treatment. The patients and those who accompany them often get themselves cheated by those who run lodges and hotels. Poor people find it extremely difficult to get cheap accommodation. The hustle and bustle of the Hospital, the difficulty in finding out various departments in the large Hospitals and the problem of getting admitted for treatment - these are some of the hurdles which make their first encounter with the system, a real nightmare. It is in this context that the Guidance Centre takes up the role of a good Samaritan. It caters mainly to the needs of the poor, irrespective of caste and creed. Anyone coming with the recommendation of a Parish Priest gets the necessary help and guidance including free food and accommodation. Last year the Centre received a grant of Rs.2 lakhs from the Projects Development Fund.

(d) Fibre Training Cum Production Centre

There are some people who question the Church getting involved in social service. They think that preaching of the gospel is enough. We should not forget the fact that the gospel is the story of love in action. Jesus not only preached the Word but also fed the hungry, cured the sick

and expressed his solidarity with the downtrodden. That preaching and social service are two sides of the same coin must not be forgotten by true believers.

The Fibre Training cum Production Centre in Sreekaryam gives employment to forty women. Moreover, it gives training to forty women every year to learn various arts and crafts. In particular, training is given to make rushmats, table mats, items for decoration, bags etc. Those who know the plight of rural women in South Travancore will appreciate this service which enables many to stand on their own. The Centre gets support from the Khadi Board and the STARD. We are reminded of the Chinese proverb: It is better to light one candle than curse darkness. Last year the Centre was given a grant of Rs.3 lakhs from the Projects Development Fund to buy equipments and build the necessary infrastructure.

(e) Treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts

Alcoholism is a sin. The number of people in our parishes who find it difficult to keep away from the use of alcohol and narcotic drugs is on the increase. As practising Christians we have a responsibility to help them out of the quagmire of addiction as a mark of our concern for the least and the lost. This is a very difficult and complicated task. Addicts have to be identified and it would be very difficult to persuade them to come to the deaddiction centres for treatment. And there is the question of giving continuing fellowship to keep them away from the old habits for quite some time. Besides, Conscientisation programmes are needed to make society aware of the grave dangers inherent in the use of alcohol and narcotic drugs. The work taken up by the Hospitals at Kattanam, Kumbanad and Malayalapuzha to tackle the problem of addiction is a move in the right direction. These Institutions received a grant of Rs. 5 lakhs from the Projects Development Fund to carry on the crusade against the evil, including preventive work.

It is a promising sign that efforts have been made at the Diocesan level to deal with the problem. The institution named 'Mochana' at Manganam, Kottayam, and the De-addiction Centre attached to George John Memorial Hospital at Valakom also render valuable service in this

task. We join with other churches in the programmes organised by TRADA, a Roman Catholic Institution to combat the evils of drug addiction.

(f) Other Institutions

About the other institutions which received financial support from the Projects Development Fund, reference has already been made in the preceding pages. They are the Girideepthi Hostel at Ernakulam, Deaf School at Kasargod and the Asha Bhavan at Pathanapuram.

Missionary Horizon

We have a number of Mission Fields outside Kerala and they are doing a wonderful work in communicating the Good News among the people. As a brief resume of the work is given in an earlier chapter this is only an attempt to highlight some of the recent developments.

Our Institutes for training Evangelists at Sihora, Hoskote and Pollachi are turning out Evangelists who can work in the Northern and Southern States. Besides, we have the trainees of Episcopal Jubilee Institute and Vanitha Mandiram who can be absorbed in Mission Fields in Kerala and outside the state. As Dioceses, parishes and individuals sponsor Evangelists by offering financial support we have to train more people and send them on to the unreached areas.

(a) Orissa Mission

One of the major Mission Fields selected by us recently is in Orissa. It was started by the Niranam - Maramon Diocese in 1985 with headquarters at Khariar Road, as a project of the celebration of the 3rd Golden Jubilee of the Reformation in the Church. Rev. Philip P. George coordinates the work going on in this area. Six workers live in villages nearby - Nityanandapur, Amanpuri and Silda. Now there are 8 more workers with them, as parishes and individuals come forward offering support. The newly built Boarding Home for boys gives accommodation to 24 students and the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom is running a Boarding Home for girls in a rented building. A building has to be constructed

to house them. Bible classes are regularly held at Adivasipara, Limayipara and Silda. Last year during Easter two people were baptised and they were asked to join the CNI, with whom we are in communion. Recently more people are requesting to be baptised.

There are a number of seekers in this area who frequently come to the Mission Centre. The area is very backward. The rate of literacy is almost at the bottom level. Apart from preaching the Word of God the field workers help people to bring their problems to the attention of civil authorities. They also help in the process of tapping resources earmarked for development by various governmental and non-governmental agencies for the people of this area. In other needy areas of Orissa also, different groups from our church are working.

