

**From Bagdad
To Chicago**

Dr. MAR APREM

1985

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FROM BAGDAD TO
CHICAGO

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ܘܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

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FROM BAGDAD TO CHICAGO

MAR APREM

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FROM BAGDAD TO CHICAGO

English

A Travelogue

Author

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FOREWORD

I have travelled extensively several times in many parts of the world. But this is the first time that I am reading a travelogue. I read it at a stretch in one sitting. When I finished reading, I felt as though I travelled with the author--the Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem--"From Bagdad to Chicago" partaking of his experiences and adventures. I could not but re-read some portions, which made me think--and worry--in the context of what is happening today in some parts of India.

According to me, the most important message that pervades the book is the call it gives for universal peace and brotherhood, for unity in diversity and for cultivating the spirit of tolerance and understanding. The author is at his best when he talks of the "distrust that

engenders the arms race and threatens human existence", or when he tells the Sikh gentleman at the U. S. Consulate in London that "India is one.....India is a secular State. We should work for the integration of our Nation".

The book which has been written in simple narrative style, gives detailed insight into the history of the Church of the East and its two factions the '25th's and the '7th's. The book also throws light on certain aspects of the Iran-Iraq war and gives some interesting details of several places of tourist interest in the countries covered by the author's travel.

What makes the book eminently readable is perhaps the author's sense of humour and his capacity to laugh at himself. The way he makes references to his inability to drive, to swim, to sing, or to drink (alcohol), the manner in which he reacts when he is told at the Dutch Consulate in Delhi that there is "no difference between a Bishop and a sweeper", the narration of the altercation he had with the lady at the check-in counter at Heathrow airport, London, and the description of the exchanges he had with the taxi-driver at Amsterdam, amply bring out the simplicity and innate nobility of the author. I only wish that better care had been taken while editing the book.

The travelogue "From Bagdad to Chicago" is certainly a valuable addition to the comparatively thin collection of travel literature written in English in Kerala. I have no doubt that this book would be very well received by the English reading public.

Dr. K. Gopalan
Vice-Chancellor

University of Cochin
Cochin 682 022
January 26, 1986

Introduction

“*From Bagdad to Chicago*” is a first hand account of my two foreign trips during the year 1984. In 1977, after I had travelled in Iraq, England, Germany, the U. S. A. and Canada the travelogue “*America Revisited*” had been written. The acceptance given to that book by friends from India and abroad made me take the trouble to sit down and write this book.

After the travels of 1977 I visited Thailand and Germany in 1980 for international conferences, the reports of which have been included in my autobiography “*Strange But True.*” In 1981 and 82 I did not go abroad. In 1983 I went to Amsterdam in July and to Germany in Sept. for the International Congress of Oriental Canon Law. On that trip I bought a Eurail Pass and visited Sweden, Switzerland and England also. I had wished to write a travelogue in 1983 but I did not get time to do so except for writing brief articles in the *Voice of the East* monthly.

Now I feel that I should take the trouble of sitting down and writing it in long hand. I have help for typing it. That much is a help indeed. But if I had a short hand typist I could have

dictated it instead of writing the whole book in long hand. Perhaps one day I will get a dictaphone to make the task of writing books easier and quicker.

Ofcourse, I should not complain because I have already written more than the average writer. This is my 23rd book. I do hope that the trouble I take to write this book will be rewarded if it is of some use to the friends who take a special interest in all what I write and in all what I do. Many friends write to me asking to write details of my trips abroad. Instead of replying to them in lengthy correspondence I find it easier to send them a book. Moreover a book will help to refresh my memory, as I am also likely to forget the names of people whom I visited.

There seems to be some similarity between my experience in writing and that of Robert Bencley who wrote.

“It took me fifteen years to find out that I had no talent for writing. But at that time it was too late to stop, because I had become famous in the meantime.”

Although my books have not reached high grades after having written two dozen books it is

not easy not to attempt to write more books. Whether one of my books, may become a best seller or not; writing has become a compulsion and weakness to me.

Usually I announce my intention of writing a book before the actual writing of the book is planned. In a recent article on "Self Publishing" in *Christian Writer & Publisher*, Kottayam, Dec., 1984 Dan Poynter points out his reasons for not announcing his publications early. He reasons.

Some of the people you meet in your research will clamp-up because they are jealous of your initiative. They seem to feel that they should be writing this book and are disappointed in themselves for their lack of energy. Another reason is that writing books always seems to take longer than we plan and our good friends begin to bother us by asking when we'll be done. Some authors don't want to tip off the competition to their work while others announce their products early hoping to scare off other authors."

My experience has been that the enquiries from friends and foes alike have challenged me to write some books. As far as the present travelogue is concerned one of my friends

Dr. Hubert Kaufhold wrote to me from Munich on 11 November 1984, "I hope that you enjoyed your stay in the Netherlands and your trip to England and the U. S. A. I read about it in the 'Voice of the East.' I am sure that you will write a new book about your journey!" I want to say "Amen." Yes, I was already writing that book when his letter arrived. That is the reason why my reply to his letter was delayed!

Writing the Foreword to my previous travelogue *America Revisited*, Advocate K. B. Veerachandra Menon remarked, "I am happy to note that the author stands on a par with even Sri. S. K. Pottekkat who has contributed so much to the growth of travelogues in Kerala." Since those words were written in 1977, Mr. S. K. Pottekkat became more famous by receiving the coveted literary recognition *Gnanapith* Award. Mr. S. K. Pottekkat passed away and therefore there are not many travel writers in Kerala left. I am a man of religion and have neither the talent nor the time to fill the gap.

This book is simple in style and is meant for the many Assyrians who met me in these travels. Their knowledge of English is as poor as my knowledge of the Assyrian language. When I returned from America I realised to my surprise I was speaking only broken English in America because most of the people including Church

dignitaries I met in America did not know English well. Therefore I had to face language problem in America also just as I faced it in Sweden and Holland!

As it is a travelogue this work often refers to personal visits. It is not easy to avoid the first person pronoun "I." Similarly the things described in the following pages are things that caught my attention. The places of interest to me find a place here. This book does not tell about cricket matches or the taste of liquor, simply because I do not share the emotions of the cricket match or the oblivion in the bottle. I should write of things I know. On the television in the U. S. A. I saw the commercial "Winston tastes good, like a cigarette should." It rhymes okay. But I do not know whether it is right or wrong. What I know about cigarettes is that it is injurious to health. This is what cigarette manufactures themselves say, or are required to say by law. Therefore those who look in this book for information on the brand of the best cigarette ("best" means that [can cause cancer to your lungs quicker) or the best brandy will be disappointed.

This book has a lot to tell about the Church of the East. The Assyrians whom the author visited in Iraq, Europe and the U. S. A. are mostly members of this ancient Church. Therefore more than being a travel book, it is a book

on modern Church history of the ancient Church. The librarians can catalogue this book in the Church History section of their libraries. Very upto-date and accurate information on the Church of the East is given in this book.

“From Bagdad to Chicago” is a title which is meaningful because the efforts for the unification of the two groups in the Church were made in Bagdad in February 84 and further in Chicago in September 84. Although these two are separated by more than half an year I find a connecting link in the quest for unity of the Church.

Not only the accounts about the Church, but also about the Iraq-Iran war, many interesting tourist places in Babylon, Sweden, the birth place of Shakespeare in England, Sears Tower in Chicago etc. can be read with a few facts and figures in this book.

Some photographs have been printed on the back pages which add to the human interest in the accounts given in this book.

I am indebted to all my hosts in different countries. I am grateful to Mr. Eshaya Chemmani, an Assyrian businessman in England, who paid for my travel from India to England (to and fro) and to St. Odisho Parish of the Church

of the East in Chicago which paid for my ticket from London to Chicago (to and fro). To keep the record complete I must express my gratitude to our Church members in India who paid for my ticket for the Bagdad trip in February.

I give below a letter which I received from Germany a few months ago.

ASSYRISCHE JUDGEND

VEREINIGUNG. e. V.

6000-Frankfurt/M

Postfach: 2379

Mr. Aprem,

now we know what kind of stupid person you are.

Where you got the title "Doctor of Theologie",?

It looks for us Assyrian people of America and Europe that the same stupid people as you are one gave it to you.

We the Assyrian Union ask you: from whom you got the money to go to Bagdad, to London and America?

In the name of our Assyrian Church, even you are not Assyrian but Indian? Never

in history an Indian has been a bishop of our Assyrian Church.

There is no necessity to write to somebody as you long letter. Only we want to let you know that the Assyrian Union will be very happy to hear when you are in Europe or Germany. Than we have your beard and put it in your pocket.

I make no comment on the above letter. My consolation was that these Assyrians, whom I do not know, have offered to put my beard in *my* pocket and not in *their* pocket. Otherwise, I would not be able to see beard which I had carefully kept ever since I became a full priest on 13 June 1965.

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Trichur 680 001,
Kerala, India.

MAR APREM

Chapter I

Fourth Trip to Iraq

It was in 1962 that I first visited Iraq. I was returning after my studies in England. The second visit was in 1968 during my return from America. I went to Bagdad in response to a telegram from the late Mar Thoma Darmo, who was then the Metropolitan of India. I spent about six weeks there, from 15 Sept. to 25 Oct at that time. That was the time of my consecration as Bishop on 21 Sept. and as Metropolitan on 29 Sept. In June 1977 I visited Bagdad for 8 days during my return from Germany. This time in February 1984 I spent 2 weeks there.

This was the first time I flew from Bombay to Bagdad. On the previous trips I had flown in from the West. I was flying by Iraqi Airways for the first time. As soon as I entered the

plane, the air hostess told her fellow hostess "*Matran.*" That is the word for "Bishop" in Malayalam as well as in Syriac. So I guessed the hostess must be an Assyrian Christian. Within a few minutes I discovered her name was Nahrain Aprem. She is an Assyrian from the Baz tribe. She is a Chaldean (Roman Catholic) while many of her relatives are members of the Church of the East. I showed her my book "*Teach Yourself Aramaic.*" The flight of five hours from Bombay to Bagdad became pleasant as we talked about the Assyrians, their language etc. As the plane was only half filled with passengers during that flight the hostess had a lot of free time to talk about her home and country.

Owing to the Iran-Iraq conflict we flew far from Iran borders. We took a longer route flying over Bahrain and around Saudi Arabia. It was a non-stop flight. Although it took five hours to Bagdad, the return flight took only four hours, as winds were favourable.

At the airport in Bagdad, about 100 members of the Church were waiting for us. When we reached Bagdad our watch showed 11-30 p. m. while the Bagdad time was only 9 p. m. They are 2½ hours behind India. We went in a row

of about 20 cars from Saddam airport to the Patriarchate Palace opposite to the Technological University. At about 10.30 p.m., a police patrol car stopped us and enquired about the cause for this night procession. Soon they signalled us on. When we reached the Patriarchate Palace, His Holiness Mar Adhai II was waiting for us. The deacons sang Syriac songs and welcomed us to the Church.

After some words of welcome by the Patriarch and our reply, I presented to the Patriarch the elephants, Book-stand and box, all carved out of sandal wood. Mar Poulouse presented a gift to Mar Thoma Geevarghese Metropolitan of Nineveh. A gift to Mar Narsai Metropolitan of Kirkuk was presented to him later upon his arrival. Our reply speeches were translated from English to Syriac by the Rev. Esho. He is the son of the Rev. Odisho of Ashitha who is a retired teacher and is active as the librarian of the Syriac Academy in Bagdad. I was particularly happy to meet the Rev. Esho, because I had stayed with his father Qasha Odisho of Sarasing in 1962 in the house of his cousin Shamasha Geevarghese Benjamin, now living in Chicago. The Shamasha was the Syriac *Malpan* (teacher) in India during 1929 - 33 before I was born.

The next three days were *Baootha* i. e., Rogation of the Ninavites, days of fasting and litany. It was my privilege to conduct *Qurbana* on Wednesday 15th Feb. It took two hours for people to receive communion. The Holy *Qurbana* which began at 11-30 a.m. was over by 3-30 p.m. I came to know that some women were fasting for three days continuously without even water. I am used to fasting on those three days upto 2 or 3 p. m. But to give up food and drink for nearly 3 days is not easy.

Patriarch Mar Adhai II was present for the Holy *Qurbana*. He had come there to attend my service and not to officiate. It had been anticipated that the Rev. Esho Odisho, who interpreted for me on Sunday night upon our arrival, would be available to translate my sermon after reading the gospel. But the Revd. Esho, being a member of the other section, went to attend the service that was being conducted by Mar Geevarghese Metropolitan. In 1984 both the Julian and the Gregorian calendars coincided and all section had Ba'ootha on the same day. Hence he was worshipping in his own Church. I was worried what to do.

It was not easy to get an interpreter from our clergy in Iraq. In utter helplessness I looked at the Patriarch. I knew that he is poor in

English as I am poor in his mother tongue which is called Syriac by some and Assyrian by others. If I attempt to speak their language the people present there will start laughing. The Patriarch also was in the same predicament. He can fluently speak Assyrian. But those who know English will laugh at him if he does not properly convey the meaning of my message. Patriarch called one of the worshippers present in the Church, Mr. George Dinha, working at the Iraqi Airways office who was fluent in English and Arabic. But he knew that inside the Church he should not interpret my speech into Arabic as he did it during our visit to the minister of Awqaf. Moreover the vocabulary of the talk inside the Church would be different and more bibliacal than the pleasant conversation with the honourable minister of Awqaf. Hence Mr. George Dinha declined to interpret.

“What to do?” asked the Patriarch in his utter helplessness. There was no time to prepare for the interpretation. There was no time to fetch the dictionary to the altar and point out the proper words. Although in my 1977 visit we both sat together and with the help of the dictionary, he wrote out the translation of my speech and I myself delivered it in his language. Then if I made a mistake people would laugh with me and not at the Patriarch.

“Something is better than nothing” I persuaded the Patriarch to be my interpreter. I stood by the Patriarch and started speaking. I showed gestures and spoke slowly. Patriarch hesitantly interpreted. But I think he did a reasonably good job. The saying goes that the best way to learn swimming is to jump into water and try swimming. Keeping on dry land and learning theories on swimming will not do.

