

Prayer led by the Church of South India.

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THE INCARNATE CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS AGAINST THE INDIAN BACKGROUND OF OTHER RELIGIONS

The topic of Christian Witness in the context of other Religious Traditions is not altogether new. It is in a sense as old as Christianity itself. The Apostolic Church, particularly Paul, saw the need to situate the Christian message they proclaimed in its rapport with the faith of Israel, on the one hand, and the Greek religious world on the other (Acts 17, 19-34).

However, this topic has gained new importance and urgency in today's context of religious pluralism. The new knowledge that we possess today of the other religious traditions, the daily co-existence and interactions between the various religious traditions, the extremely minority character of Christianity in the midst of the huge majority of other religions in Asia and India, the revival and expansion movements in the other religious traditions, the attraction of the so-called mystical religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, in the West etc. are some of the reasons for the current importance of this topic.

1. Christian Witness

Before speaking of Christian witness in the Indian background it is good to see what Christian witness is in itself. All the Gospels end with the words of Jesus sending the disciples to preach the Gospel to all the nations (Mk 16, 15-16; Mt 28, 18-20; Lk 24, 47-49; Jn 28, 21) The missionary commissioning in the Gospel of Luke presents the mission of preaching the Gospel in terms of witnessing: „Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things“ (Lk 24, 47-48). This seems to refer to the ecclesial character of preaching the Gospel. In Mark the response to the preaching of the Gospel is a personal response of faith accompanied by baptism (Mk 16, 15-16). In Matthew evangelization is by initiating the individuals into a trinitarian and ecclesial life through baptism (Mt 28, 18-20). This life in the Church seems to have given origin to the idea of „witnessing“, which is the concrete form which evangelization takes in Luke (Lk 24, 47-48). Later, in the Acts of the Apostles, witnessing becomes the main task of the Apostles and the Church (Acts 5, 30-32), So Christian witness remains the fundamental duty of every Christian and of every Church from the beginning to this day.

2. Israel: Witness of Yahweh

The Old Testament background in this respect can be found in the call of Israel to be witness of Yahweh. The nations had to be witnesses to their gods by demonstrating the deity of their gods from their experience (Is 43, 9; 44, 9). On the other hand, Israel had to be witness of Yahweh by experiencing and manifesting his guidance, deliverance and revelation grounded on the election. In this way God's people will declare to the nations the uniqueness, reality and deity of God (Is 43, 10, 12; 44, 8). The witness that Israel bears to her God has its basis in the experience she had of his saving actions in the course of her history.

3. Church: Witness of the Christ-event

The object of witnessing in the early Church is the Christ-event with its significance. When the disciples asked the Risen Lord about the time of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, He told them not to worry about the times fixed by the Father and asked them to be his witnesses „... to the ends of the earth“ after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1, 6-8). So the time of the Church here on earth is the time of witnessing to Jesus Christ. The primary thought is that the disciples of Jesus can and will proclaim from first-hand knowledge the story of Jesus (Acts 1, 22; 10, 39) and especially the fact of his resurrection (Acts 2, 32; 3, 15; 5, 31 f.; 10, 41). But in so doing they will always emphasize its saving significance (Acts 10, 42).

Christian witness is not to the factuality of the history of Jesus, though sometimes it is also included. Neither is it witnessing to certain significant events of Jesus' life, such as his birth, death or resurrection. The witness is simply to the very person of Christ and his significance.

4. The subject who witnesses

In the New Testament we find several subjects of a witnessing activity, Jesus himself (Jn 5, 31), his works (Jn 5, 36), the Father (Jn 32, 37), the Spirit (Jn 15, 26), John the Baptist (1, 15; 3, 26), the Scriptures (Jn 5, 39), the Sacraments (1 Jn 5, 5-11) etc. Though several agents are mentioned as bearing witness to Christ, in all these agencies, it is God the Father who really bears witness to Jesus. The validity of Jesus' testimony about himself rests on his oneness with the Father: „I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me“ (Jn 8, 18). In 8, 16, John says: „If I judge, my judgement is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and he who sent me“. Jesus repeatedly appeals to his Father's testimony convalidating his own (cf. Jn 3, 11; 8, 38; 12, 49-50). The testimony of Jesus' works is again the testimony of the Father because the works of Jesus are works of the salvific power of the Father: „The works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing bear me witness that the Father has sent me“ (Jn 5, 36). Since the works of Jesus are a direct and symbolic continuation of the salvific works of Yahweh for Israel, the Scriptures recording these works also bear witness to Jesus (Jn 5, 39-47). Since the same works of Jesus are the direct and symbolic prefiguration of the sacramental salvific work of the Father through the Spirit in the

Church, the Sacraments also bear witness to Jesus (cf. 1 Jn 5, 5-11). The testimony of the sacramental activity of the Church is the testimony of the Father, because it continues throughout all ages the salvific work of the Father fulfilled in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The testimony of John the Baptist is also the Father's testimony, because he makes it clear that his knowledge of Jesus depends on divine revelation and is connected with his mission: „I myself did not know him ... but he who sent me ... said to me...“ (Jn 1, 31-33). Even in the Post-Paschal witness of the Spirit through the disciples, it is the Father who is the real source and subject of the witness because the Spirit proceeds from and is given by the Father: „When the Counsellor comes whom I shall send you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses“ (Jn 15, 26-27), all the above considerations show that witnessing to Christ is no mere human endeavour, it is exercised by the Father himself who is always at work in us through his Spirit.

5. Father's witness: interior to man

When Jesus told the Jews that the Father who sent him bears witness to him, they challenged him asking him to produce his witness: „Where is your Father“? (Jn 8, 19). Jesus did not reply to their question directly because they grossly misunderstood the nature of God's testimony, taking it for an external one, whereas throughout the Gospel of John, we see that the Father's testimony is not merely external but internal, as it is at work in the hearts of men. „No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him“ (Jn 6, 44). „Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me“ (Jn 6, 45). „No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father“ (Jn 6, 65). So we see that the testimony of the Father works mysteriously within the hearts of men urging them to believe in Christ.

6. Christian Witness is Trinitarian

Christian Witness has its origin in the Holy Trinity. Christ's sending forth of the disciples was rooted in the fact that Christ himself was sent by the Father in the Holy Spirit. „As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven“ (Jn 20: 21-23). The sending of the Son by the Father is the „model“ and the „source“ of the sending of the disciples. God is in Himself a life of communion with the Son in the Holy Spirit. God's involvement in the history is aimed at drawing the whole humankind into this Trinitarian Communion. So the Father sends his Son and makes available to humankind the Holy Spirit, so that the humankind can be liberated from the slavery of sin and be taken into the Trinitarian Communion. Hence the mission of the Church is to bear witness to this divine life and communion and to draw the whole humanity into this communion.

7. Christian Witness is centered on the Incarnate Christ

Jesus Christ is the one in whom this communion is manifested and the one through whom this communion is effected. So Jesus Christ is always the pivotal and

the dynamic factor in the Christian witness in this world. He is the incarnation of the Word of God the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the one witness of God true and faithful (Rev 1, 5; 3, 14). In his conversation with Pilate Jesus says: „For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to bear witness to the Truth“ (Jn 18, 37). The Son of God assumed the fullness of our humanity into himself, healing and restoring humanity by placing it in himself. It is the great mystery of the divine human unity that becomes the source of the new life of the world. It is to this mystery of Christ that we are today called to witness together.

8. Witnessing through Confession of Faith in the Church

The Father's witnessing to the Son and the Son's witnessing to the Truth is to continue after the death and resurrection of Jesus through the community of believers in Christ. Some of the New Testament writers claim to have been eye-witnesses of the Historical Jesus (Jn 19, 35; 21, 24; 1 Jn 1, 1-3). But what is important is the experience of the Risen Lord which gives us the possibility of seeing the glory (doxa) of Jesus, „glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth“ (Jn 1, 14) to which the Christian Community is inescapably bound to testify. This seems to be expressed in 1 Jn 5, 9 f. „This is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.“

It is the faith-experience of the Community that qualifies them for witnessing to Christ. Jesus tells his disciples: „The Spirit of Truth ... will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning“ (Jn 15, 26-27). The expression „from the beginning“ (ap'arches) refers to the time of the first Christian preaching (1 Jn 1, 1-3; 2, 24). In 1 Jn 3, 11 we read: „For this is the 'message' which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.“ The reference is therefore to the beginning of Christian experience. Since the perfect tense in Greek expresses the on-going effect obtained through a past action, the use of the perfect „we have heard“ (akekoamen), „we have seen“ (heorakamen) in 1 Jn 1, 1 is an additional indication that what is witnessed to is not the mere past happening of the historical revelation in Jesus Christ, but its continuation in its effects in the believers (cf. Bruce Vawter, *The Johannine Epistles*, in JBC, London, 1968, 62, 9). The plural „we have seen ... we have heard ... we testify“ also points to the communitarian or ecclesial experience of the Christian believers.

In 1 Jn 4, 14 the author says: „We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world“. From the following verses it appears that their witness is their confession of Jesus: „God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God...“ The term „confess“ (homologeïn) means the public confession of faith. Hence „witnessing“ and „confession of faith“ in the Church merge into one another.

9. Faith in the uniqueness of Christ

When we speak of „witnessing“ as intimately related to our confession of faith in the Church, we are confronted with the question of our faith in the uniqueness of

Jesus Christ and the universal significance of the Christ-event, specially in the context of India with its religious pluralism. Vatican II was the first Council in the history of the Catholic Church to speak of other religions in a positive way. The Declaration „Nostra Aetate“ on the relations of the Church with the Non-Christian Religions, exhorts Christians to recognise the positive values presented in other traditions and enter into a relationship of dialogue and collaboration with their adherents. This positive approach to the non-Christian religions becomes a challenge to our faith in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the universal salvific significance of the Christ-event.

In this challenging situation, the witness of the Church has to be based on certain principles. First of all, we have to accept the universal salvific will of God. Salvation is offered to all. Secondly this salvation takes place within a temporally and historically situated community of faith. For non-Christians this can happen within their own religion, which is therefore a true vehicle of salvation. Thirdly Christ-event is always the constituent cause of salvation for all.

10. The Uniqueness of Christ: Inclusive

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the universal meaning of the Christ-event are the foundations of Christian faith. But this uniqueness is not exclusive but inclusive. Christ as mystery is God turning to humankind in self-revelation. Hence the Mystery of Christ is present wherever God enters into the life of human beings in an experience of the divine presence. But for Christians, the Mystery of Christ is inseparable from the Jesus of History, though his presence and activity are not limited to the confines of the Christian fold.

11. Jesus Christ: The Absolute Mystery

For Christian, it is the mystery of Christ that is at the centre of his faith not just his message nor just his personality. This is important for inter-religious dialogue and witnessing in the context of a pluralistic religious situation. Jesus Christ is the Absolute Mystery while the Church is the derived (relative) mystery. Salvation is possible in other religions, but always associated with the mystery of Christ. Vatican II says: „For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery (GS 22). The Church and other religions become means of salvation precisely because of their relationship with the mystery of Christ. Hence the question of the horizontal relationship between the Church and other religions can be satisfactorily solved only from the point of view of their vertical relationship with the mystery of Christ.

12. The Religious Traditions related to the Mystery of Christ

In the divine plan Jesus Christ is the centre of humanity. He is the universal mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2, 4-6). So faith in Jesus Christ is cosmic in its dimensions. It is true that the spatial particularity of Jesus Christ becomes, so to

say, a scandal. God choosing one cultural and religious expression, as a means to make the whole humankind his own, belittles the other religions, specially the centuries old religions of Asia and India. But the various religious traditions of humanity represent the various divine interventions in salvation history. These are ordered to the decisive salvific event in Jesus Christ. These religious traditions have a positive value for their members in the order of salvation by virtue of the presence of Christ and his saving mystery operative in them and through them. The religious traditions of humankind are evangelical preparations for the Gospel of Christ. The full proclamation of the Gospel takes place when one individual or one community explicitly accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour. This has not been done in the case of all persons and religions. For example, Paul speaks of such a situation for the Jews in Rome 9-11. So the non-Christian religions are not only pre-Christian but also pro-Christian.

This positive value of other religious traditions is indicated in the covenant of God with Noah (Gen 8-9). Jesus' positive attitude to the Gentiles as described in the Gospels is also indicative of this (cf. Mt 8, 5-13; Mk 7, 29; Mt 15, 21 f.). When Jesus was touched by the faith of the centurion he said: „I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness (Mt 8, 11-12). These words of Jesus also witness to the positive value of the non-Christian religious traditions. The Areopagus speech of St. Paul in Acts 17, 22-31 is a clear example of acknowledging the positive value of the non-Christian religious traditions and of bearing witness to the Christian faith in a multi-religious context as that of India. It is also interesting to note how St. John in his Gospel presents Jesus Christ as „Logos“ who was present in creation (Jn 1, 1) but ordained to Incarnation (Jn 1, 14) who is source of life (Jn 1, 4) and light enlightening everyone coming into the world (Jn 1, 9).

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is an important reality in the context of Christian witness in a multi-religious situation. Of course, here the Incarnation is to be understood not in the sense of redemption from sin or satisfaction for the sins of humankind, but in the sense of God's self-communication or manifestation to man. „God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life“ (Jn 3, 16). The immediate premise of the Incarnation is not „sin“ but „adoption“. The essential character of Incarnation is not so much the „redemption“ of man, but the divinization of man. „Adoption“ in us corresponds to what „Incarnation“ is in Christ. Being Son of God he became son of man so that as being children of men we become children of God (Cf. G. Martelet, „Sur le problème du motif de l'Incarnation, in H. Bouesse and J.J. Latour, (eds.) Problèmes actuels de Christologie, Paris 1965, 51). The self-communication of God in Jesus Christ which, we believe, is the most perfect self-communication, is nevertheless not the only or exclusive communication (Cf. J. Dupuis, Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions, N.Y. 1991, 99-110). The self-communication of God in Jesus Christ, the „Incarnated Logos“ is the most perfect and unique one. From Incarnation to Resurrection this self-communication of God takes place in various ways and in different phases.

The very title „Logos“ that the Fourth Evangelist gives to Jesus is indicative of this. The term „Logos“ means „Word“. The word is revelatory in nature. Long ago

God started speaking in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son (Heb 1, 1-2). Hence the Incarnated Son of God is the speech of God the self-communication of the Father, the „Logos“.

13. The Economy of the Spirit

The fulfilment of the messianic times is pictured in the Old Testament as an eschatological outpouring of the Spirit of God. This Spirit is a Spirit of inner renewal (Ez 11, 19), a new spirit placed within the human beings (Ez 36, 26, 37). This gift of the Spirit is a universal gift. Pentecost was a realization of this outpouring of the Spirit characteristic of the messianic times. Peter explains the Pentecost in this way: „This is what was spoken through the prophet Joël: In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh...“ (Acts 2, 16-17).

The Spirit poured out on Pentecost is the Spirit bestowed by Christ: „Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear (Acts 2, 33). According to Paul Jesus himself became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15, 45). The Spirit of God dwelling in us is qualified by Paul as the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8, 9) and the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3, 17). Paul goes to the extent of identifying Christ and the Spirit: „The Lord is Spirit“ (2 Cor 3, 17).

This Spirit is, however, a universal gift, a gift not limited to the Church. This universal character of the Spirit is evident both in the promise and in the fulfilment. Joël 2, 28 says: „I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.“ The universality of the tongues at Pentecost is a sign of the universality of the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2, 6-11). The Council of Jerusalem refers to a Pentecost of the Gentiles resembling that of the initial one (Acts 15, 8). The reference is to the incident in Acts 10, 44 - 11, 18 where it is said: „The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God“ (Acts 10, 45-46). The gift of faith was given to the holy pagans (Heb 11, 4-7).

14. The Presence of the Word and Spirit in other Religions

The activity of the Word and Spirit in the other religious traditions is affirmed by different Vatican II documents (cf. LG 16-17; AG 3, 7-9; NA 2). All the various stages of salvation history are integral to the mystery of Christ, the plan and process of God's self-manifestation to humankind. A new stage does not abolish automatically the previous stages. They are real, though incomplete, means of salvation.

It is this inter-relationship between the Church and other religious traditions based on the Mystery of Christ that should determine the nature and manner of Christian witnessing in a multi-religious context. The Church has to bear witness to her faith in Christ as the full manifestation of God's salvific plan for the humankind. At the same time, the Church should acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture (cf. NA, 2).

15. Church: a privileged sphere of Christ-Spirit

Though Christ, the Word and the Spirit, is present in the whole humankind, in all the religious traditions, the fact remains that the Church constitutes a privileged sphere of Christ and the Spirit. This is indicated by the fact that, in the so-called Johannine Pentecost, the risen Christ appeared to the disciples and breathed on them and said „Receive the Spirit“ (Jn 20, 22). The Spirit, the breath of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word was communicated to the Community of the Apostles who represent the Church. The Church was promised to have the special presence of the Spirit, the Paraclete, in contrast to the world (Jn 14, 15-17). The Church is the inner circle of this Christian centre, while the world is the outer one. If Christ is the Head of the Church (Col 1, 18; 2, 19), He is also the Head of the Cosmos (Col 1, 15-18; Eph 1, 22). If the Spirit of Christ is at work in the universe, it works in a special way in the Church (Rom 8, 14-23). So the Church has the duty of witnessing to her Christ-Spirit experience in solidarity with the other religious and cultural traditions.

16. Witness through the Liturgy

Liturgy is the celebration of the faith of the Church. Liturgical worship centered around the Eucharistic celebration is an obvious form of witness. It is there that the Church, the privileged sphere of the Word and the Spirit, the sphere of the mystery of Christ, expresses itself. Liturgy is the celebration of our own Christian existence, the celebration of our identity as people committed to the Christ-event and therefore also a proclamation and witness of Christ and his Gospel.

The Church being the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God, the liturgy is the celebration and proclamation of that sign. It is the celebration and proclamation of the holy dispensation, „m-dabra-nuta“, God's plan of human salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ. Each Eucharistic liturgical celebration incorporates us more and more into that salvific plan of God which is human, cosmic and eschatological. Experience of the Eucharist is experiencing the incarnation of Jesus Christ inside the limits of finite human existence. It is in the community's being united to the crucified and risen Lord that its members are able to transcend the limits of finitude and to become established in the source and destiny of their existence (cf. Paul Verghese, „The Relevance of Christology Today“ in Wort und Wahrheit Supplementary Issue No. 1, Vienna, December 1972). Hence the Liturgy itself is a missionary event. It is an act of participation in God's mission to the world and thus the best form of Christian witness.

17. Witness through Life

The liturgy is a continuous transformation of life into Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the liturgy should be translated into the everyday Christian life, both personal and communitarian. Thus the liturgy which is the proclamation of the Christ-event has in a sense to be continued in the daily life of the members of the Church. Without this continuation the liturgy remains incomplete. It is in this continuation of the liturgy in life that the Christian witness is fully effected.

In the Eucharistic Liturgy, we are incorporated into Christ „who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many“ (Mk 10, 45). This new being in Christ is to be manifested in the concrete life of the Christians, a life of love and service of the human community. The Eucharistic Liturgy does not cease when the Eucharistic assembly disperses. Going out of the Eucharistic celebration is a going out to continue the mission of Christ, to bear witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The believers, having experienced the Word of God and partaken in the Body and Blood (Spirit) of Christ are called to be prophetic signs of the Kingdom of God in this world.

18. Witness through Ecumenical Communion

In spite of the serious difficulties which prevent full communion it is evident that all those who by baptism are incorporated into Christ share in the same mystery of Christ. Thus there exists a real, though imperfect, communion among the Churches. This communion based on sharing the same mystery of Christ is an interior reality. John in his first Epistle describes this communion as a participation in the life manifested in Christ and experienced by the Apostles. Jesus the Incarnate Word is presented as life, life which was with the Father (1 Jn 1, 1-3). The Father manifests His own life in the Incarnate Word so that those who accept Him are brought to share the same divine life of the Father in Him. The different Churches share in this same divine life and therefore are in communion.

The Churches have to bear witness to this life or Communion (1 Jn 1, 2). The communion that exists within the Church and between the Churches has to be made visible so that it will become a sign for the world to believe in Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus proved for „that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me“ (Jn 17, 21). The communion that exists between the Churches can be expressed in various ways such as prayer in common, sharing in non-sacramental liturgical worship, sharing in sacramental life, especially the Eucharist, sharing other resources for spiritual life and activity etc. (cf. UR nn. 3 and 8; Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, Vatican City 1993, pp.63-76). When the different Churches live and pray together giving expression to their communion, they really bear witness to the faith which they share and to their baptism in the name of God, the Father of all, in his Son Jesus, the Redeemer of all, and in the Holy Spirit who transforms and unites all things through the power of love.

19. Witness through Ecumenical Co-operation

Based on the Communion that exists among the Churches, there is scope for many forms of ecumenical co-operation that will express and promote unity and enhance the witness to the saving power of the mystery of Christ that the Christians give to the world. Thus our Churches in India can cooperate in study and propagation of the Bible, studies of our ecclesial liturgical and spiritual heritage, in pastoral care of our faithful, in organizing cultural programmes suitable to give a common witness to Christ and Gospel values, in educational field imparting Christian values to individuals, families and society, in fighting against corruption

in the society, in analysing current social problems and proposing adequate solutions, in fighting against the moral disintegration of the society. Such a co-operation between our Churches will help us to overcome the barriers to full communion and at the same time to put together our resources for giving common witness in view of the mission which our Churches share.

20. Witness through Ecumenical Dialogue

Dialogue is at the heart of ecumenical co-operation and accompanies all forms of it (cf. Ecumenical Directory, 1993, 80-84). The dialogue will help the members of the different Churches to get to know one another, to identify matters of faith and practice which they share and points on which they differ. Understanding the roots of such differences and trying to find ways to overcome them in the light of the faith they hold in common, will gradually help them onward to the Communion which will be the best form of common witness. This dialogue could take different forms ranging from informal conversations that occur in daily life to study groups for specifically ecumenical subjects. This dialogue could take place also on different levels of the life of the Church and of the Society. If this dialogue is marked by a strong sense of the Mystery of Christ and the Church, it will promote mutual help and common witness.

21. Witness through Dialogue with other Religions

In the context of India, one of the best ways of bearing witness to Christ is Dialogue with other Religions. The Community of God, one and triune, and the communion of his Kingdom, to which God calls all peoples and of which the Church is the servant, make dialogue an integral dimension of the mission of the Church (cf. Theses on Interreligious Dialogue, FABC, papers, no. 48, 2, 03). When Christianity confronted Judaism and Hellenism, it developed a new and inclusive vision of the Mystery of Christ as manifested in the New Testament especially in Paul and John. In the course of the last two thousand years the Church has encountered and dialogued with various peoples, cultures and religions with varying levels of success. Today, in the context of the renewed discovery of the presence of Christ and his saving mystery operative in the world religious traditions, the Church has to be engaged in Dialogue with these religions in a more committed way. This is especially true of our Christian Witness against the Indian background of religions pluralism. Christians in India, though they are still a little flock, animated by the Spirit who is leading all things to unity, are called to play a serving and catalyzing role which facilitates Interreligious dialogue and collaboration. This calls for an experience of the mystery of Christ in our own lives, in sacrament and community, a living contact with other believers in an atmosphere of openness and trust, an increasing awareness of the universal dimension of God's plan and a better realization of the life of the Church as „mission“.

22. Ecumenical Witness and Interreligious Dialogue

The Christian witness through dialogue with other religions is deeply influenced by the ecumenical co-operation between the Churches. Ecumenical co-operation shows to the world and the members of other religions that those who believe in Christ and live by his Spirit and are thus made children of God who is Father of all, can set about overcoming human divisions, even about such sensitive matters as religious faith and practice. The common profession of faith in God and Jesus Christ before the people of other religions can be a powerful means of Christian witness. It will enable the Christians to be engaged better in dialogue with people of other religious traditions. In the same way a common, fraternal effort from the part of our churches in social, cultural, technical and even religious matters will be a genuine form of Christian witness in the context of the religious pluralism of India.

Discussion

Thomas Mar Themotheos congratulated the Archbishop for emphasizing the Indian situation and the importance of liturgy etc. Requested the members to start discussions.

Prof. (Mrs) Annamma Abraham from the Jacobite Church commented on the decision of Vatican II quoted in Powathil's paper and said that it is time to think of dialogues with all religions.

Advocate Jose from the Syro Malabar Church said that he found the paper as the Magna Charta of the symposium. He said the word incarnation is confusing with the word „Avathar“ in the Hindu religion. So he requested the participants to find a better word to explain the „incarnation“ to the Indians.

Fr. Kattackal from the Syro Malabar Church said that instead of „incarnate Christ“ he prefers „incarnate God“. He said there are two extremes. One is to say that all other religions are devilish and the other is to say that all religions are the same. These two bring the average believer into confusion. We must avoid these two extreme positions since it will definitely lead to problems. We must be careful in finding a solution between the two extremes. He also said that if we practice the healing ministry, it will be one of the greatest attraction for non-Christians to come to the church.

Fr. Tharian from the C.S.I. said that we must stress the uniqueness of Christ. Dialogue with other religions is necessary but is it not a compromise to them. He quoted Dr. Radha Krishnan's saying „Christians are ordinary people making extraordinary claims“. and said that we must answer these criticisms.

Archbishop Powathil said that incarnation is a word originated in the West. He is not against finding out a better word in the Indian situation. He said mission is to be stressed. Liturgy also has attracted people. Being a Christian there is no other way

than stressing the uniqueness of Christ. It is a claim for Christ. Conversion and full communion is necessary to make mission perfect.

Fr. Chediath from the Malabar Catholic Church said that Charismatic movements are also part of Christian life and witnessing people may be attracted by healing ministry and miracles but the emphasis must be on Christ. We are not sufficiently presenting Christ to India through categories which is understandable to the non-Christians. We should present Christ in their categories and not as a stranger or foreigner. Christ never asked us to increase number but his command was to witness him.

Thomas Mar Themotheos requested the PRO ORIENTE delegates to explain more about the Jewish Christian dialogues which are going on.

Dr. Fenn from the Catholic Church suggested that the Indian meditation systems are good methods to explain and experience Christ. He said that we should allow people to go to different churches in order to get rid of the idea that the church building is the church. They must feel that Church is something beyond simple buildings. So also different denominations should be allowed to celebrate in the same churches. He also suggested to give badges to persons who are involved in ecumenical activities.

Fr. Xavier Koodapuzha (Syro-Malabar Church) is happy that the uniqueness of Christ is emphasized. In some of the recent missionary conferences in Northern India the uniqueness of Christ was watered down and this really leads to a crisis in Mission. The Vatican II documents (*Lumen Gentium*) recognised the positive value of other religions but at the same time it does not deny the uniqueness of Christianity. True Christian must also accept the uniqueness of Christ, otherwise his religious affiliation is meaningless. He said that both Gandhi and Radhakrishnan had great appreciation for Christ. But they didn't want to become Christians. They criticised Christianity since they identified it with colonial power, which exploits the Afro-Asian countries, and ridicules Indian culture. Mission and Liturgy should be seen in proper perspective. In liturgy we proclaim our faith through symbols and images and so the symbols are meaningful. The moderator made the comment that Dr. Radhakrishnan said that India has seen only two Christians, St. Thomas in the first century and Mahatma Gandhi in the 20th century.

Deacon Saji from the Jacobite Church said that the Christians should accept others as they are without making any extraordinary claims. We do not have any right to impose our understandings and convictions on others. The Dialogue in Indian context should include the Dalits (backward casts) also. The Moderator said that many things are not said in the paper and can not be possibly be so, too.

Fr. Dr. John Mathews (Orthodox) said that we are only making speeches and not acting positively. We cannot show the uniqueness of Christ because we, Christians are not unique comparing to others.

Prof. Otto König from Austria said that the claim of absolute uniqueness of Christ came from a western tradition. In India our task is to re-define this idea of pre-eminence and uniqueness. We must be prepared to accept the valuable things from Indian traditions too.

Mar Joseph Powathil said concluding the dialogue that Christ has made unique claims which nobody else made. Accepting Christ explicitly and entering into the community that he has constituted depends also on the claims he made, which was a scandal to the Jews and a foolishness to the gentiles. But he has never given up his claims. In our dialogue with other religions it is sad, if we give up certain claims. In this, he said that he does not agree with Prof. König.

