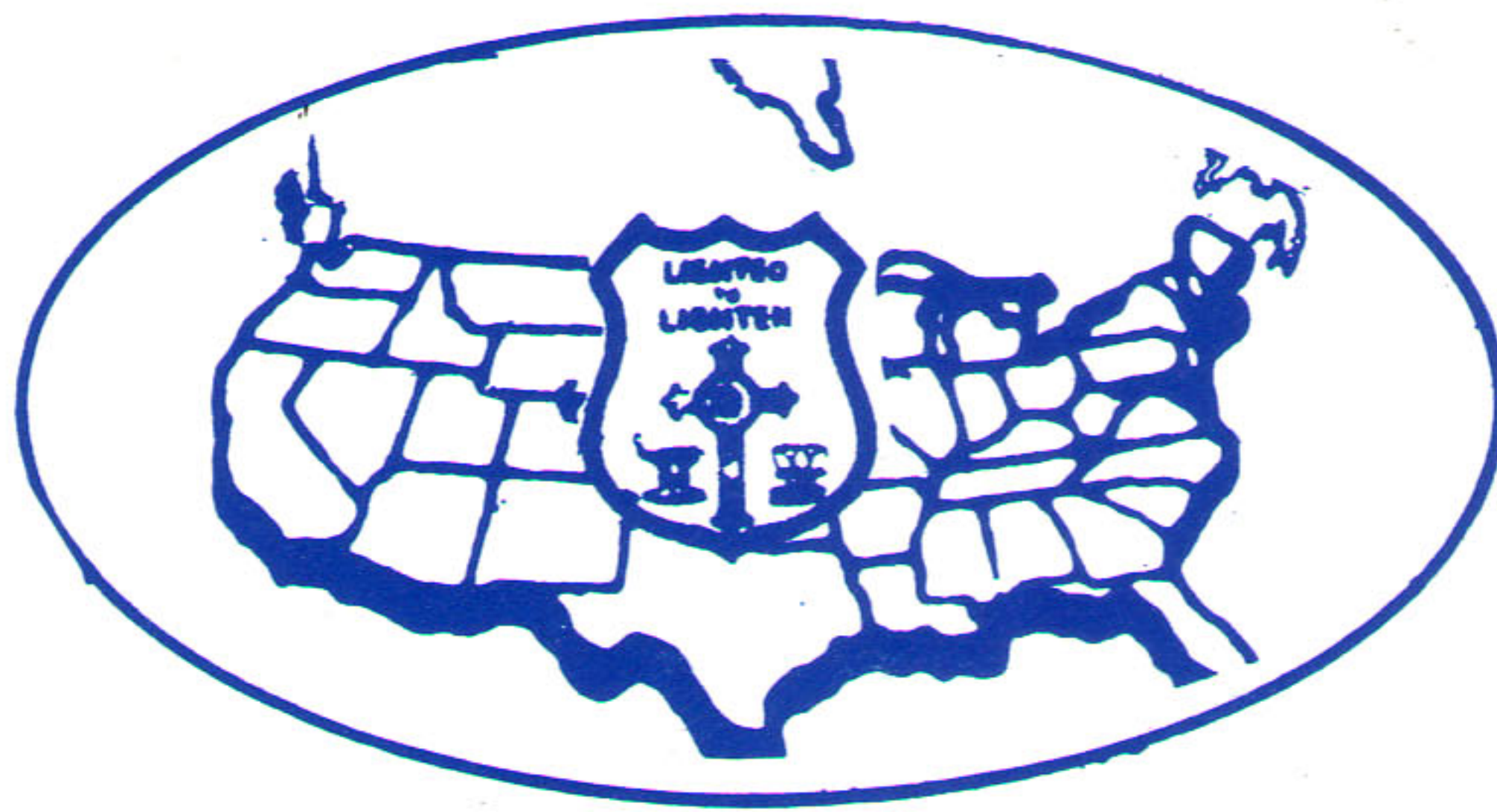


MAR THOMA MESSENGER



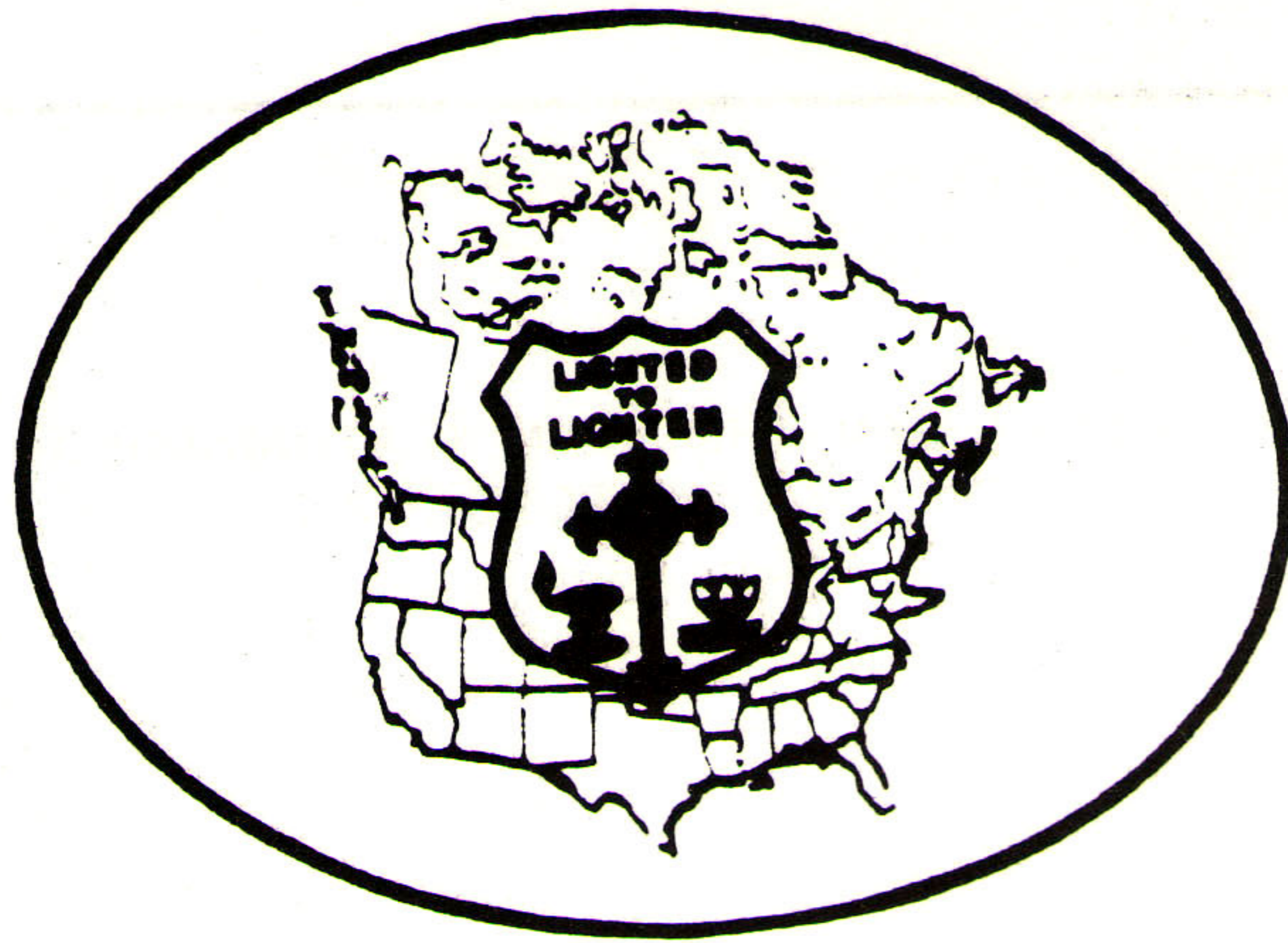
MAR THOMA ZONAL COUNCIL OF THE
MAR THOMA CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

MARCH 1985

THE LATE RT. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS
SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN
1914-1984



"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (2 Timothy 4: 7- 8)



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MAR THOMA MESSENGER

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മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സപ്രമഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ കാലംചെയ്തു



കോട്ടയം: മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയിലെ തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സപ്രമഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ [വനംപുനയിൽ തിരുമേനി-70] ഹൃദയോഗം മുഖ്യ മാരണം മരണം ഹോസ് പിററലിൽ കാലംചെയ്തു.

ഊതറോ. ഡോ. അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ പ്രധാന കാർമ്മികത്വത്തിലും വിവിധ സഭകളിലെ മേലദ്ധ്യക്ഷന്മാരുടെ സഹകരണത്തിലും സംസ്കരിച്ചു.

തിരുവല്ലാ സെന്റ് തോമസ് പള്ളി യുടെ മദ്രബഹറസ് അടുത്താണ് കബറിടം. ഡോ. യൂഹാനോൻ മാർത്തോമ്മായുടെ കബറിടത്തോടു ചേർന്നാണ് ഇതു സ്ഥിതി ചെയ്യുന്നത്. കബറടകൾ ശുശ്രൂഷയ്ക്കു വിവിധ സഭകളായങ്ങളിലെ ആയിരക്കണക്കിനു കേരളനങ്ങൾ സാക്ഷ്യം വഹിച്ചു.

ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ അന്ത്യനിമിഷം വരെ കർമ്മനിരതനായ മഹാനായിരുന്ന തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സപ്രമഗൻ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം തികച്ചും ആകസ്മികമായ അന്ത്യമായിരുന്നു അത്താനാസ്യോസ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്തായുടെ മരണം തുടർന്നു പ്രസംഗിച്ച ഡോ. അലക്സാണ്ടർ മാർത്തോമ്മാ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ പറഞ്ഞു.

കോട്ടയം-നന്നി ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയാണ് മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ വഹിച്ചുപോന്നത്.

കോട്ടയം പനമ്പുനയിൽ തൊമ്മന്റെ പുത്രനായി 1914 മെയ് 26-നു ജനിച്ച ഇദ്ദേഹം കോട്ടയം സി. എം. എസ്. പ്രൈമറി സ്കൂളിലും സി. എം. എസ്. ഹൈസ്കൂളിലും വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം നടത്തി. ബിരുദപ്പത്ത് കോളജിൽ വൈദികപഠനം നടത്തിയ ഇദ്ദേഹം സെറാനൂരിൽനിന്ന് ബി.ഡി. ബിരുദം നേടി.

ഓക്സ്ഫോർഡിൽ വികളിഫ്റ്റ് ഹോളിലെ സെമിനാരിയിൽ ചേർന്നു വൈദികസംരംഭത്തിൽ ഉപരിപഠനം നടത്തിയ ഇദ്ദേഹം 1944-ൽ ഹൈന്ദവപുസ്തകം, 1946-ൽ ക്രൈസ്തവപുസ്തകം സ്വീകരിച്ചു. 1953-ൽ ബിരുദപാഠി സ്മാനാനരണനും ചെയ്തു. 1959 വരെ തെക്കൻ ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതലയാണു വഹിച്ചത്. തുടർന്ന് 64 വരെ മിഷനറി ബിരുദപാഠിരുന്നു.

മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ നിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ നിർണായക പങ്കുവഹിച്ചുവന്ന മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ 1964 മുതൽ 82 വരെ വടക്കൻ ഭദ്രാസനത്തിന്റെ ചുമതല വഹിച്ചു.

മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജനസഖ്യം, സെന്റ് സെക്യൂലർ സമാജം, സേവിക് സ.ഘം, സുവിശേഷ പ്രസംഗ സ.ഘം, മാർത്തോമ്മാ വൈദിക സെമിനാരി എന്നിവയുടെ പ്രസിഡൻറായും ലിറ്ററേറ്റി കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ ചെയർമാനായും സേവനം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്.

ലോകത്തിലെ ഏറ്റവും വലിയ സുവിശേഷ സമ്മേളനമായ മാർത്തോമ്മാ കൺവെൻഷനു വർഷങ്ങളായി ചുക്കാൻ പിടിക്കുന്ന മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ ആതുര സേവനമേഖലകളിൽ കാര്യമായി ശ്രദ്ധ ചെലുത്തിയിരുന്നു. പെരുമ്പാവൂർ വനിതാ കോളജ് സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ അദ്ദേഹം മുൻകൈ എടുത്തു.

ആധുനിക മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയുടെ ശീൽപിമാരിൽ പ്രമുഖനായ ഇദ്ദേഹം സഭയുടെ മിഷനറി ബിരുദപ്പത്ത് എന്ന നിലയിൽ ലോകമെമ്പടും പലപ്പട്ടം യാത്ര ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഓസ്ട്രേലിയയിലെ അവില് ലോക യുവജന സമ്മേളനത്തിലും സഭകളുടെ ലോക കൺവെൻഷനിലും ആസ്ട്രേലിയ-ന്യൂഡൽഹി-മെൽബോൺ സമ്മേളനങ്ങളിലും ഹെയ്ൽസ് ആൻഡ് ഓർഡർ കമ്മീഷന്റെ മോണ്ടിറ്ററിംഗും ഡൻമാർക്കു സമ്മേളനങ്ങളിലും രണ്ടാം വത്തിക്കാൻ കൺവെൻഷനിലും സമാപന സമ്മേളനത്തിലും മറ്റും മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയെ പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്തു.

മികച്ച സംഘാടകനും പ്രചാരകനുമായ മെത്രാപ്പോലീത്താ ഒന്നാം കിട ഗ്രന്ഥകാരൻകൂടിയാണ്.

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

With the passing away of Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, our beloved Diocesan Bishop, the Mar Thoma Church has lost one of its most able leaders and the North American Zone of the Mar Thoma Church its architect and builder. Born on May 26, 1914 in Panampunnayil, Kottayam as the son of a teacher, Mr. P. Thomas (Thomas Mar Athanasius) had his early education in C.M.S. Primary and High Schools, Kottayam. After his Intermediate in C.M.S. College, he had his higher studies in Arts College, Trivandrum from where he took his M.A. Degree. Later he joined Bishop's College, Calcutta after which he took his B.D. Degree from the Serampore University.

With this rich background, he entered the Church's ministry in 1944. P. Thomas Achen started as a resident lecturer in the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary with Mr. K.K. Kuruvilla as the principal. He was raised to priesthood in 1946. During this period, he had occasion to visit many places. He attended the Oslo Conference which opened the way to the ecumenical circles. Later he went for higher studies in Wycliffe Hall, London. He attended the first meeting of the World Council of Churches held in Amsterdam. He also underwent training at the Bossey Institute. With this useful training, he returned to India and was appointed parish priest. Along with this, he was President of the Yuvajana Sakhyam also.

In 1953 he was consecrated bishop. He was first in charge of the Southern Diocese, building churches, organising parishes and giving a new life to the Diocese. Then he became Missionary Bishop in charge of congregations outside Kerala. During this period he formed new congregations in various parts of India and the Gulf region.

Thirumeny took part in the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council in 1961, and was elected to the Faith and Order Commission of the W.C.C. for six years. This enabled him to attend consultations held in different parts of the world. It was during this period that he attended the Mexico Evangelisation Conference. Later on in 1980, he attended the Conference on Mission and Evangelism held in Melbourne, Australia.

After being Missionary Bishop, he was appointed bishop of KottayamKunnamkulam Diocese. He did a lot for the development of our Church in Malabar area. Many new congregations were formed. From 1964-80, he was chairman of the Governing Board of the M.T. Theological Seminary. He

was also a member of the Senate of Serampore College. He was instrumental in securing scholarships for clergy in various seminaries abroad, and also raised funds for the construction of buildings for the Seminary. The C.P. Mathew Memorial building is due to his initiative. His contribution to the growth of Christian College, Chengannur and St. Thomas College, Kozhencherry is worth mentioning. His work in the S.C.M. as its chairman gave it a sense of direction. His contribution to evangelism as the President of the M.T. Evangelistic Association is well known. He was mainly responsible for starting the Mar Thoma Women's College at Perumbavoor. He used to collect large volumes of theological books for the St. Augustine Study Center. Clergy and laymen were invited to read and reflect at the Center. Regular meetings and seminars were conducted there. Periodical publications are also undertaken by the center.

Thirumeny was chairman of Unit I Committee of N.C.C.I. from 1980 to '83. In 1983 he was elected chairman of C.I.S.R.S. and of late the Ecumenical Study Group, Kottayam.

He is noted for keeping personal contacts with the people in our Church. Such contacts brought a number of people in different walks of life to active church life. He was quite versatile in his endeavours and has won the appreciation of all those who came into contact with him. His disciplined devotional life and interpretation of Biblical truths, ecumenical outlook, concern for the mission of the church, choice of words and measured phrases in councils and meetings and deep desire for reconciliation, and capacity to go deep into the problems and the wise and acceptable decisions, have endeared the people to him as a spiritual father.

We in North America owe a great deal to his relentless efforts to organise and consolidate the parishes in this continent. We recollect with gratitude the tremendous contribution he made in laying the foundations of the future diocese of North America by giving shape to the Zonal Council and the Zone of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. We all join together in mourning the sad demise of our great leader, and also thank God for the invaluable services rendered by dear Thirumeny to our Church in general and to our Zone in particular.

Rev. P. V. Thomas
Editor

The Late Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan (1914 - 1984)

Twentieth Century Apostle Thomas

Dr. Plammoottil V. Cherian
Assistant Secretary, Zonal Council
Mar Thoma Church, North America

The news about the death of our beloved Thomas Thirumeni was as shocking as it was tragic. The magnitude of leadership he gave to the christian world is immeasurable. The late Thirumeni tried to imitate Christ as perfectly as possible in his service to the church and the community. For the growth of the Mar Thoma Church, the efforts of the late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius acquired a place second to that of none.

As far as North America is concerned, the Mar Thoma Church is what it is today mainly due to the vision, courage, and foresightedness of the late Thirumeni. He was the **Diocesan** bishop of North America and the United Kingdom, which **are** included in the Kottayam-Ranni Diocese, for several years. Perhaps many of you know that until 1978, there were only 3 Mar Thoma congregations in North America, and today there are 28 parishes and congregations.

Like the Apostle Thomas, the founder of Indian Christianity, who came to India in the first century A.D., the late bishop Thomas Mar Athanasius came to this continent on several occasions (three times in the past four years), with a task of establishing the Mar Thoma Church here. Because of his commitment and dedication as a true disciple who worked to build the church the Mar Thoma Church today stretches from the shores of Florida in the South, to Fort McMurray, Canada, in the north which is only 700 miles from the north pole, from New York in the east to California in the west. For the growth of the church in this continent the leadership he gave was superb, the foundation he laid was solid and he courageously led us to establish the Mar Thoma Church in this continent. It was amazing the way in which he travelled all across the continent with vigor, strength and enthusiasm in unconditional obedience to the call of his Master who said " go ye therefore to all peoples everywhere .". In his last visit to North America in June to September of 1984 he established about ten congregations in North America. Wherever he could find a few Marthomites he urged them to establish congregations.

It was not easy for the late Thirumeni to have achieved this. If the Apostle Thomas had met with opposition from the indigenous Hindus, primitive people and from difficulties due to lack of means of transportation and so forth, Thomas Thirumeni faced difficulties in establishing Mar Thoma Church here in the west from the wide cultural differences between our native land in the east and the United States, Canada and United Kingdom in the west. He also faced the impact of modernism, individualism and materialism that influence the society to move away from the church and religion. He may even have faced few Kerala christians who perhaps could not understand the need of establishing Mar Thoma Church in these countries. On the other hand Thirumeni was very courageous and broad minded to accommodate modern views that are acceptable to the church. But he never allowed any of our eastern traditional qualities and heritage to be sacrificed at all. Instead, he wanted all of us to preserve the uniqueness of the Mar Thoma Church in its origin, in its vision and in its mission of evangelism.

The formation of the Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America in 1982 was due to the sole efforts of late Thirumeni. The Council was formed to coordinate the church activities here with that of the diocesan office and the church headquarters at Tiruvalla. Today the Council has 36 members with the Diocesan Bishop as its President, a resident vicar as the Chairman and it is parallel to the Sabha Mandalam.

Likewise Thirumeni was instrumental in organizing the Youth conference and Family conferences for the Mar Thoma people in this continent. Thirumeni believed that a Christ centered family is the essence of a viable community. Therefore, strengthening the youths and adults in their spiritual and social life were of paramount importance to him.

