

THE STAR OF THE EAST

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an ecumenical journal dealing
specially with the oriental and
eastern orthodox churches.

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An Ecumenical Journal dealing specially with
the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

SOPHIA CENTRE, ORTHODOX SEMINARY, P. B. 98,
KOTTAYAM—686 001, KERALA, S. INDIA.

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Special Issue on the 70th Anniversary Celebrations
of the Re-establishment of the Catholicate in India.

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Editorial

Saptati

The seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East turned out to be quite an occasion-also of ecumenical encounter. The World Council of Churches, The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Pope John Paul II of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches of Armenia, Ethiopia, Russia, Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria and Finland had all sent distinguished delegations to take part in the celebrations which began in Bombay on September 4, 1982 and concluded in Delhi on September 15th.

The climax was in Kottayam a meeting in the large Nehru Stadium, with the stadium overflowing capacity. A modest estimate says 300,000 people were present, to felicitate the Orthodox Church. Others estimated half a million present. The new President of India Rashtrapati Gyani Zail Singh gave the inaugural address, which we reproduce in this issue. He paid great compliments to the Christian community for its contributions to the life of the nation. Some of the evidence was actually present on the podium as he spoke-State Governor K. C. Abraham of Andhra Pradesh, Union Cabinet Minister Sri. C. M. Stephen, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Principal Secretary, Dr. P. C. Alexander, all three sons of the Orthodox Church.

The Georgian Patriarch, His Holiness Ilia II, President of the World Council of Churches, presided over the occasion, and decorated the Catholicos of The East, H. H. Moran Mar Dr. Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I, with the order of St. George, the highest honour of the Georgian Church. Speaking of decorations, the President of India, a very religious Sikh, was deeply touched, when he in turn had pinned on him the gold Cross of the Order of St. Thomas, Apostle and Martyr, by the Catholicos.

Pope John Paul II had sent a personal gift to the Catholicos characteristically a reproduction of the icon of the Black Madonna of Jasna Gora, Poland. The festival of the Black Madonna was on September 15th in Poland. There were messages of felicitation and gifts from so many sister Churches, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. The head of the Mar Thoma Church, Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma gave a very memorable address, and the message from the Moderator of the Church of South India, presented by Bishop Mani was equally moving.

For India at least, it was a unique and genuinely ecumenical occasion. The participation of non-Christians was equally impressive. Besides the Chief Minister of Kerala, Mr. Karunakaran, an ardent Hindu, who spoke very highly of the contribution of the Orthodox Church to the life of Kerala, Sri. R. Balakrishna Pillai, State Minister for electricity and also a devout Hindu wanted to be counted as an honorary child of the Orthodox Church. Similarly spoke other Hindu leaders, like State Minister Mr. Srinivasan, and Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati. There were also Muslim speakers of high prominence during the ten days of celebrations.

The Orthodox Church used the occasion to make two basic affirmations—its commitment to the ecumenical movement and its determination to defend its autocephalous and independent structure. The Church had suffered in the past from its geographical isolation, and this wealth of ecumenical presence meant much to the Orthodox people. But the Orthodox people also made it clear that it would not brook any outside intervention from other Churches, as it had often been forced to accept in the past.

The Church announced the plans to open two ecumenical dialogues—one with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and the other with the Joint Council of the Church of North India, Church of South India and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. This would be in addition to the on-going dialogue with the Lutheran Churches in India. In response to an appeal from Moderator Yesudas of the Church of South India, the Church announced its willingness to re-open negotiations for membership in the National Council of Churches. These negotiations had failed to get off the ground on previous occasions because of inexperience and lack of comprehension on the part of the Protestant leadership of what was a glorified Missionary Council at that time.

The seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the Catholicate has thus set in motion a new wave of enthusiasm in the Indian Orthodox Church, a wave which is distinctly ecumenical and distinctly Indian at the same time. With the sisterly co-operation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches in India as well as abroad, the Indian Orthodox Church bids fair to start a new chapter in its long, chequered but Spirit-guided history.

In this issue we publish some of the speeches and messages delivered on the occasion, for the record.

* * *

Religious Toleration has enriched the heritage of India.

(Address by Rashtrapathi Gyani Zail Singh at the 70th Anniversary Celebrations of the re-establishment of the Catholicate of the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East, at Kottayam on September 12, 1982).

I am glad to be here this afternoon to associate myself with the celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of the revival of the Catholicate of the Orthodox Church. Christianity came to India much earlier than in most countries and received warm welcome. It is known that St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, reached the Coast of Malabar in 52 A. D.

India has been the treasure house of spiritual knowledge and all religious thoughts have been traditionally acknowledged and preserved. A characteristic feature of India's ancient culture has been toleration and respect for all religions. This in turn has enriched the country's heritage. Our secular approach is the only right approach in a country like ours with diverse religious faiths and a long tradition of composite culture.

This is the glorious tradition of our country based upon respect for all religions. Through long periods of history our country has cherished the idea of unity in diversity. We have always believed that the eternal values of mankind like Truth, Love, Compassion, Devotion are common to all religions governing the human conduct. It may be recalled that these values also shaped our freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi and our basic national policies of secularism, socialism and democracy.

Christians, who constitute a significant section of our population, have played a constructive role in the affairs of our country. Many of them have held high positions in the public life of this country. I am told that the Orthodox Church is very active in the educational, social, economic and humanitarian fields and is running a number of schools, colleges, industrial training centres, orphanages and hospitals. My compliments to leaders and members of this Church for their constructive and nation-building activities.

Concern for the uplift of downtrodden masses of this country is felt by all right thinking people. Many schemes for their betterment have been launched by the Government in recent years

These efforts of Government need to be supplemented by voluntary organisation like this Church. It is good to know that this Church, as part of its Saptati Celebrations, has decided to build 70 houses and distribute them among the poor families in different parts of the State.