Sixth working session: Saturday October 2nd, afternoon

Special prayer of Gandhi Jayanti (125 birth anniversary of Gandhi), given by H.G. Archbishop *Mar Joseph Powathil*

Moderator: *H.E. Metropolitan George Punnakottil*

Thomas Mar Themotheos

THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF A COMMON CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN INDIA

1. Introduction

Each individual has an identity, sometimes different identities - national, religious, denominational, ethnic so on and so forth. „In the process of give and take between the self and the world, the personality of every being is developed, evolves, by reference to models certain aspects of which it assimilates, only to reject later in order to take on others.“¹ Just as individuals, various churches have developed their own identities in history. The Church founded by Jesus Christ, in the course of history got divided. Several reasons could be attributed to those divisions. One result of those divisions is that each group has developed its own traits. Therefore we could talk about a Roman Catholic (Latin Church) identity, Byzantine or a Syrian identity. Innumerable sub-identities also could be identified in each of the above broad divisions. These „physiognomies“ of Churches could be elaborated as local, national, regional and ethnic. Yet others are cultural. Confessional differences also have contributed to the development of different identities. Any search for unity is very much related to the search for a common identity. In India we have varieties of such Church identities. Just as several invisible walls are existing in the Indian Society, the Churches also are divided by walls of divisions. The exclusive attitudes of Christians and Churches mark the quality of Christian witness. Many

¹ Isabelle Chaireire, „The part played by Christ and the Spirit in the identification process“ in *CONCILIUM*, April 1988 (Christian Identity - Religion in the Eighties) edited by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristan, T & T Clark Ltd., Edinburgh, p. 94

sensitive Christians are concerned about this problem. Development of a common Church identity could be one of the solutions. The search for a common identity is also a search for rediscovering the purpose of God's intentions in and through the Church. In the midst of various religious traditions in India, the search for a common Christian identity is imperative. The divided Churches often project an unwholesome image. Between the different religious traditions in India more than any other period dialogue is needed. For this, the Church could play a creative role. The Church can be a bridge-builder between warring communities. „The Church could ... collaborate on all levels in the ongoing process of the inner transformation of the traditional religions of India.“² Elaborating this point Raymond Panikkar says, „Under the impact of modernity, traditional religions in India, if they are at all to survive, have to evolve and to undergo an often painful process of inner transformation.“³ Churches should be able to help in this process. Between the Churches and between members of various denominations, ignorance and misunderstandings need to be removed as a first step to create a new identity for this big task. Dismantling of historically inherited prejudices is an important step in this process.

To be a Christian also means... For any believer the key reference is to the founder of the religion. The Semitic religions and all other world religions, excepting perhaps Hinduism, have this in common. The truth that was revealed through Jesus of Nazareth and the identification of a believer to him needs to be examined. Jesus Christ who offers salvation and life invites us to follow him. (Lk 6, 47; 14, 25-33) What does following Jesus mean? Does it mean imitating him or going beyond? To be a Christian means placing one's trust in the historical personage of Jesus, in whom we accept a trans-historical dimension. „It means identifying Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah announced by the prophets and expected by the Jewish people. This recognition comes through our experience of the risen Christ: an event handed down by tradition through the Christian community ...“⁴

The Christian identity needs ultimately to be shaped by the revelation of the Holy Trinity in this world. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is not only the ultimate reality or the transcendent whole, but a paradigm for relationship. The revelation par excellence of the Trinitarian God was through Jesus Christ. It continues to be a reality through the Holy Spirit. „If this God who relates to us offers us, in God's mode of being, a model on which to form our personality as believers, then we also need to understand how the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit work and to analyse the consequences for us.“⁵

2. From Orthodoxy to Orthopractice

For the evolution of a common identity the Churches in India need to re-examine their doctrines thoroughly and give adequate and new interpretations. True faith must lead to true practice. If truth does not liberate us it is not truth. The traditional doctrines which foster exclusiveness must be reinterpreted. Since the

² Raymond Panikkar, „The dream of an Indian Ecclesiology“ in *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology*, edited by Gerwin van Leeuwen, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1984, p. 39

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40

⁴ I. Chaireire, *op. cit.* p. 95

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95

times of the Greek disputants of early Christian centuries, the Greek philosophy had exerted its influence over Christian theology. The problems and methods of Greek Philosophy were used in theology to claim that salvation of people and nations were dependent on the maintenance of same opinion about metaphysical processes. And this has been responsible for many false analyses of the character and mission of Christianity.

„This typically Greek evaluation of the nature and function of ideas must be held in part accountable for the intolerance in religion which has given rise to many denominations through the exclusion of groups professing an opinion more or less divergent from that which had become established“.⁶

Not only on the re-examination of doctrines, but on several other fronts, openness - to other Churches, to other religious traditions and secular ideologies - is essential. „Here is where we urgently need an Indian ecclesiology to spell it out:

„Church as salt, leaven, living organism, people of good-will (incidentally not merely of good doctrines: orthopractice has primacy over orthodoxy).“⁷

True Paradigm of orthopractice we find in Jesus Christ. He came at a time of messianic expectation among the Jewish people. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God. He did not take part in the political movements (Mt. 22, 17-22) and so did not aim to restore the earthly Kingdom of the people of Yahweh. He was not afraid of conversing with people. He chose to address himself to those pushed out to the margins of Society. He spoke to a woman with bad reputation (Lk 7, 37-50), shared meals with publicans and sinners (Mt. 9, 10-11) and showed forgiveness to people punished by the Law or shunned by the righteous.⁸ From the Churches' side the present day strife-ridden Indian Society needs collective orthopractice. The identity of the Church must be known through that. In this Christ is the Paradigm. How far Churches are equipping the faithful to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ need appraisal. Orthopractice means living in and guided by the Spirit. Our identification with Christ is effectively made possible by the Spirit. Though the Son is physically absent in our day today world the stage is fully set for the founding of Christian Identity. Besides placing the son in his difference from the Father, the Spirit establishes us in a true relationship with the Creator and with the Creator's manifestation in Christ.

3. Christian Identity in the midst of Challenges

How the Indian response to the Christian fact should be? This needs careful examination. The historical experience of the Church in India which has twenty centuries of its existence is a valuable deposit. The Churches of the Syrian traditions have valuable contributions to make. To do this effectively they need to rediscover the essential and non-essential factors that separate them. This must be an ongoing search. The pluralistic religious situations and its rich traditions have to be another source of inspiration. The socio-political realm and the economic sphere deserve attention. „In theological terms, Christian identity does not need to mean sociolo-

gical homogeneity or doctrinal uniformity. Christians in India should be convinced of their right and duty to rethink and re-enact the Christian fact, certainly without ignoring twenty centuries of Christian history, but also without ignoring that Christ is living“⁹ „Yesterday, today and forever“ (Heb. 13, 8).

India is a nation of varied peoples, cultures and languages. Numerous societies live here side by side. There are attempts of late, aggressive ones even to impose certain religious identities on others. „... India is a polity, that is a collective of citizens, in which numerous Societies and cultures co-exist and that the identity of each of these should be carefully nurtured and not be liquidated or even assimilated into an artificially contrived mainstream“.¹⁰ It is in the midst of this difficult situation that the Churches have to live and witness the life-giving and liberating Lord Jesus Christ. „Contemporary Christian identity needs to find a delicate balance between witnessing the fact of Easter Conversion of one's own life, crusade against evil, mission towards the neighbour and dialogue with the world“.¹¹ It is common to confuse identity with rigidity of practices and thought patterns for that matter of the Church. Tradition contributes a lot in determining the identity of a group, Church or religion. As regards Christian tradition, it should be progressive and not retrogressive.

4. Denominationalism versus authentic Christian identity

Whatever justifications are there for the existence of different Churches, it has to be said that denominationalism is a curse. Churches have often been susceptible to worldly victories, ignoring the ideals of Jesus Christ. „In adapting itself to the conditions of a civilization which its founder had bidden it to permeate with the Spirit of divine love, it found that it was easier to give to Caesar the things belonging to Caesar if the examination of what might belong to God were not too closely preserved“.¹² The Christian ethics of brotherhood is defeated by denominationalism. It underscores the moral failure of Christianity.

„Denominational Christianity that is a Christianity which surrenders its leadership to the social forces of national and economic life, offers no hope to the divided world. Lacking an integrating ethics, lacking a universal appeal, it continues to follow the fortunes of the world gaining petty victories in a war it has long lost. From it the world can expect none of the prophetic guidance it requires in its search for synthesis.“¹³

A major evil of denominational Christianity is that it excludes others as outsiders. „... We are not Christians by virtue of excluding others. ... It was Augustine who affirmed the belief that many are outside who are actually inside, and many are inside who are actually outside“.¹⁴ Instead of seeing God working in the

⁹ R. Panikkar, op. cit. p. 26

¹⁰ Oomen. T.K. „Unity and Diversity. Building an authentic India“. Article in The Times of India, June 7, 1993, p. 12

¹¹ R. Panikkar, op. cit. p. 27

¹² Niebuhr. H. R. op. cit. p. 3

¹³ Ibid., p. 275

¹⁴ Quoted by Christian Duquoc in „Church membership and Christian identification“, in CONCILIUM, April 1988. p. 122

⁶ Niebuhr H., The Social Sources of Denominationalism, Meridian Books Inc., New York, 1957, p. 12

⁷ R. Panikkar, Op. cit. p. 46

⁸ I. Chareir, op. cit. p. 95-96

world through Church alone, we have to see God's ceaseless activity in the world as sovereign creator.

The hope which sustains the Church is not that it will eventually be restored to new positions of prestige and power but that its humiliation and defeat will bring forth the will of God here and now or in His own eschatological future. For any church the focus point on this count must be Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry which ended up on the cross and the resurrection thereafter. Here ecclesiology is heavily influenced by Christology and Church's authentic identity emerges. But denominational Christianity fails exactly on this point. Histories of Churches abound with such failures.

The Church in this world should avoid the extremes of proud triumphalism and religious isolationism. Quite often Church is vulnerable to these extremes. Incarnate Christ's own relationship with the world should be an ever refreshing factor in the Church-World relationship. From the New Testament books, Jesus stands out as a man who lived in full harmony with God and man. His unity with the Father was complete; his sense of brotherhood and solidarity with men knew no bounds of social class or religious affiliation. What is the meaning of the fullness of life offered by him in our own times? The limiting factors of denominationalism have to be critically examined by the Indian Churches to be faithful to the Lord Jesus.

5. Conclusion

We live at a historical juncture, when different religious identities clash for domination in India. „Hindutva“ has become a catchword not only of the Hindu religiosity, but also of our general Indian polity. It evokes apprehensions in the minds of others in India, especially among the Muslims who are larger in number than the Muslims of Pakistan itself. Also we hear about the Islamic identity - the efforts being made by radical groups to islamise the Muslims, who according to them are much hinduised. The militancy of the Sikh identity is little bit subsided but not at all fully wiped out. There are ever so many other sub-identities seeking forceful expression in this land. The clash has become so forceful that many social thinkers and secular minded leaders are concerned about it. One observation is worth quoting. „If one community strives for a more aggrandised identity it cannot but provoke the others to do the same“.¹⁵ The Christian Church in India is called to do its mission in the midst of such a conflicting situation. Tremendous challenge is involved here. Church is trusted to a large extent, yet mistrusted as a foreign agency by many. Many - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others - do think that Church has a role to play. It needs an Indian identity acceptable to all Indians. Yet its indianness should not be parochial or just geographically limited, but an identity that reaches beyond barriers and reaches to the very core of the conflicting situations to bring forth shanthi and true life promised by its Lord Jesus.

¹⁵ Sham Lal, „Mythologies old and new“, article in The Sunday Times, June 6, 1993, p. 14

Discussion:

Fr. Chediath from Malabar Catholic Church expressed deep appreciation on the paper.

Fr. Koodapuzha from Syro Malabar Church referred to the question from R. Panickar and said that Orthodoxy and Orthopractice are equally important for Christians. He said that we do not have to dream about an Indian ecclesiology since there was and is already an Indian ecclesiology. It was a unique ecclesiology which was developed outside the Greco-Roman world. Our task is to re-discover it and use it.

Fr. John Berchmans from Syro-Malankara Church said that there was a cry for the last twenty years to develop an Indian Christian Theology. Even then why we are not going forward. What prevents us from developing an Indian Christian Theology. Mar Themotheos said that we can argue which from orthopractice and orthodoxy comes first. He thinks that churches and Christians have conveniently forgotten orthopractice to gain other things. The neglected aspect of Christian theology must be found again. Regarding the Indian ecclesiology, he said that the Indian Church was limited to Malabar. An Indian ecclesiology must not be limited by geographical boarders and must not be separated from other ecclesiologies. There is a need for that, and we are called to work for that. There are so many developments in that line and we hope it will emerge one day.

Mr. A.J. Jose from the Syro-Malabar Church said that Hinduism is not a single religion and it has transferred our policy. Christians are called by Christ to lose all identity and so there is no need to keep a separate identity in India. So also there are so many similarities between Hinduism and Christianity.

Fr. Xavier Puthenkulam from Syro-Malabar Church said that this paper brings a new vision of a new identity. Even though we are divided we all have something common behind all these divisions. That something is Indian and that holds us together and we can go forward with it.

Fr. Kattackal from Syro-Malabar Church said that Indian Christianity is often branded as foreign. He showed various similarities between Hinduism and Christianity and argued that it is not difficult to form an Indian Christian theology without compromising any Christian principles.

Fr. C.C. Cherian from the Orthodox Church referred to the statement of Mar Themotheos that denominationalism is a curse. We Christians were one till the sixteenth century. But after that foreign influences have separated us. Foreign contacts have of course helped us but it also spoiled our independence and even the ability to think independently. If we can cut off all foreign contacts, whatever type it may be, it would be easy for us to come together and form an Indian Christian Ecclesiology. At least take the freedom to think about it. He also requested the PRO ORIENTE to encourage some follow up works of the symposium.

Prof. Sebastian from Syro-Malabar Church said that we should more frequently examine the identity of Indian Christianity. There is an identity crisis within the church. The identity of a Christian is that he is a humble servant of Christ. He also said that orthodoxy and orthopractice must go together. He drew attention to the Indian Theological Association which is working for an Indian Christian theology. *Fr. Koilaparambil* from the Latin church said that we should continue the search of an Indian ecclesiology. We are still looking upon foreign aids. Let us become completely free from foreign help and try to look after our own things.

H.G. Mar Themotheos said that we have a responsibility to desire and see what is our mission. The Cross of Christ will be the guiding principle for the Christian church in India. We are all conditioned by our past history. It is very common to hear the accusation that the foreigners came here and made the divisions. The actual problem were we ourselves and our leaders. There is no point in blaming others. Instead of blaming others let us try to see what is our future aim. The Church is being branded as a foreign agency in many parts of North India. But in Kerala this is not a problem. We have to see that the whole Indian Church is rooted in the Indian soil and branding it as a foreign agency does not have any justification.

Fr. Dubasque from the Pontifical Council for Unity commented on the PRO ORIENTE symposium. He repeated the words of Pope John Paul II, and said that the Roman Catholic Church is involved and devoted to ecumenical works. He thanked the PRO ORIENTE organization for its achievements. The most important thing is not the papers read, but what we are experiencing together and being together.

The ecumenical relationships must be based on three pillars. Firstly, fraternal contacts and relations. Secondly, study and theological researches. Thirdly, prayer and practical collaboration.

If one of these pillars is missing then the whole thing will be unstable.

Fourthly, many things are going to be said about the policy of this organization.

Fifthly, for the Roman Catholic Church, promoting Christ on unity is very important. He described some activities of the Roman organism.

Ecumenical education of priests and future priests are important. He said that this being altogether was a heavenly experience. We should not say like the apostles on Transfiguration. We have to go down and tell all over. Brothers and sisters what we have seen and experienced.

H.E. Dr. George Punnakottil concluded by thanking everybody for participating in the discussions.

Then he chaired the presentation of the reports of the group discussions and the general discussion.

Prof. Dr. Cyriac Thomas

SUMMARY OF THE REPORTS OF THE TEN WORKSHOPS

1. Scheme details

Groups	Moderator	Secretary	Question discussed
1	H.E. Mar George Punnakottil	Prof. Annanana Abraham	First
6	Dr. Xavier Koodappuzha		First
2	Fr. Joseph Vendarappathy	Deacon Bijil Markose	Second
7	Fr. C.C. Cherian		Second
3	Fr. Antony V. Koken	Mr. A.J. Jose	Third
8	Fr. G. Chediath	Mr. Roy Joseph	Third
4	Fr. Adai Jacob	Mr. C.C. Peter	Fourth
9	Fr. Joseph Koilparambil		Fourth
5	H.E. Thomas Mar Thimotheus	Mr. Sebastian Mabiakel	Fifth
10	Rev. M.T. Thariyan	Prof. K.T. Sebastian	Fifth

2. First Question

„On the basis of the agreement on christology and on the basis of our Apostolic heritage in India, can we project a vision of one Church in India?

If this future Church maintains eucharistic communion with all other apostolic churches in the world, what are the minimum requirements for a truly Indian Apostolic Church in terms of structure, authority, liturgy, spirituality, style of life...?

Can we use all the available resources in our various churches in India today to shape an authentic ecclesial tradition in India, a tradition that transcends the present division?“

Group 1

Agrees with the concept of one church in India but prefers the different churches keep their own identity yet having a kind of union. Proposes sacramental hospitality provided a common understanding of the Eucharist is possible.

Collegial authority or a centralised body may be necessary. While one's liturgy is retained, a common spirituality is also to be evolved. More effective social involvement is necessary utilizing available resources at our disposal. Inculturation is a must. On the evangelical field more unified effort is necessary. Steps should be taken for conscientising the seminarians on the principles and possibilities of Ecumenism.

Group 6

The idea of one Indian church is welcome. But the venerable ecclesial patrimony of each church must be constitutive elements. It must be united in communion and shouldn't aim at a monolithic structure. Objective should not be uniformity but a harmony in variety. Unity in action and witness should be promoted. In a situation which we find in India regional co-ordination may help maintain the rich diversity in the country. The structure should in no way precipitate a crisis.

3. Second Question

„What is our christian mission today in India where the preaching of the gospel and christian activities are viewed with suspicion, at least by a small section of the majority community?

Is conversion the essence of mission?

Are Christians seen as a „foreign“ group in India?“

Group 2

The Group felt that even if the other Communities are suspicious of us, to a considerable extent, we are also to be blamed for that. In India the lives lived by the Christians does not bear any witnessing of Lord Jesus. What is being said in the Bible and the lives of the Christians in India does not meet anywhere. The question of Dalits in India is to be included more seriously in the agenda of our churches. Christian mission in India may be viewed as multidimensional.

Regarding conversion, the group felt it an essential aspect of the mission of the church only in certain parts that Christians are considered as foreign groups.

Group 7

The mission of the church is not confined to the presenting of the Gospel alone. Christ is to be expressed through the lives of His followers. Our educational institutions have a special role to play viz giving formation to students instead of merely providing them with information. The Church should certainly emphasize the role of „Love“ so that the small differences must give way to big agreements.

Group felt conversion was essential and the newly converts duly taken care of.

4. Third Question

„The Church teaches that God and humanity are perfectly united in the incarnate Christ.

What is its meaning for us today in India where we see poverty, oppression, injustice and many other social evils.

What is the Church's ministry to society in the light of incarnation?

What are our ecumenical possibilities of collaboration in fighting these evils in our society?“

Group 3

The incarnate Christ expresses the love of God to Man and he (man) in turn has a responsibility to be kind, considerate and loving towards his fellow beings. The Church should not limit her services to liturgy but certainly must reach the poor and address to their needs. Christ today is in the oppressed. In India the issue of Dalits is to be championed by the Church. It is the inherent responsibility of every Christian to help create a better world.

Group 8

While other religions such as Buddhism advice the attainment of Salvation through man's effort, in Christianity it was through the grace of God, out of His

sympathy and Love for Men. The charismatic renewal help people to uphold certain values. In Christ the distinction between the sacred and the secular disappears. The ecumenical possibilities are to be explored in very earnest.

5. Fourth Question

„We live in a country rich in many religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions. What is our christian response to these religious insights and perceptions. Do we accept the goodness in them and the people who practice them? If we accept them, will it be a compromise of our faith in Christ?“

Group 4

We need recognize the presence of the various religions as well as the spiritual and philosophical traditions in India. No one can ignore the influence of them in the formation of the Indian Society. We the Christians in India are also a part and parcel of that Indian Society. The basic Indian temperament is tolerance, and this was a reason for the very presence of the Christians in India where they constitute only a minority. There must be a better harmony between the faith and the life of the Christians.

Group 9

While recognizing the goodness of other religions, we also need emphasise the uniqueness of the personality of Christ and His message. If we fail to accept the goodness in other religions it means that we become less christian. The Christians should seriously view and respond to the contemporary Indian situation.

6. Fifth Question

„Communal hatred and the politicisation of religion are menacing the Indian society and its democratic vision. As a minority community what is the role of Christians in India in this critical situation?“

Group 5

We should see the problems of India in a christian way and respond to them in such a way even if it affects the „interests“ of the Christians. Formation of a new generation should find priority in our agenda. The christian presence should be more effectively felt in the field of education where we have already a decisive voice.

Group 10

By and large the people of the major religion in India are very peace-loving and brotherly. Religious tolerance is India's age-old tradition. In India the major trouble now is the emerging culture of violence and corruption. Politicisation of religion and the consequent violence even varies from region to region. In India politicisation of religion has become a threat to Indian democracy. The churches must promote the spirit of ecumenism as well as love for other religions, especially among youngsters.

Conclusion by Moderator *H.E. Dr. George Punnakottil*

Almost everybody agreed in having one Indian Church.
Keep the identity of every church and have sacramental hospitality.
Collegial authority was recommended.
Christians are not considered as foreigners in Kerala.
New interpretation must be given to conversion and baptism.
Foreign contacts are creating some problems.
We must respect foreign agencies who gave us the gospel news and helping us in spreading it.
Witness the love of Christ and requested for a change of heart is more important than increasing the number of Christians.
Church in India must become more effective in human right problems.
Christians must lead true Christian life and witness Christ.

Seventh working session: Monday October 4th

Worship led by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

Moderator: *Bishop Mar Aprem G. Mookan*

Mathews Mar Severios

CONCILIARITY AND PRIMACY A MODEL FOR FUTURE CHURCH UNITY

1. Introduction

The Church is the Body of Christ. Hence it is a Koinonia, its members participating in and sharing each other, everyone according to his own capacity for the growth of this Body. The oneness of the Church is derived from the One Christ manifesting in turn the Oneness of the Trinity. The Church, therefore, is the image of the Trinity.¹ The real Church unity is a reflection of the Koinonia of the Holy

¹ Cyrille Argenti: Christian Unity, in *The Ecumenical Review (ER)*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1976, p. 34

Trinity manifested through the members of the Church. Thus Koinonia is the community of Christians on the basis of the common participation in the living and indwelling Christ, in whom they share by His redeeming death and resurrection through the action of the Holy Spirit.² Conciliarity and primacy are two concepts in Church unity seriously considered both in the discussions of the World Council of Churches beginning from its very foundation and also in the unofficial consultations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches since 1971. Both these Organisations were spending their energy to find out an effective model for the future Church unity³ for which we recommend the model of Church unity constituting conciliarity and primacy.

2. Models of Church Unity

The Church as the Body of Christ cannot exist divided. Its unity is a divine reality we have to discover. In this effort the early World Council Bodies had the following affirmations.⁴

(a) That the unity of the Church is a given unity, in that it has its essential reality in Jesus Christ Himself.⁵

(b) That this unity must be made manifest to the world.⁶

(c) That full Church unity must be based on a large measure of agreement in doctrine.⁷

(d) That Sacramental communion is a necessary part of full Church unity.⁸

(e) That a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church⁹ are required, but that a rigid uniformity of Governmental Structure¹⁰ or a structure dominated by a centralised administrating authority¹¹ are to be avoided.

(f) That the unity of the Church depends on the renewal of the Church.¹²

(g) That this unity is not to be sought for its own sake only, but for the sake of the world in which the Church performs its mission and evangelism.¹³

These affirmations may not be complete. But they have much importance as the common voice of many Traditions in the One Church. The common effort to establish Church unity from different angles proposed different models of Church unity according to the consciousness they received from the Holy Spirit. And it is very encouraging that this consciousness was growing down through the centuries proposing more and more fruitful models for our common concern. This clearly shows that our Churches began to think of a common vision of the unity. Unity is essential, not only for the sake of our common witness, but a necessity of realizing it as the truth of the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ as a reconciled community

² J.C.G. Kotze: The meaning of our unity in Christ, in ER, Vol. VII, No. 2, January 1955, p. 327

³ The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No. 2, 1991, p. 69

⁴ W.A. Visser 'T Hooft: Various meanings of unity, ER, Vol. VIII, No. 1, October 1955, p. 21

⁵ Amsterdam Assembly report, p. 51; Evanston Speaks, S.C.M. Press. p. 18; Lund report, p. 20

⁶ Evanston Speaks, p. 19; Toronto Statement IV, 2

⁷ Amsterdam Assembly report, p. 55; „Christ - the hope of the World“, p. 20; Edinburg report, p. 253

⁸ Lund report, p. 49

⁹ Lund report, p. 26 and some permanent organ of conference and counsel Edinburgh report, p. 253

¹⁰ Lund report, p. 34

¹¹ Amsterdam report, p. 127

¹² Lund report, P. 21; Evanston Speaks, p. 23

¹³ Evanston Speaks, p. 20

manifests the reality of its essence and confesses its eschatological dimension as the Kingdom of God. Its unity clarifies its status as a symbol of the unity of the total creation. Hence it is necessary that our effort for Church unity must be from the perspective of realizing and manifesting its inherent character of catholicity or universality. In this effort the will to unity is of prime importance. Every Church needs purification and constant renewal. Unity with other Churches is therefore not to be feared as a threat to its identity. On the contrary unity can enfold the individual identities in a more inclusive identity.¹⁴ This sacrament of confession is to be practised among our „confessions“. A constant rhythm of dying and rising again is a mark of the vitality of Christ's life. This doesn't mean the abolition of the fundamental constituents of the Church and to lay a new foundation but only the dying of the secondaries so that the primaries may shine more gloriously and with a new vigour of the Truth manifested, the essential character of the Church of Christ. The Holy Spirit indwelling in the Church leads her to all the truth. The Church is in via, being led by the Spirit to the fullness of Truth.¹⁵

3. Earlier models of unity

3.1. Interconfessional movements

Christians from different Churches - individually or in groups - come together to pursue a common goal in obedience to Christ. The emphasis is not on the union of the divided Churches as such but an effective unity in witness, service and fellowship for the sake of the goal.

3.2. Federations or Councils of Churches

In this different Churches as such agree to co-operate in certain tasks. This fellowship resulted will be more or less binding and effective in engaging the life of the Churches.

3.2. Full mutual recognition

A form of unity established, for example between the Anglican Church and the Old Catholic Church or C.S.I.

3.4. Organic Union

Different Churches come together to form a new fellowship with its own, new identity. This normally involves agreement in a new confession of faith, on sacraments and ministry, on an organisational structure by which they can act as a single body. A new name, a common tradition showing inherent experiences are its marks

¹⁴ Lukas Vischer: The unity of the Church, a report to the Central Committee, ER, Vol. XXV, No. 4, October 1973

¹⁵ Paul Verghese, Fr. T: The infallibility of the Church, significance of the Ecumenical Council, Wort und Wahrheit, 1973. Supplementary issue, No. II, p. 46

leading to one United Church. The proposed effort to find an „Indian Christian Church“ is an example.

Out of the above models most of the theologians recommend the model of Organic Union as a fully committed fellowship.¹⁶ Achievement of full communion in faith and sacramental life is the objective of all the ecumenical dialogues between the churches for which they pray and proceed.¹⁷ There is, of course, tension along the way to the visible unity in which it will finally be overcome.

4. Conciliar fellowship of Churches

The Salamanca Consultation convened by the Faith and Order Commission, W.C.C., on „concepts of Unity and models of Union“, September 1973 proposed this new model for the Organic Union of the Churches.¹⁸ The Oneness, Catholicity and the Apostolicity of the Church is aimed as the goal of this conciliar fellowship of the local churches. The document is quoted below:

„The One Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship each local church possess, in communion with the others, the fullness of Catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same church of Christ and guided by the same spirit. As the New Delhi Assembly pointed out, they are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same Eucharist, they recognize each other's members and ministries. They are one in their common commitment to confess the Gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world. To this end each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationship with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gathering whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling.“

This document was extensively studied by theologians of all the Christian traditions and there arose positive and negative criticisms. But one thing to be noted here is that many of the ongoing dialogues between different families of Christian traditions come to the conclusion time and again supporting the conciliar fellowship of the Churches as a practical and vital model of future Church unity. The recent dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches also came to the same conclusion in their Fifth communiqué in September 1988 at Vienna.¹⁹ Conciliarity is being recommended by almost all the joint Declarations, communiqués and statements of the joint efforts of the Churches. The question remains unsolved is the question of a primate among the Churches to act as a coordinator or convenor of this conciliar fellowship. That is why we have conjoined this concept of primacy along with the concept of conciliarity. We are of the opinion that a conciliar fellowship of the Churches for the goal of organic union necessitates a primacy, not as a permanent structure but as a structure which is provided so that

it may act as and when necessity arises in the conciliar fellowship of the Churches for their common life and witness.

Hence conciliarity with primacy may be proposed as a model of future Church unity. A primacy within the conciliar fellowship in its full sense of conciliarity may not face with objections from the different Church Traditions.

The achievement of a BEM document by the World Council of Churches and the recent statements out of the study seminars on primacy and conciliarity by the initiative of PRO ORIENTE, the Vienna based foundation for promoting Christian unity in July 1991 and June 1992 helped us to view this model of conciliarity of the local Churches with a primacy included within its framework.

5. Conciliarity and Primacy

5.1. Etymological

Conciliarity is derived from „concilium“ (council), its primary meaning as „an assembly of people which serves the purpose of discussing or negotiating something“. Primacy comes from „primo“ (first), where others are of the same category as the first.

