

# Mar Thoma Messenger

SESQUICENTENNIAL  
COMMEMORATIVE  
ISSUE

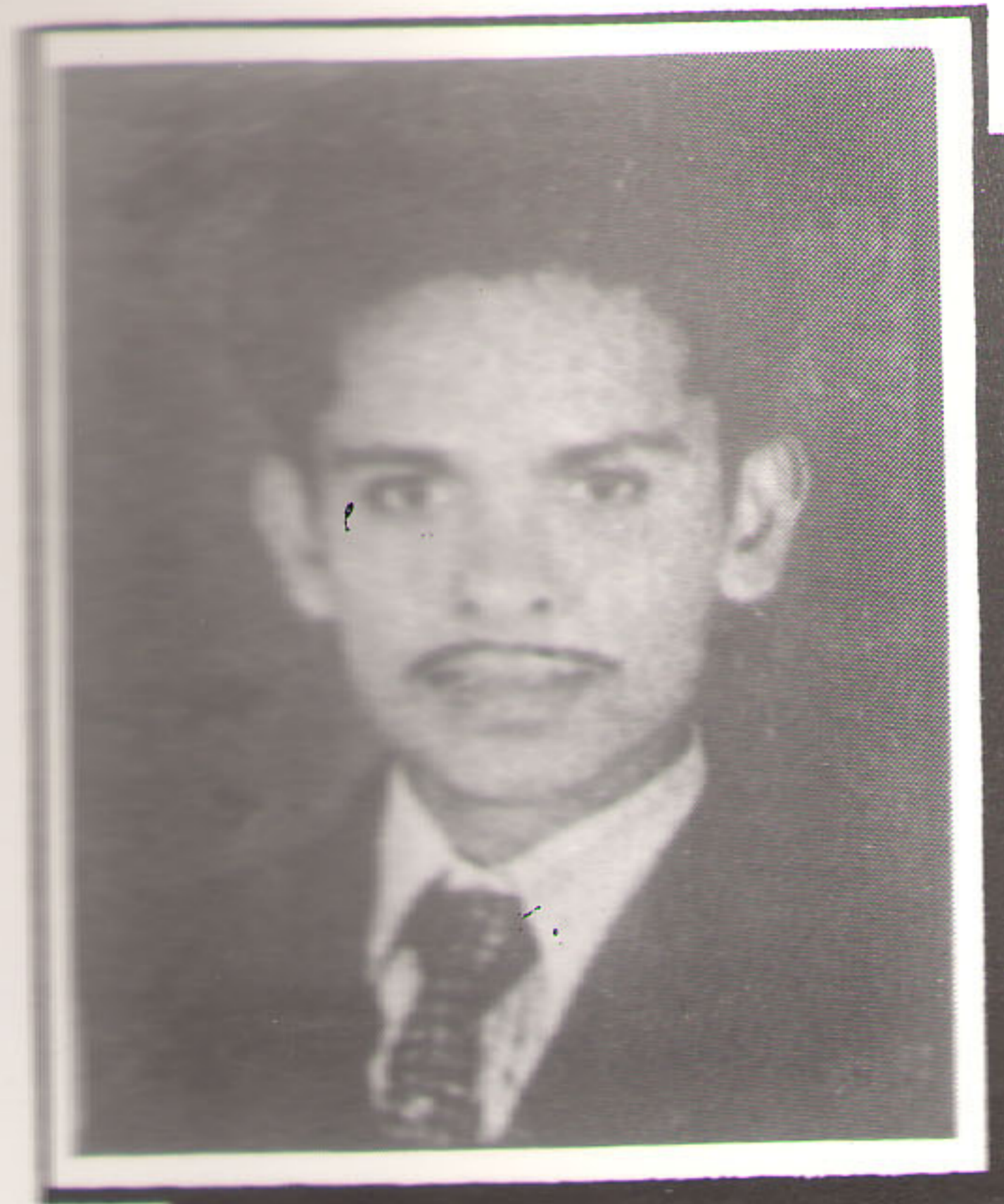
A Publication of  
Mar Thoma Zonal Assembly



**MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR REAL ESTATE BROKER**

## **J. M. J. SERVICE**

**BUYING AND SELLING NEW AND OLD HOMES,  
COMMERCIAL LAND, PROPERTY MANAGEMENT  
LEASING, INVESTMENT, INTERNATIONAL  
REFERRAL AND RELOCATION SERVICES.**



**JOSEPH CHANDY**  
226-0181

Concentrates work in  
DALLAS, MESQUITE, GARLAND, RICHARDSON, PLANO,  
CARROLLTON, COPPELL and IRVING.

**Dealing With All Custom Builders:**  
Fox & Jacobs, U.S. Homes, Centennial Homes,  
Pulte Homes, N.P.C. and Charter Homes, etc.

**DISCOUNT TO BUYERS: \$500 TO \$1000**

Financing available at the lowest rates, bond money, special financing, F.H.A., V.A.  
and conventional. Second mortgage. Save **\$50,000 to \$75,000** in loan payment.

- **COMPLETE FAMILY INSURANCE SERVICE**
- **AUTO — HOME — LIFE — HEALTH — for BETTER RATES**
- **TAX AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES**

**CALL FOR FAST & FRIENDLY SERVICE**

**JOSEPH CHANDY (JOY) 214/226-0181**

P.S.: Now Hiring REAL ESTATE and INSURANCE AGENTS  
for BETTER COMMISSION with BETTER TERMS.

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:—**

Dr. George K. Zachariah, Washington, *Editor*.  
Rev. A. G. Mathew, Philadelphia.  
Mr. George J. Poikail, Dallas.  
Mr. P. C. Philip, Chicago.  
Mr. K. V. Thomas, New York.  
Mr. P. G. George, Toronto.

**PUBLISHED BY:—**

Rev. A. G. Mathew (*Secretary*)  
for the Zonal Assembly of the  
Mar Thoma Church in North America.

**ADDRESS:—**

5508 N. American Street  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19020.

**PRINTED AT:—**

A V M Printers  
1603 Hancock  
Mesquite, Texas 75149.  
(214) 289-8605

Opinions expressed in the articles are personal  
views of the authors.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

*We are having a new design for the cover of the Messenger.  
Mr. George Parakamannil, a member of the Mar Thoma  
Congregation of Greater Washington designed the same.*

Editorial:- Heritage of the Past and the  
Horizons of the Future.

Message from Metropolitan

Message from Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa.

Letter from Rev. Richard C. Halverson.

Letter from Dr. M. M. Thomas.

Mar Thoma Church:— Reformation and Ecumenism.  
*Dr. M. M. Thomas.*

Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar.  
*Dr. P. M. Mammen.*

Mar Thoma Church in North America  
Its Ecumenical Heritage and Involvement.  
*Mr. George J. Poikail.*

Summary and Review of Reformations  
Sesquicentennial Jubilee Commemorative Volume.  
*Dr. George K. Zachariah*

The Reforming of the Mar Thoma Church  
in North America.  
*Dr. T. M. Thomas.*

Our Sevikasanghom.  
*Dr. Arina A. Panackal.*

Future of Mar Thoma Youth work in North America.  
*Mr. P. G. George.*

Reformation in the Mar Thoma Church Then and Now  
*Anjana Thomas.*

The Reformation of the Mar Thoma Church.  
*Leeza Mathew.*

Where do we go from here.  
*Shaju Joseph.*

Mar Thoma Students Confrence — 1986  
*Sunitha Cherian.*

The 1986 — North Eastern Regional Youth Conference  
*Mr. Chacko Abraham.*

Reflections on the Mar Thoma Students  
Conference — 1986.  
*Suku John.*

Mar Thoma Students|Family Conference of  
North America 1986.  
*T. A. Abraham*

Three Books on the Mar Thoma Church.  
*Dr. George K. Zachariah*

**NEWS FROM THE PARISHES.**

Condolences

Anisha Abraham — A 1986 Presidential Scholar.

Dedication of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church.

Houston Sunday School Building

If I had Another Daughter .....

Future Issues of the Mar Thoma Messenger by Editor

*Brief Editorial Comment....*

*It is obvious that the special Reformation Edition is considerably late in coming out. The editorial committee had every intention of publishing it at least by December 1986. The materials were on hand and even set in type. But the financial resources of the Zonal Assembly are considerably strained that we had to wait to raise at least a part of the expenses through advertisements. So we believe that you will understand and forgive.*

*For the Committee*

*George J. Poikail*

## HERITAGE OF THE PAST AND THE HORIZONS OF THE FUTURE.

The sesquicentennial of the Reformation and of the formation of the Mar Thoma Church is an occasion for celebration. This is a time when we can celebrate together an exciting sense of identity. The most important question we can ask is: who are we any way? To some, the answer may seem so obvious that they fail to ask the question, when they should. Familiar clichés do not, go deep enough to awaken the church's vitality. That can be achieved only through a rediscovery of the roots of the Christian church. Perhaps the strongest thread that binds together Christians of different persuasions is their theological understanding of the church as the People of God. Our calling as a Christian community is clear. It is to help our members discover what it means to be God's people in a particular time and place. We will have to come to a clear image of what the church is meant to be.

What drew people to the early church which continues to serve as a model to us in the twentieth century was not a lot of doctrine but a desire to have a personal relationship with Christ and to have it grow. It matters *not* so much *what we say* about our calling as the servant people of God, as the body of Christ, as a royal priesthood, as a living temple or ministers (agents) of reconciliation, but *what we do* about it. Whatever the major emphasis, a spiritually vibrant church always has a clear and consistent sense of direction, a strong sense of purpose and a contagious sense of identity without exclusivism. A strong sense of identity generates contagious enthusiasm and communicates a climate of vitality. Such a church sees itself as a catalyst in the lives of individuals and in the corporate

life of the community. There are three *foci* for its work; encouraging people to truly become disciples or followers of Christ; nurturing its people to grow in a personal relationship with Christ through service; and making Christ known in the community at large.

The church is where grace rather than guilt and legalism provides motivation. It is through grace that we discover the deep meaning of our common humanity. Since none of us has deserved the love of God, we share a common life in Christ. Every one of us has been forgiven so much that whatever we must forgive in one another is really nothing at all. In brief, the church is a forgiven and forgiving community and is simply a "*network of grace*" in which there is a mutual acceptance by people of one another. Grace opens the door to growth. It allows people to make their own mistakes. It gives them the right to fail. Renewal comes where a climate of acceptance and trust gives freedom to be honest with one another about our fears and failures about our vulnerabilities and longings.

Our church with its ancient Eastern traditions and liturgical practices, informed by the insights of the Reformation and based on biblical teachings, came on the scene as a renewed and reformed church. The tension and the Spirit that gave birth to the church are ever present. Each generation has to think through its faith and practices. Actually, theology is not an intellectual exercise for leisure time; rather, it is committed reflection. "It is tying up the loose ends of our lives from the perspective of one's faith." In a sense, we *do* theology rather than think and speak. The church needs to inspire

its members to do theology in the sense mentioned above.

We ought not pretend to be what we are not. Neither should we, with false modesty, pretend that we are not what we are. We must be aware of the gifts God has given us and must use those gifts in a spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving. It is comforting to note that God gives the church the gifts it needs to fulfill its international mission in the world. The necessary abilities to carry out that mission do not reside only in a few persons, but they are present in many different ways in all members of the church. We must consciously seek to discern the manifold gifts in our people and must be involved in equipping the members for their ministries and must encourage them to experiment using those gifts.

It is good to remember that institutions, just as much as persons, can get amnesia. The church cannot afford to succumb to amnesia any more than other institutions can. A vital part of its life is the "community remembering" of that which goes on in its midst. In fact, from a human point of view, the church's survival may depend on how well its memory bank is working. What kinds of things does our church have for remembering? There are three: (I) the set of events that brought the Christian church into being; (ii) the two thousand years of reflection and commentary on it; and (iii) the movement of reformation and renewal. Together they constitute the heritage that gives us our identity and mission.

The call that comes to the family of God is to be a "people for others." Dr. Cliff Robinson used to say that the only ability God requires of us is "availability." We are called to be key instruments of God's grace for change in the community. Awareness of need must lead to com-

mitment of resources. Time, energy, skill, imagination and money are all involved in meeting these needs. We must take seriously Dietrich Bonhoeffer's warning not to seek for our own ideal image of Christian community, but to accept community as a gift of God — a divine reality rather than the fulfillment of a human dream. We are not nurturing people for their own benefit. It is in order to impart family life, community life, work life, life in the nation. The mission of the church is to speak the language of compassion and like the Samaritan in Jesus' parable, its role is to be the first on the scene. Inherent in mission is a vital holy impatience.

We need to integrate our worship and mission. In fact, there is no dichotomy between worship and mission. As Orlando Costas has characterized the relationship, "Liturgy without mission is like a river without a spring. Mission without worship is like a river without a sea. Both are necessary. Without the one the other loses its vitality and means."

Institutional structures often are the product of former movements that have been organized to ensure continuity, coherence and conformity. It is a fact that many times they persist even when the soul of the movement has been lost altogether. They may lose their capacity to change. Someone has asked, "can the church be trusted with mission?" Is not mission a movement rather than an institution? The tight boundaries of the institutional church make it uncomfortable for many searching and creative individuals.

A serious problem we confront is viewing and experiencing the church as an institution rather than as a Christian community. One of the great priorities of the church in our time is to help people dis-

cover community. We are called to be a pilgrim people. The life of pilgrimage of each individual must be taken seriously. We are challenged not to settle down. We are called to be perpetually in an "exodus mode". More often than not, the church is a secondary group rather than a primary community. We are a group of strangers rather than a people who deeply share our lives with each other. It may be worthwhile to experiment with spending a good part of our committee meetings for worship, caring, loving, healing. Let us take time to be a brother or a sister to our fellow believers. A climate where making decisions by consensus can be developed. We have to learn to trust that God's spirit is at work in other styles and persuasions wherever faithful people gather. We must learn to appreciate what others have to say and what others are doing.

It is possible that movements can thrive within church structures if the church is structured so as to encourage movements of the Spirit. It is good to remember that order without ardor is empty, meaningless and barren, while ardor without order breeds chaos and eventually leads to deadly conflicts. It is not hard to understand why most of us resist change. Familiar ways are comfortable. Growth can be painful. Fear may drive us to seek solutions in increased activity. Fear may prevent us from discovering what our real problems are.

We have to change our way of doing things. Consider the time spent by congregations and the members of the congregation in church-related matters. The church spends too much time and energy analyzing problems. It is worth recalling that devastating word in which Reinhold Niebuhr summed up his attitude to American protestantism. The church, he said, has become "trivial". Too little atten-

tion is given to creative movements of the Spirit. The myriad problems that we face and our inability to appropriate God's grace in solving them have left us as one of the most cynical people on the face of the earth. There is a need for change in the church's mode of dealing with the world from monologue to dialogue.

The church's passive internalization of the surrounding secular culture has resulted in a situation in which each church member follows the culture on most issues, rather than submit his|her thinking to the light of scripture. The men of God in the Bible were almost always prophetic rather than diplomatic. We conform to this world by becoming mild-mannered "organization men". We should have more prophets and fewer diplomats. However, the ideal missionary approach has been expressed by Heinrich Kramer as the combination of "a prophetic, apostolic heraldship of truth for Christ's sake, with a priestly, apostolic ambassadorship of love for His sake."

Where exactly do we stand on the issue of *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always to be reformed)? How do we treat the "gad-flies" in our church; with tolerance or with disgust? Our attention must not be on our past, but on our potential. The inertia of 150 years of past practice must be overcome. The heritage of the church must be offered as a *resource* rather than as the *source*. The heritage of the past and the horizons of the future are called to be in dialogue. What we do not need is a heritage in monologue with itself obscuring the horizon. Our memory needs to be a servant rather than a master. Are we deeply committed to becoming God's active people that we are willing to pay the price? What is our commitment? Are we willing to give time and money? Are we willing to enlist others to work with us?

*George K. Zachariah*



**BEST COMPLIMENTS**  
**FROM**

**GEORGE MATHEWS & ASSOCIATES INC.**

*The largest Indian owned Insurance Agency in Texas*

**18333 Preston road Suite 315  
Dallas, Texas 75252  
214-931-1980**

**Voyager Travels (India) Pvt. Ltd.  
George Mathews, Managing Director  
M. D. Commercial Center  
K. K. Road, Kottayam, India  
Phone 3289**

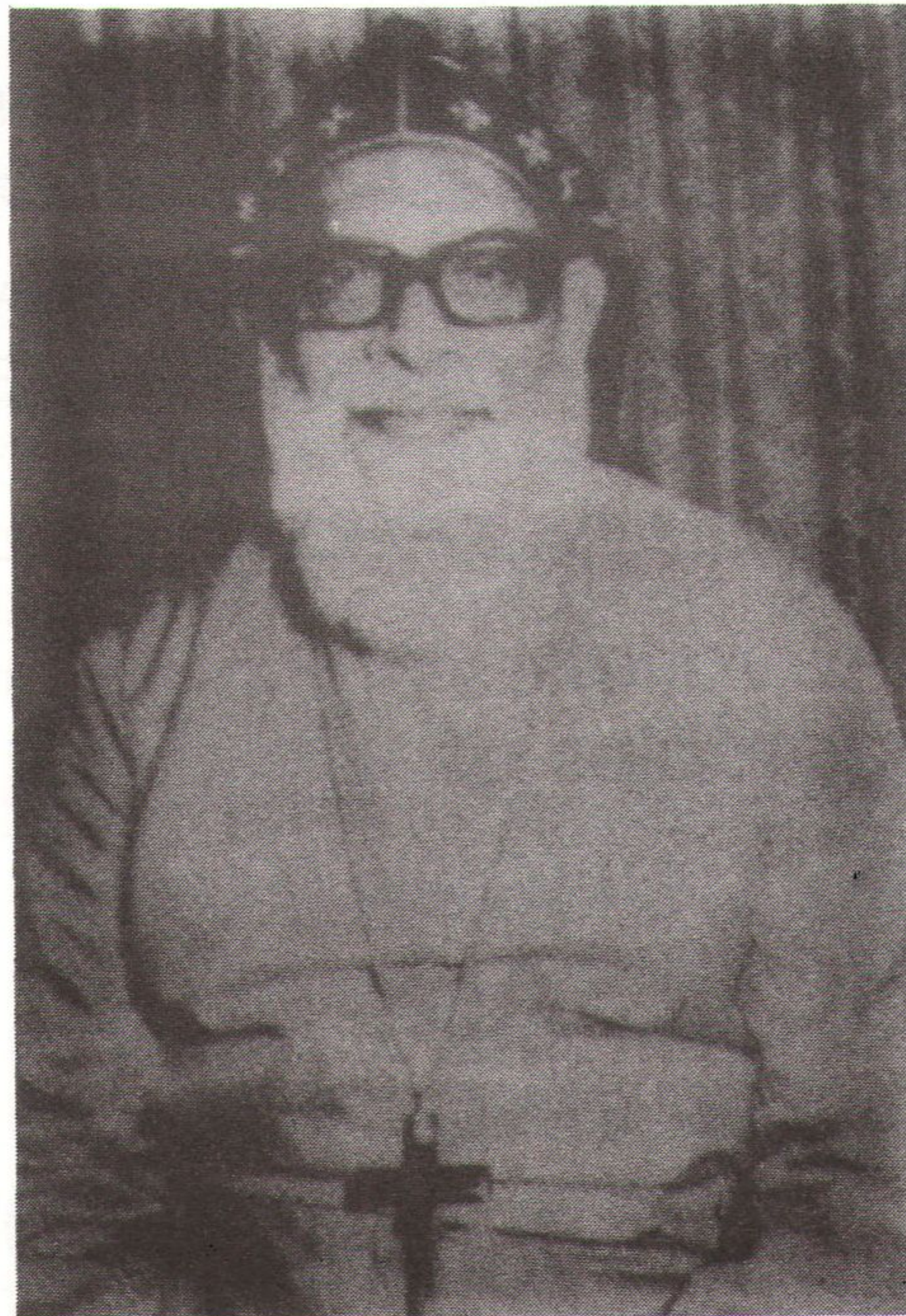


# Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar

THE MOST REV. DR. ALEXANDER MAR THOMA  
METROPOLITAN



Tel. 2313  
Poolatheen,  
Tiruvalla-689 101  
Kerala.