I understand that these celebrations are being attended by a number of foreign dignitaries from friendly countries. I welcome all of them and wish them a pleasant stay. I hope they would carry back happy memories of their sojourn here.

I thank the organisers for inviting me here and enabling me to inaugurate the Saptati Celebrations of the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East. I wish you all success in your future endeavours.

JAI HIND

The Catholicate is so precious to us

(The inaugural address delivered by His Holiness Basilius Marthoma Mathews First, Catholicos of the East at Ernakulam).

Your Holiness Patriarch Ilia, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Your Graces, Honourable Ministers, and our beloved people.

Our heart is truly filled with joy and gratitude on this occasion. Not only because God Almighty has been gracious to us, and has fostered this Catholicate here in India for the last seventy years. For that our gratitude to God knows no bounds.

But even more, our joy is fulfilled because you from our sister Churches from all over the world have arrived here to share our joy. Ever since St. Thomas established this Church here in the first century, the circumstances of history and geography have conspired to isolate us from other Christian Churches. Why did our sister Church in China disappear? Mainly because of a similar isolation from the sister Churches of the world.

The last seventy years mark not only the history of our re-established Catholicate but also a period of more helpful and more frequent contacts with sister Churches all over the world. We remember especially the visit of one of our distinguished predecessors to the Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh in 1935. We became founder members of the World Council of Churches, in 1948, and our bishops, priests and lay people have represented us in all important World Council meetings and other ecumenical gatherings. It is a matter of no small pride to us that the first Woman President of the World Council of Churches was our beloved daughter Miss Sarah Chacko, who later served the W.C.C. as its first Secretary for the Department of Co-operation between Men and Women and died in harness. Later our Fr. Paul Varghese served the W.C.C. as Associate General Secretary. Others like Dr. K. C. Joseph and Mr. C. I. Itty served on the staff in Geneva. The World Council of Churches became in many ways the forum through which our frequent and friendly contacts with the non-Roman Churches were built up and maintained. We are therefore particularly grateful that one of the Presidents of

the World Council is present with us on this occasion—its Orthodox President H.H. Patriarch Ilia Catholicos—Patriarch of all Georgia.

With the opening of the Second Vatican Council and from the time of Pope John XXIII of blessed memory, our relations with the Roman Catholic Church also were put on a new basis of ecumenical co-operation. Our delegates were present at the Vatican Council as delegated observers. Our immediate predecessor had the privilege of greeting and embracing Pope Paul VI in Bombay. His Eminence Cardinal Willibrands, Fr. Pierre Duprey, Archbishop Jerome Hamer, Fr. John Long and others visited us and opened and maintained a new set of genuinely sisterly relationships between our Churches. It gives us particular pleasure that Pope John Paul II has delegated Fr. Pierre Duprey to represent His Holiness on this joyous occasion.

His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras of blessed memory, that angelic ecumenical pastor, whom we never had the privilege for meeting, also maintained very close relations with our Church and we are very happy to welcome the delegate of Patriarch Dimitrios his successor, in the person of Metropolitan Emilianos of Silibria.

All our distinguished international and Indian guests have already been welcomed. We wish only to add our personal welcome and gratitude to all of you.

In requesting to inaugurate the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East, we wish to make one or two points clear.

First, ours is an autocephalous Orthodox Church of apostolic origin, and we want to develop our life in sisterly ecumenical co-operation with all our sister Churches in the world. We are fully committed to the ecumenical movement—a prayerful dedication to make manifest our unity in Christ as His One Body. We are anxious to engage in active dialogue with our sister Churches in India as well as abroad. We have officially communicated our desire to begin dialogue with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. We are still awaiting an official response. We have also communicated our desire to begin dialogue with the federation of the three evangelical Churches: the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, the Church of South India and the Church of North India. We have now been in dialogue for some years with the Lutheran Churches in India, and we are pursuing it. We hope the other two dialogues can also begin soon.

Secondly, I want to say a brief word about our relations with the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Middle East. Our experience in the past twelve years has been bitter. We have faced both Portuguese and British intrigue and treachery in the past—instances in which our ecumenical hospitality has been sinfully misused to

disrupt our Church from within. What the late Syrian Orthodox Patriarch did to our Church was something worse. We pray that God may forgive him. We allowed him inside our Church in 1958 in good faith. Since 1970 he consistently betrayed that good faith and interfered in our internal affairs. His successor, the present Patriarch, came here recently, without even the courtesy of informing us, and began entering our churches and misleading our people. He did not take one step towards a settlement of our disputes beyond certain very offensive paternalistic declarations of self-righteous willingness to forgive those whom his predecessor had hurt. We had cabled him before his departure from Syria to delay his visit in order that we could prepare the stage for a settlement of our disputes. To this date he has not had the courtesy to respond to our telegram.

We want to make this clear. We are anxious for a settlement. We are prepared to ask our deputies to sit down and discuss such a settlement with duly authorised people. We shall, of course, not compromise the autocephaly and independence of our Church. Nor can we allow any other Church to interfere in the affairs of our Church. Those are our two cherished values. We have sometimes compromised these values in the past for the sake of peace. We cannot do so in the future. We have learned our lesson.

We have a long history of association with our sister Church of Antioch. We are grateful for their help on occasions in the past when we were harassed by the British and by the Portuguese. We want to restore our sisterly relationship with that Church. We will not uncanonically interfere in their affairs, nor should they interfere in ours. This is all we ask.

Our faith in the Triune God and the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ is very precious to us. Equally precious is our heritage from the Holy Apostle Thomas through whom we received that faith. That is why the Throne of St. Thomas and the Catholicate of the East so precious to our people. It is the Kerala celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the re-establishment of that Catholicate of the East here in India, that we most graciously request your Grace, Metropolitan Emilianos, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch, to inaugurate now.

The Apostolic Churches of India and Georgia are the oldest among the Churches of the East.

(The speech of His Holiness ILIA II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia made during the visit to India in connection with the Saptati Celebrations.)