I remember very vividly an occasion during his last visit to United States when the late Bishop was very jubilant and satisfied. It was on the night of July 20, 1984 when a combined session of the students' and family conferences was held in Dallas where nearly 2000 people assembled (the largest Mar Thoma crowd at a conference in U.S.A) to

hear the various clerical representatives of Dallas. During the session Dr. William Richey Hogg of the Perkins School of Theology of the Southern Methodist University took a look at the gathering and said "truly this is Maramon in the U.S.A" recollecting his own experiences at the world famous Maramon convention several years ago. When it was his turn to speak, as Thomas Thirumeni walked to the podium, rays of joy and satisfaction graced his face. On seeing the spiritually enlightened crowd Thirumeni declared "this is really Maramon U.S.A" repeating the words of Dr. William Hogg. It was for this realization that he worked strenuously parish after parish, place after place so that the Mar Thoma people must worship in truth and spirit.

Another of his aspirations about the Mar Thoma parishes in North America was that each parish should have its own place of worship. Thirumeni felt that as the number of Marthomite outgrow, the present facilities they use are becoming insufficient and therefore he urged each parish to set this goal and achieve it in the shortest possible time. In fulfillment of this dream he was fortunate to celebrate Holy Communion in the first Mar Thoma church in North America on July 14, 1984 at Trinity Mar Thoma Church in Houston, Texas. Moreover, it gave joy and satisfaction to him to see that he was instrumental in initiating the deal and was present when two other parishes, the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church in New York and the Mar Thoma Church in Dallas made agreements to purchase house of worship of their own. Other parishes are eagerly working to achieve this goal and I hope that for many of them that day of fulfillment is not far away.

The late bishop played a crucial role in establishing a relationship between the Mar Thoma and Episcopal churches in United States, the Anglican church in Canada and the Church of England in the United Kingdom. He considered the ecumenical movement as a movement of the Holy Spirit.

When Thirumeni spoke about the mission of the church on several occasions, two things struck my mind very hard. He said that

one of the missions of the Church is to commit itself or as it members ourselves to its neighbor who is poor, oppressed, homeless, destitute, and denied justice. He preached that commitment to our neighbor is part of christian discipleship. The second mission of the church is to build, he said. "We will build" should be our motto, and we will build our church in North America, he said during the last Zonal Council meeting in July. He reminded us often that dedication to work for Christ, and the unwavering determination to build His Church should be the duties of the church and its members.

The late Thirumeni had some advice for the youths of North America; to uphold and practice the Mar Thoma tradition in this land. It is a tradition of faith, service to others, willingness to fight against injustice and of determination to help the poor and feed the hungry.

As a priest, a bishop and Suffragan Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church he fought a good fight, successfully finished the race, kept his faith, and now he had gone yonder to receive the crown of Justice from the Master to whom he was an apostle. He was a world christian leader. The gap created by his loss is too wide. In his death the christian world lost an able spiritual leader and the Mar Thoma Church lost a faithful and obedient disciple of Christ, and we in North America lost the founder and architect of the Mar Thoma Church in North America.

His life had a meaning. His voice was bold and sweet and that voice is not gone. I hope that the witness he bore during the last seventy years give us strength to dedicate ourselves to carry on with the goals and aspirations he had for the church. He served the Mar Thoma Church for the last forty years and we must be thankful to our Lord for his life. May his memories give us spiritual satisfaction in our life for years to come.



അനുശോചനപ്രമേയം

**അഭിവന്ദ്യ തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി
ദേഹവിയോഗത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയ്ക്കുള്ള അനുശോചനം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിന്
1984 ഡിസംബർ 30-ാംനു കോട്ടയത്തു കൂടിയ സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച പ്രമേയം.**

1944 ജനുവരി 29-ാംതീയതി മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയിലെ പട്ടാമ്പലിയിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കുകയും
1953 മെയ് 23-ാംതീയതി എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാസമാനത്തോട് അവരോധിക്കപ്പെടുകയും 1984 നവം. 27-ാംനു
സഹൃദനാകുകയും ചെയ്ത തോമസ് മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി സഭയുടെ
സ്വർഗ്ഗലോകം വളർച്ചയ്ക്കുവേണ്ടി വിവിധ നിലകളിൽ നാലു ശോബുക്കാലം മാതൃകാപരമായ ശുശ്രൂഷ
നിർവഹിച്ചു.

അചഞ്ചലമായ ദൈവഭക്തി, ഉന്നതവിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, ലോകസഞ്ചാരം, വായന, സുവിശേഷതീഷ്ണത,
ഏക്യമെന്നിടയിൽ വിഷണു എന്നിവകൊണ്ട് അനുഗൃഹീതനായിരുന്ന സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി
മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയുടെ പ്രേഷിതവൃത്തിയിൽ ശ്രേഷ്ഠമായ നേതൃത്വം നൽകിയിരുന്നു.

തെക്കൻ ഛദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ, സഭയുടെ മിഷനറി ബിഷപ്പ്, കോട്ടയം-കുന്നംകുളം ഛദ്രാസന
എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ, കോട്ടയം-റാന്നി ഛദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ എന്നിങ്ങനെയുള്ള നിലകളിലും, മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജന
സഖ്യം, സേവികാസംഘം, സുവിശേഷപ്രസംഗസംഘം, മാർത്തോമ്മാ വൈദികസെമിനാരി, റെറ്റേസ് II
ട്രെയിനിംഗ് കോളേജ്, കോഴഞ്ചേരി സെന്റ് തോമസ് കോളേജ്, പെരമ്പാവൂർ വിമൻസ് കോളേജ്
എന്നിസ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ ചെയർമാൻ എന്നീ നിലകളിലും ഉദ്യോഗവും, ആകർഷകവുമായ സേവനമനുഷ്ഠി
ച്ചിരുന്നു.

സഭയുടെ ആത്മീകവും, ഭൗതികവുമായ വളർച്ചയ്ക്കുവേണ്ടി ആഗ്രഹിക്കുകയും, ഉൾക്കാഴ്ചയോടും സ്ഥി
രോത്സാഹത്തോടുംകൂടി വിവിധ കർമ്മപരിപാടികൾ ആരംഭിക്കുകയും പുനീകരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ളകാര്യം
ഈ സഭ നന്ദിയോടുകൂടി സ്മരിക്കുകയും, ദൈവത്തിനു ന്യോത്രമർപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

അടൂർ ഹെർമ്മോൻ അരമന, ചെമ്മരപ്പള്ളി ബഥേൽ അരമന, സെന്റ് അഗസ്റ്റിൻ സുഡിസെന്റർ,
മാരാമൻ റിട്രിറ്റ് സെന്റർ എന്നിവ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിനും സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ച
നേതൃത്വം പ്രശംസനീയമാണ്.

സഭാജനങ്ങളിൽ ഏക്യമെന്നിടയിൽ ചിന്തകൾ വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുന്നതിനും, സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ ആത്മീക
വും ഭൗതികവുമായ വശങ്ങൾ ഒരുമിച്ച് ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിക്കുന്നതിനും സഹായകരമായ പ്രസംഗങ്ങൾ ചെയ്തിട്ടു
ള്ളതും, ലേഖനങ്ങളും, ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളും പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുള്ളതും ഈ സഭ വിലപ്പെട്ടതായി കരുതുന്നു.

അഖിലലോക സഭാകൗൺസിലിന്റെ വിവിധ സമ്മേളനങ്ങളിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള തോമസ് മാർ
അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി ഫെയിത്ത് ആൻഡ് ഓർഡർ കമ്മീഷനംഗമായും,
നാഷണൽ കൗൺസിൽ ഓഫ് ചർച്ചസ് യൂണിറ്റ് കമ്മറ്റി, എസ്. സി. എം. കേരള യൂണിറ്റ്,
CISRS എന്നീ സംഘടനകളുടെ ചെയർമാനായും, സെറാമ്പൂർ സർവ്വകലാശാല സെനറ്റംഗമായും ചെ
യ്തിട്ടുള്ള സംഭാവനകൾ ചിരകാല സ്മരണീയമാണ്.

സഭയുടെ ഉത്തമ താല്പര്യങ്ങളെ പരിരക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനും, ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിൽ അധിഷ്ഠിതമായ പ്രേഷിത
വൃത്തി സഭാജീവിതത്തിൽ കെട്ടുപണി ചെയ്യുന്നതിനും, സഭാഗങ്ങളിൽ ദൈവസ്നേഹവും, സാഹോദര്യവും,
സയ്യിലും വിവിധ സമുദായങ്ങളിലും അനുരഞ്ജനവിഷയവും വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുന്നതിനും സഹൃദൻ
മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി ശ്രമിച്ചിരുന്നു.

ഇപ്രകാരം വിവിധസരണികളിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയ്ക്കും, ആഗോളക്രൈസ്തവസഭയ്ക്കും, സമൂഹത്തിനും
ഉന്നതമായ നേതൃത്വവും, ത്യാഗസമ്പുഷ്ടമായ ശുശ്രൂഷയും നിർവഹിച്ചശേഷം 1984 നവംബർ 27-ാംതീയതി
രാത്രി 11 മണിക്കുമാണോന്നു മരണപ്പെടും മന്ദിരം ആശുപത്രിയിൽവെച്ച് കാലംചെയ്ത അഭിവന്ദ്യ തോമസ്
മാർ അത്താനാസ്യോസ് സഹൃദൻ മെത്രാന്മാർക്കുവേണ്ടി ദേഹവിയോഗത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാസഭയ്ക്കുള്ള
അനുശോചനം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു.

CONDOLENCE MEETING

A condolence meeting in honor of the late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan was held on Sunday December 16, 1984 at the Interchurch Center in New York. The meeting was arranged by the liaison offices of the Mar Thoma Church and the Episcopal Church. His Lordship the Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa presided over the meeting. In his remarks, Bishop Irenaeus mentioned the dedicated services of the late Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan as a faithful servant of Christ, and of his numerous contributions towards the growth of the Mar Thoma Church during the past four decades.

Rev. Jacob Thomas welcomed the gathering. Rev. George Mathew read Psalm 90 and the litany during the service. Several prominent christian leaders including Dr. Donald Schriver Jr., President of Union Theological Seminary, New York; The Rev.

Paul Moore Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York; Rev. William Norgren, Ecumenical Officer of the Episcopal Church Center and Dr. Kosuke Koyame, Director of Ecumenical Center, Union Theological Seminary paid tributes to the late Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan. Clergies from Jacobite Syrian, Orthodox Syrian and Roman Catholic churches and Dr. M.S. Isacc of New York also spoke during the meeting.

Dr. P.V. Cherian, Assistant Secretary of the Zonal Council spoke about the efforts of late Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan in building the Mar Thoma Church in North America. Dr. Cherian said that the late Thomas Thirumeni was the founder and architect of the Mar Thoma Church in North America which has about 28 parishes and congregations and a Zonal Council. Rev. A.G. Mathew, Secretary of the Zonal Council proposed the vote of thanks and introduced the condolence resolution.



Bishops and clergies of the Episcopal Church, and clergies of the Jacobite, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church attending the Condolence Meeting in honor of the late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan at the Interchurch Center in New York. His Lordship The Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Irenaeus presided over the meeting.

**The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan
Dr. Donald W. Shriver, Jr.**

President, Union Theological Seminary, New York

For me, a Protestant Presbyterian American, there was only one thing that I found difficult about the man we remember this afternoon: his complete, exact title as an official of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar India. It may always be difficult for me: "The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan, Metropolitan."

How could anyone think of that title first when one is thinking, most and first of all, of a *friend*? He was a friend to me, and through him the entire Mar Thoma church expressed its friendship to me. What is more important about the office of bishop than that? Once in his office in Kottayam he agonized out loud about the apparent sharp increase in violence in today's human world. His life, like the life of all people of Christian faith, was a witness to God's own friendship for this world in Jesus Christ our Lord. Violence is an affront to the image of God in every human being on earth. It is the business of Christians to array themselves on the side of kindness in the world over against cruelty, and Thomas Athanasius was one of the kindest men I have ever known. Whoever chose his name "Athanasius" had in mind, of course, one of the great theologians of the fourth century church. The doctrine associated with that other Athanasius is embodied in the Nicene Creed, whose chief point of faith is that God loved this human world enough to be truly incarnate in the human being Jesus. This God was "made man." God does not love the world by remote control but by intimate, historical, personal, particular connection between the divine self and human selves. God is the great friend of the world; and like all true friends, said Saint Athanasius, the God of Jesus comes to be with us, into our very homes, "tabernacling with us, full of grace and truth."

I will always think of Thomas Athanasius as a friend who embodied the friendship of God for the world in his own habit of visiting his friends and making new friends through his visits. C.S. Lewis once called earth the "visited planted." Thomas Athanasius made a good witness to such a faith, for his life was full of visits around the world.

Seldom in his travels in the United States over the past eight or ten years, did he fail to

visit me in my office across the street. Often he paid tribute to the ties between our seminary and the Mar Thoma Church, beginning with the year of graduate study of Juhanon Mar Thoma in 1929, who became a disciple and friend of a young professor in our school named Reinhold Niebuhr. Since then, the Mar Thoma Church has been one of the world's Christian communities where a visitor like myself could come, knowing always that a welcome would await us there.

In the most profound sense, however his friendship for me and for my school was only one expression of the deep ecumenicity in the life and spirit of this man. I will always think of him as a leader of the world church who welcomed all parts of the global Christian family into the spacious room of his own heart. As he travelled around the earth exercising his episcopal duties towards the priest and congregations of the Mar Thoma Church, he exercised those same duties towards the great world church that gathers this Christmas time to celebrate the birth of the One who is lord of our life and our death.

My life as a Christian is strengthened by a certain few members of that world church who remind me in their personhood that it is really possible to *be* a practicing Christian. Such a reminder to me was Bishop Athanasius. To know him was to be glad that it is still possible, after 2000 years, to be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. To have known him is to be glad, as an American, that God has faithful witnesses to the Gospel in every place on earth. To have known him is to have been assured, in this Christmastime, that the Spirit of God still lives to announce the Good News of a Love that no cruelty can overcome and no darkness extinguish.

There is no more magnificent use of a human life than this. There are no better reasons for gratitude to God than the reasons God gave us in the life of this man. Our sadness in his departure is more than matched by our joy in our share with him in very spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead, and who will also raise us. Thanks be to God who gives us this victory and the companionship of such a person on our own earthly pilgrimage as a Communion of Saints.

**THE MOST REV. Dr. ALEXANDER
MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN**



**DIOCESAN BISHOP OF MAR THOMA
CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.**

HOUSTON TRINITY MAR THOMA CHURCH DEDICATED

The Houston parish had a small beginning ten years ago, with twelve families. Over the years the number increased, and at present it is the largest parish in North America with 210 families. One of the basic problems of the parish since its inception was the lack of a place to meet for worship. In the initial stages, chapels and churches were available; but as the number grew, we had to face real hardship. It was due to the pressure of circumstances that we were forced to press for permission to have a church of our own. Consequently the Episcopal Synod granted us permission in early 1982, and as you all know we bought a five acre plot of land. The foundation stone of the church was laid on August 29, 1982 by His Grace Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan.

Preparations for the project started. Members pledged 5% of the total annual income of the family; but soon most of the male members lost their job. So we had a very rough sailing and work could not start as scheduled. The plan was getting ready and the City of Houston approved it. On September 15, 1983 the ground breaking ceremony was held; but due to adverse weather, actual work started only later. Engineer K.C. Philip of the parish was appointed site supervisor. The Building Committee worked hard in raising funds. The members of the parish in spite of acute unemployment and financial crisis cooperated to the best of their ability, and work progressed. Construction was given on piece-contract and it took eight months for completion.

A team of volunteers worked relentlessly all through this period of construction. 'Sramadan' was arranged on several occasions. members including women and children turned out in large numbers to work in the hot sun. The sanctuary is 100' long and 50' wide with two side rooms and a seating capacity of 600 and the Sunday School hall 80' x 50' with 400 seats and two sets of rest rooms, nursery, kitchen and utility room. The concrete-paved parking lot has facility to park 100 cars. In the compound, at the back of the buildings courts are getting ready to play soccer, basketball and volley ball. The land is level and a perfect square with full scope for future development.

When we look back to the various stages through which the parish passed, we just cannot explain how it all materialised. Amidst the financial stress and strain, difficulties with the various contractors, problems of weather and all the rest of it, we struggled very hard; but the GRACE of God was sufficient for us. We fought the battle with tears on our knees. In the midst of gloom and darkness, God was on our side. By his grace, the entire parish stood together in perfect unity.

We have incurred a total expense of \$460,000.00. This is mostly from members of the parish. They have contributed quite liberally and sacrificially. The lady members have donated substantially. Children, apart from their other donations, have furnished the Sunday School hall fully. An amount of \$40,000.00 has been received as interest-free loan from members. Dallas and Chicago parishes have wholeheartedly cooperated in the fund raising efforts. We haven't approached other parishes for collection. Friends and well-wishers have helped us in many ways to see through the project.

The dedication of the Trinity Mar Thoma Church and the 10th Anniversary celebration of the parish were held on July 14, 1984 at 4:00 p.m. The Diocesan Bishop His Grace Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan officiated the dedication. Rt. Rev. Dr. Maurice M. Benitez, Episcopal Bishop of Texas was the chief guest. Eight of our Achens and seven from sister churches attended the function. During the dedication service, the Episcopal Bishop gave an inspiring message. After the service, a public meeting was held with the Suffragan Metropolitan in the chair. His Grace congratulated the parish for its remarkable achievement. Rev. Winston W. Ching spoke on behalf of the Presiding Bishop and the Asiamerica Ministry of the Episcopal Church. Rev. N.M. Cherian felicitated the parish representing the Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. The first vicar Rev. T.I. Joseph also spoke on the occasion. Ministers from C.S.I., Orthodox, Jacobite and Roman Catholic Churches felicitated the parish. The Vicar welcomed the guests and Mr. T.A. Mathew, convener of the Building Committee proposed a vote of

thanks. Mr. Abraham K. Idiculla, secretary of the parish read out the messages received from the Indian Ambassador to U.S.A., the Governor of Texas and the Mayor of Houston. The church choir entertained the audience with melodious music. A souvenir to mark the dedication of the church and the 10th anniversary of the parish was given to the Episcopal Bishop by the Vice President Mr. Jacob John with an introduction. The bishop released it by presenting it to the Suffragan Metropolitan. After that, the 10th Anniversary Cake was cut jointly by both the bishops. Mr. George Thomas led in the opening prayer and Thirumany concluded

the meeting with concluding prayer and benediction. There were more than 1500 people from all over N. America, representing various parishes and denominations. Refreshments were served to all.

The first Holy Communion service in the Trinity Mar Thoma Church was celebrated on Sunday, July 15 at 9:30 a.m. Over 1,000 people were present and a large number took part in Holy Communion. After the service, refreshments were served to all.

I must thank every one of you for your prayers, encouragements, felicitations, well wishes and assistance of every kind. Kindly continue to pray for us.