## MESSAGE

I am very glad to know that the Mar Thoma Messenger will be published again in December, 1986. It has already rendered very useful service in communicating the news of the Mar Thoma Church to all the members in North America. Such a medium is of vital importance to the Church, as the members are in widely scattered different places all over North America.

Besides providing news, the Messenger also serves to publish articles about different aspects of Christian life and witness. It also informs the members regarding the needs of different Congregations and of the Zone as a whole. Thus it is a multipurpose publication, as the previous issues have already shown.

I wish the present publication all blessings from God.

*Alexander Mar Thoma*

(Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan)

# BENS TRAVEL SERVICES INC.

1820 I-35 N. SUITE-100 B  
CARROLLTON, TEXAS 75006  
(214) 245-3115

In a Land That Has Myriads of Agencies  
and  
In a Community that Has Hundreds of Travel Agencies  
WE ARE NOT JUST ANOTHER TRAVEL AGENCY

---

We Avoid Logos, Lingos, and Jargons  
We CONCENTRATE  
ON  
SERVING YOU  
OUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, OUR KIN

We Just Don't Sell Tickets  
Although We Do That Too  
WE SELL A SERVICE

---

Travel  
Leaving from A Point and Returning to That Point  
Is Tedious Enterprise

---

WE PLAN TO MAKE YOURS THE EASIEST  
Call us for all Your Travel Needs  
To Anywhere, By Any Means, And at Any Time  
BENS TRAVEL SERVICES INC.

---



Dearly beloved in Christ:

August 11, 1986

It was indeed a great joy to visit the North-American parishes after a decade and for the first time after becoming a bishop of the Church. The Clergy Conference and the Zonal Assembly were occasions to meet with and to share deep and ultimate concerns affecting the life and growth of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. I was highly impressed by the Students' Conference and the Family Conference held at Chicago. Our youth have become disciplined and committed while the elders have matured and accept responsibility. The parishes all over are growing and stabilizing. People under the leadership of our vicars are constructing new Church buildings at several places. The spiritual life is being nurtured through Sunday Schools, Youth League, Women's Groups and Prayer Fellowships. I appreciate that the people have taken seriously the religious dimension. We have to establish spiritual values and stick to them instead of cherishing cultural values as the "*be all*" and the "*end all*" in the context of cultural pluralism.

I was happy to go through the former series of the Mar Thoma Messenger which has a number of very valuable articles. The Messenger has to play a useful role in moulding the thoughts and beliefs of our people. News and views have to be shared. Ideas of the youth and elders should find expression. Information about the Mar Thoma Church, and its faith and practices, should be communicated to all generations. Avenues for response have to be pointed out. Imminent needs such as a Diocesan Centre and a Youth Worker have to be brought to the attention of the people.

I hope the Messenger will speak to our people and their voice will be heard through it. It might be painstaking to have the Messenger as quarterly or monthly but is worth trying and having it. There is not much to lose but there will be much to gain. I wish and pray that our people in North America will be highly benefitted through the publication of the Messenger.

With all good wishes and sincere prayers,

Yours in Christ's Service,

*Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus*

RICHARD C. HALVERSON, D.D.  
CHAPLAIN

**United States Senate**  
OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 1986



Many of my most precious memories of India and for that matter the whole Far East was the time when I had the privilege of speaking at a Mar Thoma Convention. Then Bishop Mar Theophilos was a very close friend. We had travelled together often as members of a pastors conference team. His devotion to Christ, love for the church, and all the people of India and the world, his missionary vision, were always a great challenge and inspiration in those earlier days of my ministry. It has been my practice for many years to remember the Mar Thoma church and all of India on Saturdays.

It is my prayer that as the church celebrates its sesquicentennial the spirit of God will meet the whole body in very special blessing and renewal. Thank God for its leadership, its missionary vision, and this very special celebration.

God bless you all,

Affectionately in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard C. Halverson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Richard C. Halverson



**To**

**Dr. George K. Zachariah**  
**Editor, Mar Thoma Messenger**

I am glad to know that the next issue of the Messenger, the organ of the U. S. Mar Thoma congregations, is going to be a special number dealing with the Mar Thoma Reformation of 150 years ago.

I believe the Reformation principles of the Mar Thoma Church are still very relevant to the life and witness of the church, but they need to be redefined in our new context without the narrowness of conventional pietism. The meaning of Christ's salvation in its personal, social and cosmic dimensions need to be recaptured. And in India and the U. S. we have to work for our identity within the larger setting of the search for church unity and ecumenism in a pluralistic society.

I wish the Messenger all success in this direction.

Yours sincerely,

M. M. Thomas

## MAR THOMA CHURCH:— REFORMATION AND ECUMENISM

*Dr. M. M. Thomas*

(*Editor's Note:* — We are privileged to include this piece from one of the foremost lay leaders not only in the Mar Thoma Church but also in the world community of Christian Churches. Dr. Thomas was chairman of the central committee of the World Council of Churches for a number of years. This is an address he gave at the Mar Thoma Regional Youth Conference held at Bluebell, Pennsylvania on September 27, 1986. We acknowledge the efforts of Mohan Zachariah in transcribing the talk).

I have been asked to speak about the Mar Thoma Church and its ecumenical concerns in the context of the theme of this youth conference: *Witnessing to Christ*. After coming here I was asked to relate it to the reformation of the Mar Thoma Church.

I want to start with the meaning of ecumenism. *Oekumene* is a Greek word to mean the whole inhabited world; ecumenical means universal. We are called to witness to the universality of Jesus Christ. So the ecumenical concern of all of us Christians or Christian churches is to witness to the universal significance of Jesus Christ. And it is from that angle that we must look at the witness of the Mar Thoma Church and also the insights the Mar Thoma Reformation bring to us. There are three aspects of Jesus Christ's universality. The missionary movements of the 19th century emphasized one and that was the one which made the great impact on the Syrian Church in Kerala before the reformation. Its emphasis was on Jesus Christ as the savior of *all* mankind; universality of Jesus Christ as personal savior. As I said, it was this that made its impact on the ancient Syrian Church in Kerala. You see that, this reformation emphasis has tremendous significance for the Mar Thoma young people in their present situation, especially in the context of living in a pluralistic society. Jesus Christ is acknowledged and witnessed to as personal savior and Lord. The emphasis is on personal commitment to Christ and thereby we become a truly human person. This is very significant, especially when we are confronted with a variety of cultures as well as cultural changes. In America you face a plurality of cultures, many ethnic groups with their own cultures, value

systems, many ideologies and religions. There are also traditional habits of thought and life as well as modern ones. We have to encounter all these. We are entering into communication with all of them in our life in North America. And at that point the question is, which is right and where should I stand. Who am I? That is really the question.

But I remember when I was married long time ago.. In the Kerala village my wife had to walk behind me. When we came to a city in India we were expected to walk together as equals and of course when we came to America they all said that she must walk in front of me! You see, in a way, we faced a variety of patterns of behavior. So I had to ask, who am I? Where are we? In such situations we have to choose. When we have too many value systems impinging on our own life, we have to make a choice. In a setting where all people act in the same customary ways, one may live by the same traditional rules and customs. That cannot be done in a pluralistic society. One has to choose. You have to choose where you want to stand and be yourself. Otherwise we have to be living a sort of plural life; one way when at home, another way with friends in school or still another way in another setting. This way, personality is divided. And therefore the question is how do I get the personal integration in a situation where there are many value systems, many cultures and when we move from one place to another or from group to group with different behavior patterns and systems of thought. Who am I? Where do I stand? It is here that the tremendous importance of personal commitment to Christ our Lord becomes clear. Living by

rules and codes is no help in a pluralistic situation, because they become irrelevant and have to be changed. You have to have a new spirit. The only way in which we can really be ourselves as human persons with integrity, is to have a commitment which transcends all these cultures, customs and codes which are in crisis, a commitment which provides us with a spiritual principle of discrimination to decide what is good and what is not. So you live no more by the rules or laws but by the spirit.

And it is precisely this that the Reformation emphasized, i.e. have commitment to Christ and then live by the guidance of His Spirit. St. Augustine once said, "Love God and do what you like." Because when you love God, you like only what is in conformity with His Spirit. So our life-principle is: *Be committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and do what you want.* Once you have the commitment to Christ through a personal decision, then you have a criterion to discriminate among the various plural values and a spirit whereby you can live and find yourself a new identity in Christ. That is very important, especially in our situation. As some sociologists have said, in a traditional society we are all directed by customs and rules. But now we have to become inner-directed. We have to get inner-direction by commitment to the person of Jesus Christ as our Lord. This spiritual inner-direction was the emphasis of the Reformation of the Mar Thoma Church from the very beginning; that we live not by rules, or laws, or codes, or customs but by our commitment to Christ as the guide. He gives us the Spirit whereby we evaluate the good and the bad. With Christ, do what you like. The only thing that stays on in a persons life, especially in a modern world, is this anchorage of commitment to Jesus Christ.

As I said earlier, that was the emphasis of the modern missionary movement which made its impact on the Syrian Church in Kerala. It is a fact that the St. Thomas Christian and churches were in existence in Kerala for many centuries. But we never had the vision that Jesus Christ was the savior of all humanity If

we had that vision earlier, perhaps the whole of India would have been evangelized by now. It never happened. We accommodated ourselves in India's caste structure accepting our position as middle caste in society. We even practiced untouchability. We never wanted to go to the outcasts or the lower caste persons with the gospel of Christ because we were afraid of losing our status within the caste structure. Therefore, we never properly witnessed to the truth that Jesus Christ was for all people. We made Christianity into an ethnic cult, and Christ as our Syrian Christian communal god. We did not present Christ to anybody else.

It was the vision of the universality of Jesus Christ that impelled us to form the Evangelistic Association and start evangelizing people outside our group, and our neighbourhood, and later on so, to the other parts of India, to adherents of other religions. So in a way now we have members of the Mar Thoma Church from Karnataka and from several other places. We have some non-Syrian Christians in our membership. Not very many. But if we really did evangelistic work and really had the vision of the universality of Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind we would not have remained in isolation. We would have had a lot of non-Syrians in our church. Even today we remain largely a "Syrian" church because we have not really pursued the evangelistic mission of witnessing to Christ as the universal savior of mankind. If we took evangelism very seriously then we would have become very much a non-Syrian Church in India by now. It is through evangelistic witness that the church grows into new society, new culture, new people. This growth is an inherent part of our faith in the universality of Jesus Christ as Savior of mankind. In America today most churches are what you call folk-churches, churches which are ethnic in character. So we have Korean church, Hispanic church. Anglo-saxon white church, Black church. I am not saying that we should not have them. Every culture needs to be transformed by Christ from within. But that cannot be the end of our journey. We have to go out

crossing cultural frontiers. As Jesus Christ said, you shall be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, next among people of the neighborhood but move on to the uttermost parts of the earth, because Jesus Christ is God's gift to all humanity. This is what has given the church today the character of a universal community consisting of people of many cultures, people of many nations. It is this vision that the Reformation brought to us. And if we take it seriously, the Mar Thoma church would change its Syrian ethnic character. I heard in Madras that some Tamilians became Christians as a result of the Mar Thoma evangelistic work and that we asked them to join the Church of South India. It may be that we wanted to be truly ecumenical-minded in this matter. But I have a suspicion that we did so because we did not want to change our pattern of life by the presence of Tamilians. There is an ecumenical concern that there should not be any conflict between churches. But it is also an ecumenical concern that evangelism should mean influx of new people into the church changing cultural patterns of life. We should accept the challenge of new cultures, non-Syrian people in the life of our church, if we want to be truly ecumenical witnesses to Jesus Christ. What does this mean for the Mar Thoma church? If our church is to become evangelistic we cannot maintain our Syrian ethnicity.

Here again we can't really emphasize the universality of the gospel without emphasizing the universality of the church. If we take our evangelistic work seriously we will begin to invite people from other cultures to Christ and really build up a community which transcends our own culture, because that is the way any church has to grow. That is the way ecumenism expresses itself. Evangelism cannot be separated from renewal of the church. It opens the church to new cultures and new peoples. That is very important. It is inherent in the Reformation challenge to go out and preach the gospel to all people. I do not forget that we have in the Mar Thoma church, Karnataka and Hindi congregations worshipping in languages other than Malayalam. The church needs to become open. That openness is a part of

the ecumenical vision resulting from our understanding of the gospel as universal. Universal gospel always envisages a universal church.

The universal Christ and Church transcend not only cultures, ideologies and regions but also denominations or confessions. There are many church traditions. There is the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Roman Catholic tradition and the Protestant reformation tradition. Then within the Protestant reformation tradition there are many sectarian traditions. So you have many churches with many different traditions and the question which ecumenism is asking is; can we really have one church? One of the great emphases of ecumenical movement today is that, because the head of the church is one, Jesus Christ, His Body, the church, must also be one. The Christian people must acknowledge each other and be in communion with each other. If we look at the New Testament, it is always a church in Ephesus, a church in Corinth and so on. There are not many churches in Ephesus or in Corinth. There is always only one church in one place and local churches in different places are in communion with each other. This should be so. Therefore the whole question of the unity of the church comes out of the universality of Jesus Christ as the sole head of the church. That again, was a very important insight of the Mar Thoma Reformation. Why is it that we did not give up the Eastern tradition and become Anglican? Why didn't we do it? Because we wanted to keep the eastern orthodox liturgical and other traditions along with the evangelical tradition. The Mar Thoma church in some of its official documents declares itself as an Eastern Evangelical church. So there is in the Mar Thoma Church a tension between the Eastern and Evangelical traditions because we want to be ecumenical. We have many evangelical groups, as well as churches with emphasis on sacraments and liturgy. Today the task of ecumenism throughout the world is to move toward one church in which the different traditions are merged or integrated. These traditions in the past have created



division. And even today some tensions are uncreative. But can we take the insights of all these traditions and integrate them into one ecumenical and universal church.

I think personally that the Mar Thoma reformation had the vision of such a unity. That is why we have struggled to keep the different traditions integrated in the Mar Thoma church. We are an Eastern church because of our liturgy, sacramental life and episcopal policy, but along with that we have kept the evangelistic emphasis. That combination was one that we have accepted. And in a way we have also sectarian groups within the church. And we have to build up unity, integrating the insights of these traditions. Of course when one emphasis is overly strong it creates a division in the church. That was what happened in the break-up resulting in the St. Thomas Evangelical Church.

The Anglican church says that it is a bridge church because it combines the Catholic and Protestant traditions. We are not a large enough church to say that. But we have a bridge concept. In the places we live we can become a bridge between the various traditions which have separated and gone in separate ways. And that is one of the functions of the Mar Thoma church. In a way we should not forget that Juhanon Mar Thoma and I myself from the Mar Thoma Church have functioned in the ecumenical movement in leadership as we did because the Mar Thoma Church has sought unity of various traditions of the church. We should not forget this ecumenical taste in any enthusiasm for any kind of a one-sided approach. I think that it is a very important aspect of the ecumenical movement and I think that it is precisely out of this concern that now we are in communion with the Anglican church. Communion is an affirmation of our oneness. We are also in full communion with the Church of South India and Church of North India and have also established a Joint Council with them. But that cannot be the end of our ecumenical journey. We are too Syrian. But we have to struggle to find our identity within

the larger church unity in some form. It is difficult but that struggle must go on. That is a real part of our Christian witness today.

First, Jesus Christ is the Savior of all mankind. Second, Jesus Christ is the head of the universal church. But thirdly, He is the head of all life. In our modern pluralistic society we must witness to Jesus Christ as the Universal Lord of all life. All life, that is to say, the material life, social life, the structure of relation between rich and poor, between man and woman, between the races, black, white and yellow, all these are taken into what is called the *Koinonia*, the fellowship in Christ. The Eucharist or *Holy Qurbana* is not an isolated event. It is a sacrament because it declares and demonstrates the pattern of community, of common human life that we should have. In the Eucharist we have the material of the bread and wine, we have the society of the believers; and the material and social life are offered by God in Christ. It is this eucharistic community which is the foretaste of the Kingdom of God, foretaste of the coming community of humanity. All the definitions of the church today indicate this line. The Vatican Council says, the church is the sign and sacrament of the unity of mankind. The World Council of Churches at Uppsala says, "we boldly declare that the church is the sign of the coming unity of mankind. When we are celebrating the Eucharist we are declaring with the whole world." In this *koinonia*, communion, and community there is a pattern of a new society. It was Canon Raven, one of the great theologians of England, who said that *koinonia*, the word used in the New Testament for fellowship, had three meanings namely spiritual *communion*, social *community*, and material *communism*. So all these three are in Christ. Material communism existed among the first century Christians even before Marx spoke about it. So all these three forms of sharing is the goal.

And again the Mar Thoma Church, in its Reformation has emphasized the idea of the prophetic ministry in society and politics. The whole tradition in the Syrian

church was to accept whatever power structure existed in society and state. For the first time, the Mar Thoma church broke with that tradition and protested against the then existing political regime. So the idea of a critique of society, a critique of politics came up together on the basis of the Christian principle of

justice. That is the tradition we are talking about as the idea of ecumenism. It is also inherent in the Mar Thoma reformation. Reformation is the seed of ecumenism in the Mar Thoma Church. But we have to live up to its insights in our time and so far as the Marthomites in North America are concerned, in the American pluralist context.



**CHECK PRICES & CALL US**  
We will better any competitive deals  
(Restricted to certain items only)  
THE FINEST JEWELRY STORE IN TEXAS  
**KARAT 22 JEWELERS**

Open Daily 11:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M.  
EXCEPT MONDAY

**KARAT 22 JEWELERS**

65 Richardson Heights Village  
(next to Taj Mahal Imports & Sari Sapine)  
Richardson, TX 75080

Tel: (214) 234-GOLD (4653)  
(214) 234-4824

Closed Tuesday



**KARAT 22 JEWELERS**

5623 Hillcroft  
Houston, TX 77036

Tel: (713) 783-GOLD (4653)  
(713) 783-0808

# MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH OF MALABAR

Some Facts for Recollectcon

By Dr. P. M. Mammen



Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar is an Eastern Church of Orthodox tradition which expounds Western Protestant theology. **CHURCH:** The word "church" translates the Greek word, "Ecclesia," which means a congregation of those who are "called out" (Acts 7:38) of bondage to satan. The Church is "catholic" because it is universal, its universality being traced to the "invisible" Church of which it is an integral part. There are innumerable "visible" sects and denominations; but in God's eyes there is only one Catholic body of believers who form the "invisible" Church. This "invisible" Church is an organism rather than an organization (John 17:21) of redeemed people. On the contrary, the "visible" church is a congregation of "mixed multitude" of professed believers, who assemble to Pray, praise, and break the bread together in the uniformity of the external forms of worship-without necessarily feeling the fellowship of unity.