Your Holiness, dearly beloved brother in Christ BASELIUS MAR THOMA MATHEWS I, Patriarch-Catholicos of the East, Metropolitan of Malankara, Eminent Bishops, Sons and Daughters of the Indian Orthodox Church.

We've come to India from far-off Georgia, the country where the greatest sanctity of the world, the Robe of Our Lord Jesus Christ is preserved. The history of our two countries and their Churches is very old and too much complex. As we know, the Churches of Georgia and India are the oldest among the Churches of the East; both, they are Apostolic as the Georgian Church was founded by the Apostles Andrew the First Called and Simon the Canaanite and the enlighteners of the Indian Church were the Apostles Thomas and Thadeus. These two Churches have different traditions, but at the same time they both were and are today the National Churches.

We do know quite well that the Indian people, as the people of Georgia, defended and preserved their rich and inimitable national culture from foreign invaders in the centuries-long fierce fight and resistance. The oldest Indian culture made a great influence on the culture of the whole world. From the ancient times Georgia, because of its territorial position, was considered the crossroad between the Europe and Asia. According to our chronicle "The Life of Georgia" the relations between Georgia and India began in the 5th century, during the reign of the King Vakhtang Gorgasali. The relations between Georgian and Indian nations were clearly depicted in the Georgian literature. The Georgian writers and politicians had the deep knowledge of the Indian Philosophy and were well acquainted with her poetry. The Georgian literary work, "Wisdom of Balavar" which originally was written in Georgian and in the 11th century translated into Greek by the Georgian monk Ekvtime Mtatsmindeli, depicts the turning to Christianity the King of India Abaness and his Son Iodanaph.

Besides this, the Georgian classical poetry, as "The Knight in the Panthers' Skin", "Amiran Daredjaniani", "Tamariani" and others, give us a lot of interesting facts about India. As the example of the tight political and cultural relations between Georgia and India, we can name the fact that the Georgian woman was the Queen of India in the 17th century. She had such a great influence on her husband Shah Daroon that turned him to Christianity.

So, our nations have a great and centuries old history. This is my third visit to India. The first two were made during the time of my being the Metropolitan. Especially I do recall my second visit in September of 1976, when I had the opportunity of getting to know much closer the life of the Indian people and her unique culture. The especially warm memories are connected with the day, when we were received by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. During this meeting I was assured once more what a great person she is and what a significant role she leads in the life of her country.

The great progress of India in the spheres of the economical and political life during the recent years, brings us much heart-felt joy, which overflows our hearts because of the brotherly co-operation between India and Soviet Union. We do believe, that the fraternal relations between our countries will be of a much help to the great mission of achieving and preserving peace in the world.

Your Holiness, with brotherly love in Christ I do greet you on behalf of the Saint Synod of the Georgian Church and personally myself. The 1750 years and 70 years anniversary of re-establishment of the Catholicate of the East in India, are the dates of the great importance in the history of your Church.

We ask the Almighty God to grant Your Holiness the long, prosperous years filled with health and happiness and the Church of St. Apostle Thomas much more growth and flourish. With special feelings of love I greet you on behalf of the Georgian people and our Apostolic Church, because the head of St. Thomas, the enlightener of your country, is preserved in Georgia, in the Sioni Patriarchal Cathedral.

'O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.' Amen.

St. Thomas belongs to the whole of India.

(Speech by Dr. P. C. Alexander, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India)

Respected Rashtrapathiji, Your Holiness Marthoma Mathews I, Catholicos of the East, Your Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia, Archbishops, Representatives of the Christian Churches, Eminent Emissaries of His Holiness the Pope, Heads of various Christian Communities in India, Heads of Religious Communities present here and my fellow members of the Indian Orthodox Church:

Let me at the very outset as a member of the Indian Orthodox Church, offer our respectful felicitations and gratitudes to our Res. Rashtrapathi for his gracious gesture of his presence in our midst this evening. Sir, we are greatly honoured and privileged by your presence here. To the members of the Orthodox Community your presence should carry a greater message. That the head of the 700 million people of India, should find the time and take trouble to come all over to this corner of our State and to be present here for a small function organised by 1.5 million people of the State, speaks volumes about the concern and the patronage with which he looks at, and his Government looks at all communities. It is an eloquent tribute to the policy of his Government that they make no distinction between one community and another; and the size of a community does not matter at all. In the same way, the presence of the luminaries, dignitaries of the various Churches here should also convey to us great message. It is not merely we are rejoicing in this great function of ours, which is indeed a recognition of the eminent position which our Church has acquired after we regained our independence. Whenever I think of this small community of Orthodox Christians in India, I am struck by one simple factor and that is the real life, vigour and vitality of this small community. I have lived in various parts of the world, had different times and occasions to see Christian communities in operation and I tell you with full knowledge of facts, there are very few communities in this wide world of Christianity with as much spiritual life, as much vigour and vitality as this small community has. I have asked this question how is it that for 1900 years, this community has survived, the turmoils, the troubles, the litigations; and how is it that the Church has been able to retain its faith. I have only a few answers to that. The first is the passionate faith of this community in the tradition of St. Thomas. I am not claiming this tradition as the exclusive heritage of the Orthodox Christians. St. Thomas belongs to the whole of India. In fact Jawaharlal Nehru once said when he

was participating in the 1900 years' celebrations of St. Thomas, that St. Thomas belongs to the whole Indian heritage. We are not making an exclusive claim of St. Thomas.

But there is a special point for this community. While for other Christians, it may be a part of history, while for some others it may be a part of heritage, for Orthodox Syrian Christians it is a part of their emotion, something which we have imbibed from the milk of mothers, something which we want to transfer to our children and to our children's children as treasure to be preserved with awe and pride. This is the special feature about St. Thomas as far as we, Christians are concerned. I have always wondered why St. Thomas chose to come to this ancient land of ours, which is the cradle for the four religions of the world, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism and I have the answer for that.