Rev. P.V. Thomas, Vicar

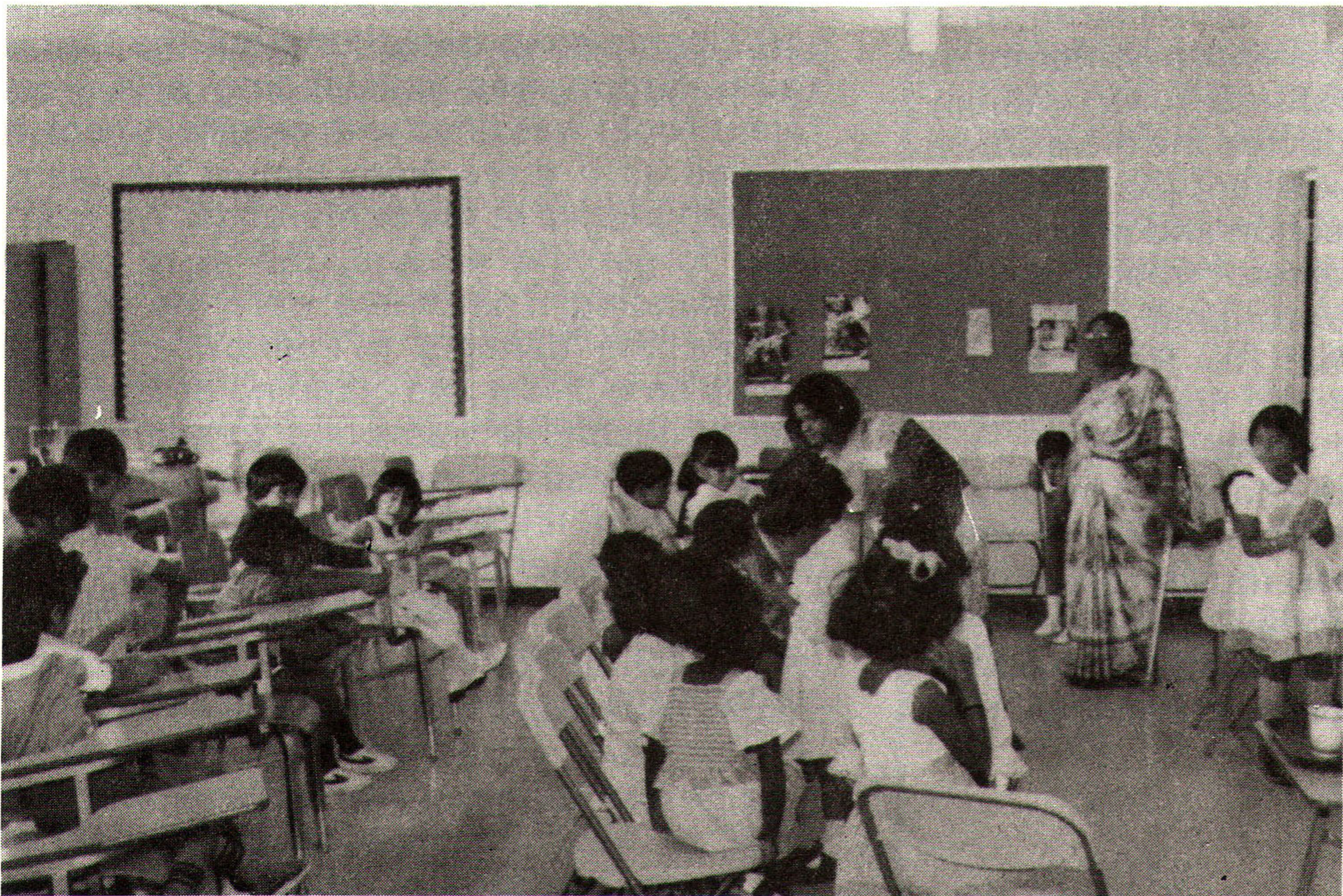


We invite messages, articles on issues which have an impact on our living and christian witnessing, and church news for possible inclusion in the Mar Thoma Messenger. Articles must be typewritten on one side only, double spaced and not to exceed 8 pages.

We would like to inform all concerned that it is very expensive to include color photographs in the Messenger and therefore, photographs intended for publication must be black and white.

Editorial Board

Scenes from the Children's session of the 1984 conference in Dallas Baptist College, Dallas, Texas.



The Mar Thoma Students' Conference of North America - 1984

Many delegates arrived in Texas and were welcomed to Dallas Baptist College, an ideal setting for the fifth annual Students' Conference. Everyone anticipated the events of the next four days and hoped it would be a time of fellowship and commitment.

Our main leader was The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan metropolitan. Thirumeni delivered three addresses that were instrumental in helping us understand the theme of the conference —*Christian Understanding of Freedom*. In his inaugural address, Thirumeni said that this theme was very relevant in our times. He was quick to point out that there is a distinction between license and freedom and that true freedom is not the absence of restriction but the freedom to serve. He went on to state that the most important question we could ask ourselves at this conference was: Do we want the freedom that God is willing to give us or do we continue to live in chains? The history of emancipation or the human effort to regain freedom was the topic of Thirumeni's second address. After examining the pattern of history, he concluded that society must not be an end in itself but must serve a higher end. In his third address, Thirumeni talked about Jesus being the "Prophet of the New Humanity", the person that stood against all that dehumanized man. The Feedback Sessions were a good tool to help express what we learned. We were graced with Thirumeni's guidance throughout the entire conference.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. William Richey Hogg who conducted the bible study sessions. He did an excellent job in taking the bible, section by section and presenting the biblical understanding of freedom. Also we had some very devotional addresses delivered by both the Rt. Rev. Robert Terwilliger and the Rev. Fr. Flynn Baumann that were humorous and challenging.

An essential part of the conference was the workshop sessions. Very competent leaders were chosen to discuss topics relevant to youths in the world today. The Rev. P.V. Thomas led: Faith and Practices of the Mar Thoma Church; Dr. Abraham Panackal led:

Peer Pressure: Identity & Conformity In American Society; Dr. P.V. Cherian led: Choosing A Life Partner: Traditional Indian Way or Modern Western Style?; Mr. P.C. Philip led: The Generation Gap: Indian Version IN America; Dr. Sally Varghese led: Drug, Alcohol Addiction: Is There A Way Out?. The discussions helped to clear our confusion, make decisions or just to express ideas on the topic. As equally important as the workshops were the singalongs. They gave us a chance to get into the spirit of the conference. The worship services led by various Youth Groups created an opportunity for us to participate in the English service.

A Panel Discussion involving a representative from both parents and students added a great deal to the conference. Feelings and ideas were expressed openly. Though there were conflicts in the opinions of parents and children, it may have helped to narrow the gap between them. The representative for the parents, in fact, was able to bring out many good points for the students' position. Thanks go out to Mrs. Nirmala Abraham and Vivian Mathew for preparing well thought out speeches to lead the Panel Discussion.

The conference would lack much pleasure and excitement if it did not include a Choir Competition and a Talent Night. It was clear that much time was spent practising by all Youth Groups for the Choir Competition. All participants sang beautifully but the Dallas Youth Group was outstanding and won. Talent Night was filled with entertainment. It seemed as if there were almost too many talented people at the conference. We won't soon forget the singers, the skits or the breakdancing. Then there were the aches doing a little "dancing" of their own. They all had us on our feet and clapping or laughing uncontrollably. It was good to see people under fourteen taking an active interest in Talent Night. It is a sign that the Family and Children Conferences are very successful and important. Those who participated in Talent Night should be commended for their enthusiasm.

There are many memories created at a Students' Conference. Being among people of the same age group enables us to communicate similar ideas and feelings. Being among people who share the same beliefs strengthens our faith. At this conference we are able to better our understanding of Christian freedom. Let us hope and pray that all future conferences will be as beneficial and rewarding.

Mathews Mawaloor
Student Vice President 1984.

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES

1. Eighth Anniversary:

The eighth anniversary of the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles was held on Sunday the 23rd September at the Church of the Angeles, Pasadena, California. Rev. Canon Harold Hultgren, Bishop's secretary in the episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles was the chief guest. The gathering included friends from Orthodox, Jacobite, and C.S.I. churches and some from San Francisco. The highlight of the program was the presentation of a play entitled return of Chandra written by Mrs. Dorothy Clarke Wilson and directed by Mr. Abraham Mattackal.

2. Farewell to Rev. Dr. D. Philip and Family:

The parish bid farewell to Rev. Dr. D. Philip and family on Sunday the 30th September 1984. The Rev. Philip took charge of the Parish in August 1981. Rev. Philip was also a student at Fuller Theological Seminary and successfully completed the Doctor of Ministry program.

Rev. E.V. Eapen presided over the meeting. Rev. Fr. George (Jacobite church), representatives from the parish, friends from outside and Rev. George Pothen spoke on the various aspects of Achen's ministry. Achen is posted to Karthikapally in Kerala.

3. Episcopal visit and Meeting in Memory of The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan.

The parish came to know of the demise of Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan with real shock and grief. A memorial meeting was arranged at 6.45 pm. On Wednesday December 5, 1984. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Irenaeus presided over the

meeting. Rev. Canon Harold Hultgren, Rev. Canon John Yamasaki, Rev. Fr. George Mr. O.T. Daniel, Vice President, Mrs. Aleyamma Mathew, secretary and Rev. K.G. Pothen, vicar of the parish spoke on the occasion. Rev. Robert Gaestel vicar of the church of the Angels was present.

4. Episcopal visit of Rev. Robert C. Rusack:

An event of historical importance in the life of the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles was the visit of Rev. Robert C. Rusack, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles on Sunday the 16, December 1984. Bishop spoke on the advent of our Lord. Rev. Canon Hultgren was also present.

Mrs. Aleyamma Mathew
Secretary.

NO TURNING BACK!

ONCE UPON MY LONELY LIFE,
WHEN I WAS ALL ALONE,

ONCE UPON MY LONELY LIFE,
WHEN I WAS ALL ALONE,
THE DARK CLOUDS AND THE MISTY WINDS,
WENT PAST MY SAVIOUR'S THRONE.
I WAS ALL ALONE THAT TIME,
WITH NO ONE THERE TO STAY,
THEN I THOUGHT ABOUT MY LORD,
THE ONE TO WHOM I'D PRAY,
A LIGHT THEN SHONE, INTO MY LIFE,
AS BRIGHT AS IT COULD BE,
FOR SOON THE LORD, MY KING,
WAS CALLING OUT TO ME,
"COME HERE, MY CHILD, "HE SAID TO ME,
I ANSWERED WITH A SMILE,
"I'LL TAKE YOU UP AND DOWN THE STREETS,"
"AND RIGHT ACROSS THE NILE,"
I ANSWERED "YES, OH LORD I'LL COME,"
"I'LL COME WITH YOU FOR SURE,"
"I'LL DEDICATE MY LIFE TO YOU,"
"UNTIL I'M GREY AND POOR,"
I WENT TO CHURCH THAT VERY NIGHT,
AND PRAYED THE NEXT DAY TOO,
FOR THEN I KNEW THE GRASS WAS GREEN,
AND SO THE SKY WAS BLUE,
HE CAME INTO MY LIFE THAT NIGHT,
FORGAVE OF ALL MY SINS,
AND THEN I WON THE BATTLE,
FOR MY LORD WOULD ALWAYS WIN!

BY OLIVY PARATHOLIL
GRADE 8,
BRAMPTON, ONTARIO
CANADA

CHOOSING A LIFE PARTNER: Traditional Indian way or Modern Western Style

Dr. Plammoottil V. Cherian*

(A paper presented at the Mar Thoma Students conference on July 20, and 21, 1984 at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas)

The subject of choosing a life partner encompasses a vast number of specific topics all of which cannot be adequately addressed within a limited time. I will limit the discussion therefore to the more general and familiar aspects of selection of a life partner in the traditional Indian style and in the modern western style focusing on the pros and cons of both. I do not intend to recommend one over the other because I believe that selection of a life partner is solely a matter to be decided by an individual and his/her family. However, I shall consider these from a social, traditional, cultural and more importantly from a CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE.

The Biblical view of the need for a life partner:

The christian philosophy of a life partner is based on the view of human personhood, which emerges from the Biblical account of creation. According to Genesis 1 and 2, God's crowning act of creation was making mankind (generic, not man the male.) Formed from the dust of the earth but made in His own likeness." In the image of God He created him, male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Thus we humans are rooted in nature and share this in common with all other creations. We are part chemical and mineral but we are more related to and rooted in the very nature of God. This is the basis of our social and spiritual nature. Only humans can stand in self conscious relationship with their Creator and with one another.

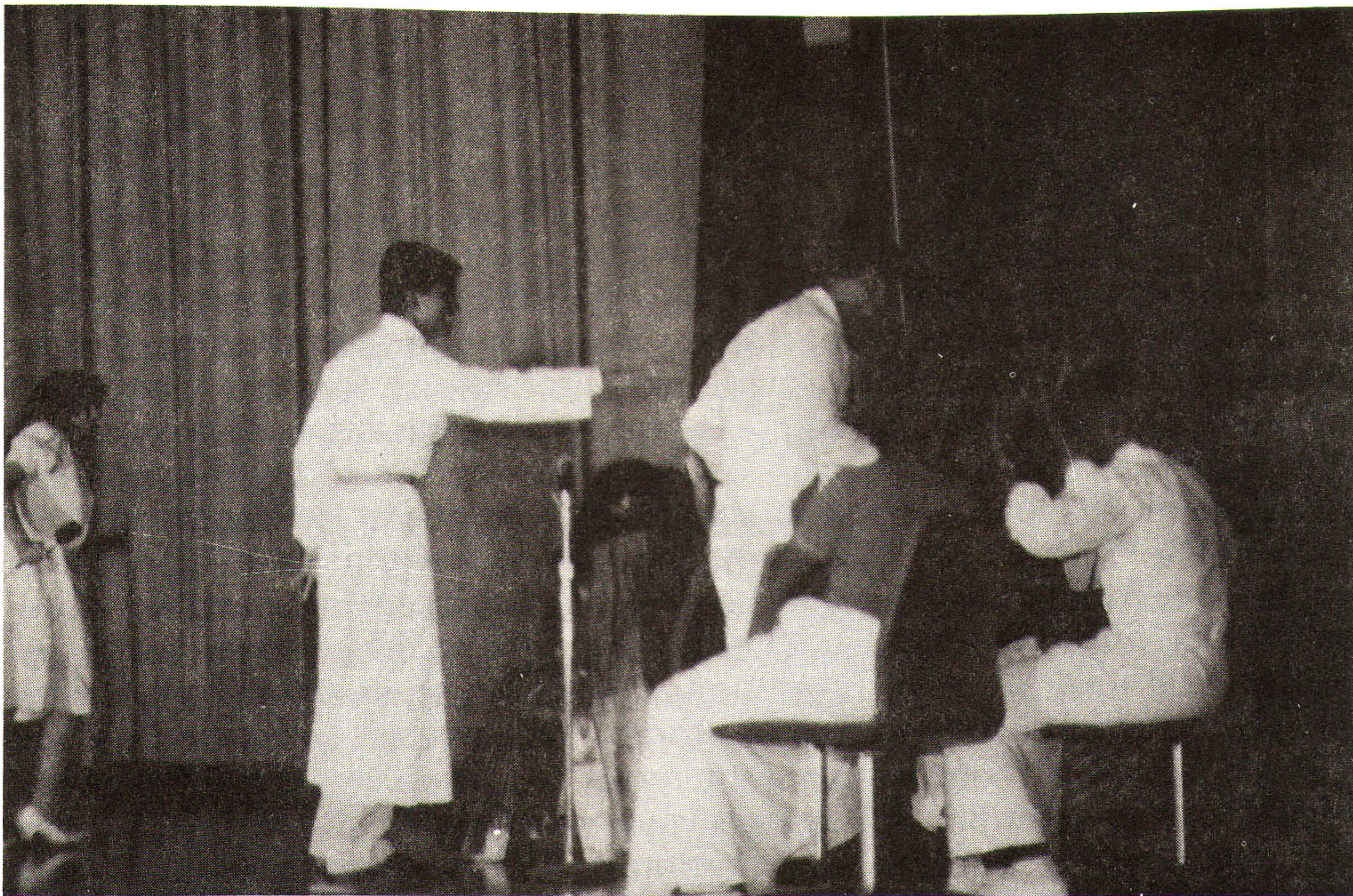
Sexuality is an essential part of our identity; maleness and femaleness are intrinsic to the image of God in human nature. One cannot think of a normal person (including oneself) without thinking of he or she. However, this masculinity or femininity is not complete within itself." Then the Lord said, 'it is not good that man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18).

Marriage: Marriage is the physical and spiritual union of two sexes. It may be considered as the reenactment of the process of creation, the man-woman unity. The sacredness of marriage is unique in its nature. To describe it or interpret it as a mere sociological fact would be to miss its real significance. While the vow taken by the bride and groom in christian marriage limits the span of companionship to the duration of life ("TILL DEATH DO US PART"), marriage according to hindu belief transcends even beyond our death, and describes it in the Mahabharat citing the example of the ideal couple, Parvati and Parameswaran, as a bond of eternal unity — not till death do us part.

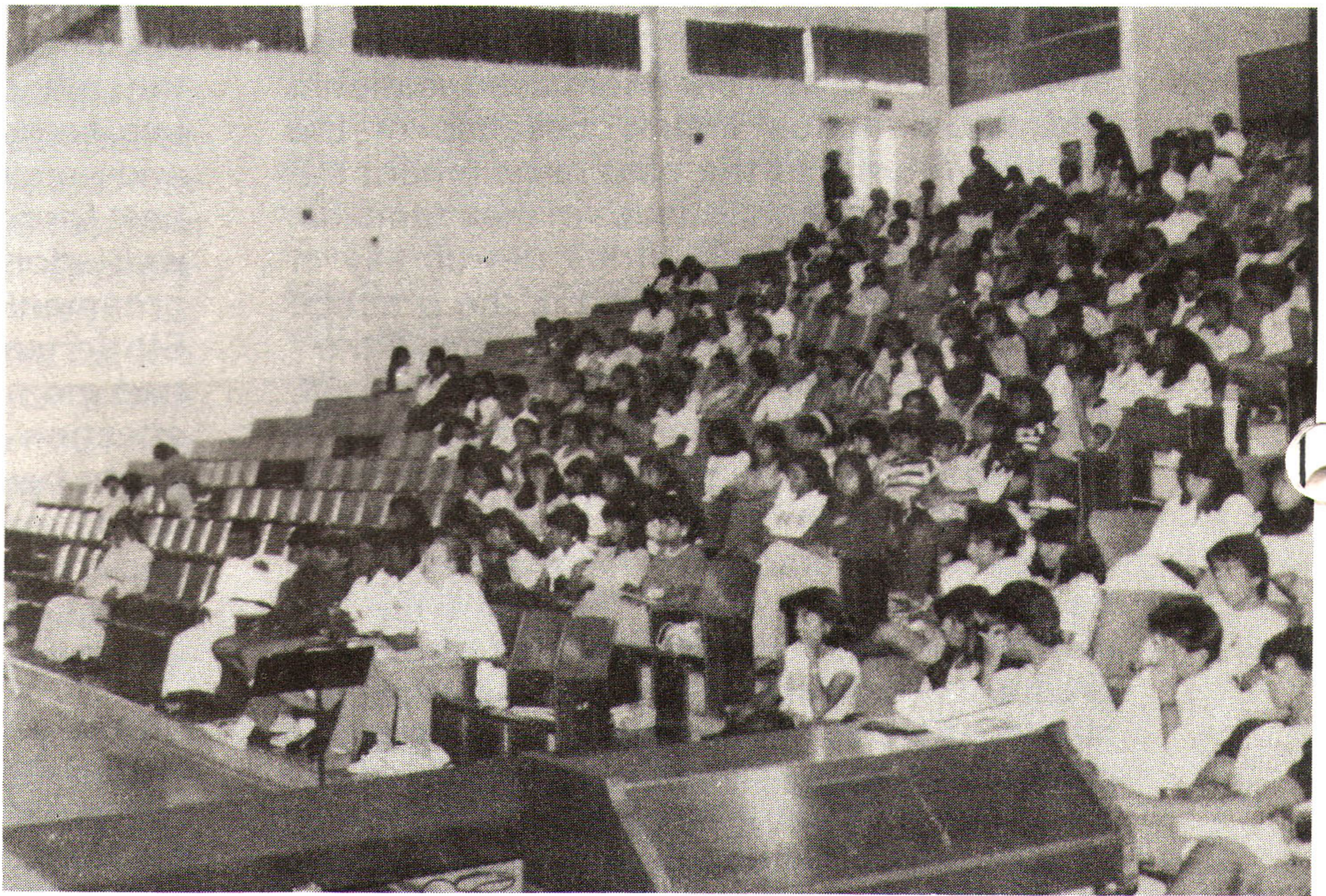
The institution of marriage is the central feature of all forms of human society from time immemorial. Apart from the sexual behavior of human society the institution of marriage serves certain other very significant purposes. With extremely developed intellectual abilities, supremacy and domination over all other creatures, the 'Homo Sapiens' do not confine themselves to the satisfaction of sexual needs alone. The mutual love of man and woman and their sentimental attachment to each other and the spirituality of marriage provide stability to the union. Thus marriage seems to be rooted in family, rather than family in marriage.