5.2. Theological

Conciliarity and primacy are two ecclesiological principles. Conciliarity presupposes a council and primacy presupposes a group of equals. Conciliarity is an inherent character of every form of society, not to mention its personal dimension in the growth of an individual. Hence conciliarity is the nature of the Church whether it is manifested or not in particular council. Without even manifesting this basic nature in councils the Church could live and continues to live even in its weak expressions. True conciliarity is a Trinitarian principle. Church as a conciliar fellowship should be sharing everything common in the fellowship of the life of Christ. The purpose of conciliarity is to express this one content of the fullness of the life of Christ shared among the members of the Church.

5.3. Conciliarity and Council

A council in its true sense can be only through the members in the same communion, either it is in the same Church or among the local Churches. Hence the conciliar fellowship of the local Churches presupposes a unity of faith. Conciliar fellowship in its true sense is a synonym for organic unity. The essence of this conciliar fellowship is the existing character of unity of the Church of Christ, though diversity is found within its socio-cultural as well as historical milieu.

5.4. Conciliarity and Communion

Eucharistic communion is essential to conciliarity. It manifests the communion existing in the Holy Trinity. The real problem is how can a council of local Churches which are not of an identical faith in fundamental principles of Tradition

¹⁶ The New Delhi Report, London: SCM Press, and New York, Harper and Row, 1961, pp. 116 ff.

¹⁷ The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No. 1, 1990, p. 103

¹⁸ Ecumenical Chronicle, ER, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, April 1974, p. 291

¹⁹ The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No. 1, op. cit., p. 103

of the Church of Christ express this communion in their conciliar fellowship. This reminds us to move back again in the effort of expressing our common faith. A solution to view the Eucharistic communion among the Churches of different traditions as a hospitality to full unity is against the basic concept of Eucharist itself.

5.5. Process of Conciliarity

The conciliar fellowship of the local Churches visualised in a movement towards its fullness from its present limitations would be a solution. This can be considered as the growth of a conciliar fellowship of the local Churches from its infancy through childhood to its maturity, our aim. This can be begun in the local level and may be moved in the universal or global level. Every previous Ecumenical Council recognized their status through an overgrowing acceptance by the Christian Churches everywhere.

5.6. A Primate

A primate to convoke the Council of the Churches, to preside over and to pronounce the decisions of the Council is not the real point of discord among the Churches. The special authority of any other form superceding the power of the members of the Council is the cause of opposition. A primate's declaration alien to or different from the consensus of the members of the Council makes him despotic and contrary to the very nature of conciliarity. Based on the fact of the Church as the icon of the Holy Trinity, a primacy of the president of the council pronouncing the „same will“ of its members, just as the will of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity is the same, is acceptable to all. A primacy attributed to the president by the members of the council can never be viewed as something special by any other means of historical or political reasons. Primacy, though a living reality existing in every Church, its exercise, character and manifestation are various and in manifold ways seen in these Churches.

6. Conclusion

Primacy and conciliarity are closely interrelated. Conciliar fellowship is a true model for achieving organic union of the Churches to the Church of Christ. It can be started at the local level, i.e., the council of bishops or heads of the Churches in a locality though not in Eucharistic communion. This council can have an elected primate from their midst who can convoke, preside and speak on behalf of the council. The council explore the possibility of agreement in our common faith in Christ so that Eucharistic communion should be established. The awareness of the necessity of our existence, life and witness of one Church of Christ will be abundantly given to us by the Holy Spirit present in our efforts as He is leading us in this process of unity for which Christ prayed.

Discussion

Prof. Miss Annamma, Syrian Orthodox Church, asked a clarification about Eucharist communion.

Fr. Cherian from Syro-Malankara Church wanted to hear the reaction of the Church of South India and Mar Thoma Church.

Fr. Xavier Puthenkulam, Syro-Malabar Church, asked how conciliarity and the Biblical tradition of special powers to St. Peter will go together.

H.G. Mar Severios replied and said that the Eucharist is considered as the expression of full unity. Before arriving at full unity, Eucharist cannot be served as a sign of hospitality. The point about primacy of Peter is studied and discussed in the second and fifth Vienna consultations of 1973 and 1988. We could not yet reach agreement. Those who want more details can consult the „Wort und Wahrheit“, Volumes II and V.

Prof. Jussey from the Latin Church commented on the statement „that this unity must be manifested to the world“ and asked whether we are manifesting this unity to the world. He requested to be vigilant to feel the new religious (fanatic) developments in India. We have differences among each other. But these differences must not be proclaimed or revealed to the world. Christians try to destroy each other because of their own denominational differences, the same reasons will be used by the non-Christian fundamentalists to destroy Christians. So let us manifest our unity to the world.

Fr. K.V. Mathew from the Mar Thoma Church said that only through our confession that we are divided, we will reach to unity. This confession must lead to a desire for unity. He wanted the „mission of the Church“ also be included in the paper. The reunion is for the mission of the Church, so that the world may know that we are one. He said that the Mar Thoma Church stands for conciliar unity rather than for organic unity with the C.S.I. & C.N.I. Regarding Eucharistic hospitality he said that Christ is the celebrant of the Eucharist. So it is the Eucharist of the Lord Christ. He got the right to invite everybody for His feast. Nobody has any right to prevent anybody from participating in it. If the Eucharist is of Christ everybody who confess Him as Lord and Saviour got the right to participate in it. He said that there is a confusion in our discussion between the reality (object) of faith and the articulation of faith.

Fr. Babu from the Syrian Orthodox Church, expressed his disagreement to *Fr. K.V. Mathew* about the Eucharistic Communion and said that it can't be given to those who do not have agreement on faith. He asked whether the question of Primacy should be solved before intercommunion. Or will it come as a problem only when there is intercommunion.

Fr. Daniel from the Syro-Malankara Church asked whether Mar Severios stands for an organic union or for a federated union of churches.

Fr. Richard Fernandez from the Latin Church commented on the statement that compare the unity of the church with that of the Holy Trinity and asked whether the human conditions make primacy a necessity.

Archbishop Krikorian said that conciliar unity and organic unity are different. He said that the Church can exist with and without a primate. A local church has a primate. When all the primates come together, there is no primacy, but they form a collegiality like the apostolic collegiality. All apostles were equal in authority and honour. He disagreed with Mar Severios and said that it is a problem that who presides over ecumenical councils and confirms and declares its decisions. It is very unfortunate that the second Vatican Council gave veto power to the Pope. This is not conciliarity and so he disagrees with it.

Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Syro-Malabar Church, commented on conciliar and organic unity and said that both are different. Unity and diversity are part and parcel of the reality of the Church, since it is the icon of the Holy Trinity. If you are going to make an Indian Christian Church disregarding the diversity or plurality of the church, that goes against the very concept of the Church. He wanted more clarification from the speaker, whether conciliarity and organic unity are the same or different.

There should be basic agreement of faith for participation in the Eucharist. If there is no unity in faith, we cannot have real fellowship. Eucharist is the expression of our communion. At the same time it is the means to full communion. The perfect union is eschatological and you can never have it on earth. Eucharist is a means to it.

Fr. Cherian, from Syro-Malankara Church, said that there is only one faith and that is the faith articulated by the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Mar Severios said that the Eucharist cannot be accepted as a means to communion. But it is the end of our church unity. The Church is the celebrant of it, and the faith of the church is that which counts. The faith of the individual can not be counted and you can not participate in the Eucharist if you are not in communion with the Church. There is no intercommunion but only communion. When unity is arrived conciliar unity is the same as organic unity keeping the identity of every individual church and at the same time pronouncing the same faith, is the organic unity. There are human limitations in expressing the unity in the Holy Trinity. Even then the Trinitarian unity is the best model we can ever see. It is better we first reach to a conciliar unity at least in the local level and then work for further unity.

Fr. Kattackal (Syro-Malabar Church) quoted examples of other religions and said that unity and diversity is a problem in all religions. In order to solve the problem we need a central authority. Referring to the comments of Fr. K.V. Mathew, he said,

the idea that „faith is total surrender“ is biblical when you come to the articulation of faith, what faith demands from us is important.

How can we have the same Eucharist, when we basically differ about our concept of Eucharist itself. There are lots of churches who have the same basic idea concerning the Eucharist. At last they must come together and have communion since most of their problems are only emotional.

Fr. Dr. K.M. George (PRO ORIENTE) said that models for unity are important and we must spend time on it.. All the models we present have limitations. The nature of the Church is that it cannot be confirmed by one historical model.

In the pre-Nicene period there were local churches, existing in different parts of the world. They had communion to each other. The term Catholic Church was used to denote them and they did not have a universal Head. Then there were local manifestation of the Catholic Church. In the Western part they called it the Roman Catholic Church. In the Eastern part, the Greek Catholic Church, and Indian, Coptic, Ethiopian etc. Catholic Church.

The idea of „Universal Catholic Church“ started to spread only by the colonial period. Before that the Western Church was only a local church. But it began to be known as universal Catholic Church since the Portuguese and Spanish colonial period. This universal idea is a rather recent idea which has a very heavy political, economic, cultural connotation. But before that the idea of the Catholic Church was there and it was not limited to geographical boundaries. The existing models of unity are not often agreed to each other. The Oriental churches have certain understanding about the catholicity of the churches which is quite different from the Roman Catholic concept. The Roman Catholic tradition always affirms the primacy of the bishop of Rome and considers communion with him as essential condition for the catholicity of the Church. But the Orthodox Churches categorically deny it. The Roman Catholics consider primacy of Rome in relationship with the apostles Peter and Paul. But the Orientals always affirm that the primacy of Rome came from political importance. There was a protocol for civil dioceses and the same was accepted in the imperial church too. An ecclesiology based on political models are not suitable for us. Eucharistic communion was broken as a result of division in the body of Christ. Only when the division is healed Eucharistic Communion can be restored. The other way round that is to restore communion and then heal the division is not acceptable to the Orthodox.

Fr. K.J. Gabriel from the Orthodox Church criticised the paper of Mar Severios and said that many of its ideas cannot be considered as the view of the Oriental Orthodox churches. By the term conciliar unity, we mean a unity arrived at councils. It is not essential that the decisions of the councils are binding to the spiritual life of the church. The unity is manifest in the church. The councils were called only when there were divisions, and the councils' main concerns were the points of dispute. He drew attention to the Wort und Wahrheit supplementary issue 3 p. 139 for further clarifications.

Fr. Mathew from the C.S.I. said that the C.S.I. is a wonderful union and they are looking forward for a wider union.

Prof. Morris J.J. from the Latin Church said that the model of Trinity is acceptable. But even in it there is a primacy of the Father. He said that all these dialogues are regarding the churches that existed in the Roman Empire. But there were so many churches outside the Roman empire. We should take them and their philosophy and theology also into consideration. During the early centuries Indian Church was flourishing and John of India represented it in the council of Nicaea. So also we should take our separated Hindu brothers into consideration.

Mar Severios said that the local and universal primacies are the problems. It is not difficult to reach an agreement on local primacy. But it is not easy to come to an agreement on universal primacy. He asked whether we can solve all problems by establishing Eucharistic communion. We have nine Lutheran denominations in India, and they have communion. But they remain as separated. So it is a false idea to take Eucharist communion as a means for unity. The moderator thanked everybody for participation and co-operation and requested to continue the debates which we started.

Fr. Koilaparampil, Syro-Malabar Church, referred to the statement of Prof. Morris and said that John who took part in Nicean Council was a bishop in the Persian Church.

Fr. Koodapuzha, from Syro-Malabar Church, recollected the formation of an ecumenical study group at Kottayam, immediately after the second Vatican Council. In the light of its experience he said that we won't reach anywhere by defending our own positions. We should get together - bishops, priests, theologians, laity etc. - once in a month or two months in regional and local level for studies and co-operation.

Prof. C.D. Paul from the Chaldean Church also suggested the formation of local and regional ecumenical study groups. Christian institutions should arrange similar meetings and ecumenical services on important days like Christmas, Easter etc. These study groups must visit various churches as well as attend services.

In our liturgy we must pray for the bishops and believers of our sister churches. Regarding communion he said that communion must be given to all those who have faith in Christ and obey the discipline of the particular church they belong. He said that the Indian Church is facing problems of communalism and religious fundamentalism. We must unite to face them in a proper way.

Fr. Puthenkulam from Syro-Malabar Church also suggested that we should follow up the discussions to reach full agreements.

Fr. Anthony Chirapurath from the Syro-Malabar church said that the unity is not possible until each disown the attitude that his own is the only right position. He further suggested that only a contextual theology about the Eucharist will help us to proceed further.

Mr. Rajan from the Malankara Catholic Church said that the real problem is in the hierarchical level and is between the heads of the church. They are not willing to give up their position and authority.

Archbishop Krikorian said that normally the Oriental Orthodox churches are against giving communion to others. But in some exceptional cases and on special ecumenical occasions he used to give communion. He said that we are not in communion, but not on the basis of disagreements on faith. We have already cleared that there is no difference in faith. But something else such as primacy, authority etc. remains as unsolved. That is not a basis to prevent communion.

Fr. Mathew Yellanickal from the Syro-Malabar Church said that we cannot come closer unless we clarify certain perspectives behind us. We should clarify our points of convergence like the mystery aspect of Christ, universal sacrifice will of Christ etc. The Eucharist itself got a healing power and ministry. That power is to heal the sin of divisions in the body of Christ. Healing and becoming holy in happening in every Eucharist. So it must not be transferred to a final stage. The idea and nature of primacy along with conciliarity should also be clarified further in our discussions.

Fr. Babu from the Syrian Orthodox church suggested that peaceful co-existence and co-operation in social and charitable activities must be encouraged. He also suggested that the priests who come from other denominations for marriages and so on must get some respectful participation in the ceremony.

Fr. K.V. Mathew from the Mar Thoma church also suggested to have ecumenical services on important feast days. He also suggested to follow up the work, to make a common prayer and hymn book, and to study and share together theological problems.

Prof. Jussey from the Orthodox Church suggested to make more young people participate in the symposiums.

Advocate Noble Mathew from the Syro-Malabar church requested - insisted of going to Civil courts - to set up a church court - ecumenical - to deal the problems between and inside the churches. Some meetings must be arranged for the youth and lay people to come together and some programs must be taken up to work together. Once we have solved the practical things, theological issues can be easily solved.

Fr. Joseph from the Malankara Catholic Church, said that instead of discussing about the primacy and authority in the Church, the Christians in Kerala must concentrate more on humanitarian issues like poverty, unemployment etc., since many are going away from the church because of their personal problems.

Fr. Ipe Joseph from the National Council of Churches said that an ecumenical curriculum must be included in each churches Sunday School training, so that students will know more about other denominations.

Mr. Napoleon from the Latin Church said that during this symposium each denomination was trying to defend themselves and their positions. That must be stopped and we must get prepared to accept each other.

Fr. Felix from the Latin church proposed to start councils in the local level as a beginning. *Prof. Sebastian* from the Syro-Malabar Church suggested to form inter-church councils in important centres to discuss common problems. And such councils must promote ecumenism in the local level. The council should meet for common study and prayer. When there arose problem between the churches or within the church, before the concerned parties must approach this council before they go to civil courts. He also suggested to publish articles of non-members too in the official periodicals of each denominations.

Prof. Hofrichter from Salzburg suggested that the education of priests must be ecumenically oriented. Theologians from all denominations must participate in various conferences and express their views and opinion so that their position must also be known to others. Theologians of various fields must meet often and study problems of common interest. He said that there were problems between the Jewish and gentile Christians even in the first century about taking part in the Eucharist. We too have problems and we also should come to certain compromises. There was unity and diversity on almost everything in the early church. We should also be prepared to go together by keeping unity as well as diversity.

Mr. Sabu De Mathew from the Syro-Malabar Church suggested to start a regional centre of the PRO ORIENTE at Kottayam. He also asked to conduct an ecumenical bishops conference and publish a common declaration. Ecumenical offices must be started in each diocese. Symposium like this must be conducted at least once in a year. A report of this symposium must be published in church publications.

Fr. Antony V. Kokken from the Assyrian Church requested to conduct common ecumenical worship with Eucharist in ecumenical gatherings like this. He also suggested to form a common Christian organization for all Christians in Kerala and India.

Fr. Daniel from the Syro Malankara Church suggested to promote inter-denominational marriages to speed up ecumenism. Conducted with presidential remarks.

Alfred Stirnemann drew attention to the presence of H.E. Dr. Philipose Mar Theophilos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian church and introduced H.E. as one of the earliest ecumenical leaders in India. H.E. was one of the founding members of WCC and was an observer in the second Vatican council.

H.E. Philipos Mar Theophilos greeted the assembly and pointed out the importance of such symposiums and wished it all success.

Eigth working session: Monday October 4th, afternoon

Alfred Stirnemann

REPORTS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE KERALA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZED BY PRO ORIENTE IN KOTTAYAM FROM 30TH SEPTEMBER TO 4TH OCTOBER 1993

1. The *participants* of the PRO ORIENTE Kerala Regional Symposium were unanimously positive about the usefulness and success of this meeting which was convened with the blessing of H.H. Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of the East, and H.B. Mar Baselios Paulose II, Catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Antioch. The idea was to inform a large public of church representatives about the ecumenical progress achieved in the 20 years of the Vienna Dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches as well as about the Common Declarations between Heads of Churches and the so far official dialogues on-going between Rome and the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church respectively, and the agreement on sacramental hospitality between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

The 170 participants included 25 bishops, theologians, rectors of seminaries, professors, priests, students as well as eminent lay people (psychologists, judges, lawyers), among them a number of women from 10 different churches (Malabar Catholic, Malankara Catholic, Latin, autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Syrian, Antiochian Syrian Orthodox, Mar Thoma, Church of South India, two Assyrian jurisdictions and Chaldean Catholic).

Thus, the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee, bringing together representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and PRO ORIENTE ecumenists, realized its intention to familiarize Christian opinion leaders with the results of the five Vienna consultations of 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988, thereby reaching the faithful of the Churches concerned in all walks of life.

The Catholicos of the Catholicosate of Antioch, Mar Baselios Paulose II, inaugurated the conference, the Catholicos of the Autocephalous Church, Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, attended most of the sessions and evening receptions and presided together with Metropolitan Benedictos Mar Gregorios, Head of the Malankara Catholic Church the great civic reception, the Head of the Mar Thoma Church, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, chaired the concluding session.

During the three days of open and animated discussions there was a true sense of ecumenical brotherhood and spiritual communion in prayer and liturgies.

2. The overall *planning* and selection of the issues to be discussed was done by the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee and centered around *three topics*:

- a) Necessity of Ecumenism and Presentation of PRO ORIENTE's Intentions and Achievements
 - Secretary General Alfred Stirnemann (Standing Committee, Roman Catholic)
 - Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian (Standing Committee, Armenian Apostolic)

- b) The Vienna Christological Consensus
 - Fr. Kondothra K.M. George (Standing Committee, Malankara Orthodox)
 - Fr. Frans Bouwen (Standing Committee, Roman Catholic)
 - Metropolitan Amba Bishoy (Standing Committee) /Dr. Emile Maher Ishak (Coptic Orthodox)
- c) Ecclesiological Problems
 - Metropolitan Mar Joseph Powathil (Malabar Catholic)
 - Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios (Malankara Orthodox)
 - Metropolitan Thomas Mar Themotheos (Jacobite Syrian Orthodox)

The target set was fully reached. The concepts presented by the speakers, in particular with regard to the Christological dialogue, were fully received and conceived as a common theological asset. The discussions (in both English and Malayalam) were lively and dealt primarily with such future-oriented questions like the envisaged unity of a genuinely Indian church, problems of inculturation and relations with other religions.

Every morning the sessions were preceded by a short ecumenical service lead by different churches (they were the Malabar Catholic and the Mar Thoma Churches, the Church of South India and the two Orthodox Churches together). The symposium was wound up by an ecumenical service in the presence of Catholicos Mathews II, where the two separated Orthodox Churches celebrated together for the first time in 25 years. The ecumenical services had been meticulously prepared by a committee, the texts of the prayers and songs were available in written form in English and Malayalam. On Sunday the foreign delegates went to the different churches (Good Shepherd Cathedral, Mar Elia Cathedral, Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, Cathedral of the Church of South India, Christ the King Cathedral, St. Joseph's Cathedral, Lourdes Forane Church, St. Mary's Church), where they held sermons or speeches.

3. The conviction was expressed that this type of symposium for the propagation of *ecumenical achievements* in certain regions ought to be repeated (Syria/Lebanon, Ethiopia, Armenia). Special attention should be given to the response and opinions of the audience representing all levels of the churches concerned. The incorporation of ecumenical results into everyday parish life and activities of the pastors is of vital importance. Papers and discussions should be held in the locally dominant language and focus on the real problems of Christians at the grass-root level such as participation in the sacraments, baptism and mixed-marriages, all of which have come to be a symbol of division.

4. The *publication of PRO ORIENTE documentations* not only in English but for the first time also in Malayalam was generally welcomed. For ecumenical results to become everyday practice their presentation in a comprehensible terminology and language spoken by the Christians concerned is essential. The publication of the papers and a summary of the discussions of the Kerala Regional Symposium both in English and Malayalam was welcomed. In this way it will be an important tool for participants passing on the knowledge acquired and the experiences made. Institu-

tions of theological formation should make a point of providing ecumenical literature in their libraries.

5. *The following common convictions were expressed:*

- a) the Christological problems of the Council of Chalcedon are resolved, both the Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian Churches have preserved the true Christian faith throughout history; human language and terminology, however, do not suffice to express divine truths;
- b) the Vienna Consultations helped clarify the misunderstandings of the past 15 centuries; this is why their results must be passed on to the people at the grass-roots;
- c) the symposium kindled an ecumenical light which must be sustained;
- d) the follow-up should be conducted by a permanent committee identical with the organizing committee and with a cooption of members of the churches so far not represented;
- e) similar symposia should be held for Christians outside Kerala, with a special emphasis on people belonging to the Oriental tradition, as well as for young theologians and seminarists in Kerala;
- f) the presented publication of the results of the Vienna Dialogue in a booklet in English and Malayalam and the planned documentation of the symposium in both English and Malayalam were welcomed;
- g) the experience of common worship was a precious gift;
- h) almost everybody agreed on having one Indian Church;
- i) in order to overcome historical divisions and to build a common Indian Church any denominationalism or Indian nationalism must be avoided; this must also include as broad a vision as possible of the rich Indian heritage;
- j) some foreign contacts create problems, nevertheless it must be born in mind that foreign agencies brought the gospel to India and helped in its spreading;
- k) the ecumenical triangle of fraternal contacts, joint studies and theological research, and common prayer and practical co-operation is the basis for stable ecumenical future prospects;
- l) unity must be manifested to the world and is essential for the mission of the Church;
- m) witnessing the love of Christ is more important than increasing the number of Christians.

6. *The following subjects were proposed for further study:*

- a) the interpretation of the mystery of our faith in 20th-century language and its articulation in terms of the Indian culture;
- b) the creation and preservation of unity and communion without giving up diversity, particularly as far as the identity of smaller churches is concerned;
- c) the principles and models of future unity;
- d) a new interpretation of conversion and baptism;
- e) the search for an Indian Christian identity has now been started and should be continued; this should include a definition of the Christian heritage in India and future church structures; at the same time it must be avoided that the nation or nationalism becomes a criterion for an Indian national church;

- f) ways of exercising authority in new and future-oriented forms, collegial authority was recommended;
- g) the experimentation with new structures instead of reproducing the old ones;
- h) textbooks for religious instruction with an ecumenical view of history written in favourable language;
- i) statement of the uniqueness of Christ and the witness for him in the face of non-Christian faiths and acceptance of their value for the Indian tradition;
- j) need of a dialogue with other religions avoiding the two extreme positions either claiming that all religions are the same or that non-Christian beliefs are devilish;
- k) ecumenical studies of the history of the Synod of Diamper in 1599 and the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653;
- l) examination of the feasibility of a local PRO ORIENTE centre.

7. It was suggested that the *PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee* propose the following issues to the competent church authorities for further consideration:

- a) special efforts to make the results of the Vienna Dialogue penetrate to the faithful;
- b) so far no official body for the assessment of the consultations has been set up although their results have found their way into the churches, sometimes with explicit reference to and acknowledgement of the Vienna texts, particularly in jointly signed documents;
- c) circulation of a joint pastoral letter about the PRO ORIENTE symposium issued by the bishops in Kerala;
- d) dropping of anathemata from liturgy;
- e) ecumenical sacramental hospitality in the diaspora;
- f) there is no longer any theological reason for remaining divided, the division is a problem of leadership, heads of churches do not want to give up any position;
- g) there is a gap between the theory and the practice of ecumenism, that is to say ecumenical results do not always reach the people outside the ecumenical circles and sometimes practices are introduced at the grass-roots without official backing;

8. It was suggested that the following issues should be brought to the *attention of church authorities* in India:

- a) prayer for the other churches' bishops and prelates;
- b) creation of ecumenical secretariates in every church;
- c) meetings of bishops, priests, theologians and lay people for common studies and co-operation every one or two months;
- d) establishment of local or regional ecumenical study groups visiting the churches and attending services;
- e) clergy meetings with guests from the other churches when ecumenical problems are discussed;
- f) meetings of theologians of various fields;
- g) exchange of preachers once a month or every other month;
- h) co-operation for working out a common edition of the bible and a hymn book as well as common textbooks for religious instruction and history;
- i) synodal discussions about problems of Christian education;

j) the possibility of debating certain issues of common interest and general importance for all the Christian churches in ecumenical bishops' meetings; one such issue would be the development of a common Christian standpoint on marriage, common rules for Christian marriage in India and an ecumenical marriage ceremony with the active participation of priests of different churches, especially for cases of confessionally mixed marriages;

k) the same should be done for funerals, especially in families with different church adherences;

l) creation of a permanent ecumenical bishops' conference which might issue common declarations for the problems mentioned in the previous point;

m) encouragement of peaceful coexistence and co-operation in social and charity work and such humanitarian aid as poverty relief and help for the unemployment;

n) the churches in India must become for effective in human rights problems;

o) a moratorium for all law suits before civil courts;

p) development of a mechanism for the reconciliation of different juridical positions and other matters of dispute between the church communities through discussion and arbitration;

q) the inclusion of the problem of the dalits into the ecumenical dialogue;

r) official church media should give space for other denominations.

9. *Education and the Mass Media*

The public awareness created was quite impressive. A week before the event Metropolitan Powathil and General Secretary Stirnemann gave a press conference. Almost daily there were several columns of coverage with pictures, not only in the major Kerala dailies but also beyond. Banners and signs announced the event at the different venues.

In view of the great importance of the matter and the willingness of the churches concerned there should be a close link with educational institutions and the mass media.

Here the following points are to be considered:

a) ecumenical aspects in the formation of priests;

b) confessionally mixed groups for updating the knowledge of biblical studies of priests and theologians;

c) development of an ecumenical curriculum for Sunday schools;

d) development of an ecumenical curriculum for Christian education;

e) the major theological faculties should be well-informed about the results of the symposium and set up a special ecumenical commission for further efforts;

f) teachers of the various theological faculties should meet occasionally;

g) representatives of other seminaries should be invited to students' conferences;

h) a report and the results of the PRO ORIENTE symposium should be published in church publications;

i) publication of articles of non-members in the official periodicals of each denomination;

j) establishment of an ecumenical library with books, magazines and audio-visual aids, run by various denominations.

10. Assyrian Church of the East

There was satisfaction that the bishop of the Assyrian Church present, Mar Aprem, agreed with the PRO ORIENTE Christological statement. H.H. Catholicos Mathews II greeted it with enthusiasm. Mar Aprem deplored the rejection of the Nestorian position in the communiqués of the first two Consultations.

He stated that not using the term Theotokos by the non-Ephesian church does not imply a denial of the Holy Virgin being the Mother of God.

The Assyrian Church is neither pro- nor anti-Chalcedonian, since the responsables of the Persian church were not able to attend the Council of Chalcedon because of the on-going war between the Persian and the Roman Empires.

The Christology of the Persian church should be studied and a dialogue initiated with theologians of all the churches of Syriac tradition.

11. The organization was ensured by a 10-member *Organizing Committee* under the efficient chairmanship of the Malabar Catholic Metropolitan of Changanacherry, Mar Joseph Powathil. Fr. Johns Abraham Konat acted as Secretary, Fr. Kuriakose Moolajil as Vice-Secretary. The other members were: Metropolitan Mar Aprem, Bishop Geevarghese Mar Themotheos, Fr. Adai Jacob, Bishop Sam Mathew, Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios, Metropolitan Thomas Mar Themotheos, Bishop Peter Thuruthikonam and Bishop Zachariah Mar Theophilos. This Committee, which functioned without any frictions whatsoever between the representatives of the different - often quite contrasting - churches, set up sub-committees for civic receptions, reception and accommodation, liturgy, correspondence and programme as well as publicity.

There were greeting messages of H.H. Patriarch Zakka I Iwas, Protector of PRO ORIENTE, the Cardinals Hans Hermann Groër, Archbishop of Vienna, and Franciscus König, former Archbishop of Vienna, Founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE, the President of PRO ORIENTE, Dr. Rudolf Kirchschräger, and of the Metropolitan of Aleppo, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim. They were received with great enthusiasm. From Rome Cardinal Cassidy of the Council for Unity and Cardinal Silvestrini of the Oriental Congregation had sent messages.