I also felt guilty that I could not teach the Patriarch enough English language when he had wanted me earlier to do so. Although we lived together in one room in Sept - Oct 1968, at the Opera Hotel and later at the Patriarchate Palace, I was busy with the late Mar Thoma Darmo and hence I did not get much time with Mar Adhai. In 1977, I had only one week in Iraq and hence I could not help him to learn English and I was trying to learn Assyrian language myself.

My record in learning Aramaic is not at all impressive. Although I can correctly recite prayers in Syriac (Aramaic) with understanding I can not converse in that language. I am able to understand most of the words, but it is difficult to reply to the questions put to me in that language. In 1962 I promised myself that I

would speak in their language during my next visit. I repeated the same promise in 1968. Thus in 1977 I read out my sermon in their language promising to do better in the next visit. Hence in 1984 I was sharply aware of my failure.

St. Raphael's Hospital, Bagdad is the place where Mar Thoma Darmo, my consecrator, breathed his last on 7 Sept 1969. The day is also the first anniversary of his heroic and historic visit to Iraq. He had spent his last days in that hospital for an operation. I could not go there to be with him in Bagdad in those days as I was not informed of his sickness. Mar Thoma Darmo did not want the Indian Church to be worried over his health and asked the Bagdad people not to inform us about his going to hospital at all. When he died, his opponents in India published pamphlets stating that Mar Thoma Darmo's death was not by sickness. It was a tragic death and his dead-body was floating on the Lake Avira. There is no lake named Avira except in the imagination of the anonymous author of the pamphlet. I wanted to visit the hospital and the room like a true follower of the doubting Thomas who did not believe the testimony of his fellow disciples regarding the resurrection appearance, I asked for the room where Mar Thoma Darmo spent his last days.

The sisters at the St. Raphael Hospital were at first confused. They stated "No Bishop died here." I told the sisters "Not today, but 15 years ago he died." They must have thought that this man must be a 'nut' to search for the room in which some-body died 15 years ago.

"*Salam alequm*" we greeted the Moslem friend who was occupying the room on the second floor. It was the "last room" of Mar Thoma Darmo who had occupied the Metropolitan's Palace in Trichur for 16 years where I reside since 1968. The patient looked calmly at us the strangers who had entered his room. We told him that we wanted to visit that room because it had been occupied by a bishop 15 years earlier. We did not frighten him by telling that Mar Thoma Darmo had died in that room. That will not be welcome news to that patient, although it explains our curiosity.

The Holy Qurbana on Fridays and Sundays were well attended. Also several people came for evening prayers every day. We were also invited to visit several families for meals and fellowship. As for the food I enjoyed the Assyrian Dolma, bread etc. We could also eat dates, the famous fruit of Iraq, although it was not the proper date season.

A visit to the tomb of Mar Thoma Darmo at the Mar Zaya Cathedral in Karradat Maryam aroused nostalgic memories. It was in that Church that I stayed with my former Malpan the Rev. Kaku Lazar in 1962. It was in that Church that I was consecrated in 1968. Here rests the mortal remains of the hands that anointed my head. Now Minister's Residences are being built in that area. Hence all old buildings have been demolished. The government is building a new Church in Dora in lieu of this. Bishop Mar Sargis told us that the dead bodies buried in the premises of that church would be shifted to the new Church. He has made a request to the government to preserve this Church as a historic monument, although no services will be conducted in that church.

The government of Iraq is kind enough to construct many beautiful Churches for Christians. The Minister of Awkaf & Religious Affairs Honourable Abdulla Fadhel told us that the government would help the Christians to worship according to Christian faith. Awkaf Ministry is willing for building many Churches inspite of the economic crisis owing to the war with Iran.

The interview with the Minister of Awkaf was shown in the Bagdad television the same

evening. The news of that interview was reported in the Arabic news papers (*Al Jamhoria* and *Al Tawra* as well as in the English newspaper *Bagdad Observer*. In Bagdad in addition to the *Bagdad Observer* we were able to purchase *Kuwait Times*. To my great surprise inside that English newspaper there was one full sheet (2 pages) of Malayalam paper. It seems the enterprising Indians from Kerala-state were writing the whole news with their hand and photocopying the matter and making it available to those who read Malayalam script. I wonder what the Arabs think when they see this strange script in an English newspaper. As some one has rightly remarked the majority of the population of Kuwait may not be Arabs but Malayalees. A new kind of colonial expansion of my compatriots.

“*Bagdad Observer*”, the leading English daily newspaper of Iraq interviewed me and asked questions about their country and my impression of the religious freedom enjoyed by our Church members. I told him that in India we have the freedom to worship and to construct Churches as we please. There is one difference. In India we have to pay with our own money to build Churches. In Iraq the government pays for the construction of the Churches. I

told the interviewer that our people in Iraq have been there for centuries. In the good old days of the 8th century, Patriarch Mar Timotheus I (778-820) had a friendly dialogue with the Caliph al Mahdi. That recorded conversation is a proof of the religious tolerance of the two religions (Christianity and Islam) which unfortunately turned to hatred during the days of the crusades. My Moslim friend was happy to hear that there is a manuscript copy of this dialogue in Syriac language preserved in Trichur and its printed Malayalam translation is also available. The friendship we could see at the time of the Patriarch Mar Thimotheus and the Caliph Mahdi in the 8th century was now visible when we were in the presence of the Minister of Awqaf & Religious Affairs as well as in company of other Moslim friends.

The interview with the English newspaper *Bagdad Observer* was in Arabic. I was surprised that the interviewer of the English newspaper did not speak that language. We have a scientist in our Church in Bagdad. He had studied at the Cornell University in the U. S. A. and had taken his Master's degree. He interpreted the Arabic questions put by the interviewer into English for me to answer and he interpreted my reply from English to Arabic. The tape recorder

recorded everything. So even if my friend did not interpret my replies correctly into Arabic, the editors at their office desk would listen to the cassette tape of the interview and would write the correct answers. Such a double check on one's interpretation makes the interpreter's task very difficult and embarrassing.

The interview was expected to appear in the Bagdad observer before our return from Bagdad and I wanted to read it myself. But the following days the newspapers were full of the news of the attacks of Iran on the border of Iraq and the crushing defeat they gave to "the criminal rulers of Teheran." In Sept. when I visited Chicago I read an article in the Assyrian magazine published in Chicago by Mr. Clemis Sargis, son - in - law of deacon Geevarghese Benjamin, former Malpan of Syriac language in India mentioned earlier. This article, I suppose, was the one that appeared in the *Bagdad Observer* for which I was interviewed.

By the way, I must mention, that the interview for the *Bagdad Observer* was held in the office room of the Manager, Mr. Hassim of the Ministry of *Awqaf* and Religious Affairs. He is indeed a friendly person. He had visited us in the Patriarchate Palace. He was very hospitable

when we went to his office to visit with the Honourable Minister (*Wazir*) of Awqaf Mr. Abdulla Fadhel.

As a matter of fact he is not showing any favour to any group. He was friendly with all Christians, although he is not a Christian. For example when we went to meet the Minister, Mar Polos, the Latin Archbishop was having tea with him. While we were sitting there Bishop Mar Sargis walked in. We were wondering whether he had invited different Christian leaders to come at the same time to have some ecumenical discussions in his office. As we were going out we saw some lay leaders like Shleemon, son of Malik Bukku, coming to see him: I was glad that Shleemon Bukku greeted us. He was one of the leaders with Malik Yosep Khoshaba when Mar Thoma Darmo came to Bagdad on 7 September 1968. But after the death of Mar Thoma Darmo he supported Mar Eshai Shimun. During our conversation later at the Patriarchate Palace I got the impression that he was genuinely interested in the unity of two groups.

We visited Mar Geevarghese Church, Dora in Bagdad where Mar Poulouse was consecrated on 13 Sept. 1968. I had been to that Church in

1962 when I was a young deacon. Revd. Isaac Enwiya was the priest. It was there that, I met the late Mar Yosip Khananisho Metropolitan who died in July 1977. I was happy to visit now the Printing Press newly started next to that Church. They showed me the Psalms (*Mazmora*) printed by the offset from the *Hudra* printed in India in 1960. 5000 copies have been printed. They printed Messianic Teachings (*Yulpana Mshihaya*). It is also a reprint by making blocks. The main problem of that Press is that they do not have Syriac types (letters) for type-setting. That is the reason why they have to depend on blocks or offset printing. It is cheaper to type-set and print, if Syriac types are available. The advantage of Mar Narsai Press in Trichur is that they have Syriac types. That is the reason why Mar Narsai Press was able to print a lot of books since 1926. I must remember with gratitude the late Rev. Joseph Kalaita of Mar Bisho, founder of Assyrian school and Press in Mosul, who spent time in Trichur during 1920-21 while he was a deacon to make these types for the first time. Patriarch Mar Adhai has got Syriac types and he is planning to purchase a printing Press and start publishing Syriac books.

The visit to Mar Yosip Sargis Episcopa of Jelu was very cordial. It was the first time I

was meeting him. I was present for the funeral of his father's mother in 1962 in Bagdad. At that time he was a teenager. His uncle the late Isho Sargis Episcopa was the Bishop. Bishop Isho Sargis died in 1967 and was succeeded by his nephew Yosip Sargis. Bishop Sargis, who is youngest Bishop of both parties of our Church (I think he is between 33 and 35), is the tallest Bishop of our Church. His smiling face and pleasing manners impressed me immensely. He understands English but is not fluent in that language. I was told that his Qurbana is very attractive as he was gifted with a beautiful *Qala* (voice).

Mar Geevarghese Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq and Representative of the Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, is one of the three Metropolitans of that group. He was the last Metropolitan to be consecrated in recent years. (the only one during the past eight years). He was a teacher and spent some time in America from 1977 to 1980 when he was consecrated, in America by the Patriarch Mar Dinkha and sent to Iraq. I could not assess his age. His head looks older than mine, but his beard appears younger without any grey. May be we are of the same age!* Mar Geevarghese also knows English. He is a dignified person and speaks little. I have an

*After writing those words I came to know that he is one and a half year younger to me. He was born in Dec 1942.

impression that he is deeply loved by his followers. He is from the lower *Tiari* tribe, from the same sub-tribe as the Patriarch Mar Adhai.

The *Tiari* is the largest tribe of the Assyrians and they were not happy about the fact that they had no Bishops of that tribe. With the consecration of three prelates from the lower *Tiari* (Patriarch Mar Adhai, on 22 Sept 1968 as Metropolitan and as Patriarch on 22 Feb 1972 as well as Metropolitan Mar Narsai and Metropolitan Mar Thoma Geevarghese on 5 Dec 1969) the *Tiari* tribe has no reason to complain. Later in the new calendar line, Mar Daniel episcopa who is in America now, and lastly Mar Geevarghese Sliva Metropolitan were consecrated.

We had discussions with Col. Malik Yosip, son of Malik Khoshaba, of the lower *Tiari* tribe. Malik Yosip had been charged by the opponents of creating a faction in our Church in 1964 - 68 which culminated in the consecration of Mar Thoma Darmo as the Patriarch on 11 Oct 1968 at Bagdad. Malik Yosip now looks an old man. About the unity of our Church he said that he would be delighted by the re-unification of the two groups.

His son is a Major in the Iraqi army and a prisoner of war in Iran for about 2 years. He

said that he recently received a letter from him through the Red Cross. Malik Yosip is writing the history of the Assyrians. He showed me several letters which his grand father's father, Malik Patho, received from the Patriarch Mar Shimun (although the name is not mentioned in the letter, I guess it is Mar Rowel Shimun, who died in 1903, who was the uncle of Mar Benyamin Shimun (who was martyred in 1918).

Our visit to Habbania, one hour driving distance from Bagdad was very pleasant. We were warmly welcomed by the deacon who was a regular reader of the *Voice of the East*. We were equally happy to meet the old priest of Habbaniya. He belongs to the *Nochia* tribe of the late Mar Yosip Hananishu Metropolitan. Although he belonged to the "25th" group he invited us for prayer in his Church, because the '7' group has no separate Church there. During the litany of the evening prayer, Deacon Dinha prayed for "Mar Adhai and Mar Dinha, our patriarchs." Whether all people present there agreed with it or not, all said a loud "Amen". I thought whether you belong to the group of Mar Adhai or Mar Dinha, both these religious leaders need prayers of both groups and even outsiders:

Most of the members present for the evening prayer requested that we should conduct *Qurbana* there. But we had arranged to return to the Patriarchate Palace where several young people were gathered to meet and discuss about unity. Hence we took leave Qasha Hammu and his people. Mar Adhai promised to return for *Qurbana* on some convenient date. Although Habbania is not far from Bagdad, it seems they do not get a chance to meet the Patriarch or prelates often. As we returned from Habbania, we could see places where police patrol or solidiers were on duty.

During our stay in Bagdad we visited the houses of our three prelates. The brothers and mother or Patriarch Mar Adhai invited us for an evening meal. One of the Patriarch's younger brothers is a deacon. I remember him as a young man in 1968. Now he is a deacon, married. He daily drives his old jeep to go to work in some workshop of the army, near Habbania.

We visited the house of Mar Narsai Metropolitan on the first death anniversary of his father. Hence dozens of friends and relatives were present for the sumptuous lunch. I noticed a lot of books in his house. His brother is a

graduate and has a good job. I was glad to meet educated young people in our Church. Mar Narsai has his Metropolitan palace in Kirkuk. He invited me to visit Kirkuk and the Churches in his diocese. In 1962 I had tried but was not permitted to go to Kirkuk. But in 1968 and 1977 I could have gone. Still I did not visit that area. So it was a tempting invitation to visit Kirkuk at this time. In spite of the war emergency, I wished to visit Kirkuk. Still time was limited, therefore I decided to postpone the visit for a future occasion. I do not know whether I will get a chance to visit Kirkuk.

Mar Thoma Geevarghese Metropolitan also invited me to his home in Bagdad. His official residence is in Mosul which is Niniveh mentioned in Bible in connection with Jonah. But his relatives live in Bagdad. Everywhere we were invited for food, we could eat big fish. Although fish is available from Euphrates river in Bagdad, it is very expensive. This is what I hear. They say one big fish costs 30 Iraqi Dinars which means 1000 Indian rupees. I cannot think of such a price in India. It is better to be a vegetarian!