In this ancient holy land of ours, Christianity out of necessity has to come from the authentic hands of the Apostle of Christ himself. Imagine what would have been the inadequacy of Christianity, if our ancestors have been converted by the missionaries who came with the Portuguese, the French or the Dutch. It was one of the justifications of the historical necessity and inevitable part of history that in this land, the authenticity of Christianity should be established by the disciple of Christ himself. When we speak about the authenticity of Christianity, we should also remember another thing and that is to preserve the faith of our fathers. On this day of joy and gratitude let us remember them also.

Unity among Churches is imperative.

(Talk by Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan
in connection with Saptati Celebrations).

We all believe that the ancient Church in India was founded by St. Thomas. It is also believed that since then the Church of Malankara with its Apostolic tradition exists as a part of the Universal Church. When we examine the early Church history we realize that the Churches in various centres, recognized each other with brotherly affection and they confirmed their faith through Ecumenical Councils.

But nowhere do we see one local Church trying to exercise its authority over another local Church. These Churches regarded themselves equal accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and proclaiming the Trinitarian faith through the Creeds.

It is recorded that delegates from the Indian Church attended the Synod held at Nicea. Whenever it was necessary, the Churches mutually helped by ordaining bishops and also in other ways.

It is a matter of pride that even when the Church of Malankara continued in relation with other Oriental Churches it always maintained its independence. We are fully aware that in the long history of our Church attempts have been made to bring this Church under foreign yoke. But our predecessors by their oath at Coonen Cross re-established the freedom of our Church and thereafter we are flourishing as an independent Church.

Because of the light obtained in the wake of the translation of the Bible into our language one group was convinced of the need of a renewal in the Church. The group which welcomed this renewal is known as the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malankara; the other group with a larger membership is known under the appellation the Orthodox Church.

Thus, though we exist as different branches, the Mar Thoma Church believes that we are parts of the ancient Church founded by St. Thomas in India, which has enjoyed and is enjoying full freedom. So the Mar Thoma Church also expresses her joy at these celebrations. The Mar Thoma Church has always stood for freedom, it has suffered much to preserve its independence.

I hope that this opportunity will pave the way for the renewal of our mutual love and for making our mutual recognition a full reality. Talks were started a few years ago by the late K.M. Cherian and C.P. Mathew, joined by Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios and others on the doctrines which separate us. But we were not able to continue it.

The Faith and Order Commission of World Council of Churches recently conducted prolonged studies on the significant topics of Holy Baptism, Holy Communion and Ecclesiastical Orders and a joint statement was issued by the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the Protestant theologians. This statement has been accepted by the World Council of Churches as a basic document for the mutual recognition and unity of the various Churches, and it has been sent to various Churches for study and response.

His Holiness the Catholicos has informed me of the willingness to conduct discussions between our Churches and other Churches, on the basis of this document. Let us hope these discussions will be started soon and it would lead to the recognition and unity of the Churches.

Four factors have already been accepted as the basis for the talks on unity among the Churches—Holy Bible, Sacraments, Nicene Creed and Apostolic Succession. On the basis of these the Mar Thoma Church, which is an eastern Church, has come into perfect contact with the Church of South India and the Church of North India which have imbibed western tradition. The dialogue between Orthodox Syrian Church and the Lutheran Church also has been already started. Such dialogues will no doubt be helpful to the Indian Churches to work together for the Kingdom of God.

It is worth mentioning that three important theological Seminaries in Kerala, have already together constituted a Federated Faculty for high level theological studies. The Faculty includes teachers from the Orthodox Seminary, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary and the C. S. I. Seminary at Kannammoola. It is good that students of various Churches are conducting their studies in these Seminaries.

We cannot, at the same time, forget the sad truth that two sections of the Malankara Church have become estranged. Let us recall the holy men like the late K. C. Chacko, Bishop Pakenham Walsh and others who sincerely endeavoured to bring about the unity between the two sections. Let us hope and pray, that such attempts would be resumed again for bringing about the unity.

Our Lord prayed "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me". If our beloved India is to experience the faith in Christ, unity among Churches is imperative.

We have to work with unity for the Kingdom of God that proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Let us try together for social justice and for the uplift of the poor. Which is the path that we are to choose in this endeavour? Is it triumphalism which the Occidental Churches generally accepted, the path of triumph and authority? It should never be! We must choose the path of the Cross and service which the Oriental Churches followed, the path of humility, renunciation, sacrifice and compassion, which was advised not only by the ancient Indian ascetics but by Sri Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi. Then only can we uphold Christ as the Saviour of India.

Likewise, let us bring ecumenism into a reality not only on the international level but in the national and local level too.

(Original text in Malayalam translated into English
by Prof. P. K. Mathai.)

The Church Should be national

(Felicitation by Bishop Paulos Mar Paulos, Chaldean Syrian Church of the East)

On behalf of the Chaldean Syrian Church of the East, I am glad to felicitate the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on its celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the Catholicate. The Orthodox Church has a great tradition. Though the past seventy years have been a period of severe torment and test for it, I, for one, think that nothing has prevented it from carrying out its task. In spite of the perilous storm and thunder and lightning that have loomed large the barge of the Orthodox Church is progressing through the channel of its glorious tradition. On this auspicious occasion let us glorify God for His wonderful guidance of the Church.

The Malankara Orthodox Church can really be proud that it has got a set of good leaders, who are well-versed in theology, deeply involved in the ecumenical movement and in the progressive measures aimed at human welfare in the present world. Let us be thankful to God for having given the Church at the proper time farsighted leaders who have the vision to lead it.

Let me repeat that many of the geniuses who have impressed the political, social and cultural realms of the country are the Children of this Church, which shows that the Church is progressing in tune with the national current.