(b) As a befitting gift to the Metropolitan, on his 80th birth anniversary the Adoor - Mavelikara Diocese took the decision to start two Mission Fields, one at Satyavadi near Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, and the other at Gadgeswar near Secunderabad in Andhra Pradesh. Four Evangelists are working in these villages. Meanwhile the Evangelistic Association decided to commemorate the 80th birth anniversary of the Metropolitan by recruiting 80 workers to be sent to different parts of India where the gospel has not yet reached. In fact on his 81st birthday 94 workers were commissioned to fulfil this task. They were given training in the languages of the region to which they were deputed in order to equip them better for the work they have taken up as their vocation. The doors are now wide open and the new mission centres at Pune in Maharashtra, Samasthipur in Bihar, Andimadom and Chettipalayam in Tamil Nadu, Koread in Pondichery and Chaglamarri in Andhra Pradesh indicate where the wind is blowing. In February 1994 at the inaugural meeting of the Centenary celebration of the World famous Maramon Convention a decision was taken to train and commission 100 more Evangelists to go to various Mission Fields and explore the possibility of opening up new ones. It seems that the Church is awakened to a Missionary fervour.

(c) A. Note on Karnataka.

A note may be added to highlight some of the recent developments in Karnataka. The Evangelistic Association is sending

more workers to Mundogod, Malgi, Sirsi, Kumta, Hoskote, Ankola and other centres and areas as people's response to the preaching of the gospel is really encouraging. Moreover, the Diocese has opened a new Mission Field at Devanahilli where the work is in progress.

In terms of output, the Karnataka Mission has been a great success. If we take conversion as one of the criteria to evaluate growth, the prospects are promising. Reports make it clear that in 1990 one hundred and thirty four people took baptism and joined the church and in 1993 the number went up to 148. And this year it is estimated that the rate will be higher.

Besides building Chapels and Centres for development we should give emphasis to programmes meant for nurturing and strengthening fellowship among the new believers. Our parishes take much interest in expressing their solidarity with the aspirations of new parishes in Karnataka and continue to offer them moral and financial support. For instance, a couple of years ago the Evangelistic association bought three acres of land in Budanagod to build a Mission Centre. When appeal for funds was made, the Maramon parish alone raised an amount of Rs.46,000/- to build a chapel for the use of people in Budanagod. In Mundugod Mission Field there is a steady expansion of our work. Parishes in Kerala - Poovathoor, Maramon, Pathanamthitta, Kalamassery and some individuals working in Kerala and abroad sponsor the work going on in this Mission Field. Six youngsters born and brought up in Karnataka with a sound knowledge of the local language and culture have come forward to work in villages. This is a promising sign as they are the right kind of personnel we need in dealing with some problems which only the local people can effectively tackle. This leads us to the question of developing leadership skills of people belonging to this region who have to be on the vanguard of the forthcoming endeavours.

We have a number of Mission Fields in other parts of India particularly the Northern belt. Mission Fields in Bhopal, Sihora, Satna, Rajasthan, Pune, Vapi, Samasthipur, Tibetan Border etc. have a network of personnel to plan and execute programmes. It is feared that

despite such impressive input the output has not been really impressive in terms of conversion. As noted earlier, conversion is not the only goal of our Evangelical pursuits. With a tradition having strong evangelical moorings, it is our duty to proclaim the gospel. The Holy Ghost will take care of the situation and we have to wait patiently for guidance. There are thousands in this region who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They are reluctant to accept baptism and join the church because of social compulsions, particularly the fear of being ostracised by their kith and kin and the community to which they belong. Community bonds are so strong in North Indian villages that to ignore this social reality would land anyone in great difficulties. It is interesting to note that in spite of these constraints and restraints a few people come out openly to receive baptism. They are the key to the future. It is not the number but the quality that matters. Meanwhile the message of the Gospel is creating ripples in the hearts of many who find in it the gateway to an abundant life which only the Lord can give.

A Time to Rejoice

We celebrated the centenary of the Evangelistic Association in 1988. Jubilee and centenary celebrations make us rejoice. They also give us valuable moments for reflection and introspection. As regards the Evangelistic Association, it coordinates various missionary activities, runs schools, destitute homes, hospitals, development centres and old age homes. The only women's College of the Church, Mar Thoma College for Women at Perumpavoor is under the management of the Evangelistic Association. As the pioneer indigenous evangelistic movement in India the Suvishesha Sanghom has a creditable record of service.

Any movement in its growth over a period of time gets into a rut from which it would be difficult to break out. Constitutionally the Evangelistic Association is a registered body under the Companies Act. Any organisation which handles a lot of money and runs a number of institutions tends to develop structures which happen to be cumbersome. In the process they cease to be dynamic, as they are caught in an intricate maze of structures, their pulls and counterpulls engineered by conflicting interests. Though outwardly Suvishesha Sanghom is a registered Company, in spirit it is neither a company nor

an institution in the conventional sense of the term. We conceive it as a movement and a growing discipline. Now that we have crossed the mark of a century we are growing into maturity. It means that we have to face the challenges of a new era and the process of planning and overhauling must come from within the movement itself.