Some deacons and lay people also invited us for meals. Mr. Jacob, who was the manager

of Opera Hotel in 1968 when we stayed with the late Mar Thoma Darmo, invited us for dinner. He has left the hotel. The hotel Opera has also changed its name as Hotel Anbar. Incidentally we went to visit that hotel. The waiters came and asked what we wanted. When we replied that we simply wanted to visit that place after 16 years, the waiters must have been surprised.

As people began to invite us every evening, the priest of the Patriarchate Palace the Revd. Nestorius did not get an evening to invite us. So we went for our last breakfast to his house before bidding goodbye to Bagdad.

Iraq can be called the cradle of civilisation. The two famous and fertile rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, flow here. Some people claim that the garden of Eden mentioned in the Bible was in Iraq. 1418 kilometres out of the 1718 kilometres of the Tigris and 1213 out of 2300 kilometres of the Euphrates flow within the territory of Iraq. This makes this country very fertile. On the banks of these rivers one can see rows of date-palms reminiscent of the coconut palms on the Kerala coasts. Watermelons, grapes, fig fruits etc grow in plenty in this country. In the mountains, vegetables grow profusely. As there are rivers, fish are available

in abundance. I was shocked to hear that one fish costs one thousand rupees (about 30 Iraqi dinars, or 90 American dollars). The place where the Euphrates and the Tigris meet is called Shat - al Arab.

The population of Iraq is less than 2/3 of the Kerala state. It is only 14 million. The majority are Arabs. The minority communities consist of Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenians, Turks etc. The population of the capital city was estimated to be one and half million during my previous visits. But now they estimate it is at least two million. "This is the population of the Iraqi nationals only. There will be at least one million foreigners in Bagdad city alone" reminded one Assyrian friend. I did not hesitate to believe it. Because I could see thousands of Japanese, Indians, Bangladesh etc, engaged in the construction of the multi-million buildings.

Christians number about seven hundred thousand i. e. 5% of the total population. As the national percentage it is higher than that in India where Christians are less than 3%. Thus in Iraq the Christians are the largest minority community, while in India Muslims are the largest minority community. In India although Muslims are only a minority community they.

are more than the Muslims in all the Gulf countries put together.

The largest Christian group is the Catholic Chaldean. Their patriarch Mar Poulos Cheikho is an old but energetic man. This community is about 400 000 according to his assistant Mar Emmanuel Delli. Some others say that they are only 300 000 believers. One thing is true, the Catholic Chaldeans are the most numerous. The second place is for the Assyrians, also known as the Nestorians. Although it is divided under two groups, one under Patriarch Mar Adhai II adhering to the old Julian calendar and the other following the Gregorian calendar, the total is about one hundred thousand: Bishop Mar Sargis said "We are at least 150 000". It is difficult to get correct figures. The rest are the Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox Church) Armenian Church, Latin Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists etc. There are five Churches in one street in Bagdad. It is called Kanisa street. On Sunday morning one can hear the bells in the Church buildings tolling, calling the believers to worship. But the worshippers have to work on Sunday. Those who do not work i.e. elderly people and the ladies only come to worship on Sunday morning. Others come to Church to attend the evening prayers on Saturdays. Most of the people attend worship on

Friday mornings. Friday is the "Sunday" in Iraq.

Christians have freedom of worship. The government is constructing Churches. We went to visit the Patriarchate Palace that is being constructed by the government for Patriarch Mar Adhai. It is a spacious one. There is a Church on the second floor. The construction was half way through. It would cost nearly half a million Iraqi dinar, i. e. nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ million U.S. dollars or 15 million Indian rupees (one and a half crore rupees). The Minister of *Awqaf* was telling us that he wanted to build more Church buildings for the Christians to worship their God. Yes, there is religious freedom for Iraqi Christians. But foreigners are not welcome. Also, Christians are not expected to convert Muslims to Christianity.

An Indian, a Hindu by faith, wanted to become a Christian in order to marry an Assyrian girl. The Patriarch asked me to talk to the Indian gentleman in Indian language. But India has so many languages. This man named Mr. Shah is a Gujarati and I do not know the Gujarati language, Finally we spoke in English Patriarch refused to permit him to be baptised. But I noticed an English man visiting the Patriarchate to marry an Assyrian girl. There was

no objection as the English man was a Christian. Conversion of a non-Christian, whether from Hinduism or Islam, is not common in Iraq. I think that government may not object the Hindus changing their religion to Christianity. As for Muslims, I do not know whether there is any anti-conversion legislation in Iraq. Nevertheless in practice, no such thing is done in Iraq. There are instances of Indian Christian girls becoming Muslims in order to marry Iraqi Muslims. I read advertisements in newspapers of a Mary changing her name to a Muslim name in order to marry a Muslim. I guess that too is not common.

The relationship among the various Christian groups is cordial. Within a few days of our visit Mar Severios Hava, Metropolitan of the Jacobite Orthodox Syrian Church, came to visit us. He had been to Trichur in the previous year accompanying the Patriarch of Antioch residing in Damascus, Mar Ignatius Zaka I. Mar Severios invited us to visit his residence the next day, as he was leaving for Damascus the next day itself. I felt that his residence and Church in Bagdad are bigger than that of his Patriarch in Damascus which I visited in 1962.

We visited Mar Poulos Cheikhu, Patriarch of the Chaldeans (Catholics). His headquarters

was formerly in Mosul. At present, it is in Bagdad. Now they have several Church institutions in Bagdad. They used to run the Chaldean High School. But now all educational institutions are nationalised by the Government. I was attracted by the board Chaldean High School way back in 1962 because the name of the school I studied in Trichur is the Chaldean Syrian High School.

The next day, the Chaldean Patriarch made a return courtesy call at our Patriarchate. Although our Patriarch, being a much younger person, offered the central chair to the visiting senior Patriarch who is more than twice his age, the visitor insisted that Mar Adhai should sit in his own Chair and the visitor would sit on the chair on his side. Some times protocol is a problem. I have heard about a senior Metropolitan in India who would not sit while his father was standing. His father being a loyal layman would not sit in front of his religious head. Therefore whenever his father visited this Metropolitan, they would go out of the house and keep walking and talking to avoid embarrassment to both.

We went to Msgr. Luigi, the Pro-Nuncio of the Vatican to Iraq & Kuwait. He is known as

the Ambassador of the Pope, which he is. He was a pleasant conversationalist. But he had a problem as he was not fluent in English. He had arranged one of his priests to translate him from Italian or Latin to Arabic. But the Spanish priest said that he was not fluent in Arabic. Even if he did translate into Arabic, only the Assyrians would understand. What about us the Indians? Finally the Ambassador found it easier to speak in English although he went back to Italian when he could not find proper English word.

The finances of Vatican, the high cost of living in Bagdad, Co-operation of Christian Churches in Bagdad etc were some of the topics of the conversation. During our conversation, he told us that the name of his secretary is Fr. Abraham Kattumana. Although his Italian pronunciation was different, I was able to understand that it was an Indian name. Fr. Kattumana was from my state of Kerala. But he was away in Kerala for his vacation. I would have enjoyed meeting a Keralite in Bagdad and talking in our mother tongue i. e. Malayalam.

The Pro-Nuncio invited us for lunch another day. Meanwhile he paid a courtesy call to us. I felt that here was Vatican diplomat very much

interested in keeping cordial relations not only with the government of the country to which he was accredited but also with the Churches in the region. In India I had the impression that the Pro-Nuncio was interested in cultivating good relations only with the Govt. and the aspect of ecumenical relations was left to the leaders of the local Roman Catholic Churches or to the Catholic Bishops' Conference in India (CBCI).

The next day we were in the Vatican embassy again for the lunch. The Patriarch did not drive his car this time. We did not want to take a deacon to drive the car; as we had been told that we would be only five prelates for the lunch. I felt helpless in such a situation as I have never learned to drive. Mar Thoma Geevarghese is an expert driver. So the Patriarch handed over the key of the car to him and sat back in dignity, ready for an official lunch at the Vatican embassy. The conversation at the table was formal and cordial. The Pro-Nuncio "May our unity lead us to sit at the Lord's table and to partake of the body & blood of our Lord."

The war between Iraq and Iran began in September 1980. Iran says that they will not end the war without Iraq paying huge compensation to Iran. Also Iran wants President

Saddam Hussein, whom they accuse as the aggressor, to resign or surrender or run away. On the other hand Iraq accuses Ayathollah Khomeini the religio-political leader of Iran, for the present war. It is not easy to find a solution to the Gulf War. The United Nations as well as India, as the leader of the non-Aligned nations, tried their best for a settlement. The Arab nations also attempted for a settlement. Iraq has the support of the rich Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait etc. Syria supports Iran against their neighbour Iraq. Some say that Israel helps Iran to fight against Iraq because Israel will thus be free from attacks of Iraq in the Palestinian issue. Formerly Iran used to send their soldiers to support the Palestinian army against Israel. Now Iraq cannot spare any of their soldiers because their population is less than that of Iran.

Iraq has a better airforce than Iran. Hence Iraq carries on air raids on several ships carrying oil from Iran. Iran has bombed Basra, the second largest city of Iraq. It is a port. It is closer to Kuwait. Not only military targets, but also civil antiplaces such as hospitals, schools, Churches, Mosques, hotels, houses etc. have been damaged in this war. The southern most town of Iraq is the worst hit in Iraq. In 1985

reports indicate that Bagdad which is in the middle and some northern border areas of Iraq have been hit by Iran's attacks. As a whole, Iraq seems to be in a better position than Iran in this war since Sept. 1980.

“Saddam, Saddam, Saddam.....” is the song I heard very often on the radio and television. In the buses in the streets which transport soldiers to the battlefields from Bagdad, there are more songs of this nature. Then the nationals say that it seems the fighting is going to be fierce in the battle field. It is to boost the morale of the Iraqi army. Programmes on TV included songs in Persian language also so that the people in Iran could enjoy. The programmes from Iran cannot be heard over the radio, because it is jammed by Iraq. They do not want their people to know Iran's account of the number of Iraqi soldiers killed in the battle. As a matter of fact Iraq pays a heavy compensation to the victims of war.

Since the population of Iraq is small compared to Iran, service in the war is compulsory in Iraq for all male members who have completed 18 years of age. I hear some young people have run away from Iraq. Now they are afraid to return to their homeland. They are afraid that

they will be killed. Iraq wants all nationals to fight for the freedom of their country, whether you are a Muslim or a Christian you have to fight. I heard that in Iran, Khomeini does not want the Christians to fight in this war, because they may not go straight into Paradise if they are killed in this war. The newspaper reports state that in Iran a lot of teen-agers from the high schools are ordered to march to Iraqi borders. Some of these youngsters who do not have any training to fight walked into death.

About 5000 Iranians walked into death in one night in February while we were in Bagdad. The next day the television showed the photographs of these innocent youngsters marching into Iraq. Some wounded soldiers were given water to drink. But they refused to drink water from the enemies. They were ready to go to Paradise dying for the mother land.

“Allahu Akbar” announced the Bagdad radio “we have killed 5000 soldiers sent by the criminal rulers of Teheran to our territory.” I guess the Iranian radio also must be repeating the same words “Allahu Akbar”, while they announce the victories they make. I began to think that it is the same Allahu (God) who is Great. What about the Greatness of Allahu.

Will God forgive those who boast in His name killing His own people?

Both Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini are Muslims. But they belong to different religious groups. President Saddam Hussein is a Sunni, while Ayatollah Khomeini is the leader of the *Shia* people. Like the Muslims of Iran, the majority of Iraqi Muslims belong to the same *Shia* group. That is the reason why Khomeini is requesting the Iraqi believers to remove Saddam Hussein from the Presidency of Iraq.

It is difficult to decide definitely what the actual attitude of the Soviet Union in regard to the war between Iran and Iraq is. As this book is about to go to the Press a report appeared in today's newspaper (Indian Express, Cochin, Wednesday, August 14, 1985) which throws some light on the trend of the Soviet attitude towards Iran.

*“Iran Importing arms through Soviet Union
Teheran, Aug 13 (Kyodo)*

Iran is importing weapons through Soviet territory to counter Saudi Arabia's interference with the transport of arms to

the country, which for five years has been locked in a war with Iraq, according to foreign military sources here.

The route, by which the weapons are transported from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea through the Blacksea and other canals, has been in use since March, two months after Saudi Arabia started "seizing" weapons bound for Iran, the sources said.

Iran, which buys weapons from Syria, Libya, West Germany, Switzerland and 18 other countries, has to now pay more than the normal market price for the weapons, they said.

Although relations between Iran and the Soviet Union have been cool in the past, Moscow has allowed the Iranians to use the route probably because it wants to avoid further confrontation with its southern neighbour, the sources said."

Iran suffers heavy casualties.

BAGHDAD. Sept 10 (UNI-DPA): Iraq said its armed forces killed 2,541 Iranian soldiers yesterday in beating back a major ground

offensive launched in the northern sector of the 1,200 km war front.

A statement read over Baghdad television by a military spokesman said: "We have crushed the Iranian offensive in the northern sector after a day-long battle."

He said the "long prepared" Iranian offensive began at 5 a. m. (0630 hrs IST) and had been routed by 3.15 p.m. (1645 hrs IST). The battle ended "completely in Iraq's interest" he said.

"Our troops want harvesting their enemies to thousands tearing up their bodies and destroying their equipment" he said.

Iraqi air force jets and helicopter gunships supported infantry, heavy artillery and armoured units in the battle.

"Our forces fully control the situation and are chasing remnants of the Iranian soldiers while thousands of enemy corpses were left (spread) over the mountains and in the valleys" the spokesman said.

A number of Iranians were captured, he added.

Iranian raid

BAHRAIN, Sept. 7 (Reuter): Iran has hit back for Iraqi attacks on the Kharg Island oil terminal, reporting an air raid on an oilfield deep inside Iraq and seizing an Italian merchant-ship in a commando swoop just off the Saudi Arabian coast.

Iran President Ali Khomeini also warned yesterday that Iran would blockade all Gulf ports if Iraq disrupted its oil exports.

Iraq to get 24 Mirage planes

PARIS, Sept. 28 (Tanjung): France will sell 24 more F-I Mirage combat planes to Iraq under a preliminary agreement signed here a few days ago.