This brings us to an important fact which every Christian in India should ponder over. If the message of the Church is to be relevant, the Church should become identified with the Indian culture; it should be an out and out national Church. It does not mean that the Church should follow blindly the national culture. On the other hand it should learn from the culture, and transform it. If the Church leads a lonely, saintly life regardless of the nation, failing to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world, it will not be able to mould the culture of the nation. While clamouring for the rights, the Churches should try to raise its prophetic voice also. Similarly they should be independent, free from all bondages both from outside and from inside. May God bless the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church to win its objectives and to give mature leadership to the other Churches of India.

The celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the Catholicate is a milestone in the history of the Church. History is sometimes compared to the mirror of a motor-car. Does not the driver look at it frequently? To make the onward journey easy one must be aware of the things at the back. But merely to look back will not take us to our destination. The Church must look back into history and learn lessons from it. At the same time it must look forward and raise its eyes to God, gather strength from the Almighty and carry out His will on earth. May God shower His blessings on the Orthodox Syrian Church so as to enable it to fulfil its mission.

The presence of the ecclesiastical dignitaries from abroad has graced the celebrations. It shows not only the ecumenical character of the Orthodox Church but its world-wide growth. I recall with joy the occasion when I was a guest of His Holiness the Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II. I am happy to, welcome His Holiness and other Bishops to Kerala.

My felicitations go with His Holiness the Catholicos and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

(Translated into English by Prof. P. K. Mathai.)

The members of the Orthodox Church can proudly claim that they are the followers of St. Thomas

(Speech by Sri. K. Karunakaran, Chief Minister of Kerala)

Dear Rashtrapathiji, Your Grace Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios, Minister Sri. C. M. Stephen, Governor K. C. Abraham, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to attend this holy function with my brothers today. I am grateful to His Grace Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios and others for having given me an opportunity to attend this celebration. At this time when seventy years have elapsed since the re-establishment of the Catholicate, the Orthodox Church has every reason to be proud of its achievements. Kerala is a land with different religions and different castes. But all these religions and castes adopt fraternal attitude to one another as if they are members of the same family. This is possible because the people of Kerala gladly accept the goodness of all religions. Since Kerala comes in the great tradition of the Indian culture an atmosphere conducive to secularism exists here. Religious hostility has not touched the people of Kerala. We are all believers in God. All believers try to find out God, though through different faiths. Though the means are different the end is the same. If any one thinks that he can live without God let me say that he is in fool's paradise. It is this truth that gives us inspiration and encouragement.

I am extremely happy to have attended and addressed this great assembly of believers. As my friend Dr. P. C. Alexander has pointed out the members of the Orthodox Church can proudly claim that they are the followers of St. Thomas. It is not through blind imitation, nor through blind belief that St. Thomas followed Jesus. It is through a critical approach, that St. Thomas believed his Master. It is owing to this that St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ had the good luck of touching Jesus after resurrection.

Once again I express my unbounded joy for having had an opportunity to attend your celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the Catholicate in Malankara. On behalf of the people of Kerala, I congratulate you all.

—Jai Hind—

(Translated into English by Prof. P. K. Mathai)

Significant Contribution to the ecumenical movement.

(Felicitation by Ninan Koshy, World Council of Churches)

Your Holiness the Catholicos of the East, Your Holiness the Patriarch of Georgia, Your Excellencies, Your Graces and Dear Friends:

It is a great privilege and honour for me to join all of you on this happy occasion of the celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Re-establishment of the Catholicate of the East.

As you know, this meeting should have been inaugurated by Dr. Zemathew Paul, one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches. We are fortunate in having another President of the World Council of Churches Patriarch Ilia the 2nd. In bringing greetings of the fellowship of the Churches around the world to this meeting and to this Church, I recall the great and significant contribution the Orthodox Church in India has made to the ecumenical movement. As has already been mentioned, the Orthodox Church of India has been one of the founder members of the World Council of Churches and thus one of the few Orthodox Churches which brought the great treasure of orthodoxy to the ecumenical movement at its very time of founding. After that throughout the last 40 years the Orthodox Church in India have again made a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement through a succession of distinguished personalities who have served on the staff and committees of the World Council of Churches. Mention has been made about Mrs. Sara Chacko, the first woman President of the World Council of Churches and I should also mention the name of Metropolitan Gregorios in this connection.

As I said, the ecumenical movement has been greatly enriched by the contribution of orthodoxy and in this, the Orthodox Church in India has made a great and significant contribution. On this occasion when we are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Re-establishment of the Catholicate of the East, I pray to God to give His abundant blessings on this Church so that this occasion becomes an occasion of renewal, spiritual growth, reconciliation and unity. Personally I am very happy to be associated with this function and on this occasion I once again bring greetings of the World Council of Churches which represent more than 300 member Churches around the world..

Thank you.

Contributions to the Spiritual and Temporal developments of the Country

(Speech by Shri. K. M. Mani, Fin. Minister, Kerala)

Your Eminences, Your Graces, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a proud privilege to be here to felicitate His Holiness, the Catholicos and His Holiness the Patriarch of Georgia and all other ecclesiastical dignitaries who have come here to participate in the Saptati celebrations. Today is our letter day in the history of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church when it is celebrating its Saphthathi, when it is celebrating the Catholicate re-establishment in India. On this occasion, let me offer my prayers for the prosperity of the Malankara Orthodox Church and I utilise this opportunity to pay my respect to His Holiness the Catholicos.

On this occasion, on my behalf and on behalf of the Government of Kerala, I extend a most hearty welcome to all distinguished dignitaries who have visited this ancient land of Christianity being blessed by the Apostle St. Thomas. The Orthodox Syrian Church has contributed to the spiritual and temporal developments of the country. It has made rapid progress in the field of education, social welfare, medical aid and in the spiritual run also it has expanded its activities to outside Kerala and to other countries also. I am sure that the Orthodox Syrian Church will make further progress in the years to come.

The Christian Churches are engaged in a dialogue today and there is a growing sense of unity in Christendom. I hope, by coming together of the various dignitaries of the various Churches of the world will pave the way for establishing and strengthening the spirit of ecumenism in our country.