(b) Malankara Sabha Tharaka : Centenary Celebration

The Malankara Sabha Tharaka, the monthly journal of the church has also completed 100 years of valuable service. The Centenary celebration was inaugurated on February 22, 1992 at one of the sessions of the Maramon Convention. It was followed by seminars at Pathanamthitta, Ayroor, Chungathara, Trivandrum and Tiruvalla. A special issue was also published in connection with the Centenary celebration. We are proud to say that Tharaka is one of the oldest monthly magazines in Kerala. It has a circulation of about nine thousand five hundred copies. Since the population of the Mar Thoma community exceeds 8.75 lakhs with 1,14,470 families, the journal has yet to reach many homes. This is a serious lacuna. So the thrust is to conscientise people to use Tharaka as a source material to know what is happening in the Church and in society and to sharpen their understanding of the Church's mission and heritage.

(c) Centenary of Maramon Convention

This is not all. We are going to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the World famous Convention in February 1995. We expect a number of eminent personalities including the Arch Bishop of Canterbury, who will be the chief guest. Meanwhile, the inauguration of the centenary celebration was held in February 1994 at Maramon and preparations are on to make the 100th anniversary a great event.

(d) Jubilee Celebrations : Sevika Sanghom, Yuvajana Sakhyam and Asrams

(i) The Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the Sevika Sanghom

As a detailed account of the Sevika Sanghom is given elsewhere in this book, only a brief account of recent developments is given. The construction of 'Visranthi Bhavan' the house to accommodate the retired workers of the Sevika Sanghom has been completed. Six sisters stay in this house. Sneha Bhavan, a project undertaken by the Charitable Trust of the Mar Thoma Church was run by the Sevika Sanghom in the beginning. People above the age of sixty who have nobody to look after them are admitted irrespective of religious consideration. Thirteen elderly people make use of this service. The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with the Women was launched in April 1988 and a midway evaluation of the decade was made in 1993. The purpose is to highlight problems faced by women in church and society and to influence the community of men and women to be equal partners in the work of the Kingdom of God. A home to accommodate 100 poor girls was opened at Elanthoor in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Episcopal consecration of the Metropolitan and the Suffragan Metropolitan in 1993.

(ii) The Yuvajana Sakhyam celebrated the Diamond Jubilee from 1993 - 1994. On February 20th, 1993 Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan inaugurated the celebration in the Maramon Convention. The celebration includes the construction of 60 homes for the homeless. Mr. Oommen Chandy, Hon. Minister of Finance who was the special guest handed over the key of one of the houses to a poor person. The Sakhyam has already adopted six villages for development. One of the projects taken up during the Jubilee year is the construction of a Diamond Jubilee Block at Adoor, consisting of four dormitories to accommodate about 600 persons, an auditorium to seat about 1000 persons and a dining hall with kitchen and other facilities. The celebration ended with a public meeting in Trivandrum in 1994, inaugurated by the Vice President of India, Dr. K.R. Narayanan.

(iii) Asrams

Two of our Asrams celebrated their Golden Jubilee - Christa Mitra Asram, Ankola in 1990 and Christa Panthi Asram, Sihora in 1992.

When the Asram movement itself is facing difficulties, these Asrams stand as beacons of hope.

The Christ Mithra Asram, Ankola has a good record of service for over 53 years. It is one of the best medical Asrams in our country. The Community Health Project taken up with the help of the Christian Medical Association of India is making inroads into villages in and around the area. The main object of the Project is to deliver health care at the doorsteps of the community as part of a movement to achieve health for all by A.D. 2000. The Family Helper Project undertaken with the help of Christian Children's Fund (C.C.F) is also making progress. At present 350 families and about 400 children receive help from sponsors. It includes various schemes under which children receive free medical care, nutrition supplement, remedial education etc. A number of services are also available to the beneficiaries' families. They include construction and maintenance of houses, sanitary arrangements, electrification, water supply etc. There are also a number of day-care centres and Balavadies. Donor agencies like K.N.H. of Germany and C.C.C (Council for Child Care) help in these ventures.

As the nerve centre of missionary work in N. Kanara, the Asram plays a pivotal role in the evangelisation of the region. As a mark of the Golden Jubilee the Asram has undertaken two programmes - a Counselling Centre and two outstations for evangelistic work in North Kanara.

The Christa Panthi Asram, Sihora celebrated its Golden Jubilee in October 1992. As a bold experiment in community living the Asram has been rendering valuable service to church and the society for over five decades.

The Asram has two branches - the Sisters Asram in Sihora town, and the main Asram located at Darsini, a village about 6 km from Sihora town. The hospital complex and the quarters for doctors and nurses are in Darsini. There are twenty two permanent members and about twenty volunteers who serve the Asram for short periods.