Mar Thoma Church is such a "visible" church of organizational uniformity, seeking the spiritual unity of the "invisible" Church. **ORTHODOXY:** It is an Eastern Church of orthodox tradition because it conforms to the usual beliefs and established doctrines of the Christian faith as formulated in the early ecumenical creeds and confessions. However, its theological and organizational orthodoxy is a thing of the past because it had grown out of it at the time of the Reformation which gave birth to it from the womb of its erstwhile parent Church of Syrian Christians.

## PROTESTANT THEOLOGY:

The Reformation which took place in the Church can be traced back to the Protestant Movement of the West. It began in 1517, when an Augustinian friar named Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses against indulgences, on the door of the castle church of Wittenberg. The Protestant theology of Luther took radical departure from the sacramental and sacerdotal theology of Roman catholicism. His Protestant Movement reached the shores of Great Britain during the sixteenth century and from there the Malabar Coast where the Church Missionary Society came to preach the "reformed" word of God.

## British Contact and Kerala Revival:

After the coming of the European powers to the Malabar Coast of Kerala—the Portuguese, to begin with, then the Dutch, and finally the British—the Malabar Coast began to change rapidly. Kerala became politically united into two princely states of Travancore and Cochin and a district called Malabar. Now modern technology was introduced in the commercialization of agriculture. Secular schools were introduced, and this was followed by printing presses and the publication of several newspapers and magazines in Malayalam language.

A clergyman from Calcutta, Dr. Buchanan, visited Travancore and, with the help of the Resident, Col. Macaulay, conducted extensive study of the Syrian Christians. In 1811 he pub-

lished his **Christian Researches in Asia**, which brought to the knowledge of the British public the existence of the Syrian Christians of the Malabar Coast. This marked the beginning of a wave of C. M. S. Missionaries, who came to Travancore with their secular education, printing presses and the Protestant theology. Messrs. Benjamin Bailey (1816-1850), Henry Baker (1817-1866), and Joseph Fenn (1817-1826) were the most outstanding of these early missionaries. Bailey founded a Christian College at Kottayam for the education of the Syrian clergymen. Fenn became the principal of the College, and he was assisted by Syriac professors and by Sanskrit and Malayalam teachers. Bailey began to translate the Scriptures into Malayalam. A printing press arrived from England in 1821, and a native blacksmith made the punches and the Malayalam script on a wooden press. The Scriptures and Common Prayer, and two complete dictionaries in Malayalam were issued from this press. Meanwhile, Baker worked among seventy-two Syrian churches where there were Malayalam schools attended by Syrian Christian children. He also introduced an English school at Kottayam. These changes prompted a revival movement in Travancore. Several young graduates from these schools began to question the validity of the then-prevailing sacramentalism and sacerdotalism of the ancient Syrian Church. The foremost leader of this revival spirit within the traditional Church was one ordained priest of Syriac scholarship, named Abraham, who is popularly known as Abraham Malpan. The Malpan Movement created a cleavage within the Syrian Jacobite fold, which attracted the attention of Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta. He visited Travancore in 1835. He found it necessary to recommend that the dissident reformist faction of the Syrian fold form an independent Church of its own. Thus Bishop Wilson's visit brought to a logical climax the fermenting forces of theological dissidence, led by Abraham Malpan, and a new Church was born.

#### **The Protestant Theology of Mar Thoma Church:**

The new Church of the Syrian community challenged the doctrine of ecclesiastical infallibility and the authority and power of the priests to change the Eucharistic elements into the very body and blood of Christ.

This Protestant theology, in other words, discarded the doctrine of transubstantiation and the validity of the Mass as the repetition of

Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. It attacked all abuses and superstitions that had grown around the sacrament of penance. On the contrary, it enthroned the idea of justification by faith as the central theme of man's insignificance and God's merciful concern for his salvation.

No sacrament could work by its own innate virtue and power, no man could be saved by his own act of faith. Faith which makes the sacrament effective is one's own, given by God freely and gratuitously. This doctrine of justification by faith delicately balances the pessimism about man against the optimism of God. The doctrine places man's faith and God's grace working together.

The Reformation of the Mar Thoma Church raised the traditional Syrian Christian of Malabar to a higher level of individualism and empowered him with the authority of Scripture. The "reformed" Syrian Christian became a person of the "reformed" word of God. He|She accepted the Grace of God as unmerited favor.

#### **Sacerdotalism:**

Mar Thoma Reformation discarded all errors of sacerdotalism, which the false teachings and practices of the priestcraft still upheld in society. The Reformation discarded:

1. The denial of the Gospel of Grace, by teaching belief in (a) salvation by works, (b) self-mortification and penance, (c) celibacy as a requirement for the ministry, (d) monasticism, and (e) the doctrine of purgatory.
2. False worship (idolatry) through the teaching (a) transubstantiation, (b) the Mass, (c) the worship of the Bread and Wine, of the Crucifix, and of the images of Virgin Mary and of saints and relics.
3. False fasting as ordained by the Church as an external penance.
4. The hindrance of free salvation to all by teaching (a) the doctrine of "exclusive salvation" (that there is no salvation outside their own confession or sect), (b) apostolic succession (that the notion of Holy of the Holiest should prevail upon opening priesthood to all believers), (c) the withholding of the Bible from the people, (d) the use of a language in worship, not understood by the ordinary people.

5. (a) the practice and doctrine of intermediaries (denial of the infallibility and inerrancy of Christ's teachings) (b) confession, priestly pardon, absolutions, the granting of indulgences and penances (c) invocation to the Virgin Mary and to saints as intermediaries.
6. False teachings about Virgin Mary and stories and legends about the saints.
7. False prayer (for the dead), and
8. False teachings about sins (about "mortal" and "venial" sins) assessing the severity of sins from the human standpoint.

**Mar Thoma Church in North America:**

There are more than ten thousand Christians of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church now living in Canada and the U.S.A. The Church is in communion with the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. and the Anglican Church of Canada. These Christians do maintain and try to preserve their "Indian-ness" in their cultural life, and at the same time they loosely identify them-

selves with the Protestant churches of their countries of adoption. These Christians, in other words, represent the ancient tradition of the Syrian Christians of St. Thomas and, at the same time, the modern protestantism of Western origin.

Now the cycle is complete: The Mar Thoma Syrian Christians are, at present, meeting their "reformers" on their own soil—but only to discover that the spiritual message of the Protestant theology of Bailey, Baker and Fenn had passed through a period of decline in the West ever since they had brought it to Malabar Coast of the East. The Episcopal-Anglican fold of America (and Europe), as well as as all other Protestant churches, is now caught unaware in the midst of two cross-currents of the twentieth century: the scientific revolution and its concomitant value of rational secularism, which have been systematically demoting God and the Sacred to an existential level of secular humanism. This has become a challenge to the spiritual tradition of the Mar Thoma Church.



# THE MAR THOMA CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA ITS ECUMENICAL HERITAGE AND INVOLVEMENT

Mr. George J. Poikail, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas

At a time when the Mar Thoma Church in North America is in a triumphalistic mood, impressed with its growth and increasing strength, it is easy to forget that a major component of our church's mission in North America is its ecumenical involvement. Our church, however impressive is its growth and accomplishment in North America during the last decade, makes up a minuscule percentage of active Christians here. Our impact, however much noise we make, or whatever impressive statistics we produce, will be insignificant without the larger context of our involvement with other Christian bodies.

1. **Identity and involvement** — Only a person with a strong identity can help make a community. Only a church that has a clear identity can become actively involved with other Churches. The Mar Thoma Church with its historicity, apostolicity, Biblical heritage and a strong commitment to mission and service has that identity. That is the reason that such a small church as ours with less than a million members scattered in at least five continents, has had such a disproportionately high participation in the ecumenical movement. It is not necessary to give statistics here. But a cursory review of the history of the ecumenical movement will show that we have been an active participant or member of all the great gatherings of the ecumenical enterprise during the last forty years, from Amsterdam to Vancouver, from Jerusalem to Melbourne (WCC meetings), the meetings of the World Students Christian Federation, the East Christian Conference, The National Christian Council of India, The National Missionary Society, The Students Christian Movement, the YMCA, or YWCA. Ecumenical leaders from our church, Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Dr. M. M. Thomas, Rev. M. A. Thomas, are considered among the select prophets of the last forty years. In addition to these, one may mention a large number who for brief periods had contributed to the growth of the church as a world-wide prophetic force.

2. **Unity and conciliar movement** — For several years during the early thirties and forties, ecumenical efforts were directed towards organic unity, as in the case of the Church of South

India. The basic assumption was that a small percentage of the population widely scattered on the sea of other religionists, would need to put its house in order, come together as people of a common faith, worship and service. But those efforts proved to be not worth the time and energy put into them. Of course, the Church of South India is growing in every way. But to bring together churches of disparate traditions and practices would be difficult and unnecessary. Consequently, a shift has been made to deal more in terms of conciliar unity: using those common grounds as apostolicity, Biblical heritage, mission and service, churches would come together towards achieving certain common goals, rather than attempting at organic unity. The latest of these is our resolution to belong to a uniting council with the Churches of South and North India rather than giving up our name and identity to join a larger Church of India.

3. **Ecumenical involvement of the Mar Thoma Church in North America** — Currently it is limited to our agreement with the Episcopal Church through its two branches, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA and the Anglican Church of Canada. But these bodies which are somewhat moribund through declining membership, involvement and increasing divisiveness, themselves do not provide the type of dynamic involvement of which we are capable. So our Achans go free of charge to the Asiamerica ministry; our Zonal Assembly Secretary sits on its committee; our Achan's visas are facilitated by the Asiamerica ministry, or its secretary or the presiding bishop makes a trip to Maramon. They are in themselves good gestures but they have no grass-roots level validity. The Asiamerica ministry itself is a fringe organization created to deal with the troublesome minorities who do not fit into the larger mainstream of Anglicanism or Anglican Protestantism. It creates a minority mentality of weakness and dependency. It fosters separatism to the maximum.

We in India are a minority but we do not have the minority mentality and dependency. We run our own affairs the way we chose under God's direction. Why should we change that and depend upon the Asiamerica ministry and

its officers? Why not we challenge the somewhat racist and establishmentarian local Episcopal churches to become partners in mission and services? Then you will find that the literature and message created out of New York never reach the local rectories and the local Episcopal parishes consider us just as they consider the Blacks, troublesome pests.

**4. Wide ecumenism in North America —**  
We have common interests of mission and service that far surpass the parochial interests of the Episcopal Church. That church, in spite of a titular head in the person of the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the world-wide Anglican Communion, is far split into geographical, national, ethnic and theological units. The bishop of New York and the bishop of Alabama have very little in common except that they belong to the same church. The PECUSA is a different bird from the Church of England which old Henry VIII created for more political and nationalistic reasons than theological, missionary or service reasons. The Bishop of York who denies some of the basics of Christian faith is welcome, as he should be, in the larger Anglican communion. But what have we in common with these shepherds and sheep than our relationship with them from the early 19th century, the Church Missionary Society and the representatives of the Oxford Movement? The CMS missionaries were paternalistic just as any other missionaries. They did an awful lot of good, just as did any other missionaries. But when bishop Wilson began to dictate the conduct and governance of our church, Mar Dyonasis and the Mavelikara Synod parted company with the missionaries. That spirit of independence is what makes us who we are. Why sacrifice that now for certain conveniences? Why associate with Asiamerica ministry?

**This writer suggests the following immediate steps.**

- (a) After its registration in North America, the Mar Thoma Church in North America should become a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.
- (b) All local parishes should be encouraged become members of the local Councils or Communities of Churches.
- (c) The clergy of our church should be encouraged or required to become members of the local associations of the clergy.
- (d) Our members should be encouraged to become part of the ecumenical enterprise

such as the Soup Kitchen here in Dallas, or the Shelters for the Homeless or any other mission and service activity.

- (e) Our Student and Family Conferences, on the regional and national level, should invite fraternal delegates from the parallel organizations in other churches such as the United Methodist the Presbyterian, the Christian Church or the Lutheran Church. We in return should send fraternal delegates to their meetings.
- (f) We should seek common communication facilities such as newspapers radio or TV in announcing common events of mission and service.

**5. Wider ecumenism in North America —**  
There are so many more Americans of Indian or Asian origins than the Marthomites. But in attending one of our national conferences with its chauvinism and triumphalism, one is liable to forget that fact. Anyone who attended the Chicago conferences 1986 came away with the feeling that, given the authority by our Savior Jesus Christ, some leaders and movers of the conference would have forced the Kingdom of God and secured a deed for the Marthomites somewhere near to the Throne of God, east of the pearly gates, right on the shores of the pearly river, certainly in the groves of the choicest apple trees.

Believe it or not, some folks other than Marthomites are going to make it to what we call eternity. Because we have to live with them there, why not practice it here? Some feeble suggestions.

- (a) Create community among members of Kerala denominations such as the Jacobites, Roman Catholics or Orthodox. The Pentecostals would have nothing to do with us and we seem to have nothing to do with them. We should try to get along even with them?
- (b) Deal with those people whom we uncharitably call "non-Christians" but who are really genuine human beings of other faiths, the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, et al. If one assumes that the church is an organization to protect its members or one to show off its wealth and beauty, then we should avoid all involvement with these others of our fellow-humanity. But if the church is to be a catalyst, a leavening agent,

a lighted light, by all means we should be involved with others in common mission and service to suffering people still living in various forms of bondage.

Currently our cocoon-type existence is a denial of our heritage of historicity, apostolicity, episcopacy, evangelism, mission and service. There are two impediments which prevent us from a genuine and wider ecumenism. (a) the myth of eventual return to Kerala, to live in a Marthoma ethos, community, and near a Marthoma Church to be buried in a Marthoma cemetery. But reality may be that most of us will die here and be buried here, leaving those costly mansions built in Kerala to generations there to enjoy. (b) the myth of eternal return to a particular heaven, as described in graphic details in the Book of Revelations. The descriptions are so enchanting and to think that one hundred and forty-four thousand described therein might include one's name, is even more enchanting. In fact it makes one giddy.

And yet the whole function of Jesus the Christ was to make God available equally and universally. Creating incestuous or ingrown organizations may serve religious purposes but it is anti-Christian. Our church has quite a wide opportunity to break into this situation and show that God loves us all and therefore we could love even the rest of Americans.

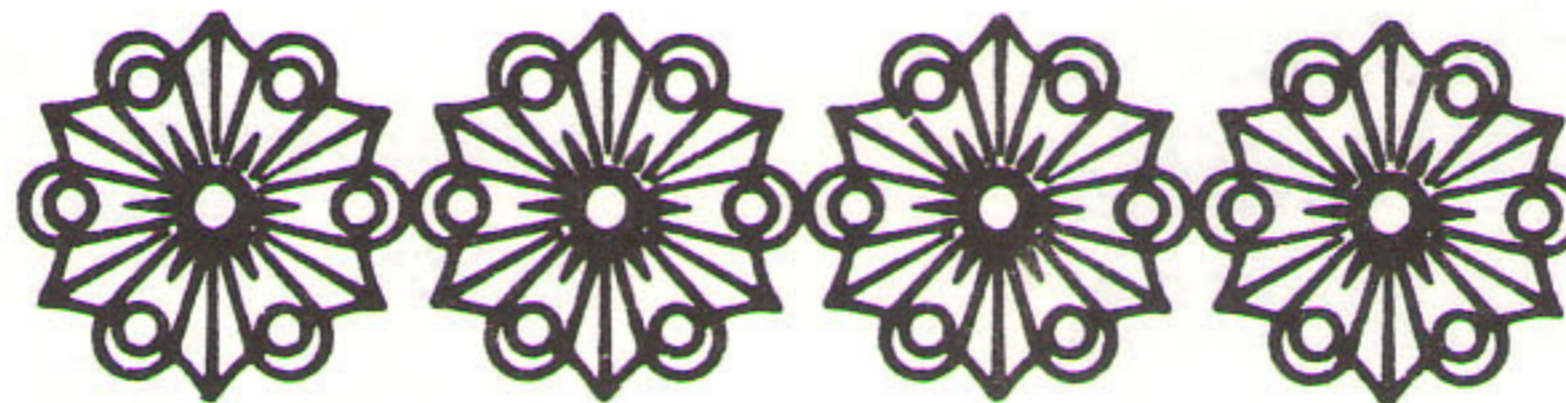
There is a practical side to this argument. Some of us, whether we like it or not, are going to have our children marry people from North America who are members of other churches, or

even people of other faiths, and most anathema of all, other color. The Lord God had given this writer twenty-four years in this promised land. During these years the writer had seen a lot of changes and it is too tedious to enumerate those. Besides, they are outside the purview of this brief essay. The writer himself has gone with the stream of history and had made several changes, some to his liking and some not. He remains reasonably happy because he has accepted the facts of (a) a God who is active in history through change, (b) the centrality of the person of Jesus who became the Christ, and therefore the Savior of all mankind, a moment of great joy in human history: (c) a willingness to make peace with God, God's Creation and God's people here on earth, and (d) a willingness to remain at peace with God in whatever station God assigns to this writer here on earth or wherever hereafter. He accepts his ministry, in the words of Jesus in Luke 4:18.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

That was the intention, activity and fulfillment of the event of Jesus Christ.

If the Mar Thoma Church in North America has any other intent, mission, service or purpose, this writer is not aware of it:





# SUMMARY AND REVIEW OF REFORMATION'S SESQUICENTENNIAL JUBILEE COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME

Dr. George K. Zacharia Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this article is to present a summary and a brief critical review of the Reformation's Sesquicentennial Jubilee commemorative volume published by the Mar Thoma Church in 1986. Except for the last two articles in English all the others are in Malayalam. In presenting the summary, I have resorted to a free translation of the statements and have liberally used statements verbatim from the two English pieces.

In introducing the volume, His Grace Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan states: Reformation is not a one time event but something that is and should be a continuous process. This is so because the life-giving and enlightening Holy Spirit is constantly at work in the church and reveals to each generation God's will for their time and points out our shortcomings and directs us to the way of righteousness. The Holy Spirit provides us also with the strength and energy to fulfill His will for us. Thus the ongoing reformation throughout, from the beginning to the end, is wholly dependent on the Holy Spirit's light and strength.

**1. Malankara church's reformation: Historical background** by Rev. T. P. Abraham. This is a brief but excellent introduction to the history of the Malankara Church up to the 1920's and provides a succinct account of the theological variations that it underwent during various periods of foreign domination and influence. Of special significance is the convening of the Synod at Diamper in 1599 through Portugese power which forced the Malankara Church to become part of the Roman Catholic Church and to accept its doctrines and practices such as invocation of saints and Virgin Mary, transubstantiation of the elements in Holy Communion, prayer and masses for the departed, private confession to the Priests, papal supremacy, teachings on purgatory, adoration of images, and the celibacy of the clergy in 1653. The church through the famous "Coonen Cross" pledge declared freedom from the Roman Catholic Church. Thus the church became two, those who accepted the Roman Catholic hegemony and those who did not. The article also describes the influence of Anglican missionaries which had a major part in the reformation. It ends by a brief discussion of the reformation and its impact.

**2. Biblical emphases of the Reformation** by Very Rev. K. V. Jacob. It discusses the three fundamental principles underlying the protestant reformation initiated by Martin Luther, namely, the primacy of the scripture, justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers. The author closes the article by identifying three noble fruits of the reformation: (i) church becoming alive to its mission of preaching the gospel; (ii) democratization of the church; (iii) tremendous impact on the social and cultural life of its people making them sensitive to the Christian responsibilities in those areas.