Before concluding, I wish the laity and clergy of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church every success in their activities.

Beginning of a Unity in Spirit

(Address by Sri R. Venkataraman, Minister of Defence,
Chief guest at the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi

on 15th Sept. 82)

Distinguished guests from world Churches,
Respected leaders from India's Religions,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I was invited to be the Chief Guest on this occasion, I must confess, I was moved by its solemn significance.

It is an anniversary that is twice-blest. We are remembering the martyrdom of a disciple of Christ whom India considers her own. We are also celebrating the re-location in India, 70 years ago, of the institutional head of the Church founded by St. Thomas. I understand that the Catholicate of the East established in AD 231 in Seleucia, was then shifted to Tigris and later, with the decline of the Persian Church, moved to India.

The martyrdom of the Apostle sowed the seed of Christianity in the Indian soil. With the restoration of the Catholicate, India's indigenous and ancient Church came into its own.

We have a tradition in this country, not only to take one's own religion with absolute commitment, but also to respect another's religion with equal seriousness. This spiritual and cultural heritage of our country is under threat and needs to be strengthened at the present time. I see this evening's function as a contribution to this cause. And I congratulate the Orthodox Church of India for having transformed a landmark in its own history into an opportunity for inter-religious fellowship and, hopefully, co-operation in the service of the needier segments of the national community. I am personally and deeply attracted by what I see in this meeting as the beginning of a *unity in spirit*.

I am speaking more as a citizen of India, than as the Minister of Defence, when I say that we have today a war to fight and to win. If I describe it as the war against poverty, it may sound like a cliché. But, behind this poverty lies its main cause, what is usually known as social injustice. Now, injustice is what man does to man—knowingly or unconsciously. So we have got to remove the roots of injustice, if we are to overcome the cause of poverty. This, I believe, is possible only when human beings—of whatever religion or agnostics, or atheists—deliberately develop a

sense of total identity with each other. "*The oneness of humanity*", said Swami Vivekananda, "*is the sanction for morality*". Christianity expresses this concept through the principle of love and sharing. Every religion upholds it one way or another. But as Mahatma Gandhi showed us, it is *not* enough to believe in a particular religion. The test is whether we also practice it. By and large, we do not. And that is perhaps the major problem facing India. Gandhiji did not found a religion. He related his own religion creatively to the travails of his fellowmen. He helped people of all religions to similarly relate their particular religion to the problems of society. And I am glad to note that the Orthodox Church, a small community with a great heritage, shares this perception.

We in India have also a historic responsibility. This arises from the tremendous spiritual legacy which we have inherited. It is too rich and varied, for me to recapitulate here but let us remind ourselves of what is there in this land of ours, for *all* to draw spiritual sustenance from:

- 500 years of Sikhism;
- 1000 years of Islam;
- 1800 years of Vedanta;
- 1900 years of Christianity;
- 2500 years of Buddhism;
- 2600 years of Jainism;
- 3500 years of Vedic Religion;
- and, the pre-Aryan spiritual practices of greater antiquity.

What I would like to emphasize at this point of time, is the amazing continuity and vitality of each of these treasured traditions. Whatever the challenge or adversity, they refuse to fade.

It is time we drew the right lessons from this history of ours and changed the pattern of our experience into more positive directions. Can these many streams of spiritual sustenance join their momentum for the common cause of humanity?

I believe the Orthodox Church is spiritually equipped to play its national role in promoting a social-spiritual regeneration of India. This, as I said, can only be in co-operation with the sister Churches and sister religions. Again, this can only be by translating the spirit of justice and equality that all religions represents through service to human beings, from a sense of mutual identity.

I wish the Orthodox Church of India a bright future that would do justice to its inspiring past.

Thank you.

Messages

1. His Holiness John Paul II

To His Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews, Catholicos of the East.

I am very appreciative of your gesture in inviting me to send a representative to the celebrations to be held on 5-12 September 1982, the seventieth anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East.

I know that the Indian Catholic Bishops, priests and faithful will also be participating in the anniversary celebrations of an event of such importance. The presence of a delegation from the Holy See will be in itself a sign of the degree of communion which we already enjoy, and will help to strengthen and foster the unity of all those who believe in Christ.

It is with these sentiments that I am happy to send a delegation from the Catholic Church to join the other guests and delegations at the seventieth anniversary celebrations, and with them to share in the ceremonies, prayers and studies which are to mark that anniversary.

I assure you of my earnest prayers to God for Your Holiness, your clergy and faithful, for the unity of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India.

From the Vatican, 2 August 1982.

Jounnes Paulus II

2. His Holiness PIMEN, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

His Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I
Patriarch-Catholicos of All the East
Metropolitan of Malankara
Kottayam, Kerala, India.

Your Holiness, Beloved Brother in the Lord,

With great inspiration and profound spiritual joy we heard the news about the celebrations to be held on the occasion of the 1750th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholicate of the Malabar Orthodox Syrian Church and on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the transference of the Catholicos's See to India.

These remarkable anniversaries once again remind us of the deep historical roots of the Orthodox Church in the East and her centuries-old traditions rooted in the Apostolic Tradition.

It gives us a great joy to greet you warmly on behalf of the plentitude of the Russian Orthodox Church on this great and remarkable occasion in the life of your Church.

These celebrations have great significance for the Russian Orthodox Church; and though the historic fortunes of our Churches differ, we have one Apostolic Tradition and one Niceno Constantinopolitan Creed which gives us confidence and hope for a future conciliar unity in the spirit of the Ancient One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Since the revival of the Catholicate in India, our mutualities and contacts have grown, contributing to a deeper and fuller awareness of the community of our Christian ideals.

Sending greetings to Your Holiness and your great flock in these days joyful for the whole Orthodox World, I take the liberty of noting the services rendered by many hierarchs, clerics and laymen of the Malabar Church for establishing better understanding between our two Churches. Among them are His Holiness the late Baselios Augen I of the blessed memory with

his exceptional contribution, Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios and Metropolitan Philipos Mar Theophilos who were and remain the faithful friends of the Russian Orthodox Church.