The Paris daily, *Le Monde*, said the deliveries would be completed within 18 months. Negotiations were also being conducted for the sale to Iraq of Mirage 2000 and "Alajet" planes.

In spite of the war the constructions in Iraq continue. Foreign countries also make investments in Iraq. The following news, towards the end of September 1985, five years after the war

had begun, indicate that Iraq plans constructive developments in the country with foreign collaboration.

UK's deal for projects in Iraq

London, Sept 28 (KUNA-Pool): Britain has agreed to guarantee contracts for a number of new projects in Iraq financed under a 400 million dollar trade package between the two countries. It was announced here.

The projects include water treatment, housing, motorway construction, provision of construction machinery and a wide range of medical equipment.

The British Government approved the finance in principle last November, and the specific contracts are expected to be concluded by the end of the year, a spokesman for the department said.

Iraqi air raid on Iranian steel mill

TEHRAN, Nov. 14 (Reuter): Iraqi warplanes bombed a huge steel mill near the western Iranian city of Ahvaz today for the second time in nine days, and first

reports said that more than 50 people were killed or wounded.

One hospital in Ahvaz said it had received five dead and between 50 and 60 wounded from the raid, which Iraq said involved 30 warplanes.

Babylon of the ancient times is in ruins. Still it is a tourist attraction. The distance from Bagdad is only 90 kilometers. We reached Babylon within one hour of starting. Patriarch Mar Adhai learned driving only in 1977. When I visited Iraq during that year he was just learning to drive his Psizeot; a French made car. Now he is a fast driver. As he sped through the newly built highway in southern direction in his Canadian Maluban Cheverlet, Mar Adhai missed the spot where we had to turn right for Babylon. After some kilometers we asked the traffic policeman and took a U-turn, and then we missed again. In our third attempt we spotted the place that we had missed. The bishops in the other car were waiting for us speedmakers to return to normal speed and proper place.

In 2000 B. C., Babylon was a small village. Soon it became a capital city. King Hammurabi,

the famous law giver (1792-1750 B. C.), was the King who brought Babylon to its fame. The statue of the lion of Judah is there even now announcing its ancient glory.

King Nebuchednezzar (605-563 B. C.) is another King who earned greater glory to Babylon. It began to decline when Seleucus, one of the Commanders of Alexander (d. 322 B. C.), built the city of Seleucia south of Bagdad. Now Seleucia is also in ruins.

In Babylon we saw the King's Palace, procession street, a replica of the Tower of Babel, hanging gardens, (said to be one of the seven wonders of the world) and such ruins which remind us of the great history of the prominent Babylonian and Assyrian Kings. The tourism department of the government of Iraq has a plan to renovate these ruins without spoiling its image. They do not plan modern style buildings at that site. It will be strikingly different from the modern buildings of Bagdad. Due to the war, it will take a long time to restore Babylon to its ancient glory.

With oil money President Saddam Hussein wants to make Iraq a great prosperous nation using its rich heritage of ancient civilisation.

Tourism is being developed as it is evident in the construction of the five star hotels in Basrah, Habbaniah, Bagdad etc. Since there is no prohibition in Iraq, Arabs who wanted to drink liquor could find a worldly paradise in Iraq. Not only Arabs but also American tourists have begun to frequent Iraq.

Since the war began the five star hotels in Bagdad are often empty. Tourist visas are not granted. Moreover tourists, even if visa was granted, would not enjoy visiting Bagdad or Basrah, often noisy with the warning of the air raid alarm sirens.

Saddam Hussein terminal in the Bagdad airport was built in recent years by President Saddam Hussein at a great cost. It was planned to be one of the most costly terminals in the world. Most of the flights coming in from or going out to Europe are using this most modern, wall to wall carpeted, terminal. We did not see it because we were flying from the east and so we landed at the ordinary terminal of Bagdad airport. While returning we were told by our Iraqi friends that we would be flying out from the new terminal, constructed at the cost of millions of Iraqi Dinars. But we could not see it. We were to take off from the same old terminal.

“Are you taking out any Iraqi Dinar?” queried an Iraqi Official. We said “no”. Who needs Iraqi Dinars? The value of Iraqi Dinar is only 1/3 of the official exchange rate in the Bank. Still the airport authorities are very particular that the Dinar should not go out of Iraq. As a member of our Church was working in the airport he helped us to get into the boarding area without opening our boxes. We were also privileged to get out of Bagdad without paying the airport tax. Being clergymen we were exempted from the tax. We have never had such a privileged treatment.

“Are you Assyrian?” asked Mr. Pathrose, the Chief Steward in the Iraqi airways flight. I said “yes”. He looked at me again in suspicion and asked “25?” “No, 7 up” I replied with a smile. Thus he realised we were enemies. Why should we be enemies? We do not know each other. It is the first time we meet. We recognize that we belong to the same Church, but opposing groups. One belongs to those following Dec. 25th as Christmas and I belong to January 7th as Christmas. Hence I said whether 25th or 7th we are the same, “Is it possible for 25th & 7th to unite?” he questioned with pessimism. I replied in the positive. I was optimistic about unity, in all sincerity.



Chapter 2

Going abroad

Without Visa

It was in 1961 that I saw Europe for the first time, as I disembarked from an Italian ship at Geneva. Along with several other passengers we took train from Geneva in Italy to Paris in France. We took another train to London which crossed the English Channel by boat. In 1962 after my studies I travelled back to India, via Paris, Geneva, Rome, Naples, Athens etc.

In 1966 I was again in Rome for a stop-over while I was going to study in New York. During the return journey in 1968 after studies in New York and Princeton, I did not stop in Europe, although my flight from New York to Bagdad had a change at Copenhagen.

In 1977 I visited Germany for the first time during my return from a visit to the U. S. A.

In 1980 again I visited to Germany and then Holland, mainly Osnabruck, Regensburg, Gottingen, Berlin, Nurnberg, Munich, Amsterdam etc. Details of 1977 visit are given in my book *America Revisited*. The details of my 1961, 62 & 80 trips are in my autobiography '*Strange But True*'.

In July 1983 I visited Holland for the Amsterdam Conference convened by Dr. Billy Graham. In Sept. 1983 I visited Freiburg for the Congress on the Oriental Canon Law. Taking advantage of the visit I bought a Eurail Pass for the first time. For \$260 I could travel in several European trains in first Class. I visited Zurich, Berne and Kaiseraugst near Basle in Switzerland, Stockholm & Uppsala in Sweden, Munich, Nurnberg and Heidelberg in Germany and London.

The Sept. 1984 trip took me to Sweden, Holland etc. On 5th Sept. we flew from Bombay by Alitalia. Instead of leaving at the scheduled time of 2.30 a.m. we left only at 6.45 a.m. Some technical troubles delayed our take off. Since security check up was laborious and even annoying I sent my hand bag along with the luggage. Hence I could travel freely. Security personnel did not have to speculate about the contents of my hand bag.

My passport did not have any visa. Sweden and England did not require a visa. As far as Holland is concerned I had hoped to obtain a visa from Sweden. It was a surprise to me to think that I was flying out of India without any visa and my health certificate. Since my passport had a stamp that emigration clearance is not required, it was easy to travel abroad. Also Reserve Bank permit is required. I did not qualify for the \$ 500 foreign exchange (F. T. S.), as I had received \$ 500 exchange in 1983. Hence I did not bother for foreign exchange also. One can qualify for \$ 500 only in alternate years. I got \$ 20 as usual at the time of checking in the flight from Bombay. I felt it so simple. I felt like travelling from Bombay to Cochin, an internal flight. One main difference was a large queue at the passport control. Customs checking also was not strict. Instead of opening the bags they sent it through X-rays.

Ofcourse for foreign travel we have to pay an airport tax of Rs. 100. In my early travels it was not required. In Bombay it was introduced after the construction of the new international terminal had been started. The government does spend a lot of money for providing facilities at airports. Therefore Rs. 100 from each passenger would help them to defray the expenses.

In the European airports, however, airport tax is not required. They already have well established airports and do not require money now to spend on the airports.

In 7 hours and 15 minutes of non-stop flight we reached Rome. Our Watch showed 2 p m. But the time in Rome is three and a half hours behind our Indian standard time. Hence I adjusted my watch to 10.30 a. m. All the passengers getting out of the gates were asked to fill in the vaccination certificate details. I had not taken vaccination against Cholera and typhoid as these diseases are not common now in India. Most of the European countries do not ask for these certificates. But visitors to or from Africa and Latin America are required to have the inoculation against yellow fever.

There was sufficient time between my arrival in Rome and departure for Stockholm. Therefore I did not have to panic even after my late arrival in Rome. But I met a 70 year old Catholic priest from Kerala who was to catch his flight to Brussels within half an hour. He was almost lost in that big terminal of the international airport in Rome. He was worrying about the next plane as he thought that his flight to Brussels had already left. But I looked at

the information Board and assured that the flight would leave at 11-30 a.m. only and I took him to gate No.4 from where the Sabina Airways was leaving for Brussels. He was very grateful. If at all I live to the age of 70 and travel abroad alone I will appreciate any help from anybody. If one expects favours from others, it is better one does such favours to others whenever occasions arise.

During the interval I telephoned to Mr & Mrs Fredericksson in Uppsala, Sweden in whose house I stayed in Sept 1983. Their promise to meet me at the Stockholm airport gave me some assurance that I do not have to worry where to go upon arrival. Ofcourse our Church members such as Michael Davoud had arranged my programme in Sweden. I was looking forward to a heavy schedule.

Rome is strict about visa to Indians. Hence I could not go out to visit the libraries or Vatican. This time I had about 5 hours to go out. In last Sept. I had only 2 hours in Rome. Still I went to the Oriental Institute because then I had Italian visa. An Orthodox priest FR. Mathai Mattathil who had come to receive me in the airport, advised me not to go out, as two hours is not sufficient to visit the Oriental institute. But we took 40 minutes to go to the Oriental

Institute to see the Institute and College Russicum (Russian College) and 40 minutes to rideback from the railway station to the airport by bus. Oriental Institute is at walking distance from the railway station in Rome. During the 40 minutes I met several professors and the Rector of the Russian College and Fr. Nedungatt S. J., who is a professor at the Oriental, showed me the library too.

But in this trip I had 5 hours at Rome. Since I had no language it was easier for me to ride in the bus and walk to the Oriental Institute especially as I knew the way. But now arose a new problem-No visa. I was thinking of asking the airport authorities to get a transit card for 5 hours and to surrender my passport. Then I saw three young brothers from Kerala who requested for my help to phone to the Mother Teresa's Convent in Rome to come and "rescue" them from the airport. They were in my flight from Bombay. But after arrival the airport, authorities took their passports and told them that they could not get out, because they did not have return tickets. The police could suspect that the Indians arriving in Rome without return ticket would stay in Rome to look for jobs.

The young brothers told the authorities that they belonged to the religious order of the

Missionaries of Charity of the famous Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the Nobel laureate. Mother could fly without ticket in many airlines and enter most countries, except perhaps, where she was born, i.e. Albania. But these young people are not known to the authorities in Rome. Unless somebody who can speak to the authorities comes and take them away they will be inside the crowd in transit. But these people had nowhere to go except Rome where they were refused entry. I rang up the priests and nuns whom they wanted to contact. But none came. They were too much worried as it was their first visit abroad. I had to act like a veteran and comfort them. At long last arrived one priest, talked to the authorities, got back their passports and escorted them out to the city.

I feel sorry for the inexperienced passengers who travel to strange lands, passengers who miss their connections, people who do not hear the announcements of flight departures properly, people who do not understand the language, people whose baggages are stolen, passengers who lose their passports, people who get sick on flight. It was in July 1983 that the passenger who sat next on my right the Rev. C. G. David, got a heart attack in an Air France flight from

Bombay to Paris. As I was trying to help him and a doctor friend, Dr. Michael John of Madras, was trying to give him an injection, he looked at me and closed his eyes, for ever.

In spite of the fear I had whether I would get my visa for Holland and America, this trip was a reasonably relaxed trip. My usual experience is to feel the pressure of work and lack of leisure to plan and to pack. Hence the initial difficulty in Delhi to get the Dutch visa did not deter me from a hopeful trip to the Syriac Symposium in Holland which I was longing for.

Still I would not forget the rude behaviour of the officer at the Dutch Consulate in New Delhi to whom I begged for the Dutch visa. He refused to grant me visa since I did not have German visa stamped in my passport, while my ticket showed a visit to Germany. I explained to him that the official invitation to visit Germany would be received by me only when I reached Sweden and I would try for the German visa in Sweden. If I do not get it I will omit Germany from my itinerary. He simply did not believe me. He thought my ticket was a "dummy" ticket.

I do not know why people obtain a dummy ticket. Even if there is such a practice in Delhi

for some reasons not known to me, I had no reason for such false pretences. Hence during the conversation I told the receptionist that I am a Bishop and I have no need of any false excuse to get a Dutch visa. When the Consul heard it he said "I have no difference between a Bishop and a sweeper." His sense of equality and dignity of labour in rejecting visa to the Bishop as well as to a sweeper without any discrimination should be appreciated, but not his tactless impoliteness.

"If Dutch people want to visit India your Consulate in Amsterdam takes one month to give visa, then why do you want it in two days time?" argued the officer. Then I began to feel that he was taking revenge on Indians because our Indian Embassy in his country must have shown reluctance to issue visa to some "hippies". It is a pity that genuine cases are rejected or delayed while some useless "hippies" travel around the world violating all rules, bringing disgrace to their countries.



Chapter 3

Visit to Sweden

On 5 Sept. at about 9 p. m., I landed in Stockholm airport. It was the first time I was landing in Stockholm airport. Although I was in Stockholm last year, I had gone there from Germany by train. But this time I was flying. Compared to the other airports in Europe, such as Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Rome, Paris etc. which I have visited, I found Stockholm airport very small.

There was no visa restrictions. There was no customs checking. I walked out just as I do after a domestic flight. If all countries could welcome visitors like that it would be wonderful. There was no long queue. No questioning by the customs official. No bitterness. We all are world citizens. Why can't I visit Sweden?

Now, it is an old story. After my visit in September, Indians visiting Sweden should obtain visa from the Swedish Consulates. It is

perhaps a reaction to the Indian government which introduced visa restrictions to the Scandinavian visitors also as it is the rule to all other foreigners after the unrest in Punjab, and particularly the blood-bath in the Golden Temple complex.