Members of the Asram visit villages regularly and preach the

Word of God. There is a network of Sunday Schools in Sihora town and the villages in the suburban area. The Asram receives help from various funding agencies for development programmes. There is an office for Integrated Rural Development which coordinates various development programmes undertaken by the Asram. There are several schemes to provide self employment to rural women. Training centres at Naya Mohala, Hudda Mohala and Imilapura give training to many.

Even today the Asram Hospital is the main link between the Asram and the Villages. There are five village clinics which make available health Care at the door step of villagers. Dr. Sosamma Philip who joined the medical team in 1976 still plays a key role in making the hospital a centre for health, healing and wholeness.

One of the three founding members, the Rev. K.T. Thomas passed away in 1989 at the age of 80. His demise was a great loss to the Asram. The late Easow Mar Timotheos was a member of Christa Panthi Asram for 21 years. It is in his memory that the church started a centre in Sihora to train Evangelists intending to serve in North India. The Asram started another training centre to train the new Christians of the North to take up the task of evangelisation. This is a bold step.

Now that the Golden Jubilee celebration is over and also the euphoria, it is time for self evaluation. Asram is a spiritual power house. It is not a place or cluster of buildings or huts but a growing spiritual fellowship. It is an experiment as well as an ongoing movement. It is a fellowship and a way of life. The Asram will have to be taken as an organism rather than an organisation. In ancient India it was the Asram that used to unleash corrective forces to cleanse society from time to time. The Gurukula system of education started in the ancient Asrams. The Asrams set standards with which people could evaluate the standards of morality in state and society. It was the prophetic mission which gave the Asrams a key place in Society. The question is whether we are keeping in line with the Asram ideals or are we taking easier lines of action? This should be the focal point of our evaluation.

DEPARTMENT OF SACRED MUSIC AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Music Department stands for the development of church music which is one of the effective means of communicating the Christian message. Until recently the infrastructure needed for its effective functioning was very limited. The Construction of Audio Visual Centre was completed in 1991. The expenditure for the construction of the building alone came to Rs. 15 lakhs. The center has a conference hall which can accommodate 300 persons. There is a Studio in the building complex for the audio-video recording. We have to import professional recording machines and other equipments to make the unit functioning. The school for training in music, other art forms and communication is in full swing. The Orchestra Troupe for public performances and mission outreach programmes is also performing well. Steps are being taken to standardise church music. More financial support is needed for arranging various programmes bringing together talented young artists for Christian witness.

Calamities: Our Response

The credibility of Christian commitment is put to severe test when people face crisis situations. A few months ago, when some parts of Maharashtra experienced a wave of earthquakes killing thousands and leaving a large number of survivors homeless, the Church rose to the occasion by joining the mammoth task of rehabilitating the victims. We could raise an amount of Rs. 41 lakhs to help in the process of rehabilitation by sacrificial giving by ordinary members. Hundreds of volunteers from various Dioceses took part in relief operation. When cyclone hit Bapatnam, Machilipattanam areas in Andrapradesh, with the help of CASA and the state government we undertook the construction of a number of cyclone-proof houses. In 1922 floods created a havoc in some parts of Kerala, particularly the southern districts. The Central organisation of the church, various Dioceses and our Institutions as well as parishes responded spontaneously in rushing aid to the victims and to carry on rehabilitation.

When Kuwait was invaded in 1990 resulting in mass exodus of Indians, our parishes in Bombay made arrangements at the Santacruz Air Port to give help to the poor victims. When riots broke out in Bombay and other places following the demolition of Babari Masjid, such help was arranged. We are facing a crisis situation following the influx of people returning from war-torn Yemen. When the Lord asks: "Where is your brother", we have no right to feign ignorance.

Other Achievements

(i) Much may be said about the work done through the Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD). Fifteen projects have been taken up by CARD for the welfare of the downtrodden.

(ii) Besides this, in 1992 the Development Department launched a new programme by focusing its attention at the parish level, to induce people to mobilise their own resources to the development of the poor within the area of the parishes. A circular to this effect was sent by the Metropolitan to all parishes. A number of parishes responded and formed committees to work out this plan. The representatives of the department visited these parishes to conscientise people and to give guidance in the matter. It is promising that instead of waiting for donor agencies to intervene, we mobilise our own resources at the local level to take up a task of development for the benefit of our neighbours who are in need. This should be an on going programme which should help poor people to develop on their own, without depending on charity. This will help them to maintain human dignity.

(iii) Our ecumenical relations continue to grow. In 1987 the Mar Thoma Church, the Church of South India and Church of North India jointly undertook the construction of a Church at Dham Tang in Sikkim for the poor people there. The joint council of the three Churches-CNI, CSI and Mar Thoma Church established in 1978 meet regularly once in every two years and chalk out common programmes for action. The different episcopal Churches in Kerala including the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Mar Thoma and CSI are jointly constructing a Dialogue centre at Nilakel in addition to a common church jointly

built by them there.