I am confident that the celebrations held by the Malabar Church will contribute to making a fresh evaluation of the experience of the Christian life preserved from the time when Apostles Thomas and Thaddaeus preached and increased through centuries by the faithful sons of the Church, and to gathering together the cultural and theological traditions and to turning these celebrations into a true spiritual triumph of the Church of Christ.

We pray that the Saviour through His co-presence (Mt. 18, 20) may bless the work of your hierarchs, clerics and laymen so that they may continue and multiply the remarkable initiatives aimed at creating the inter-Orthodox unity, strengthening the friendship between our people and peace throughout the world.

With constant brotherly faithfulness to Your Holiness,

August 24, 1982

Moscow.

PIMEN

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

3. His Holiness Dimitrios, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople

(as delivered by H. E. Metropolitan Emilianos of Silibria,
at Kottayam, September 12, 1982.)

Your Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I, Catholicos of the East, Your Holiness Patriarch, Ilia of All Georgia, Your Eminences, Excellencies, friends,

This ecclesiastical feast of the Seventieth Anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East, a feast of the ancient See of your venerable Church, acquires today a wider dimension for all of us. It has drawn us together from all the sister churches, because the re-establishment of the Catholicate is part of the growth into stability of the whole Body of Christ.

In the last few decades we have, not only entered into a theological dialogue between our two churches, but registered definite and enormous progress in our rapprochement. We have, in all humility and honesty, re-discovered together our convergence on matters of faith by being reminded that the unhappy developments in the history of the relations between our two churches, during the period between the two ecumenical councils of Ephesus (381) and Chalcedon (451) were mostly due to non-theological factors. This rediscovery has a positive bearing for our common mission in the world.

Our Churches are today engaged in the most promising efforts for spiritual renewal, by our common witness to the rich patrimony of the Holy Fathers of the East, to the discipline and spirituality of our ascetic life, to our rich liturgical and hymnographic heritage—all of which have a relevant message to a frustrated world desperately longing for a word of cheer and hope of salvation from the Lord.

This is indeed a blessed occasion for expressing our gratitude to the Triune God for all the blessings so richly bestowed on this your holy sister Church throughout her long history. The remarkably high level of your clergy trained in a widely known theological seminary and the numerous excellent and highly esteemed theologians actively participating in all ecumenical gatherings are all signs of the intellectual and spiritual vitality and the enormous potentiality still formed in the ancient Church established by the Holy Apostle St. Thomas. These resources are a portent and promise for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in India.

His Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios-I, with all the Holy Synod, extend to all of your bishops, clergy and laity, their heartfelt greetings, and express the wish that this jubilee may become a stimulus for further spiritual attainments in peace and unity, and in prosperity sustained by the Holy spirit.

Dimitrios, Ecumenical Patriarch.

4. H. E. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury

H. H. Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I
Catholicate Palace
Kottayam, Kerala, India

It is with much Joy that I offer warm personal Greetings to the faithful people of the Orthodox Syrian Church for the 70th Anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East on September 12th. I Offer thanks to Almighty God for this 70th anniversary and pray that He will abundantly bless all members of the Orthodox Syrian Church.

September 1, 1982.

Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury

5. Archbishop Iakovos, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America

H. H. Catholicos Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I
Kottayam, Kerala.

Your Holiness.

Deeply grateful for your kind invitation to participate in festivities marking the 70th anniversary of re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East respectfully extend humble felicitations and pray to the divine founder of the Church to keep your Holiness in His loving care inspiring and guiding you in a long and glorious service to your spiritual flock. Respectfully yours.

August 27, 1982.

Archbishop Iakovos

6. Archbishop Paul of Karelia and All Finland Finnish Orthodox Church

We send our heartfelt message to the Orthodox Syrian Church who reveres the Apostle Thomas as her founder. In the same sense as the holy apostles rejoice upon seeing the face of God in the union of love, the Churches that have been founded by them should live and work on earth in the spirit of Christ and united by His love.

It has given us the greatest joy to see that in the recent times the pursuit of the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches towards their full Eucharistic unity has become an important activity for all of us.

On behalf of the Orthodox Church of Finland we express our warm greetings to His Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I Catholicos of the East, the Bishops, Synod, and all the faithful, on the occasion of the great anniversaries of your Catholicate.

Paul, Archbishop of Karelia and All Finland

7. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus

To the Most Holy Catholicos of the East, Beloved Brother Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I, holy embraces in Jesus Christ.

We were glad to receive Your Holiness' letter of 4th June, and are very happy to receive your kind invitation to send a delegation to the forthcoming celebrations from September 5th to 12th of the 70th anniversary of the re-establishment in India of the Catholicate of the East.

Being unable to comply with this kind request of Your Holiness, may we express through this letter our warm felicitations on the occasion of these historic festivities of your Church. We rejoice with you and whole-heartedly wish that our sister Church in India, under the spiritual guidance of the Apostle Thomas in the pastures of our saviour and be filled with the fullness of the Grace of Christ.

We remain, with our warm greetings to Your Holiness.

Archbishop's House,
Cyprus,
13th July 1982

Your Beloved Brother in Christ
Chrysostomos
Archbishop of Cyprus

8. **K. C. Abraham, Governor of Andhra Pradesh**

RAJ BHAVAN,
Hyderabad-500041,
16th August, 1982.

It is a matter of great significance and jubilation for the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church that the Malankara Sabha is celebrating the 1750th Anniversary of the establishment of the Catholicate, during September, 1982. I am happy that this event is synchronising with the 70th Anniversary of the transfer of seat of the Catholicos to India and that the occasion is likely to culminate in a global Orthodox Church meet.

