

ASIAN ITINERARY

January 7 to March 15, 1988

1. To attend a meeting of the *CCPD (Commission of the World Council of Churches/WCC*, which is engaged in problems of Churches' Participation in Development), to accept formal ecclesiastical invitations, and at the request of many friends, I was allowed a 68 day trip to Asia with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan *EIRENAIOS*, the President of the Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC), and the willingness of my colleagues to undertake many responsibilities during my absence. The trip also facilitated the *WCC/ Sub-Unit on Renewal and Congregational Life (Rev. T. Arai)* and the *WCC/CICARWS- Secretary for Personnel (Samuel M. Isaac)*. I thank God and an infinite number of friends for valuable experiences during this trip, some of which I'd like to share with you. The first draft of the report indicated that we needed a huge volume of the Academy's Bulletin "*DIALOGUES OF RECONCILIATION*". That is why I have confined myself to a very synoptic and fragmentary inventory, and I apologize to our readers for the "telegraphic" style of the following text.

2. Departure (January 7)

I depart from Crete hoping that the road won't be "crooked" nor my words in Asia a voice in the desert.

3. SINGAPORE (January 8-9)

The long trip to Singapore (which ends with music of *M. Hatzidakis* during landing!) confirms the airlines' fine reputation. The richness, the vitality, and the orderliness of that Asian city-state is impressive. But the self-consciousness of the political regime is questionable. Only a few days ago, it had ousted the offices of the *CCA (Christian Conference of Asia*, an interecclesiastical organization, similar to the *Conference of European Churches*), forcing them to move to Hong Kong (see 7b). Reason: "the CCA proceeds with...anti-christian actions", since it protects persecuted in various Asiatic countries, encourages the "theology of liberation" and causes headaches to authoritarian regimes!

4. PHILIPPINES (January 9 - 21)

a. The work of the *CCPD/WCC*, of which I am a member(see 1), is conducted in Manila and Tagaytay. The previous meeting of the Committee was held in Nicaragua (22/7 - 3/8/1986). In the Philippines decisions are made for a vast netting of ecclesiastical activities throughout the world, which pertain to developing programs to combat poverty, exploitation, discrimination, etc., to the dialogue between Christians and Marxists, to the program of the *WCC* for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (*JPIC*), etc.

b. Also at the same place and at the same time, the *Christian Medical Commission (CMC)* is meeting. Certain gatherings and activities are collective. Also the daily prayer. The *National Council of Churches* in the Philippines greatly facilitates our work and keeps us informed responsibly concerning the ecclesiastical, social and political realities of this great country in which unfortunately some developments appear to be contradictory to the hopes that were created after the abolition of the dictatorship.

c. A few of us learned about a small portion of the corruption and the crisis which lashes the country during a visit to the city of Pagsanjan, infamous for its, sodomy, which as we discovered, has created thousands of victims (boys 5-12 years old) the past few years. "*Apocalypse Now*" is the title of a film, parts of which were shot in that city (with *Marlon Brando*). Several people involved in production are said to have contributed for establishing and advertising this "*pedophile*" (a Greek term widely used in that case, obviously in order to give to that phenomenon a greater seriousness through the reference to the inventive "genius" of the Greeks!). The scenes which we viewed nevertheless were a

simple first taste of Asian reality, which truly remind us of the Apocalypse of John!

5. JAPAN (January 21 - 31)

a. "What was the first thing that came to your mind when you landed in Japan?". This peculiar question was presented to me by professors during a formal dinner offered for me (30/1) in the *Christian University of Tokyo*. I hesitated a little, and then confessed: my first thought has some value perhaps from the point of view of Depth Psychology, as a product of my subconscious "prejudice" for the technical progress of your country. On the night of January 21, when our plane dove under the clouds to land at Ozaka, and I saw the motley of lights in the shape of a parallelogram of the densely inhabited area, I immediately thought: Japan is just like the interior of a *...t r a n s i s t o r !*

b. Later I thought about it more maturely as I got to know the "land of the rising sun" and other areas of this continent, whose strengths are foolishly overlooked by our western arrogance! Whoever manages to penetrate the wailing wall, where today poverty, sickness, and misery is lamented, will understand how all of Asia is assembled into a giant "transistor", which is very likely to assert its own rhythm in the pace of world history. The deeper meaning of that perspective of the changes of everything becomes more comprehensible to whomever wants to harken and to discern what is coming. Of course in a world, where people are countlessly "infinite" and multiply at the speed of a computer, the question "what will be the human cost of the change" seems to loose every meaning.

c. The people of the *Christian Academies* of Japan and many others, former friends or strangers until now, surround me with care that is truly enchanting!