**3. Lay leadership in the Church** by Dr. T. John. It surveys the historical meanings and emphases on lay leadership in the church universal, in India, in Kerala, and in the Mar Thoma Church. The author lists many outstanding lay leaders under each of those headings. The article ends with a section on identifying potential leaders and training them. However, the author should have acknowledged the thousands of nameless leaders who provided leadership in local parishes whose efforts have sustained the church.

**4. Creative growth of the Mar Thoma Church** by K. I. Ninan. This is an interesting article dealing with the influences of missionaries in the growth of the church maintaining its identity. It identifies the following as the sources of the church's growth: translation of Bible and the orders of worship into Malayalam, generous monetary gifts of its people to the church, gospel work in cooperation with the C.M.S. missionaries, the local clergy from the missions, founding of the Evangelistic Association and subsequently the Voluntary Evangelistic Association, the establishment of the Maramon Convention, the local and regional conventions, founding of schools, colleges and theological seminaries, and church administration following the patterns of the Anglican church. It also makes a passing reference to the unity talks with the Church of South India.

**5. Theological training through the church** by Rev. Dr. K. V. Mathew. The author first attempts to define theological education and the role it plays in church life. Traditionally, the seminaries have been considered as the tool for theological education. But the author identifies several of its limitations. Theological education is essential for interpreting church's mission to

(i) the people suffering from poverty, (ii) society with religious pluralism, (iii) the world in need of peace, and (iv) the world of male domination and suppression of women. The article ends with a discussion of the role of theology in enriching life in general.

**6. Reformation and the younger generation** by Rev. K. K. George. It starts with the historical role played by Latin and Syriac in the life of the Christian churches and makes passing reference to the work of John Wycliffe who translated the Bible into English and the persecution he underwent. It was during the early part of the 19th century that the Syrian Church came to the realization of the need for formal religious education for its children. Regular Christian schools carried out that function for some time after that. Revival meetings also played a significant role. Printing of the Bible in Malayalam had a great impact. Christian hymns exerted great influence in the spiritual growth of children. Order of worship in Malayalam was a giant step. The formation of the Sunday School Samajam in 1905 at the Maramon Convention was another landmark. Today it caters to 100,000 Sunday school children and 10,000 teachers. The main theme, however, is addressed only periodically.

**7. Reformation and the evangelistic work of the church** by Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. This is a very significant contribution warranting a more detailed summary. A succinct account of the situation in Malankara Church which led to the reformation is given. The single most important event which led to the transformation was availability of the Bible in the vernacular. The Gospel is the foundation of reformation. The dominant tenets of the reformation can be summarized as follows: (i) The only basis of man's salvation is God's grace as revealed in Jesus Christ; (ii) Salvation can be experienced by any one through faith and is something that everyone must experience; (iii) Thus the gathered ones are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. There is no special place for priestly superiority and mediation. All members of the church are ministers of God's grace and are responsible for bearing witness in various arenas of life. Irrespective of the sexes, everyone has been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. As a holy nation, we must not identify with the world, but must reveal through our lives God's love, truth, holiness, justice and peace; (iv) The bases for all our faith and order are the 66

books which constitute the open Bible. Everyone has the right and responsibility to study and to teach the Bible. We must eradicate all practices and social ills which are contrary to God's word; (v) The church is a community called and responsible to bring the light of salvation to the world. It must always be engaged with all its strength in the work of the Kingdom of God. God has delegated us as a community to heal the sick, to expunge all evil practices and the evil spirits, to work untiringly to let God's message be known in the society for establishing justice and peace in the world.

In talking about the scope of the reformation, His Grace states that the reformation was a return to the purity of faith and commitment to work for the Kingdom of God which was characteristic of the early church. However, time is changing. We have to find new ways of expressing God's grace. The scope of the reformation not only changes but also widens. Its role in the effort to transform society is unquestionable. When we examine the history of revolutions we find that in fighting against one kind of injustice we end up embracing another kind of injustice and from one kind of slavery to another. Nations which cry out slogans such as 'put an end to wars' are the ones which are engaged in stockpiling arms. It is in this human context that God has revealed his way through the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The Spirit of God summons us to lay down our lives for others and to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This can happen only when we accept the pre-eminence of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The world depicts this as a failure. The power of resurrection demonstrates that it is not so. The Acts of the Apostles has recorded the victory in Jesus Christ. Sharing this good news is an integral aspect of the reformation movement.

Thirumeni then gives a brief historical account of the efforts of the church in evangelistic work. A significant event in this regard was the formation of the Evangelistic Association which was the outcome of the working of the Holy Spirit in a group of twelve faithful people gathered in a mansion in Kallissery. Revivals in different places, the Maramon Convention, and the Ashram movement contributed substantially to the missionary ventures both inside and outside Kerala. Another significant event was the founding of the Voluntary Evangelistic Association under the leadership of Abraham Mar Thoma.

Mar Thoma Women's Auxiliary, Sunday School Samajam, and the Youth League followed suit. Yuhanon Mar Thoma reminded the church that we cannot separate evangelism from active involvement in work for social justice. A lot remains to be done in helping the low caste communities advance. His Grace closes the article challenging the church to get actively involved in efforts to bring employment and housing to all, to work for changes in the structures of society through political activity and in educational and medical arenas, in work among the handicapped, mentally retarded and helpless and destitute people.

**8. Spiritual revivals in the Malankara Church** by Rev. V. M. Mathen. Only God can bring revival. To share that Spirit, God needs human instruments. God can sometimes use people with very little education and even undeserving ones. When we survey the revivals in Kerala we realize that there have been periods of drought following them. The author identifies the following as indicative of the presence of revival: Transformed lives of individuals, rise in society's moral standards, zeal in works of compassion, purification of personal relationships, disappearance of misunderstandings, attitude of cooperation among communities, absence of prejudgments of individuals and groups. An emotional upheaval is not necessary for true revivals.

The beginnings of revival in the Malankara church date back to circa 1870. At that time, it must be noted, Holy Communion service was in Syriac and even the reading of the gospel during the service was in Syriac. There was no real spiritual life nor Bible knowledge among the Malankara Christians. C.M.S. missions and translation of Bible into Malayalam had great part in the religious awakening of our people. Ammal from Tanjore along with some other women went around singing and preaching. Moses Valsalam of London Mission Society visited many places and taught Christian hymns. These had exerted considerable influence. The first significant revival took place in 1873. God used a poor man from Tinnevely called "Pandikkaran Mathai Upadeshi". Two other later luminaries were Vidwan Kuttyachan and Kizhakkethalakkal Achan. The Seminary case and the founding of 'Yoyomaya Sabha' with a false teaching dimmed the fervor. The founding of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, the court decision against our church in the case resulting in loss of church properties, and the

Maramon Convention gave a new life. There were other revivals as a result of C.M.S. missionaries and our own evangelists. People began to confess their sins in public and with one another. Panchamannil Mamman Upadeshi, Moothampakkal Kochukunju Upadeshi and Dr. Stanley Jones were three of the greatest evangelists of recent times.

**9. The reformation in the Malankara Church and women** by Mrs. K. K. George. The author recounts the historical role played by women in the church universal from its inception with an interlude when they lost their influence. Women had a significant role in family prayers and various social service and educational activities. Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sangham was formed in 1919. The contributions of Smt. Kandamma Varghese and some great missionary ladies are acknowledged. She laments the reality of the scarce row of leaders and identifies several reasons for the same. The church has not taken an active part in eradicating the current marriage patterns, dowry system and the low status accorded in families to young women. Only recently have women been admitted to our Theological Seminary. If we have to have a foundational change in our attitude toward women and equal position for them we must embrace Christ's attitude toward women. We must as a church be committed to educate the membership at large 'the theology of humanhood'. The teaching ministry of the church has not entered new fields. Many parts of the open Bible which provided the foundation for reformation have not yet seen the light of day. Even educated among us do not have the ability or skill to interpret the Bible correctly. Women must share the power by being in administrative roles of the church. We must entrust with them greater responsibilities. Language in the order of worship must be adjusted to accommodate the women. Women should be given significant parts in worship service.

**10. Christian education: An evaluation** by Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla. The reformed church gave great emphasis to Sunday school work. However, we have to note certain facts. The Sunday school movement was started in our church at a time when people by and large had not questioned God's reality. The only thing lacking at that time was an instructional schema developed in an orderly fashion. But today, the relevance of belief in God and especially of the institutional religion are seriously being questioned. The church is facing children of such parents. Many

# JESUS CALLS

INTERNATIONAL INC



1789 TEXAS PARKWAY  
MISSOURI CITY, TEXAS 77489  
(HOUSTON)  
U.S.A.

713-499-4857 713-437-3990  
TELEX NO. 6503271469



**FOUNDER**  
DR. D. G. S. DHINAKARAN  
16 GREENWAYS ROAD MADRAS 600 028 INDIA

**PRESIDENT**  
ABRAHAM K. MATHEW  
1789 TEXAS PARKWAY, MISSOURI CITY, TX 77489 U.S.A.

**ARE YOU DEPRESSED?**

**LONELY?**

**DEJECTED?**

**ANSWER IS JESUS, WHO IS WILLING TO**

**DELIVER YOU FROM ALL YOUR PROBLEMS**

You are invited to attend the healing Service in Jesus calls office at 1789 Texas Parkway, Missouri City, on every Saturday at 4:00 p.m. and receive healing for your soul, mind and body.

Br. Dhinakaran, a prophet and a great evangelist of this century in India, has extended his ministry to the people in the U.S.A. He proclaims the word of God to the needy and suffering humanity and brings peace and comfort through various means such as:

Audio visual Aids  
Books, Magazines  
Crusades  
Prayer Tower 24 hrs.  
Healing Services

For More Information  
Phone: (713) 499-4857  
437-3990

of the questions raised are not out of place if we examine the content of the generally accepted belief system and the character of the established institutional religion. Church and the Sunday school should take this new situation into account. Attempts to relate life experiences and faith in God are meager. We must also take into account insights from modern developmental psychology. Bible was fundamentally written by adults for adults. Church should translate the Bible so that it can be understood by children of various ages. We must recognize that Mar Thoma church at present is global in nature. In places where our members are scattered, there are no facilities for conducting Sunday school for our young people. There is a danger of our churches becoming mere Christian clubs. Bible lessons through correspondence and video cassettes are to be experimented with. We must have a new orientation as to what constitutes Christian education. It is not merely teaching the Bible contents. Its aim is to liberate man through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There are many stumbling blocks. The purpose of Biblical learning is to receive insights regarding those and to proclaim the victory that we can obtain through Christ, our Lord. The Christian must receive education helpful to this throughout life. We must gain insight on the world through the Bible. When the two, Bible study and knowledge of the world, complement each other, both are enriched. We should offer Sunday school classes for adults. The problems of the world must be viewed in the light of the scriptures. We need to raise a group of lay biblical scholars.

11. **Vision of the reformation and relevant mission of the church** by Rev. Jolly Thomas and Rev. Oommen V. Varkey. Abraham Malpan, the father of our reformation, believed that only by giving up superficial rituals and external expressions can the deep faith and early vision of the church be made real to our members. The significant thing about reformation was to separate true faith from mere religious beliefs. To equate rituals built on false teaching and through various patterns of worship with religious faith was heresy to him. Faith was seen as the gift of the Kingdom of God through Christ which entails an eschatological vision of man's future and a life-style and value system commensurate with that. Reformation is an ongoing process. Structures as we see are human creation. As such we must be open to hearing the word of God anew and to adopt structures and modes

of functioning consonant with that. It is clear that today there is a need for reformation in various areas of our church life. We have to recover the vision of salvation of man in its holistic sense rather than that of an individual of the gospel. Redemption of structures of society We have to give emphasis to the social dimensions must be part and parcel of the church's agenda. We have almost forgotten our prophetic mission. Church must become the conscience of society. We are silent on rampant social and political evils of today. We are eager to silence those who are critical of the church's stance. We must rethink the nature of the church and authority in the church. There is great and growing interest in structures of power and order of administration. We tend to operate in a legalistic framework and love and forgiveness may lose their place. It is true that in the visible church we need to have certain rules of order. But it is imperative to find ways by which these will not be stumbling blocks to our effective ministry and how they can be used as instruments for such witness. Our treatment of brethren who have come from low caste groups is still shameful. We must sincerely examine how far our institutions are carrying out the Christian mission which they were intended to do. Today our clergy and bishops are administrations more than being shepherds. The authors ask a pertinent question: Is it desirable to transform spiritual authority into an administrative one? There is need for changes in our orders of worship. They should be made more meaningful and relevant to the contemporary situation. We should examine those in the light of our faith and biblical understanding. We must train our clergy so that they will be able to work in non-religious areas. We must rethink our priorities in the area of developing our institutions and establishing new ones.

12. **Reformation and society** by Rev. Dr. T. M. Philip. The author starts by stating that the phrase 'Reformation's Jubilee' is a misnomer. Reformation is continuous and no precise date can be fixed for the date of reformation. When there is widespread dissatisfaction in the existing condition, then there is need for critical evaluation. Vision, reason and courage must become a part of our dedication and must direct our life. That is when we can claim that reformation has taken place. Reformers are all children of a particular historical period. At the same time they create history. The missionaries played a great part in raising the social status of the

low caste people and women through founding of schools for all people. Through Western education, liberal values such as equality, liberty and fraternity found entrance in the value system of the people. There are three interpretations about the aim of reformers: (i) reforming the doctrinal base and accordingly importance is given to the changes made in liturgy; (ii) since the reformers attempted to expunge not only false doctrines but false practices, the aim was to have individual regeneration in the light of evangelical theology; (iii) bringing a cultural revolution. The author contends that we have to incorporate all these in order to have a full perspective of the reformation. Belief in astrology and witchcraft, fear of fate, idol worship, celebration of certain feasts, and prayer for the departed among other things were rampant. The reformation was in strong opposition to such beliefs and practices. The Reformation challenged our people to cross the boundaries of our traditional Syrian community and to preach the gospel to the diverse castes and groups. It indeed was a great challenge to the caste system. Abraham Mar Thoma lamented that there will be no salvation to the church until this devil leaves her. We have not yet become a community and a true fellowship. That becomes a reality only when spiritual communion, economic sharing and social fellowship happen together. We may not be fully aware of our 'syrian attitude' which is full of communal spirit. It stands as a stumbling block to ecumenical relations. Our attempts to maintain our status lead us to ways away from the vision which inspired the reformation. Our church has taken leadership on several occasions in fighting human and civil rights violations. Navajan movement initiated by Dr. Stanley Jones, social service activities launched by Yuhanon Mar Thoma, involvement in political struggles, and Vigil India Movement are examples of our dedication to the principles of reformation. Our challenge for today is how we can participate in building 'a just participatory and sustainable society'. We must be willing to participate in the struggles of the masses for economic and social justice. Then only can we be truly a prophetic community. There is an increase in abusing women, hostility to Harijans and other human rights violations. Let us reverse these trends and work for christian justice.

**13. Mar Thoma Church and social welfare and development activities by Rev. T. K. Mathew.**

This article enumerates some of the social service activities of the church. For instance Yuhanon Mar Thoma initiated the Land and House Gift Movement within the church, through a circular dated February 9, 1948. It is to be noted, that this effort even pre-dated Vinoba Bhave's Land Gift Mission Movement and the Government's own land reform act. Through the Metropolitan's Fund established in 1968, the church has assisted in building about 2000 houses. Medical mission is another significant area of involvement. There are a number of hospitals and medical institutions run directly by the church. Work among lepers, counseling centers, orphanages, destitute homes, old folks homes, women's hostels, schools and colleges, and educational work for the handicapped are some examples of our active witness in these areas. The church has a department of development. Christian Agency for Rural Development, South Travancore Association for Rural Development, and the Mar Thoma Sea Coast Development Project are other examples of our involvement.

**14. New regions of ministry by Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph.** This deals with areas of ministry where the church, according to the author, has yet to engage in. We must give attention to pre-school Christian education for children below 5 years of age. We must have separate classes for youth, middle aged and old people and must prepare appropriate instructional materials for those groups. Sunday School Samajam is initiating an adult sunday school as a memorial of the Jubilee. Counseling services must be made ubiquitous. We must have vocational guidance programs. We must help people identify their own abilities and strengths. This service must extend to marriage and marital counseling. Family enrichment programs must go hand in hand with this. Our parishes and congregations must recognize more the role families play. The traditional house visit by our priests is inadequate. We must enlist lay leadership in this and develop a joint ministry for family enrichment. To have regular family prayers in our homes is an imperative.

**15. Church and cultural renaissance by Rev. Mathew Daniel.** The impact of Bible translation, worship in Malayalam, revolution in the educational scene, the contributions in the literary field and the influence of English language on us; awakening of our conscience by missionaries

on social evils, and our contributions in the cultural realm are briefly discussed.

16. **The stalwarts of the reformation battle** by the Editorial Committee. Since the inception of the Malankara church until the beginning of the 19th century, gradually false doctrines and heretical practices which were contrary to Biblical faith and practice crept in. Routine administration and rituals went on. There was neither life nor evangelistic zeal in the church. The clergy was not well educated. There were no theological seminaries to train them. Worship was in Syriac which people did not and could not follow. Even the priests did not understand it. Priests earned money through saying prayers and conducting masses for the departed. Christians were not much different from non-Christians as far as some of the religious practices were concerned. Western missionaries played a significant role in a spiritual and biblical awakening. Palakkunnathu Abraham Malpan (1795-1845) and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan (1800-1855) were two outstanding leaders of the reformation movement who wanted to remain in the Malankara Church and reform it from within. (Malpan is the Syriac term for Professor). Abraham Malpan is acknowledged as the Father of the Reformation Movement. This article gives a short biographical sketch of both these great men.

17. **A global church: the Mar Thoma Church in North America** by Dr. T. M. Thomas. The author contends that one of the distinctive features of the Mar Thoma Church is the acceptance of 'protestant church characteristics' while maintaining its Eastern orthodox nature. At around the same time Abraham Malpan brought an awakening in the cultural and religious life of St. Thomas Christians and fought against some of the social evils of the times, Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, and Vaikunda Swami were providing leadership in their respective Hindu communities. Among Episcopal churches the Mar Thoma church seems to be at the highest level accepting democratic ideals. People actively participate in the decision-making process and the laity has an important role in the management of the church. It maintains a balance between the altar and the pulpit, one representing worship as emphasized in the orthodox churches and the latter representing sermons, the focus of service in protestant denominations. Educational level of our members is comparable to any well educated

group in India. After discussing some general characteristics and achievements of the Kerala immigrants and after making some passing remarks about potential problems in family life, he briefly describes the beginning of Mar Thoma congregations in North America and the establishment of the Zonal Council (Assembly). A significant event in the life of the church here has been the Agreement signed between our church and the Episcopal Churches in U.S.A. and the one with the Anglican Church in Canada. Our parishes and congregations here do not make any serious efforts to enter into a relationship with other protestant denominations. Their organizational patterns follow the model in Kerala and hence do not serve the special needs of the church here. The pastors sent from Kerala are not equipped to meet the special needs of our people living in a different culture. The current organizational patterns need drastic modification. A separate diocese for North America is necessary and it will facilitate autonomy. The author points out the clanish mentality of our members and our prejudicial attitudes towards others as serious weaknesses. The openness associated with reformation enabled the Marthomites to accept new ideas and be open to liberal values. That is our strength. However, the author feels that some others probably have gone ahead of us in implementing in their churches some of the reformation ideas.