Gerdie and Lars Fredericksson, who were my hosts in Sweden an year ago were waiting at the airport to receive me. They live in Uppsala about one hour's distance by train from Stockholm. The airport is some where in between Stockholm and Uppsala and so I could reach their home before it was very late at night. My hosts had been to India several times and it was a pleasure to meet them again.

Next morning I took a train to Stockholm. Michael Davoud, an Assyrian friend, was there at the railway station to receive me. He took me to the Consulate of Netherlands for my visa to visit Amsterdam. Michael Davoud took me to several places in the Stockholm city and took me in the evening for a reception given by the Assyrians in Stockholm area. There was no time for a morning service as all Assyrians were working during the week day. Nevertheless, the evening gathering was a pleasant fellowship meal attended by Deacon Aziz Aziz and other Assyrians. The unity of the Church was a topic of interest.

Language was a serious problem. The Assyrians in Sweden know Assyrian language and Swedish. But I was speaking half Assyrian

and half English. I was surprised to see that Michael Davoud had a good knowledge of English. Fortunately *Voice of the East* of September had the Swedish translation of my song *Behold the Cross of Calvary* on the back cover. I had learned the correct pronunciation of the Swedish words from Gerdie and Lars Fredericksson and therefore it was easy for me to sing in Swedish. As usual in that friendly gathering I sang several translations of that song. And we laughed together some at me and others with me!

“Slagsta Hotell” in Norsborg was the place they arranged for my night stay. They escorted me to the hotel and paid special attention to my comfortable stay for the night. I agreed to catch the bus next morning and travel by train to Stockholm all by myself. They gave me a Turistkort (Tourist card) valid for 24 hours (costing 28 Swedish Kroners which is about Rs. 42). I did not understand the instructions written on it in Swedish language. But I could read 07 and 10 : 15. Hence I knew it was valid until 7th (Sept) 10 : 15 a.m. It was valid for both the bus and the train. I got out of the Slagsta Hotell by 9 a.m. hoping to complete my journey before 10 : 15 a.m. But at the bus stand I waited for some minutes and there was no sign of any bus. One man standing there told me to walk to the other side. I thought the bus would stop on that side. He walked to the next road and to the next and so on. Although I was carrying only a brief case (leaving my suitcase in the Stockholm railway station, the previous

day) I found it difficult to walk long distance. As I did not know Swedish language to verify whether he was taking me to the bus stop or to the railway station, I followed him.

Realising that I was getting tired, he decided to take a short cut. Soon he discovered that his short-cut had a dead end at the backyard of an apartment complex. We retraced our steps. Finally we made it to the railway station and the train on the platform had left. Then I caught the next train which arrived at 10:10 and I got into that train realising that my ticket was valid only upto 10:15. I was worried whether, during my half an hour journey in that train, the ticket examiner would detect me travelling with a ticket not valid after 10.15 a. m. I understand ticket examiners do not often check the passengers. But once you are caught you have to pay heavy fine.

Immanuelskyrkan (Immanuel Church) is at the corner of Birger and Kungstengatan. At 11 a.m. on Sundays there is an English worship. The International pastor is the Rev. Daniel Ericson, an American. He was away when we visited that Church. My Assyrian friend Michael Davoud knew pastor Ericson well and was disappointed that he was out of station on those days.

Since I had no visa to go to the Netherlands, three days later, we went to the Dutch Consulate. The lady at the desk was very considerate to a bishop. It was in contrast to the arrogant behaviour of the man in the Dutch Consulate in Delhi who refused visa to me; as I did not have a German visa on my passport. As I was trying to recollect the rude behaviour of the Dutch man in Delhi, the lady at Stockholm made me convinced that the people of Holland are nice and civil. I got the visa without facing the uncivil interrogation and impolite declarations. I wish all Consuls would be people who could discern men and matters and had unprejudiced outlook. Here was one such consul.

On 7th afternoon I was accompanied by Michael Davoud and another Assyrian friend to the Kaknastornet, the tallest building in Scandinavia. It is 508 feet high. This tower receives 400,000 visitors each year. We had refreshments in the restaurant at the top. The Swedish government uses this tower as its main broadcasting centre for the radio and television. Although it is the tallest building in the whole of Scandinavia, it is only about half the height of the Eiffel Tower in Paris which is roughly 1000 ft. high.

This 508 feet building anchored to bedrock by 72 prestressed steel rods each measuring

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and sunk to a depth of around 26 feet. We could see all the important buildings in Stockholm through the binoculars fixed on the open roofed-terrace. The Kaknastronet was officially opened on 12 May 1967.

On the same day we visited the French Reformed Church in Stockholm which permits its building to be used for the service of the Assyrian congregation. Since there is no priest in Stockholm there is no regular Sunday service. Communion service is conducted only 5 times a year as per the convenience of the priest from Jonkoping to arrive. The French pastor was very kind and rushed to the market to purchase a roll of film as he realised that his camera did not have any film. Thus he photographed the rare visit of an Eastern Metropolitan.

In the evening of Friday, seventh September, we went to Jonkoping. At night when the train reached the railway station I was warmly welcomed by the priest, the Rev. Avraham Jiddah as well as the President of the Assyrian Consistory of Sweden, Mr. Edward Malek and many others. Sumptuous supper was served in the house of the priest. We talked upto midnight and the guests dispersed, promising to meet in the morning for the Qurbana.

**Poem of song for the honor of
welcoming Mar Aprem in Sweden**

A

You are welcome oh our Matran
Christ had sent you for our help
The hope is upto you oh our Protector
Absolve our sins and be our liberator

B

Kahna (priest) our father oh Mar Aprem
Hold out your right hand and keep us up
Give your command that may everybody will
understand
Who will not obey you will profane him by your
mouth

C

Ye Mar Aprem as mediator
Encounter the principals today
To quit the garment of insistence and blame
Let them gather the sheeps in one shed

D

Ye Mar Aprem blessed father
See Mar Adhai and Mar Dinkha
That may they will extinguish the blazing fire
In the church of the sons of the east

E

Two principals of the Church, giants
Dinkha and Adhai the Patriarchs
The Church being split by woe of destiny
They will unite as valiants

F

The twenty fifts and the sevenths
Brothers which divided
None of them has the offence (misdemeanour)
They will unite by the will of Lord

Composed by:

Shamasha Sarkis Iskhak Paulos of Shamezdine

On Sunday 8th September more than a hundred Assyrians gathered in a Swedish Lutheran Church for the Assyrian Qurbana. Since it was a Saturday the whole Church was for us to use. There was no need to rush the service to complete it before the regular Swedish congregation arrived etc. We started our service with the morning prayer and deacons and laymen participated in chanting and reciting the prayers from the Hudra printed in India. I was happy that I was instrumental in pushing the Mar Narsai Press in Trichur to send the Hudras to Sweden to those who wanted to purchase it and use it.

Some Assyrians were surprised to hear me recite the liturgy in the ancient Aramaic language. I regretted that I could not preach in the Assyrian language. Hence I preached in English which was translated to the Assyrian language, the modern Syriac known as *Swadaya*.

After the service two deacons sang a song of welcome composed by one of the senior deacons, Sargis Ishak Paulos of Shamezdine. The singing in Syriac was beautiful. To my pleasant surprise Shamasha Sarkis Poulos had already translated it into English for my use. It is given below to have a glimpse into the

Syriac poetry of a modern Assyrian writer. In Assyrian language it rhymed well.

Shamasha William, one of the young deacons who assisted me at Qurbana, spoke good English. He is a theology student in a Methodist Seminary in Sweden. He told me that he was in America and Bishop Mar Aprem Khamees permitted him to study in a Methodist Seminary, as we had no theological College of our own. It was a wise suggestion. I also had studied in a Methodist Seminary in Jabalpur from 1957 to 61, as our own theological Seminary did not have all the required courses. When I was sent for such studies in 1957 some of the defenders of faith approached my predecessor to recall me saying that I would turn a Methodist. My predecessor's reply was "God help". Yes, I believe God answered the prayers of many as I still serve our ancient Church. My prayer was to learn in a Seminary of good academic standard and yet to remain loyal to the mother Church which needed my services. By learning in a theological College, one does not become a Protestant. There are a lot of scholarly efforts made by the Protestants to learn our religious books in ancient language and it is our responsibility to learn them and to get informed upon their efforts and to point out the mistakes if any. We have

tendency to blame the Protestants and the Roman Catholics whom we accuse of having deliberately or unknowingly distorted our books. But who is there among us who can correct their mistakes? Who is competent among our own faith who can do it with a thorough knowledge of our own faith? Who of our young people have interest to learn subjects like theology?

On the other hand, there is also the danger of immature young people who think that our faith is outdated when they start learning in other Seminaries. For diverse reasons, they develop some fancy to the novel Protestant ideas and look down upon our ancient faith with contempt. It is a dangerous attitude. Instead of using their training for God and for our Church they use it against them. For the sake of money, some people may leave our faith and find attractive positions in other Churches and organizations. So it depends upon the persons we select. Ofcourse nobody knows the future behaviour of such selected youngsters. No X-ray can detect what the future behaviour will be. Our own Seminary is the best., Sometimes we have to go for the second best too.

At a small place called Tibro near Jonkoping the Assyrians have bought an old Church building. It is small. But it is the first Church

building of our own. It is named Mar Sawa Church. There was a plan that I should proceed there to conduct service on the next day i. e. Sunday. But my flight to Amsterdam was from Stockholm on Sunday afternoon and if I did service in Tibro, I would not make to that flight. Hence it was decided that all members of Tibro come to Jonkoping for the service and they did. Hence by noon one of our young Assyrian friends offered to take me to Stockholm in his car instead of returning by train.

Car journey from Jonkoping (pronounced as Yonshopping) to Stockholm was pleasant. Good roads and the best cars made the journey fast. We stopped on the way to have some coffee. It was not that I was hungry. But I preferred that my young Assyrian friend who was driving the car should break the journey and drink some coffee because I was going under an after lunch nap in the car. I had a fear what would happen if the man at the wheel should doze off. During the journey we talked about the Church. And I was happy that here was a young man deeply concerned with the Church. He too had the usual complaint that the priest did not visit him. Often the priest visited his neighbours who belonged to the tribe of the priest. I think such grievances common

in the Middle East. How can a pastor be acceptable to his flock? How can we make our ministry to the people devoid any caste or tribal discrimination?

Before we reached Stockholm on the way we stopped our car and telephoned from the gas station (In India we call it petrol pump) to book the hotel. But when we reached the house of the parents of the young friend it was suggested that I could stay in that house instead of going to the hotel. I always appreciate the hospitality of the Assyrian homes and therefore I decided to stay there.

His father Slieo is a religious man. He showed me the prayer book presented to him by Mar Poulos Sheigho, Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Bagdad. He told me that he was regularly attending the prayers in a Chaldean Church and this prayer book was personally presented to him by the patriarch as recognition of his love for the Church. I read from the book and we had an interesting conversation. Assyrians, especially the older ones, are proud of their heritage and are loyal to the faith. From his room he recites the prayers with a loud voice. His wife said "Yes, he always prays in a loud voice." I was not sure whether she approves or disapproves such a behaviour.

Next day, Sunday, we went to the Immanuel Church mentioned earlier, Pastor Daniel Ericson was back and Michael Davoud introduced me to the pastor. He invited me to preach for a few minutes. It was an English speaking congregation of people from America, Africa and even India. I was pleased to meet two young Indian girls working in Stockholm Miss Neeta David and Miss Anne Samuel. They are from my home state of Kerala but their Malayalam was not clear. Then they told me that they grew up in Delhi. Therefore I found it easy to talk with them in English rather than in our mother tongue, Malayalam.

It was a privilege to worship in the Immanuel Church. They have good music. My Assyrian friend who knew that I had written several songs told me that he was going to ask the pastor to provide time for me to sing during the service. He did not know that my singing solos in the service would spoil the good reputation the Church has for religious music. I told my friend that I sing solos but it is most unmusical to those who know music. My songs are good only if it is sung by others, and not by myself.

The publicity pamphlet in English language gives a graphic picture of the activities of the

Church. Since it will be useful for other Church workers to use it as a sample, it is reproduced below.

Immanuel Church

-is a part of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, founded over one hundred years ago, which is affiliated with several International Church organizations.

-has beautiful facilities in the heart of Stockholm, and ministers to the people of Stockholm regardless of the ethnic cultural or professional background.

-is strong and active in its singing and music programmes.

offers study circles ranging from handicrafts to theology.

-is caring for senior citizens.

-is visiting sick and elderly people.

-offers services in Swedish, English and Korean.

-supports Christian work in many countries around the world.

THE IMMANUEL
INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

offers you in English:

Sundays at 11.00 (June-August 10:00)

-Worship followed by coffee and fellowship,
a good opportunity to meet and make new
friends.

-Sunday School and nursery for your children.

Fridays at 19.00

Bible study and prayer including singing,
discussions, fellowship and refreshments.

Saturdays at 15.00 to 19.00 (Sept-May)

-Sports in the Church gym. with basketball,
volleyball, badminton, pingpong, sauna and
pool. Refreshments following.

many have found the

IMMANUEL INTERNATIONAL
FELLOWSHIP TO BE THEIR

“HOME AWAY FROM HOME”

We invite you to become one of us!

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden
was founded one hundred years ago. It is a free

Church built on Lutheran principles with emphasis on freedom and fellowship. No doubt, it caters spiritually to many non-Swedish visitors.

The major denomination in Sweden is the Lutheran Church. Its biggest Church, the Cathedral of the Archbishop, is at Uppsala. Since I visited it last I did not go there again to the Cathedral when I was in Uppsala this time. The Cathedral is called St. Eup's, St. Olof's & St. Laurence's Metropolitan Church of the Nordic countries. It is the largest Church building in Scandinavia. It was founded in 1260 and took 175 years for its construction. It was finally consecrated in 1435 by Archbishop Olof Larsson. It was built at the site where St. Erik, the Patron Saint of Sweden, conducted his last service. He was killed outside the walls after Mass on the Ascension Day in 1160 A.D.