Kyoto (January 21 -27)

d. I am given hospitality at the *Kansai Seminar House* (an Institution similar to the OAC). "The Cretans of Kyoto" that is the staff members of this Academy who had visited us last year, welcome me willingly and wholeheartedly and make it easier for me to become familiar with the institution, the city with its magnificent, Buddhist and Shintoist temples and other monuments, the life of the Japanese family, and the "tea ceremony", which is perfectly performed by *Taeko Fujii* with impressive sentiment.

e. The director of the Academy, *Satoshi Hirata*, and members of its Board inform me about the work and the activities of the *Kansai Seminar House* and of similar Centers which cooperate in the framework of the *Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia (ASISCA)*. We also discuss matters of cooperation and exchange between our institutions.

f. Professor *Masao Takenaka*, a master in art subjects and president of the *Asian Christian Art Association (ACAA)*, displays a vital interest in the "FACE TO FACE" program of the Academy. (*) Together we visit the art exhibit of *Yasuo Ueno*, a follower of the

(*) An ongoing program of Arts and Literature. The Orthodox Academy of Crete invites artists (painters, sculptors, etc.), poets, writers and composers to react creatively to the dialogue below of the famous monk, *St. Makarios of Egypt* (beginning of the 4th century A.D.). We are thankful for the encouraging participation from several countries. Deadline for the submission of work is March 31, 1989. All the works are understood to be gifts to the Academy, which in turn will invite participants to a world wide meeting in August (13-21) 1989. During their stay on Crete, they will be guests of the Academy. The dialogue, which is the theme of the project, covers several aspects of the lack of communication, which is obviously one of the major problems of our times (communication with ourselves, our religions, between nations and people, the whole question of peace and war, all our ecological problems, and of course our relation or non-relation to God). Since we have already received works which refer mainly to the first message of the dialogue (the reality of hell), we would greatly appreciate new works showing aspects of hope and ways to overcome hell. The dialogue (summary): MAKARIOS: Who are you? SKULL: I was a priest of the pagans. When you pray for us in hell, we experience great relief. MAKARIOS: What is hell like? And what kind of relief do they experience? SKULL: We are standing in the midst of flames scoring right up to heaven. But our actual torment is the fact that we cannot see each other's faces as we are chained back to back. That is hell indeed. But when you pray for us, the chains are loosened and we can see one another. That is the relief.

We kindly ask our friends once again to "propagate" this our project as much as possible!

tradition of byzantine iconography, who promises to contribute to our program. *M Takenaka* composes a letter to Asian artists and recommends our program.

g. My old friend, *John England* and his wife, *Rita*, inform me about the tendencies of contemporary Theology in Asia. A few of these trends underline the need for "dehellenization" of Christianity - Christ has to assume the body and the face of Asia. After seeing the deep scars on that body and the distortions of the human face on this continent, I better understand those theologians, who ask for a crucified Christ embracing a crucified man!

h. On Sunday January 24th, I attend the service at the Orthodox Church in Kyoto. Following is a reception and discussion with the congregation. A young woman, *Anastasia*, asks to come to a monastery on Crete to prepare herself for the monastic life. The Orthodox Church of Japan needs to solve its problems of jurisdiction and - as some stated - to create its own identity-which until now has been strongly influenced by the Orthodox Church of Russia.

i. The staff of the Academy, participants at a seminar (trade-union leaders of large Japanese companies), and other invited guests follow my lecture whose subjects are: OAC, Orthodoxy, Hellenism and Europe (here as well as in other instances, wherever the technical means permit, I use slides and video films showing the *Ecumenical Patriarch's* visit to Greece and a concert of Greek music). *K. Spennemann*, a Professor of Philosophy at the Doshisha University, known to me from the time of my studies in Germany, translates. We agree that he will visit our country in March of 1989 with the choir of the University (60 members) in order to present a series of concerts.

j. The warm farewell ceremony in the Kansai House is a promise of future mutual communication.

Hiroshima (January 27-29)

k. I am deeply moved upon arriving at Hiroshima late at night. I am well looked after by *Pastor J. Arakawa* who along with his wife informs me about parish life.

l. *Suzuko Numata* is a "HIBAKUSHA" who survived the explosion of the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945 (she has only one leg and many scars from the holocaust). She narrates shocking details to me.

m. *Y. Yamashita* and *M. Tashiro* lead me to different places and speak about the tragic catastrophe (they are members of the group *HIP=Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace*, who with a spirit of reconciliation and peace voluntarily guide foreigners).

n. At lunch *K. Tanaka* and *Y. Yamashita* (from the *Institute for Peace in Hiroshima and Nagasaki*) and the above participate. Our program 'FACE TO FACE' is discussed, which naturally adopts new dimensions in Hiroshima!

o. With the Municipal Office of International Relations is discussed the possibility of having the mayor of Hiroshima come to Crete in 1990 for the "CRETAN CONSULTATION ON PEACE AND LIFE", which will have the theme 'THE LIGHT THAT GIVES LIFE' (Transfiguration of Christ, Aug. 6) and "THE LIGHT THAT KILLS" (nuclear threat).

p. Hiroshima with its many inhabitants, its impressive town squares, its large buildings and its stores displaying activity and vitality, seems to have forgotten its past and appears to be moving toward the future with assurance, just as is the rest of Japan.

q. I listen, I look, I am silent! A tremendous interchange of displays, reflections, and anticipations for the future of mankind. The marks of the catastrophe in the museum are shocking. The paintings of the *Maruki* couple, the painters of the holocaust, resemble a representation of the Revelation!