Traditional Indian Way

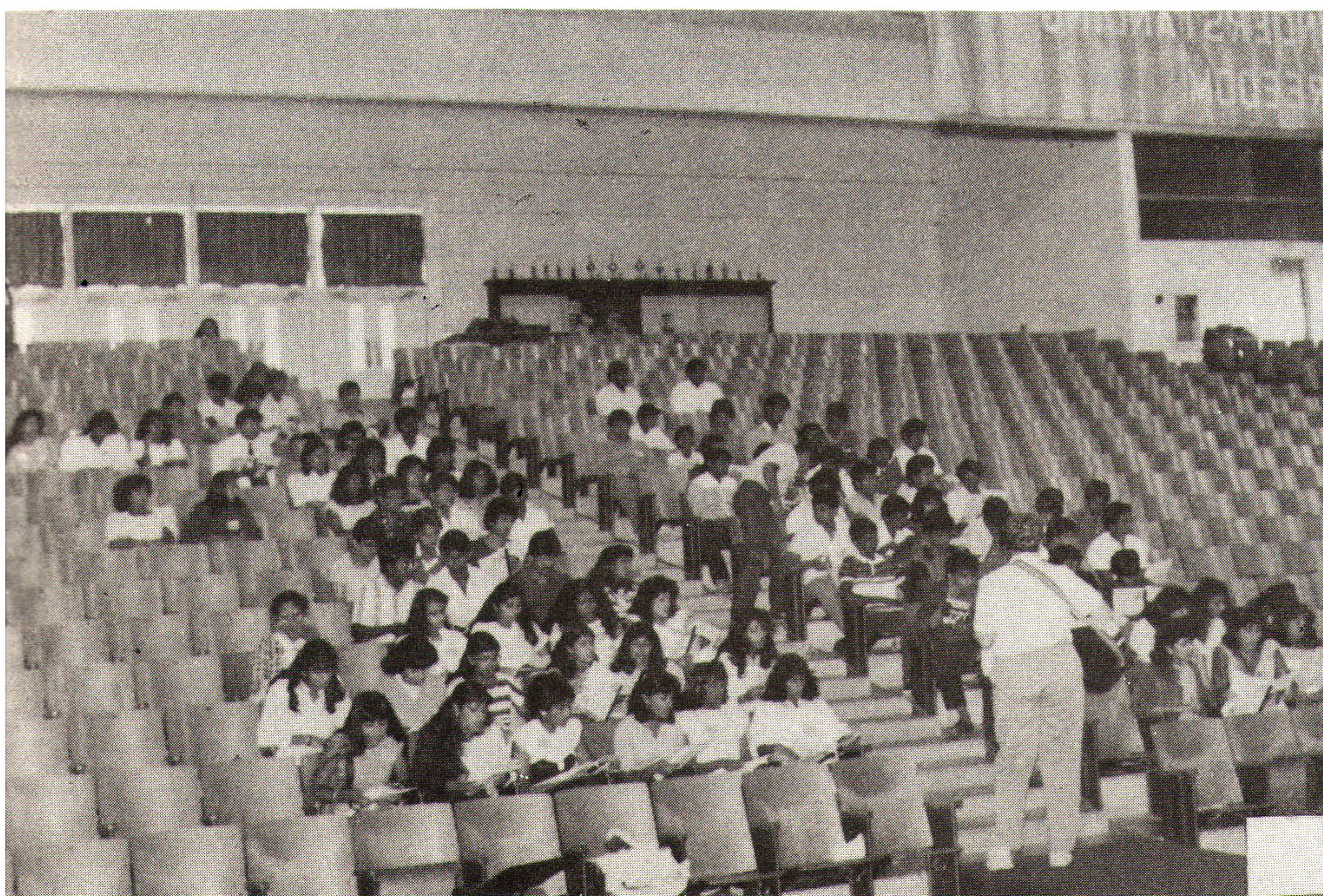
Traditional Indian marriages follow a number of prohibitions and considerations for selection of partners. Among these, much emphasis is laid on the personal qualities and characteristics of the prospective bride and bridegroom. Moreover, the social and economic status of the respective families are taken into consideration. Free movement and dating of the prospective bride and the groom or boys and girls of marriagable age have been traditionally prohibited in Indian culture because of ethical, moral and spiritual reasons. It was due to these



A mock Edavaka Yogam (General body meeting) of a Mar Thoma Parish was staged by the Youths of Dallas Mar Thoma Church, to the amusement of the audience.



A view of the audience from the podium during the combined session of the students' and Family Conferences.



Students' conference participants at singalong.

restrictions and considerations that parents traditionally took upon the responsibility of selecting a mate for their sons or daughters.

Parents most often prefer to choose bride or the groom from families which enjoy the same social status. And in most cases parents or relatives are more knowledgeable in these than the youngsters. From ancient times for the selection of mates the most important consideration used to be, good family status (kulum), not necessarily meant wealthy families. The families of high reputation were preferred even if they were not economically well off. This was practiced even in Biblical times. In Genesis we read that Abraham sent his servant with specific instructions to go unto his country and kindred to take a wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24:1-4.) According to Mahabharata marriage relations are preferable between families having same economic, educational and social status mainly because of the consideration that the offsprings inherit the qualities and characteristics of their families.

Even in western countries (let us say in United States) where dating is the practice for mate selection most parents advise their children to date from the same social, political and educational background. In self initiated marriages because the partner's involvement is most often due to physical attraction and emotions these aspects may be overlooked. The probability of disharmony and unhappiness in marriage is greater in partners from different social, cultural and religious background than in partners from same background.

Premarital sex is prohibited in Indian culture and it is strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. Western sociologists agree that mutual respect for the partners is seen mostly among couples who uphold moral values and are strictly disciplined not to engage in physically intimate relations before marriage. Mutual respect undoubtedly pave the way for a long healthy marriage. Protecting the virginity and purity of a girl (and that of a boy for that matter) is of utmost importance in any culture. Unfortunately that is not the case in the western dating where the misuse of freedom often results in premarital sex.

On the other hand in parent initiated selection often the complaint is that there is no opportunity to get to know the boy or girl in detail. Needless to say, in strictly arranged marriage neither the boy nor the girl has the opportunity to exercise his or her will in the selection of the life partner. It is very

essential that the partners have similarity in views, temperment, likes and dislikes. Therefore boys and girls should have the NECESSARY FREEDOM in the selection of partners. Parents and community should provide the opportunity for our youngsters to meet and know each other. Our youth as well as their parents need to be educated about the need for social interaction of our youngsters and the extent of freedom that can be exercised in their interaction.

The dowry system is another factor of traditional Indian system. The system as it exists today was quite unknown during ancient times in Indian culture. The dowry system is very intimately connected with the conception of marriage as a Dana or gift. According to Hindu concept a religious gift is not considered complete until it is accompanied by a gift in cash or gold. Thus the gift of the bride (Kanya dana) in the beginning was also accompanied by a formal and small gift in cash or ornaments. In the best form of marriage the girl was given away well adorned with beautiful dress and gold ornaments. These ornaments were known as Sthridhana and the bridegroom or his father had nothing to do with it. Later out of affection for their daughters the parents might have started giving some presents in the form of cash which later crept into the society as a condition for marriage, became a matter of prestige, thus becoming an indispensable part of marriage.

Dowry has become a malady on the society and has thus much to contribute in condemning woman to an inferior position in the family and society. In quite a lot of the Indian families particularly in the north, among the hindus the birth of a female child was looked upon and viewed inauspicious, and the parents seemed to look pale and worried because of the financial burden they will have to bear when the daughters reach marriagable age. On the other hand today a son with higher education and prospect of a good job is looked upon by parents as a sound investment paying good dividends. Parents of girls vie with one another in securing for their daughters such young men and offer fantastic sums for marrying their daughters. The bargaining nature of this and making it a condition for marriage dehumanize the society.

The western system

The western system of dating and courtship leading up to engagement and marriage creates certain problems which are

not found in many cultures in other parts of the world. There is no evidence in the scriptures related to dating as far as I know. The wide sociological system in both Old Testament and New Testament times then was entirely different. Western system of dating as we see it today with its varying degrees of physical intimacy emerged much later in civilization.

Through dating young people may acquire social and personal competence, extend their range of interaction between the opposite sex as well as gain valuable learning in the form of feedback from other people about their own habits, attitudes, and behavior. In addition they may learn to distinguish between the traits or qualities in others that they could never live with.

Illegitimacy constitutes a serious problem in the western society as a result of misuse of freedom in dating. As a consequence of new freedom in sex relations that prevail among youth in the western system, the number of young girls who become pregnant and the number of unmarried mothers have steadily increased in recent years. One out of every twelve babies born in Germany is illegitimate. In 1914 there were one million illegitimate children in Germany. In 1947 in the United States there were 131,900 illegitimate births. Although, the contraceptive methods have reduced the number of illegitimate births in recent times, the problem of illegitimacy is a moral and social issue that plagues the western society.

The waves of divorce affect most vigorously those societies which lack social, moral, and spiritual controls. In other words divorce rate is very high among partners believing in extreme forms of individualism and liberalism where guiding principles of life are "DO WHAT YOU LIKE". Divorce, desertion or separation is not an accident with the cult of freedom of sex, rather in most cases it is well expected and contemplated as an outlet. Family influence and social concerns help the partners in adjustability, adaptability and understanding. Indian women by nature are humble and adaptable and Indian men are compassionate and understanding and the couples adjust satisfactorily. Where there is no adaptability and adjustments there has been problems also. Problems of nonadaptability and unhappiness are much less in Indian society as compared to the number of unhappy families, broken marriages and divorces in United States and other western countries. The divorce rate in India or among people of

Indian descent are much less as opposed to 55% divorce in United States. Nevertheless, divorce in Indian families should not be neglected.

The moral aspect of Dating:

I do not think it is completely wrong for a boy and a girl to interact and get to know each other and to develop friendship within the limits of CHRISTIAN FREEDOM. Most often friendship between two people of the opposite sex leads to love and may develop into marriage relations. However, in western societies there is almost a built-in guarantee of an over-emphasis upon the physical rather than on pure friendship and love. Because the western society is sex oriented, in dating there is deeper physical intimacy practiced which is allowable only within the bounds of marriage. When the entire mass media and advertising world use every possible means to stimulate our bodily desires, the society does not find much of any wrong doing if partners engage in deeper physically intimate relations. To make the problem more complicated a large segment of western christianity has joined with secular thinkers in throwing overboard the authority of all landmarks and in promoting a carefully thought out version of "New Morality". Some of these supposedly written from a christian stand point go to unbelievable extremes.

The Christian View:

From a christian stand point there are degrees of personal commitment and degrees of physical involvement. Many casual physical intimacies (such as close bodily contact or a sustained kiss) that take place in the typical western courtship scene should have no place among christians. Sustained physical intimacies in dating are not activities that can be carelessly thrown around, for they are intended to carry more meaning for the christians. To simply use one another as biological plaything is to live "as the Gentiles do" and to surrender to sensuality which St. Paul admonishes against in Ephesians 4:17-21.

But what about christians who are seriously in love with each other and have committed to marry. THE SCRIPTURE FORBIDS SUCH A PAIR TO HAVE PHYSICAL INTIMACIES. Some ten references in the scripture lists premarital sex as EVIL; Mathew 15:19; Mark 7: 21; Acts 15:20, 29; Acts 21:15; Romans 1:29; 1 Cor 5:1; 2 Cor 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Col. 3:15. And about an equal number of times it is absolutely forbidden; 1 Cor 6:13; 1

Cor 6:18; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Cor 10:8.

In scripture God gives a clear and absolute rule governing full sexual union: it is limited within the marriage relationship. It is a law, but it is a law of love. Jesus described love as a new commandment (John 13:34; 15:22). Love dispenses with the necessity of laws because it has a built-in regulating device, a sort of moral compass which should always GUIDE US LIKE A HOMING PIGEON TO RIGHT MORAL BEHAVIOR. The ultimate question of love is, How shall I behave? When Paul answers this in 1 Cor. 13 he gives us some definite guidelines. The moral commandments of God give the content of love. They appear to be secondary to love but they cannot be contrary to it. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments". (John 14:15). "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10). Our youths need to be taught this very carefully so they should realize that this urge is a part of normal feeling meant to lead up to fulfillment and therefore to be treated seriously and sacredly.

In marriage two persons become one. Both the Old Testament analogy of the covenant relation between God and Israel and the New Testament analogy of the relationship between Christ and His church confirm this. Scripture forbids sexual relations before marriage not because of the many pragmatic reasons we offer our youth like the possibility of pregnancy and venereal diseases but because of the positive reasons based on what man is and his relationship to God and others must be. The modern question, is not whether it is wrong, but is it meaningful? That is in itself wrong. How can it be meaningful when it violates the stated limitations and meaning God intended it to have? To override the creator's word can only bring about the wrong meaning. As in other areas, WHEN IN DOUBT REFER TO THE MANUFACTURER'S HANDBOOK.

The impact of individualism in western dating:

Individualism is a modern world, says A.D. Lindsay, a noted western scholar. The emancipation of individual, the young, the old, man, woman and the society is very desirable and should be attained. It is the primary aim of democracy in which we all believe. But democracy without discipline is a menace in itself and was and is the cause of the downfall of many a civilization. The con

cept of individualism, if practiced as in the western countries, has far-reaching consequences on the institution of marriage. The very meaning and purpose of marriage are undergoing rapid changes. It is increasingly becoming a personal and formal matter and losing fast its social and institutional values. Like in democracy, individualism without discipline can be harmful to the individual, and thus to the society. Most often an individualistic couple is not concerned with others of their family or the society and they are shut off from the rest of the community and in 95% of cases where physical and mental abuse of partners occur, it has been in couples who are shut off from the rest of the community.

Freedom is not an unmixed blessing. Freedom does not mean an absolute freedom. It does not mean "do as you please". Therefore freedom must be exercised very judiciously and very carefully. Man is a rational being. Mankind is distinguished from other animals on account of reasoning WHICH PLACES CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS ON HIS BEHAVIOR. Restrictions bring discipline, system and order in human life, selection of partners and in the sexual behavior. Society which is the sum total of individuals imposes restrictions to control the behavior of individuals. This is true in the case of sexual behavior as well. Thus for a happy marriage both the institutional and personal characters must find their proper place. It must be a happy compromise of the two. Individuals must have the freedom to the extent that it must not hamper the growth and well-being of other individuals. Society on the other hand must have the authority to exercise checks on the free acts of individuals without harming their initiative and enterprise. Individualistic view sees marriage as a relationship between two persons, but in reality it is a social relationship between families also.

In conclusion, the institution of marriage requires a rethinking in the process of selection of partners by our youngsters growing in the western societies. Selection of partners by the parents, the dowry system and the lack of proper understanding between the partners are features of the old tradition. In view of the changing social values and the growth of modern democratic

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urges and aspirations traditional views about marriage do not appeal to the modern mind. On the other hand marriage has been influenced by modern factors such as industrialization, individualism and the sexual freedom which brings into existence revolutionary changes in the matter of sex and morality. The misuse of freedom and independence in modern times have led to chaos and confusion in sex, morality, spirituality and religion TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT GIVES SOMETIMES THE APPREHENSION OF THE EXTINCTION OF DECENCY AND HUMANITY ITSELF.

*Dr. P.V. Cherian is currently the Assistant Secretary of the Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America and Headmaster of Philadelphia Mar Thoma Sunday School. Before coming to United States he had served on the faculties of St. Thomas College, Kozhencherry and Mar Thoma College in Kerala, India.

Achens:

Rev. N.M. Cherian (N. York), Rev. George Jacob (Toronto), Rev. Abraham Thomas (Philadelphia), Rev. D. Philip (Los Angeles) & Rev. Philip Varghese (Dallas) left for India. We thank them and their families for their valuable services. Rev. M.S. Varghese (Toronto), Rev. K. G. Pothen (Los Angeles), Rev. A. G. Mathew (Philadelphia), & Rev. T. O. Joseph (New York) have joined us. We welcome them to our midst and assure them of our prayer.