I walked inside the Cathedral and saw its impressive beauty. There are several altars inside the Cathedral dedicated to different saints. Ofcourse we should remember that this Church was built before the Reformation. After the Reformation Masses for the saints and for the dead are forbidden and therefore the several side chapels are there for tourists to see its past glory.

Ever since Kristoffer of Bavaria was crowned the King of Sweden in 1441 this Church became the "Coronation Church" where all Swedish rulers were crowned up to the 18th century. It has the tombs of the Kings too.

On 16 May 1702 this Cathedral was badly damaged by fire. 3/4 of the Uppsala was in ashes within 14 hours. It was restored in 1744.

Laurentias Petri was the first Archbishop in Sweden after the Reformation. He was consecrated in 1531 as the 40th Archbishop of Uppsala. It was in Uppsala that the Church of Sweden was declared an Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The first bishop to win a Nobel Prize was the Archbishop of Uppsala, Nathan Soderblom who won the Nobel Prize for Peace (This year the Nobel Prize for Peace went to a Bishop, a black Bishop in South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu) Archbishop Soderblom was the one who called the universal Christian Conference on Life & Work in 1925 at Stockholm. Late Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan attended the conference as he was in Europe at that time.

Although the Life and Work conference was held in Stockholm the concluding service

was held at the Cathedral at Uppsala. It was the King of Sweden himself who inaugurated the conference in the Rikssalen in the Royal Palace on 9 Aug 1925. The conference ended on 30 August with the service at the Uppsala Cathedral. Along with the Archbishop of Uppsala, there were three other joint Presidents, namely the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and Rev. Dr. Arthur J. Brown, Chairman of the American section of the International Committee. This conference of 1925 was one of the significant conferences which paved the way for the promotion of the World Council of Churches in 1948 at Amsterdam, Holland. Its headquarters is at Geneva, Switzerland. I was happy to see the photograph of my predecessor's predecessor, Mar Abimalek Timotheus, on page 38 of the Handbook of this Conference. Although our Church did not produce any outstanding ecumenical leaders, we should not forget the participation of the late Mar Timotheus at the Life & Work Conference of Stockholm in Aug 1925.

The most attractive shrine I saw inside the Cathedral was that of St. Erik's, the Patron saint of Sweden. The crown of St. Erik, the oldest crown of Sweden in existence, is kept

above the shrine. Erik was the King of Sweden. He ruled for a decade. Then on 18 May 1160, when the King went to the Mass in the Church of Holy Trinity where the Cathedral now stands, he heard the news that the enemies were outside the town. The King stayed in the Church until the service was over. After the service, he faced the enemies bravely. But he was killed by the Danish Prince Magnus Henriksson and his soldiers. The King was taken to the Cathedral at Gamla Uppsala, and was buried there.

King Erik was a man of "Mild spirit and honourable life." He built Churches and enforced law and justice in the country. He, along with Bishop Henry, went on a crusade to Finland to win his neighbours to Christ. That is the reason why this King was canonised and became Saint Erik. His remains were kept in a shrine at Gamla Uppsala and were transferred to the present Cathedral on 24 January 1273.

Olof, like Erik, was a king who is known as a saint. Olof was a Norse viking who took part in several expeditions. In one of these voyages he came into contact with Christianity. After becoming a Christian, Olof was elected King of Norway in 1015. But owing to conflict with the noblemen he went abroad. In 1030 he died

in a battle, attempting to regain power in the country. He was canonised and became a popular saint in the Nordic countries. He is said to be an example of "wisdom and humbleness."

The third name given to this Cathedral is that of St. Laurence. It was the name of the old Cathedral at Gamla. Laurentius (Laurence) was Archdeacon in Rome and was killed by emperor Valerianus in 258 A. D. The emperor killed the Archdeacon because he gave all the possessions inside the Church to the sick and the poor when he heard that the emperor had ordered to confiscate the possessions of the Church. When the emperor put the naked body of the Archdeacon upon a large grating and put fire underneath, Laurence said to the emperor "You poor man, you have now roasted one side of the carcass. Now turn it around. I thank the Lord that I am worthy to enter your gates." He was canonised by the Church for his brave and just action. It was about him that Pope Leo II wrote "St. Laurence has made Rome as famous as St. Stephen once made Jerusalem famous."

I was happy to have the opportunity to have a look at this historic Cathedral. Its paintings

are very interesting. It has 13000 square metres of mural painting. In spite of the fact that it is a place of tourist attraction, it is a place of devotion and quietness. No doubt it must be terribly expensive to maintain such a huge Cathedral, neat and clean.

After the service at the Immanuel Church we had breakfast with all the worshippers. I met a young man from Ethiopia named Amde Michael Kassaye. I requested him to translate my song "Behold the Cross" to his mother tongue Amharic. Although he said that he was very busy, later he sent the translation.

I was wishing that I had more time in that company of foreigners so that I could canvass more translations. Since we had to rush to get to my flight, I reluctantly left the place and headed for the airport. As soon as I reached the airport at Stockholm I felt the necessity to call my Assyrian friend Shmuel Ibrahim whom I had visited the previous year at his home at Aquamaryn near Amsterdam. As I tried to telephone, putting the coin, I was not able to make the connection. My friend Michael Davoud made a final attempt. As we had not enough coins to put in the telephone box to be able to talk for a long time, Davoud told Ibrahim "Mar Aprem is coming by 4.30 flight." It was brief like a telegraphic message.

Chapter 4

Syriac Symposium in Holland

Four priests from Iraq were travelling along with me by the same flight from Stockholm to Amsterdam. Since they were going to the Syriac Symposium we decided to stay together as we got out of the aeroplane to pass through the Customs clearance area. We were looking for the quickest route to our Conference Centre at Oosterhesselen, north of Amsterdam.

Although the Chaldean priests managed to pass through the customs without being questioned much, the young lady who was questioning me was not satisfied. She opened my suitcase and examined everything. I was not sure what she was looking for. She was very suspicious of my beard.

“What is it?” she asked taking my face powder. Because of my black beard I do not

have much room left on my face to apply the powder. Still to avoid any perspiration odour I use some face powder, and so she must have doubted me.

Indians are involved in smuggling marijuana and opium. Hence they are suspicious of Indians, especially a bearded Indian who might be a hippy. After her intensive search the lady officer let me depart in peace.

Ibrahim was waiting for me as per the telephone call. He gave us directions to go to the railway station and catch the train. We moved fast. We had to make a bus journey also after the train ride in order to reach our Conference Centre.

The Chaldean priests are older than I. Some of them had studied in Rome and therefore were well acquainted with Europe. Still they had not been to Amsterdam before. And I had been there in July of the previous year. Hence I posed the guide.

Tickets were purchased. I found out the platform of our train. Finally we ran with our luggage to the train which was about to leave the platform. The railways all over

the world are the promoters of a new shorts, weight-lifting and sprinting.

In a hurry we got into the train after making sure that it was the right train going in our direction. But when the ticket examiner came he looked at our tickets and informed us that we would not reach our destination if we occupied those seats. I argued that I saw the name of our destination written on the platform before we got into this train. He explained that it is two trains running as one train. But after some distance the portion which we were occupying will be disconnected and the other part of this will proceed further. Unless we shift into the other part of the train we cannot reach our destination. When we realised our folly we shifted to the next compartment when the train stopped at the following station. There was no passage from this section to other section of the train. Otherwise we would have changed without delay.

Finally when we reached our destination I walked to the bus stop in front of the railway station. "How do you know where we have to stand? Have you been here before?" was the question of my Iraqi friends. Although I had been to Amsterdam in July 83, I had not been to Oosterhessalen. But I had read the instruction

given by the organisers of the Syriac Symposium regarding the route to follow in order to reach Oosterhesselen.

I was a little puzzled because there were so many bus routes from the railway station. Fr. Shamir from the Oriental Institute, Rome, whose acquaintance I had made in 1980 Symposium, was already standing in the queue. He signalled to us. Hence we knew that we were in the right track. Still we did not know from where to purchase the ticket for the bus. In some places tickets are available in the bus. Fr. Shamir explained to us that we could purchase a strip ticket from railway station which would be slightly cheaper than buying in the bus. He showed us his ticket. Therefore I could purchase a similar ticket strip before the bus arrived.

I felt that in India also they could introduce such a system so that a driver alone, without the help of a conductor, could manage with the passengers. The driver can issue tickets to a small number of passengers which he can do along with his driving duties. In India a conductor is required to collect the money and issue tickets. Sometimes he stops the bus as he is not able to issue tickets before the bus reaches the next stop.

Ofcourse he has to stop the bus. Otherwise a ticket checking Inspector may enter the bus at the next stop and detect several of the passengers without tickets. I think that ticketless travellers are only very few in India. But conductors who do not account for all the tickets are many in India. This suggestion is not recommendable in India because if the conductors are dismissed, the number of unemployed will increase.

When our bus reached Oosterhesselen, we saw some sign boards pointing to the Conference Centre, called Klencke. We got down on the main road. It was not easy to walk such a distance from the main road to the Conference Centre, especially after six hours of travel from Stockholm, Sweden, to the little village of Oosterhesselen by plane, train & bus. Fortunately one of the volunteers came by car and carried our baggages. Then we were free to walk for ten minutes to reach the Conference Centre.

Syriac scholars from all over the world had arrived. Some of them were new. But the majority are those who participated in the previous Syriac Symposium held in Sept 1980 at Golar, West Germany. Most of the scholars are from Europe, i. e. Germany, France, Belgium,

Holland; A few are from the U. S. A., Australia, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, India & Egypt.

These Syriac scholars are not Syrians by birth. Their knowledge of Syriac language is by reading books. Most of them do not speak this language. Perhaps the Iraqi priests who travelled with me to the Symposium were the only ones who could fluently converse in this ancient language. The others translate Syriac texts with or without the help of the dictionary.

There was not a single paper in the Syriac Symposium read in the Syriac language. Only three languages were used. All the papers on the Syriac language or literature were read in English, French or German. Ofcourse most of the scholars in Europe knew at least two of the three languages mentioned above. Some scholars knew all the three languages. Although I have learned German and French in Princeton, America, I can speak only English. Language was a distinct disadvantage for me in such a company of European scholars. Since I never happened to study in Germany or in France, it was not easy to follow what the majority of scholars were talking about.

There was no arrangement for simultaneous translation. In the Oriental Canon Law Congress which I attended in Sept. 1983 in Freiburg,

Germany translations were always available in all the three languages. Therefore we could ask questions and understand the replies. But it is expensive to hire translators. In addition to the payment to the translators, the ear-phone equipments also should be available which was not easy.

One advantage here was that there were two sessions held in two different halls all the time. The programme sheets were in our hands. Hence we knew what was on in each hour. If an English paper was being read at 10 a. m. in hall No. 1, and another paper in English at 11 a. m. in hall No. 2, participants like me who preferred English moved from hall No. 1 to hall No. 2. But sometimes papers at both the halls were in German or French. Hence we chose the "lesser evil" on the basis of the professor or the topic, as we could not understand fully well either German or the French.

Most professors were men. The majority are clergy, professors in Rome or other places. But for a variety there were three or four ladies. Some of these ladies surprised us by the knowledge they had acquired in this ancient language and the interest they had taken in the study of an old manuscript or a liturgical topic. If there

was no bar for women to be ordained as clergy, the women would have dominated in such conferences. In India the results of the university exams show that women bag almost all the top ranks in almost every degree course, whether in arts or in science.

Some papers are printed or cyclostyled and distributed to the participants. But people like me who write the papers at the last minute could not get copies made. As a matter of fact I was giving some finishing touch to my paper and adding footnotes while standing in a queue at the American Consulate in Amsterdam. Nevertheless, all the papers are printed in a single volume in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, published by the Oriental Institute in Rome. Hence it is not a great disadvantage. Still laziness is not an excuse. On some occasions I had completed writing the paper sufficiently early.

My experience with the American Consulate is very disappointing. I had to travel by bus and train to get to the American Consulate in Amsterdam. The first day I was told that the application for visa will be received in the forenoon only. The afternoon office time is reserved for issuing the visa for those who had already applied in the morning. The next day I went

again. After submitting the application I was called after waiting for some time. The man at the counter questioned me why I did not apply in India. I explained to him that my invitation to visit the U. S. A. came when I was about to leave India for Sweden and Holland. There was no time for me to wait to get the written invitation. Hence I left India directing my Church in Chicago to send the formal invitation, tickets, etc. to Amsterdam.

“You can go to Madras, and get your American visa. I am not issuing it here.” was his considered reply. I was shocked by his behaviour. Madras was not next door. I told him that it was not easy to go back to Madras just to collect a tourist visa for ten days. My ticket and reservation was to Chicago, and not to Madras. The man would not budge an inch from his stand. The choice before me was either to return to Madras to collect a tourist visa for ten days or cancel the trip to the U. S. A.

With deep disappointment I returned to my Symposium, the primary purpose of my journey to Holland. I cancelled my flight ticket to Chicago and back to Amsterdam, sent by our Church in Chicago. By telephone I talked to them the result of my abortive attempts for

visa. I told them I would make a last attempt in the American Embassy in London, as I had to go to London. But because of my American visit I had informed my people in London that I was cancelling London trip and was flying directly from Amsterdam to Chicago. Now under the changed circumstances I called London to inform that I was going to England for three days.

While returning from the American Consulate in Amsterdam, I was wondering why the American Consulate should advise me to go to Madras to collect my tourist visa. Formerly they used to issue visa in any country. But now they made a policy decision to issue visa only in the country of the passport holder. That is, Indians holding Indian passport should get American visa only from India and not from Holland or Canada or England. But I got the visa later in London as we would see in the next chapter.

“To Oosterhesselen” I said to the taxi driver when I reached the railway station near to our Syriac Symposium. When I returned from the American Consulate in Amsterdam in the evening the last bus had left for Oosterheseelen. I had travelled by bus after 8 p.m. on Sunday when I

arrived from Sweden on the first day of the Syriac Symposium. But I was told that it was a Sunday. On Sundays there is a late evening trip. But on week days the last trip would not operate. I had no choice except to stay in the town or to hire a taxi.

“Is it your name?” queried the taxi driver. “No that is the name of the place I want to go to?” He was puzzled to realise that there was a place in his country unknown to him. I was equally puzzled to think of such ignorant taxi drivers who should have known every nook and corner in that locality. And the railway station is not far from the village named Oosteahesselem. Then there was benefit of doubt in favour of the taxi driver because my pronunciation of European words or names is not accurate. I explained that Oosterhesselen is not my name, it is the name of the village I want to go to.