Moreover, the Council for Unity was represented by an observer, Fr. Bernard Dubasque, the responsible for the Oriental Orthodox Churches in this dicastery. Besides, there were observers from the Kerala Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches in India and the two jurisdictions of the Assyrian Church of the East.

12. The *hospitality* shown by the churches was overwhelming. Every night the approximately 200 people were treated to a seated meal hosted by the Malabar Catholic, (autocephalous) Malankara Orthodox Syrian and the (Antiochian) Syrian Orthodox Churches as well as by the Mar Thoma Church and the Church of South India.

These dinners were all attended by the Catholicos of the Autocephalous Church, Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, as well as by the heads and bishops of many other churches and senior representatives of public life (headed by Madam Collector of Kottayam District Mrs. Sheela Thomas).

A civic reception for about 400 guests featured three hours of addresses, with representatives of all the churches concerned, PRO ORIENTE, the National Council of Churches in India, the Kerala Council of Churches, the Kerala government as well as the Muslim and Hindu communities taking the floor. The Archbishop Major of Ernakulam, the Head of the synodally newly established Malankara Catholic Church, Antony Cardinal Padiyara, and the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Mons. Giorgio Zur expressed their encouragement of the event.

On behalf of Cardinal Groër, the General Secretary awarded H.H. Catholicos Mathews II the diploma of his proclamation as a Protector of PRO ORIENTE issued by the competent bodies of PRO ORIENTE (he thus was honoured in the same way as the Patriarch of Antioch, Zakka I Iwas).

Discussion

Fr. K.V. Mathew from the Mar Thoma Church said that he feels that the first and the last are the same. He also requested to mention the participation of the non-Orthodox non-catholic denominations - especially that of the Mar Thoma CSI families and also the presence of KCC and NCC as observers.

Alfred Stirnemann said that the presence of the observer from the Pontifical Council for unity can also be added.

Mr. C.D. Paul suggested to organise ecumenical groups in various places.

Fr. K.V. Mathew suggested to include the fact that H.H. the Catholicos was made the protector of PRO ORIENTE. Mr. Stirnemann also agreed to it and said that this is first kind of it in India. Mr. Stirnemann passed on to proposals and suggestion. He said that the proposals could be addressed to the churches in Kerala, to the bishops, the clergy and the religious and educational institutions, national and religious organizations, to PRO ORIENTE etc.

Closing session:

Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian

CLOSING PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, we thank Thee for all Thy gifts and mercies, for every thing that Thou offer to us in our daily life - joy, honour, success and health.

We thank Thee for the harmonious, successful and fruitful procedure of the „Pro Oriente Regional Symposium in India“. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the results surpassed the limits of our expectations.

We thank Thee for the small miracles which occurred in these days; communities and hierarchs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit came together,

shared agape and prayed to Thee and praised Thee in joyful hearts and with cheerful voice.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, bless all the organisers and organisations of the „Regional Symposium of India“ - the ecumenical Foundation „Pro Oriente“, the Standing Committee, the Organising Committee under the presidency of His Grace Metropolitan Mar Joseph Powathil.

Bless the hosting houses - St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, where the Symposium was held, the Centre of Spirituality where the „Pro Oriente Delegation“ found a warm-hearted house and hospitality.

Bless the Churches and the communities who every night offered excellent agape and hospitality to all participants of the Symposium.

Bless His Holiness Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, His Beatitude Baselios Paulos II, Catholicos of the East, and all other archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons and laymen and women - members of the Syro-Malabar Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Syrian Orthodox Church, Mar Thoma Church, Syro-Malankara Church, Church of South India and of the Assyrian Church, who participated in and contributed to the „Regional Symposium of India“.

Bless also all stewards and sisters who in charming service and charity made the stay of the participants in every way pleasant and thus contributed to the smooth running of the Assembly.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, at this moment we think of the tragic earthquake which occurred in Maharashtra-State (capital Bombay) during our Symposium. We remember all the victims and pray for them and for their relatives. May God move the hearts and minds of all leaders of the World Community, of states and countries, of Churches and U.N. and other Charity-organisations - so that they hurry and extend generous aid for the devastated zone.

Let us pray to and beseech God to bless and through his Holy Spirit guide and make abundantly fruitful the ecumenical efforts and activity of the Foundation „Pro Oriente“ and in general the ecumenical dialogue and efforts of all Churches and Institutions, of Rome and World Council of Churches in the service of reconciliation and reunion of Churches.

May the grace of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Babu Paul

SPEECH AT THE RECEPTION AT ST. JOSEPH'S SYRIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

As I stand before you I am excited by what I see, barriers breaking down right in front of me in my vicinity, within my visibility. I made my first public speech at the age of five, 47 years ago on the celebration of the birthday of our King. My father had written it out for me and I had dutifully mugged it up and I delivered it accurately, but I was shivering all over and my knees were knocking at each other. Since then I have addressed meetings ecclesiastical, spiritual and temporal in all continents of this earth except Antarctica. With 31 years of administrative

experience I had anticipated the attention and care necessary for this toast and had therefore prepared my speech well in advance. Even that does not seem to be helping. I am back to square one. My knees are knocking at each other. I can hear my own heart beat. I am excited when I see His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II and a large number of his Metropolitans and office bearers attending this reception organised by the Syrian Orthodox Church. His Holiness's presence here is a symbol. I hope it produces concrete results of unity. I look forward to that day when His Holiness is able to climb the stairs leading from this hall to the Church above to worship our Lord together (prolonged applause).

At the outset before proceeding to my task let me also use this opportunity to congratulate His Holiness on his being made a Protector of PRO ORIENTE. I know His Holiness from 1959 when he washed my feet on a Maundy Thursday at Trivandrum where I was an Engineering student. I wept like a child and my girlfriends in die YWCA hostel teased me a lot for being so girlishly sentimental. That was the beginning of a relationship which has persisted to this day. The vicissitudes of recent church history have not affected our personal equation because His Holiness is essentially a generous human being. Once every quarter he telephones me just to enquire about my well-being. In the recent past our meetings have been between 5 and 6 in the morning when neither his friends nor my foes would see us in conclave (laughter). I, therefore, have no hesitation to say that the elevation of His Holiness to the galaxy of PRO ORIENTE's Protectors is eminently deserved. On behalf of His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the first ecclesiastical dignitary to be made Protector of PRO ORIENTE along with his counterparts on the thrones Alexandria and Constantinople, and on behalf of the entire Syrian Orthodox church in Malankara, I congratulate His Holiness and at my personal level I place a toque of felicitations at the sacred feet of His Holiness (prolonged applause).

Now to my task. Let me begin by saying that the happiest person this evening is not physically present in our midst. I am referring to His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Prince Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church and „Protector of PRO ORIENTE“. His Holiness is a man of ecumenism. Right from his early days as a monk he has been involved in the ecumenical activities of our church. He was at the Pan Orthodox Meet at Addis Ababa as a delegate. He attended Vatican II and a Lambeth conference as observer. He participated in ecumenical consultations of theologians right from 1964 when the dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox theologians began. Until his enthronement he was a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. From the inception of PRO ORIENTE he collaborated with that organisation by presenting papers at practically every important session. And PRO ORIENTE in turn made His Holiness first its Honorary Member, then its Fellow, and finally, in 1984, its Protector which title was bestowed on him along with the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Constantinople, as I said a little while ago. Therefore I think it would be appropriate for me to begin by invoking His Holiness's blessings this evening. I pray and request you all to pray for His Holiness's good health to enable him to continue his effective ecumenical ministry.

I wish to draw your attention this evening to the fact that we have assembled in the only church in the Syrian Orthodox tradition which is dedicated to St. Joseph. You are aware that Oriental Fathers always emphasised the perpetual virginity and

the unique position of Theotokos. This is seen even in small but significant nuances which distinguish Peshita from Vulgate and other Western versions. It is also interesting to mention that just as we cannot find a picture of St. Mary without infant Jesus in a Syrian Orthodox Church (which saves us from Mariolatry); we cannot find a picture of the two along with St. Joseph either. This is not because we have any reservation about St. Joseph. The reason is purely one of emphasising the position of our Lady. It reminds me of the practice in the Marthoma church where they dedicate churches to various saints but studiously avoid St. Mary. When I asked one of their Bishops about this he said that there was no justification for it, but the practice probably started out of fear of the distant possibility of a Marian Cult returning to pollute their reformed environment. It is a similar sentiment that kept our Fathers away from dedicating churches in the name of St. Joseph. This church to my mind symbolises therefore the new understanding that essence is greater than style; that content is greater than cover.

I am also happy to meet PRO ORIENTE delegates in a Syrian Orthodox church for another reason. Although the consultations started in the sixties it gained momentum in the seventies with the active involvement of PRO ORIENTE and the first joint statement of the late Paul VI and the late Yacoub III, Holy Fathers of blessed memory, in 1973. In fact Yacoub III was accused of compromising the faith of the forefathers by signing that statement. I remember there was a talk those days that Yacoub III was about to join the Roman Catholic church. I asked one of my dear friends, a highly placed academic scholar, as to his reaction to the possibility of the Patriarch joining the Catholic church. He said, „Forget the Patriarch. I won't join the Catholic church even if our Lord Jesus Christ himself decides to join them“ (loud laughter). However, subsequent history proved Yacoub III a visionary in this regard. The continued efforts since then culminated in the joint declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas on 23rd June 1984. This declaration has established economic communion and opened the doors for collaboration and co-operation in priestly formation as well as in pastoral care. As Cardinal König told me in person in 1984 when His Holiness Moran Zakka I Iwas was kind enough to take me along on the apostolic visit to Austria the joint declaration of our two churches was the first instance of the Roman Catholic church formally signing a declaration with an ancient See. There were murmurs of disapproval here in India but they have also died down. I consider the Vatican declaration as much a success of PRO ORIENTE as of the Secretariat for Christian Unity and the Syrian Orthodox Church. I must also add that His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas has not been keeping quiet after this declaration. Just as this declaration put an end to 1.500 years of separation an agreement between our Church and the Greek Orthodox church in Syria concluded two years ago has closed a chapter of estrangement as old as the Crusades by evolving what I call the Damascus Formula.

I must say that it is most appropriate for PRO ORIENTE to hold a symposium in Kerala. This is because the Kerala model, applied *mutatis mutandis*, can lead to effective ecumenism. Kerala model as you know is essentially a concept in Economics. It refers to the dichotomy of our society where the quality of life is as high as in Europe while the per capita income is very low. Quality of life is measured by PQLI - Physical Quality of Life Index - based on parameters such as female literacy - a recent World Bank study in Pakistan showed that one extra year

of schooling for 1.000 Pakistani girls would avoid 700 births, 50 cases of infant mortality and would increase their market productivity by 15% - the infant mortality - today the chances of a child born in this town to reach the age of 60 is brighter than that of an average child born in the city of New York - number of school seats and hospital beds per thousand people and things like that. I am not referring to this enigma of Economists when I say that Kerala model should be seriously studied by PRO ORIENTE. I am not referring to the Kerala church situation now either. I have in mind the pre and early Portuguese period when the church here was a homogenous entity. We have different versions of our history for that period. My church would say that we were always under Antioch. The Catholics would say that they were always under the Pope either explicitly or implicitly. Within the Catholic church Syro Malabar historians would find a „caravan route“ to Rome via Persia and Babylon. Mar Aprem would say that that Chaldean route was Nestorian. To my mind the only unassailable fact is that the church here accepted any visitor who shared the basic faith planted here by St. Thomas. They were more concerned about the unity in Christ than about the disunity caused by christology and dogmas. They knowingly or unknowingly gave importance to what united and were indifferent to what divided. In fact this is why all schools can find evidence to support their claim that the Pre-Portuguese church was in their tradition. We have no Arian left - except those born under that zodiac sign - and no Manichaeans - we have only the Manichayan of Palai - otherwise there would even have been claims that the church here was Arian or Manichaean. What unites all of us is more basic and more fundamental. As Patriarch Zakka I Iwas said at the PRO ORIENTE luncheon on a June-afternoon in 1984, our faith is „in the blessed and Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit“. What separates us and divides us are less than what unites us. In fact what separates has emanated from theological expositions conditioned by historical background, cultural context and linguistic differences. What unites us is, on the other hand, derived from God, the fountain of all wisdom. It is our divinely ordained duty in this last quarter of the 20th century to decide consciously that the unity desired by God shall not be allowed to be destroyed by disunity occasioned by human situations in ages past. Let us all pray that God may enable us so, for „It is only He who gives growth“ (1 Cor 3: 7).

Once we realise this a major step is taken. However, though major, it is only a first step. We have a long way to go. The basic necessity to traverse this tortuous and winding road is to change gears from second level theology to first level theology. If we shift our emphasis from the investigative, interpretative and critical second level to the first level which is knowing Theos and bowing in humility to His will we shall come closer much faster. I hope that the symposium here will become a significant step in this process. It is important to be not deshearted. Let us not be like those who say that they will go to church only after all priests become angels. We have to begin somewhere. Unity is a mansion built brick by brick. Every brick placed properly is important. I pray that Almighty God may continue to guide us so that in us may be fulfilled our Lord's prayer that we may be one just as He and the Father is one.

I greet all the delegates once again and propose a toast to PRO ORIENTE.

Geevarghese Chediath

PRO ORIENTE SYMPOSIUM - AN EVALUATION

The meaning of the Latin words PRO ORIENTE is „for the East“. In fact, it means „for the Eastern Churches“, i.e. for the Eastern Orthodox Churches (Churches of the Byzantine Tradition) and for the Oriental Orthodox Churches (the non-Chalcedonian Jacobite Churches) which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

The churches of the Oriental Orthodox tradition broke away from the communion of the Catholic Church with the council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. They are the Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Syrian and Malankara Orthodox Churches. A section of the Orthodox, namely the Patriarch's party is part of the Antiochene Syrian Orthodox Church. These five churches belong to three liturgical families, namely Coptic, Armenian and Syrian. In the international ecumenical discussions these churches are known as Oriental Orthodox churches.

The Churches of the Byzantine tradition were in full communion with the Catholic Church till the 12/13th century. The common head of the Byzantine Churches is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. These Churches include Alexandrian, Antiochene, Constantinopolitan, Jerusalem, Russian, Romanian, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Georgian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Slovakian and several other autonomous churches. In the ecumenical discussions these churches were formerly known as Eastern Orthodox churches and at present simply Orthodox.

After the Second Vatican Council, H.E. Cardinal König, Archbishop of Vienna in Austria founded the PRO ORIENTE foundation. Here in this evaluation we speak about the activities of the foundation in relation to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The theologians of the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches met at Vienna in 1971, 1976, 1978, and 1988 in a non-official level in order to hold several important ecumenical discussions. They discussed the topics of common interest such as Christology and Ecclesiology. After 1.520 years of separation and isolation the Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox came around a table for serious theological and ecumenical discussions.

The split in 451 in connection with the Council of Chalcedon was centred around Christology. PRO ORIENTE succeeded in overcoming the stumbling block of Chalcedon. The „mia physis“ of the Oriental Orthodox is to be understood in the sense of St. Cyril of Alexandria, i.e., *mia physis thou Theou logou Sesarkomene* (one nature of God the Word Incarnate). St. Cyril used the expression „one nature“ in the sense of „one person“. The Oriental Orthodox Churches teach that „Jesus Christ is God and man, and that the divine and human natures subsist in the one nature (person) without confusion, without separation, without division, without alteration and without commixture.“

The Catholic Church accepts the Council of Chalcedon of 451. When the Chalcedonians teach that Jesus Christ is „in two natures“ (*en dyo physessin*) they do not mean that there are two persons in Jesus Christ. On account of that it became

quite clear to the Oriental Orthodox that the allegation of Nestorianism on the Catholics is altogether baseless.

When the Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox tried to understand each other they came to realise that the walls of separation and alienation of 1.520 years began to crumble one after another. They realised that both sides are holding fast the basic truths; the difference lies only in the terminology. It was a revelation for both sides.

The Coptic, Syrian and the Malankara Churches made use of the „unofficial“ decisions of the PRO ORIENTE and made them their own and made agreement with the Catholic Church in an official manner. The Churches of these traditions are at present fully convinced that Chalcedon is no reason for the separation of these two ecclesial traditions.

What remains at present is the ecclesiological questions: the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome, Authority in the Church, the place of the Councils in the life of the Church, Conciliarity, etc. In the first centuries, the churches of the various traditions lived in communion. After the separation, each church developed and grew in isolation and without full communion with other churches. Such a growth is visible in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and that of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. There is a long history for the global jurisdiction exercised by the Bishop of Rome through the Roman Curia, Roman Centralisation and the extension of authority of the Roman bishop in the local churches. The system of authority in which the ecclesiastical authority is centred around one person is the result of an evolution. This type is seen in the history of the Roman Catholic Church till the Second Vatican Council. The Second Vatican Council insisted on the synodality of bishops and opened the path of conciliar fellowship.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches after 451 had a history of existence of their own. Each of these churches lived in isolation, without communion with any other church and without a common head. At times they quarrelled among themselves: e.g. between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church, between the various groups in the Armenian Orthodox Church.

It is a historical fact that the Syrian and Coptic Churches alone took part in the deliberations of Chalcedon in 451. The Ethiopian, the Malankara and the Armenian Churches took their stand regarding Chalcedon only much later. It is only after 1653 that the Malankara Church accepted an anti-Chalcedonian stand when it came under the influence of the Antiochene Syrian Church. And the question of Chalcedon was not at all a concern of the Malankara church. It was in fact only centuries later that the Malankara church took an anti-Chalcedonian stand, and that too under the influence of the Antiochene Syrian Church in the Synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876.

Since the Oriental Orthodox Churches grew and developed without a common head for the past 1.530 years, at present the leaders of that church insist on conciliarity. A common head in its present form is not acceptable to some of them. However, some of their leaders begin to assert that the universal Christian communion should have a head and that visible symbol of unity could be the bishop of Rome. They have disagreement only regarding the extension of jurisdiction of that person.

A few basic principles accepted by PRO ORIENTE:

1. In the ecumenical discussion the dialogue participating churches should be considered as equal partners.
2. Avoid unnecessary and outmoded terminological discussions.
3. The churches should not turn back to the past history in order to justify their own particular theological and terminological stand.
4. Instead of seeing before them their great Christian mission they should work in communion with others for the joint Christian witnessing.
5. Be prepared to fulfil at any cost the prayer of our Lord, „that they all may be one“.
6. Accept the principle, „unity in basic and essential matters alone, diversity in other things, and charity in all things“.

Steps are being taken to carry the message of PRO ORIENTE to regional and local levels. There was first a regional Symposium at Wadi en-Natrun in Egypt. The second one was at Vadavathoor, Kottayam, between Sept. 30 - Oct. 4, 1993. The representatives of the PRO ORIENTE took part in the Symposium, Mr. Alfred Stirnemann, the Vice-President of the foundation was the leading force of the Symposium and he led the deliberations. Representatives from the Catholics, Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox), Malankara Orthodox, Marthomite, CSI, and Nestorian Churches took part in the Symposium. This Regional Symposium was organised by Mar Joseph Powathil, Archbishop of Changanacherry.

The discussions were very lively. The topics of the discussions were the following:

1. The results of the ecumenical discussions since 1971.
2. Joint statements of the heads of the churches.
3. Effects of the statements on inter-church relations.

The papers were distributed earlier so that the participants could come prepared.

Every evening there was lunch under the auspices of one of the churches. It was considered as a very significant event that the Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox church took part in the lunch given by the Syrian Orthodox church at their St. Joseph's Cathedral. Many considered it as a new beginning. In the same way the Syrian Orthodox bishops participated in the lunch given by the Malankara Orthodox church at Devalokam, Kottayam.

Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, head of the Malankara Catholic Church presided over at the civic reception at Kottayam given by the Kottayam Citizens' Forum.

In the Kottayam Symposium one could note the following remarkable points:

1. The younger generation of Christians is not at all interested in fighting for outdated theological formulations and terminologies, however sacred they were for the past generations.
2. There is a growing ecumenical interest among the younger bishops of all the churches.
3. Seeing the great mission in India, all expressed the need for common witnessing.
4. Giving more emphasis to the uniting elements than the dividing elements.

5. Undertake ecumenical endeavours even when there are still disagreements on various matters. Realise that the fullest communion will only be in heaven.

6. Learn to forgive each other, pardon each other, accept each other and cooperate and witness unitedly.

Many voiced that none can forget the past. But we are not for the past, we live for a better future, a bright future. All the divided churches have inherited from our predecessors the great burden of sin of division on our shoulders. We must not hand over this humiliating burden to the posterity. Let us try to shake it and throw it out. Let us not carry it any more. Let us in one voice take the Gospel of Love and tell our countrymen that Jesus loves you, that God loves you.

When Israel and the Arabs made agreement, when the blacks and the whites made agreement in South Africa, why can't we Christians make agreement, was the question of Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum. After the crumbling of atheistic communion a new world order is emerging and we the Christians should give the leadership in this process, commented Mar Joseph Powathil.

(translated from Malayalam by the author)

**69th Ecumenical Symposium of PRO ORIENTE,
Vienna, House of the Diet of Lower Austria, Knights Hall,
31st January 1994:**

Alfred Stirnemann

**THE INDIAN REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM 1993
ITS ECUMENICAL EFFECT**

1. Kerala

Kerala is an Indian Federal State at the Southern cone of the subcontinent towards the Arabian Sea, half as big as Austria with 30 million inhabitants. It is one of the most densely populated areas of India. It looks over long distances like an urban agglomeration along its coastal line and has lagoons dipped in the juicy green of its tropical vegetation with the typical coco-palm trees just like a landscape of gardens. The coco-palm (=kera) is said to have given its name to the land thousand years ago which is mentioned in the edicts of the great Buddhist king Aśoka 250 BC for the first time. Thirteen centuries later the language which is spoken today in all Kerala was developed, Malayalam the youngest of the Dravidian languages. The Malayalis distinguish themselves from their neighbours especially by their higher educational standard (90% of men and 85 % of women can read and write) and the lowest infant mortality rate in India. About a fifth of the population live in cities. The double city Cochin-Ernakulam is the biggest agglomeration. The capital city Trivandrum - situated far in the South - is the third biggest city.

This federal state which came into existence in 1956 as a homogenous linguistic unity was for many centuries the Indian area with the strongest contacts with the outside world - perhaps with the exception of the countries at the Northern passes to Punjab. Here the so-called „silk road of the sea“ was passing by, the old trade route between Ancient Rome and Ancient China. Here the Arabs landed under the commando of the Zamorin, the „Lord of the Sea“. Later - 1499 - he was expelled by the Portuguese under Vasco da Gama as vice-roy of India. The Portuguese themselves were driven out by the Dutch who were followed by the British in 1792. Today this former land of the Rajas of Travancore has not only the highest economic force and quality of life in India, but also as a consequence of the high schooling level the highest percentage of unemployed, especially among the graduates, and the highest percentage of voters and members of the Communist Party which governed this state for a long time through some coalitions. This fact is explained by political scientists with the role of education and the Christian confession. Today the state is ruled by a coalition formed by the National Congress, the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League.

Kerala is associated with the mission of the Apostle St. Thomas who according to the so-called Southern tradition landed near Cranganore in the year 52 AD. He is said to have formed seven church communities from which four still exist today and ordained for these churches priests from the four Brahmanic families of the San-

karapuri, Pakalamattam, Kalli and Kaljankal, before he was pierced in an uproar in Mylapore (today in the region of the city of Madras) by a spear around 72 AD and so found the martyrdom. This state has the highest percentage of Christians of all Indian federal states: 20%. Another fifth of the population are Muslims, three fifths are Hindus. In Kerala a broad variety of Christian Churches is active: two Churches belong to the pre-Ephesian faith in the tradition of the Persian Church, they are often called Nestorians. They are in turn split into the followers of the Julian and the Gregorian calendar. To the Persian tradition with East Syrian liturgical language also belong two churches which are united with Rome, the Malabars and the Chal-deans.

In the family of the Ancient Oriental Churches there are three churches. One of them has made herself independent as the Autocephalous Indian Church, another has a Catholicos, Mar Baselios Paulose II, and remained under the authority of the patriarch of Antioch and a third group, the Knanaya, who according to the tradition at the time of the persecution of the Jacobites around the year 345 from the city of Edessa in Syria settled with 336 families in India are directly under Antiochian jurisdiction.

These churches who in terms of denomination can be defined as non-Chalcedonian, which were in a polemic attitude and falsely called monophysitic and who in the oldest time according to their confession and their rite stood in the tradition of the Persian church and were united at the time of the Portuguese conquest with Rome and came finally to the West Syrian Antiochian church community as a following reaction against the latinizing tendencies of the Portuguese.

From this church a group, today called the Catholic Malankarese with West Syrian liturgical language made a union with Rome as a result of an attempted union of the whole Malankara Church with Rome which was not successful. Moreover there are the Latin Church who cared for the untouchables who for a long time were neglected by the traditional churches of old historical standing as well as Protestants of different tendencies who united in 1948 in a process which caused much interest at that time to an Ecumenical Union Church, consisting out of Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians and interpreted themselves as Church of South India. Moreover there is a church of Syrian tradition and liturgy and reformed theology, the Mar Thoma Church, whom one could pointedly define as an Anglican United Church.

2. The Vienna Consultations with the Ancient Orientals

PRO ORIENTE first came into contact with the churches of Oriental tradition in 1971. At the time three eminent Indian scholars took part in the conversations at the Vienna Consultation between Catholic and non-Chalcedonian theologians. They were father Paul Verghese, at that time Assistant Secretary General and later President of the WCC, an ecumenist of world fame, now Metropolitan of New Delhi and of the North. Then father George who is now as Mar Osthathios Metropolitan of Niranam as well as Dr. V.C. Samuel who at that time was dean of the Theological Faculty at the Haile Selassie University in Addis Ababa.

Through these first talks after 1500 years in Vienna in 1971 and their four continuations in the years 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988 Vienna became the focus of the

world-wide dialogue with non-Chalcedonians. Many local dialogues such as in India, but also in the United States took the results of Vienna as their basis and starting points for further studies. Especially lucky was the opening in the Christological problem which was at the time of the council of Chalcedon in 451 the main cause for the break up of church unity and the effective split within the ancient old patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch and so led to the formation of what is today known as the Coptic, the Syrian, the Armenian, the Ethiopian, the Indian Church.

On the basis prepared by the Vienna Consultations it was possible for Rome to start with two of these churches an official dialogue and this was since 1974 with the Coptic Church and since 1989 with the Autocephalous Indian Church. With the Syrian Church of the Patriarchate of Antioch there was a document agreeing on hospitality in three sacraments, i.e. penitence, eucharist and the anointment of the sick. Joint Communiqués were signed with the two Armenian Catholicosates on the occasion of the visits of Catholicos Vasken I with Pope Paul VI in 1970 and with Catholicos Karekin II with Pope John Paul II in 1983. The Ethiopian Patriarchs Tekle Haimanot and Paulos first visited Pope John Paul II in 1981 and 1993 through the intermediary of PRO ORIENTE.

The Vienna „Christological Formula“ and many of the other results concerning the ecclesiological problems have found their documentation in about 1500 pages of minutes. The practical problem was bringing these results to the knowledge of the totality of the hierarchy and the faithful of the churches concerned so that it can be translated into daily practical life. To a certain extent these results received a church-official and decisive character through the joint declarations between the heads of the Ancient Oriental Churches and the Roman Pontiffs. However, neither bishops nor professors or theologians or the pastoral clergy can be forced to read this literature which has grown to a whole library and is written in English.

It was primordial that general access to these results is given to seminars and other meetings. By translating this literature into the main languages of the churches concerned it will not be restricted to specialized theologians and ecumenical church diplomats but in this way the results of the last 25 years granting future development of ecumenism will be made known and will be translated into the daily life and especially into the education of the new generation thus replacing the polemics of the past.

The first Regional Symposium was held in Arabic language for the churches of the Middle East in October 1991 in Wadi Natroun, the summer residence of the Coptic Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria, Shenouda III, who in 1971 at the first Vienna Consultation gained great merits for the elaboration of the „Christological Vienna Formula.“ The Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos II Ghattas also participated in the meeting which was attended by some 120 bishops, theologians and lay people. Cardinal König who was personally present and had an important part in this meeting gave a report at the 64th PRO ORIENTE Symposium in the Festival Hall of the Vienna University on March 10th, 1992.

3. The Regional Symposium in India

The very successful development and the good results of the first Regional Symposium in Egypt were an encouragement for the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, an institution founded at the fifth Vienna Consultation 1988. Besides some representatives of PRO ORIENTE it consists of very important representatives of the six Ancient Oriental jurisdictions mostly bishops who often are the right hands of the head of the respective church. Archbishop Krikorian who will sum up the theological contents of this Regional Symposium represents the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin in this Standing Committee. Together with Mons. Otto Mauer and after his death together with the Rector Father John F. Long SJ he was co-chairman of the Vienna Consultations with the Ancient Orientals. From the Indian side the associate director of the ecumenical college of the WCC in Bossey near Geneva, Dr. Kondothra K. M. George, is the member who played a big role in the preparation of the symposium.