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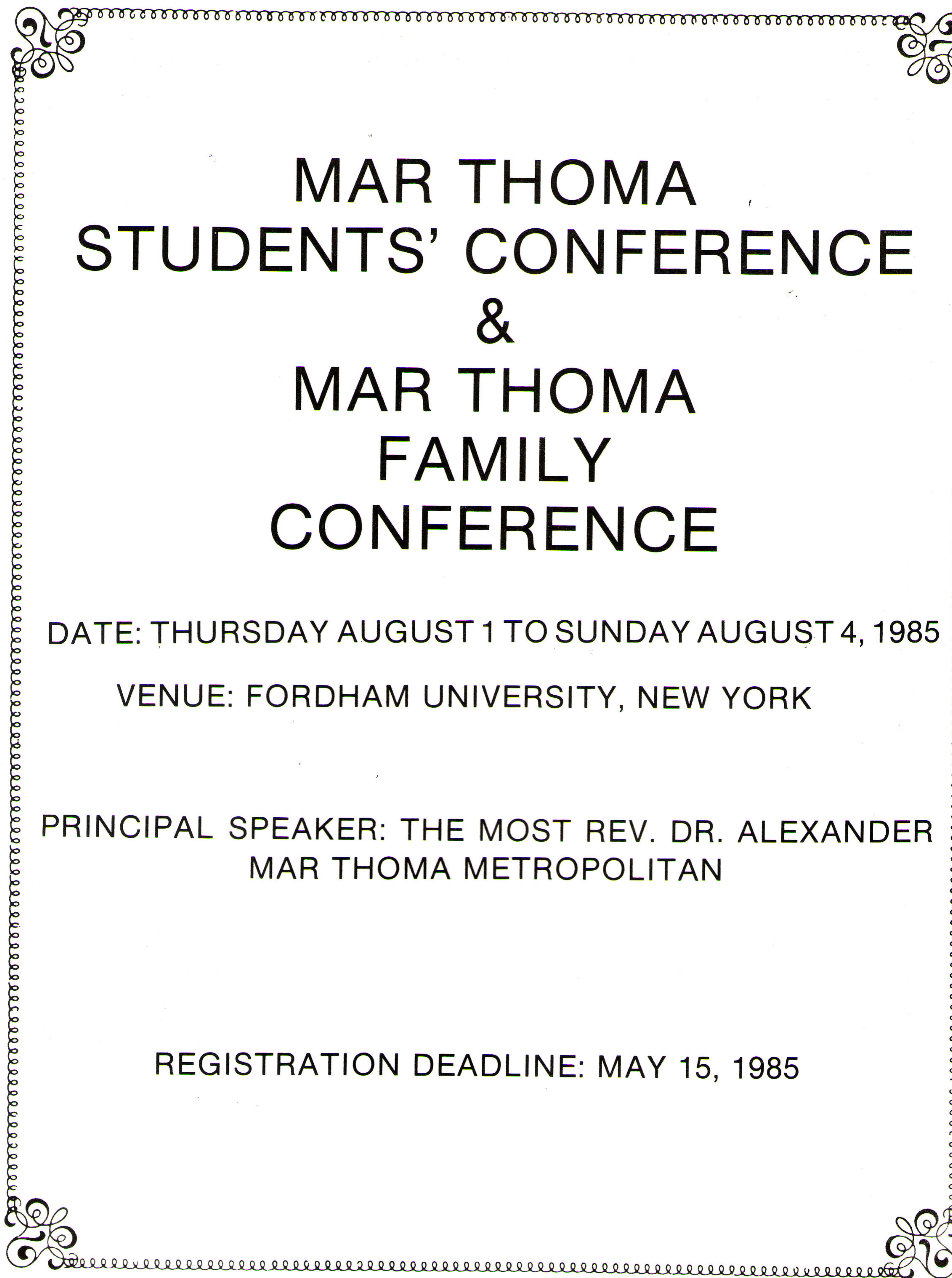
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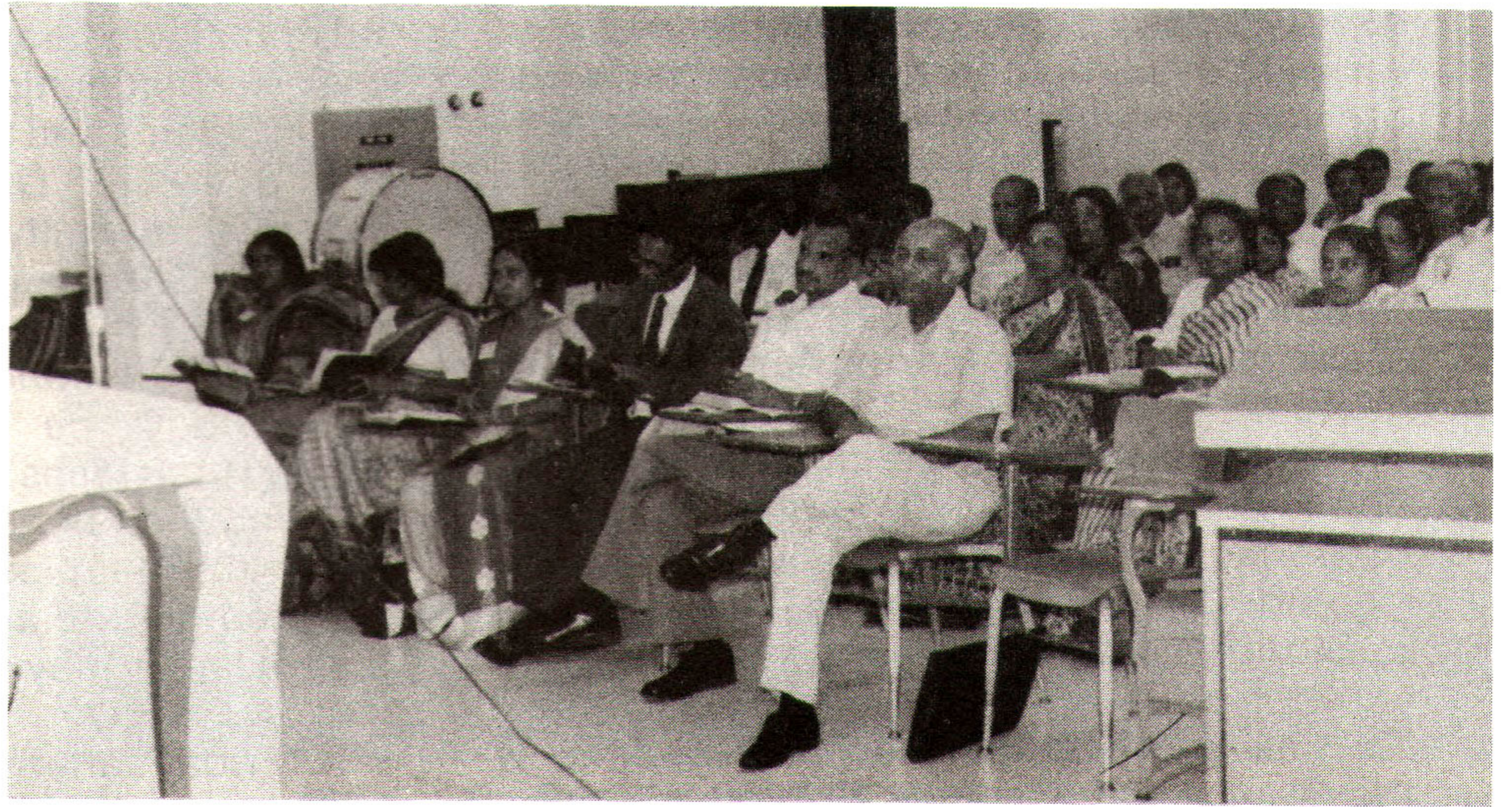
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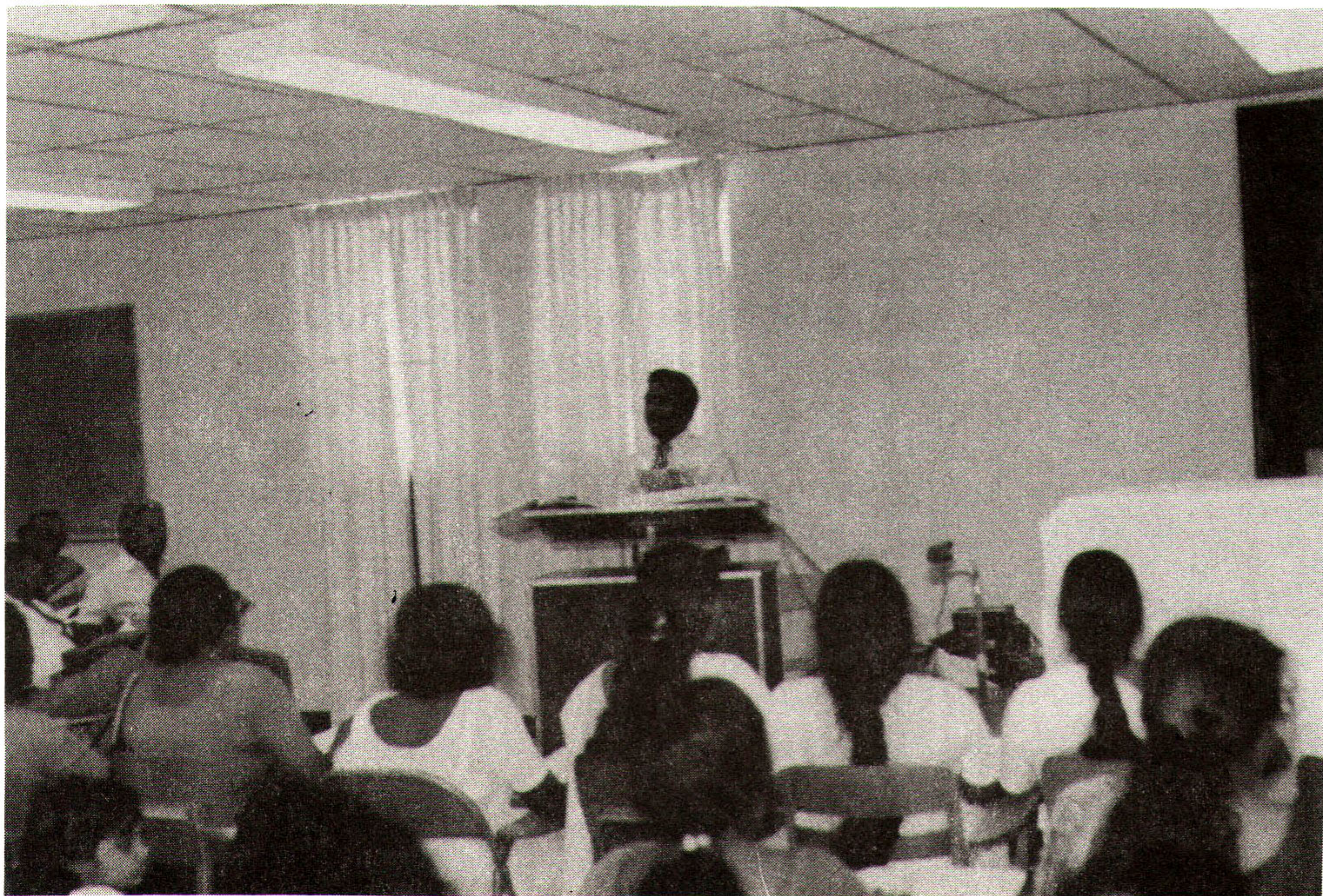
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: MAY 15, 1985



Our vicars on the stage with a little dance of their own.



Family conference participants attending the Bible study session in Dallas Baptist College.



Mr. Samkunju of Dallas Mar Thoma Church leading the singalong during the Family Conference of 1984

THE MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA



The Mar Thoma Family Conference which was held at the Dallas Baptist College in Dallas, Texas during July 19-22, 1984 surpassed all expectations in attendance and in enthusiasm. Just before the conference opened only ninety registrations had come in but by early the second day over one hundred and seventy-five families had come in and by that evening the average attendance was four hundred which increased to about five hundred by the third day. The participation in all the sessions, especially during the discussion time was broad and the singing was simply superb. The Dallas Baptist College sits on the top of a hill by the side of a lake. One doubts whether anything such as four hundred or so Mar Thomites singing beautifully "Jesus marathavan, Jesus Marthavan.." was ever heard from that hill-top.

The principal leader of the conference was The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. His grace chaired three of the sessions including the business meeting and gave the concluding message. Beside these, Thirumeni addressed the joint sessions of the Family and Students Conference three times on the theme CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF FREEDOM. The Bible study sessions were conducted by Dr. K.P. Mathai, Principal of the South India Biblical seminary, Bangarapet, India. Taking his texts from both the Old and New Testament, Dr. Mathai led us through an understanding of how humanity had lost its freedom through sin and how it was gained for them through Jesus Christ. He concluded that a Christian is fully free only to the degree that he or she is bound to Jesus Christ. To be a free people we should be bondspeople to Christ. Therefore, our freedom is not licence but a call to Christian responsibility.

Dr. George Zachariah of the University of Washington, D.C. gave a masterful presentation and led a discussion of our Larger Freedom, especially living in the United States with all its opportunities and dangers. He argued that we have special

resources of faith and heritage that should enable us to exercise Christian freedom and live with joy and enthusiasm. Dr. George Kurian of the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada presented a paper touching upon the problems of the Indian immigrants and their families. His scholarly approach encompassed the special problems of immigrants in general who try to adapt to the ways and culture of their adopted country and yet try to retain some of the values, customs and practices of the society that they had left behind. He pointed out some of the problems and tensions that such an effort would create. Dr. Abraham Panackal of Temple University, Philadelphia presented a topic on Christian Freedom in the context of Christian family. Drawing equally from the Biblical texts and from his discipline of Psychology, he argued that a Christian family that faces issues or problems fully utilizing the resources of our faith, is apt to make the happiest adjustment to this our adopted culture and children brought up in such a family may make the best adjustments in this society.

A Friday afternoon panel on Christian Understanding of Freedom in the Indian North American Cultural Context was moderated by the Rev. N.M. Cherian Vicar of **Staten Island**, New Jersey and St. Andrews parishes. The presents included Dr. **George Kurian**, Mr. C.A. Thomas and (Mrs.) P.V. Cherian. The ensuing discussion was one of the liveliest and the broadest participation that this writer had seen in a long time.

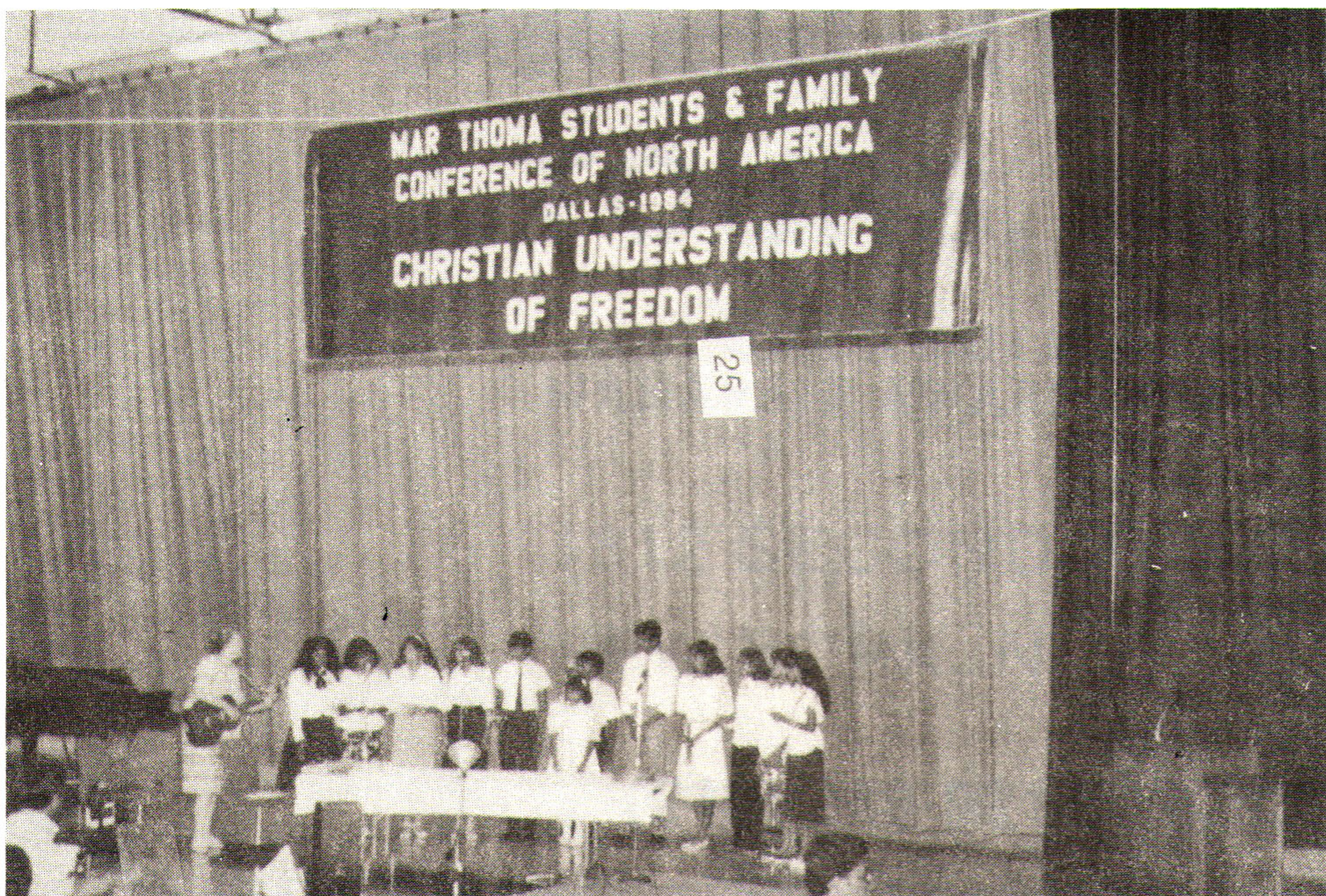
A business session was held on the afternoon of Saturday July 21 and after considerable discussion on the desirability and practicality of holding a large conference such as this, it was unanimously decided to hold annual sessions of the Family conference separately but at the same time and venue of the Students Conference. A Committee of ten, two each representing the five regions of the Zonal Council was elected. The member representing the region where the next conference is to be held will be the convenor.



Rev. N.M. Cherian moderator, Mr. C.A. Thomas and Mrs. Kunjumol Cherian (Presenters) listen to questions from the audience at a session of the family conference. Dr. George Kurian who was also present for the session is not in the picture.



The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan addressing the concluding session of the Family Conference of 1984 in



Philadelphia Mar Thoma Youth Choir on stage during the Choir Competition.

Although an annual conference will be held, each region was encouraged to hold regional conferences using the resources available in our North American Zone of the Mar Thoma Church.

On Saturday (July 21) afternoon a combined panel of representatives from students and parents was moderated by the Rev. N.M. Cherian. It brought forth a profusion of comments and remarks from both the parents and the students about possibilities and problems in communication between them and suggestions were most constructive. The results greatly justified the decision to hold such a panel.

On Friday (July 20) night a combined session of the students and the members of the Family Conference was addressed by various representatives of the community in Greater Dallas. It was during this session that Dr. William Richey Hogg of the Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, took a look at the gathering and said "Truly, this is a Maramon in the U.S.A." remembering his own trip to the Maramon Convention many years ago. Since then a large number of people have fondly referred to the conferences as "Maramon in North America."

The communion service on Sunday July 22 was the largest gathering of the members of the Mar Thoma Church in North America ever. From the more than a thousand who attended, over five hundred and fifty took Holy Communion. The service itself lasted over two and a half hours and those who participated in it shall never forget that experience.

The last session of the family conference was addressed by the Rev. Philip David, Vicar of the Los Angeles Mar Thoma parish. Achan's sermon was followed by a period of testimony in which participants were encouraged to renew their Christian dedication as family units. A large number participated and because time was running short, in the closing everyone stood up and made a collective rededication. That was another moment of emotional high for this writer.

Although not named individually, all the vicars of the Mar Thoma Church in North America except two, had participated in this

conference and provided leadership in worship, prayer and in presiding over several meetings. A conference of this magnitude and scope could not have been organized and operated without the selfless efforts of a very large number of people from the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Dallas and to them we shall always remain grateful.

A new feature this year was the Mar Thoma Children's Conference, a series of classes in the style of the Vacation Bible School. About two hundred people from age three to fourteen attended this conference. It was most heartening and encouraging to watch these, of the future generation that we have been discussing much in the conferences, spend their time in studies, songs and games under the general title Jesus is My Answer. Watching them at work and play one came away assured that there is really nothing to worry about the future of our church in North America.

The Rev. K.M. Samuel, President of the Family Conference and The Rev. Philip Varghese, President of the Students Conference deserve special gratitude for their prayerful and faithful leadership. Let me close by saying, On to New York, the Epiphany Church, next year.

—George Poikail, Convenor



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REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS CONFERENCE

A one day retreat and training program for the Mar Thoma Sunday School Teachers of the Northeast region (New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Washington) was held on Saturday September 22 1984 in Philadelphia. Philadelphia Mar Thoma Sunday School hosted the conferences. Rev. George Mathew, Coordinator of the regional activities presided during the sessions. Nearly 65 teachers from the region attended

the conference. Dr. P.V. Cherian, Headmaster of Philadelphia Mar Thoma Sunday School welcomed the gathering. Rev. T. Jacob Thomas, Rev. T.O. Joseph, Rev. A.G. Mathew and Rev. J. Joseph were also present and gave devotional messages. Lunch and refreshments were provided. During the business session in the afternoon, activities for 1985 were planned. Mr. John Kunchandy proposed the vote of thanks. After prayer and benediction the conference came to a close at 5 p.m.



LARGER FREEDOM

Kerala Christian Community's witness in
American Society

Paper presented at the Mar Thoma Family
Conference, Dallas Baptist College, Dallas,
Texas - July 19-22, 1984 by George K.
Zachariah, Washington, D.C.

I have been asked to discuss the exercise of christian freedom by Kerala christians in their interaction with the larger American society. Preparing for this task has not been easy. What I propose to do is (i) to raise some questions hoping that they will help us reflect upon our responsibilities as members of a larger community and (ii) to venture to make some observations without making any claim that they are tested principles. Because of the lack of time and space, some of those statements have to be cryptic.

There is perhaps a tacit but unintended assumption behind the suggested topic that there is something we can contribute which no other group can. However, a case certainly can be made that there is nothing unique about our possible contributions. The hardest part of the task, granted the validity of the assumption, is to identify some unique contributions we as a community could make. We will attempt to do that to a limited extent later on in the paper.

We shall discuss the concept of freedom in general and then that of christian freedom followed by an analysis of the American landscape relative to the issues brought out in that discussion and conclude this paper by making some observations regarding Kerala christian community's role in the larger American society.

'Freedom' is probably one of the most significant aspects of life warranting constant study and reflection. Our ancient Indian sages proclaimed: "Sa vidya ya vimuktaye" (That is true knowledge which makes us free). Nature endows man with responsible power of choice thus making freedom both possible and real. Freedom is the pre-requisite for learning on the part of responsible selves. God teaches by indirection. He not only permits but enforces the freedom to learn. "Dare to be free" was a slogan of the American revolution. Ezra Pound defined a slave as someone who waits for someone else to free him. Dietrich Bonhoeffer distinguished a slave from a free man by stating that the former asks: what is to come?, while the latter asks, what is right?

"I've gotta be free; I've gotta be me". This couplet from an old popular song expresses the sentiment of many people. In addition to the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, we can list a number of freedoms we cherish and to a certain extent

enjoy: Freedom to maintain or even better the standard of living to which we are accustomed freedom from responsibility; freedom to live private lives without outside interference; freedom to make our daily work meaningful; freedom to do what we want to do without feeling guilty; freedom to grow to the full stature of our capabilities; freedom to enjoy what our culture and society offer. In spite of these kinds of freedoms we enjoy we have an uneasy feeling of being trapped. Many times this may be resulting from what Alvin Toffler characterized as 'overchoice'. In this culture we have too many options. What happens is that we have become victims of our own options. Our possessions, affiliations and activities possess us and enslave us. You will agree that being free is not a matter of freedom to do or be whatever we wish; it is not freedom from all responsibility; it is not license; and it is not to be taken as synonymous with being adventuresome or fearless. To be free is to know our limits and operate resourcefully with them. Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil 4:11) That is freedom. Increased knowledge of oneself and others along with the knowledge of the world broaden the bases of freedom. The will to power is possession and is not the will to freedom. Plato rightly pointed out that a tyrant is himself a slave.