Tokyo (January 29-31)

r. I am greeted at the railway station by *Chida Yu Ko*, the director of the Christian Academy of Tokyo and *M Arai* (daughter of T. Arai, see 1). The trip from Hiroshima, despite the fog, revealed the strength of the "transistor" and the physiognomy of the area (even though the grandeur of Fuji appeared only momentarily through the clouds).

s. Formal visit to the *National Council of Churches* of Japan. Discussion with the General Secretary *Nakajima Masaaki (John)* and other leaders (*Maejima Matunaga, Matsuki,*

Shigeko Yamano, etc.) concerning the activities of the Council and the situation of Christianity in Japan. I informed them about our ecclesiastical and national affairs (as I do with all my contacts in Asia).

t. A multitude of people follow my lecture (January 30 - Feast of The Three Hierarchs) which takes place in a large room in the KYOBUNKAN mansion. The subject of the lecture was *THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF THE WORLD FROM THE GREEK ORTHODOX VIEWPOINT* (translated from German by *Rev. Minami*).

u. Formal dinner at the Christian University. Warm address by *Dr. Hideyasu Nakagawa*, President of the Council of Christian Academies of Japan (Academician, former President of the University). I responded accordingly. Church personalities and professors (*Rev. Minami, E. Oyamada, T. Yamamoto, I. Kato, S. Matsunaga, Kentaro Shiozuki, C. Yu Ko, K. Takado*, President of the Christian Literary Company of Japan, *H. Oura*, Director of the "*Christian News*" and others) take part at the dinner. One of their questions gives me the opportunity to refer factually to *St. Kosmas Aitolos* and his predictions, and indirectly refer to the Turkish Occupation and the struggles of the Nation (up to the present). Possibility of a visit by our Japanese friends to Crete was discussed.

v. Visiting the museum of the *Maruki* couple. After an update, their participation in our program 'FACE TO FACE' was insured.

6 . KOREA (January 31-February 3)

a. "Regal" welcome at the Academy of Korea! At its entrance is inscribed that its inspiring influence is Plato! Its Director, *Dr. Won Yong Kang*, a special friend of the OAC (1972) and a distinguished personality of his country, introduces me to the work of the institution, the Church, the culture, the current political problems of Korea, as well as the tensions in the broader areas.

b. Visit to the "OLYMPIAN VILLAGE" with its excellent installations. Detailed information given by a representative of the Olympic Committee of Korea, who also presents to me the emblem of the Olympic Games, which we hope will be carried out without anguish and undue rivalry. Discussion with the Director of the Academy (President of the Cultural Committee of the Games) concerning the participation by Greek artistic musical groups and the functioning of an Orthodox chapel at the site of the games (I promise to mention this to the appropriate authorities, which has since been done).

c. A visit to a branch of the Academy, the National Park (*Korean Folk Village*) and to the "*Korea House*".

d. Collaboration with *Oh, Jae-Shik*, an outstanding ecclesiastical personality, who has been appointed as director of the CCPD/WCC(see 1) and *H.C. Myung*, an artist, who promises to contribute to the 'FACE TO FACE' program.

e. Lecture (with slides) directed to the staff of the Academy (this speech as well as those further described are delivered in English. Translation into local languages whenever necessary. Exception: the meeting described below,g).

f. Lecture at the *Presbyterian Theological School* of Seoul about Orthodox Theology. The audience consists of theologians-prospective doctorates from third world countries and Europe. Guided tour by *Dr. Yong Bong Kim*, member of the CCPD, as well as a discussion concerning his proposition of post-graduate studies by Greek theologians at the above school.

g. I am given information at the Orthodox Missionary Centre by *Archimandrite Father Soterios Trampas*, a clergyman who convincingly and effectively interprets in Korea the message of the Gospel according to the Orthodox Tradition. I contribute a modest sum of 1,000 U.S. dollars as a symbolic assurance and expression of solidarity (portion of this was contributed by the *Lawyers' Association of Chania*, by various pious Christians and the remainder was allocated by the OAC). Vespers at the Holy Church of St. Nicholas. Moving psalmody performed by young Koreans, men and women. Speech to the assembled Orthodox of Seoul-discussion (translation by *Father Soterios*, an expert in the Korean language, and by University Professor *Jaewon Yu*, who received his Dr. of Philosophy from the University of Athens). The following pleasant spiritual evening gathering was the best possible completion of my visit to Korea.

7. HONG KONG (February 3-6)

a. Greek Orthodox gathering of this city at the home of the President of the Community, *Polychrones Makrides*. Speech (with slides, etc.), discussion regarding the needs of the community and prayer at the Orthodox Chapel, which has been temporarily arranged at the home of a Chinese Orthodox, *Loukas Chow* and his wife, *Dora* (whose family name is *Heiladakes* and is from Gavalohori, Chania!).

b. Visit (twice) to the *Council of Churches of Asia (CCA)*. Detailed update given by the substitute General Secretary, *G. Ninan*, about the expulsion of his offices from Singapore (see 3). Discussion with *May-An Villalda* (member of the CCPD) and her husband, as well as with other officers of the CCA (*M. Kay Hobb*, *R. Singh*, *Noel couple* and others) regarding the activities of the various departments of the Council and the Churches of Asia (including Australia and New Zealand, which are also members of CCA).

c. Familiarization with this unique and fateful city. Clearly it will play a special role in the near future in maintaining its "possessions", whilst developing its merging with China in the near future.