A year before the Regional Symposium of Kerala which took place from September 30th until October 4th 1993 in the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary near Kottayam, a three person delegation of the Standing Committee, consisting of the Archbishop of Aleppo Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim for the Syrian Orthodox Church, which has about 300 000 faithful in India, Father Kondothra K. M. George, whose church has two million faithful, and myself, visited Kerala in order to study whether and in what measure such an event would be feasible at the present moment. The big difficulty was winning over for this goal the two Ancient Oriental Churches, that is the autocephalous Indian Church and the church dependent on the Patriarchate of Antioch. For 25 years both churches have been involved in a juridical conflict which is connected with questions of juridical form and autonomy and autocephalicity, that is whether way nominations of bishops would need the approval from Antioch and who is the owner of certain church properties or to whom belong certain disputed communities. Since that time this law suit was very often brought in front of judges especially in front of the federal law court in New Delhi which is thus asked to be the arbiter of the question of whether a bishop's ordination in India is possible without the agreement of the Patriarch of Antioch who has his see in Damascus. The main problem was to know whether the bishops and the theologians as well as the clergy and the laity of both churches would be ready to follow an invitation from PRO ORIENTE and to take part at the same congress under one common roof. This was after 25 years of conflict with mutual excommunications and sometimes violence at common property claims not in all cases self-evident. We were advised to postpone such initiatives as a further deterioration of the dispute was feared.

Finally by choosing the seminar of the Catholic Malabars as a venue, we managed to get the agreement of both heads of churches - H.H. Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II and H.B. Moran Baselios Paulose II - and to convince a majority of the bishops of the usefulness of our undertaking. The PRO ORIENTE delegation set up a local organizing committee composed of ten bishops of the churches mentioned above who, under the efficient chairmanship of Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry, a generally respected and recognized personality from the Malabar Catholic Church, attempted to give their best in an atmosphere of mutual competi-

tion between the churches and to find solutions for a very sensitive topic which had its cause in the rivalry of the two orthodox churches.

But in the preparation and in the organization of the Regional Symposium, we also had to take other tensions into consideration, especially tensions within the Catholic Malabar Church who only in 1993 became a church community with an autonomous bishops' synod, tensions between a tendency which wanted to restore the original East Syriac liturgy of the Ancient Persian Church and another one who put more emphasis on the liturgical reforms of the Latin Church as expressed at the Second Vatican Council. Another controversy exists between the Latin Catholics on the one hand and the Orthodox and the Catholics of the Old Syriac tradition on the other hand. This is mainly for historical reasons: whereas the former draw their faithful from the lower casts, the latter have a predominantly high cast membership.

Under these circumstances PRO ORIENTE and the Standing Committee were conscious of the fact that with the project of a Regional Symposium in Kerala we ran a great risk, as it was not certain from the beginning whether a contribution could be made beyond the already existing unity or whether we even would be causing additional cleavages by undertaking such an initiative. The organization or implementation over a distance of more than 10 000 kilometres by post, fax and telephone was an additional difficulty.

4. *The Development of the Symposium*

The programme was set up by the Standing Committee and consisted of two lectures on the importance of ecumenism and the intentions and results of the work of PRO ORIENTE held by the two speakers of this evening, three lectures on the christological agreement reached in Vienna, by a Catholic, a Coptic and an Indian Orthodox as well as three lectures by Indian speakers who treated ecclesiological problems especially such of church structure.

As PRO ORIENTE published an Arabic edition of the basic ecumenical documents of the Vienna dialogue and the agreements between the heads of churches for the Regional Symposium in Egypt, so now our Indian Standing Committee member Father George had translated the text into Malayalam and had it printed in Ernakulam. Now we are busy translating and publishing the lectures and the minutes of the discussions of this Regional Symposium in English and Malayalam which was one of the claims of the participants.

170 participants were convened, according to a proportional key agreed on by the churches. This proportional participation was necessary as the demand was much higher than the available space. Among the participants were 25 bishops, many professors, rectors of seminaries, members of the clergy active in pastoral work and eminent lay representatives, among them professors of psychiatry, judges of the higher courts, lawyers and also a number of female participants, not only nuns and sisters, but also women who in general play an amazingly strong role in all eleven Indian churches mentioned above.

Each day started with a short prayer service, the first day led by the Catholic Malabars, the second day by the Mar Thoma Church, the third day by the (Protestant) Church of South India and on the last day by both Orthodox Churches in common. This was the first common liturgy between the bishops of these two

churches since 25 years. The ecumenical prayers were very carefully prepared by a special committee, so that everybody had the text and songs in English and Malayalam. On Sunday the foreign delegates took part in the community liturgies of the different churches where they were invited to make a sermon or speech:

Good Shepherd Cathedral (Latin): Reverend Habison

Mar Elia Cathedral (Syro-Indian): Archbishop Krikorian

Jerusalem Marthoma Church: Father Kapoudjian

Church of South India: Miss Krcal

Christ the King Cathedral (Syrian Orthodox, Patriarchate of Antioch):

Father Bouwen

St. Joseph's Cathedral (Syrian Orthodox): Vice-president Stirnemann

Lourdes Church (Malabar Catholic): Prof. König

St. Mary's Church (Knanaya Syrian Orthodox): Prof. Ishak

St. Mary's Church (Manacardu, Syrian Orthodox): Prof. Hofrichter

On the last day there was a common final worship. Its non-programmed climax was for me when one bishop of the separated churches, having forgotten his cross for giving the final blessing, had to borrow it from the head of the rival orthodox church.

The opening ceremony was done by the Catholicos of the Patriarchate of Antioch in Aramaic that language which is also called Syriac and in which the last books of the Old Testament and the Gospel according to St. Mathew were written. It was the mother tongue of Jesus and for about 1000 years the common and diplomatic language of the Middle East. The Catholicos of the autocephalous church was present in almost all of the sessions. He took part in the final liturgy and invited the participants and local personalities to a dinner in his residence for several hundred persons. This was a quasi non-theological success of the symposium. The bishops of the Patriarchate of Antioch accepted this invitation and after 25 years one was again sitting at a common table.

Hospitality was one of the most impressive phenomena of this meeting. In Sanskrit there is a rule: „A guest is God“. Every evening a different church community invited the participants and representatives of high civil authorities with Madam Collector at its top - a lady to be compared with a regional prefect - altogether several hundred persons for dinner at long tables. The culmination was on the third evening when the head of the autocephalous church personally accepted the invitation to a dinner in the patriarchal church and when one of the many speeches characterizing the atmosphere and enthusiasm of confidence expressed that such a gesture could lead to a resolution of the decade-old conflicts. This was in line with the unanimously voted proposals, demands and recommendations of the symposium, among other things a moratorium for all trials before civil courts and the development of a mechanism of conciliation which would make it possible to settle differing juridical positions and other cases of content in a sort of arbitrage procedure by discussion and mediation. So PRO ORIENTE was lucky enough to organize this symposium when the time was apparently ripe and elasticity came into standpoints which had been inflexible so far.

The interest of the public in the ecumenical event went far beyond what one is used to know from Europe. The city of Kottayam was marked by the welcome of the delegation of PRO ORIENTE and the other participants. A public ceremonial act in

the big auditorium of the municipal library for 400 invited guests was chaired by the head of the Indian Orthodoxy and Archbishop Benedictos Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum the head of the church which had separated from Orthodoxy 60 years ago to join again with Rome. The cordiality of the personal encounter of those two heads of churches which found its expression in the quality and intensity of their mimics and gestures would not have been possible at any other spot of the world between a quasi non-uniate and a uniate head of church. An Indian ceremony starts with the introduction of the honorary guests by ovations and the decoration of the guests with heavy strongly perfumed garlands of flowers, followed by the illumination of a bronze-candelabrum by the main personalities. Then a number of speeches were held in our case about 20 speeches which were followed by the auditorium for several hours - this time it took only three hours - in concentrated attention and with a discipline of iron. Besides the representatives of the participating churches also the chairmen of the Church Council of Kerala, of the all-Indian Church Council were present besides for the government of the state of Kerala the minister of finance and for the communities of the Hindus and Muslims two eminent representatives. On this occasion special thought was also given to the victims of the dreadful earthquake in Maharashtra.

On the same occasion the Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE gave His Holiness the diploma signed by the Archbishop of Vienna, Hans Hermann Cardinal Groër, upon the initiative of the board of PRO ORIENTE, proclaiming him „Protector of PRO ORIENTE“, the highest honour which our foundation can convey.

Back in 1983 when he was a coadjutor of his predecessor accompanying him to Rome the Catholicos was a guest of PRO ORIENTE and visited Vienna again in 1989 as a member of an interconfessional delegation of five bishops who were campaigning for the idea and the financing of the ecumenical center of pilgrimage in Nilackal which is a common property of several churches.

The 20 speeches were partly held in Malayalam, partly in a very guttural English, so that the European guests needed a repetition in English by some friends with an experience of British English. Under these conditions the Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE had the pleasure to give at the end of this solemn act a speech of reply in which he had to commemorate each one of the speakers, quote his most important ideas and draw a resumé, what was not an easy task considering the phonetic peculiarities of the local English and the unknown sounds of Malayalam.

Something new for PRO ORIENTE was the participation of the so-called Nestorians. The bishop of the old-calendarian jurisdiction Mar Aprem G. Mooken of Trichur who on the 18th of June 1990 had taken the floor at the 59th Symposium of PRO ORIENTE on the very interesting subject „Was Nestorius a Nestorian?“ and priests and lay people of the jurisdiction of the new-calendarians were also present. Mar Aprem stated that the christology of the Assyrian Church was neither pro nor anti-Chalcedonian as its representatives could not attend the councils of the Roman Empire at Ephesus and Chalcedon, because there was a war between the Roman and the Persian Empires. He explained that he can fully accept the „Vienna Christological Formula“. For the same reason he, however, deplored the confirmation of the Nestorian position in the same declaration.

This agreement to the „Vienna Christological Formula“ was accepted with enthusiasm by Catholicos Mathews II present at this point. As one of the results of the Regional Symposium a theological consultation with all churches of the East- and West-Syriac traditions under the auspices of PRO ORIENTE was scheduled for June 1994 in Vienna. In the coming months I am planning to visit the two heads of the separated Assyrian Church, H.H. Mar Dinkha IV in Teheran and Mar Addai II in Baghdad, together with the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, in order to clear difficulties which still might exist.

At the end of the Regional Symposium there was a long list of recommendations and suggestions for the continuation and the follow-up. This started with the call for a repetition of the symposium for the Indian churches outside Kerala and especially for seminarists and students of theology in Kerala and went as far as the proposal to build up a PRO ORIENTE center in Kerala (something like a far-off branch along the lines of our diocesan sections which we have in Salzburg, Graz and Linz).

On the basis of the demands of this symposium and of the experiences collected so far the Standing Committee decided to go on and hold Regional Symposia regularly in future. Hence there will be one in Lebanon in autumn 1994 for the countries of the so-called Mashriq: Syria, Iraq, Jordan and the Holy Land. For 1995 PRO ORIENTE is invited to Addis Ababa by the Ethiopian Patriarch Paulos and after this we are hopeful that the re-established peaceful conditions in Armenia will lead us to the Caucasus. The respective translations into Amharic and Armenian are under work.

In a way the Kerala Regional Symposium was different from its Egyptian predecessor where the christological differences of the 4th century were known until the last detail and hotly debated and where there was a special need for reconciliation on the subject: the Indian churches are so busy developing the future of the one Indian Church of the third post-Christian millennium fully integrated in the Indian culture, that people are much more moved by the ecclesiological problems. This orientation towards the future of the churches in India is a great source of confidence for the unity of all Christians.

**RECONCILIATION AT KERALA - THE EVALUATION OF THE
ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE PRO ORIENTE
REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT KOTTAYAM IN INDIA**

1. Introduction

It is my intention to present in this paper the ecumenical theological discussions of the PRO ORIENTE Regional Symposium at Kottayam/India in September/October 1993 and to evaluate them. This Regional Symposium was without any doubt an ecumenical event. It was great and fruitful! The theological discussions themselves were not really sensational and they did not bring forth much new results, however, they were certainly different in direction, different in accentuation of certain aspects and consequently also in their significance. In this sense the talks of the meeting in Kottayam could be considered in their contents as an important contribution to the theological dialogue in general and especially to the ecumenical dialogue in India.

The main goal of the papers was to make publicly known the results of the five Vienna Consultations in South India. So their contents did not intend to bring new research. In any case I shall examine only the last paper of the Symposium on the models of unity in short and try to estimate it.

2. Christology

The topic of Christology was subject of long and interesting discussions. The discussions, however, were not as vivid as they were in Egypt at the Regional Symposium of Wadi Natroun in October 1991. In the country of the famous Cyrill of Alexandria (412 - 444) and in the presence of Pope-Patriarch Shenouda III who is interested with body and soul in the christological dispute, it was clear that a deep concern as well as a detailed discussion of different aspects and problems of Christology was to be expected. Also in India all the Indian participants of the Symposium were praising and highly esteeming the "Vienna Christological Formula", but they showed very little enthusiasm for historical Christology.

The christological agreement which was already reached at the first Consultation in Vienna/Lainz in 1971 certainly represents a milestone in the dialogue between the theologians of the Ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The reconciling christological statement reached there at least unofficially settled the long dispute of about 1500 years which was burdening - not to say - destroying the relationships of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches. In the Agreed Statement we read:

"We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed.

We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of

an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation

We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions, we are convinced, however, that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus."

Now it was very interesting and important, that although the Nestorian Church community has never officially accepted the Council of Ephesus (431), however, the „Nestorian“ participants of the regional symposium from India declared, that they could agree with the Vienna Christological Statement!

Although the problems of historical Christology did not attract special attention as contrary to Wadi Natroun, however there started a useful discussion about the necessity and importance of a new interpretation of the Incarnation of Christ for the Christians today. Various participants of the Symposium repeatedly declared that the subtle and difficult christological talks and argumentations of theologians do not interest the simple people of God. What is rather necessary is to re-interpret anew Christology and to translate it into the faith and life of man today. So K.V. Mathew from the Marthoma Church - the Reformed Malankara Church - said:

„We have a heritage of Christology and a responsibility to interpret it anew. Let us convene and write a new christological formula for the 20th century. The faith is not a subject of formulations, especially not of the language of the fifth century. Faith means to render oneself totally to Christ. The others should see how we love each other. Nobody of us is perfect; we must share faith in common. We have to compose the formula according to our cultural background. Experience in faith is important. The Holy Spirit shall lead us to more communion (Koinonia).“

Father John Mathews from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church emphasized the necessity of interpreting Christology in the language, mentality and the way of expression of the Indians. He said:

„Did not the Oriental Churches take use of the Hellenistic language and culture in order to understand and to explain the mystery of Incarnation? Do not we Indian Christians have the same right to convene and to translate the facts in Indian categories and languages?“

Father T.J. Joshua from the same Malankara Orthodox Church considered the explanation of the mission of Jesus Christ as more important than the clarification of christological terminologies of the past. From the view of the Catholic Syrian Malankara Church Father Joseph Gnayallour expressed his conviction that the discussion on humanitarian questions such as unemployment, misery and poverty and so forth were more important than the discussions on Primacy and Authority in the Church. He stated: „Many go away from the Church because of personal problems.“

Anyhow it is certain, if somebody wishes to re-interpret the Incarnation of Christ in the language of 20th or 21st century, then he has the duty of making clear two aspects:

Firstly: in Jesus Christ two perfect natures, the divine and the human are existent and that a mysterious inexpressible unity is formed without that one nature or the other is reduced, mixed, mingled, separated or divided.

Secondly, as it says in the Creed of Nicaea and Constantinople: „Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.“

Or, as Gregory of Nazianz formulates it:

„This is our feast (Christmas), that we celebrate today: the coming down of God to man, so that we may go to God or, expressed in a better way, to return to him; so that we put away the old man and take on the new one and as we have died in Adam, we may live in Christ as we are resuscitated in him.“¹

A new interpretation of Christology need not be new in contents, but it must be new in language and in the form of its expression!

His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Church, with whom I had the privilege of concelebrating the holy Liturgy on October 3rd, 1993, expressed his joy about the discussions and closed the section „Christology“ with the following declaration:

„We are in fact unworthy to study the person and the nature of Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit guide us, so that we may understand more this truth.“

3. Authority in the Church and the Problem of Primacy

A vivid discussion followed the presentation of my paper in which I had tried to explain the results of the five Vienna Consultations on authority in the Church and on the question of Primacy. The positions were clear and evident: the representatives of the Roman Catholic and Latin Church communities were maintaining and defending the Primacy of the Pope in a traditional form, whereas the Syrian Orthodox participants of the Symposium rejected the jurisdictional pre-eminence of a visible head of the whole Christian Church. In order to avoid any misunderstanding and any debate it might be helpful to recall that the statements of the Second Vatican Council on the college of bishops and the ministry of Peter are almost word by word repeated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.² So it reads for instance in § 882:

„The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful.“³ And: „For in virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme, and universal power over the Church. And he can always exercise this power freely.“⁴

The „full, supreme and universal power over the Church“ has been rejected since 4th/5th century by the non-Chalcedonian Churches, is not recognized at least since 11th century by the Byzantine Orthodox Church and not accepted since 16th century by the Churches of the Reformation. Of course it would not be realistic to expect from a Regional Symposium the solution of the question of authority or of primacy! In one thing all the participants were of the same opinion that in the Church there is a need for authority or for a hierarchical authority in order to organize and administer the life of the community according to the teaching of the New Testament and the early Ecumenical Councils and the Church Fathers in a good way. It has been discussed and remains open to discussion the problem of a universal jurisdictional primacy as it is claimed by the Bishop of Rome. Father Xavier Puthenkalam from the Syrian Malabar Church pointed to „the Biblical principles“ (!). Dr. Sebastian from the same Church community asserted that „the most important problem which has to be solved is the problem of primacy“ and asked thereafter: „If we can solve the problem of primacy what will be the next step? Will each Church further maintain its characteristics and identity? If this is so, then there is no problem of primacy!“ Prof. Abraham Arackal, a layman from the Latin Church was convinced that there has to be a certain visible head of the Church, even if collegiality would be accepted. According to his opinion in the re-united Church a person - a pope or a patriarch - has to be the final authority/the last instance. Also Father Joseph Koilparampil from the Latin Church was defending the primacy or let us say the infallibility of the Pope in a romantic way. He stated:

„In order to enjoy the beauty of a cathedral one has to admire it from inside. The same is true with infallibility. We must be within the Church in order to experience this. If the Pope decides during a council about doctrine then there is infallibility! The Pope is only infallible when he interpretes the tradition of the Church on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and after consulting the bishops and the people and when he proclaims it as the interpretation of the Church. The doctrine of infallibility must be seen from the view of the Catholic Church and not from outside!“

The Oriental Orthodox participants rejected a primacy on the whole Church. Father P.K. Babu from the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church recommended the model of primacy of the Ancient Oriental Churches who are among themselves in a communion of faith and of Eucharist, but who preserve their own traditions and identities. According to his opinion the assembling of general synods and the presiding over such meetings has to be done in alternative change!

During the discussion I proposed as a future solution the development of new structures within the church(es). With this proposal I meant the model of „Conciliar communion of the local Churches“ as it has been defined in the Salamanca Declaration. At a conference of the „Commission for Faith and Order“ of the WCC in Salamanca 1973 the long desired unity of the Church was conceived as followed:

„The one church is envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship each local church possesses, in communion with others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit. They

¹ Gregor of Nazianz. De nativitate Christi, I/4-6

² Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche. München-Wien-Oldenburg 1993, §§ 880-892

³ cf. Lumen Gentium 23

⁴ ibidem 22

are bound together because they received the same baptism, and share in the same eucharist; and recognize each other's member and ministries, etc."⁵

4. Councils and Conciliarity

The issue of „Councils and Conciliarity“ in a logical way depends strongly on the question of authority. Also here the participants could not reach a breakthrough in the discussions.

The main problem was and is the number as well as the recognition of the ecumenical councils. Traditionally the Roman Catholic Church recognizes 21, the Byzantine Orthodox Church seven and the Ancient Oriental Churches 3, the Churches of the Reformation 4 councils (at least formally on the paper!). It is pleasing that the Catechism of the Catholic Church has reduced the number of ecumenical councils to 17 (left out are: the First Lateran 1123, the Second Lateran 1139, the Third Lateran 1179 and the First Council of Lyons 1245). In a lecture in Vienna on the occasion of the study seminar on „Councils and Conciliarity“ Hans Joachim Schulz even reduced the number of ecumenical councils to 12 (left out are the five Lateran synods 1123, 1139, 1179, 1215, 1512, the two synods of Lyons 1245 and 1274, the council of Vienne 1311/12 as well as the council of Konstanz 1414 - 1418).⁶ Anyhow still five or nine synods are left whose ecumenicity is questioned by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Already at the Second Vienna Consultation the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Oriental Churches had agreed on the following statement:

„....We agree that the first three Ecumenical Councils had, because of their more general acceptance in the Church, a greater degree of fullness, which the later Councils do not have.“⁷

During the unofficial dialogue between representatives of the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches some Byzantine theologians had insisted on the recognition of the first seven councils as pre-condition for the re-establishment of unity and of the eucharistic community. In September 1990 both sides stated in Chambésy near Geneva in an official agreement:

„Both Church families accept the first three ecumenical councils which are our common heritage.“⁸

This problem was only solved at the beginning of November 1993 in Chambésy when the mixed commission for the official dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches in a common declaration announced their agreement on lifting of the mutual anathemata against councils and Church fathers. There it reads:

⁵ What Kind of Unity. Publication of the WCC/Geneva. 1974, p.121; *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963 - 1993*, edited by Günther Gassmann. Publication of the WCC/Geneva. 1993, p.62

⁶ The Vienna Dialogue. On Councils and Conciliarity. Booklet No 5. Vienna 1993, p.46

⁷ Wort und Wahrheit. Supplementary Issue No 2. Second Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Vienna 1974, p.176

⁸ Chalzedon und die Folgen. Ed. by Rudolf Kirchschräger / Alfred Stirnemann. Innsbruck-Wien 1992, p.357

„In the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology at St. Bishoy Monastery 1989, and of our Second Agreed Statement at Chambésy 1990, the representatives of both Church families agree that the lifting of anathemas and condemnations of the past can be consummated on the basis of their common acknowledgement of the fact that the Councils and Fathers previously anathematized or condemned are orthodox in their teachings“

Through a similar treatment of the problem of councils it could be possible also to come to an agreement with the Roman Catholic Church. Of course it would be the right and the task of different Churches after the publication of such an agreed christological interpretation and formula to accept in course of time parts of the contents of the ecumenical- or general councils in their liturgy, in their canons and in their spirituality.

In Kottayam the discussions on councils and conciliarity went parallel with the issue of „Authority in the Church“. Almost all participants of the symposium were of the same opinion that the first three Ecumenical Councils had a certain pre-eminence and a greater importance for the whole Christian Church. Father P.K. Babu from the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church expressed the view of the Ancient Oriental Church in the following statement:

„In connection with the number of ecumenical councils, as basis or unity should be accepted the first three Councils (Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, and Ephesus 431). The councils following thereafter should be considered as synods of the respective Churches who accept them. The lifting of anathemata from liturgy (or from the rites) is very advantageous, but it is not necessary to compose for this a new liturgy; it is only important to correct the consequences of History or to interpret them anew!“

The majority of the theologians were unanimous that it would be acceptable in the future if the Pope would summon the ecumenical councils and chair them. Only the participants of the Ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches did not agree with the pretension of the Second Vatican Council that such a council needs under all circumstances the confirmation of the successor of Peter. In *Lumen gentium* 22 it is stated literally:

„A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter.“⁹

In connection with the solution of the problem of conciliarity as well as of the problem of the primacy of the Pope I expressed the hope that perhaps „new structures“ could be developed through dialogue and in common growing in which „each local Church would possess in communion with others the fullness of catholicity“, and no Church would claim a pretension of authority over others!

⁹ This sentence is quoted in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, paragr. 884, p.261

5. Dialogue with Nestorians

It is understandable that in Wadi Natroun it was not very convenient to speak about the teaching of Nestorius and about the Assyrian Church of the East, since at the council of Ephesus 431 under the leadership of Cyrill of Alexandria Nestorius was condemned in absence. At the Regional Symposium in Kottayam there emerged an indirect and unofficial dialogue between representatives of the Assyrian and Oriental Orthodox theologians. At the meeting we had five „Nestorian“ participants, among them also Metropolitan Mar Aprem who in June 1990 in Vienna upon the invitation of PRO ORIENTE had delivered a lecture under the title of „Was Nestorius a Nestorian?“

From April 10th, 428 onwards Nestorius was the Patriarch of Constantinople and a zealous adversary of heretics especially of the Arians, Macedonians, Novatians and Pelagians. As he tried to settle the disputation concerning the title „Theotokos“ for St. Mary, he proposed a new terminus as solution i.e. „Christotokos“ which led to a great agitation. The provocation itself probably has to be ascribed to his companion Anastasios of Antioch. He enjoyed the confidence of the Patriarch. During a discussion on the veneration of St. Mary he is said to have declared from the pulpit: „Nobody should call Mary the mother of God, because she is a simple human being and it is impossible that God could be born from a human being.“ Consequently Nestorius was condemned on June 22nd, 431 at the Council of Ephesus as author of „impious doctrinal expressions“ and as unobedient clergyman and consequently at the same time he was deprived of all his ecclesiastical dignities.¹⁰

At the Kottayam Symposium Metropolitan Mar Aprem repeated in a long contribution to the discussions his conviction which he had already expressed at his conference in Vienna in 1990:

„I also agree with the unanimous christological declaration of the first Vienna Consultation. The so-called Nestorians never separated the divinity from the humanity in Christ; they did not teach that divinity has been added at a later stage to the man Jesus. I cannot agree to the anathema,¹¹ that the PRO ORIENTE consultation together with Pope Shenouda III¹² has proclaimed in 1973 against Nestorius. The „Nestorian Church“ is in perfect agreement with the Christology of the Council of Chalcedon. The „Nestorians“ are neither for nor against Chalcedon as they were entirely absent at that meeting. The political situation in Persia forced them to declare that they had nothing to do with the christological quarrels of the West. Nestorius in your understanding is not the Nestorius of our understanding. He was ready to accept the Christology of the Tomus Leonis.“

¹⁰ Alois Grillmeier. *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*. Vol. 1. Freiburg 1979, p.689

¹¹ 1971 as well as 1973 the first and second Vienna consultations denounced the doctrines of Eutyches and Nestorius. In the first consultation was stated: „We all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ.“ See: WW 1. Supplementary Issue 1 (1972), p.182

¹² In 1973 Pope Patriarch Shenouda III did not participate at the consultation. The communiqué just states: „Both sides are agreed in rejecting Eutychianism and Nestorianism.“ See: WW 2. Supplementary Issue 2 (1974), p.176

Father P.K. Babu of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church commented on the statements of Metropolitan Mar Aprem as follows:

„It is a good sign to learn that the so-called Nestorian Church is not dependent on Nestorianism. However, the teaching of the Church is deeply rooted in the minds of people since many centuries. We cannot change them; we have to respect these thoughts. But what we can do is to say that also other ones have the same faith and the same doctrine.“

Father Chediath from the Syrian Malankara Church stated on his side that it was a wonderful experience to hear that the same faith is expressed in different terminologies. He added:

„Should we not also consider the Christology of the Persian Church, if we want to come to an agreement as she also was of an ancient tradition such as the Byzantine one and has developed a christological tradition such as every other church?“

In no other country the Assyrian or Nestorian Church has left such deep and broad traces as in India. Probably the Nestorians were active in mission much earlier than all other churches. Today all the churches feel to be obliged to have an ecumenical dialogue with representatives of this community. The goal of the dialogue must in my opinion be a reconciliation and the establishment of Eucharistic communion with this very old church and not a subjugation or integration within other churches. On the contrary all are invited to support the Assyrian Church so that she may maintain her characteristic features.

6. Search for an Indian Ecclesiastical Identity

During the whole Symposium in Kottayam a local issue was again and again taken up and was very vividly discussed. That is the search for an Indian ecclesiastical identity. There was a feeling that all the representatives of the different church communities were unanimous and also willing to form a general Indian Church and in this way to gain an Indian identity. What should or could be the character of this identity, nobody was able to formulate it. Hereinafter I would like to present the most important contributions of the discussions.

Father K.M. George from the Malankara Orthodox Church stressed that he was not interested in an Indian national Church, but that for him rather the common tradition and the rich heritage of these churches were of importance. According to his opinion a united Indian Church of course would not have the structure, the authority and the constitution of the present churches. Finally he asked: „Why this Indian Church cannot be the manifestation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?“

Father Xavier Puthenkalam from the Syrian Malabar Church stated:

„Our goal is not the total loss of our identity in a synthetical church. We must have the liberty to maintain our identity and at the same time enter in communion. I am not for the idea which allows everybody to visit each church he just wants; there must be a certain discipline.“

Father Cherian Ramanal from the Syrian Malankara Catholic Church declared that Christology was not an important subject for India; much more important are the problems of the synods of Diamper (1599) and the so-called „Coonan Cross Oath“ (1653). One has to study the documents of these meetings in an ecumenical spirit.