“Is it in India or in Holland?” was the second question. Without hesitation my reply was that it was in Holland. When he insisted there was no such place in Holland I repeated the word with different accents in many manners of speech.

“Yes, now I know what you mean,” was the words of comfort from the taxi driver. My next

attempt was to get an idea of how much it would cost, as taxi charges are very high compared to Indian income. He replied that he did not know how much it would come until we reached our destination.

“It depends upon how fast I drive,” was his reply to my query how much time it would take to reach Oosterhesselen. I said I just wanted to get some idea about the taxi charge. That was why I enquired about the time. He said it might be about half an hour. It must cost about 45 Dutch guilders. Finally I found him friendly. So I hired him. I was wondering what would happen if he did not understand my pronunciation of the word Oosterhesselen. It is always better to carry a map so that we could show the location in case the people do not follow our accent while pronouncing the names.

When I reached the Centre of the Syriac Symposium and reported about my failure to secure a visa to visit U. S. A. for ten days, the U. S. citizens attending the Syriac Symposium were angry against their own country. They offered to write a memorandum to be signed by them to be submitted to the U. S. Consulate in Amsterdam. My reaction to that suggestion was negative. Because once they have refused,

the same Consulate will not reconsider to reverse their own decision. Moreover, since I was going to London, I thought that I would have a better chance there.

Our symposium was not planned to be held in the obscure village of Oosterhesselen. It had been scheduled to meet in the University of Groningen. Perhaps for the sake of the availability of boarding places for the delegates it was held at Oosterhesselen. Nevertheless we had one meeting at the University of Groningen. It was a reception gathering with refreshments and music.

Groningen is considered to be one of the three important cities of Holland, the two others being Amsterdam and Maastricht. Groningen stands sixth in size among Dutch cities. It is about 1000 years old, and a centre of education and the sciences, and of commerce and industry. Groningen being in north was isolated from the rest of Europe. By the 15th century it was a city - state.

In recent years the isolation of Groningen is broken. Sixty trains a day connect it in a matter of two or three hours with the large towns in the West of the country. There are

three trains daily to Bremen in Germany, two of them direct. On weekdays there are four flights (Fokker Friendship) between the international airport of Amsterdam and Groningen. A brochure on this attractive town has the following claim. "Groningen has a commodity to offer those in search of relaxation which is one of the most scarce in the Netherlands: space in plenty—and peace and quiet to go with it". I wish this claim will be true always. Perhaps it will be possible if the present population of 160000 remains steady.

During the symposium, in addition to the scholarly papers read, there were opportunities for scholars in the same field to meet one another. Dr. Sebastian Brock of Oxford who is doing very useful work in Syriac language studies and research, Dr. J. F. Coakley of Lancaster University, U. K. who has made a study of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission, Dr. John Sanders, retired professor of Arabic & Syriac in Amsterdam University who was my host in 1980 in Heemstede, Holland and many other old friends were there. It was an opportunity for me to tell about our Church and the Syriac publications of the Mar Narsai Press to the Syriac scholars who never had any contact with our Church. As there are not many

Syriac scholars in our Church today, neither among the clergy nor among the laity, our publications are not properly known except in a circle of very limited friends.

My regret was that I did not get much time at the Symposium, as I was busy with the attempt to get the U. S. visa. Moreover as I do not speak German or French or Italian, or Spanish, some Syriac scholars from Europe could not speak with me. English is not always useful in Europe. Many in India do not know that. Anyhow the little knowledge of German I have, was indeed useful in railway stations, to find out the train timing, to buy the ticket etc.



Chapter 5

5th Visit to England or England Revisited

On Thursday 13 Sept. 1984 the British Airways flight touched down at Heathrow airport, London. Mr. Eshaya Chemmani of Bagdad, now settled in Ealing, London, with his brother Youvel and sister Esther were there to receive me. It was a sudden change in my programme, as I was not able to get visa to the USA from Amsterdam as anticipated.

It was my fifth visit to England. During 1961-62 I studied in Boniface College, Warminster, Wiltshire, part of the King's College, London. In 1966 I spent several days with my sister and family in England on my way to study in the USA. In 1977 I spent several days there

while returning from the USA, etc. In 1983 after the Conference on Oriental Canon Law in Germany I visited England for a fourth time.

When I reached London as a citizen of a Commonwealth Country I was able to enter England without visa or entry permit. The Customs officer, however, hesitated to let me walk away like that. I thought he would respect the robe and show the courtesy which the immigration officer showed a few seconds earlier. Perhaps my beard did not command any respect. He stopped me and queried

“Do you speak English?”

“Yes, I do”, replied I in my Indian accent.

“Do you know the Customs regulations?”

“Yes, I know,”

“Do you have anything to declare?”

“No, I do not have.”

Then I thought that was the end of the conversation. But I was mistaken. “Open the bag” he ordered. I obeyed instantly. After checking it thoroughly he ordered “open the suitcase too.” He checked it thoroughly. Without lifting his face he murmured “sorry for the inconvenience.” I wanted to say “you better be sorry.” But I did not. He was doing his duty.

My stay was in the spacious house of Eshaya Chemmani. I had conducted the blessing of that house one year earlier just before returning from England on 25 Sept. 1983. So it was a familiar place. I contacted Rabbi Aprim Kellaitha, my friend since 1961. I was happy to hear that Mar Narsai Elias de Baz, Metropolitan of Lebanon, was staying in the house of Mr. Kellaitha. I had to contact Chicago over the phone regarding my visa to be got from the U. S. embassy in London.

On Friday I went to the house of Rabbi Aprim and Khanna Kellaitha to meet them and especially to meet Mar Narsai Metropolitan for the first time. Since the people who were with me spoke in Assyrian, I could not follow everything. I enquired in English about the possibility of a united synod of the two groups. Mar Narsai said since the Church split started in Iraq it should end in Iraq itself. He was returning to Beirut. He was planning to return to Chicago after 3 weeks.

My brother-in-law, Dr. N. V. George, came with his children to take me to Rugby where they live. At Rugby I was able to trace the telephone number of Dr. Joe Philips of Preston, who had been writing to me and reading my

books. I was wondering whether he was a doctor of divinity or a medical doctor. I had thought only doctors of divinity took such an interest to read my theological books. He cleared my doubt stating he was a medical doctor who took an interest in divine matters. It was nice to make his acquaintance as he was originally from Kerala, Orthodox Syrian Church, now settled in England. He came to service on Sunday and we talked like old friends although we were meeting for the first time.

On Saturday 15 Sept. 1984 I was in Rugby with my sister and her family. We went to see the birth place of Shakespeare. Stratford-on-Avon is a place of attraction for tourists. Many Americans were there to see the house where the great William Shakespeare lived. We had to pay one Pound and 35 shillings, almost Rs. 20 for entrance. Probably about a thousand people visit that place. Perhaps that much money may be necessary for the up-keep of such a place with guides to explain the things we see in that building. The plays of Shakespeare are being enacted every day in the theatre next door. It is not easy to purchase tickets to see the play. Usually it is fully booked long in advance. Shakespeare has such an attraction. In spite of all the new styles and techniques in writing and acting, Shakespeare lives in the hearts of all the English speaking people.

The biggest news we heard when we returned to Rugby was that the second son was born to the Prince of Wales and Diana. On television we saw the great celebration. The citizens' loyalty to the royalty made them open Champagne bottles and rejoice at the glad news of the birth of a royal baby boy.

Although Shakespeare is acknowledged as the greatest in his field of writing plays, an American writer Caloin Hoffman is arguing that 36 out of the 37 plays were written not by Shakespeare but by his fellow playwright Christopher Marlowe. Hoffman says that he found in Padua in Italy the burial records of 1627 in which Santo Merlo is mentioned. He argues that Saint Merlo is an accepted Italian variant of Marlowe. Referring to the fact that several of Shakespearean dramas are set around Italy: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, Hoffman argues "we know that Shakespeare never travelled, so how could he have known so much about Italy?"

We do not know how many people will believe the theory of Hoffman giving credit to Marlowe to many of the Shakespearean plays

Perhaps as years go by, news and opinions on Shakespeare may change. One can agree with Hoffman that "Shakespeare had no idea during his life time that the plays would come to be regarded as immortal masterpieces."

Mar Narsai Metropolitan was to conduct the service on Sunday 16th Sept. at the Assyrian House in London. It was the same place where I did Holy Qurbana on 25 Sept. 1983. Mar Narsai invited me to the altar and I was present there. Since we belong to two calendars, it is not a common sight to see bishops of the 25th and the 7th on the same altar, although lay people of both groups of our Church might worship together in the same Church. To me it was the the first experience to be on the altar with a bishop of the other party. I have been with the clergy of other party on 25 Sept. 83 in London and on 8 Sept. 84 in Jonkoping, Sweden. Thus the rare thing happened. Later I heard that an Orthodox Syrian Doctor, Joe Philips, who tried to photograph the rare occasion, was prevented by some. Somebody is afraid of truth and photographs! Thus that rare occasion is without a photo evidence. Let me record it here so that whether the unity of the two groups comes or not, let us not forget that there was a gesture for peace and reconciliation, which the

majority of our Church members long for. Although photographs were denied inside the Church, a photograph of all Indian members was taken just outside the Church.

The Indian group included a Scottish friend. By virtue of the fact that Mr. Callaen married an Indian, he felt that he should be included in the Indian group. His bride is Susan, daughter of Dr. O. R. Timothy and Dr. Molly Timothy. It was nice to have them with us because they were present in 1962 when I conducted the Assyrian evening prayer at St. Barnabas Church, Ealing, London. Dr. N. V. George, my brother-in-law, and my sister's three elder children Honey, Sheena and Varkey were present for the service. I do not know how much our Indian members understand during the Assyrian service. Since the Aramaic language is unknown to them, I am of the opinion that Aramaic is Latin and Greek to them. Although the older people like Dr. Timothy and Dr. George who are born and brought up in Trichur do understand the actions of Qurbana, the younger generation brought up in England understands neither the Symbolism nor the words of the service.

The case of the Assyrians also is not much better. Many Assyrian children born and brought

up in England do not understand the liturgical language. The older people speak the Assyrian language as their mother tongue. The service is in old or liturgical language known as *lishana Atieqa* meaning the old language. Very few Assyrians understand the old literary language used in the liturgy. Hence the sermon is preached in modern language which the Assyrians speak in their homes whether they live in England, America or Australia.

It was nice to meet Fr. K. A. George of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India, who is working in London. During my 1977 trip I stayed at his home. He was studying in Oxford when I was studying in St. Boniface College, Warmminster, Wiltshire during 1961-62. He came to help me when I went to the American Consulate in London for the US visa.

A Sikh gentleman came to talk to me while I was sitting in the US Consulate in London. He told me that he did not like India. He wanted Punjab to separate from India for the good of the Sikh religion. He gave an advice for my benefit that the Christians in North East India and Kerala (south west) should separate from India for the good of the Christians. I told him that India is one. We Christians,

Sikhs, Muslims etc. who are minority communities in India should work with the Hindus who are more than 80% of the Indian population. Moreover, India is a secular state. We should work for the integration of our nation. This was in September 84 and in October the world was shocked to hear about the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

After a long wait my name was called. The young lady sitting on the other side began to question me about my purpose to visit the USA. "Did you come to London just to apply for the American visa?" was her first doubt. "No, I had planned a trip to London after my Syriac Symposium in Holland" was my honest reply. She was not convinced.

"Do you have an address?"

"Yes, it is written on the application form" was my impatient reply.

"Do you have a salary? Do you have a Church? How many people you have in your Church? Are you sure that you are not going to stay for more than ten days? "Who is going to pay for your expense?" She had many questions to ask me.

Although I wanted remain without any resentment against her irritating questions, I began to wonder whether I am going to retort her questions in the same wave length. But I was to get a favour from her i. e. visa. Still at one point I wanted to tell her that I am not begging for any help from her country. I am just visiting her country at the invitation of the American citizens in Chicago, just to do religious services for them. I was asking visa for only ten days. I had written that I would not accept any job. Still she was not convinced.

I began to reason with her. I told her that I studied in the USA and took an American degree during 1966 - 68. I still did not try to find a job. The only other occasion I visited America was in April - May 1977. The visa was for 45 days only. I never overstayed a single day. Then why should they hesitate or harass me like this. I was a debate Champion in my college days. I had won the Law College Debate Trophy in Jabalpur in 1960 defeating the lawyers. Here standing in the queue, clad in my episcopal gown and cap, I stood helpless to plead for a visa for ten days.

That was the time I felt an extra help from outside was needed. I did not attempt to threaten

her or appeal to higher authorities as some people do. There I stood praying "Lord, if it is thy will, give me visa or I go back to India." Some lady came and whispered something into the ear of the lady who was asking "silly" questions to me. I think there was a telephone call at that time from Chicago asking them to give visa to me.

The caller from Chicago was another lady who was working for the re-election of the President of the United States. What prompted her to feel sympathy to the request of our Church members in Chicago, I do not want to reveal in this book. In my righteous indignation I wanted to keep talking about it after reaching Chicago until it could become another Watergate scandal. Any how I was grateful to the caller from Chicago and the young lady in London who finally condescended to grant me a ten day visa with a sticker on the visa stating that I will not work during my ten days stay in the United States of America.

On 18 Sept. 1984 I took off Heathrow airport in London at 12.30 noon. The flight was to Chicago O'hare airport direct without touching New York. In 1977 I arrived in New York and then I had to take a flight to

Chicago. I was not aware of a direct flight from London to Chicago. Now not only Chicago, but other cities also are there in the U. S. A. which are directly connected from London.

The flight took about $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours reaching, Chicago, at about 9 p.m. We are asked to put our watch back to 3 p.m. Chicago is 6 hours behind London. I already had put my watch $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours back when I reached Sweden and another one hour at London. Therefore in all three changes I realise Chicago is $11\frac{1}{2}$ hours behind India. In India it is the same time throughout the country. But in the U.S.A. I understand that there are three different time zones. New York is one hour behind Chicago and San Francisco will be two hours ahead of Chicago.