18. **Unity of the church — despair or hope?** by Rev. M. A. Thomas. This incisive paper starts with a discussion of the semantic confusion in the usage of terms such as 'universal', 'ecumenical', and 'catholicity'. Theologians of all shades of opinions and ecumenical statements on unity issued from time to time by August bodies like the Vatican and the World Council of Churches invariably suffer from imprecise and insufficient understanding of the issues involved. Therefore, we cannot ascribe finality to any single concept of church unity advocated so far, but should in humility learn from each other, correct ourselves without being proud or arrogant. The Holy Spirit leads the church and will lead her to a new and fresher understanding of the unity of the church. The author, however, warns that not everything that flourishes is the work of the Holy Spirit. He cites Cardinal Leo Suenens as emphasizing the present urgent need for a shift from 'renewal of the life of the church' to the 'vocation and

# MADHAVAN K. PILLAI

*A Professional Corporation*

*(Certified Public Accountant)*

3821 WOODVALLEY  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77025

**(713) 666-4811**

## CUT YOUR TAXES AND SAVE

**Personalized and Confidential Services in:**

Income Tax (Individual, Corporation,  
Small Business Corporation, Partnership, Estates,  
Trusts, Gifts, etc.)

- Certified Audit/Unaudited Financial Statements
- Compilation and Review Services
- Retirement Plans and Tax Shelters
- Accounting Systems and Records
- Full Service Bookkeeping
- Business Planning and Consulting
- Tax Planning
- Computerized Accounting and System Design
- Income Tax Audit Representation
- Management Advisory Services
- Mergers
- Estate Planning
- Auditing Bankruptcy

★ **Reasonable Rate** ★

*Credentials:*

Certified Public Accountant  
Master Degree in Business Administration  
Master Degree in Mathematics  
Member Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants  
Member American Institute of Certified Public Accountants  
Consultant and Houstonian Since 1972.



mission of the laity in the church and in society'. In the history of the ecumenical movement the formation of the Church of South India in 1947 through a merger of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches was a landmark. It raised the hope that it could be a model for further unification resulting in one visible united church. The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948. At that time they did not try to define the nature of unity fearing dismemberment. The WCC Assembly in New Delhi (1961) made the first serious attempt to make a common declaration concerning the nature of unity by keeping together the local and universal dimensions of unity. However, New Delhi warns against centralization and uniformity. The Uppsala Assembly (1968) treated the problem of unity under the heading of 'catholicity' and spoke about the possibility of the local unity being expressed in a universal council reminding us of the ecumenical councils of the early centuries. It is growingly becoming clear now that there are many within the World Council fellowship for whom the concept of 'organic union' is unacceptable. Councils are gatherings of churches which are different from one another, but respect these differences. This is what Mar Thoma Church did in the common action taken with the Church of North India and the Church of South India in establishing a Joint Council as a visible expression of their unity. It is the Nairobi Assembly (1975) that brought out more clearly and emphatically the concept of 'conciliar fellowship'. Over-obsession with a limited concept of church unity can blind our vision of wider unity. The unity of the church cannot be looked at in isolation from the unity of mankind. If a particular church is immune to the problems of poverty, the exploitation of the Adivasis, violations of human rights, then, another church which has this as a significant priority on its agenda cannot have any measure of effective unity with the other church. If a church is purely other-worldly and considers that the life in this world is not of much consequence, it will not be easy for other churches convinced about the necessity for deep involvement in the transformation of society to come together whole-heartedly. A church that invariably supports status quo and is afraid to correct oppression and corrupt governments cannot have much in common with churches which are called upon to struggle against such systems. The cementing force of unity is God's love revealed in Jesus Christ and is well stated in John 17. Uppsala Assembly declared that the church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of

the coming unity of mankind. Courage and patience are needed in taking initiatives to strengthen our church's ties particularly with sister churches in Kerala. He warns that those engaged in union efforts will soon experience 'ecumenical' exhaustion, if human ingenuity takes precedence over contrition and obedience to the will of God. The church needs to go down on its knees to seek God's guidance and strength. Often churches find it easy to be 'ecumenical' abroad, but difficult to practice it at home. The first purpose of the World Council of Churches stated in its Constitution is to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one Faith and in one Eucharistic Fellowship expressed in common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe. The Mar Thoma Church is firmly rooted in this faith and hope.

### SOME COMMENTS

This is a storehouse of a wealth of information. I would strongly recommend that the church publish an edition in English so that those who cannot read Malayalam can use the volume profitably. The articles are well presented and invariably relevant. The literary style is excellent. However, it may be hard for the ordinary reader to follow fully. Presentation in a more simple language would have been preferable. The various authors have categorically claimed that the church is continuing the process of reformation and is maintaining the wholesome traditions of the past. There have been only passing references and only very few articles (four or five) mention areas where our church needed to be more faithful. For instance, our Metropolitan acknowledges in his discussion of the evangelistic work that we cannot say that the church is maintaining the vision and standards of early years of its existence. Mrs. George has identified several areas. In a volume like this some attention should have been given to emphasize the prophetic mission of our church in our day and should have specifically identified our weaknesses along with the stated strengths. It is worthy of note that in a volume commemorating a reformation where the priesthood of all believers is a fundamental notion and the laity's role is emphasized, of the nineteen contributors only four are lay people including one woman. In the recent history of the Mar Thoma Church, circumstances that led to the formation of the St. Thomas Evangelical Church are certainly of historical value. No reference has been made to that event. On the whole, the volume is a fine addition to the growing number of our church's publications.

# THE REFORMING OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Dr. T. M. Thomas, New York.

This year, 1986, we observe the 150th anniversary of the reformation in the Mar Thoma Church. Just as people in this country asked the question during the Statue of Liberty centenary celebrations. "Who are we as Americans?" We need to ask the question, "Who are we as Marthomites?" The answer regarding our Mar Thoma identity can be found in the context of reformation. The church gained several distinctive features and acquired a new name over 150 years ago. Today it has secured a very special place among all Christian denominations because of its growth in the spirit of reformation.

## What is reformation?

Reformation is not just an event in one church or the other; rather it is a phenomenon which helped to change the whole cultural life of Kerala during the first half of the 19th century. It refers to a socio-religious awakening that started in the Kerala culture a century and half ago.

The contact with the West, especially after the arrival of Protestant missionaries during the 19th century, brought to Kerala new ideas and attitudes. The idea of equality gained some acceptance in a caste-dominated society. Some people began to participate in the decision-making process effecting their lives irrespective of class or caste barriers. Each person began to assert himself/herself by assuming personal responsibility for events. The British system of education was accepted in the Kerala culture which valued learning and scholarship. Several popular social practices were subjected to rational assessment rather than to authoritarian enforcement. In short, traditional customs and practices were seen in a different perspective from what existed then.

Religious life forms the core of Kerala culture and hence social transformation goes hand in hand with religious reformation. In Hinduism, the most important leaders of social awakening were Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal and Vaikunda Swami in the Ezhava, Nair and Nadar communities respectively. St. Thomas Christians were in the forefront of a new social transformation. It was led by Abraham Malpan. All the leaders named above fought against the social evils of the times by accepting the goals of a liberal democratic culture.

Christians developed a new style of living as a result of the socio-religious awakening indicated above. Open Bible became the guide to discover God's will. Believers assumed responsibility to spread the good news of God's salvation to others around, thus becoming evangelical for the first time in their long history. The worship was made meaningful with the use of the vernacular in the place of syriac. These and other changes from the essential elements of reformation which found its expression among others in the formation of the Mar Thoma Church.

## The distinctiveness of the Mar Thoma Church

The reformation in the Church Kerala resulted in the separate formation of a small church in the St. Thomas tradition. Several distinct qualities of this church are noted below.

The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala belong to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, if all Christian denominations can be divided into three: (1) Catholic; (2) Protestant; (3) Eastern Orthodox. While maintaining its Eastern Orthodox characteristics, the Mar Thoma Church has absorbed many Protestant

practices. The Mar Thoma Church is distinct in that it keeps a balance between these two traditions in one denomination.

The worship of our church strictly adheres to Eastern Orthodox practices and hence the use of colorful vestments, incense and other items for a long service. In the Protestant tradition a sermon is considered important. In our worship, liturgy and preaching have equal emphasis. In short, we find a balance between the altar (worship) and the pulpit (sermons), something not so common in several other denominations.

Commitment to evangelism or missionary work is another distinct feature of our church. The Evangelistic Association provides evangelists to reach the unreached but equally works through institutions such as Ashrams. The Maramon Convention and other such gatherings may be seen as expressions of this evangelical commitment.

Our church provides many services to the community. For example, homes are provided for the homeless the old and the disabled. Equally the leaders of the church stand with the oppressed in dealing with social issues.

Marthomites have their share of educational institutions along with other Christian denominations and the major religions of Kerala. The commitment of religious groups to schools and colleges has contributed to the high level of educational gain in Kerala. As we know, Kerala stands first among all states in India in the matter of literacy and education.

The ecumenical outlook of our church resulted in providing leaders, both clergy and lay, to the World Council of Churches and other such global or regional organizations. The Mar Thoma Church has intercommunion with Church of South India, Church of North India, the Episcopal Church in America, and the Anglican Church of Canada.

Another distinct feature is the democratic organization which encourages all people to participate on an equal basis in the decision-making process. Along with the clergy, the laity has an important role in the management of the church. Among episcopal churches, our church may be placed high for its practice of democratic ideals.

### **Continuing Reformation in America.**

Members of The Mar Thoma Church along with other St. Thomas Christians of Kerala are recent immigrants in North America. Soon after their arrival they formed congregations in the new country to worship and to keep their identity. Parishes are being organized following the pattern in Kerala. The special needs of this country are ignored during this growth and expansion. A reforming church has to come up with new approaches to meet the special needs of a people who are expected to take roots in a new cultural context.

To own places of worship, a policy accepted by all parishes, is a step in the right direction. However, modifications are necessary for the worship so that our young people are attracted to the church. Hence shorter worship in English should find wider acceptance, in our parishes, than it has now.

Many parishes take interest in organizing cottage prayer meetings. Greater participation by all people, including the young, should be our goal. There should be a place for group discussions instead of long sermons that aches and preachers are accustomed to give.

Interest in evangelism is shown by paying for some of the workers appointed by the Evangelistic Association of Kerala. It is good that increasing number of parishes take on this responsibility. However, it remains impersonal. Contact between the parish and the evangelistic work in India is essential. People who financially support the work need to bond with it. At present this personal aspect is ignored.

In the areas of social concerns and social service the Mar Thoma parishes in America are weak. Many American churches have outreach to help the poor and homeless. Also, churches with whom we have close contact, the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian, strongly protest the present arms race. As Marthomites we do not even think of these problems which threaten human survival. The Zonal Assembly may do something in this matter by issuing appropriate statements.

On education, Marthomites in America seem to have an ambivalent attitude. Adults take interest in providing the best education for their children who do extremely well in schools. Sunday school is well-organized in our parishes. Young people meet at parish and national levels for their conferenc-

es. On the other side, adults do not pursue any significant learning activities. Articles published in "Messenger" or other such journals are not read by many adults who are satisfied with the news items of their own parish. A reforming church should give far more importance to the education of its adult members, than it gives now.

In short, reformation has to be continued in the Mar Thoma parishes of North America. Modifications are necessary in various areas of activities, as noted above. The five criteria which can be used in assessing the mission of a church are (1) worship, (2) education, (3) pastoral care, (4) evangelism, (5) service.

(For details, see my article "The Mission of the Mar Thoma Church in America" Mar Thoma Messenger, June 1983).



## OUR SEVIKASANGHOM

Dr. Anna A. Panackal

Philadelphia, Pa.

Our Sevikasangom was formally organized in February, 1919 under the guidance and patronage of the Most Rev. Abraham Marthoma (then our Suffragan Metropolitan) at the Maramon Convention. The head-quarters of the Sanghom was established at Thiruvalla and it had about 50 branches in different parishes. The Most Rev. Titus II Marthoma authorized **Polachirakkal Kochuveetil Mariamma** and **Angilivelil Rahelamm**, the secretaries of the Sanghom, to initiate and organize activities of the Sanghom. It was Rev. V. P. Mammen who developed the first constitution of the Sanghom which was modified later in 1932, 1962, and 1964. With the leadership of dedicated women in our Church such as Mrs. Annamma Zachariah, Mrs. Mariamma Abraham, Mrs. Kandamma Varughese, Miss. T. M. Annamma and Mrs. K. K. Kuruvilla, who served as General Secretaries, the strength and activities of the Sanghom had increased tremendously. The major thrust of the Sanghom at that time (1925-1944) was evangelistic work. Vanithamandiram was started in 1924. The legendary activities of the Travelling Secretary, Mrs. Kandamma Cheriathuruthyl, is still remembered and appreciated by all. The Managing Committee of the Sanghom had instituted an endowment fund in her name after her death in 1964. The leadership of the Australian missionary, Miss Kellaway was a blessing for the development of Vanithamandiram and its activities.

At the next phase of development (1944-1962), the Sanghom entered the field of education. The Sanghom had either started or had taken the management of some schools and improved the education and training provided by them. It had also sent trained women as missionaries to several centers all over India. Presently, the Sanghom has more than 660 separate units under its umbrella. Its motto is Service

and Evangelism. There are about 55 full time workers, serving 15 Mission Fields. Several institutions such as Vanithamandiram, Selem Children's Home, Marthoma Boys Home (Punalur), Vanitha Hostel (Kottarakkara), Balamandiram (Elanthur), Kuwait Home (Retired Worker's Home), M. T. S. S. U. P. School, and Boarding, M. T. Nursery Teachers' Training School, and Asrams at Thiruvalla and Elanthur are managed by the Sanghom.

The main sources of income for the Central Sevikasanghom are: (1) **Deppipiruvu** in aid of orphanages, (2) Marriage fund collection, (3) Sponsor's Contributions, (4) **Saujanyadana piruvu** in aid of **Swadesh** Mission, (5) **Varshika piruvu** for general expenses, (6) **Videsh Mission piruvu** in aid of work outside Kerala, and (7) General donations and specific donations for orphanages. Though the total income for the Sanghom is under one million rupees, the prayers, services, and emotional support provided by all the women in our churches make the Sanghom the richest and most productive organization in our Church. Medical Mission activities, Orphanages, Educational Institutions and Hostels run by the Sanghom are witnesses to the dedication, spiritual life, and leadership of our sisters. **Vanithabodhini** is its publication, begun in 1979 to commemorate the 60th year of the Sanghom. The present office bearers are: (1) President — Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma (2) Vice-President - Mrs. Aley Mathew, (3) General Secretary — Mrs. Rachel Mathew.

Our mothers and grandmothers have maintained Christian fellowship, and social and spiritual strength by their activities within the Sevikasanghom. Their faith in the promises of our Lord and their prayers have helped us to come to this land of opportunities. God has enabled us to establish our-

selves here as a church to practice as well as to transmit our faith and traditions to our children. The fact that we have more than 1,600 Mar Thoma Christian families in North America is a great economic and social strength to Mar Thoma Church. Planned and properly co-ordinated, the use of our collective strength could meet many missional needs of our church here and in India. We have Sevikasanghom units in our parishes and congregations in North America and they are integral parts of our church. There are two regions to which our Sevikasanghoms can devote their attention: (a) Activities in North America; and (2) Activities in India. Although we are making an effort to support the activities of our Church in India through our contributions, hardly anything is done to organize any essential project for our community in this country. It is high time that we devote our attention to disseminate information on the common problems faced by us in this country and to provide proper suggestions for possible solutions.

Our present major concern is proper parenting of our children who are brought up in this culture. Our children are torn between our traditional lifestyle and the liberal values of American culture. Most of the parents in our churches are unable to handle the ever growing problems facing them during the adolescent years of their children. They fail because of the lack of information, the lack of communication, and their impatience. However, the demands on us, the mothers of these children, are increasing and we do not have well organized support activities or services to help us to meet this challenge. Therefore it is imperative that we organize activities which will give parents insights in dealing with the problems which are seemingly impossible to be solved by themselves.

Recognizing the urgency and importance of these problems, the Zonal Assembly constituted a Savikasanghom Committee to plan and coordinate the various activities of the women of our churches in North America. The members are: (1) Rev. T. O. Joseph (Chairman), (2) Mrs. Mary Mathew (Dallas), (3) Mrs. Saramma Joseph (Toronto), (4) Mrs. Mary Mathew (Chicago), (5) Mrs. Bai Varughese (New York), (6) Mrs. Kunjamma Abraham (Houston), and (7) Mrs. Anna A. Panackal (Convenor). The committee met and decided (a) to survey our community and prepare a directory of professionals who can contribute to the needs of our community and provide leadership to our people, (b) to organize meetings, seminars, workshops, discussion groups, and counseling sessions for parents and teenagers with the leadership and assistance of suitable resource persons from the list, (c) to plan and conduct cooking classes for our teenage girls at the local level and edit a cook book for use in North America, and (d) to explore the possibility of starting women's activity centers in the parishes where we own church buildings.

During the past seven decades, our Sevikasanghom has grown and has spread all over the world. Our responsibility and burden also have increased. Our Lord is good to us and He has provided us with many resources which our mothers and grandmothers did not even dream of. We are now forced to act comprehensively to use our resources and to profit from the present environment. Otherwise, we will not only lose the potential growth before us, but also the spiritual heritage that we have acquired. We should establish ourselves as a tribe in this country using all the good traditions and faith we inherited from our forebearers along with the excellent work ethics and personal values of this our adopted society and seek God's will for us. He will fully meet our needs.

\*\*\*\*\*

## FUTURE OF MAR THOMA YOUTH WORK IN NORTH AMERICA

P. G. George, Wycliff College, Toronto, Canada.

(Convenor, Youth Committee of the Zonal Assembly).

Mar Thoma Church has come a long way since the first seed of Gospel was planted in India by Saint Thomas. People of our Church carried their rich heritage far and wide, as they moved to different parts of this "Global Village". The progress of the Mar Thoma Church during the last decade has been phenomenal in North America. The Church has taken root. Now, what are we, the people of God, going to do as a Church? Do we still hear the Lord saying, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today". (Matt. 21:28)

Youth work is an essential part of the church's mission. Many ask whether there is a future for our Mar Thoma youth in North America? I believe there is. I associate the future of the Mar Thoma Church in North America with the future of our youth. Also, I believe that there is no future for the Church or the youth in the Church, if we do not see our ministry and mission to our young people as an immediate need. I would like to pursue three aspects of this proposition.

First, we have to give the full Gospel to our young people. You may ask, are we not already doing this? Let us examine. In our Students' Conferences and Youth Group meetings we talk about the many problems which our young people face today in North American society. The difficulty is that each young person must often make for himself or herself and without any assistance, value judgements in each problem situation. Thus the first and basic thrust of our mission should be that "all young people in our Church should accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and bear witness to His saving power". (Alexander Mar Thoma, *The Mar Thoma Church: Heritage and Mission*, 1985, p. 39). We must help our young people to grow in Christian fellowship and to build a strong character which reflects Christian values and spiritual discipline. This will give them a solid foundation on which to base their decisions in life. We are helping them to help themselves.

Young people have to make many decisions which will have a permanent effect. They might ask, "What am I going to do next?" The

questions may range from choosing a career, a partner, a friend or a life style. Rev. M. S. Varghese posed four helpful questions. At the 1985 Youth Leadership Training Institute In each situation, ask:

1. Is it physically, mentally and spiritually helpful? (1 cor. 6:12)
2. Does it enslave me? Habit (1. cor. 6:12)
3. Will it cause others to stumble? (1. cor. 8:12-13)
4. Does it glorify God? (1. cor. 10:31).