Father Kattackal from the Syrian Malabar Church declared:

„There are two extreme positions; one which says that all other religions are devilish, and the other one, which means, that all religions are equal! These two positions bring the average faithful in confusion. We have to avoid these two extreme positions and to look for a solution of the middle way. When we exercise the ministry of sanctification it will have an attractive power for the non-Christians who then will come in to the church.“

Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil from the Syrian Malabar Church tried to stress in his conference, but also in his contributions to the debate the peculiarity or uniqueness of Christ and stated: „Conversion and full communion make the mission a perfect one.“

Father Chediath from the Syrian Malankara Church also praised the ministry of sanctification and the miracles, but the stress, he meant, has to be put on the person of Christ. He said:

„We present Christ to the people of India not sufficiently in those expressions which would also be understandable for non-Christians. We have to present Christ in their category and not in those of the foreigners. Christ never asked us to multiply the number, but his mandate was to give witness of him.“

Also father Xavier Koodapuzha from the Syrian Malabar Church underlined the uniqueness of Christ and of Christendom. He said „otherwise the religious affiliation of a Christian would be meaningless.“ At the same time one must respect the Indian culture.

Father K.V. Saji from the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church countered by saying:

„The Christians have to accept others without making extraordinary pretensions. We have no right to force our understandings and our convictions on others. The dialogue in the Indian context must also include the Dalites and the backward castes!“

Also a lawyer, Mr. A.J. Jose, from the Syrian Malabar Church, spoke against an ecclesiastical identity in India:

„Hinduism is not the only religion which has influenced our political order. The Christians are called by Christ to lose every identity and consequently there is no necessity to maintain a proper (Christian) identity in India. Apart from this there are many similarities between Hinduism and Christianity.“

Father Kattackal from the Syrian Malabar Church also laid stress on the similarities between Hinduism and Christianity. But he concluded on the contrary that

„it will not be difficult to develop an Indian Christian theology without endangering any Christian principle.“

Metropolitan Thomas Mar Themotheos from the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church thought that the Christian churches and Christians have partly forgotten orthopraxy in order to gain other things. According to his opinion an Indian ecclesiology should not be limited by geographical borders and cannot be separated from other ecclesiologies. He did not see any sense in the accusations that the foreigners have come to India and have caused divisions. Moreover the churches have a responsibility for mission. He finally said: „The Cross of Christ will be the guiding principle for the Christian church in India.“

The Indian Cross, called the „Persian Cross“, which is an external sign of common heritage of several churches in India and which has a great similarity to the Armenian Cross, can also be the sign of communion of the different Indian churches who would be united in faith and Eucharist, but possess different rites, customs, practice of piety, different organisations and systems of administration.

The PRO ORIENTE Regional Symposium in Kottayam gave initiative and impulses to the churches in India to conduct a serious discussion on the question of a common church identity.

7. Models of Unity of Churches

Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church replaced the sick Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios in a conference on the possible models of unity of the churches or models of the united churches. He has absolved his studies in Rome, but he had also studied the ecumenical theological documents of the WCC as well as those of the five Vienna Consultations. In his study he had become the victim of a fatal misunderstanding. He presented the organic union as identical with the „conciliar community“. I quote from his lecture:

„Different churches come together in order to form a new fellowship with its own, new identity. This normally involves agreement in a new confession of faith, on sacraments and ministry, as well as on organisational structure. A new name, a common tradition showing inherent experiences are its marks leading to one united Church!“¹³

This misleading presentation caused still more confusion and excitement when the speaker identified „organic unity“ with „conciliar fellowship“ as it is described in the Salamanca-definition. Literally he said: „Conciliar fellowship in its true sense is a synonym for organic unity!“ The speaker also brought two important problems into discussion during his lecture, but he did not offer any solution:

Firstly, the question of primacy and
secondly, the strive for eucharistic communion!

He considered the role of the primate as co-ordinator in the church as a very important one, but he also had to admit that this still presents an unsolved question. I cite his words: „What remains unsolved is the question of a primate among the churches to act as a co-ordinator or convener of this conciliar fellowship.“

¹³ cf. the paper of Mar Severios, p. 195

In relation with the eucharistic communion Metropolitan Mar Severios also expressed the official opinion of the Oriental Churches as well as his own conviction that communion is the final goal and the manifestation of the unity of all churches. That is why no inter-communion or eucharistic hospitality is possible.

The conciliar - organic model of unity of the churches was criticized and rejected by all participants of the discussion. Especially father Mathew Vellanickal from the Syrian Malabar Church stated:

„The conciliar and the organic unity are different. Unity and diversity belong to the reality of the Church, because it (the unity) is the icon of the Holy Trinity. If you want to create an Indian Christian Church not giving attention to the diversity or the pluralism of the churches then this stands against the true understanding of the church!“

There was a vehement discussion about inter-communion or eucharistic hospitality. Speakers from the Ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches (P.K. Babu, K.M. George, etc.) spoke against inter-communion as the first step towards full communion, whereas the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church communities and of the Mar Thoma Church mostly considered this as a good intermediate solution till the realization of the complete union. For instance father K.V. Mathews from the Mar Thoma Church said:

„Christ is the celebrant of the liturgy, that's why it is the Eucharist of Christ. He has the right to invite all to his meal. Nobody has the right to hinder anybody from participating. If Eucharist belongs to Christ, then everybody who confesses him as his Lord and Saviour, has the right to take part in it.“

In this sense a discussion came up whether communion or inter-communion without unity in faith is possible at all. Many were „pro“ and many others „contra“. In a contribution I tried to clear and to explain that there are no essential differences in faith between the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Churches; and if the unity longed for - is not still existing, then one has to search for the reasons in church politics and in the problem of authority.

8. Conclusion

The Regional Symposium at Kottayam was not a break-through in ecumenical questions. But certainly new aspects were introduced into the theological dialogue. Our eyes and our attention are now directed from the fifth century to the problems of the 20th century. Hope and enthusiasm were offered to all of us that - as time goes - in „common growing“ the remaining hinderances on the way to a complete unity of the Church will be removed for the welfare of mankind and for the glory of our triune God.

**32nd Ecumenical Academy of PRO ORIENTE,
Salzburg, Adult Formation Center St. Virgil, 11th April 1994:**

Peter Hofrichter

PRO ORIENTE IN INDIA THE KERALA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM IN AUTUMN 1993

The Regional Symposium of the PRO ORIENTE foundation took place in Kottayam in the Indian federal state of Kerala from September 30th to October 5th 1993. It was after the first Regional Symposium two years earlier in Wadi Natrun in Egypt the second event of that kind. Our aim in India was - as it was in Egypt - to inform a possibly broad church public of the country about the results of the Vienna dialogue with the Ancient Oriental churches. The ecclesiastical situation in India is essentially different from the one in Egypt. So already the conception and the planning had to look for quite new methods. The course and the results were in many respects unpredictable and surprising.

In the following I would first like to present shortly the country and secondly explain the ecclesiastical situation, thirdly I would like to remind the so-called „Vienna formula“, fourthly to present the planning and the course of the event, fifthly to inform about the subjects treated, sixthly to report on the discussions thereabout and seventhly to try to give a short appreciation.

1. The Country

Kerala is situated on the Western side of the Southern point of India. It is one of the smaller and younger federal states of India. India was released in 1947 into liberty by the British. Kerala was formed in 1956 only as a federal state. It is half as large as Austria but has four times as many inhabitants. The state has a slim and long stretched form and consists of a coastal strip with the range of mountains lying behind up to the watershed. The climate is subtropical. The temperature is around 30 degrees centigrade during the whole year. The seasons are distinguished only by the length of the days and the scarcity or the strength of the precipitations. A gorgeous and year-long vegetation produces all kinds of tropical plants, especially coco-palms, bananas, spices, among them especially pepper, as well as tea and coffee. The economic situation is not characterized by misery nor marked by social differences. Kerala disposes of a highly developed system of education. Kerala is also the only Indian state where there are no analphabets but where there is a strong Communist party which alternates on the basis of free elections in the governing responsibility with other parties. Kerala is the Indian state with the highest percentage of Christians, around 20 %. And with this we are to describe the ecclesiastical situation.

2. *The Ecclesiastical Situation*

Kerala is not a mission country. Christianity here is based on the oldest tradition and claims to be of Apostolic origin. The Apostle Thomas himself brought according to the conviction of the Christians in Kerala the faith to India and founded himself seven communities in Kerala. At least since the fourth century the Christians in Kerala were in contact with the East Syrian Church on the territory of the Persian empire. As the Persian empire was the great political and military rival of the Roman empire the Persian church was developed completely independent from the Roman-Byzantine imperial church. Only at the beginning of the fifth century the decisions of the councils of Nicaea and of Constantinople concerning the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit were accepted. In all other Ecumenical councils the Persian church had no part. Nor of course the church in India. It is a matter of dispute whether and in what measure the church in India was influenced by the theology of Nestorius which was given a certain development later on in the Persian church. But it is certain that the Church in Southern India had a very special profile. Her relation to the Persian mother church was similar to that of the Ethiopian to the Coptic mother church in Egypt. Bishops in principle had to be taken from Seleucia-Ktesiphon or later from Baghdad. The actual head of the church was the indigenous archdeacon.

The moved history of modern Christianity in Kerala starts with the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century. A century later, 1599, at the famous synod of Diamper the union with the Roman Catholic Church was concluded. The indigenous church was put under Portuguese administration and most severely latinized: the result of this is known today as the Church of the Catholic Malabars. Half a century later a larger part of this church broke away from Roman patronage with the oath of Coonan Cross. As the East Syrian or Nestorian Church in its majority had also accepted at this time the union with Rome - today known under the name of „Chaldeans“ - a West Syrian bishop of Antioch independent from Rome was accepted. The fact that this bishop was in the terminology of these times not a Nestorian but a Monophysite did not play any role for the Indians. The actual transformation of the church towards the West Syrian Jacobite tradition took place only much later, in the last consequence only in the 19th century.

Among this now Jacobite or Syrian Orthodox Church another branch was born under the influence of the Anglicans in the 19th century: and this was the Protestant Reformed Mar Thoma Church. Then a group of the Syrian Orthodox Church became again Catholic in 1930; these are called the Malankarese. The Syrian Orthodox themselves became divided over the question of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch in Damascus and split up into an autocephalous Indian Orthodox Church and another one under the authority of the patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church. But also the Malabars who stayed Catholic did not come to repose. At the end of the 19th century they tried to give up the „Padrao“ of Goa and to come under the authority of the Catholic Chaldean patriarchs of Baghdad who were more conform to their ancient traditions. When this was not successful, some of them decided at the beginning of our century to turn again to the non-Catholic Nestorians. Since then there are again Assyrians or Nestorians in India.

All these churches mentioned so far are in the continuation of the one unseparated ancient church of the Christians of St. Thomas, whom the Portuguese met on their arrival. The Christians of St. Thomas belong to the higher casts and have never done missionary work among the lower casts nor outside their own traditional territories during their long history. This was only done since the beginning of modern times by the Western missionaries of the Catholic Portuguese as well as by the Anglicans and the Reformed British. So a Latin Catholic Church came into being and Anglican and Reformed missionary Churches which united in 1950 in the Church of South India. This is definitely an extremely colourful ecclesiastical landscape. And until now we have not spoken about special groups within the churches and the different sects. This ecclesiastical diversity is realized in a total number of just about six million Christians. But all of them seem to take an active part in church life. Kerala, however, with a Christian population of about 20 % (another 20 % are Muslims, the rest of 60 % is Hindu) gives an external impression of a country thoroughly characterized by churches, sculptures and steles and other Christian symbols. And on Sundays all of these many churches are crowded. You cannot cope with the impression that Christian identity is directly proportional to ecclesiastical diversity.

3. *The Vienna Formula*

When the foundation PRO ORIENTE was brought into life by Franciscus Cardinal König and Mons. Otto Mauer in 1964 one of the intentions of this foundation was the taking up of the theological dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church with the Churches of the pre-Chalcedonian tradition, the so-called Ancient Orientals or Monophysites as they wrongly were called. These were the Copts, the Ethiopians, the Armenians, the Western Syrians and the Orthodox Syrian Indians. The most important result of the dialogue which brought the representatives of the different Ancient Oriental Churches for the first time together at one table was the so-called „Vienna Formula“. Through it the terminological conflicts of the fifth century on the relationship which exists between divinity and humanity in Christ was overcome. In this conflict the church of the Roman Empire broke into parts after the council of Chalcedon 451. As a consequence the East of the Empire fell victim to Islam in the 7th century. Since 1971 there exists now a formula of unity. It reads: „We believe that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnate-Logos is perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. He made His Humanity One with His Divinity without mixture, nor mingling, nor confusion. His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity even for a moment or twinkling of an eye.“ The formula comes from the Coptic liturgy. It was proposed then in Vienna by the representative of the Coptic Church, who is now the current Patriarch and Pope Shenouda III, and was immediately afterwards accepted by Rome. Until its final recognition by both churches several years passed. The formal signing was done in Wadi Natroun only in 1988. In this issue which was for one and a half millenary the reason for the separation of the churches the unity of faith has been re-established, however, this is not yet all the full church unity. In the meantime other distinctive doctrines have been developed, especially that of the jurisdictional primacy of the Pope of Rome. But who outside the church authorities knows about the re-established unity in this

central doctrine of Christology? Exactly as in Catholic school-books there might be still a reference to Monophysites, Catholics and Byzantine Orthodox Christians are sometimes still considered by the Ancient Orientals as heretics because of the doctrine of the two natures.

In order to make the „Vienna Formula“ and the results of the five consultations which were held until now more known in the homelands of the Ancient Oriental Churches a plan was conceived to translate the most important texts in the local languages and to inform in a series of regional symposia a possibly broad sector of pastoral workers and opinion leaders. Only when this unity in the fundamental questions of faith will be generally accepted, the vital obstacles to church unity can be tackled really.

Until now translations in Arabic language were published and presented in the first Regional Symposium at Wadi Natroun in Egypt in 1991. In the same way the first booklet was translated into Malayalam, the language spoken in Kerala, and was completed well in time before the Regional Symposium in India last autumn. Translations into Armenian and Amharic are already under preparation.

4. The Planning and the External Course of the Regional Symposium

The direct partners of the foundation PRO ORIENTE in Kerala are of course the two Ancient Oriental Churches: the autocephalous „Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church“ with the Catholicos Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II at its top and the „Malankara Syrian Orthodox Jacobite Church“ which is also under a Catholicos, Moran Baselios Mar Paulose II, who is however dependant on Patriarch Zakka I Iwas in Damascus. The latter church does not develop its own activities in church politics, the autocephalous or so-called Indian Orthodox Church, however, participated in an operative way in the Vienna consultations. One of its most eminent representatives in Vienna was the former President of the WCC, Paul Verghese, the actual Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi. To motivate both churches in spite of the tensions in their relations and their different understanding of identity to participate together was most important in planning of the Regional Symposium.

On the whole attention had to be paid to the necessity that on the one hand none of the regional churches felt discriminated in participating, on the other hand also all non-Indian Oriental Churches had to be represented by speakers and observers. Each possible source of ill-feeling or mistrust had to be carefully omitted. Especially the Coptic Church watches rigorously over the strict orthodoxy of all activities in the sense of her ancient church tradition and declines any getting in touch with Nestorians but also with non-Christian thinking. A lecture on the inculturation of Christianity in India could not be held. On the other side it was inconceivable to exclude the Nestorians from participation who had in their Metropolitan Mar Aprem G. Mookan of Trichur a very active, competent and widely beyond his church and beyond India known representative. So with the exception of the representatives of the Ethiopian Church who had applied too late for their visas all the Oriental Churches as well as all the local churches were represented.

The Indian themselves formed under the chairmanship of the Malabar Catholic Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil a local organizing committee in which the representatives of almost all the churches in Kerala collaborated. Besides

the Malabar and Malankarese Catholics and the two Ancient Oriental Churches, the Protestant Mar Thoma Church, the Church of South India and the Assyrian Church, wrongly called Nestorians, also took part in the Regional Symposium. The planning was elaborated until the last detail.

A basic intention of the planning was a broad participation of hierarchy, of clergy and of opinion leaders. From each church according to her size a number of delegates was nominated: bishops, priests, lay people, among them also women, together about 170 participants. Beside the liturgies and the lectures, large space was given to working groups on local aspects of ecumenical work. On Sunday the speakers of the symposium informed the faithful in the most important churches of the city on the aims and goals of the foundation PRO ORIENTE and the contents and purpose of this symposium. The climax of media attention was a public event in the lecturing hall of the municipal library of Kottayam with the participation of heads of churches, of Kerala ministers, of the Lady Collector of the district of Kottayam and high ranking representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities.

The normal place of session was the big St. Thomas Seminary of the Malabar Catholic near Kottayam. The organization of the morning service was given to a different church each day, also the Mar Thoma Church, the Church of South India and the Assyrian Church had their word. The same was true of the moderation of the debates. Only the lectures themselves were strictly reserved to the members of the Catholic and the Ancient Oriental Churches. Each working day was closed by a festive reception with a full dinner given each evening by another church in their venues also by both Protestant churches. The reserve of the local Latin Catholic church was well noticed. She collaborated in some organisational services and was also present by their participants, but beyond this did not take a too active part in the event.

5. The Issues Treated

The core of the event were eight lectures and the debates following them. The first two lectures were to inform on the foundation PRO ORIENTE and its activities and goals achieved so far. The Secretary General of the foundation, Alfred Stirne-mann and the Armenian Apostolic Archbishop of Vienna, Prof. Mesrob K. Krikorian, both founding members of the foundation, gave an overall view of the aims and the history of the foundation, the consultations and study seminars held so far with the representatives of the Ancient Oriental Churches.

To build up a maximum of confidence the central dogmatic subject, the christological agreement in the „Vienna Formula“ was to be treated by one member of the Indian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and an Ancient Oriental sister church. So the subject „The Christological Consensus“ was treated by three lecturers: Fr. George Kondothra of the Indian Orthodox Church, Fr. Frans Bouwen PA, Catholic, Belgium and member of the White Fathers in Jerusalem, and by Dr. Emile Maher Ishaq, medical doctor, celibate deacon and professor of theology of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The dogmatic problems of the experts found, however, less interest as expected.

A lot of attention was given to the contributions of the two local bishops which proposed theological consequences. The Malabar Catholic Metropolitan Mar Joseph

Powathil, Archbishop of Changanacherry, gave an extremely sophisticated lecture on ecclesiology: „The Incarnate Christ and Christian Witness against the Indian Background of other Religions.“ The Indian Orthodox Metropolitan of Kandanadu and expert of ecumenical affairs in India, Dr. Mathews Mar Severios, gave in his lecture on the ecumenically explosive subject of „Primacy and Conciliarity“ an occasion for pertinent controversies which we shall comment later.

Great public interest also found the lectures on „Unity and Christian Identity in India.“ The speaker was the Syrian Orthodox Bishop Thomas Mar Themotheos.

6. The Debates

It would not make sense and also would be impossible to refer here in the right order to the contents of the different lectures and debates in detail. I would prefer to give some personal impressions as a sort of flashlight on the situation.

First there was at a passion, perseverance and listening attention which seem to be inconceivable for us in Central Europe. Each day three or four lectures were given with interminable discussions on the subject. Then liturgies and in the evening receptions with again several long speeches. Also the numerous bishops were always present as a rule. Then the cordial and always kind atmosphere which is typical for the Indian character and also covers certain tensions which might be present. In fact there were enmities overcome on this occasion. Both Syrian Orthodox Churches who are before a civil - and that means as a rule before a non-Christian - law court suing each other in trials on the validity of Episcopal ordinations, properties, buildings and real estate, were present through their Catholicos and through numerous other bishops and have close contact for the first time in years.

Following the lecture of Archbishop Krikorian there was a stormy discussion on the problem of the primacy of jurisdiction. Krikorian probably expressed the conviction of many when he said that the unity would be re-established rapidly if the Pope would renounce universal jurisdiction. The model of the Ancient Oriental Churches and their unity on the basis of equality in rank and diversity was of course very near. Of special interest was the conviction expressed in the discussion that the five patriarchates of the Roman Empire with their order of rank and jurisdiction did not have any importance outside the Empire which means also not for the Indian Church. So the primacy of Rome was considered irrelevant for India. Against this political decision some Catholic participants maintained their defence of the primacy of jurisdiction on the basis of the scriptures of Mathew 16, 18.

The three lectures on the Christological Consensus did not wake - as was mentioned already - nearly any interest for dogmatic problems themselves. The agreement on the „Vienna Formula“ was commented with much consent from all sides. The Catholicos of the Orthodox Syrian Church, Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II exclaimed: „I am a Catholic!“ and also the Nestorian Metropolitan Mar Aprem stated that he is completely in agreement with the „Vienna Formula.“ On the other side it was also very directly expressed that those problems which came out of the Hellenistic philosophy do not have any importance for India. Even the origin of these differences was the matter of an ecclesiastical minority of some bishops and theologians. Instead of discussing such questions, one should rather collaborate in social activities and give a common Christian witness.

The lectures about problems especially topical in India found a stronger interest. Archbishop Powathil with his lecture on incarnation and Christian witness caused an extremely vivid discussion on the claim of the exceptionality of Christ and Christianity, a problem which cannot be neglected in the context of religious diversity of India. On the one side this claim was criticized, on the other side there was a warning not to put all religions on the same level. A middle way must be found between saying that all other religions are evil and the opinion that all religions are basically identical. The exceptional importance of Christ is very difficult to propagate when the Christians are not so exceptional but rather common was maintained by one of the participants.

Metropolitan Thomas Mar Themotheos especially pointed to the importance of orthopraxis in his lecture on „Unity and Christian Identity in India“. Christian life and action is at least as important as orthodoxy. It was also remarkable that there was a very general and broadly existent hope for an Indian Church in itself and united in diversity. They think of an Indian Patriarchate in conciliar community with Rome and with other big Churches. In this idea which is, in the continuity of the tradition of the Christians of St. Thomas and the apostolicity of their church, Catholic Malabars and Syrian Orthodox Jacobites but also other Christians meet. With this there is a longing for a return to that ancient Indian Christianity of the first three centuries which was still free from foreign influences but which is not yet known to anybody. On the other hand there is the vision of a single church if truly Indian character.

This goal was also present in the group discussions. The first point in the résumé was: „Almost everybody agreed in having one Indian church.“ The second point of this résumé was the proposal of sacramental hospitality in maintaining church identities: „Keep identity of each church and have sacramental hospitality.“ The third point recommends a collegial direction of this Indian church: „Collegial authority was recommended.“ In the other subjects as mission and the relations towards foreign countries two very special Indian problems were expressed.

The last lecture of Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios on the subject: „Primacy and Conciliarity“ was further developing the problem of Christian unity. His identifying of conciliar unity with organic unity was at first responsible for confusion. Under „organic unity“ generally a melting of churches is understood as happened in the case of the Church of South India, whereas conciliar unity „is a unity which preserves diversity.“ A subject of vehement controversy was also the problem of intercommunion: can the Eucharistic community be a way to community or only its consequence? Strict refusal of Eucharistic community before reaching the complete union of churches as was advocated from the orthodox side seemed strange. And that especially in spite of the just demonstrated unity in the Christological faith and in spite of the already existing agreement between the Patriarch of Antioch and the Pope about the mutual administration of some sacraments in the case of emergency. There was reference to the tradition of Christian antiquity but there was also an understandable fear to maintain clear church boundaries. A Protestant intervention expressed the view that the person administering of the Eucharist is Christ himself and that no church has the right to deny it. In an orthodox view, however, the church celebrates the Eucharist, so that participation presupposes belonging to this church.

The general debate at the end of the symposium was showing that the foundation PRO ORIENTE has met with this Regional Symposium a highly topical local need. The enthusiasm prompted proposals to found a section of PRO ORIENTE in Kerala or at least to introduce ecumenical working groups in the whole country and to organize regularly major meetings on the model of this Regional Symposium. Among the proposals were: liturgical prayer for the sister churches, common celebration of the Eucharist on high feast days, the collaboration in mixed marriages, the strength of collaboration of churches in social and charity activities, common books of prayers and of song books, an ecumenical arbitrage in law cases in order to settle the conflicts between the churches extra-judiciary, the ecumenical education of young people. One might probably not deny realism to a sobering information of some Mr. Raja from the „Malankara Catholic Church“ who asserted: „The real problem is on the level of hierarchy and is between the heads of the churches. They are not willing to give up their position and authority.“ However, without any doubt the Regional Symposium of the foundation PRO ORIENTE has brought a process in march which at least will not easily be recounered. As far as I was informed last February there was already a successive meeting.

7. A Conclusive View

The vision of a united and unified Indian Church centered in itself is fascinating. The agreement of the Indian Christians in this goal is already a step in the right direction. The reality still looks different up to now. The dependence on different Western influences are very clearly can be felt. Almost all the bishops and professors have studied in the West and are proud of that: the Catholics in Rome or Germany, the Orthodox in Protestant or Catholic faculties in Germany, Britain, Belgium or the USA, the Protestants are orientated towards Britain and the USA. Almost all Catholic religious communities have founded their Malabar branches because here they find a lot of vocations. The various styles of spirituality of the Western mother churches are cultivated and stressed. Among the Catholics electronic organ music is over-sounding the liturgical songs. Among the Indian Protestants Anglican chorales are sung nicer than anywhere else. And the Orthodox are performing their numerous proskyneses probably more conscienciously than anywhere else in the Middle East.

A special problem is Western money that without any doubt is sustaining the Christian school system and the social activities, but is also provoking a very unequal deployment of power and influence according to the existing resources.

Only a decolonization of the Indian Christianity almost as courageous as Gandhi has achieved it for the Indian state could create the precondition for the vision that a united Indian Church will become reality some time in the future.

But one thing is certain. The Christians in India will follow an ecumenical approach of their mother churches with enthusiasm, they will even promote it according to their influence. To have learned this and have awakened and strengthened the consciousness of our Indian fellow Christians is one of the results of this event of the foundation PRO ORIENTE. As the Syrian Orthodox Churches in India have been for a long time stronger than those in their Arabic countries of origin the key to the ecclesiastical policy of the Patriarch of Antioch lies not least in India. Espe-

cially in the Catholicos of the Orthodox Syrian Church, Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II the foundation PRO ORIENTE has a sincere friend. He was honoured by the well deserved title of a protector of the foundation PRO ORIENTE at this Regional Symposium.

As another consequence I may estimate that now also the ecumenical dialogue with the so-called Nestorians is put into march. The Indian situation has made it clear that the process of reconciliation cannot stop with the Ancient Orientals but must go beyond the council of Chalcedon and may finally may heal the split after the council of Ephesus. Next June there will be already the first consultation with representatives of the Nestorian Churches and catholics and protestant theologians in Vienna.

The great success of the Regional Symposium in Kerala has at last encouraged the executive of the foundation to continue this series of symposia in foreign countries. Next autumn a third Regional Symposium in Lebanon is in preparation where not only Catholics and Syrian Orthodox Christians, but also representatives of all the churches of Syriac tradition will take part.

(Translation from the German original by Alfred Stirnemann)

72nd Ecumenical Symposium of PRO ORIENTE, Vienna, 28th June 1994:

Mar Joseph Powathil

REPORT ON THE PRO ORIENTE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT KERALA AND THE SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES 1993/94

1. Context

The event of the second Regional Symposium of PRO ORIENTE, held from September 30th to October 5th in the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary Kottayam (Kerala, India) was, indeed, a land mark in the process of promoting ecumenical fellowship and communion in India, particularly amongst the Oriental Churches here. Kerala's right to host such an event goes uncontested as the region provides the highest density of Christian population in India next to Nagaland and as the place where perhaps the largest number of Christian denominations also co-exist. Kottayam, the venue of the symposium, is well recognised as an ecumenical township for all practical purposes. The decision to call the conference at Kottayam, in fact, promised the inherent potential and immense possibilities of a new phase in the gradual growth of an Ecumenical Congregation in Kerala. The Churches of the oriental traditions in India claim the origin of their faith to the Apostolate of St. Thomas and this common heritage should nationally be emphasised to foster the bond of fellowship further among the Oriental Churches on the Subcontinent. Since the landing of St. Thomas in Kerala in 52 AD and the consequent conversions in the land and the martyrdom of the Apostle, all constitute a part of a historical and spiritual tradition, any effort to promote an ecumenical atmosphere in Kerala will look only natural and historically and logically justifiable.

2. Response

The war response received from the various Episcopal Churches in Kerala to the announcement regarding the holding of the Regional Symposium by PRO ORIENTE was much encouraging and true to that response the various Churches extended their full and unreserved co-operation in the preparatory work, also ensured the active participation of their official delegates in the conference. It was for the first time in the recent history of the Churches in India that they refreshingly met in a conclave to have a meaningful and serious dialogue in search of a better communion amongst them. The media also gave deserving coverage, describing the symposium as a memorable event of unprecedented dimensions. If the general consensus amongst the participating Churches was any indication, the PRO ORIENTE symposium was well received by the congregations of faithful belonging to different denominational shades. The conference marked an unimaginably positive change in the working relationship of the various Churches in Kerala. The fact that the symposium was formally opened by His Beatitude the Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Paulose II. of the Malankara Syrian Jacobite Orthodox Church and the Valedictory

Meeting blessed by His Holiness the Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathew II of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was widely acclaimed as a new chapter in the ecumenical endeavours in Kerala. The warmth of the conference was being felt every evening during the conference days when the various Churches hosted dinner to the delegates in their own Cathedral premises in the town. Its culmination was in the public reception accorded to the delegates of the conference in the Public Library auditorium, Kottayam presided over by His Grace Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Syro-Malankara Archbishop of Trivandrum and a former Chairman of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India. The Government of Kerala was represented by honourable Minister K. M. Mani and the various non-christian religious groups by their respective lay leaders.