(iv) The Navajyothi School for mentally retarded children at Thelliyoor is steadily expanding its services. The newly sanctioned Krishi Vignana Kendra (KVK) of the Government of India will change the face of MCRD and it will be one of the major information and training centers for the agricultural developments in the state.

(v) At Charal Mount, the famous Camp Centre, a new building has been completed with modern amenities to accommodate 50 persons. Its name is 'Thejus' meaning light. Let it enlighten generations of campers.

CHAPTER XIV

CHIEF VALUES UPHELD BY THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

Abraham Malpan's intention was to effect reform in the ancient Malankara Church on the basis of Scriptural truth, and not to form a new Church. But as noted above he was ex-communicated by Metropolitan Chepat Mar Dionysius because of the principles that he upheld. He held firmly the conviction that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone as revealed in the Scriptures. The reform party was convinced that they continued in the apostolic faith brought to India by St. Thomas. So they accepted the name, "The Mar Thoma Syrian Church." Abraham Malpan was keen that the Church should continue in the Episcopal tradition; and therefore he sent his nephew to receive Episcopal consecration from the Patriarch of Antioch. It did not mean that the Church in Antioch had any special authority over the Malankara Church. When the Patriarch tried to exercise authority over the Church, Metropolitan Mathews Mar Athanasius stoutly resisted such attempts and upheld the independence of the Malankara Church. The following values were regarded as very important by the reformers.

1. Autonomy of the Church

The Church believes that the Malankara Church is an independent Church, as it was founded by Apostle Thomas himself, and that it is not under the authority of any other outside body. It was because the Church held firmly this conviction that it lost all earlier possessions of property and buildings, by a verdict of the Royal Court which gave the award in favour of those who accepted the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch. It is significant that the Orthodox Church has in recent years established the independence of the Catholicate on the same principle. Recently other national Churches also have been established as independent Churches such as the "Church of South India," the "Church of North India" and the "Methodist Church of India" even though all these Churches realise that they belong together as different branches of the one Church which is the body of Christ. Each of these Churches though spiritually related to one another, can

itself make decisions concerning all matters of faith and practice, and plan for development and mission, either singly or jointly with other Churches.

2. Evangelical Biblical Emphasis

The Mar Thoma Church declared that it accepts as the basis for all matters of faith and doctrine, the Holy Bible consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. Though rites and ceremonies are helpful, salvation is the gift of God, appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ. This message of salvation by the grace of God, brings assurance and joy to the believer helping him to face all vicissitudes of life with courage and confidence. This also challenges believers to holy living on the pattern of Jesus Christ, irrespective of differences of race, and social status. This challenges the Church also to be evangelistic in outlook, to take the gospel of salvation to all people, even to the lowliest in society. Till the time of reformation the Malankara Church remained almost as a privileged caste in the community, and did not realise its responsibility to take the gospel to the suffering and oppressed people in the feudalistic society. The example of the C.M.S. Missionaries was helpful in this respect. The study of Scriptures convinced the Church of its evangelistic responsibilities.

3. Reforming Spirit

The Church realised that renewal is needed continually within the Church and in the community. Thus the Church became progressive in outlook with concern for society. One example of such concern is that the Church began to start schools for the education of children of all classes in society. Till that time the children of lower classes could not go to School together with the children of the upper classes. Another example concerns the financial support of the Church. Till that time fees were levied compulsorily, on the occasion of special ceremonies like marriages, baptism etc. for the support of the clergy and the Church. This system was abolished and voluntary contributions were accepted as the way of support of the Church. Again people have become aware of the need for further changes in

the light of new situations.

In the Sabha Mandalam of 1985 a resolution was passed demanding that the Government must remove the inequality in the inheritance laws and provide for equal rights for sons and daughters, in the parental property.

4. The Episcopal Heritage, Oriental Nature and Democratic Form of Administration

Abraham Malpan was very much influenced by his friendship and association with the C.M.S. Missionaries. He was even offered a lucrative teaching post by the Missionaries after he was expelled from the Old Seminary. He did not accept it. He wanted to maintain the oriental nature of the Church and keep as much of the old traditions as were consistent with Biblical doctrine. He made the minimum changes in the liturgy and kept the ancient forms of worship and ritual. He did not want to adopt the western forms of worship. He also wanted the Church to **continue the episcopal heritage**. That is why he took the risk of sending his nephew all the way to Mardin in Syria facing all the hazards of the journey. Thus the Mar Thoma Church, continues the episcopal tradition and oriental forms of worship, and democratic form of administration.