8. INDIA (February 6 - March 11)

An old wish which has been thwarted three times, begins to be fulfilled upon my arrival at the New Delhi airport at midnight. My visit to this great country is made following a formal invitation by the *Syrian Orthodox Church*, the *Mar Thoma Church*, and by the *Ecumenical Center of Bangalore*.

New Delhi (February 6 - 11)

a. At New Delhi, I am the guest of the *Syrian Orthodox Church*. The program has been organized by the distinguished *Father K.M. George*, a theologian who is also well known in Orthodox circles and assists *Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios*, the Metropolitan of New Delhi, who is well known for his extensive range of knowledge and his ecumenical engagement, and one of the Presidents of the WCC (unfortunately absent during my stay there). The assistance of Father George helps to make the best use of time for the activities described below.

b. Familiarization with the large connecting cities (Old and New Delhi) with their countless "faces" and memorials and of course with a moment's recollection at the mausoleum of *Mahatma Gandhi*.

c. Direct communication with religious realities which until now I have only read about in books (for example, observing a Hindu wedding ceremony, visiting a temple of the "predominant" religion - Hinduism - as well as visiting Buddhist, Sikh, Islamic and other temples (during times of ceremonies). In all these occurrences and despite the differentiations, I ascertain the deep religiosity of the people. Something that those who love "holy money" know how to play on perfectly, and even more so those who distort religious feeling into fanaticism, intolerance and fratricidal violence precisely in this land, whose password is nonviolence. All things in India speak about a reality which is based on harmony or the bringing of everything into harmony. Nevertheless, everything is stirred in its depths by a continual strain of rivalry.

d. With this perplexity in mind concerning the incomprehensible (by me) harmonization of opposites, I visit, accompanied by Father George, two religious personalities. First *Shubh Karan Dasani*, a Jainist leader who had recently met the Pope and Italian political leaders concerning the subject of peace (at our meeting is *U. Lal*, who is also responsible for conferences and is from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - if I understood correctly). Secondly a meeting with *D. Tulku*, Director of the Cultural Institute "House of Tibet" (and practically the "Minister for Foreign Affairs" of the *Dalai Lama*), who promises a contribution to our 'FACE TO FACE' program. Just the experiences gained from these countries and being able to communicate with these people can effectively help one to understand the problems Christianity is confronted with here, and also the nature of religious and philosophical challenges, which the East projects to the West.

e. Discussion of the above and other related problems with distinguished Church leaders from the Roman Catholic Church (*Fr. Dias*, Director of the Center of the Council of Bishops, *Fr. A. Nambiaparambil*, who is responsible for Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue),

with the President of the Church of North India (formerly Anglican) *Bishop Magbul Caleb*, and *P. Santvan* who is in charge of the central offices of that Church and others. (This Church as well as the Church of South India are attempting to interweave protestant denominations into one ecclesiastical unity. This ecumenical experiment is still under development).

f. Lunch with *Palai K.M. Mathew*, a leader of the government party and President of its Committee for Intellectuals. I am informed about the political situation in India and the broader area, as well as the spiritual and political movements in India.

g. Visits to churches and institutions of the Syrian Orthodox Diocese of New Delhi and to the Bishop's House of *His Grace, Paulas*, which is a Center with multi-sided activities. Meeting with the clergy and speech to Christians of the area (with slides, etc.) It was my first direct contact with the ecclesiastical tradition of the Syrian Orthodox people.

Bangalore (February 11 - 13)

h. In the predominantly industrial town of Bangalore and its surrounding areas, noteworthy theological, interfaith and interchurch activities are developed, a few of which I had the opportunity, to some degree, of becoming familiar with. In particular:

i. I had three meetings with the eminent theologian *M.A. Thomas*, member of the *Mar Thoma Church* and founder of the *Ecumenical Christian Center of Whitefield*, which is still supported by him. Mainly on his own initiative, the *Indian School of Ecumenical Theology*, which is scheduled to open in 1989, was founded. It will operate in the same Center. with interchurch collaboration. The school will operate under the guidance of an International Panel to which I have also kindly been invited to join. We discussed the regular participation of Greek Orthodox theologians on the teaching staff of the School.

j. At the Ecumenical Center (similar to the OAC), I collaborated with the director, *Suzy Nellithanam*, and her staff (information exchanged concerning the work and problems of our institutions), and I gave two lectures (with slides, etc.).

k. I also visited the Protestant Theological School in Bangalore, where I had two extensive discussions (one with the Professors and the other with 35 prospective doctorates). I also had two meetings with *M. M. Thomas*, former President of the World Council of Church's Central Committee. Then I visited the large Roman Catholic Theological School (*Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram/Dharmaram College*). The dean, *Fr. Joseph Pathrapanka CMI*, referred especially to the development of Roman Catholic theology in Asia, to matters regarding the calling to the priesthood, and to the old, thorny and forever unsolved problem of an "accomodation" of the Gospel to the Hindu environment.

Trivandrum (February 13 - 16)

l. In this city which is the capital of the Federal State of Kerala, I firstly am the guest of the *Mar Thoma Church* in the home of *Bishop Eirenaeos*, and given special care by the family of *Fr. Jolly Thomas*. Opportunity to become familiar with the southernmost part of India, the Bishop, some of the clergy, to visit a few christian families, to study the rich spiritual and social work of the local Church and to speak to gatherings of the faithful. A few observations which were confirmed when I went to other areas of Kerala: simplicity and directness in relationships between the Bishop and his co-workers, the clergy and the laity; a brotherly spirit, mutual compensation and support between the priests, a continuous, intense ecclesiastical effort on several levels and an effective collaboration of the laity.