3. A Serious Effort

The symposium addressed itself to theological and christological questions in an effort to identify areas of co-operation and agreement and understanding and communion. Commencing the daily sessions with a liturgical worship, led by particular denominations, but joined by all participants, set the tone of the deliberations that followed till the evening. The prayer sessions also proved equally effective as dialogue sessions of the conference. The deliberative sessions marked an academic openness on the part of the participants but they also provided enough opportunity and occasion to assert ones' own opinions on theological and christological questions.

The inaugural or opening session of the conference was held in a very serene and solemn atmosphere, presided over by Archbishop Joseph Powathil, the President of the organizing committee and the chairman of Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council. The symposium was opened by His Beatitude the Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Paulose II of the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Church. Mr. K. M. Mathew, Chief Editor Malayala Manorama spoke on the occasion. Prof. Dr. Cyriac Thomas said words of welcome and Rev. Dr. Zacharias Elippulikatt, Rector, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary proposed the vote of thanks. Alfred Stirnemann, Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE spoke the words of introduction in the opening session and also read the official messages from Rome and Vienna.

The conference in the following days took up for discussion a number of themes including „Christological Consensus“, „The Incarnate Christ and Christian Witness“, „Primacy and Conciliarity“, „Unity and Christian Identity in India“ etc.

Alfred Stirnemann, Most Rev. Metropolitan Mar Aprem, His Grace Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, His Grace Metropolitan Dr. Mathews Mar Severios, Fr. Gerhard Habison, Fr. Kapudjian, Dr. Otto König, DDr. Peter Hofrichter, Fr. Bernard Dubasque, Miss Melitta Krcal, Fr. Kondothra K. M. George, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Dr. Emil Maher Ishaq, His Grace Metropolitan Mar Meletios, Archbishop Joseph Powathil, His Grace Metropolitan Thomas Themetheos, Mar George Punnakottil et al. presented papers and served as moderators in various sessions.

The Valedictory session was presided over by His Grace Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. His Holiness the Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II delivered the words of blessings and presented mementos. Archbishop Joseph Powathil presided over the function. Fr.

Dr. Johns Abraham Konat welcomed the gathering Fr. Kuriakose Moolayil proposed a vote of thanks.

As a result of the symposium, PRO ORIENTE has now practically become a sign and signal representing Church unity among the various denominations in Kerala. In fact PRO ORIENTE was a household word in the Central Kerala those days. The general feeling has been that the efforts of the PRO ORIENTE should be made more effective at the regional levels also to carry forward the message of Church unity and Inter Church Communion. It may perhaps be desirable that the work of PRO ORIENTE be made more consequential by organizing its activities at regional levels with regional forums or centres to make the message of PRO ORIENTE more meaningful to those who hold the cause of ecumenism dear to their hearts.

4. Evaluation

At the end of the symposium, it was the unanimous opinion of the participants that the symposium was a success. May be such feelings are to be expected at the end of a friendly gathering. However the fact that even months after the symposium many participants cherish the same view is an indication of what was achieved through the meeting.

It is certainly to be noted that all the Episcopal Churches responded well by sending their delegates. Each Church was allotted a specific quota and this was wholeheartedly accepted by all. The organizers were pleasantly surprised by the early response from the Churches regarding their delegates. Because of the interest evoked, there were other applicants too and we could not accommodate all of them.

There was good participation in the deliberations. Though serious topics were brought up, most members took part in the discussion without any inhibition. Naturally almost all of the speakers were sensitive to the sentiments of members from the other Churches. The participants also mixed with each other freely.

The initiative taken by the two Orthodox Churches in visiting each others headquarters for public receptions was certainly something that earned everybody's praise. This helped to create a very cordial atmosphere at the symposium. It was also a product of the atmosphere that already prevailed from the very beginning of the 'get together'.

The dinner-reception given by each Church not only reduced the expenditure of the symposium, it enabled prominent leaders of every Church to mix with the delegates from all the Churches. This was also something that attracted the attention of the general public.

The media as a whole was very favourable to the event. Even secular or communal minded papers reported about the meeting. They saw the gathering as something significant in the context of the negative tendencies in the country. The 'unity in diversity' expressed by the Churches on this occasion was in fact a useful signal to the country.

One or two critical factors that helped the organization of the symposium and made it a success could be mentioned here.

1. The choice of the venue. this was one of the first problems faced by the organizers. The St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary at Vadavathoor, however was a venue acceptable to all the Churches. The excellent facilities of the institution and

the ready service offered by the staff and students of the seminary, were indeed a very important factor in making the symposium a success. The organizers could save much of their time and energy simply because of the availability of the seminary.

2. The already existing personal relationships among Church leaders was a very positive factor. In fact, the friendly atmosphere created by the Nilackal Trust meetings has contributed very much to the organizational efforts. There was little scope for misunderstandings and group rivalries. The heads of Churches, who regularly meet as members of the Nilackal Trust, were very generous and co-operating.

3. The enthusiasm of certain lay leaders of the various Churches was very heart warming. Enthusiastic young men offered their free service during the days of the symposium. Elders used their influence and willingly contributed financially to get things done. On the whole the laity evinced very keen interest in the movement for Church unity.

5. The Follow-Up

The organizing committee set up for the symposium was to continue as the Follow-Up Committee. And they have been quite earnest about their work. This is also something significant. Usually such follow-up is not taken seriously after an event like this.

The Follow-Up Committee has already met three times. They have also set up subcommittees to organize further regional symposiums in different parts of Kerala. These subcommittees are also regularly meeting and pursuing their tasks.

The Follow-Up Committee has decided to have the first regional symposium in Trivandrum. Church leaders of the area have already expressed their happiness over this move and have agreed to co-operate in the best way possible. A subcommittee has been set up to organize this together with the local committee delegated by the Episcopal Churches of the area. It has also been decided that after the Trivandrum meeting, their should be further regional meetings at Kottayam, Ernakulam, Trichur and Kozhikode.

The Follow-Up Committee also decided at its February meeting to publish a book (catechetical in nature) introducing all Churches of Kerala to the believers. The articles on each Church are to be written by a member of the concerned Church itself. An editorial committee has been set up and they are going ahead with their work. In fact they have already finalised the plans for a 200 page book to be published by December/January 1994/95. If this goes according to plan, it will be a unique achievement.

Another decision was to arrange for a meeting of all the seminary professors in Kerala as a part of the search to build up better co-operation and understanding among Christians. As a first step rectors of the various seminaries were convened for a meeting on 31st May. At this meeting it was decided to convene a general meeting of the professors of seminaries in December 1994 or January 1995.

As you can see, this serious attempt at follow up is itself very significant. The desire for closer co-operation is taking more concrete shape. It is evident that the follow up, we are speaking about, is not mere word-game. God willing, we shall be able to accomplish many things.

TOWARDS ONE CHURCH: PRO ORIENTE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT KOTTAYAM AND ITS VISION FOR FUTURE

Christians in Kerala are used to all kinds of „ecumenical“ meetings. Bishops, priests and lay people from different churches often meet across church borders whenever social, ecclesiastical and cultural occasions demand it. Their common commitment to the multi-religious society in India, especially in the areas of educational, medical and cultural services often prepares common ground.

However, the regional symposium at Kottayam in October 1993, sponsored by the PRO ORIENTE foundation struck a different note. It was a meeting of official delegates, including many lay people, representing all established churches in Kerala. The hierarchy of our various churches took a vital interest in the running of this symposium. Above all, „unity of the church“, the ecumenical theme par excellence, was at the heart of the deliberations there. I must acknowledge here with gratitude, the inspired leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, who was the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and also the total dedication and commitment of Alfred Stirnemann, president of PRO ORIENTE, for holding a truly ecumenical meeting in India.

The PRO ORIENTE symposium has worked as a catalyst in enhancing the existing good relations among the churches in Kerala. the Follow-Up Committee has picked up several of the practical proposals made by the participants of the symposium for immediate implementation. for example, there are plans for publishing a handbook on churches in Kerala in the form of an ecumenical catechism which will deal with the history, theology, liturgy, administration and present life of the various churches in an ecumenical and irenic perspective.

There is a plan for holding a local symposium in Trivandrum with the participation of the hierarchy from different churches on some of the pressing questions facing India today like communal violence, interreligious understanding etc. A third avenue is the proposed meeting of the rectors and professors from various theological seminaries in Kerala to focus on the ecumenical co-operation in areas like theological education and ministerial formation.

Since archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil will give you a more authoritative report on such plans, I wish to limit myself to some broad observations as a member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee involved in the running of the Kottayam Symposium and as a Christian who cherishes the dream of one Church in India, at least within the St. Thomas tradition, to begin with.

As you are probably aware, Christians in India belong to two major streams depending on their Christian origin or church affiliation. The first stream which can be broadly called the St. Thomas tradition includes all those Christians who belong to the historic Christian community in Kerala or in diaspora that traces its Christian origin to the preaching of St. Thomas the Apostle. At present, this community includes churches belonging to Roman Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, East Syrian and Protestant families of churches.

The second stream generally represents the Western Missionary tradition. It includes Roman Catholic and various Protestant churches. Christians belonging to

this stream trace their Christian origin to the missionary activity of Western Colonial powers like Portugal and Britain ever since the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama who landed at a seaport in Kerala in 1498.

Since the PRO ORIENTE foundation is primarily interested in fostering ecumenical dialogue between the Western Roman Catholic tradition and the Oriental Christian traditions, my observations refer primarily to the first stream, namely churches belonging to the St. Thomas tradition.

It seems to me that regaining the lost unity of the churches belonging to the tradition of St. Thomas in India should be the first priority in the context of the Kottayam symposium. This conviction grows out of the historic tradition of these churches.

It is a simple fact of history that the Christian community in India remained undivided until the 16th century, that is, until the coming of Portuguese colonizers and missionaries. What we now see as doctrinally and organizationally distinct Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches in Kerala is obviously the result of division fomented by Portuguese and British missions. What we can reasonably affirm about the pre-Portuguese church in India is that it was an undivided local Christian Church of purely oriental character, celebrating the tradition of Apostle Thomas and well rooted in the socio-cultural soil of India. I believe that this is a sufficient basis for our ecumenical search for one church in India. There was an overwhelming consensus in the Kottayam symposium on the vital need of rediscovering this unity. The participants were of course aware of the many hurdles on the way of realising this rather utopian dream.

What is the nature of this unity that we dream about in India?

We were speaking not about a unity in which one church joins another church, or one church absorbs other churches - a rather simple way - but about true unity. We may specify two conditions essential for an ecumenical ecclesiology for one church in India.

a. Apostolic

The one church in India will be faithful to the Apostolic tradition of the one undivided church. We have sufficient ground for affirming this because of our common heritage of the Apostle St. Thomas. We have also a fairly high degree of knowledge of the shape of the undivided Church in the first four centuries after Christ. The one Church in India will accord a unique status not shared by later Western or Eastern developments, to this common Apostolic tradition held by local churches everywhere in the early Christian centuries. In holding on to the undivided Apostolic tradition of faith and Christian life, the one church in India will manifest the fullness of the „On Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.“ With the agreement on Christology as a starting point, we should come to a consensus about the essential content of the Apostolic tradition.

The one Indian church will give special attention to the ecclesial genius of the oriental tradition in its liturgical theological and spiritual perceptions and expressions. This is in a way partly determined by our geographical location as part of „the oriental world“ and partly by our early and formative association with other oriental

churches. This, however, is not understood in an exclusive sense as the rejection of all other traditions.

While we can continue to maintain healthy and creative relationship with great ecclesial traditions like Latin, Greek, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian, Armenian and so on, we will understand them as the legitimate development of the Christian tradition in their particular cultural and social contexts. The one Indian church will not, therefore, simply imitate any of these „local churches“, but will respect and learn from them while shaping its own ecclesial character and identity. The question of maintaining eucharistic communion (eucharistic communion in one apostolic faith as the only essential requirement) between the Indian church and other „local“ churches will have to be addressed in a broad, ecumenically positive framework. We will work, not for cutting down communion, but for extending it with all churches which are faithful to the apostolic tradition, without necessarily privileging communion with any one local church at the expense of other local churches.

b. Indian

The one Church in India will be qualified „Indian“, not in a nationalistic, parochial sense. „Nation“ is not the criterion here. Rather, the Indian church will take seriously first of all its context of the great religious and spiritual traditions covering all of the Asian continent. The witness of the Indian Church will not be limited to a little recent word 'dialogue'. It will, as the Body of Christ be oriented to an authentic manifestation of the divine-human unity in the incarnate Christ in the context of our cultural, religious and social reality. Being rooted in the Apostolic tradition of faith and drawing from our own Asian intellectual and spiritual resources, it will aim at incarnating the gospel for all our people. In this deep and non-nationalist sense of incarnating the Christian faith in the heart of our culture, the qualifying word „Indian“ is no more and no less legitimate than adjectives like Roman, Anglican, Greek, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Coptic used to qualify local ecclesial traditions. Of course, the word is not essential for us, provided the spirit is internalized.

This is a dream, yet it is not a dream in a vacuum. It is arising out of the perfect union of God and humanity in Christ and the vision of the Kingdom into which all people of the earth are invited. We cannot accomplish this dream by our own effort unless God wills it. We can humbly pray to the master of the harvest: „Lord, gather us together in truth and love for the glory of your Kingdom and for our humble service to humanity.“

About the Newspapers which Covered the Symposium

1. Malayala Manorama

This Malayalam Newspaper started on March 22nd 1890 from Kottayam under Kandathil Varghese Mappila. It appeared twice in a week from 1901 and thrice in a week from 1918. In 1928 it became a daily. It was the cause of nationalism during the freedom struggle of India. It has now five editions from Kottayam, Kozhikode, Kochi, Palakkad and Trivandrum. The Malayala Manorama company publishes two weeklies, one linguistic bimonthly and a children's fortnightly, and an English weekly also. This is the most leading newspaper in India with a circulation of 775.000. The Chief Editor is Mr. K.M. Mathew, an illustrious leader of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

Mangalam

This is a new publication which started in the eighties in Malayalam. It was originally coming out as weekly and from 1989 onwards it came out as a daily. It has a circulation of around 20.000. The Chief Editor is Mr. M.C. Varghese. The weekly still comes out and it is the second popular publication of its kind in India.

Deepika

This Malayalam daily started on April 15th 1887 from Kottayam as a means for the educational cultural and occupational affairs of Christians. Its original name was Nazrani Deepika (=Light of Christians). The founder editor was Nidheerickal Mani Kathanar, a Catholic priest. Above the status of a Christian publication, it kept public awareness and standard of cultural newspaper with social interests. From 1895 onwards it had become thrice in a month, from 1899 onwards a weekly and from 1912 as fortnightly. From 1931 it again became a weekly. In 1938 it became a daily. Now the company publishes a weekly, and a children's weekly apart from the newspaper.

Mathrubhumi

It started on March 18th 1923 as thrice in a week under the leadership of Mr. K.P. Keshava Menon, a doyen of India's freedom struggle. It publishes a weekly and a film magazine apart from the newspaper. This newspaper keeps a good standard among the Malayalam dailies. Reliable news in good and orderly manner is its significance. Now this daily stands 5th in whole India with a circulation of 452.189 and the second leading daily in Malayalam just behind Malayala Manorama. It has four editions coming out from Kozhikode, Palakkad, Koch and Thiruvananthapuram. The head office is at Kozhikode and the Chief Editor is Mr. M.P. Veerendrakumar, the leader of the Jain Community in India.

Move for Christian Unity towards New Heights

It is the duty of all Christians to long for and work for Christian unity. Christian unity is very meaningful in the selfishness and districting mentality we see in the world today.

It was during the sixties the move for Christian unity got strength. The WCC and the Second Vatican Council helped a lot for this. Many people may think that the moves for unity are very slow. But we must remember that obstacles are many. The perfect unity can only be achieved according to the divine will. Many moves are going on keeping this aim in mind all over the world. Conversions and feasts are being conducted by the initiative of priests locally. Due to the many dialogues between Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church consensus are made in Christology. It is a point to be noted.

One of the most important events in the Kerala Church History is the corporal effort made by the Episcopal Churches to re-establish the Nilackal Church. For this a Trust was formed and a temporary church building has been erected. This joining together lead to the co-operation in various other fields.

The Inter Church Council (a body formed by different church delegates) is a notable move regarding church unity. With full unity and mutual understanding this Council meets and thinks about educational issues. Another movement is also formed to work together in advanced educational fields.

To catalyse these efforts and lead towards full unity between churches a symposium is planned to be held from September last to October first week at Kottayam. This symposium will discuss theological issues in which all the Episcopal Churches of Kerala will take part. The symposium is being arranged by the famous PRO ORIENTE foundation centred at Vienna. This foundation was founded by Cardinal König in 1964 who was the Archbishop of Vienna. The conclusions came due to the efforts made by the PRO ORIENTE in Christology etc. leading to the official dialogues between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. Such conferences were organised in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988 in Vienna. In these conferences (under the auspices of the Vienna Archdiocese) delegates from Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Indian Orthodox Churches attended. In this, dignitaries from these churches or their representatives are members.

The aim of PRO ORIENTE is to create more co-operation and understanding between churches of the East and the West. So it encourages studies in this regard, arrange contact opportunities and tries to find new fields for communication. It is because of these the Pope is encouraging such moves. It was the Vienna Formula formulated in 1971, which led to the common declaration between Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox and the Roman Catholic church. In 1989 the Joint Commission between Malankara Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church began to function.

To catalyse such moves many regional consultations are being held. In 1991 a consultation was held in Egypt for the churches in the Middle East. The second meeting in this manner is being organised at the Paurastya Vidya Peeth, Vadavathoor, Kottayam. This is mainly aimed at the Churches of Kerala but delegates from all over India will take part. The Standing Committee members from abroad

will lead the discussions. the topics for discussion are Christology, Hierarchy of Church etc.

We cannot say when and how the church unity materialise. But the world nations cannot ignore the persuasion given by churches which tend towards unity and friendship. The unity in diversity, or in other words, the understandings even if many differences still exist has a special value. In this complicated world it is impossible to find out a unity ignoring diversities. Hence the Kerala symposium of PRO ORIENTE will surely be a milestone in the path of unity.

(from Malaya Manorama July 24th 1993, translated from Malayalam; the article was published also in the newspapers „Deepika“ and „Mangalam“ of the same date)

Ecumenical Symposium Begins Tomorrow

Kottayam: the Ecumenical Symposium under the auspices of PRO ORIENTE foundation centred in Vienna and in the co-operation with different Christian Churches of Kerala begins tomorrow.

The symposium to be held at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary Vadavathoor will be inaugurated by H.B. Baselius Paulose II at 9.00 in the morning. Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil will preside over the meeting and Chief Editor of Malaya Manorama Mr. K. M. Mathew will speak.

Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic Archbishop for Central Europe and Sweden), Alfred Stirnemann, Rev. Fr. Dr. K.M. George etc. will present papers in the following sessions. Rev. Fr. V.C. Samuel will be the Moderator.

(Malaya Manorama, September 29th 1993)

P. C. Abraham, Padinjarekaja

Tradition of the Church will be made richer

Attempts to bring churches more closer and to better understanding is getting stronger in these days. Apart from official discussions, on unofficial levels also churches work in harmony. Earlier theological discussions were occasions to make drifts among churches. but today they are considered as the part of sincere attempts to find out unity formula.

Reception to the Catholicos of the East at Vatican by Pope and the return visit of Pope at the Catholicos's Cathedral Church Kottayam were milestones in bringing brotherhood between the two ancient churches.

Many delegates from India and abroad representing various churches are attending the PRO ORIENTE Symposium which begins today at Kottayam. This symposium will make the churches in eastern tradition still richer as bishops, priests and lay leaders of all Episcopal Churches of Kerala take part in it.

There will be around 200 delegates including the delegates from abroad for the PRO ORIENTE Symposium at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary. It is expected that PRO ORIENTE could share the findings of the five Vienna Consultations with all the Episcopal Churches of Kerala. Delegates from all the Episcopal Churches of Kerala will be present in the symposium. The attempts will be to find out the possibilities of church unity by analysing its theological and non-theological backgrounds in time bound discussions.

PRO ORIENTE gives the call to give heed to the voice of unity in the ideological and pragmatic levels. This Kottayam summit gives a hope to the Christian churches to strengthen the attempts of lowering the depth of disparities and make the path of unity more easier to ride on by finding out the areas on which unity is possible and also become the part of a Christ-centred chain of unity beyond the limits of narrowness.

(Malayala Manorama, September 29th 1993)

Reception to Church Leaders Today

Kottayam: The delegates for the PRO ORIENTE symposium will be received and felicitated by the Kottayam Public today. Major Archbishop of Syro Malabar denomination Cardinal Anthony Padiyara will preside over the meeting. H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II will inaugurate the function. Archbishop Benedictos Mar Gregorios will bless the meeting which begins at 5.00 in the evening at the Kottayam Public Library Hall.

Minister of Revenue Mr. K.M. Mani, Finance Minister Mr. Oommen Chandi, Ex-minister Mr. P.P. Ummer Koya, General Secretary of N.S.S. Mr. P.K. Narayana Panicker, Bishops Peter Thuruthikonam, Joseph Mar Ireneus, Thomas Mar Athanasios and Alfred Stirnemann etc. are among the speakers.

The delegates will be welcomed by Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil and Dr. Cyriac Thomas will read out the messages. The reception committee convener Mr. P.C. Abraham Padinjarekara will garland the foreign delegates and Fr. T.J. Joshua will express a vote of the thanks.

(Malayala Manorama, October 1st 1993)

Christians have to become One without being a threat to others

Kottayam: „Christians have to become one without being a threat to different denominations of Christian church or other religions“ was the inaugural message of the five day International Ecumenical Meeting at Kottayam commenced yesterday. Alfred Stirnemann, Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE, suggested that instead of bringing others to ones own ideas, a corporal effort to understand Christian truth aiming to the future is the days need.

More than 150 delegates from India and abroad are attending the conference being held at Apostolic Seminary Vadavathoor. H.B. Catholicos Baselios Paulose II

inaugurated the meeting. The most important mission of such conferences are to bring the good results of the Vienna consultations between churches to the believers; he said. Such conference could eliminate the blocks which stand in between a better agreement among Eastern and Western churches; he wished.

The Archbishop of Changanacherry Mar Joseph Powathil said that the churches should work together for the betterment with a mutual understanding which is the need of the age. He presided over the meeting.

Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE Alfred Stirnemann and Manorama Chief Editor K.M. Mathew spoke on the occasion. The Lay Trustee of the Orthodox Church P.C. Abraham garlanded the Catholicos. Cyriac Thomas welcomed and the Rector of the Seminary Zacharias Elippulikkattu expressed the vote of thanks. Messages from the Patriarch of Antioch H.H. Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas, Archbishop Hans Hermann Groër of Vienna and Franciscus Cardinal König, founder of PRO ORIENTE, President of WCC H.G. Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi were read.

(Mathrubhumi, October 1st 1993)

H. B. Baselios Paulose II

A Milestone in the Path of Church Unity

Kottayam: To include the Spirit of Christian Unity all the episcopal churches of Kerala joined together at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary with the International Ecumenical Symposium.

H.B. Baselios Paulose II pointed out that due to the dialogues under the auspices of PRO ORIENTE foundation, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches, many disputes and differences opinion were cleared out. He was inaugurating the five day symposium.

He remembered the settlement of the dispute about the Ousia of Jesus Christ for 1500 years between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches through the dialogues under the wings of PRO ORIENTE. This meeting will become a great success and be a milestone in the history of ecumenical activities of India, he said.

In his presidential address Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil said that the circumstances of today are making Christians to tend towards unity. From the four corners threats are coming up against our future. Injustice, corruption, sexual exploitation, foreign liquor etc. are around us. We cannot fight against these social evils separately. No Christian can get isolated and forget his responsibility towards ecumenism.

All the ideologies stood against Christianity are facing the threat of existence and its intensity is affecting the world like an earthquake, said the Chief Editor of Malaya Manorama Mr. K.M. Mathew. Majority fundamentalism at one side and minority fundamentalism on the other side are pressing India. Here the minority Christians have a greater rule he said.

The Cyriac speech by H.B. Mar Baselios Paulose II was translated by Thomas Mar Themotheos.

PRO ORIENTE secretary general Alfred Stirnemann read out the felicitatory messages. Dr. Cyriac Thomas, Rev. Dr. Zacharias Elipulikkattu were among the speakers.

Bossey Ecumenical Institute Director Rev. Dr. K.M. George and Rev. Dr. V.C. Samuel were the moderators of the discussions in which the key note address was given by the Armenian Apostolic Archbishop Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian. Many church dignitaries as well as lay leaders from India and abroad are attending the symposium. These delegates will be felicitated by Kottayam public at the public library auditorium at 5 p.m. Major Archbishop Anthony Cardinal Padiyara will preside over the meeting.

(Malaya Manorama, October 1st 1993)

His Beatitude The Catholicos: „Contributions of PRO ORIENTE are Unique“

Kottayam: His Beatitude Baselios Paulose II Catholicos said that the PRO ORIENTE foundation has successfully solved the difference lasted for 1500 years. He was inaugurating the five day symposium by the PRO ORIENTE foundation.

PRO ORIENTE has contributed a lot to the ecumenical movement during the last two decades. This brought up churches for communication between the Christians of the East and the West. The foundation has achieved its goals par excellence. In the circumstances where disputes between Catholics and the Orthodox are lesser the possible unity is more clear, he said. But the main obstacle is that the believers do not know about these much and the Kottayam symposium will convey this to more people. He hoped that this symposium may become a milestone in the ecumenical history of India and this may be a success with the co-operation of all churches of Kerala.

Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil presided over the meeting. He said that this is the time Christians need unity the most. Those who do not try for unity are not for the policies of the Church. This is the period we face serious threat against the faith. Sexual exploitation, corruption and drugs are common today. To fight against these the power of unity is inevitable. He exhorted to try for ecumenism instead of selfish interests. Malayala Manorama Chief Editor K.M. Mathew spoke in the meeting. The Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE Alfred Stirnemann read out the messages. Prof. Dr. Cyriac Thomas welcomed the meeting and Rev. Dr. Zacharias Elipulikkattu thanked.

The discussion at 9.00 today will be moderated by Bishop Dr. Peter Thurithikonam. Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Militios will lead the afternoon session. There will be a reception for the foreign delegates at 5.00 p.m. at the public library auditorium.

A Malayalee also at the Front

A Malayalee also at the front of PRO ORIENTE Movement: the Rev. Fr. Dr. K.M. George. He is the Associate Director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute run by the WCC. He has now been appointed as the Vice Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. He took his G.S.T. from Orthodox Seminary, B.D. from Serampore University and earned a doctorate from the Catholic Institute Paris. He had been a professor in the Orthodox Seminary, Director of the Delhi Orthodox Centre and also the Secretary of National Christian Council. He is now a member of the Standing Committee and PRO ORIENTE. Apart from him Metropolitan Amba Bishoy, Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim Mar Gregorios, Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Metropolitan Garima, Cardinal Groër, Alfred Stirnemann etc. are the leaders.

(Mangalam, October 1st 1993)

The Catholicos: Churches have to imitate Christ

Kottayam: The time has come for the churches to imitate Christ who began ecumenism, says His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II The Catholicos of the East. He was inaugurating the reception given to the Standing Committee of the members of PRO ORIENTE at the public library auditorium by the Kottayam public.

The Archbishop of Trivandrum presided over the meeting. He exhorted to fight against the utter poverty all over the nation.

Archbishop Joseph Mar Powathil welcomed the meeting. The Indian Church today faces a situation which is dreadful and evokes anxiety, he said. So the church unity is very essential. This is the time we have to show love and sacrifice more and more. To generate the message of unity we have to be the witnesses of Christian life.

Alfred Stirnemann presented the order of PRO ORIENTE namely „Protector of PRO ORIENTE“ to the Catholicos. Bishop Sam Mathew introduced the foreign delegates. Alfred Stirnemann, Vice-President of PRO ORIENTE; the Armenian-Apostolic Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian of Central Europe; Fr. Frans Bouwen PA, Jerusalem; Dr. Emil Maher, Coptic Orthodox Church, Cairo; DDr. Peter Hofrichter, Salzburg; Melitta Krcal, Secretary of PRO ORIENTE; Fr. Bernard Dubasque, Rome; were those who were felicitated.

Mr. K.M. Mani (Minister of Revenue), Ex-Minister Mr. P.P. Ummerkoya, Secretary General of N.S.S., Mr. P.K. Narayana Panicker, Peter Thuruthikonam, the Bishop of Vijayapuram, Bishop Joseph Mar Ireneus, Bishop Thomas Mar Athanasius were among the speakers. Fr. T.J. Joshua expressed the vote of thanks.