5. Its Nature as a Bridge Church

The Mar Thoma Church combines evangelical and reformed doctrines with ancient forms of worship and practices. As a reform Church with progressive outlook, it agrees very much with the reformed doctrine of the western Churches. Therefore, there is much in common in faith and doctrine between the Mar Thoma Church and the reformed Churches of the west. At the same time as it continues in the apostolic episcopal tradition, and ancient oriental Practices, it has much in common with the Orthodox Churches. Thus, it is regarded by many in the ecumenical world as a bridge Church. This gives an opportunity to enter into closer relationship with other Churches. The full communion relationship that has been established

between the Mar Thoma Church and the Anglican Communion all over the world and with the CSI and CNI are the results of this special nature of the Mar Thoma Church. Conversations are being held with other Churches also, with a view to forging closer relationships.

6. The Place of the Laity

The Reformation emphasised the truth that all people are called to share in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ. The laity share in this as much as the clergy, though different people are called to exercise different ministries. The idea of clerical domination is not Scriptural.

The Mar Thoma Church values episcopal tradition and regards episcopacy as a gift of the Lord to the Church. At the same time it considers the laity as equally responsible in the work of the Kingdom of God. All matters of faith and practice in the Church are decided by the Sabha Mandalam which under the provisions of the Constitution of the Church is made up of 65 percent lay persons and 35 percent of the clergy including bishops. The bishops of the Church are elected by the same body, only if 75% of the clergy and 75 percent of the laity vote in the affirmative. In all aspects of Church life, men and women have an equal voice. The laity have the special advantage of being on the frontiers of life in the secular world and can witness to people in different walks of life.

Lay persons of the Mar Thoma Church have occupied places of high responsibility in the Church and Society. Mr.K.K.Kuruville was the Principal of the Theological Seminary. He was also a member of the State Legislative Assembly. He has served as a Missionary in North Kanara. Dr.M.M.Thomas was the Moderator in the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, 1975. He is a Theologian of world renown. In the political and educational fields also laymen of the Church have given great leadership. Mr.T.M.Varhese who was foremost in the freedom struggle in Kerala and subsequently Speaker in the State Assembly, was also a keen Church member.

Mr.K.T.Thoms, Advocate, who ably defended the Metropolitan in the Supreme Court was also an eminent political leader in the freedom movement in the State. Mr.K.A.Mathew bravely upheld the cause of freedom and justice and led the opposition in the legislative Assembly against the despotic rule of Diwan C.P.Rama Swami Iyer. Mr C.P.Mathew and Mr.V.M.Ittyerah were among the founding members of the Union Christian College, Alwaye, which is one of the premier institutions of higher education in the State.

There have been many who rose to great eminence in the Judiciary like Judges K.K.Chacko, P.J.Varghese and A.Chريان, who were highly reputed for their integrity and godliness. There are many in the present generation in the Judiciary, in the Police Department and various other branches of Government who continue in this great tradition. Many doctors, engineers and professors have combined effective Christian witness with great professional attainments. Dr.M.M.Thomas was also Governor of Nagaland in 1992-94.

The revival movement in Kerala owed much to the evangelistic zeal of laymen. In the early days of the Maramon Convention, two friends from Tamil Nadu, David and Wordsworth helped with forceful gospel messages. Sadhu Kochukunju and Punchamannil Mammen Upadesi kept the fire burning for many decades, helping thousands to continue in spiritual joy and sacrificial living.

Sadhu Kochunju was a pioneer in social service also. He worked among the cholera victims of South Travancore. He also started and maintained an orphanage at Kalayapuram in Central Travancore. He had great spiritual influence in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Kolakot John Upadesi was another stalwart in the faith. He worked hard to organise the Voluntary Evangelists Association despite severe physical handicap. Mention has been made of Mrs. Kandamma Varghese and others who organised the Sevika Sanghom.

The Voluntary Evangelists Association which is one of the chief organisations of the Church lays emphasis on the witness of the laity in secular occupations. This aspect which has in recent years been receiving emphasis in the ecumenical world was given utmost importance by the Mar Thoma Church all along as mentioned earlier.

CHAPTER XV

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE CHURCH

Background - Celebration of the Third Golden Jubilee of the Reformation

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Reformation in the Church was an important landmark in the history of the Mar Thoma Church. The celebrations were inaugurated during the Maramon Convention in 1985. The main emphasis was to give the present generation an understanding of the significance of the Reformation in the Church. Studies on this subject were conducted at different levels, in parishes, regional groups and Dioceses. Seminars also were arranged and books were published as study helps. An important book among these was written by Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan and Rev.T.P.Abraham. These studies helped to recall the spiritual and social values upheld by the Reformation. The study of the Word of God was one of the important aspects. It is noted that systematic Bible study is not continued by most members beyond the Sunday School stage. So a book was prepared and published by the Sunday School Samajam for the study of the Bible by adults. This is studied by many groups in the parishes, though not as widely as expected. Another aspect was to reach more villages in India with the Gospel and to send more workers. The response through the different missionary organisations and Dioceses has been mentioned above. The new work started by the Niranam-Maramon Diocese in Orissa may be noted in this connection.