In this way, each problem can be dealt with from a Biblical perspective. Through Christ we seek answers to our problems.

Many young people have made Christian commitments. The church must help and guide them to grow in that commitment with spiritual discipline. This involves "worship, study, witness, and service". A delegate to the 1985 Mar Thoma Youth Leadership Training Institute wrote "I have been made aware of how inadequate my commitment to God has been thus far and how much I have to learn and grow as a child of God". If our Church has life, it will grow, and the sign of its growth will be the deepening of our loving relationship with God, which will be translated into Christian service.

The second aspect of the youth ministry is: Educating our young people. They need to know the importance and significance of our traditions. For the tradition to be transmitted meaningfully by our young people to future generations its meaning must be explained in terms that the young can readily understand. Every church member, whether a parent, Achen, executive committee member, Sunday school teacher or youth leader, has an important part to play in this.

We preserve only what is precious. Do we have something precious to give to our youths. I believe we do. We should be proud of our traditions and confident of their continuing value. Our immediate challenge is to translate our tradition into the North American milieu.

The Eastern Liturgy is one of our richest heritage. We celebrate the Holy Communion with

chanting, long prayers, incense and candles. In order to make the liturgy more understandable and meaningful to our members living in English speaking areas, the Church has translated the liturgy into English, just as the liturgy was translated from Syriac into Malayalam at the time of reformation. The Mar Thoma Church in Malaysia has produced their own Prayer Book. We too, need to have a North American-made liturgy which reflects our North American socio-economic-cultural and political experience.

And thirdly, involve our young people in the regular affairs of church life. There is a tendency in parishes with sizable youth groups for adults to feel threatened. This 'fear' should drive us into a more positive approach to help the young people find their place in the church. Young people could be drafted for assisting in worship, working as Sunday school teachers and serving on the executive committee. The adults should try to earn the respect of the young people.

Youth leadership is a misunderstood and slightly controversial topic in our Church. Some adults think that young people are immature and thus do not know many things, and many parents cannot imagine their children taking leadership roles in the church. It needs young people with Christian commitment. In order to facilitate such a process, the Mar Thoma Church in North America had two Youth Leadership Training Institutes sponsored by the Youth Committee of the Zonal Assembly. The objective was to train committed young people to become youth leaders in the church, not only for youth groups, but also for other varied activities in the church, where they will eventually be needed.

The Leadership Training Program has now become a regular feature of our youth work.

Young people have to be challenged to dedicate themselves for Christian ministry. We cannot endlessly depend on our parent church in India to continue to provide us with effective pastoral leadership. If we wait too long we may encounter what happened to the Mar Thoma Church in Singapore. Singapore's immigration laws prevented new Achens coming from India. Even if this does not happen in Canada and United States, if we and our young people appreciate the need for continued pastoral care and leadership, some of our young people will offer themselves for ordained ministry. It is thus our responsibility to encourage potential leaders to emerge, to give them necessary encouragement, guidance, training, and our sustained prayer support. However, if we fail to allow these potential young leaders to emerge, gain confidence and acceptance, some will not perceive their calling to offer themselves as Christian Leaders (Lay or Clerical) while others who do sense a calling will probably be drawn to serve in other churches where they would be accepted.

Reformation has drastically changed the theology and liturgical practice of the Church to a new understanding of salvation and mission. In North America we now do not need "reformation," but "Renovation," i. e. Renewal, where the ideals of Reformation can be made new and fresh to the worshipping community. We have always been a struggling Church, but we have determination, imagination and above all deep faith in the Lord. Let us face the fact that the future of our Church in North America depends upon our willingness to entrust the leadership of our Church to the hands of committed young men and women, who trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, will spread the Light of the Gospel in North American Society.



## REFORMATION IN THE MAR THOMA CHURCH THEN AND NOW

Anjana Thomas (high school student) 5 Canary Dr., Brantford, Ont.,

Sitting through a Mar Thoma service one day, I looked to see familiar objects and listened to hear familiar chants but realized that I knew very little of the church to which I belonged. How did it begin? Who are its leaders? What makes it different from other churches? and where is it going? A trip to India and to the Maramon Convention further kindled my curiosity, where I was fortunate enough to attend the 150th Anniversary Celebration. It was a great privilege to be a part of such a historical event. It prompted me to go through a few books and I am glad to say I am wiser for it.

Tradition states that the Christian Church in India was founded by St. Thomas the apostle in A. D. 52. (Available records also affirm this fact.). History shows that the ancient church had friendly relations with Persia from the 4th century A. D. The Portugese established power in India in the 16th and 17th centuries and brought with them Roman Catholicism. The Synod of Diamper held in 1599 under Alex De Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, had one aim — to bring the Syrian Christians under Roman authority. All historical documents of the Syrian Church were destroyed. The Syrians were forced to declare their allegiance to Rome by accepting The Roman Catholic doctrines and customs. In 1653 A. D. the Syrian Christians declared their independence with the famous "Oath of the Coonen Cross." What they really wanted was to maintain their ancient faith and traditions. When Archdeacon Thomas was consecrated with the title "Mar Thoma" in 1665 by Mar Gregorius of Jerusalem, the event began the relationship of the Syrian Church with the Antiochene Jacobites. Next the Christian community came into contact with Anglican missionaries who came to India with the British East India Company. These missionaries helped to translate the Bible into Malayalam and thus furthered the education of the people."

As modern education progressed and people started reading the scripture, enlightened individuals felt the need to reform the church. Many of the Roman Catholic doctrines continued and superstitious beliefs and magical practices were practised. Recognizing the need for reform was a small group under the leadership of Palakunnath Abraham Malpan, a scholar and eminent churchman; and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan. Abraham Malpan was known to spend long hours studying scriptures and preaching sermons. He found that the teachings of Christ and the practices of the church were at times in contradiction. Christian truths were overshadowed by church dogma. Some of the reforms proposed by him and his followers were:

1. Invocation of Virgin Mary and intercession of the saints were removed.
2. Adoration of images and prayers for the dead were to be stopped.
3. The use of holy oils in sacraments was to be discontinued.
4. Auricular confession was no longer to be practiced.
5. Absolute clerical celibacy was to be removed.
6. Rejected was also the doctrine of transubstantiation, consubstantiation or localization as unscriptural. Holy Communion was to be viewed as symbolic in living memory of the passion and death of Christ. The reformers believed in the activity of the Holy Spirit in consecrating the elements and that Christ gives himself to the believers who enter into fellowship with Him. Communion was to be administered in both kinds, bread and wine.
7. Ordaining uneducated and immature laity to the Christian ministry was to be discontinued.
8. The authority of the sacred scriptures alone was accepted as a basis in all questions of doctrine.

# **INDTEX FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.**

*Trade - Brokerage & Investment and Importers*

*Also Owners of True Value Stores*

## **OUR NAME MEANS AND SAYS A LOT**

.... For anything you buy you pay a PRICE ....

But do you get the VALUE? .....

**WE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD STORES THAT ASSURE  
THAT YOU GET THE VALUE FOR YOUR PRICE**

— BESIDES —

**WE SELL EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD**

**From Nuts to Bolts**

**TO MEET EVERY NEED OF THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF  
YOUR HOME**



Visit our Neighborhood Stores at:

**LAKE DALLAS - LEWISVILLE - FLOWER MOUND AND ROCKWALL**

And don't forget

We assure the VALUE of everything you buy from us

**WE ARE YOUR TRUE VALUE STORES.**

**INDTEX 200 LEWISVILLE CENTER, LEWISVILLE, TEXAS 75067**

The reformers were not discouraged with the strong opposition in the church for any change. They incorporated the proposed theological changes to revise the liturgy. Abraham Malpan used it himself in his parish at Maramon, explaining to his congregation the need for the changes. The service was wholeheartedly accepted. As well, images of saints were destroyed and annual festivals in their honour were abolished. By 1836 the reformers started conducting church services in Malayalam, their native tongue. When the Metran saw that the reform movement was moving ahead, he excommunicated its leader, Abraham Malpan and his congregation at Maramon. As a result, the reformers encountered many reactionary prejudices. It became obvious that no reform was possible as long as Chepat Mar Dionysius continued as Metran.

In 1836 a petition was presented to Col. Fraser, the British resident, asking that Mar Dionysius be removed from office. It proved to be an explosive event and the year 1836 is celebrated as the year which officially ushered in the reform.

Deacon Mathew, Abraham Malpan's nephew, was chosen by the reformers to replace Mar Dionysius as Metran. In 1843, he was enthroned with the title Mathews Mar Athanasius. Metran Mar Dionysius continued in office without recognizing the authority of Mathews Mar Athanasius. The struggle continued.

The government appointed a committee to examine the respective claims of the two parties and to decide who was the rightful claimant. On its recommendation, it was Mathews Mar Athanasius who was confirmed in 1852 by royal proclamation as the Metropolitan.

Succeeding Mar Athanasius was Thomas Mar Athanasius, son of Abraham Malpan. During his rule, the conflict in the church came to a climax. In 1889, the court ruled that the metropolitan had no right to possess the individual churches and their properties. The result was a split in the Church. The opposition

party under Pulikot Mar Dionysius called themselves Jacobites (followers of Jacob Bardaeus) and the reformers stuck to the original name of Mar Thoma Church.

The material loss incurred by the reformers was great — they had to start again from scratch. Organizing themselves under their Metropolitan, they undertook the task of building new churches, schools and a seminary at Kottayam in place of the old seminary which was lost. Under Titus I Mar Thoma, the next Metropolitan, the present activities of the church had their beginning. The Mar Thoma Seminary at Kottayam and S. C. Seminary at Tiruvalla were built; the Sunday School Samajam was formed; Malankara Sabha Tharaka began its publication; missionaries were sent to Karwar in North Canara and a number of churches were built and organized. Under Titus II, the movement begun by Abraham Malpan came to maturity.

Abraham Mar Thoma succeeded him. A great orator, he took intensive preaching tours visiting and strengthening the churches. He helped form organizations such as The Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, Voluntary Evangelistic Association, Sevika Sangham, Fellowship meetings, Summer Classes, Ashrams Hospitals, National Missionary Society and others. He was the guiding spirit of the Maramon Convention.

The stewardship of Dr. Juhanon Mar Thomma, his Successor, aided in the social awakening of and awareness by the church. He served as one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches. Our present Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma places equal emphasis on missionary zeal and social responsibility. Thus the church progresses with the spirit of the reformation.

Abraham Malpan and hundreds of others laboured to restore the church to its original purity. There remains much more labour to continue the work that the reformers have started.

Reformation is a continuing process. As the late Thomas Mar Athanasius,

Suffragan Metropolitan used to say "Mar Thoma Church is not a reformed church, but a reforming church; constantly reforming.,\*" When we see ways in which to better the church, or strengthen it, we must not hesitate to act. There was a time when European and North American missionaries came to India to preach the Good News. Now it seems that the situation has reversed. We as the Mar Thoma Church in North America have the responsibility of spreading the Gospel here, especially now when the Christian faith is dwindling and material wealth is increasing in North America. The need for spiritual renewal is all too apparent. Also we must keep in mind that the Mar Thoma Church is no longer a church just for Kerala. Here in the next generations, the congregation will be mainly English speaking. Just as Abraham Malpan changed the liturgy from

Syriac to Malayalam, eventually it must be changed into English if it is to be meaningful to the people. It is also imperative that the younger members of the church be instructed in the various responsibilities of running it if the church is to remain alive and strong. As well, we should take an active interest in church activities whether it be Sunday School, Youth Group, Church Picnic, or in making a contribution to the building of a new church. Most important, we cannot forget why we are a church. It is to be with a community that shares a common faith in Jesus Christ. In this light, conflicts in personality and in ideas can be resolved peacefully. A continual examination and re-examination of the ideals and theology than it would have otherwise of our church will ensure that it grows more and more true to the Gospel.



# THE REFORMATION OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

Leeza Mathew Ontario, Canada.

(Editorial Note:— This article was submitted in response to a call for essays in commemoration of the Sesquicentennial. The author is a fourth year university student.)

The Reformation of the Mar Thoma Church can be seen as a religious revolution in the history of the Church. It was a change for the better, and of moral improvement of the people. The Reformation was brought into effect in order to bring the members of the Church closer to God. As more people began to learn about God's word the need for reformation became quite evident. "*The Trumpet Call of Reformation*" was initiated by Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan from Maramon.

The object of the Christian Church is to witness and spread God's word and love to all people. However, until the Reformation, the Church in Malabar (Kerala) did not do this. Prior to Reformation, the "*Church was satisfied with the observances of certain rites and ceremonies*", and it was also influenced to a great extent by beliefs and practices of the community outside the Church. The people prayed to Saints, prayed for the dead, and celebrated different types of festivals that were similar to non-christian practices. It was generally thought that if these practices were followed, evil would not enter into ones life and that God would generously reward good behaviour. However, this is not what the Bible teaches and the people were oblivious to this fact.

Abraham Malpan was professor in the Old Seminary in Kottayam. He was a member of the Palakunnath family whose origins can be found in the Pakalomattom family. This family was one of the original four ordained by St. Thomas to govern the Churches on the Malabar Coast. Abraham Malpan's understanding of God's word was aided by his own studies of the Bible and the Syriac language, and also through the help of the Church Missionary Society. Through his knowledge and understanding, he realized the need for the Church to reform its objectives. He thus set out on his mission of reformation, to re-establish the faith in God that had been present in the first Church.

Abraham Malpan's first step was to suggest certain changes that he thought were necessary. He organized a group of twelve priests under his leadership to help him in this task. They prepared "a memorandum consisting of 24 theses . . . which clearly stated the ecclesial irregularities committed

by the Metropolitan Chepat Mar Dionysius . . . . . and also the wrong religious practices carried on in the Church". Unfortunately, the presiding Metropolitan of the Church strongly opposed reformation. Therefore, the group was unable to take this draft to him for approval. So they took it to Col. Fraser who was at that time the British Resident in charge of the state. This action is what is commonly referred to as The Trumpet Call of Reformation. It was the initial step. However, Col. Fraser did nothing about the draft.

This setback did not deter nor discourage the group. The members decided to affect the changes themselves. They considered it as a call from God to carry out and complete His work. Abraham Malpan started this task in his own parish in Maramon due to opposition from the Metropolitan to start anywhere else. "*He recited the prayers etc. in Malayalam and also deleted from it the prayers for the dead and the invocation of saints. He celebrated the Holy Quarbana in his church using the revised liturgy on a Sunday.*" By conducting Malayalam services, the parishioners were better able to understand and appreciate what was being said. Changes in the Liturgy were necessary to prevent ambiguity and superstitious beliefs. Overall, the changes were kept to a minimum. The oriental form of the service was continued and retained since it was familiar to the people. This was quite effective when it came to obtaining the interest of the people.

Abraham Malpan was able to effect these changes in his parish due to the strong support of all the members of the Maramon Church. "The members of the Maramon Church had great respect and admiration towards Abraham Malpan (and they felt that) Malpan (would) not deceive (them)." They faced intense opposition from the other parishes and even the Bishops. However, their faith in Abraham Malpan, and most importantly in God, was strong enough to help them overcome these difficulties. Eventually other parishes joined them in their services. Thus the Mar Thoma Syrian Church emerged. All others who opposed the changes remained loyal to the Jacobite Church.

The first Bishop (Metropolitan) of the new reformed Church was Abraham Malpan's nephew, Deacon Mathew. The Patriarch of Antioch in Mardin, Syria ordained him and gave him the name Mathews Mar Athanasius in the year 1842. However, it was not until 1852 that Mathews Mar Athanasius was declared as the Bishop of the Malankara Church. This delay was due to opposition from Chepat Mar Dionysius who was strongly against the act of reformation. In 1845 Abraham Malpan died disappointed that the Reformation was not being accepted as quickly as he had hoped. By his early death he was unable to see the results of his actions.

The Reformation left a lasting mark on the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. This initiated the spreading of the gospel to all nations regardless of caste level or religious denomination. The Church became filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The doctrines of the Mar Thoma Church became recognizable due to the different services that were a part of the whole Church. Abraham Malpan initiated special services for different events such

as Marriage, Holy Communion, Baptism, and Prayers for the families of the dead to name a few. Prayer meetings, a Malayalam Bible, the Womens Fellowship Group (Sevika Sanghom), Youth meetings, and Ashrams for the poor and needy are just some of the later results that came out of the Reformation. The Church began to grow spiritually due to a better understanding of God's word.

The Reformation was started "with the grace of God". Abraham Malpan knew that through prayer things could be changed and so he put his faith in God to bring about the changes. Through his faith the faith of the Syrian Church in God was strengthened. Morally, progress had been made among the people. Many of the changes initiated by Abraham Malpan are still being used today. As for the future Church, let us leave it in the hands of God since He will never steer us in the wrong direction. All that He asks is that our faith in Him be just as strong as exemplified through the faith of Abraham Malpan.



## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

*Shaju Joseph, New York*

The second youth leadership training institute was held in Dallas from the evening of the 10th of October till the afternoon of the 12th. It was fairly well attended for a leadership training institute. There were 16 'trainees and 9 'leaders' including 2 resident achen. It was held in a beautiful, isolated site, Prairie Valley, nearly 60 miles from downtown Dallas. For some of us, getting there was an ordeal. As it is to be expected, any beautiful isolated place is usually not easy to get to and it is quite easy to get lost, especially around 1:00 A.M. So, some of us got an unscheduled visit of the area, but we eventually did find the others.

This set the stage for a fairly good day of activities (the night went by ever so quickly). Over the whole day and evening, different people spoke out on the importance of accepting and living with Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Talks were on the nature of our calling, how it was actually ordained, on the nature of society's influence on our church, on the nature of sin and how to try and live without it. Later talks focussed on the aspect of Jesus being our personal saviour and the importance of Bible study and prayer. A study was conducted on the life of Paul, his nature and his mission and how he had changed to become a better tool in God's ministry. If anyone thinks it is all fun and games at these youth group sessions, let me assure you that the day's events were not exactly trivial in nature and demanded a great deal of concentration and commitment that everyone showed. During this day, a talk was also given on the practical aspects of our ministry. Here we shared our problems and our successes as youths in our individual parishes. In the evening we had a session where many of us shared with each other, their personal shortcomings, frustrations and later on their commitment for God's ministry. Here we had a really great moment where many of us reached out for each other and on the whole gave the moment that

very special touch and feeling. Yes, God was definitely with us!! Afterwards the matters of the long drive back to Dallas for the church service (which was proudly declared to possibly be the only Mar Thoma service in the North America region, that starts on time!!) loomed up ahead and we managed to catch a few moments of rest. For most of us, we expected Dallas to be climatically a warm place and we were not exactly ready for the cold, damp weather we experienced. So, very cold and weary we slept and woke up early morning (this night's sleep was practically non-existent) and set off for Dallas. Remember my quip about the only thing not so great about nice, beautiful isolated places was getting there. Well let me add, its not easy getting away from such places either. One carload of people got to see the highways and byways of Texas and made it just before the church service finished.

That was a short overview on the happenings at the training institute. The emphasis of this leadership training institute was on one's personal growth in Christ. Bible study, prayer groups, effective means of discerning sin and staying from the devil etc. were indicated and advocated. This is definitely the way we can begin to be Christians. But is this all we have to do? Where do we go from here, if at all anywhere?