Door (February 16-21)

m. Departure by car and arrival at the small town of DOOR (or DUR), approximately 95 kilometers northwest of Trivandrum. Warm welcome by the Suffrigan Metropolitan of the *Mar Thoma Church*, *His Grace Philipose Mar Chrysostome*, President of the *Evangelistic Association*, which is a dynamic missionary movement, formed 100 years ago and which is responsible for the organization of the *Maramon Convention* (see k). Until February 21st, I am the guest at the Bishop's seat, where much eagerness, kindness, attention and cordiality is displayed. There in the side of a hill on Church property is a building of substantial size. It contains the home of the bishop and the offices of the diocese, sitting rooms, guest

rooms, etc.

n. *Metropolitan Philipose Mar Chrysostome* is a dynamic personality and Church leader, who knows how to make good use of his many talents. Especially impressive is his oratorical ability. He is indeed a "chrysostomos". It is even obvious to someone who might be a foreigner and doesn't understand the local language (Malayalam), that he is capable of addressing young people with the same ease and conviction that he has when addressing persons of high intellect and education and of course mass audiences. His words are characterized by a flowing and practically continuous humor and dialogue with every audience.

o. My seven day association with the prelate was like an intense seminar for me. My dashing about with him all day and every day gave me the opportunity to understand new aspects of Indian realities and to deepen others. Observing farm laborers and the basic feudalistic system of India, visits to schools, hospitals and other Church institutions, participation at Church and other ceremonies, speeches everywhere, conversations with the people and discussions of my uncertainties with the Metropolitan, and also current matters of a theological and ecclesiastical nature are examined.

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THE CHRISTIANS OF MAR THOMAS

We are describing here only a minimal number of events and facts, which we feel are necessary in order to better understand my Indian Itinerary. The characterization "*St. Thomas Christians*" covers a broad spectrum of Christian communities, which are mainly in Kerala (with dissemination to India and abroad). According to tradition, the Apostle Thomas brought the message of the Gospel to India and founded its Church. During the course of history, these Christians who had contact mainly with Persia and Syria, found themselves in the orbit of christian communities, which did not accept the decisions of the Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451). Today they belong to the Ancient Oriental Churches. Isolation, internal differentiations, litigations about jurisdictional conflicts, personal weaknesses, family nepotism and also the dissolving intervention of western missionaries and political expediency are some of the factors, which contributed to the breaking up of the "Christians of St. Thomas". Today there are more than 15 different groups. Each one refers to the Old Tradition; most of them truly maintain some elements of it. The conflicts nevertheless intensify and multiply. As is observed in other parts of the world, the ecumenical conciliatory mood of leaders (especially when they are outside of India) doesn't appear to effectively influence its "base".

The divisions provoke confusion both in the usage of names and titles. The terms *Malabar, Malankar, Syrian, Orthodox*, etc. are used in various combinations. This chronicle concerns two of the above Churches, that had invited me as their guest to India: The *Syrian Orthodox Church* and the *Mar Thoma Church*. Both are founding members of the WCC and have contributed to it noteworthy leadership.

The **SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH** is under the Catholicos of the East (presently: *H.H. CATHOLICOS MORAN MAR. BASELIOS MAR THOMA MATHEWS I., since 1975*) with its headquarters at *Denalokam, KOTTAYAM, Kerala*. This Church no longer recognizes, as a governing center of reference, the *Syrian Orthodox Patriarch* of Antioch (which another branch insists on recognizing as their governing authority, thereby perpetuating an expanding and intense opposition between the two). Since 1912 its aims of consolidating into an Orthodox Church of India with indigenous selfconsciousness. This attempt is still under development and many litigations concerning the "Patriarchicals" occupy the civil courts. Despite all of this, the Church has kept its selfconfidence and decisiveness. The (somewhat precarious) statistical data gives us the following picture: Number of believers: 1,500,000; Dioceses: 20 (one of which is in New York); all are headed by Metropolitans (44 "Chorepiscopoi" are also reported); Parishes: 1,270 (and 160 chapels); Priests: 1,025; Deacons: 80; "Monasteries" 15; "Hermitages": 10; Monks: 160; Nuns: 157; Schools: 210; Colleges: 17 (and other kinds of educational institutions); 1 Missionary School; 11

Periodicals, 8 Church Organizations (women, youth, catechismal, etc.); 24 hospitals; 12 Orphanages; 100 students at the Theological Seminary of KOTTAYAM, where ST. SOFIA, a self governing "institution" is located (for conferences and studies); various places of pilgrimage, etc. (1986 data). During the past 35 years, this Church organizes Assemblies similar to that of Maramon. A spirit of renewal is appearing and the role of the Holy Scriptures is emphasized as is the life of the Church.