How free are we? Psychologist B.F. Skinner advocates that we give up our 'illusion of freedom' and get busy learning how to control our life by eliciting the conditioned reflexes which best fit our needs. It is true that man is not *totally* autonomous. No absolute freedom exists in this life. We are, like it not, servants of our own culture and technology. Coincident with the forces from without is the disturbing fact that we are also controlled by forces from within which we cannot adequately manage. All we can talk about is relative freedom. It is possible, however, to increase our margin of autonomy. The christian claim is that we are growing *into* freedom and will one day be perfectly free in Christ.

There are some important questions to be answered:

1. Given the fact of order as the correlate of freedom, how are they to be prioritized in different situations? What are some of the situations when it is justifiable to risk the loss of order for the sake of freedom?; the loss of freedom for the sake of order? Under what conditions would it be appropriate to subordinate one concern to the other?

CONGRATULATIONS

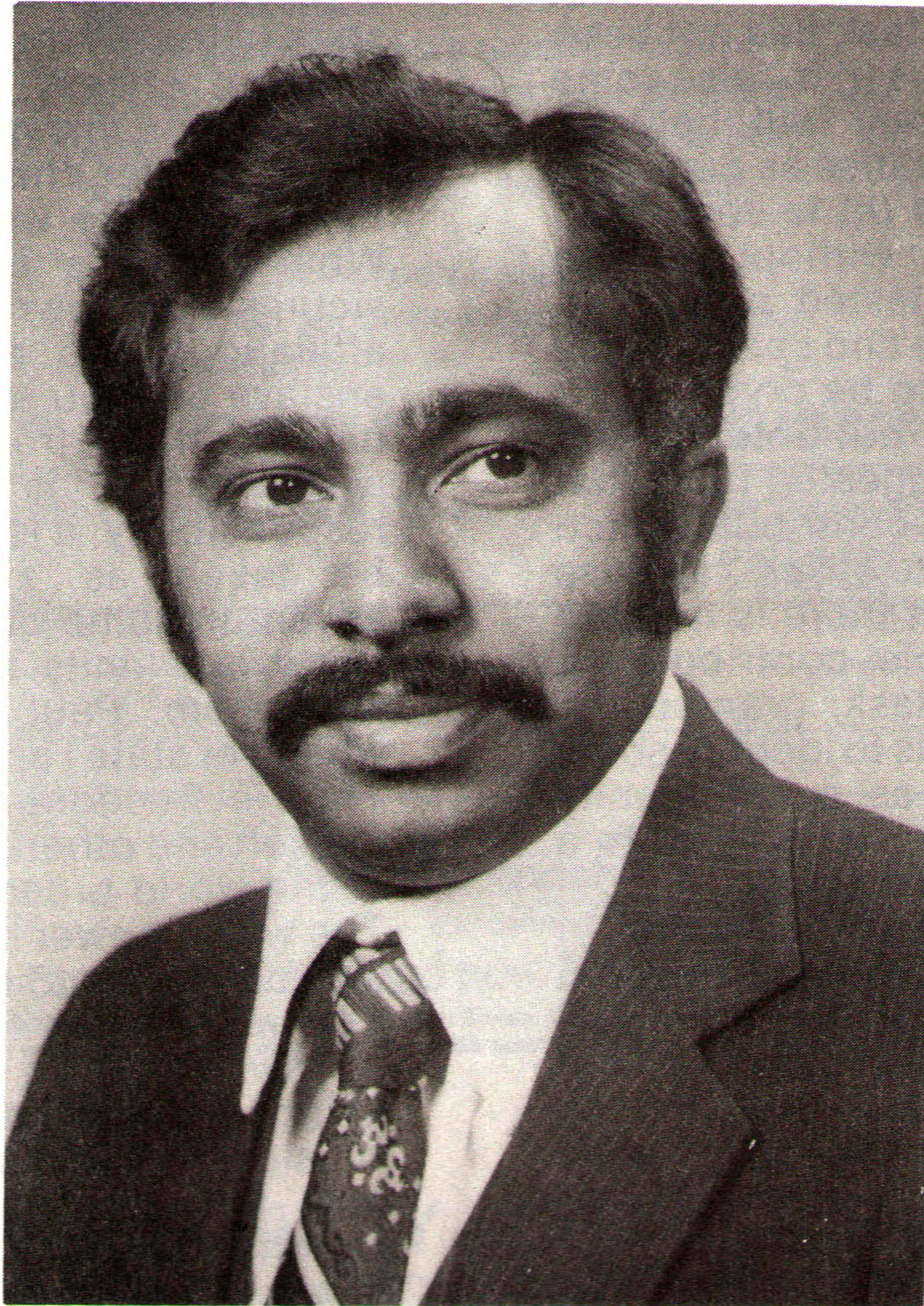
TO

Mr. JOSEPH MATHEW

(Raju Mon)

Mr. Mathew obtained his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Kerala; is a former student of St. Thomas College, Kozhencherry and member of Mar Thoma Church, Kuzhikala.

In India he had served as the Executive Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs. Also he is a former student of the United Theological College in Bangalore, India.



For the last four years Mr. Mathew has been a Sales Manager with JOHN HANCOCK which is a Multi Billion Financial Corporation in the fields of Insurance, Investments and Banking.

With his wife and two sons he lives in Upper Darby in Pennsylvania. He is interested in Arts, Poems writing, Ottamthullal, Kadhaprasangam and meeting new people.

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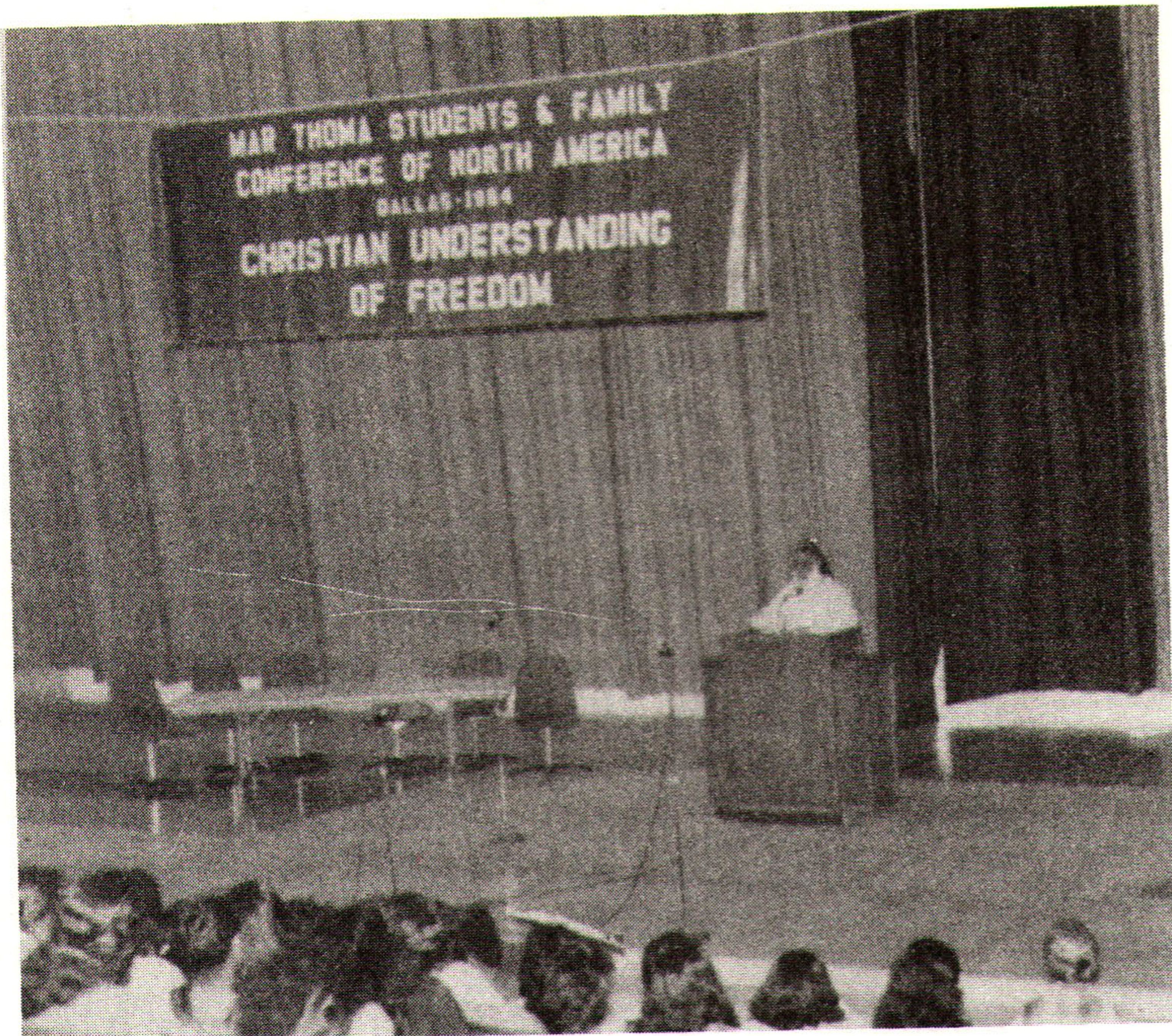
Mr. Mathew is a graduate of the Life Underwriters Training Council and the John Hancock Institute in Boston. He is a member of the National Association of Security Dealers and currently undergoing training in Chartered Financial Consultant Program at the American College in Brynmawar.

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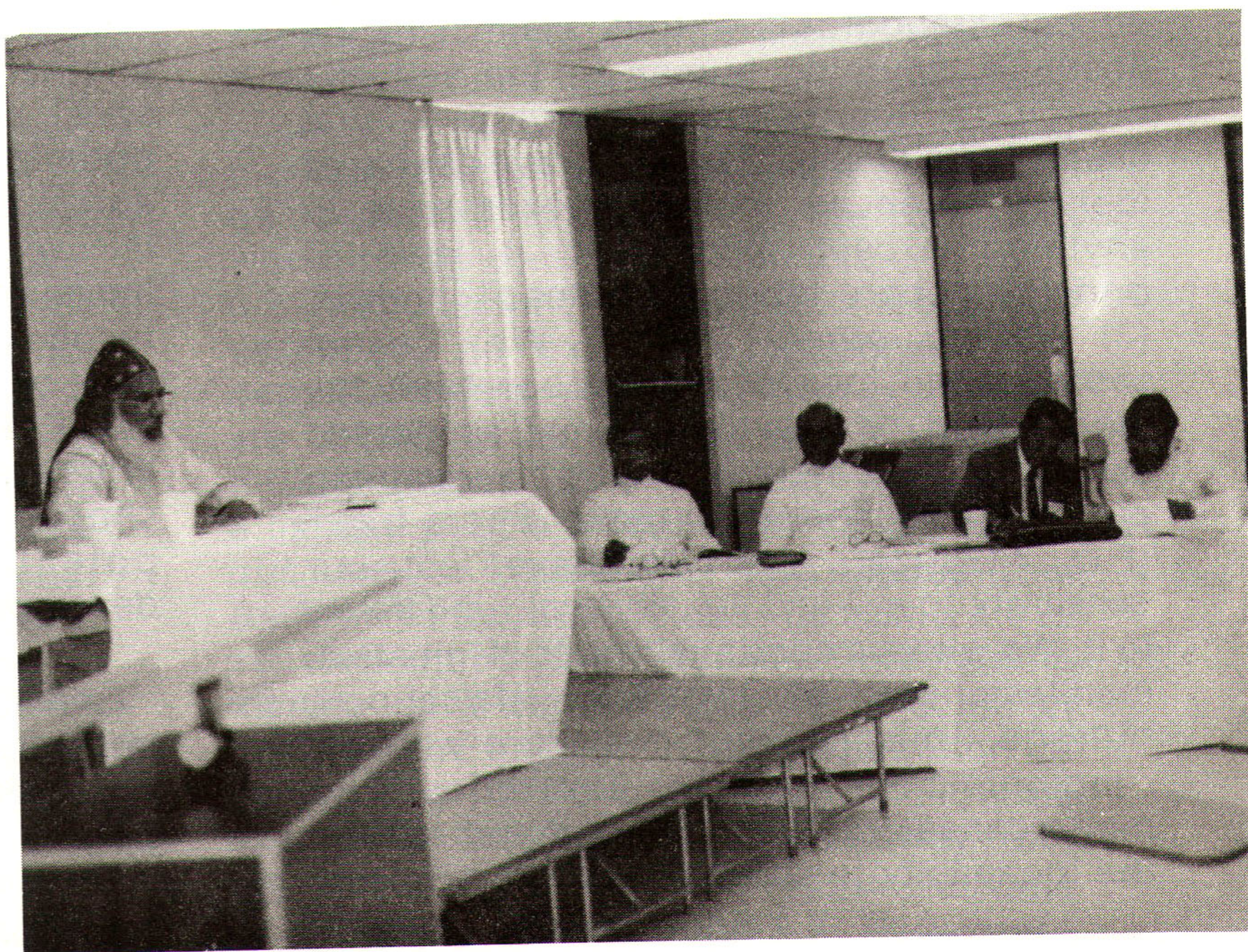


His Grace Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan delivering the address on Christian understanding of Freedom during the opening session of the Mar Thoma Students' Conference, in Dallas.



Zonal council members and the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan

His Grace Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan presiding over the Zonal Council meeting in July 1984. The secretary of the Zonal Council Rev. N.M. Cherian, Rev. P.V. Thomas, Chairman, Dr. P.V. Cherian and Rev. T. Jacob Thomas (recording secretaries) are also seen.



2. Can we legitimately speak of 'a christian freedom' as distinctive from freedom in general? What is the relationship between christian faith and freedom? Is a christian more 'free' than others? What are the differences which faith in our Lord Jesus Christ can, ought to, and sometimes does make in our moral decisions?

3. What role does discipline play vis-a-vis freedom?

4. Is christian freedom authentic both in the world and in the church?

Jesus said: "If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn.8:36) T. R. Clover's famous sentence comes to mind: "Four words destroyed slavery, 'For whom Christ died' (Rom. 14:15)". Thus Christ brings the larger personal and collective freedom. This realization has two consequences for the christian. He becomes impatient with restrictive rules designed for the immature and he begins to think of others.

Christian freedom has three facets: (1) *Breaking free* — believing and trusting in and feeling of new freedom God has given us in Jesus. As Karl Barth claimed "faith is freedom" and only by faith in Christ does man achieve his right and proper freedom to trust, to know, and to confess. We don't have to prove our worth. We can drop our defenses. To the degree that we count on His word of promise, we can 'sit loose' to everything else. (2) *Living free* — the continual process of becoming free persons which also involves dying to be free. Men of faith are incurable protesters. "They protest against anything finite — nation, culture mankind — that claims to be infinite; anything relative — mores, moral codes, ethical standards — that claims to be absolute; anything human — the self, the church (structures), the in-group — that claims to be divine." There is grave danger of idolatry when we look for governance to anything except Christ, be it laws or principles or pre-fabricated rules of conduct. (3) *Setting others free* — We "cannot separate the idea of deliverance from the idea of God, or even think of man as blessed except as he enters into God's redeeming purpose and labours to make others free." (F.D. Maurice) Alas! We have lost our sensitivity to evil and are abysmally indifferent to it. We witness continually acts of injustice, manifestations of hypocrisy, falsehood, outrage, misery, but we rarely grow indignant or overly excited. "The niggardliness of our moral comprehension, the incapacity to sense the depth of misery

caused by our own failures, is a fact which no subterfuge can elude. Our eyes are witness to the callousness and cruelty of man, but our heart tries to obliterate the memories, to calm the nerves, and to silence the conscience." (Abraham Heschel)

Basically, it is a matter of choosing one's master. It is expressed well in the hymn, "Make me a captive Lord, And then I shall be free". It is the authority emanating from going directly to the source, God, the ground of freedom. It is abundant life which is potentially dying for Christ. Some one asked the late activist community organizer, Saul Alinsky, in an interview if he were not afraid of being killed. His solemn reply was: "I died a long time ago. I don't have to face that any more. Now I am free to do my work."

Christian, responsible freedom is not freedom from others and their demands; it is freedom to serve others in love. Our freedom is bound up with the freedom of others. It is freedom from legalism. Emil Brunner noted: "There is obviously a great deal written in the Old Testament as divine law which no christian can regard as binding upon himself unless he ceases to be a christian." (*Justice & the Social Order*) Paul Ramsey in his *Basic Christian Ethics* argues that everything is lawful, everything is permitted which christian love permits, everything is demanded which christian love requires. It reminds us of the Augustinian dictum, "Love with care and then what you will, do." As Ramsey states, "The commands of love are as stringent as the needs of the world are urgent." The one test according to Schubert Ogden (*Faith and Freedom*) whether love is really present is always freedom — both in the sense that the test of whether one loves another is always whether one intends to speak and act in such a way as somehow to optimize the limits of the others' freedom, and in the sense that the test of whether one is loved by another is always whether the limits of one's own freedom are in some respect thus optimized by what the other says or does. This notion resembles that of Erik Erikson's paraphrase of the golden rule: Wherever one has a choice, one should choose to act, so as to enhance the potentials of one's counter-player's development as well as one's own."

Christian freedom means taking our lives seriously and it is a call to courage to lay our emphasis where Christ laid it. It means making moral choices most responsibly with, to use the brilliant characterization of

George Chauncey, "the commitment of *faith*, in light of the *facts*, with the help of the *fellowship*, and aware of his own *fallibility*." (*Decisions! Decisions!*) H. Richard Niebuhr suggested that the question, what must I do in a given situation must be preceded by the question, what is God doing? Gustafson reformulated it by stating that the primary question is "what is God enabling and requiring me (or us) to do?" (*Can Ethics be Christian?*) It is impossible for us to imitate Christ. That is why many prefer to speak about christian discipleship or following Christ rather than imitating Christ. Martin Luther, in his treatise *The Freedom of a Christian*, summarizes all that it means to be a christian in all the two paradoxical statements: "A christian man is the most free Lord of all and subject to none; a christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one." Before freedom can become a way of life it must be deeply entrenched as a way of thought.

Discipline and freedom: We have to recognize the paradox that freedom is preserved only through discipline; but initial freedom is required to make discipline possible. Every discipline has its corresponding freedom. Following are a few examples of disciplines and corresponding freedoms: (1) *Not viewing ourselves better than others and the desire to control them* — If we are to progress in the spiritual walk so that the disciplines are a blessing and not a curse, we must come to the place in our lives where we lay down the everlasting burden of needing to manage others and to give up our moral complexes of superiority. When we genuinely believe that inner transformation is God's work and not ours, we can put to rest our passion to set others straight. (2) *Simplicity* — Simplicity is freedom and duplicity is bondage. "God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising." (Eccles. 7:39 Jerusalem Bible) As Arthur Gish said, "We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like." (*Beyond the Rat Race*) It is putting possessions in proper perspective. To receive what we have as a gift from God; to know that it is God's business, and not ours, to care for what we have; and to have our goods available to others are the three basic attitudes of simplicity. (3) *Submission* — This is a hard one for us especially Keralites. The corresponding freedom is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. (4) *Leadership* — It is *letting be*, allowing freedom to others to do their work, simply enabling people to be themselves, to grow and to fruit. Professor

John MacQuarrie has argued that for speaking of God Himself the most fundamental category more basic even than that of 'pure being' in which He has been traditionally described is that of 'letting be'. "And God said, Let there be..." (5) *Sharing* — corresponding freedom is release from anxiety. (6) *Loyalty to our roots, traditions and families* — Corresponding freedom is one of stability and emotional resourcefulness needed for facing crises. I cannot resist mentioning the role our parents contrive to play in our lives. It is written that when King Solomon erected the Temple in Jerusalem he attempted to bring the Holy Ark into the sanctuary, but the gates locked and would not open for him. He began to pray and chant hymns in praise of God, but the gates remained closed. Then he raised his voice and commanded "Open, ye gates, allow the Lord of Hosts to enter!" But still, the gates remained locked. In desperation, Solomon cried out: "Almighty God, remember the righteousness of David, my Father!" Instantly, the gates opened and the Holy Ark was brought into the sanctuary.