Christian leadership is quite different from what the secular world defines leadership to be. Christian leadership actually equates with service. Often we as Mar Thoma Christians living in fairly well-to-do conditions and situations in the North American continent forget the meaning of being a Christian. Does being a Christian mean just going to church every Sunday, attending religiously every prayer meeting and Bible study groups, giving long and verbose prayers when given a chance? Christianity is not something that can be turned on and off for just one day in the week. Jesus in his

human life always lived with the constant service attitude. He reached out to the poor and lowly, the oppressed and the disliked, and he ate with them, had them as his friends, and slept in their homes. His life, he found out, could not be turned off and on between love and concern for the unfortunates, and a lack of concern or disinterest. So, in many ways, he showed us what it really means to be God's child. If we truly love God then we have to love our neighbor and this love automatically translates to service and action. We are thus not only known by our reactions to situations of injustice, hatred, racism, sexism, homophobia etc. but also by our actions. Thus we strengthen our faith and we put into practice what we preach. But for that we have to consciously start working. It would mean more than Bible study, prayer meetings and church services.

This kind of Christian life thus demands not only those ideas but also the deeds that complement those ideas. That would mean, that we, as human beings, as Mar Thoma Christians have to reach out and help those in need. Rather than just sit and eat our sumptuous Thanksgiving turkey dinner we have to consider those without any food and work towards help-

ing those who are hungry for food or love and companionship. It would mean that when we fret in front of our packed closets as to what we have to wear we have realize that there are many in this world without two changes of clothes and this should move us to work in service for them. Maybe our Church needs to find new avenues of growth so that our Church just doesn't remain our small, restricted Church but rather it grows with the life Christ intended, to be an open, warm, loving, concerned and acting Church. All of this is tied up in becoming a Christian leader, because here our service, our love, our open minded approach to all in God's name, shows our true leadership. It is ironic that 150 years ago, our Church broke away believing in ideals of putting service and prayer into practice as evangelism, and that now we are reverting back to a very similar church that our ancestors wanted to change. Maybe the best commemoration we could make for this 150th anniversary is by picking up those same ideals and making our parishes grow. And then we can never fail, for isn't God with those who can see Jesus Christ in everyone, specially the downtrodden?





## MAR THOMA STUDENTS CONFERENCE – 1986

(Sunitha Cherian, Canton High School, Canton, Illinois)



The Marthoma Students Conference of 1986 was a very enlightening experience. The Conference was held at Concordia College in River Forest, Illinois from July 31 – August 3. This is the second Conference that I have been to, the first one being in Toronto, Canada in 1983. The whole Marthoma Conference was very well organized and because of that, more activities could be planned. The conference was a good Christian learning experience for everyone.

The Marthoma Family Conference was held at the same time as the Marthoma Students Conference. “*You are the Temple of God*” was the theme for this year. The discussion groups at the Conference were the best. The questions that were brought up were taken from talks by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa and the rest of the ministers. Many of the discussions were based upon the question, “How do you glorify God in yourself?”

There were many interesting answers to that particular question. Some of the most common answers were: Keeping the body that God gave to you in good shape and not abusing it, Using the talents that God gave to you to the fullest, and Glorifying God through your career. Another good part about the conference was that there were so many new people to meet. The organizers of the conference encouraged everyone to go out and meet people and not just to stay in little groups. Still another good thing about the conference was that everyone was willing to participate in the learning of the Word of God and because everyone was willing, it helped the students as a whole to relate to what they were learning.

Both the Marthoma Family and Student Conferences were successful and because each conference gets better and better every year, I can't wait to attend the next one!





**AIR-INDIA**

**SKYLINE TRAVEL**  
**AUTHORIZED / BONDED**  
**TRAVEL AGENT IN DALLAS**

**CHECK OUR NEW LOW FARES TO**  
**INDIA, PAKISTAN, AND SRI LANKA**



**एअर इंडिया**  
**AIR-INDIA**



**اخطوط الكويتية**  
**KUWAIT AIRWAYS**

 **PAN AM**

**U.S. 1-800-544-ASIA**



**(214) 320-1401**

**ARC**

**8035 E. R.L. THORNTON FWY. #101 DALLAS, TX 75228**

## THE 1986 NORTH EASTERN REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

The 1986 Regional Youth Conference was held in Philadelphia on Saturday, September 27, 1986 at St. Dunstan's Church, Bluebell, Pa. from 8.30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. About 190 participated. Youths came from St. Andrew's Church, NY; St. Thomas Church, NY; Baltimore, Md; Washington, D.C.; and Philadelphia, Pa. Mr. Cecil Mathews and Mr. Sajeev Cherian led the youth in singing. A worship service was conducted by the Rev. George Varghese accompanied by representatives from each youth league. The Rev. A. G. Mathew welcomed the gathering.

The theme of the conference was "Christian Witnessing". The Rev. K. C. Abraham spoke on "Challenges of Witnessing in a Pluralistic Society". Dr. Abraham dealt with the fast pace of advancement in the society around us and the struggle to maintain one's identity while living amidst various nationalities, religions and languages. He said that pluralism was not only a source of conflict and tensions, but that it could also be a source of enrichment and advancement. He stressed that there was a need to gain insights on witnessing in the U.S.A. as Marthomites because of an ongoing conflict within us between the traditional culture of the Marthomites and the technological society of America. To solve the problem, he suggested that we need a bilateral approach accepting the good from our tradition, as well as those of the American society. He concluded the talk showing Jesus approach as an example. "Jesus faced the pressures of the Jewish tradition in His society. Jesus never accepted tradition literally", he said. So preserving values such as justice, love and

peace, Rev. Abraham urged the youths to critically analyze the present society and our traditions and accept that which was useful.

In his message entitled, "Mar Thoma Church, Its Reformation and Its Ecumenical Movements", Dr. M. M. Thomas explained ecumenism as witnessing to the universality of Christ. (See the full text of his speech elsewhere in this issue).

The Rev. Dr. P. J. Philip (Coordinator of the youth activities in the North Eastern Region) served as the Moderator of the Conference. Group discussions brought forth many challenging questions and the speakers answered those during the afternoon session. Dr. T. M. Thomas gave the concluding comments which were inspiring. He called upon the youths to make an honest commitment to Christ and witness His greatness in their lives. Many youngsters went up to witness as to how Jesus Christ and His teachings had influenced their lives.

In the Business Meeting that followed, secretaries of the various youth leagues presented brief reports of their activities. The next meeting would be hosted by the Staten Island Youth League, New York in the month of July, 1987. Dr. Mathew T. Thomas, Vice President of the Philadelphia Mar Thoma Youth League proposed the vote of thanks. The conference was a blessing to all who attended.

Chacko Abraham, Secretary  
Yuvajana Sakhyam  
Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE MAR THOMA STUDENTS CONFERENCE 1986.

Concordia College, Oak Forest, Chicago, Illinois.

Suku John Silver Spring, Maryland.



As I stepped off the aircraft, at Chicago's O'Hare, I suddenly became nostalgic. My thoughts went back to 1981 — the last time the Students Conference was held here at the Concordia College campus, Oak Forest, Illinois.

I had arrived from India in January 1981 just a few months earlier and I was still unsure about myself and the society I was in. I was invited to the conference and I, like many others, went to have a good time!

That was '81 and since then, I went to Philadelphia and Texas and, probably like many others, came away with very little spiritual commitment.

I remember breaking curfew, and being chased by a group of adults all over the campus. Like many others, it was done in the spirit of the weekend — just for fun.

Now, five years later, back in Chicago, the atmosphere was different. Somehow, there was a certain spiritual awareness on the part of most participants or may be, all of us just plain grew up.

May be, it had something to do with the Rt. Rev. Zachariahs Mar Theophilus being at the conference. Thirumeni has always had a reputation of being able to get along with the younger generation. He was always able to disarm a potentially explosive question with a smile and a detailed explanation of why a certain of why a certain thing should be done or not done. The best part, I guess, was the fact that he actually took the time to listen and did not consider our questions as a nuisance or tolerate them as has been done in the past.

On a scale of 1 to 10, I have to say that the 1986 Students Conference, rated an 11. Things worked like clockwork. Schedules were kept!! And above all enough importance was given to the fact that this was a Students's Conference.

May be, another reason for the success of

the conference was the lack of the usual "debate" between the parents and children. (They have always ended almost in a shouting match). Thirumeni took the time to talk, answer and advise both groups. This move did avert the usual boring debates. I don't think this should be eliminated from future conferences entirely. I have always maintained that there was a strong need in our community to communicate. Far too many lives are lost through the lack of communication. I have always stated at the conferences and I will state it again; it is essential to the future of the Mar Thoma Congregation in North America, for the church, parents and children, to communicate to one another.

While most parents go through a tumultuous period of adjustment on their arrival in this country — the process of adjustment is almost continuous for their children.

During the first few years of my life here in this country I believed I had developed a split personality — not just kidding — it was close the truth. I had one foot at home, where the environment was totally Indian and the other foot was at college, where the environment was entirely American. I was constantly going from one extreme to another and it was driving me crazy.

I do believe that more programs or events at the conferences should be geared towards helping the youngsters in our community make this transition or adjustment. Considering that we live in a society where success is measured through hardwork, determination, clear thinking and the ability to live in the fast lane, I believe that more effort must be made to understand our children, if we are not to lose them entirely to the forces around them. Efforts must be made to make them aware of the Indian culture — both the advantages and disadvantages. This gives them an opportunity to compare and understand both cultures.

## MAR THOMA STUDENTS | FAMILY CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA 1986

The Mar Thoma Students|Family Conference of North America has become a forum of fellowship for the Mar Thoma immigrants where they can express their thoughts and find answers to the special problems related to life in this society. This year's conference was held at the beautiful campus of the Concordia College in River Forest, Illinois, from July 31 through August 3, 1986. His Lordship the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa was the main leader.

The Conference theme was "You are the Temple of God". In a world of constant change in value systems and permissiveness, how can we keep ourselves pure and worthy of our call? This challenging question was discussed in depth during the conference. Besides Thirumeni, Mr. K. J. Joseph of Asia Evangelistic Fellowship of India, Ms. Mary Lou C. Wilson of the World Evangelistic Fellowship, Prof. P. A. John, our Achens and some of our lay people gave leadership at the conference.

The Students Conference was attended by over 175 students from all across the U.S.A. and Canada. The family Conference had 140 registered participants and a few others commuting. The conference started with a Joint Inaugural Session on July 31 presided over by Theophilus Thirumeni. About 750 people attended this session. During a brief worship service which was quite solemn and moving Thirumeni gave the message. After the service several people including Mr. P. G. George and Dr. George Zachariah, a student and a teacher respectively of our "Kochu Thirumeni," felicitated him on his consecration as an Episcopa of the Mar Thoma Church. It should be noted that this was his first visit to the United States and Canada after becoming an Episcopa. Then the delegates to the conference were introduced.

The main talks on the theme of the conference were given by Theophilus Thirumeni for the students conference and by Mr. K. J. Joseph for the family conference. Ms. Mary Lou C. Wilson conducted a workshop for the students. Thirumeni's great talent in dealing with the youths was evident throughout the conference. His Lordship was able to leave lasting impressions on the youths who attended the conference. Be-

sides the main talks and workshops, there were many other activities including the Talent Night and Choir Competition. Students and families were divided into several groups for discussion and family prayer. The morning and evening family prayer added a new spiritual dimension to this year's conference. The Bible studies were conducted by Rev. K. G. Pothen and Rev. M. S. Varghese for students and family conference respectively. The testimony sessions held separately for the two conferences on Saturday night were of immense value to all who attended. Many used the occasion for dedicating and re-dedicating their lives to Jesus Christ.

The conference concluded on Sunday, August 3, with a Holy Communion Service and a public meeting commemorating the Sesquicentennial of the reformation in the Malankara Church. The Holy Communion service was in English conducted by Theophilus Thirumeni and the sermon was given by Bishop M. C. Mani of the Church of South India. This final session was attended by over one thousand people and was one of the largest gatherings of Mar Thomites in North America. During the public meeting which was presided over by Theophilus Thirumeni several spoke including Bishop Mani, Hon. N. P. Nazaretgh, Consul General of India and Dr. T. M. Thomas. Ms. Geetha George and Mr. P. P. Mathews gave an evaluation of the students and family conferences respectively.

All in all this conference was a great success. Its role in building closer relationship among Mar Thomites in North America is far reaching. The key to the success of both the students and family conferences was the Grace of our Lord. Many people worked hard. Many upheld this conference in their daily prayers. From the bottom of our hearts we **THANK YOU ALL!** We pray for and look forward to the 1987 conference in Los Angeles. We should congratulate the host committee headed by the Rev. Cherian Thomas whose planning and efforts helped in making this conference a gratifying one for all concerned.

T. A. Abraham  
Senior Vice President  
Students Conference, 1986.

## THREE BOOKS ON THE MAR THOMA CHURCH:

### A Brief Review

1. *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church* by The Most Rev. Juhanon Mar Thoma, the Late Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. (Madras: New India Printers, 1954 pp. 79). The book surveys briefly the St. Thomas tradition, the church in Malabar and the Persian connection, the church under the Roman Catholic hegemony, the Coonen Cross incident and the coming of the Jacobites, the C.M.S. mission of help and subsequent reformation in the church. The last two chapters deal with the question of what the Mar Thoma Church stands for and a look to the future.

2. *The Mar Thoma Church Heritage and Mission* by Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. (Houston, Texas: T & T Copy & Printing, 1985 pp. 96). The first four chapters deal with the story of the church upto the 15th century, the Roman Catholic connection, the mission of help from C.M.S. and the reformation in the Malankara church. Chapters 5 & 6 discuss the various organizations of the church, namely, Evangelistic Association Sunday School Samajam, Voluntary Evangelistic Association, Sevika Sangham, Yuvajana Sakhyam, Students' Conference, and Department of Sacred Music. The author who is well known for his commitment to the evangelistic mission of the church, has devoted an entire chapter on the missionary outreach of the church. Chapter 7 is a summary of the contributions of the bishops in the 20th century and mention is also made of some outstanding priests in our church including the Vicars General. It includes also a brief statement on the church workers and their theological training. Chapter 8 discusses the role our church

plays in the service of the community through educational work, medical mission, and charitable organizations and institutions and through a department of development. The next chapter reviews our ecumenical relationships. Chapter 10 is devoted to a discussion of the chief values upheld by our church. The closing chapter is entitled challenge of the future. The author identifies some areas which need our individual attention as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. *The Faith and Practice of the Mar Thoma Church* by Rev. Dr. K. V. Mathew (Kottayam: Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, 1985 pp. 99). This book was especially prepared for the Sesquicentennial celebration of the Reformation in the Malankara Church. It contains a brief historical introduction followed by section on faith and practice, the sacraments viz., baptism, Holy Qurbana, marriage, priesthood, anointing the sick and Christian burial. The book closes with an elaboration and interpretation of the Nicene Creed. This is an invaluable introduction to many of the practices of our church.

We strongly recommend to every member of the Mar Thoma Syrian church to hold these three books in their personal library and study them. All of them are small books and written in simple and easy to read language. The three complement each other and surprisingly are not much overlapping. All of them were written apparently for the English-speaking people — in our church especially our youth who cannot read Malayalam.

G. K. Z.

### THE LATE MATHAI VARKEY

We mourn the death of (Mr.) Mathai Varkey of the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York who died on May 27, 1987 from injuries he suffered from a head on collision. He is survived by his wife Omana and sons Bijo, Sajo and Tojo.

This death is of special grief to this writer who knew this young man as a neighbour at Kavungumprayar, Kerala. When this writer left Kerala in 1953, Mathai Varkey (Kunjumon) was still a youngster of ten. He had done extremely well for himself and has been a great help to his brother and sisters. Our paths crossed again in New York where he established himself as an active member of the Mar Thoma Church as well as the Kerala Christian community.

The MESSENGER expresses its deepest sorrow to Kunjumon's wife, sons, his brother and sisters. Death itself is very grievous to those of us who live but the death of such a remarkable young man as Kunjumon is even more grievous. We seek comfort in knowing that we will see each other again.

George Poikail

### THE LATE ANNAMMA ABRAHAM

Born August 10, 1935  
Called 'Home' April 28, 1987

We sincerely mourn the death of (Mrs.) Annamma Abraham of the Los Angeles parish on April 28, 1987. Annamma was from Ayroor, Kerala. The funeral service was held on May 1, 1987 by the Rev. K. G. Pothen and she was interred at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Cypress, California.

When this writer visited with the Abraham family in November 1986 Annamma appeared to be in perfect health. She was regularly working till March 28, 1987. In one month her health rapidly deteriorated and she passed away. Till the end she maintained cheerfulness, faith and hope.

We mourn the loss of this dear friend and extend our prayers and condolences to her family. husband Abraham Philipose and sons Felix and Saji.

George Poikail





## **FAR PAVILIONS TRAVEL & TOURS, INC.**

Created to cater to all your domestic and international travel needs

Our unique difference is in our commitment to service and satisfaction

We are proud of being part of the Indian community

—and—

We are different than others

**WE REPRESENT ALL AIRLINES, CRUISE LINES, AND HOTELS**

So—For all your travel needs—call our vacation or tour desk

**MRS. SARAH MATHEW AT (301)494-8200, 01, 02, 03  
OR NATIONWIDE TOLL-FREE (1)(800)592-9992**

**FAR PAVILIONS TRAVEL & TOURS, INC.**  
2360 West Joppa Road, Suite 317—Joppa Concourse, Lutherville, MD 21093

*ADDITIONAL SERVICE: Free Automatic Flight Insurance—\$250,000.00 For Every Air Ticket You Purchase.*

International  
Airlines  
Travel  
Agent  
Network



**ARC**



## ANISHA ABRAHAM — A 1986 Presidential Scholar



Anisha (extreme left) with Mr. A. N. Ram, Deputy Chief of the Indian Embassy and the rest of her family at a reception held at the Indian Embassy. — Photo taken by Mr. Rajan Devadas.

Anisha Abraham, daughter of O. C. & Nirmala Abraham of Hockessin, Delaware was chosen as one of the Presidential Scholars of 1986. The Presidential Scholars Program was initiated in 1964 honoring the nation's top high school seniors. This is the highest honor the nation bestows on its high school students. A total of 121 scholars were chosen on the basis of academic achievement. The scholars include a young man and a young woman from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U. S. families living abroad. Fifteen other student scholars were selected at large. In addition, 20 were selected for achievement in the arts, including dance, music, theater, visual arts, and creative writing. Thus a total 141 scholars were named by a White House Commission of 50 private citizens appointed by the Presidential Scholars Medallion. As part of her recognition, she spent a busy week in Washington with the other scholars for a series of educational, cultural and social activities. It included a reception at the White House given by the President, a reception at the Indian Embassy for her and four other scholars who are children of Indian parents, and a series of symposia with notables like Secretary Casper Weinberg, Secretary William Bennett, Dr. William DeVries, and Dr. James

Watson. Equally memorable were meetings with Senators and Congressmen and celebrities such as in the sports and movies. Each scholar identifies one teacher as most influential in his/her accomplishments. These teachers also accompany the scholars to Washington and are presented with Certificate of Excellence Families are also invited to the White House Awards Ceremony.

Anisha's extra-curricular activities are extensive and as accomplished there as in the academic area. She has been President of a Junior Achievement Company, Vice President of Explorer's post, Layout Editor of an Yearbook, Business Manager of a newspaper, a member of the cheerleading, volley ball, and lacrosse teams at Town Hill School. She is also an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer. For her paintings and poetry she has won several medals in Shankar's International Arts Contest. Anisha is currently enrolled in a six-year accelerated medical program at Boston University.

Anisha is a member of our Mar Thoma Parish in Philadelphia and is an active member of the Youth League and has taught Sunday School.