The **MAR THOMA CHURCH**, originated by the family of "Christians of St. Thomas", was established following an ecclesiastical reformation, prepared under Anglican influence and in the framework of wider religious, social and political developments and changes in Kerala during the first fifty years of the past century. Even though many traditional characteristics of the Church were retained, which decided to remain "eastern", the western, especially the Anglican influence is obvious. Veneration of the Virgin Mary and Saints has been abandoned; Memorial Services are not practiced and the *Liturgy of St. James*, which is mainly used by this Church (as it is by the Syrian Orthodox), has been altered significantly in dogmatical contents; there exists a reservation towards all "sacramental" elements; the Holy Scriptures are one sidedly emphasized, while the entire theological thinking is adequately westernized. In addition, in interchurch relations, its ties are also one-sidedly western (for example, the Mar Thoma Church has regular interchurch relations and -as of 1961- eucharistic communion with the Anglican Church, as well as with the Churches of South India- since 1958; and of North India since 1972, which maintain an Anglican-Protestant tradition). Despite all of this, the leaders of this Church have not concealed their desire for improved relations with Orthodoxy. So, our impression is that in the framework or even in the context of the dialogue between Orthodoxy and the *Ancient Oriental Churches* the examining of this reformation with all its consequences would be desirable. The estrangement that has intervened is obvious. Attempts at reconciliation have been unsuccessful. But we think that the likelihood of a productive future dialogue, inspired by the Paraclete, who heals wounds and corrects mistakes of man, should not be ruled out.

The Mar Thoma Church, with its present primate, the dynamic Hierarch *Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan*, with the second in order (Suffragan Metropolitan) *Philipose Mar Chrysostome*, 6 bishops (total 8 Dioceses, of which one is in America), 500 - 600 thousand faithful, 530 priests, a Theological Seminary, an impressive number of Schools, Hospitals and other charitable institutions, with Periodicals and other publications, and with the active participation of laymen in all levels of the life of the Church, creates a dynamic reality in India. Every three years the priests are compulsorily transferred and the bishops every seven years. Most of the priests are married and of a high educational level. Problems of the calling to the priesthood don't appear to exist (contrarily the number of unmarried clergy is small and this is the reason that there is such a limited possibility to select Hierarchs).

Maramon (February 21 - 26)

In this town of Kerala the great *MARAMON CONVENTION* takes place every year (usually in February). This year, the "Evangelistic Association", which organizes the Convention, celebrated its 100th year anniversary. It is the preeminently manifestation of the Mar Thoma Church and rather the most attended yearly ecclesiastical gathering on a universal level. It is in a way, similar to the german KIRCHENTAG. During the period of the Convention, the waters of the river Pampa are at a low level and a large islet is formed, upon which wooden pavillions are built for more than 100,000 people. In the immediate area of the Convention and in the town, convenient kiosks are assembled and books, food and every kind of article imagined are sold. An atmosphere of a trade fair is thus created. Everyday four meetings are held. Some of these are attended by more that 100,000 persons, others by less. There is a constant coming and going from dawn to late at night. People come from near and far to attend.

Interhuman communication is a main characteristic of the Convention, which is also attended by members of other Churches, as well as followers of various religions. Women are forbidden to attend the evening sessions. Most people sit on the ground, chant hymns,

follow with unbelievable patience the great length of the speeches, announcements, etc. and willingly contribute their penny in the "tray" at every gathering. The speeches are of a fiery and spirited nature and are expressed in the quick pace of the local language, always give reference to the Bible and are strictly evangelistic, with a pietistic and moral content; they become less oppressive if the speaker has a sense of humor. The worshipping-sacramental element is very limited. Its place has been almost fully taken by the sermon of the Word of God, which makes up the preeminently "divine service". Perhaps this explains the fact that even members of the Government, the parliament and other political personalities are not allowed to address the Convention. Their presence is simply announced. The Convention takes place where the reformation began, through which the Mar Thoma Church originated. In this way, the reformatory tradition continues and is confirmed, the conviction of the faithful and the oneness of the Ecclesiastical body are emphasized, its presence becomes perceptible to the environment; and so, all of this, witnesses the Gospel to an area, where Christianity remains a minority. The speeches and the happenings of the Convention are adequately covered by the press. During its duration, daily bulletins in the thousands are printed containing the main parts of the speeches. This Convention is a worthy institution and could become more accomplished in the future if its organizers manage to get "unhooked" from the outdated protestant devoutness and re-examine certain methods and tactics and maintain a true desire for a real "opening up".

l. During the Convention, all three of the main speakers (the American Professor *S. Moffett*, the Indian theologian *Th. Williams* and myself) speak in English and are amazed at the surprising ease of the translators, who interpret into the local language (MALAYALAM is also read backwards!). Using the Great Litany of the Divine Liturgy as my basic topic, I speak about the PEACE in the whole world, the STABILITY of the Holy Churches of God, and the UNITY of all. This is the first time in the 100th year history of the Convention, that an Orthodox theologian actively participates. This fact which the organizers projected with special emphasis, appears to have been the small pebble, which falls upon a glass sphere and cracks it! Truly: the MAR THOMA CHURCH, completely encompassed until now with its reformed mentality and the ultra conservative theology of an evangelistic Protestantism, feels the presence and the word of an Orthodox theologian as an intrusion at the "kairos", just the "right" time - as was emphasized repeatedly by the organizers. The crevice of the sphere became more clear after the speeches of *E. Stockwell*, a staff member of the WCC, who arrived during the last days of the Convention. He highlighted the necessity of an exodus from the fortifications which appear to protect the Church, but in fact prevent its ecumenical mission.