(Mangalam, October 2nd 1993)

The Catholicos: Christ, the Unique Symbol of Ecumenism

The most unique symbol of ecumenism is Christ who incarnated as man to make man God, reminded H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II. He was inaugurating the public meeting felicitating the foreign delegates attending the International Ecumenical Symposium at Vadavathoor Seminary.

Christ showed the real ecumenism to men by coming down from heaven and making man close to God. So the vineyard of God, the Earth and Heaven must be united to its full sense and experience, he said.

We are the heirs of one heritage. Our first parents are same. Even if we are Hindu or Muslim or Christian our heritage is the same. So whatever disputes are there between us we must confess that we belong to the one family, His Holiness pointed out. Christians as well as the whole human kind.

Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios called the attention to a serious issue. The need of the day is eliminating poverty and the help that the rich countries give for the poor is only a trifle. Christ is making all the children of God one family through the Holy Spirit. So we must try to make a world where all are living in love and decency he urged.

PRO ORIENTE, the Vienna centred movement for ecumenism all over the world, presented the order „Protector of PRO ORIENTE“ to H.H. the Catholicos. Alfred Stirnemann, Vice president and Secretary general to PRO ORIENTE handed the order over to Bava Thirumeni.

Dr. Cyriac Thomas read the messages from various dignitaries felicitating the ecumenical meeting. Bishop Sam Mathew introduced the foreign delegates and Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, Minister of Revenues K.M. Mani, Mr. P.P. Ummer Koya, Secretary general to N.S.S. P.K. Narayana Panicker, Bishop Dr. Peter Thurithikonam, Joseph Mar Ireneus, Thomas Mar Themotheos, Fr. T.J. Joshua etc. were among the speakers. Alfred Stirnemann replied.

The ecumenical meeting expressed grief at the disaster at Maharashtra. Kerala Catholic Bishop Conference as well as Orthodox Church offered hundred thousand each for the afflicted. The meeting exhorted all the Christian churches to help the sufferers.

(Malaya Manorama, October 2nd 1993)

Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil: Gandhian Thought Fits for the Age

In the current circumstances of India the importance of Gandhism has only increased and Gandhism is not an out-dated philosophy but the philosophy apt for the age, said Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil. Gandhiji's attitudes were beyond all kinds of greed and limitations. He was giving the key-note address in the „Gandhi Jayanti“ remembrance meeting specially conducted during the PRO ORIENTE ecumenical symposium. Bishop Mar Punnakkottil presided over and Dr. Cyriac Thomas spoke.

On the third day of the symposium H.G. Thomas Mar Themotheos presided. We cannot confess Christ unless we cooperate with other religions in the Indian

context he pointed out. The importance of Christian mission for Peace gains more prominence in a stirred situation, he added.

Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil suggested that the dialogue should be extended to all religions of India without limiting it into Christian denominations only.

The meeting began with the prayer of the C.S.I. Church. The symposium will come to its end tomorrow. Metropolitan Alexander Marthoma will deliver the closing message and Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil will preside over the meeting.

(Manorama, October 3rd 1993)

Churches cannot exist in division

H.G. Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios said that the Church which is the body of Christ, cannot exist in division and the mission of churches today is finding out that truth and make a life style in accordance to that.

The churches should show unity in diversity just like the unity of Trinity is seen in Christ, he said. One cannot forget that churches can find areas of unity in ideas keeping their own identities. He was giving after presenting the key-note address of the last day of the ecumenical symposium called by PRO ORIENTE at Vadavathoor.

In the afternoon the newly consecrated bishops of Mar Thoma Church were received and felicitated. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilos introduced the bishops to the audience. Bishop of Tiruvalla Geevarghese Mar Themotheos felicitated. New bishop Joseph Mar Barnabas replied. Fr. Kuriakose Moolayil welcomed and Dr. Cyriac Thomas expressed the vote of thanks.

The closing session in the evening was presided over by Mar Joseph Powathil. Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma gave the keynote address. Chief Editor of Deepika Dr. P.K. Abraham, Chief Editor Mangalam Mr. M.C. Varghese etc., felicitated the meeting. Fr. Johns Abraham Konat welcomed and Fr. Kuriakose Moolayil expressed vote of thanks.

In the morning the prayer was led by H.G. Geevarghese Mar Coorilos and H.G. Thomas Mar Themotheos, bishops of the Orthodox Syrian Church.

(Mathrubhumi, October 5th 1993)

With the Message of Unity the Seminar Ends

Kottayam: Creating new waves in the field of church unity, the five day long International Ecumenical Seminar came to a close.

Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma gave the closing message. Quoting the verse from the Bible that all are one in God, he exhorted to move forward without looking back.

H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II The Catholicos said the speech of blessing. Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil presided over the meeting. Pra-

yer was led by Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian. Alfred Stirnemann spoke on the occasion. Fr. Johns Abraham Konat welcomed and Fr. Kuriakose Moolayil expressed the vote of thanks.

Earlier in the symposium H.G. Dr. Mathews Mar Severios presented the paper. The main mission of the churches is to find out the truth that the churches cannot exist separately and hence work according to that: he reminded. In the afternoon the newly consecrated bishops of Mar Thoma Church were felicitated. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilos introduced them and Joseph Mar Barnabas replied. Fr. Kuriakose Moolayil welcomed and Dr. Cyriac Thomas expressed the vote of thanks.

Alfred Stirnemann and Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil were specially felicitated for their sincere contributions to conduct this symposium. The morning worship was led by Bishop Thomas Mar Themotheos and Bishop Geevarghese Mar Coorilos of the Orthodox Church.

(Deepika, October 5th 1993)

CATHOLIC PASTORAL GUIDELINES ON MARRIAGES BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OF THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1. These guidelines are framed on the basis of the common declaration of His Holiness Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.
2. Commissions were appointed by both Churches to explore ways and means to foster the existing common affirmation of the faith and sacramental unity between the Churches.
3. Having considered the above mentioned declaration and the unity that exists between the two Churches in faith and sacraments, both Churches have agreed to accept the reality of inter-Church marriages taking place between their members.
4. The two Churches desire to foster marriages within the same ecclesial communion and consider this as the norm. However, accepting the reality that inter-Church marriages do take place at times, the two Churches have decided to facilitate the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony in either Church, allowing the bride/bridegroom the right and freedom to retain her/his own ecclesial communion, by providing necessary information and documents.

Preparation for Inter-Church Marriages

5. When the parties apply for an inter-Church marriage they should be told that the marriage within the same faith is better for the harmony of the family and the upbringing of the children.
6. If they insist on conducting the inter-Church marriage they should be instructed properly about the *Agreement* reached between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church on inter-Church marriages.
7. It should be stressed that, while each partner holds his/her ecclesial faith as supreme or paramount, he/she should respect the ecclesial faith of his/her partner.
8. A pre-marriage preparatory course and a pre-marital counseling session are highly recommended.
9. The bride/bridegroom shall produce her/his baptism certificate.
10. The priest must ensure that the bride/bridegroom is eligible for marriage.
11. The priest should ensure that bride/bridegroom has paid the church donations in connection with marriages according to the practice of the Churches.
12. The bride and bridegroom, after mutual consultation, may select the church in which the marriage is to be celebrated.
13. Written permission for inter-Church marriage from the respective bishops should be obtained by the bride/bridegroom.
14. Banns should be published in the respective churches, which also announce that it is an inter-Church marriage.
15. Once the permission is obtained from the bishops, the respective parish priests are expected to issue the necessary documents for the conduct of marriage.
16. Marriage in the Lent or Advent seasons is only to be conducted with the permission of the Bishops.

Celebration of Inter-Church Marriages

17. The liturgical minister should be the parish priest of the church where the marriage is celebrated, or his delegation from the same ecclesial communion.
18. there is to be no joint celebration of marriage by the ministers of both Churches. The marriage is to be blessed either by the Catholic or by the Syrian Orthodox minister. However, there could be some kind of participation at the liturgical service by the other minister who could read a scriptural passage or give a sermon.
19. On the occasion of these celebrations the couple, and any members of their families who belong to these Churches, are allowed to participate in the Holy Eucharist in the church where the sacrament of matrimony is being celebrated.
20. Proper entries must be made in the church registers, and marriage certificates should be issued for a record to be made in the register of the other church.

Pastoral Care of Catholic - Syrian Orthodox Inter-Church Families

21. The Catholic partner is to be reminded that he or she has to commit him/herself to imparting to their children proper Catholic formation, to the extent possible and in agreement with his/her partner.¹ Such formation should be fully in harmony with the Catholic tradition to which he/she belongs.
22. The pastors of both partners are bound in conscience to provide continued pastoral care to the inter-Church families in such a way as to contribute to their sanctity, unity and harmony.
23. Each partner is to be advised to attend the liturgical celebrations of his/her respective Church, but the couple may be allowed to participate jointly in the eucharistic celebration on special occasions when this joint participation is socially required.
24. Any declaration of the nullity of such marriages is only to be considered with the consent of the bishops concerned from both Churches.
25. The funeral service should as far as possible be conducted according to the rite of the dead person's church, even though he/she may be buried in either of the cemeteries, especially if the other partner is already buried there in a family tomb.

January 25th, 1994

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ON INTER-CHURCH MARRIAGES

This agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on inter-Church marriages has been prepared taking into account the following elements of the *Common Declaration* of Pope John Paul II and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Zakka I Iwas of Antioch, dated 23rd June 1984:

- „(1) The common profession of faith between the Pope and the Patriarch on the mystery of the Incarnate Word;
- (2) the common affirmation of their faith in the mystery of the Church and the sacraments;
- (3) the possibility given by the declaration for a pastoral collaboration including the mutual admission of the faithful belonging to both Churches to the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick for a grave spiritual need.“

Having considered the above mentioned events and declaration, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church agreed on the following considerations and norms.

As our two Churches believe in and confess the mystery of the Church and its sacramental reality, we consider it our duty to specify the areas of agreement in cases of marriages between the members of our two Churches.

Man and woman created in the image of God (Gen 1, 26/27) are called to become sharers of the eternal divine communion. The sacrament of marriage is an image of this divine communion. Marital intimacy and self-effacing sharing are reflections of the deepest inter-personal sharing within the Trinitarian communion. Hence this intimate marital communion is divinely confirmed by Christ with the seal of unity and of indissolubility, and ordered toward the good of the spouses and the generation and education of the offspring.

„He answered, 'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh?*' What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.“ (Mt 19, 4-6)

Marriage is a great sacrament of divine communion and St. Paul compares the mutual relationship of the husband and wife to the mystery of communion between Jesus Christ and his Church.¹ St. Paul calls it a great mystery: This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church“ (Eph 5, 32). Hence we believe that the sacrament of marriage bearing the image of the eternal divine communion is also an image of the most intimate communion between the Risen Bridegroom with his Bride, the Church.

¹ cf. Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism (1993), nn. 150-151

¹ cfr. Eph 5, 21-26; Tit 2, 3f.; 1 Pet 3, 1f; Rev 18, 7; 21, 2

The Church is the primordial sacrament of the eternal divine communion and, through the celebration of her sacramental mysteries, she deepens her communion with the divine Spouse and enables her members to participate in the divine life.

Our two Churches accept the sacredness and indissolubility of the sacramental bond of marriage and consider the conjugal relationship as an expression of the above communion and a means to achieve self-effacing mutual love and freedom from selfishness which was the cause of the fall of humanity.

In this theological perspective, taking into account the question of the marriages between the members of our two Churches, we consider it a matter of our pastoral concern to provide the following directives.

Our two Churches desire to foster marriages within the same ecclesial communion and consider this the norm. However, we have to accept the pastoral reality that inter-Church marriages do take place. When such occasions arise, both Churches should facilitate the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony in either Church, allowing the bride/bridegroom the right and freedom to retain her/his own ecclesial communion, by providing necessary information and documents. On the occasion of these celebrations, the couple as well as their family members belonging to these two Churches are allowed to participate in the Holy Eucharist in the Church where the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated. We consider it also the great responsibility of the parents to pay special attention to impart to the extent possible and in mutual accord proper ecclesial formation to their children in full harmony with the tradition of the ecclesial communion to which they have to belong.

January, 25th, 1994

INTERIM REPORT ON MARRIAGE BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OF THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

The joint international commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India, 9 - 12 Dec. 1990

The Commission in its first meeting held at Sophia Center, Kottayam, from Oct. 22 to 25, 1989 had set up a sub-commission to study the issue of marriages between the members of the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The sub-commission presented its study report to the commission in its second meeting held at Spirituality Center, Manganam, Kottayam from 9th - 12th Dec. 1990. Having discussed the report, the Commission agreed upon the following points:

1. both our churches affirm their common loyalty to the Catholic and Apostolic Tradition. This living tradition is always an open, growing and dynamic reality, with both a universally common core and specific ways of understanding, expression and practice which have become part of the reality of the Church for Christians living in various localities.
2. In the matter of Matrimony as a Christian sacrament, while we recognize that the historical record is not always clear, and that some of the present practices and beliefs are the result of long developments which are not uniform in all localities, we agree, along with all ancient churches that Matrimony is a Holy Sacramental Mystery of the Church; the Church itself is the great Sacramental Mystery of Christ's Incarnation. While our practices vary, even within one Church, in regard to the Sacrament of Matrimony, we confess that it is the Church which administers all sacramental mysteries enabling the faithful to share in the mystery of the Kingdom of God.
3. The man-woman relationship is integral to the original Creation (Gen 1, 26-28). Our Lord himself taught us that in the beginning the twain were one and that it is ultimately God who joins together man and woman in marriage to become one flesh (Mt 19, 4-6). Christian marriage derives its meaning from the great mystery of the union of Christ with his bride, the Church (Eph 5, 22-32).
4. We agree that the marriage between Christians is a Sacrament, is for life and is indissoluble. Differences of practice prevail among our various traditions in relation to the impediments to marriage, declaration of the nullity of marriage and separation of married couples. These differences need to be further studied by the sub-commission to see to what extent, if any, they affect marriages between Catholics and Orthodox.
5. We recognize that the mutual consent of the marriage partners is a constitutive element in the Sacrament of Matrimony. However, the expression of that mutual consent seems to take different forms in the canonical practices of our ecclesial traditions.
6. We are also agreed that the Eucharist is the crown of all sacramental mysteries. Hence in Christian married life the communion of husband and wife in the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ is of central importance.

7. Our two churches are not now in Eucharistic communion with each other. This situation makes it difficult for members of the two different churches to be united in matrimony and to continue in one Eucharistic Fellowship. The Roman Catholic Church has special provisions for „mixed marriages“ and for pastoral care of the „mixed“ married couple and their children. The Malankara Orthodox Church does not now permit its members to continue in that Church after marrying someone not in that Communion. Each church justifies its present practice on theological and canonical grounds.
8. The Commission, based on the report of the sub-commission, discussed various possibilities of finding a mutually acceptable interim arrangement for marriages between members of the two churches until Eucharistic communion is restored between them. The discussion led to the elaboration of certain principles, on the basis of which the sub-commission should make further studies and bring specific proposals to the next meeting of the commission.
9. The main principles are the followings:
- 9.1. Marriages between members of two churches not in Eucharistic communion with each other are not normal, and should be allowed only in exceptional circumstances, and be treated as special cases.
- 9.2. The two churches recognize two fundamental considerations for making interim provisions in such marriages:
- 9.2.1. The Church has a God-given responsibility to be faithful to the Apostolic tradition it has inherited, and to maintain it in its integrity without compromise;
- 9.2.2. The Church has also a similarly God - given responsibility for the pastoral nurture and care of its members through Word and Sacrament, and to provide for their spiritual growth and general welfare.
- When these considerations seem to come in conflict with each other in some cases, special measures have to be devised.
- 9.3. In devising any interim measures, not only should the two principles be held in view; it should be recognized that the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church hold in common a very large area of the Christian faith and tradition. Arrangements made between these churches may or may not be applicable in the case of other churches.
- 9.4. There are differences of practice even within the Roman Catholic Church.

This interim report is submitted to our respective authorities; a further report with specific proposals will be prepared by the sub-commission in order to be considered by the next plenary meeting of the Commission.

The development of that report during the following years:

1. At the meeting of the joint commission from December 8th - 12th, 1992, the commission did not devote any further study to the draft agreement for the celebration of mixed marriages. Instead they decided to ask the sub-commission to study it again and to present its findings for consideration at the next meeting in 1993.
2. At the meeting of the joint commission from November 15th - 18th, 1993, there was decided to continue the sub-commission's research for the whole of 1994.

RELATIONS WITH THE ANCIENT ORIENTAL CHURCHES IN INDIA

1. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

General:

Faithful: 1,5 million in India

Mother tongue: Malayalam, (English)

Church administration: Catholicosate with 15 dioceses; 15 members of the Holy Synod

Rite: West Syriac

Liturgical language: Aramaic and Malayalam

Calendar: Christmas and Easter follow the Gregorian Calendar

Head: H.H. Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the East and of the Apostolic See of St. Thomas, and Malankara Metropolitan

See: Kottayam, India

Predecessors: Mar Baselios Philoxenos (1925-28) - Mar Baselios Geevarghese II (1929-64) - Mar Baselios Augen I (1964-75) - Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I (1975-91)

No community in Austria (a student's community meets at Afro Asian Institute in Vienna)

2. Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church

General:

Faithful: 1 million in India

Mother tongue: Malayalam, (English)

Church administration: (under the Holy See of Antioch and all the East) Catholicosate with 10 dioceses; 10 members of the Holy Synod

Rite: West Syriac

Liturgical language: Aramaic and Malayalam

Calendar: Christmas and Easter follow the Gregorian Calendar

Head: H.B. Moran Baselios Paulose II, Catholicos of the East

See: Muvattupuzha, India

The church community meets at the Syrian Orthodox parish church in Vienna/Lainz

Relations with PRO ORIENTE:

September 7-12, 1971: Participation of four Orthodox Syrian theologians in the „First non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church“, at Vienna: The Rev. Prof. *Paul Verghese*, Rector of the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam (Kerala), India; Rev. Fr. *M.V. George*, Vice-rector of the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam; the Rev. Prof. *V.C. Samuel*, Dean of the Theological Faculty of the University of Addis Ababa, and the Rev. Fr. Dr. *K.C. Joseph*, World Council of Churches, Geneva.

September 3-9, 1973: Participation of two Orthodox Syrian theologians in the „Second non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church“, at Vienna: the Rev. Prof. Paul Verghese, Rector of the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam (Kerala) and the Rev. Prof. V.C. Samuel, Dean of the Theological Faculty of the University of Addis Ababa.

September 6, 1973: In Vienna the decree of honorary membership of PRO ORIENTE is presented personally to the Rev. Prof. Paul Verghese (appointed on December 4, 1972).

August 30 - September 5, 1976: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios (the former Prof. Paul Verghese), honorary member of PRO ORIENTE, Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios (the former Rev. Fr. M.V. George) and Deacon K.M. George take part in the „Third non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church“, at Vienna. Rev. Prof. V.C. Samuel, Dean of the Theological Faculty of the University of Addis Ababa, was prevented to come to Vienna.

September 3, 1976: Pontifical Mass in Indo-Syrian rite on the occasion of the „Third Vienna Consultation“, celebrated by Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, sermon by Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, at the Syrian Orthodox St. Ephraim parish church in Vienna.

September 5, 1976: Sermon of Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios at the Pontifical Mass on occasion of the conclusion of the Third Vienna Consultation, celebrated by Archbishop Franciscus Cardinal König at the Cathedral of St. Stephan's in Vienna.

September 9, 1976: the results of the „Third Vienna Consultation“ are officially presented by PRO ORIENTE to H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I.

November 12, 1976: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios acknowledges on behalf of H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I receipt of the results of the „Third Vienna Consultation“.

February 22, 1977: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of Delhi participates in the session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Vienna Consultation.

September 11-18, 1978: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, Prof. V.C. Samuel and Deacon K.M. George take part in the „Fourth non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church“, at Vienna. Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios of Niranam was prevented to come to Vienna.

September 13, 1978: Sermon of Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios at the prayer service, celebrated by the Ethiopian Orthodox delegation in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

September 15, 1978: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios celebrates the Pontifical liturgy in the Syrian Orthodox St. Ephraim church of Vienna, sermon by Vardapet Aram Keshishian.

September 28, 1978: The results of the Fourth Vienna Consultation are officially presented by Franciscus Cardinal König to H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I for practical suggestions and implementation of the results of the four Vienna Consultations to be proposed by the Orthodox Syrian Church of India.

March 11, 1979: H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I informs Franciscus Cardinal König that the results of the four Vienna Consultations have been placed

before the Holy Synod of the Catholicosate of the East and that the Holy Synod has appointed a special committee to study them.

August 25-28, 1979: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios visits Vienna.

April 12-20, 1982: A delegation of PRO ORIENTE visits India on invitation of H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I, the Catholicos of the East. Audience at His See in Kottayam. - Meetings with Metropolitan Mar Osthathios of Niranam, Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi, honorary member of PRO ORIENTE, the Latin Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of New Delhi and with the Roman Catholic Auxiliary bishop Anthony Thannikot of Verapoly. - Visit at the Secretariat of the Indian Conference of Bishops and at the Orthodox Seminary of Kottayam (Dr. Theodor Piffli-Percevic, Prof. Dr. Ernst-Christoph Suttner, Alfred Stirnemann)

June 1-5, 1983: Meeting with H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I in Rome, accompanied by the Catholicos-designate of his church Metropolitan Mathews Mar Coorilos (now Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II), Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, honorary member of PRO ORIENTE, Father Zachariah (Dr. Theodor Piffli-Percevic, Alfred Stirnemann).

March 1, 1986: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi stays at Vienna.

June 13-18, 1986: The Catholicos-designate of the Orthodox Syrian Church Metropolitan Mathews Mar Coorilos (now Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II) visits Vienna.

March 12, 1988: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi stays at Vienna.

September 18-25, 1988: Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi and Father K.M. George participate at the „Fifth Vienna Consultation“.

May 22, 1989: H.H. Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I appointed Father K.M. George as member of the Standing Committee.

June 21/22, 1989: The Catholicos-designate Mathews Mar Coorilos (now Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II) stays at Vienna as member of an Indian ecumenical group from Kerala.

November 6, 1989: Metropolitan Mar Osthathios of Niranam was proclaimed as honorary member of PRO ORIENTE.

November 6, 1989: Pontifical liturgy on the occasion of the 25-years-jubilee of PRO ORIENTE at the monastery church of Our Lady at the Scots, celebrated by Franciscus Cardinal König, assisted by the Orthodox bishops. Reading of the Orthodox Syrian Catholicos' message.

November 6/7, 1989: Participation of Metropolitan Mar Osthathios of Niranam at the second meeting of the Standing Committee at Vienna.

June 30 - July 3, 1990: Participation of Father K.M. George at the third meeting of the Standing Committee at Vienna.

September 15 - 17, 1990: Participation of Father K.M. George at the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee at Bossey near Geneva.

June 29 - July 1, 1991: „On Primacy“ - First Study Seminar“ at Lainz/Vienna. Theological seminar with 12 Ancient Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians, among them Father K.M. George who spoke about the development of primacy on both sides.

October 26 - 28, 1991: „Middle East Symposium - Wadi Natroun“ at the Bishopry monastery near Cairo to make known the results of the five Vienna consultations

among theologians of the Middle East. Guests of honour: H.H. Pope Patriarch *Shenouda III* as host, H.B. Patriarch *Stephanos II*, Coptic Catholic, and *Franciscus Cardinal König*. Participation of 120 bishops, professors of theology as Father *K.M. George*, rectors of seminaries, editors of newspapers and students of theology.

June 27 - 29, 1992: „*On Councils and Conciliarity - Second Study Seminar*“ at Lainz/Vienna. Theological seminar with 17 Ancient Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians about the understanding of conciliarity as structural principle of the church and about the importance of ecumenical councils. Participation of Metropolitan *Paulos Mar Gregorios* of New Delhi and Father *K.M. George*.

September 5 - 20, 1992: A delegation of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE visits Kerala to prepare the Regional Symposium in India. Reception by H.H. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II* in presence of his Coadjutor *Thomas Mar Themotheos*, Metropolitan *Philippos Mar Theophilos* of Bombay and Ankamaly, Metropolitan *Paulos Mar Gregorios* of New Delhi (honorary member of PRO ORIENTE), Auxiliary Bishop *Job Mar Philoxenos* of Delhi, Metropolitan *Geevarghese Mar Ivanios* of Kottayam, and Bishop *Mathews Mar Severios* of Kandanadu (all from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church). Reception by H.B. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Paulose II*. Meetings with Metropolitan *Thomas Mar Athanasios* of Kandanadu, Bishop *Geevarghese Mar Gregorios* of Kottayam and Metropolitan *Thomas Mar Themotheos* of Outside Kerala (all from the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church). Reception by Archbishop *Mar Climis Abraham*, the Primate of the East from the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. Meetings with Bishop *Geevarghese Mar Themotheos* of Tiruvalla from the Malankara Catholic Church, with *Anthony Cardinal Padiyara*, Archbishop of Ernakulam, Archbishop *Mar Joseph Powathil* of Changanacherry, and Bishop *Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry* of Kottayam (all from the Malabar Catholic Church) as well as with the Latin Archbishop *Cornelius Elanjikal* of Verapoly and Bishop *Peter Thuruthikonam* of Vijayapuram and from the Mar Thoma Church with Bishop *Alexander Mar Thoma* and Bishop *Zachariah Mar Theophilos* (Vicepresident *Alfred Stirnemann*, Archbishop *Yohanna Ibrahim*, Father *K.M. George*)

September 11, 1992: Audience at the See of H.H. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II* in Kottayam (Vicepresident *Alfred Stirnemann*, Father *K.M. George*)

September 11, 1992: Audience at the See of by H.B. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Paulose II* in Muvattupuzha (Archbishop *Yohanna Ibrahim*, Vicepresident *Alfred Stirnemann*, Father *K.M. George*).

September 30 - October 4, 1993: „*Kerala Regional Symposium - Kottayam*“ at the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary in Vardavathor (near Kottayam) to make known the results of the five Vienna consultations in India. Guests of honour: H.H. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II* of the East (Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church), H.B. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Paulose II* (Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church). Participation of 25 bishops from eleven different churches, among them the head of the Kerala Churches' Conference and the head of the National Council of Churches in India as well as 145 professors of theology, students and editors of newspapers.

September 30, 1993: Celebration of the inaugural worship organized by the Malabar Catholic Church on the occasion of the PRO ORIENTE Kerala Regional Symposium.

October 1-3, 1993: Morning worships organized by the different participating churches, celebrated by the participating bishops on the occasion of the PRO ORIENTE Kerala Regional Symposium.

October 4, 1993: Common final ecumenical worship on the occasion of the PRO ORIENTE Kerala Regional Symposium at Kottayam, celebrated by the bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian and the bishops of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church.

December 14, 1993: 30th Ecumenical Academy at Salzburg, Formation Center St. Virgilius. Conference by Father *John Oomen Madathil*, lecturer for church history at the Old Seminary of Kottayam, on „*Christmas at the Christians of St. Thomas*“.

June 24 - 29, 1994: „*First non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition*“ at Lainz/Vienna. Theological seminar of 30 Ancient Oriental, Roman Catholic, and Assyrian theologians about the Christology of the Assyrian Church of the East. Papers by 15 participants of all churches on nine different issues. Participation of Metropolitan *Mathews Mar Severios*.

June 28, 1994: 67th Ecumenical Symposium at Vienna on „*The PRO ORIENTE Regional Symposium 1993 in India*“ with papers of Archbishop *Mar Joseph Powathil* of Changanacherry, chairman of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, honorary member of PRO ORIENTE, and Father *K.M. George*, vice-rector of the Ecumenical Academy of the WCC at Bossey near Geneva, honorary member of PRO ORIENTE.

July 1 - 5, 1994: „*On Ecclesiology - Third Study Seminar*“ at Lainz/Vienna. Theological seminar with 25 Ancient Oriental and Roman Catholic theologians on Ecclesiology and the unity of the church. Participation of Father *K.M. George*.

September 23 - 27, 1994: „*Lebanon Regional Symposium - Kaslik*“ at the university St. Esprit in Kaslik to make known the results of the five Vienna consultations in the Middle East. Guests of honour: H.B. Catholicos *Karekin II* of the Great House of Sis (Armenian Apostolic), *Franciscus Cardinal König*, H.B. Patriarch *Pierre Nasrallah Sfeir* from the Maronite Church, Patriarch *Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian* (Armenian Catholic), *Raphael I Bidawid* (Chaldean) and Patriarch *Maximos V Hakim* (Melkite Church). Participation of 120 bishops, professors, rectors, among them Father *K.M. George*, and students.

September 23, 1994: Solemn inaugural worship at the Aula of the St. Esprit university on the occasion of the PRO ORIENTE Lebanon Regional Symposium, celebrated by Patriarch *Pierre Nasrallah Sfeir* in presence of Catholicos *Karekin II* and *Franciscus Cardinal König*. Participation of Father *K.M. George*.

September 27, 1994: Common ecumenical worship on the occasion of the PRO ORIENTE Lebanon Regional Symposium, celebrated by Catholicos *Karekin II*, *Franciscus Cardinal König* and the participating bishops. Participation of Father *K.M. George*.

April 10, 1995: Meeting with H.H. Catholicos *Moran Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II* at the inthronization of H.H. Catholicos *Karekin I* at Etchmiadzin.

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