Our hearty congratulations to Anisha and the rest of the family.

G. K. Z.

## **Trinity Mar Thoma Church Dedicates new Sunday School Building**

Trinity Mar Thoma Parish in Houston continues its steady growth through another milestone in its collective life — the dedication, on the 11th of July by His Grace the Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma, of its new Sunday School building.

This new building which costs \$225,000 is a magnificent addition to the sanctuary. It is attached to the main sanctuary. It meets a very urgent need of this expanding parish. The building can accommodate not only the classes of the Sunday School but it can also serve as a hall for public gatherings, or receptions. It has a built-in stage which makes it appropriate for legitimate drama or other shows.

The sanctuary and Sunday School now make the physical plant worth at least a million dollars and this sitting on a five acre lot with plenty of possibilities for expansion and growth.

What is remarkable is that all of this is paid for and at a time when the employment picture in Houston is somewhat dim.

The MESSENGER congratulates the Houston Trinity Mar Thoma parish in general and its vicar the Rev. P. M. George in particular, for this remarkable achievement. Perhaps it could serve to encourage other parishes to believe that sacrificial giving and participation can make a great deal happen for their respective parishes.

**George Poikail**



**A. K. REALTY, INC.**



REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS,  
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT,  
APPRAISALS, LONG RANGE MANAGEMENT-  
PLANS FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

**M. ABRAHAM KOSHY, CPM., MSA.**  
PRESIDENT

7227 FANNIN ST., SUITE 201  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77030  
(713) 797-6722

## DEDICATION OF THE CHICAGO MAR THOMA CHURCH BUILDING.



The long cherished desire of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church to have a permanent place of worship materialized on November 8, 1986 with the dedication of the newly built church building at 240 Potter Road, Des Plaines, Illinois. The dedication ceremony was conducted by the Rt. Rev. Easo Mar Thimotheus Episcopa assisted by the Episcopal Bishop of Chicago, the Rt. Rev. James Montgomery. His Grace Dr. Thomas Mar Makariose, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, a number of clergy from different churches and many dignitaries attended the function. The Zonal Assembly of the Mar Thoma Church in North America was represented by its Chairman Rev. P. M. George and the Treasurer Dr. John P. Lincoln.

A public meeting was held following the dedication. This meeting was attended by a record crowd and the guests included the Mayor of the city of Des Plaines, Senators and Public officials. A souvenir was also released commemorating the occasion. Light refreshments were served for all.

The church building project began with a decision of the congregation on April 17, 1983 to acquire a place of worship. Approximately one acre of land was purchased on January 10, 1985 for \$70,000. The site is located conveniently at near the Northwest suburb of Chicago. On July 14, 1985, the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan laid the foundation stone for the church building. The actual construction work started on March 31,

1986. Mr. Walter Carlson served as the architect and Mr. Vernon Miller as the construction Manager. The leadership provided by Rev. Cherian Thomas will always be remembered. Later Rev. Moni Mathew assumed the responsibility and accepted the challenge.

The main sanctuary and the balcony together can accommodate about 450 people. The building has a full basement with kitchen facilities. The basement is mainly for Sunday school classes. The present parking lot has provision for about 70 cars. When completely finished and furnished, this project is estimated to cost about 700,000 dollars including the price of the land. The whole project was made possible through the prayerful cooperation and sacrificial financial support of many of our members and friends in North America. We express our sincere thanks to all of them.

This newly built church again manifests the greatness of God and His unmerited favor towards His children. Despite all the setbacks and unforeseen difficulties during the different phases of construction, the unseen hand of God has helped us at every step. We rededicate ourselves to the One who has helped us so far: Ebenezer. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

(1 Samuel 7:17)

P. C. Philip, Convener  
Church Building Committee &  
Zonal Assembly Representative  
Chicago Mar Thoma Church

**BEST COMPLIMENTS**

**FROM**

**AVM PRINTERS**  
**1603 Hancock**  
**Mesquite, Texas 75149**  
**(214) 289-8605**

## IF I HAD ANOTHER DAUGHTER . . . .



Ask any Marthomite mother with teenage children, especially girls, as to their primary concern is about. It is about the children, especially the girls. We watch our precious little ones from the time they are born, to make sure that they take their little steps correctly and safely and that they are fed and secured.

But the problem with infants is that they grow to become boys and girls. That is when we start worrying about them much and often. The first telephone call that our precious little daughter gets — is it from a girl-friend, or — horror of horrors — from a boy, an American boy! We know that our children in school or colleges do not have the same protection and providence that we used to have from teachers wardens, matrons and other godly people who watched over us in schools, hostels, or even at work-places. They do not have the same social net-work of uncles, aunts, grandparents or neighbors who monitored us when we were growing up.

So our children grow up under conflicting values and process of socialization. We expect one thing and their peers expect another. More often than not, these expectations are contradictory. Yet our children survive and grow to be beautiful persons.

I write this because of my own experience. I have two children, a girl and a boy. I had prayed a lot for them and still do pray for them. I was petrified as to how our daughter Sharynne would fare in the world. She was always very bright, talented and independent and she had very little contact with Indian friends during her early years. Pressures were much — developmental, academic and social. I decided to trust her to God's care as my mother did trust me to God's care when I first left home in 1953.

Well, Sharynne surprised all of us. She did extremely well in everything she tried. She avoided friends with any bad habits such as smoking or drinking. She never wasted time or resources. She is involved in the world, both in its beauty and problems.

She fell in love with a white American boy. I did not know how to accommodate this. A year ago we celebrated her marriage to Eric Nenon, a delightful and precious young man from Chatham, Virginia. One may ask as to how I adjust to a white American son-in-law. Eric has so very well blended to our life-style and I trust he knows that we try to blend with his and Sharynne's. The wedding itself was a great joy and celebration.

I write this not primarily to boast or brag about Sharynne and Eric although I am very proud of them and of what they do. I write so that mothers such as I may feel that between God, our children and us much can happen that will make life easier, joyful and certainly more rewarding than by trying to control our children to the point of stifling them.

If I had another daughter, I would like her to be just like Sharynne, and do exactly what she did.

Sharynne was a member of the Mar Thoma Church in Dallas, and is now, by transfer and choice, a member of the Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D. C.

*written (and paid for) by Saramma Poikail*



## *FUTURE ISSUES OF THE MAR THOMA MESSENGER*

The Mar Thoma Messenger is the official organ of the Zonal Assembly of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. Even though we would like to publish this at least on a quarterly basis, the cost is prohibitive. We are hoping to publish one more issue prior to the next Zonal Assembly meeting in the summer of 1987. We would like to improve the quality of the Messenger. We cannot accomplish that without your active support. Following are some of the ways you can do that:

1. Sending articles for publication.
2. Soliciting advertisements.
3. Sending news brief items from your parish|congregation.
4. Submitting news items about individuals which might be of interest to the general readership such as recognition awards, significant contributions to our church, institutions and|or community.
5. Obituaries.
6. Upcoming events of interest to the readership.
7. Pictures of persons and events related to news items to be published.
8. Financial support.
9. Comments on the issue you receive.
10. Using some of the materials in the Messenger for discussion in meetings.
11. Prayerful support and encouragement to the contributors and the Editorial Committee.

*Editor*

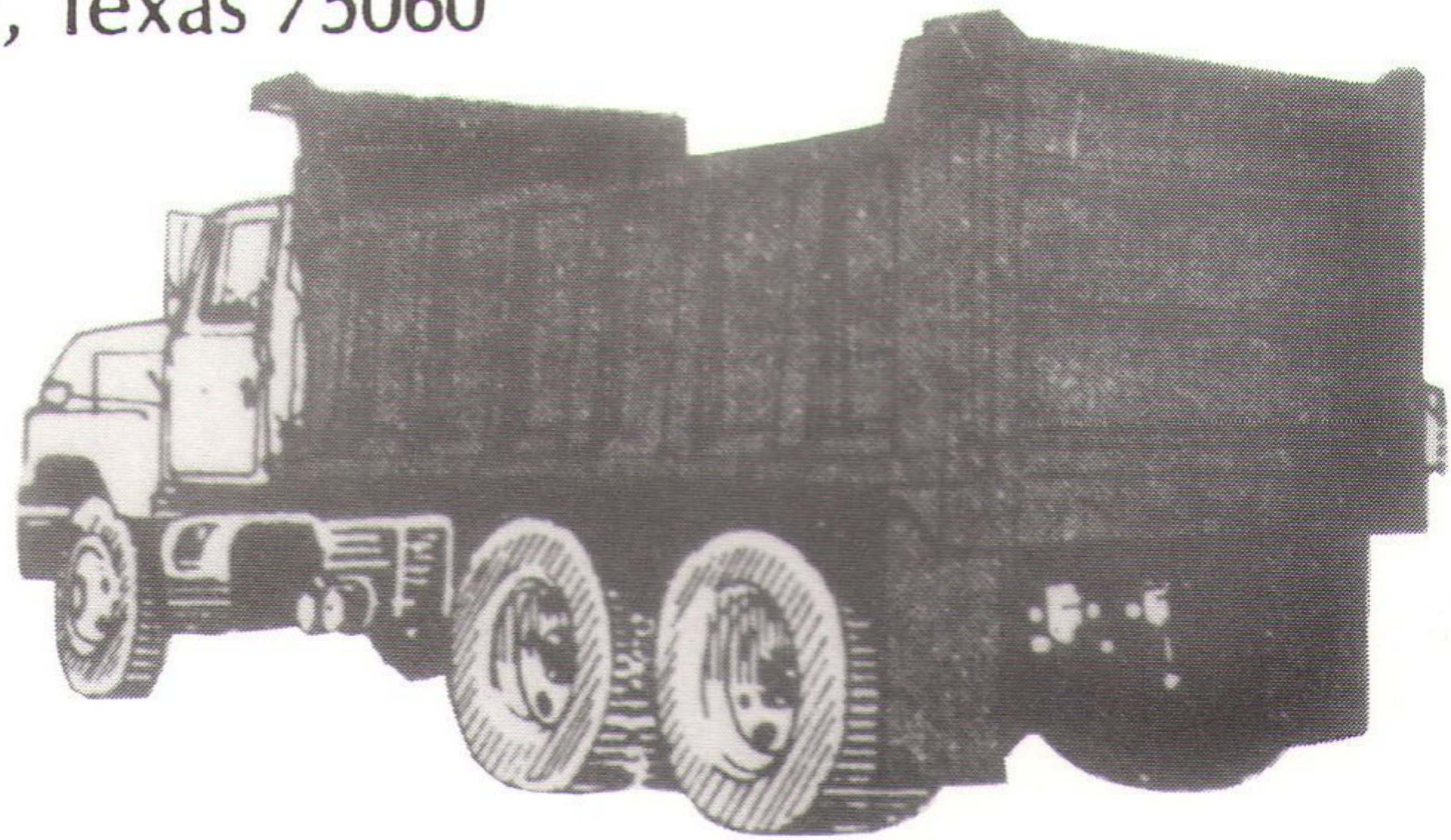


**A & J**

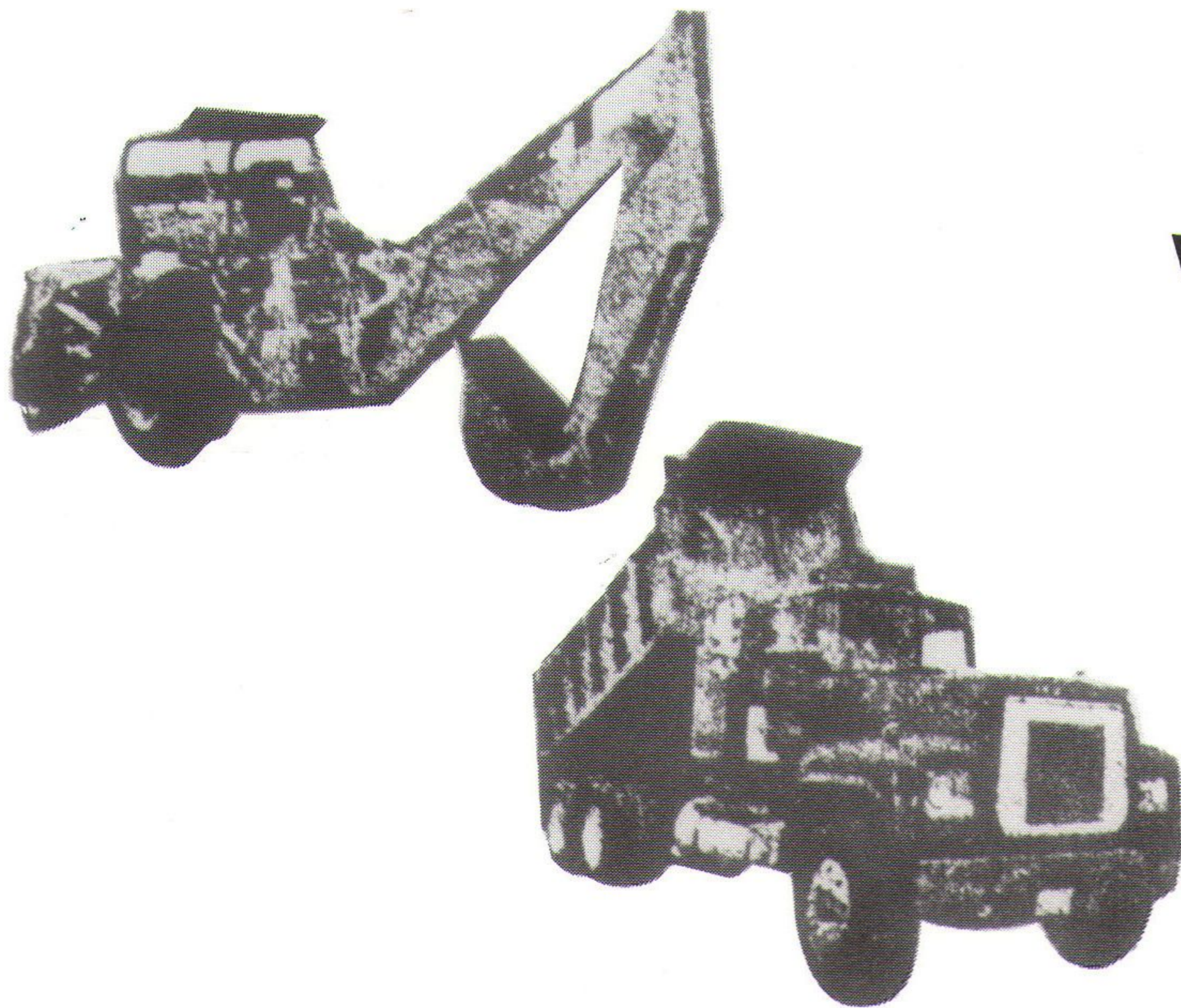
## **SAND AND GRAVEL**

2257 Bolden Road  
Irving, Texas 75060

**RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL**



**WE DELIVER ANY PLACE IN DALLAS AND  
FORT WORTH METROPLEX FOR REASONABLE PRICE**



### **WE HAUL:**

- SANDY LOAM
- CUSHION SAND
- TOP SOIL
- FILL DIRT
- CRUSHED STONE
- GRAVEL
- ROCK
- ETC., ETC.\_\_\_\_

**OUR VEHICLES ARE RADIO AND BEEPER  
EQUIPPED FOR FAST DELIVERY**

**CALL NOW**

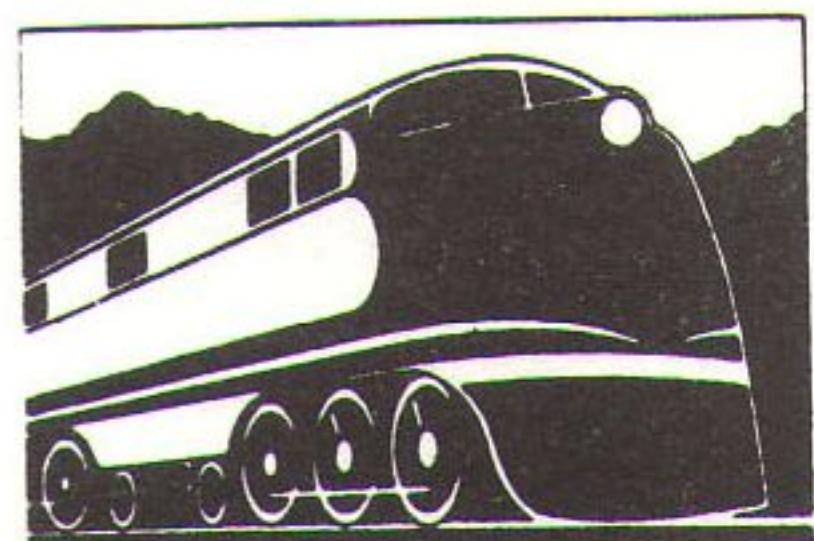
**A.M. ALEXANDER (KUTTAPPEN)**

**(214) 721-1957**

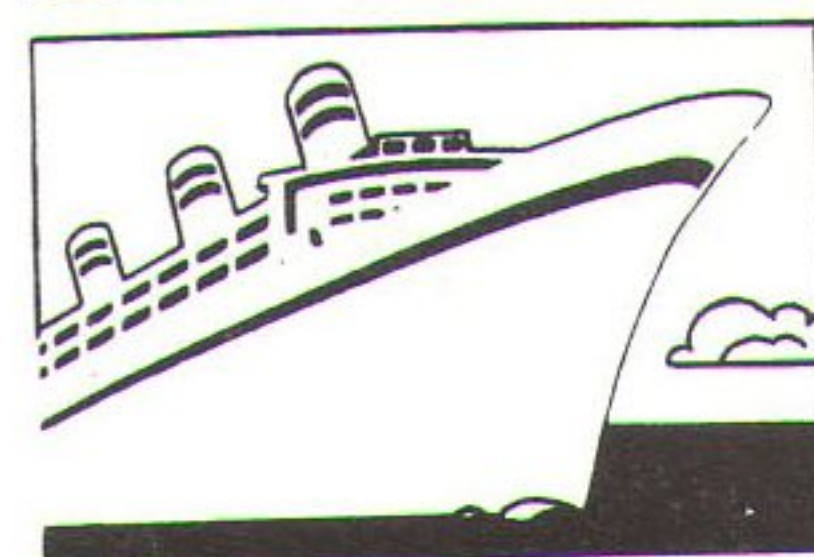


# **RAJ TRAVELS, INC.**

## **YOUR TRAVEL AGENT.**



**INDIVIDUAL GROUP DOMESTIC OR  
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURS**



## **Lufthansa's Top Sales Award Winner**

Raj Travels is one of the oldest travel agencies in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Bonded agent for Lufthansa and Air India.

Special agent for PanAm, TWA, Royal Jordanian, Iberia, United Airlines, Philippine Airlines, Thai, Cathay Pacific, and Korean Airlines, PLUS airline of your choice. Instant boarding passes available on selected airlines.

INSTANT PASSPORT PHOTOS AND NOTARY SERVICES AVAILABLE

# **(214) 659-9035**

Telex: 281567

425 W. AIRPORT FWY., SUITE 104  
IRVING TEXAS 75062

ONLY 10 MINUTES FROM D/FW OR LOVE FIELD

**"WE DO APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS"**

*NEW YORK*  
TAJ TRAVELS & TOURS  
146-06 JAMAICA AVE.  
JAMAICA,  
NY 11435  
Phone (718) 291-9100

*OKLAHOMA*  
RAJ TRAVELS & TOURS  
1213 GARDEN GROVE  
YUKON,  
OKLAHOMA 73099  
Phone (405) 356-1652