On this momentous occasion we recall to our memory the noble struggle of the founding fathers of the Church to establish the fraternity and in whose spiritual pursuits, the Glory of God is reflected over the years and to this day. It is time to consolidate these spiritual gains for harmony and understanding so as to pave the way for a more illumining future. We remember with reverence, the great patriots like His Grace Vattaseril Gheevarghese Mar Dionysius, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Gheevarghese-II and lay men like Mr. E. J. John, Mr. M. A. Chacko, Mr. O. M. C. Cherian, Mr. K. C. Mammen Mapillai, Mr. A. M. Varkey and a host of others who stood loyally by the Church. It is from their dedication we should continue to draw our inspiration, and let us hope that the relentless endeavours of this Church under the leadership of the present Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews Pradhaman will contribute to promoting perfect harmony and good will within the various arms of the Church, the community and for the promotion of peace of mankind.

On this happy occasion, I extend my cordial greeting to the congregation and give my prayerful good wishes seeking the blessings of the Almighty for the success of the Celebration.

K. C. Abraham

9. **Prof. K. M. Chandy, Lieutenant Governor**

RAJ NIVAS
PONDICHERRY-605 001
July 30, 1982.

I am very delighted to learn that Malankara Sabha is celebrating the 1750th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholicate together with the 70th anniversary of the transfer of the seat of the Catholicos to India. Every Syrian Christian traces his roots to high caste Hindu families converted into Christianity by St. Thomas, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ, who according to tradition, came to Kerala, i. e., Malankara in 52 A. D. and established small communities of Christians or Churches in different parts of Kerala. A compilation setting out the chief events in the history of these people will be a great contribution to the social History of Kerala and I wish your endeavour all success

Yours sincerely
K. M. Chandy

**10. Bishop Jesudasan, Moderator,
The Church of South India**

It is our great privilege and joy to participate in this unique celebrations when the Orthodox Syrian Church, Catholicate of the East, celebrates its 70th Anniversary of the re-establishment of the ancient Catholicate of the East in India. I bring you loving greetings and best wishes from the Synod of the Church of South India and its officers on this memorable occasion. As co-Chairman of the Joint Council of the Marthoma, CSI and CNI Churches, I bring you greetings from the Joint Council.

We extend our warm welcome and greetings to the Church dignitaries visiting Kerala in connection with this celebration, I am sure that you have already started experiencing the warmth of the fellowship of the Christians of Kerala. The Church of South India value very much your visit and pray that your visit would enrich the life of Churches in India, especially those of Kerala. We request you to take with you our greetings and best wishes to the people you represent.

The Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala, with its Eastern tradition has played a very significant role in the religious, cultural, social and political life of our Nation. The tradition that St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, had visited and established a Church in South India and that the Orthodox Syrian Church came to be considered as the immediate successor to that First Mission, give great credit to the Christian Church, in this land. The Church of South India as a sister Church holding reformed traditions views with great interest that the recent pronouncements made on behalf of the Orthodox Syrian Church especially that the Orthodox Church stands for the realisation of one Church in India and for ecumenical co-operation to achieve this end. The Church of South India being already committed to this goal, welcomes the move and we extend our co-operation in this regard.

Trivandrum,
4-9-1982.

Jesudas
Moderator

Greetings of the Romanian Orthodox Church

Your Holiness, Your Eminences and Great Assembly Gatherings:

Now this great Church in Kerala is celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the re-establishment in India of its Catholicate. It is a gratitude for us for offering warmest greetings and blessings and our sincere prayers for this happy occasion.

The Orthodox Church in Kerala, India, and the Romanian Orthodox Church are already having a long established relations. Also, there are very good relations between India and Romania. At this moment we would like to wish great success to the Orthodox Church in India so that it may work for the welfare, for the spiritual welfare, for its children.

May the Orthodox Church in India live long and flourish.

Bucharest
1-9-1982

JUSTIN
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

Felicitations by the Armenian Orthodox Church

Your Holiness Baselius Marthoma Mathews I, Catholicos of the East, Your Holiness Ilia II, the Patriarch of Georgia, Your Eminences, Your Graces and beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We are coming from Etchmiadzin to participate in the unique celebrations. From His Holiness Vazgen I, the Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians greetings and blessings to this Church. Also we are bringing the love of our people, the Armenian nation, on this happy occasion of the celebration of the re-establishment of the Catholicate in India. We accepted that St. Thomas the Apostle came to India, to this State, to preach the Christianity as two apostles came to Armenia to enlighten the Armenian nation. The theology of the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East and the Armenian Church are similar and we are happy and proud to say that we are sister Churches in Christ. Our brothers and sisters, by coming to India and participating in the celebrations, we are knowing you more in your faith and feelings. We are knowing you more in your faith and respect the Catholicos and the Synod of the Church. We realise that you as a whole love your Church. This celebrations and festives that you are celebrating and participating we are, we take it with us to Armenia to report to our people and to our Catholicos so that they will rejoice and be with you for this celebrations. And to express our rejoice, according to our tradition, we would like to kiss the hand of His Holiness to get his blessings. Congratulations to you all.

(Speech delivered at Kottayam)

Felicitations by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Your Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I, Catholicos—Patriarch of the East, Your Holiness Ilia II, the Catholicos—Patriarch of Georgia, Your eminences and friends.

I am very glad to represent the Patriarch of Ethiopia in this 70th anniversary Celebrations of the re-establishment of the Catholicate of the East in India. His Holiness has entrusted me to convey his love and respect towards this Catholicate. It is not a festival for Malankara Orthodox Church alone, but it is a festival of the whole Churches in the world. By our present visit, we could understand the various activities of your Church and its growth. Also we realize the hospitality and humanitarian concern of the people of India. God has blessed you in the past. God will bless you in the years to come so that you can produce more spiritual fruits. The Orthodox Churches in India and Ethiopia are with one Faith and one Tradition. We are one in Christ. We pray for the progress and growth of your Church. May God bless the Church, its head His Holiness the Catholicos—Patriarch and all your leaders.

(Speech delivered by Abuna Nathaniel of Ethiopia.)