Church and Freedom: One would think that freedom of thought and expression are central to the christian style of life. Didn't Jesus promise that the truth would make us free? Most people in the church do not act as if they believed this. Historically, the church has been one of the strongest stumbling blocks to free thought and expression. The 'free church' is a notion absolutely central to St. Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Galatians and is the substance of his vision. All structures including that of the institutional church are "provisional and expendable". The church should not only tolerate genuine freedom but must abet and encourage it. In as much as the normal medium through which the Holy Spirit may be expected to speak is the 'christian worshipping community listening critically', our responsibility is obvious. Freedom is essentially an 'exodus' experience. God's people always are engaged in an exodus: We are a pilgrim community called to travel through life without excess baggage. Are we a captive people in Babylon? Or are we on our trek to Bethlehem? The exodus from Babylon to Bethlehem leads us from a life of separation and disengagement maintaining identity as a separate people to a life of involvement implicit in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The church needs to follow the example of Jesus. It has to move away from legalism and give up meaningless elements in orthodoxy. Bishop John A.T. Robinson's statement that "the church has a greater

investment in integrity than in orthodoxy" is worth recalling here. Jesus said, "The sabbath is made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Persons are more important than any principles. Apart from the scandal caused by His messianic claims, only two accusations of personal depravity seem to have been brought against Jesus of Nazareth. First, that he was a sabbath-breaker and secondly that he was 'a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners' — "that he ate too heartily, drank too freely, and kept very disreputable company, including grafters of the lowest type and ladies who were no better than they should be." Dorothy Sayers has some harsh words for the church: "For nineteen and a half centuries, the christian churches have labored, not without success, to remove this unfortunate impression made by their Lord and Master. They have hustled the Magdalenes from the communion table, founded total abstinence societies in the name of him who made the water wine, and added improvements of their own, such as various banes and anathemas upon dancing and theatergoing. They have transferred the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, and, feeling that the original commandment "Thou shalt not work" was rather half hearted, have added to it a new commandment "thou shalt not play" " (*The Whimsical Christian*) She further asks a poignant question, "Has any prosperously fraudulent banker, I wonder, ever been refused communion on the grounds that he was, in the words of the English Prayer book, 'an open and notorious evil liver'?"

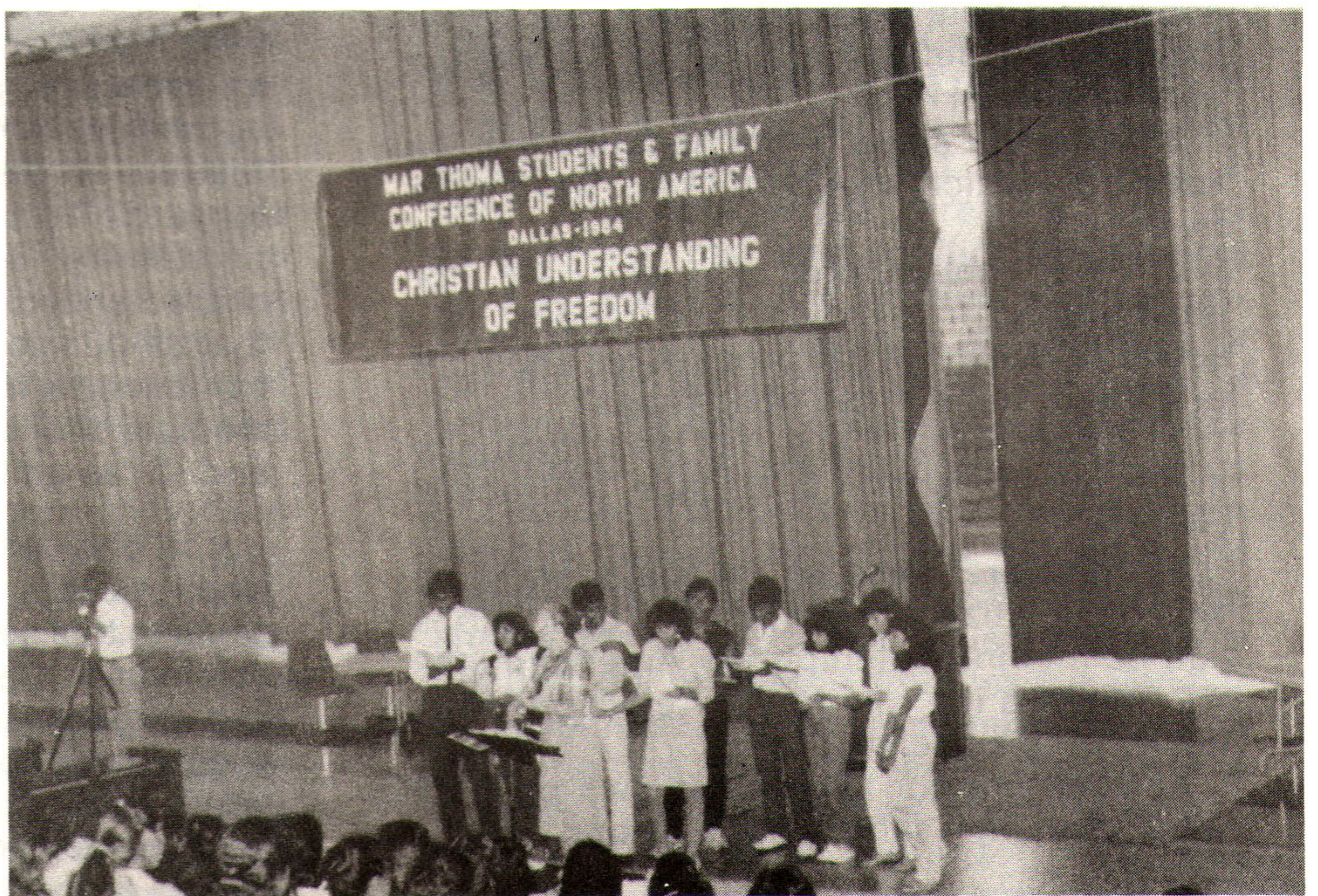
One of the biggest barriers between the church and the world is 'the almost indecent obsession that the churches have with sex' (Bp. Robinson) In fact, the term 'free love' was used as a protest slogan against the christian moral standard though what goes under that name is usually neither love nor free. Bishop Robinson thought it relevant to distinguish carefully between 'the erotic, the obscene, and the pornographic'. While he rejects the latter two as unwholesome and evil, he claims that a "a reinstatement of the genuinely erotic as a subject of beauty and delight" as one of the priorities of our society. He states: "It is an area where the church has reparation to make. For, as every one knows, the church has a shameful record of being anti-erotic.... There is nothing anti-erotic about Jesus, who was certainly not known as a puritan, and by his fearless freedom gave women an entirely

new acceptance in the ancient world." I am taking the liberty to quote Bishop Robinson extensively on this topic since he expresses certain sentiments which call for our sympathetic but critical evaluation. "I have no compunction as a christian in saying that we have in our generation to aim for a truly humanistic understanding of sex... The liberation of sex, so that we are genuinely free in how we act and how we talk about it, is far from complete... For the heart of the sexual revolution in our time is that potentially now we have within our grasp a freedom over sex... It has been said that sex is bidding fair to replace religion as the opium of the people... For the revolution demands that, whether we are christians or not, we should rethink our attitude to sex not simply in terms of what is permitted ('how far' we go, or where we 'draw the line'), but in terms of the quality of *personal relationship*. It is the test of honesty to the relationship and real fidelity to the whole person that matters. Sex can be fully personal, as opposed to animal, only in the content of a tender, caring, responsible relationship. And it is this that *eroticism* undermines by detachment. Anything that works against this detachment is not only on the side of angels, but, more importantly, on the side of integrated, mature, joyful, human living." In short, our compulsion to murder pleasure and accentuation of the negative component in existence is obvious. What should give joy is turned into misery. Pleasure is not even permitted some times. Definitely there is also an inability to plan for pleasure. 'The resurrection of the body', to use Norman Brown's telling phrase, is an essential condition of mental sanity. Part of our redemption lies in laughter, "in the forgiving and reviving showers of mirth that cleanse and renew us." As B.F. Skinner admits, the church built 'WaldenTwo' long before he offered his design for it. Proper behavior — the desired response for the 'virtuous life' was positively reinforced in a thousand symbolic ways.

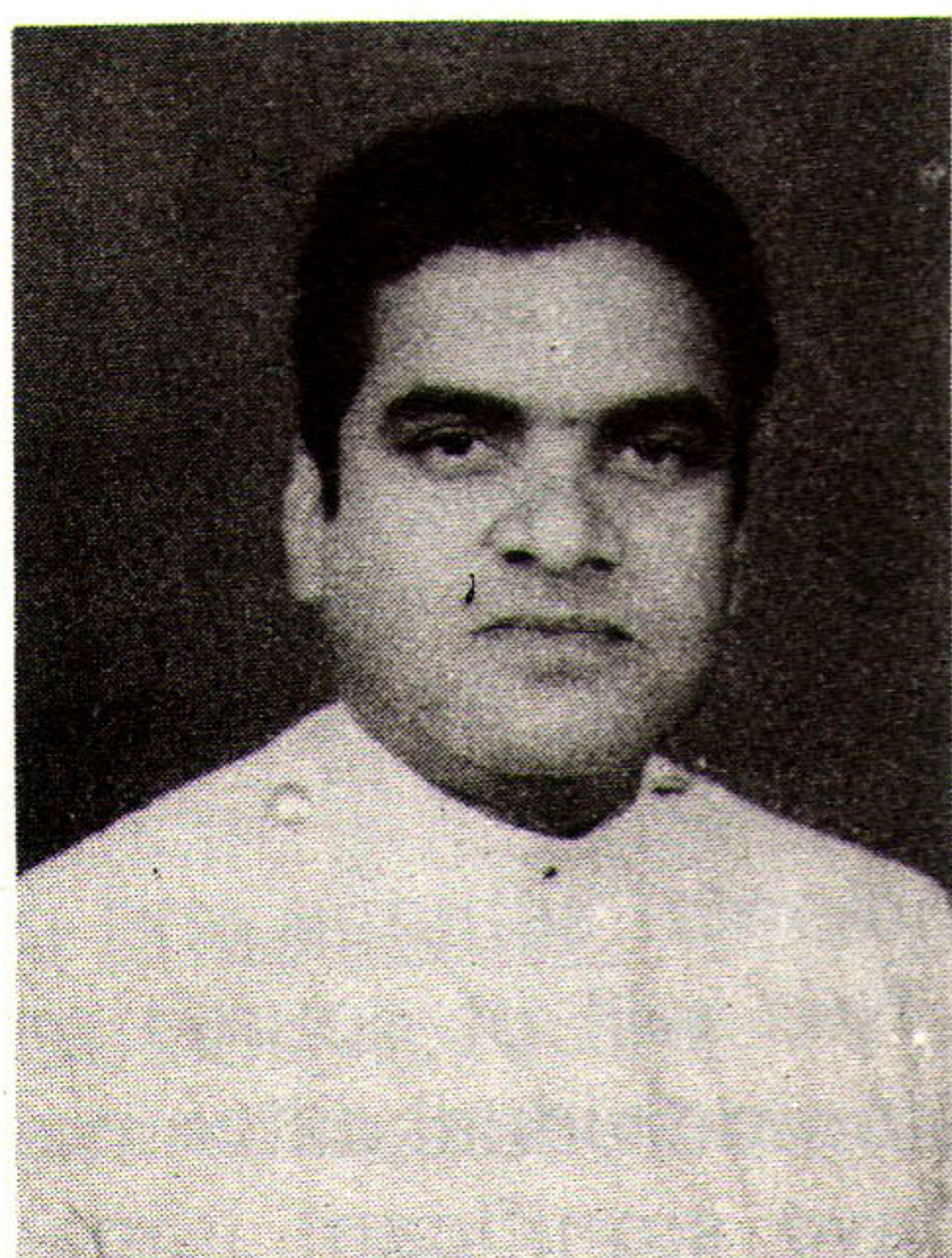
What we should note is that the christian ethic can never honestly be presented as law plus love or law qualified by love. There is no question that law has its place, but that place is at the boundaries and not at the center. Eugene Kennedy has attributed "a residual compassion for the human condition, a willingness to suspend rules" as one of the reasons for the staying power of the church. (*A Sense of Life, A Sense of Sin*) We have to view sympathetically even the people who have taken an exodus from the



Members of the Toronto Mar Thoma Church on stage during the talent night show. Family Conference 1984.



Dallas Mar Thoma Youth Choir during the choir competition, 1984.



Rev. A.G. Mathew, Secretary, Zonal Council

church. When Sargent Shriver was the Executive Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), he had so many former priests and ministers working for him that he quipped that "OEO should stand for the Office of Ecclesiastical Outcasts".

Our Role in American Society in the Exercise of Christian Freedom

The preceding extended discussion was intended to provide some criteria to assess how we measure up in the practice of christian freedom and areas where we have to make substantial progress. There is no need for my stating explicitly where we stand relative to those items already mentioned since you are as experienced as myself to make those assessments. Some questions present themselves:

1. How do we perceive the American society?
2. How well have Kerala christians adjusted to the American society? What are the expectations of other Americans of us and what are our expectations of them? What explicit and defined claims do each make upon the other?
3. What are some of the hangups that we have from which we would like or have to be free?
4. What obligations do we have for encouraging free exercise of freedom and social criticism? What procedures should it provide to fulfill those obligations?
5. What impact, if any, has the community made on the social landscape and social policies?
6. What are some of the major ways by which our citizenship or resident obligations can be met in contemporary American life?
7. What is the role for the Kerala christian family in this society?
8. What are our aspirations as a people? What are our values and visions of the future?
9. How can we plan for larger freedom?

Charles Reich in *The Greening of America* characterizes America thus: "It is one vast, terrifying anti-community. The great organizations to which most people give their working day, and the apartments and suburbs to which they return at night are equally places of loneliness and alienation. Modern living has obliterated place, locality, and neighborhood, and given us the anonymous separateness of our existence. The family, the most basic social system, has been ruthlessly stripped to its fundamental essentials. Friendship has been coated over

with a layer of unpenetrable artificiality as men strive to live roles designed for them. Protocol, competition, hostility, and fear have replaced the warmth of the circle of affection which might sustain man against a hostile universe." America so often is a nation on wheels. It does something to our sense of stability. It has been characterized as a permissive society as opposed to a paternalistic society. In that the permissive society, like adolescence demands freedom, it can be regarded as a real advance over the paternalistic society. However, it does not create freedom and often, indeed, does not foster it. It is not easier for young persons genuinely to be free. They are smothered by massive pressures particularly to conform. At any rate, it does not prohibit freedom and by its inner logic requires it, often beyond the strength and structure of the individuals and groups unaccustomed to it. Hence the casualties, which can be tragic. A permissive society can be quite oppressive as a paternalistic society. Both these types of societies have the capacity also to distract people from the basic issues of their existence with as much potential for evil as oppression. America, some one said, is a "culture of distractions." We have to press forward from the paternalistic and the permissive society to what has been characterized as a 'mature society', setting that as our goal. In this change process, we can become involved in three ways: (1) as a medium of change; (2) as a target of change; and (3) as an agent of change.

It is only less than a quarter of a century when sizable number of Kerala christians came to this country forming semblance of a community. Cultural anthropologists speak of two processes of enculturation namely accommodation and assimilation. While a good number of Kerala christians have become well adjusted to the American society, as a community we have been more or less a ghetto community. And as a result our impact on the social scene has been negligible. Unlike some other ghetto communities we have not been viewed as adversaries and not treated like one. We must shun uniformity of surrounding as much as absolute conformity in behavior and tastes. We must strive instead to create as many diversified environments as possible. We must increase the exposure of people to a variety of environmental settings and potential interactions. This will of course provide choice and allow for individual difference. But it should also have significant impact on

increasing people's sense of the possible and their level of aspiration. One Geographer, C. Peach, writing about West Indian migration to Britain says, "there is a universal and probably correct assumption that ghettos are the geographical expression of social failure." It really does alienate; not just one group from another; but more significantly, it alienates the restricted individual from his historic origins as well as from a broader contemporary milieu. In one respect, the insulation provides security, comfort and a refuge. But in another sense, it prohibits any real contact with the wonders and the dangers of the larger human environment. In isolation, there may be unity, cultural cohesion, and group identity. But there is also provincialism, distrust and unresolved frustration. Many of us try to imitate the Americans' behavior, thereby debasing ourselves. The other Americans remain on the whole unimpressed and hostile to integration. We have been too dependent on their good-will, which has proved a superficial, or at least, insufficient resource. We ought to be more dependent on our own resources. But we should be wary of ethnic organization. That can be subversive. We often fail to grasp the elementary truth that by demanding special attention we are demanding to be patronized. It can afflict us with a disability by providing us with a permanent excuse for not competing or measuring up. We have to give up our alibi of discrimination. It is debilitating and condescending.

Helping others discover community: One of our great priorities in our time is to help people discover community. Genuine christian community is one that is "mediated through Christ" (Bonhoeffer) and is a seedbed for the discovery and development of the creative uniqueness of the individual members. Community happens when caring happens. A true community is where God dwells. It is a horizontal relation immersed in the vertical. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Role of the Christian Family: The importance of a stable christian family can never be overemphasized. To have a family is to understand that your life is not your own, that you have a responsibility to those who are near and dear to you. To be a christian family extends the scope of this responsibility grounded in the realization that Christ is the center. When we lose the center, we become eccentric. "Your home is 'First Church' no matter where it is." Simple homes

where the Bible is read (From the most trivial to the most complex problems the solution is to be found there. Every lesson in the Bible provides a workshop in living), prayer is made, where there is mutual respect for one another and the basic principles of the christian father are practiced — here is the heart beat of the nation. A home is something that must be grown. It takes time. Home and religion, they belong together. But we have separated and divorced them. True values in life and especially in the home are not material but spiritual. All the material possessions and a large bank account have no power to heal broken hearts or supply needed power for facing crises. We have already mentioned one crisis, separation of home and religion. Another crisis is in the drastic change in the concept of marriage. Far too many people approach it with an 'a la carte' attitude, take it or leave it — if it doesn't work out, we can get out. Dr. J. Randolph Ray has aptly observed: "Living together is hazardous enough without the added handicap of 'merchandise returnable' " (*My Little Church Around The Corner*) This is an area where we have a great responsibility in providing a model for stability. In a real sense, our marriages don't fail, we fail. A third important crisis area is one of generational gap and conflict. We parents have accentuated this problem through unwholesome and unrealistic expectations of our children and providing an illicit model of behavior. We have become infected with the 'get ahead' virus like the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Competition, self-interest, harsh judging, gossip, cliquishness, snobbery and status-seeking haven't been hard to find. The shame, the guilt and the anxiety that follow not only our professed attitudes but also our behavior have been a real stumbling block in 'bridging the gap' or better, 'healing the wounds'. There are at least three problems in generational conflict. They are: (i) credibility gap; (ii) communication gap; and (iii) confidence gap. The youth ask: can we really believe what the adults are saying? Do they really know what they are talking about? Are they really hearing us? Can we really trust them as they live by double or even multiple standards. We are to act responsibly in our relations with our young people. Some times they consider that we are meddling in their affairs. But the fact earlier mentioned that 'your life is not your own', enjoins us to become involved in the lives of our children. Many do, of course. However, there is a world of difference between living some one

else's life for him/her and being supportive, between dictating and guiding. We have a responsibility in helping them (a) develop a wholesome philosophy of life, (b) choose a career matching their talents and interests, and last but not least (c) choose their friends and a life's partner. Our young people are by and large adopting the 'American way of life' as the appropriate model for their life as far as choice of life's partners is concerned. This is an area where we have great responsibility, believe it or not. Our vulnerability in succumbing to what has been proven to be backing in the so-called American way of life from a christian point of view should be recognized. However, one of the serious hangups that we have, we should point out, is the tendency to view that everything we bring from Kerala is the best for us, our children and our neighbors. We refuse to utilize the emotional resources this environment has. In some cases, it is true that we do not have the ability to do so. Another hangup is our tendency for 'pathogenic leveling'. We do not recognize individual and group differences and naturally we have uniform expectations of all. The Kerala christians have a tremendous opportunity in this country in being a model for some areas in family life. The vigour and vitality of a 'christian' extended family is something that can provide a veritable challenge for this culture. The care for the aged, the acceptance of the vital role the elderly play in our families and the respect for our parents and elders are valuable lessons for this culture.