With the Syrian Orthodox again

m. The second period of my stay with the *Syrian Orthodox Church* (Feb. 16-March 11 [see 8a]) was also notably intense. *Metropolitan Mar Ostathios Geevarghese* had organized a full program of tours, visits, contacts and talks. Each day was "filled" and blessed from early morning until late at night. A sagacious theologian, a "rebel" in life and volcanic in action, *Metropolitan Ostathios* is known in our ecumenical scene as a prophet of the synthesis Christianity-Marxism in a new "classless" society, based on the model of the Holy Trinity. In this way, during our regular dialogues, certain views of Indian reality are illuminated from a new standpoint as for example, why Christianity wasn't able to dissolve the system of discrimination even among the members of the Church into **castes**. My own request for MACRODIAKONIA encouraged years ago to further formulate his request for MACROJUSTICE. We had introduced our views also at the large conference of the WCC in Larnaca (1986). At that time he invited me to visit India. So it was natural to intensify some crucial social problems during my speeches, that he had requested of me and which I presented at ecclesiastical gatherings similar to that of the Maramon Convention (organized however in several places and therefore with lesser participation), at Priests' Conventions, at Institutions and Schools, at the Theological Seminary of KOTTAYAM, and at Parishes. In a few instances I had to make five speeches in a single day. He and other people managed to translate from my mediocre English.

n. With the same zeal the *Metropolitans Joseph Mar Fachomios* in the *Vettickal* area

and *Philipose Mar Theophilos* in Bombay as well as their clergy and lay co-workers made my time productive. Also during this period the hospitality offered to me was heartening and warm, and the whole atmosphere of our daily company was truly brotherly. In two cases, formal gratitude was expressed by the *Syrian Orthodox Church* towards the *Church of Greece* for its financial support to the Theological Seminary of KOTTAYAM, while the *Ecumenical Patriarchate* was referred to with respect during my meeting with the *Catholicos* (March 1) and in various gatherings.

o. On March 11th as my plane was taking off and I was leaving India behind, I had the feeling of an infinite number of threads pulling me back. They were feelings of gratefulness, of new knowledge and experiences, which will take much time and deep reflection to become filtered, to crystallize and to perhaps be expressed as a whole experience.

9. JEDDAH (March 11 - 15)

a. The final stop of my trip transferred me suddenly from the many-sided and polytheistic India to the theocratic homogeneous Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A kind invitation by professor *Syed Z. Abedin* and his family during the Christian - Muslim Colloquium at the OAC this past September brought me to JEDDAH, a city which decisively transforms the desert into an oasis of life and activity. *F.A.M. Korby* who met me at the airport drove me into town along the coast. On this road are placed impressive decorative objects of great size, many of which are superb works of art.

b. Westop at a magnificent mosque which has been built on the sea. It is Friday and time for the noon prayer. Hundreds of men pray in the huge mosque and many women outside of it in the western courtyard. Some children prefer to play, and a few boys swim in the sea. In the minaret which is very tall and a masterpiece, are microphones so that the prayers can be heard at a great distance as well as the dynamic voice of the interpreter of the Koran.

c. At the ALATTAS hotel everything is well cared for and is pervaded by a warm and friendly atmosphere. Professor *Abedin* arrives in the afternoon from Mecca (Makkah - if pronounced with the correct Arabic accent) and announces that I will be an official guest of the *MWL-Muslim World League* -or in Arabic- *RABITA*. I of course, hadn't planned on this nor on any of the following events. I am grateful for this exceptional hospitality and especially for the opportunity of meeting so many enlightening people. The main ones were as follows:

d. Two meetings with *Dr. Abdullah Omar Naseef*, Professor of Geography, and the former president of the *University King Abdul Aziz*. He has been bestowed by the King now the high position of General Secretary of the *Rabita* (similar to that of General Secretary of the WCC). Prince of the desert, courteous, wise and so a simple person, indicates a vital interest in the programs of the Academy as well as in my remarks referring to the need for an essential dialogue among the three Monotheistic traditions, the "*Children of Abraham*." We agree to continue this discussion in the near future at the OAC.

e. The sources of tension in the Mediterranean and surrounding area and the need for collaboration of all peace loving powers were the subjects of my discussion with the General Secretary of the *O.I.C (Organization of Islamic Conference)*, the Pakistani diplomat *Dr. Sharifuddin Pirzada* and his staff at the headquarters of the Islamic "U.N.", which represents 46 Muslim countries. This discussion also culminated with an expression of mutual desire for participation by *Dr. Pirzada* in one of the forthcoming activities for peace on Crete.

f. The third place of enlightening contacts was my visit to the University of Jeddah accompanied by the Sheik, *Dr. Essam Abid*. I visited the President *Rida Obaid*, Professor of Chemistry who confessed sincerely that we could not agree on anything! The atmosphere at the Department of Biology and Oceanography was different and even more so at the Department of Sociology (*Professor A.A. Bagaber*) and Islamic Studies (*Professor M.Y. Izzidien*), and in discussions with professors at the *Hajj Research Centre*, an institution of a high scientific level with complete technical equipment, where multiple problems are researched relative to the pilgrimages of Mecca and Medina (architectual, maintenance of

the monuments, problems of hygiene, use of the meat of the animals which are offered during the week of pilgrimage-Hajj (more than 1 million animals!). Finally, at the *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, minority problems of mutual interest are discussed with Professor *S. Abedin* in an atmosphere of responsibility and understanding.