The Reformation also stood for renewal of holiness of life on the personal and social levels. People were made aware of the corruptions in the Society which have infiltrated into the Church also. Dependence upon the power of money and the unjust use of social influence and the evil of alcoholism and drug addiction and other social evils were highlighted. The plight of the backward classes and their uplift was another topic for study and action. In this connection it was decided that the 16 Congregations out of the 117 formed by the work of the

Evangelistic Association which still have no place of worship of their own, should be provided with Church building in 1986. It is gratifying to note that this appeal has met with generous response, and the project has now been completed.

The Jubilee celebrations were formally concluded at the time of the Maramon Convention in 1986. The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Robert Runcie and the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Emilio Castro, were the chief guests on the occasion. In their messages they emphasised the importance of fulfilling the Mission of the Church through spiritual renewal and participation in the struggle of the weaker sections for justice, and working together with other Churches in the spirit of ecumenism. Representatives of other Churches in India and from abroad also were present and brought felicitations.

The celebration of the third golden jubilee of the Reformation is to be regarded not only as an event of the past, but as having a renewing influence in the ongoing life of the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Renewal

It has to be admitted that the spiritual zeal of our fathers is now not so much in evidence. There has been much material prosperity during the past few decades, and the relative affluence from the influx of money from the Arabian Gulf areas has altered the value system, so much so that there is great hankering after comfort and worldly possessions. Corruption at all levels of society is another evil to be faced. Bribery and nepotism have come to be faced as the normal way of life. This evil is affecting the decisions of the institutions of the Church also. So the image of the Church also is getting tarnished. Courageous action is needed to root out corruption. Action groups have to work with prophetic zeal to awaken the Church from lethargy and to help the Church to stand for truth and justice.

The spirit of self-sacrifice that was so common in the Church in the reformation days is now hard to find. This tendency is seen in the

national life also. Those who struggled for freedom were willing to give their all for the sake of the country. But what is now seen is the struggle to reach positions of power. The need of the hour is a spiritual renewal by which the cross will be realised as the power of God for salvation of mankind. Self giving love for the sake of others must become the way of life for all. The Holy Spirit alone can fill people with this kind of divine love. Renewal of life can be achieved only by waiting upon the Lord in deep humility and confessing our sins with penitent hearts. There are groups of people here and there meeting in fellowship and prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to renew the life of the Church. This has to happen on a much larger scale, so that the fire of the Holy Spirit is rekindled.

The Word of God

Feeding on the word of God is essential to sustain the new life in the spirit. It was the open Bible that showed the way of salvation to the people who were lost in darkness. There was a thirst to hear and to study the word of God. In groups large and small, people searched the scriptures to find pearls with which to enrich their lives and to understand the will of God in changing the situations. With the change of priorities and values, the earnestness to take time to study God's word has been dampened, and this has caused impoverishment of life. So the need of the hour is to go back to study of the word of God, to hear the prophetic call for justice and truth, and to grasp the message of the gospel of the grace of God seeking and saving the sinner in redeeming love. In connection with the Jubilee celebrations, booklets have been published containing lessons for Bible study, and people have been urged to meet in groups for study, and for delving into the depths of the word of God. The more such groups are formed, the more abundant will be the blessings. Life of the individual and of the community must conform to the will of God as revealed in the Word of God.

Mission

The challenge to take the gospel to others came in the wake of

the renewal in the Church. The work of evangelisation both within Kerala, and through the Ashrams and Mission fields in other language areas, was carried on with great enthusiasm a generation ago. But the spirit of lethargy has fallen upon most people due to the influences mentioned above. There are thousands of villages in India which have not so far heard the Gospel of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ. When the gospel is presented to such people, it is amazing how gladly they respond to it, finding new light and life. This is true especially of the tribal people who still live in fear of ghosts and evil spirits. They have not had the exposure to any developed religion; and the liberating message of God's love is received with open hearts. How true the word "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom, of God." The challenge before the Church today is therefore to reach the poor villages and to present this message to them, sharing their lives and identifying with them in the spirit of the Lord who came to dwell among us. It has been declared as a goal for the Jubilee Year to work in at least five new places outside Kerala and to find and send at least fifty persons for the work. It is a welcome sign that groups are responding to this challenge with the motto "Youth for Mission." It is to be recognised that similar work is being carried out by other Churches and missionary groups. And it will be helpful to work together with them to attain better results.

The message of Jesus Christ is the gospel of the fulness of life. This involves bringing wholeness of life to those who are deprived in various ways, who suffer from hunger, ignorance, poverty and disease. Jesus Christ clearly identified Himself with the poor and the suffering, stating unambiguously "whatsoever you have done to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it unto Me." In India more than 50 per cent of the people are still below the poverty line. Many of the efforts at development during the past 30 years instead of reaching the grass roots, have served to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. A change has to come, beginning with people at the lowest level, in the backward villages and remote districts. Without transforming the villages of India, poverty cannot be eradicated. Mission therefore has to reach the poor people, providing them with opportunity for work, teaching them the rudiments of health, and the importance of thrift, and weaning them from the evils of alcohol and drugs. Small scale

dispensaries and clinics have to be opened and community health programmes promoted.