Our citizenship or resident obligations can be met in several ways: (1) on-the-job and within-the-system — acting responsibly and competently; blowing an 'ethical whistle' when the establishment fails to serve human needs or adopts exploitative rip-off policies; seeing beyond the systems and corporations to the whole community as a focus of loyalty; (2) as part-time activists who work after hours and/or on week ends as volunteers; (3) as a community which has made social change as its vocation; and (4) as a community dedicated to wholesome race relations and as a medium and an agent of reconciliation. Undoubtedly, even though we are a relatively small group, we can make a tremendous impact on social policies in this country. Many times people question our effectiveness because of our size. Time and again, history has demonstrated the impact even one person can make in the lives of many and even changing destinies of nations

and cultures. Lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa are only some examples. We can learn an important lesson for our obligations from the incident reported by Malcolm Muggeridge. When he asked Mother Teresa once what was the difference in her eyes between the welfare services and what her Missionaries of Charity do, she said that welfare workers do for an idea, a social purpose, what she and the Missionaries of Charity do for a person. Sometimes we dream of a neutral moral place where we can do anything we please because no one else knows and no one else will be hurt. But such a place simply does not exist. We are integrally connected and attempts at separation are suicidal and life-denying.

We often take freedom for granted. It is *imperative that we deliberately plan for freedom* if we are to engender it and reap its fruits.

I wish to close by repeating a question which I raised earlier: What are our aspirations as a people? What are our values and visions of the future? Values are determinants of virtually all kinds of behavior that could be called social behavior — of social action, attitudes and ideology, evaluations, moral judgments and justifications of self and others, comparisons of self with others, presentations of self to others, and attempts to influence others. Basically, it is a matter of perceptions. Ultimately, the realization and enlargement of freedom as a community is also a matter of our perceptions. "Only people who see deeply together can be deeply one together. Civility, politeness, even cordiality do not make a community... The more he co-sees, the more he co-bes." (Thomas Dubay)

We have to recognize several factors that influence our perceptions:

1. (i) where we look from
- (ii) those whom we look with
- (iii) what we look through
- (iv) what we look at
- (v) what we look for

To use a distinction made by F.C. Sharp, we have an obligation to use 'flood lights' instead of 'spot lights' and *attempt* to see as Christ would see.



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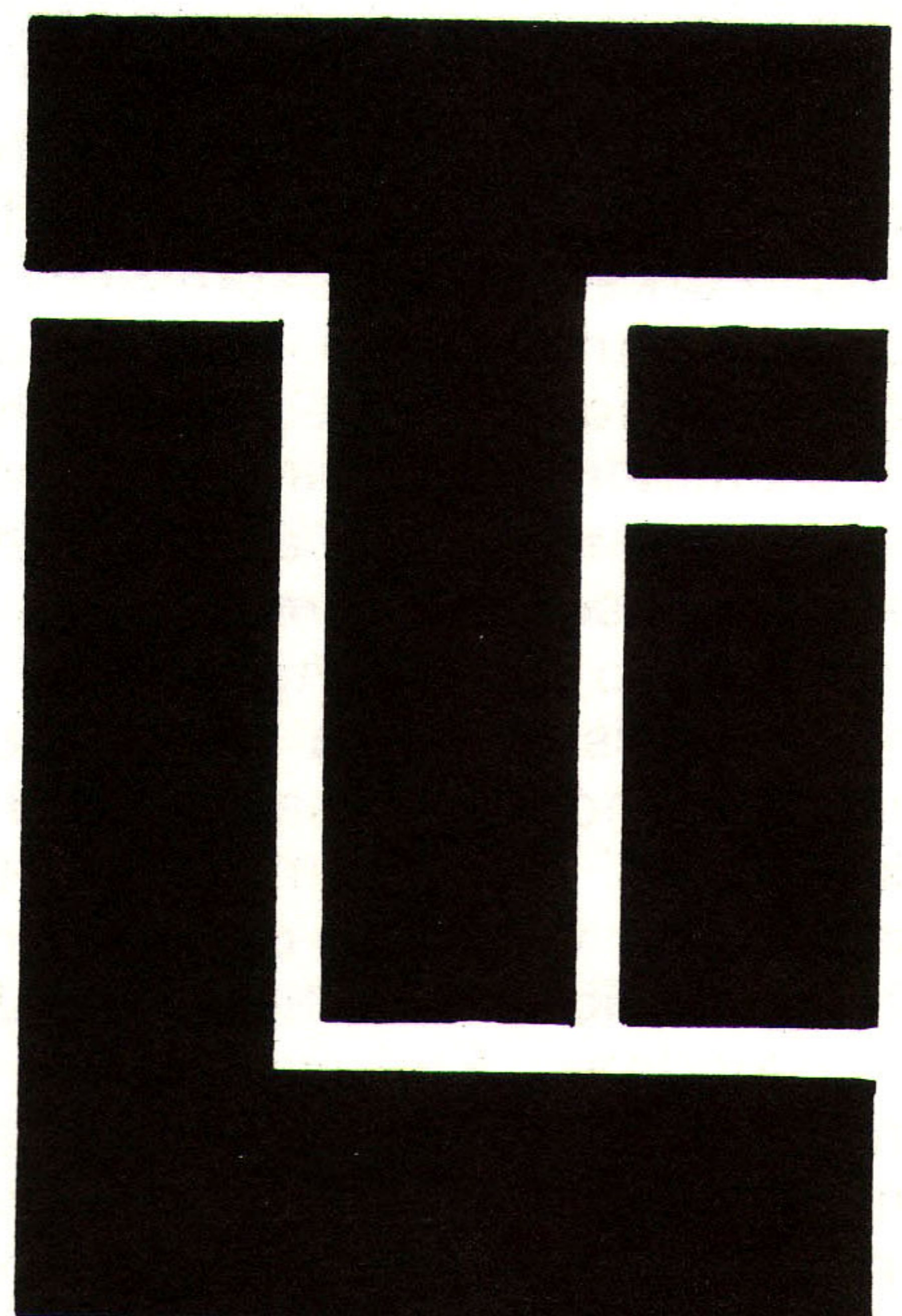
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A Celebration of Unity

St. Paul's Anglican Church in Toronto was the scene, last August 18, of a service involving members of both the Mar Thoma Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to welcome Suffragan Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius to Canada and to celebrate the first anniversary of the signing of a pastoral agreement between the two churches. By this agreement members of the Mar Thoma Church in Canada come under the pastoral oversight of Anglican Bishops, while continuing to retain their own identity and autonomy. The ancient eucharistic liturgy of St. James used in the Mar Thoma Church was celebrated in both Malayalam and English. About 100 persons were in attendance at the liturgy which was presided over by Bishop Athanasius and Bishop Geoffrey Parke-Taylor, one of the Suffragan Bishops of Toronto. Music was provided by Mr. David Low, assistant organist at St. Paul's Church, and by the choir of the Mar Thoma congregation in Toronto.

The service opened with the singing of the well-known hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" during which the two Bishops, accompanied by clergy and lay assistants entered the sanctuary. Representing the Anglican Church were the Rev. A.T. Little, The Rev. Brian Prideaux and Mrs. Marjorie Fawcett while the Mar Thoma Church was represented by the Rev. N.M. Cherian, the Rev. J. Joseph and Mr. P.G. George. Various portions of the liturgy were shared among these participants. Bishop Parke-Taylor expressed a warm welcome to those who came and Bishop Athanasius then delivered the sermon. During the offertory the choir sang in Malayalam "The Lord is my Song and My Strength". Later the consecrated bread and wine were distributed to the congregation by the Bishops, assisted by a priest from each Church. Bishop Athanasius and Bishop Parke-Taylor later joined in the final blessing, after which the choir led in singing the hymn "Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah" in Malayalam. Following the service members of the congregation had a chance to meet each other and the Bishops at an informal reception in the Church Hall. Perhaps the best indication of the success of the event was the amount of friendly conversation which continued long past the scheduled time.

It was in Vancouver on August 3, 1983 that the pastoral agreement was signed by the Most Rev. Edward W. Scott, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church who were there to attend the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Looking on during the signing were the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., John Allin, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie. In addition to providing for episcopal oversight for Mar Thoma members the agreement encouraged clergy and congregation of both churches to reach out to each other in mutual support and fellowship. Provision was also made for Mar Thoma Bishops to visit their Canadian congregations. These arrangements give concrete expression to a relationship of full communion which has existed between the two churches since 1974. A similar agreement has also been signed with the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.

Friendship between the Anglican and Mar Thoma Churches date back to the movement of reform which resulted in the independent existence of the Mar Thoma Church in the 19th Century. Anglican missionaries in the Kerala region of India had translated the Bible into Malayalam, and Abraham Malpan (1796-1845) was moved by the spirit of the Reformation to advocate the removal of what he considered to be abuses and unscriptural customs in the life of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the time.

With the immigration of people from India to North America there have grown up Mar Thoma congregations in both the United States and Canada. At present there are congregations in seven cities across Canada. The Mar Thoma Church in Toronto is the largest in this country with 130 families. It currently worships in the chapel of Trinity College at the University of Toronto.

Both Churches are being challenged by the partnership that was formally recognized by the signing ceremony at Vancouver in August 1983 and reaffirmed this summer in Toronto. Anglicans will need to be sensitive and open to the different liturgical and theological tradition represented by the Mar Thoma Church. For their part Canadian members of the Mar Thoma Church will need the trust and confidence to reach out to their Anglican colleagues. The beginning that has been made seems to demonstrate that the churches will respond to the challenge, and will be greatly enriched as they do so.

Rev. Brian Prideaux, Ecumenical Officer
September, 1984
Anglican Church of Canada

MAR THOMA STUDENTS' CONFERENCE 1985 PLATINUM JUBILEE - COCHIN

The Mar Thoma Students' conference which was founded with the main objective of grooming the students of the church in a christian atmosphere, to be effective tools in building up the kingdom of God is completing seventy five years. The conference was started in 1910. Incidentally, in the same year the Edinborough Ecumenical Conference was also held. Ever since, the student's conference has been playing a unique role in the church poineering various developments which directly influenced the church, and in the long run, society and the state.

Today the students' conference is the officially recognized student's movement of the church. Eminent christian leaders such as Bishop Stephen Neil, Bishop Lesley Newbegin, Dr. D.T. Niles and Dr. M.M. Thomas have been addressing the conference. Lately the attendance at the conference has been exceeding three hundred.

Many of the participants have been led to a deeper christian understanding, and eventually a complete surrender to the will of God. A good number of them are serving the Lord in various capacities as Bishops, priests, political leaders, doctors, engineers, professors and teachers in various parts of the world.

In 1935 the silver jubilee celebrations were held at Kottayam under the leadership of the then Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Titus II. In 1960 the golden jubilee session was held in Tiruvalla and the late Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was the leader. The veteran lay leader Mr. C.P. Mathew delivered the main talk. The 74th annual conference was held in Calicut at the St. Joseph's School in 1984. Cochin was selected to be the site for the Platinum jubilee session in 1985.

Arrangements for the conference have already been started under the leadership of Mr. Paul Mathew, President of the Students' Conference for 1985. Conference will be held in Rajagiri High School at kalamassery from April 30th-May 4th, 1985. The platinum jubilee session falls a year ahead of the 150th

anniversary of Abraham Malpan's Reformation in the Syrian Church. The main theme of the conference is "We His servants will arise and build." (Nehemiah 2:20)

Besides a long term project has been planned to commemorate the platinum jubilee. The following are the main among them.

1. To prepare 75 dedicated young men and women to serve the Lord in various capacities.
2. To lead all the participants to a deeper and fuller commitment to Jesus Christ.
3. To start a hostel and an Institute for Evangelism for Tribal School and College students.
4. To bring out a souvenir highlighting the main events of the conference during the past seven and a half decades.
5. Arrange for the participation of a good number of students from foreign countries.

The youth are exposed to the various challenges in the modern world. The youth have many questions, but few answers. They suspect everything; believe nothing. Unless the christian faith is made relevant to them, the church faces a bleak future. But the Gospel presented, in the right perspective has never failed to attract and challenge the youth to live and die for it. This is our prayer that the Jubilee session of the Mar Thoma Students' Conference will challenge the young men and women in the church to rise and build.

On behalf of the organizers of the conference I have immense pleasure in inviting all our students of North America to participate in this prestigious platinum Jubilee session. I also request your prayers and cooperation for the success of the 1985 conference.

M. Paul Mathew
President

Mar Thoma Students' Conference 1985

All correspondence may be addressed to:

M. Paul Mathew

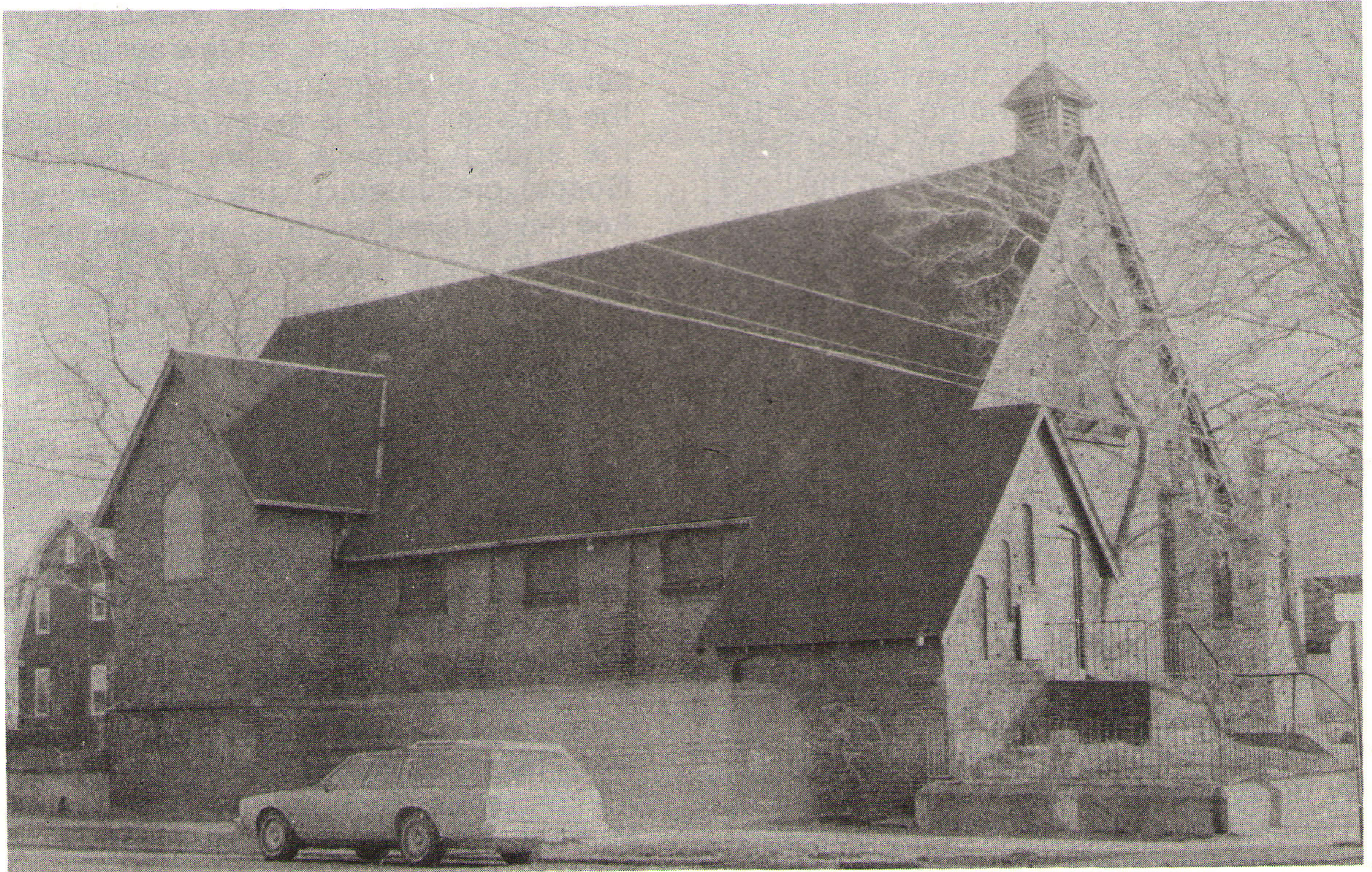
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His Grace the Late Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan with Bishop Parke-Taylor of the Anglican Church of Canada during his visit to Canada in July 1984.



Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York. The Church building and parsonage (left) were bought by the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church for a total price of \$235,000 on December 4, 1984.



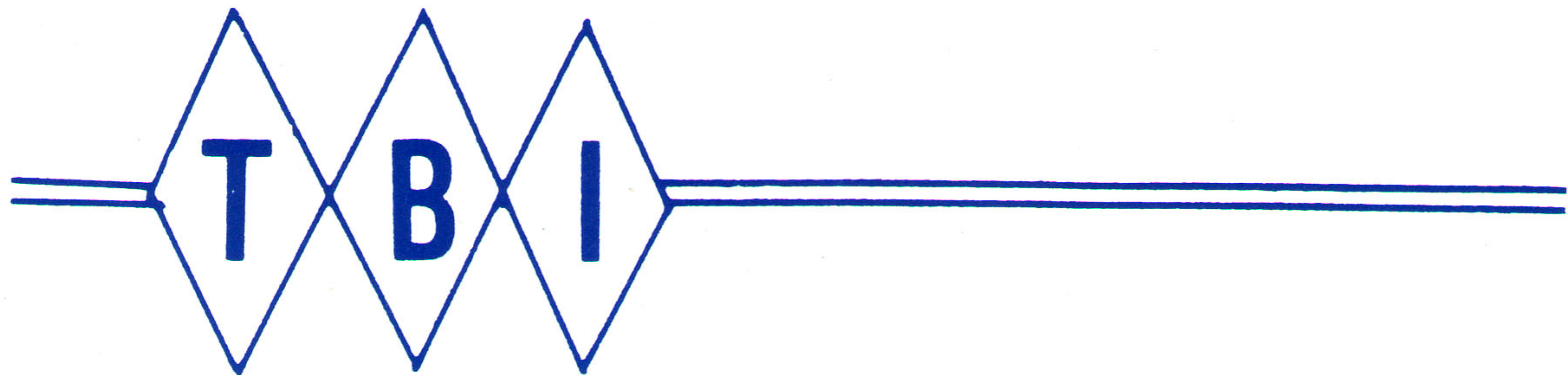
CANADA

1. Mar Thoma Congregation, Edmonton-Calgary
2. Mar Thoma Congregation, Fort McMurray
3. Mar Thoma Congregation, Montreal
4. Mar Thoma Congregation, Ottawa
5. Mar Thoma Church, Toronto
6. Mar Thoma Congregation, Kingston

UNITED STATES

7. Mar Thoma Congregation, Rochester, New York
8. Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York
9. St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York
10. The Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island, New York
11. St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, New York
12. The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey
13. Mar Thoma Congregation, Boston
14. Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia
15. Mar Thoma Congregation, Baltimore
16. Mar Thoma Congregation, Washington
17. Mar Thoma Church, Detroit
18. Mar Thoma Church, Chicago
19. Mar Thoma Congregation, South Florida
20. Mar Thoma Congregation, Oklahoma
21. Mar Thoma Congregation, Lubbock
22. Mar Thoma Church, Dallas
23. Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston
24. Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles
25. Mar Thoma Congregation, San Francisco
26. Mar Thoma Congregation, St. Louis
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