g. My visit to Jeddah was completed with a press conference, in which I emphasized the need for cooperation among the "*Children of Abraham*" for the promotion and consolidation of peace (related interview was published in the widely circulated English language newspaper SAUDI GAZETTE of March 28th).

h. During my return trip to Crete (March 15th), I somehow fail in my attempt to organize my new experiences in my mind. The evening of my return, my co-workers and close relatives have prepared an emotional homecoming which somehow alleviates my ...reentry into daily life, which despite its many problems, is I believe, the best in the world!

GLORY TO GOD FOR EVERYTHING!

DESCRIPTION OF COLORED PHOTOGRAPHS

1. My Asian Itinerary contains many surprises. Here a religious procession of Hindus.

2. At one of the places of boys' prostitution in the Philippines (see 4c).

3. At the Christian University of Tokyo (see 5u).

4. Hiroshima (see 5p).

5. One of the memorials of Hiroshima (see 5m).

6. With Satoshi Hirata, Director of the Christian Academy of Kyoto and staff members of the institution (see 5e).

7. On the right, Dr. *Won Yong Kang*, Director of the Christian Academy of Seoul (see 6a).

8. The Holy Church of *St. Nicholas* at the Orthodox Center of Seoul (see 6g).

9. The Orthodox Chapel in Hong Kong (see 7a).

10. *Pluralism* and *Syncretism*, two realities which mark the life of India.

11. At one of the infinite temples in India. The water is used mainly for ritual purification.

12. Hindu wedding. Performed in the ancient sanskrit language. It is of long duration and is accompanied by many symbolic - magic acts.

13. At the Syrian Orthodox Center of New Delhi (see 8g).

14. Offering of a holy icon to a newly ordained deacon. I contributed holy icons to many Christians in Asia as well as to theological schools and institutions. In most places, the icon either never existed or has been forgotten.

15. Holy Altar in a *Syrian Orthodox Church*. The iconostasion is either missing entirely, or is imperfectly formed this also appears in *Mar Thoma Church*. Everywhere an icon of *St. George* exists and nowadays more and more that of *St. Gregorios of Paroumala* can be seen.

16. The Catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church (see 8g).

17. Metropolitan Ostathios (see 8m).

18. The new Saint, *Gregorios of Paroumala*, the contemporary pride of the *Syrian Orthodox Church of India*. He was born on June 15, 1848. It is said that he became a deacon at the age of 10, a priest at 18, and a bishop at 28. He died on November 2, 1902 at the age of 54. His proclamation as a Saint was on November 2, 1947. He is very popular today and can be compared (in popularity) to "St. Nektarios" of Kerala.

19. *M.A. Thomas* (see 8i) in his office. The practically daily and of long duration discontinuance of electricity in India brings back the alternate use of old methods. So, nowadays we also have.....gladsome radiance!

20. *S. Nellithanam* and her co-workers (see 8j).

21. Climbing the very tall coconut trees to harvest the dates is performed with surprising cat-like movements by workers who are specialized at this exhausting and dangerous job.

22. *Fire* and *condiments* are saving Asia! Here is *pepper*. When it ripens, it turns red and when dried in the sun, turns black.

23. The primate of the *of Mar Thoma Church*, Dr. *Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan* (see 8l)

24. From the *Maramon Convention*. In India the umbrella is used for protection from both the rain and the sun.

25. With Metropolitan *Philipose Mar Chrysostome*. (see 8m).

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink
in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say
unto you, he shall not lose his reward". (Mark 9,41).

26. From my meeting with *A.O. Naseef*, the General Secretary of the *Muslim World League* (see 9d).

27. Discussion with the *General Secretary of the O.I.C.* (see 9e). On the right is Professor *S. Abedin*.

DESCRIPTION OF THE OTHER PHOTOS

Page 65. One of the works of our project "FACE TO FACE".

Page 66. Hospitality in JEDDAH.

Page 70. Above: With the Orthodox Japanese of Kyoto.

Below: Kyoto (see 5d).

Page 71. Above: Discussion with *S. Numata*. (see 5l).

Below left: Deep well in Kerala (see 8o).

right: With artist *Maruki* (see 5v).

Page 74. SEOUL: Fr. Sotirios Trampas (see 6g).

Page 75. Above left: New Delhi - Soviet week with advertisement of the byzantine Pantokrator.

Below left: Pupils in JEDDAH.

right: At the Roman Catholic School of Bangalore (see 8k).

Page 76. DOOR Church of Emmanuel (see 8o).

Page 77. Liturgy at Kerala. Children sing together; Kerala: Metropolitan Pahomios gives Holy Communion to the children (see 8n).

Page 78. Above: Gathering of the clergy with Metropolitan Ostathios (see 8m).

Below: At an Institution for the protection of children. (see 8m).

Page 79. Syrian Orthodox Missionary Shool.

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