Education

We should give high priority to the renewal of the system of education, which needs thorough overhauling. There are now two types of schools existing side by side, one for the well-to-do where high fees are charged and better standards are maintained, and another for the poor sections who have to be satisfied with a poor standard of education dilapidated school buildings and disinterested teachers. Educationalists and parents should find ways and means to remedy this situation, so that all the schools maintain a uniformly high standard of education, and the best education is provided for all children irrespective of the social or financial status of their parents. Creation of an elitistic class does not agree with the socialistic principles professed by the nation and the Christian concern for the good of all.

It is encouraging to note that the Government of India has taken seriously the fact that even after forty years of independence the villages of India are steeped in illiteracy, with only 40 per cent of the people who are able to write their names. So the New Educational Policy has been enunciated to concentrate attention on this problem, and to find an adequate solution soon. The co-operation of all people is needed to reach the poor villages. The Church has a great responsibility to send workers to the villages with the spirit of service to eradicate this and related evils.

Christians' role as Liberators.

Jesus Christ came to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind and to set free the oppressed. Evil is found both in individuals and in the structures of society. The gospel has to be presented as the power of God which saves individuals and changes social structures. It is the duty of the Church to work on both levels.

There are millions of people in our land who suffer abject

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poverty. Many around us are captives of evil habits and sins. Owing to ignorance and illiteracy many are not aware of their inherent rights. They are blind to the opportunities before them. It is our duty to conscientise them and help them to see, what they can attain and to break the chains of bondage. Social and political action will have to be taken to change evil structures like the caste system, racial segregation, armament race, monopolistic trade and drug traffic.

Some nations and races exploit other nations and races. Rabid social discrimination is practised in south Africa as a state policy. Thank God that the racist government is gone now. There is economic exploitation of weaker nations by stronger ones. Tyranny and exploitation are practised by multi-national corporations. Their callous indifference to the well-being of others, and heartless competitions lead to such grave consequences as the gas tragedy in Bhopal. Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to the whole world.

The Churches and individuals should face these challenges. They should stand with the poor and the oppressed, and champion the cause of human rights, justice and peace. Those who accept the redeeming love of God in Jesus Christ are freed from the power of self and the desire to dominate over others.

If we preach and practice the liberating gospel we have to give women their rightful place in the Church and in society. They should have due representation in the decision making bodies of the Church. We should have greater concern also for all the disabled. We must find opportunities for them so that they too can play useful roles in the life of the nation.

Mission of Reconciliation

The Christian church should work for peace and reconciliation consistent with justice. Jesus Christ not only liberates but also binds people together in love and brotherhood. The message of the Kingdom of God will bring peace to society and the world.

Though Christians are a minority community they can enrich the whole society as the salt of the earth. In fact the influence that the Christian Church has wielded in India's history is much greater than their number would indicate. They wisely decided to belong to the mainstream, and did not ask for safeguards or special privileges when the Constitution of the country was framed. It was a wise decision. In

Kerala, Christians have played.... an important part in the social, economic and cultural life.

One of the greatest problems affecting life in India is communalism and casteism. Religion has become a divisive force rather than a source of reconciliation. The division of India on the basis of religion has not brought about a spirit of love and brotherhood between different communities. The formation of linguistic states also has aggravated disunity. The tendency for further separation along these lines is a challenge to the unity of the nation. The demand of the Sikhs in the Punjab cost the lives of many innocent people. The struggle between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka has repercussions in India also. Eventhough 1986 has been declared as the International Year of Peace, situations of conflicts between nations and groups within nations have only increased. There is also the question of those who have been exploited by upper castes for centuries. Communal tensions have become stronger after the destruction of Babri Masjid. Mixing up of religion and politics is a growing danger. The power of multinational corporations over poor nations is a real threat.

Reconciliation has to be effected on all these fronts. Peace can come only with satisfying the claims of justice. Causes of injustice have to be tackled and solutions have to be found on peaceful lines, and not by resorting to violence. Christ's way of suffering love in the cause of justice alone can bring about reconciliation. The Church has an important role in this. It may have to suffer while working for peace. But such suffering will bring about healing between conflicting groups. Jesus Christ reconciled the world with God by His sacrifice on the cross. He has committed the task of reconciliation to His Church. The Church is not to avoid facing conflicts but must enter situations of conflict, with the message of love and reconciliation, working for establishing justice.

The mission of the Church involves all the aspects mentioned above. Effective witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ will be possible only when the Church will present the Gospel to the world by word and deeds of suffering love. We should not be complacent or rest contented, but keep marching forward with the vision of the City of God, so that the Kingdoms of this world may become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