Chapter 6

Again at O'Hare

At the O'Hare airport in Chicago, Rev. Awiqam Pithyon (student in our Seminary in India while I was a student in America in 1966-68) was present to receive me along with Rev. Nestorius, Chaplain at the Patriarchate in Bagdad, and members of the newly formed St. Odisho parish. His Holiness Mar Adhai II, Patriarch, was waiting to receive me at the temporary headquarters where he was staying in Chicago. The Patriarch looked healthier and happier than when what I saw him in Feb. of this year in Bagdad.

The first glad news I heard was that Patriarch Mar Adhai had gone to meet Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV at the Bishop's residence of Mar Aprim Khamis Episcopa in Chicago the same day. It is a beginning for the desired unity of the two groups of our Church. Patriarch Mar Dinkha was to make a return visit next day.

On Wednesday 19th Sept. exactly at 11 a.m. Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, accompanied by Mar Aprim Khamees episcopa, Rev. Aprim de Baz and Rev. Shomuel Dinkha as well as lay leaders such as Mr. Akthiar B. Moses and others came to the residence where we were staying. I was pleased to meet Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV after 17 years. It was in 1967 that that I met him during a send-off meeting in Yonkers, New York. He was an episcopa and I was a priest.

A lot of changes have taken place since that meeting in Yonkers, New York. Soon after that Mar Dinkha came to India which resulted in some court injunction against him. After that in Sept. 1968 the then Metropolitan of India, Mar Thoma Darmo, went to Iraq and became the Patriarch at Bagdad on 10 Oct. 1968. These events split the ancient Church of the East into two.

Now at Chicago Mar Dinkha IV and Mar Adhai II, two patriarchs, successors to the main personalities of the conflict i. e. late Mar Eshai Shimun and Mar Thoma Darmo, sat and talked like friends. As a student of Church history I sat there thinking when and how the unity would come. Since the conversation was in modern Syriac, I was able to understand only

half of it. Still I kept hoping something good would come out of this friendly meeting.

When the guests departed after lunch I expressed my desire in English with a few words in Assyrian (That is the name they prefer) that most of the people want unity. To find out how exactly it is to be brought about, we have to pray for God's solution. The same idea was made clear again next day when I went to visit Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV at the residence of Mar Aprem Khamis. The broader understanding among many people is that there should be mutual acceptance of both patriarchs and accept a common calendar. Although the Church of the East followed only Julian Calendar like most of the Eastern Churches, in 1964 Patriarch Mar Shimun sent a circular to all Churches adopting the Gregorian Calendar. A group in Iraq under the late Rev. Ishaq Enwiya at Daura, Bagdad and the majority in India under Mar Thoma Darmo refused to agree to this change. But it is hoped that since twenty years elapsed after the event, an amicable settlement is possible.

I told Patriarch Mar Dinkha that no party should attempt to defeat the other party. In

that spirit, peace is not possible. Patriarch Mar Dinkha very magnanimously agreed with my opinion and stated that unity should come without the spirit of defeating the opposite party. I repeated the desire that was expressed in Bagdad in Feb. 1984 that a simultaneous Synod of the two groups would be called in any location and unity would be achieved after discussions on the points of differences, which I think, are not many.

On Sunday 23rd September a dinner was arranged at Dankhaus, Chicago in honour of Patriarch Mar Adhai II. Since I happened to be present, the Committee arranged for a special welcome song to be composed. The St. Odisho Church Choir sang it beautifully. After the Patriarch had spoken for more than an hour about Church unity etc., I thought of changing the serious mood of the 400 strong audience to a lighter one. Hence my speech was in a lighter vein throughout.

I was able to meet Shamasha Geevarghese Benjamin of Ashitha who was a teacher in Aramaic language in Trichur during 1929-33 before I was born. I had the privilege of staying in his house in Mosul, Iraq in 1962 when I was returning from England. In 1977 I visited his

house in Chicago when he was away in Iraq. Now it was a privilege to meet him and talk about India. I met Archdeacon Sadok de Mar Shimun also with whom I stayed in 1977. During my first visit to Chicago when I was staying with Mr. Baba Paul, I visited Archdeacon Sadok. He is 82 years old and is active in ecumenical circles working as Vice President of the Greater Chicago Clergy Fellowship (Oh! there are many organizations and my memory is not that good to remember the exact title).

After the above paragraph was written and typed out the news of the death of Archdeacon Sadok de Mar Shimun appeared in the *Assyrian Star* magazine published from Chicago. It is appropriate to put down here that he wanted unity of two groups in our Church.

On 23rd Sept. morning I had the privilege of conducting Qurbana in Aramaic language. Since I had conducted Qurbana in this language in Bagdad, Sweden and England it was not difficult to do it. In India I usually conduct the same liturgy but more than half of it is recited in my mother tongue known as Malayalam. It is easy because the liturgy book has Malayalam translation on the left and Aramaic on the right.

We went to see the Sears Tower. To me it was not much of a wonder, as I had gone up to the top of the Empire State Building of New York and CN Tower in Toronto. But to the Patriarch Mar Adhai who had not seen any such tall buildings it was definitely a new experience. We all went to the top of the building which has 119 stories, the largest private office building in the world. As we reached the top we were 1454 feet (443 meters) above the street where we left our cars. From that height our cars looked like small match boxes.

The facts and figures about this Sears Tower are interesting and are therefore reproduced below from the brochure we obtained there. As we stood in the fully enclosed Skydeck that night on 103rd floor (1353 feet above the ground), we were wondering about the engineering genius of the man who constructed such a marvelous structure. Many of my readers can only imagine the size of the huge structure. One needs to use it in order to appreciate the beauty of it. From the Skydeck we saw that big city with all the lights as we were on top at night. It took only one minute for us to climb to the top by the elevator.

Construction of Sears Tower took three years, and during peak times, some 1,600 people worked on the project.

It is the world's tallest all-electric building, with sophisticated systems designed for optimum conservation of energy.

The Tower's framework consists of 76,000 tons of steel. The building contains enough concrete to build an eight-lane highway, five miles long; has more than 16,000 bronze-tinted windows, and 28 acres of black duranodic aluminum skin.

114 rock caissons support the 222,500 ton building. Each is sunk as deep as the Statue of Liberty is tall and is securely socketed into the bedrock.

The building's 103 cab elevator system divides the Tower into three separate zones — with skylobbies in between.

The Tower has the most complete life safety system ever devised for a high-rise building, with automatic sprinklers, smoke detectors, emergency diesel generators and a sophisticated communications system.

Six automatic window-washing machines clean building exterior eight times.

Sears Tower has a population of 12,000 including 7,000 Sears, Roebuck and Co. national headquarters employees. Sears occupies the lower half of the building; the remainder is leased to tenants.

Five restaurants in the building includes a delicatessen, a coffee shop, an elegant multiroom restaurant, a pub and a 1,500 seat cafeteria. Other facilities from Lower Level II to the Mezzanine level include a bank and a broad variety of retail shops and services.

The newspapers dated 25 Nov. 85 has a news that Sears Tower in Chicago is not going to be the tallest building in the world in 1992. Plans have been finalised to construct a building of 150 stories in New York city. That building will have a height of 509 metres i. e. 66 metres higher than the Sears Tower. Some years ago before Sears Tower was built, New York had enjoyed the status of having the highest building in the world. Now probably within the next seven years, New York can regain its lost prestige. The new building will be in the Fifth Avenue in New York city. It will be called the

Trub Tower in honour of the architect Donald Trub. It will be in a triangular shape.

Chicago has a lot of Syriac books in the University library. In recent years Prof. Arthur Voobus of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago started a Museum of Syriac books. I heard that Prof. Voobus, is an Estonian, who had fled from his country and settled in America. He is one of the world famous Syriac scholars. He has translated several books from this ancient language into English. In addition to translating books into English, Prof. Voobus has searched for and identified unknown manuscripts in Syriac language and has made significant discoveries in this field. His twenty books (Nos. 263-282) and three articles (Nos. 379-381) have been mentioned in my book 'A Nestorian Bibliography.'

Using telephone directory I was able to trace Dr. Voobus and I expressed my desire to see his museum of Syriac manuscripts. Although we had never met we talked on the telephone as we are old friends. I made an appointment with him for the following Monday but I could not take advantage of it as I had to fly to California that Monday. I telephoned to him to tell him that I would stop by his place on my

way to the airport to see the Syriac books, for half an hour. He said that there was no use of spending just half an hour with the precious old manuscripts. I should visit him on a later occasion with more time to see the books. I understand that most of his manuscripts are of the West Syrian script used by the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. Assyrians cannot forget the services being rendered by this great scholar for their language and literature. Several students such as David George Malek have studied under Professor Voobus about this ancient Church and its valuable language.

There are several Kerala Christians in Chicago. The Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Syrian Church as well as the Mar Thoma Syrian Church are conducting their services in Malayalam language. But I was conducting service in Aramaic. Just one Kerala couple was there. That was Lalitha, sister of my brother-in-law Cherian Puthicote.

Lalitha and her husband David Oomen took me to their home for a Kerala lunch. They have been living in Chicago for many years and have become American citizens. Chicago will have many Indians in all walks of life as a second generation is being born and brought up as

Americans. The original inhabitants in America are called Red Indians and the future Indians in America will be brown Indians. Or, they may be called brown Americans like black Americans. The second generation Indians in the U. S. A. will be more American than Indian in their life style.

Many Assyrians came to talk to the Patriarch Mar Adhai and myself. Most of them spoke in Assyrian language and I had to be a patient listener. Sometimes I used my broken Assyrian and was able to communicate. Many of our people expressed a desire to have *Huyada* (unity) of the two groups.

Oraham G. Yacoub is the trustee of our newly formed Mar Odisho parish. He was kind enough to vacate his house so that the Patriarch, myself and the Rev. Nestoris could live in that house conveniently. Ofcourse upto midnight there would be committee members, visitors etc. It was also office room upto midnight.

From Chicago when I flew to Columbus, Ohio, the cost of the ticket was \$162, but when I returned the cost was only \$62, i.e. a difference of \$100. It was People's Express for the return flight. It was a new cheaper airline service

introduced recently. We had to travel longer distance in order to travel cheaper. It is difficult to understand, because People's Express does not fly from Columbus to Chicago. I had to fly to Newark, New Jersey and then fly to Chicago. All for \$100. Actually I thought it was a mistake because Newark is much west of Columbus, Ohio, while my destination in Chicago was on the east. Hence I had to make two flights in order to return to Chicago.

People's Express is attracting the ordinary passengers who look for cheaper flights than the regular airline. I do not know whether the cheaper airlines can afford to stay in business for a long time. There was one Laker airliner operating cheaper air taxi service between England and the U.S.A. Finally, faced with the opposition of regular airlines as well as financial loss it is out of business.

On board the People's Express, there were no beautiful hostesses; there was only a conductor like a regular bus conductor just to check your ticket and collect the ticket charge if any and put it in his bag. If you ask for a cup of coffee, you have to pay for it. Ofcourse one cannot expect refreshments when the total amount you pay for two flights is only \$160. But I felt like riding in an ordinary bus.

Actually I could have saved the extra \$100 which I paid (Ofcourse my brother Addison paid for that visit) on the way to Columbus. As soon I got into the flight, there was an unusual announcement that there was a passenger who had to catch an international flight at Columbus and the airline would put me in the following flight after 2 hours and pay \$100 as compensation for the two hours delay. I did not believe it at first. It may be a joke, I thought. But when the announcement was repeated over the microphone, I was tempted to claim \$100 and to wait for the following flight, because I had flight connections to make yet. Moreover it would be a great help to somebody who needed to make connection to the international flight. At the same time I knew that my brother Addison, and his wife Molly were waiting at Columbus airport along with their six year old son Aprem (I gave my name to him when I baptised him) would not appreciate as we had to ride by car for more than one hour to their home in Chillicothe. To my surprise nobody was willing to be delayed by two hours. For them two hours was more valuable to them than \$100.

At Columbus airport I was received by my brother Addison, his wife Molly and their son Aprem. He is the only boy born in our family

and named after me. The tradition followed in Kerala is that the first boy will be named after paternal grandfather and the second boy after the maternal grandfather; the third boy will be named after the brother of the paternal grandfather. I was given the name George, which was the name of the younger brother of my paternal grandfather. In the last generation having about a dozen children for the same parents was not uncommon, so wide representation could be given to satisfy all the relatives. But now there are only one or two children for a couple of the present generation. And therefore there was no chance for my name to be given to my nephews. Hence my younger brother Addison decided to honour me, out of turn, with the permission of my father of course. His name had already been given to the first boy of my elder brother Professor Andrews Mookan. So this boy was called Aprem, omitting the title Mar (which means "my Lord," a title given to bishops and saints).

Aprem was happy that his real name-sake uncle was visiting him for the first time. He had told his friends about it. As we got up next morning, he came to me and began to talk about all his friends. "Don't you know Elizabeth?" he asked. As my reply was in the negative he

wondered about the ignorance of his educated uncle. "Elizabeth is my neighbour. And you do not know her?" He was genuinely surprised. He mentioned the names of all his friends and neighbours. I replied in the negative to all his queries.

As it was expected, my brother and his wife asked about our relatives in India and the sister in England with whom I had spent a day a week earlier. Everybody is busy in this world and it is not easy to send letters always. Moreover my work in the Church kept me at a little distance from family members.

Babu Konikara, son of the late Administrator of the Church of the East in India, Rev. Poulouse Konikara, is a professor in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the nearest member of our Church living in Ohio. Professor Konikara, teaches science and his hobby is playing piano etc. A bachelor, he lives alone in Cleveland. He came to my brother's house for lunch. We talked about Church and Trichur. Ofcourse we did not have enough time as I had to return to Chicago, very soon.

Dr. Deacon C. J. Chacko, aged about 85, the senior most deacon of our Church, is living

in Chester, Pennsylvania. During my previous visit to the U. S. A. in 1977 we had met. His wife Dr. Dorothy Chacko was the founder President of our Mahila Samajam, the women's society of our Church. Both of them have been awarded honorary doctorates from Widener University where Deacon Chacko was a Professor after his retirement from the Delhi University. Dr. Dorothy is the recipient of the Indian national Award name Padmashree for her humanitarian work. It is a rare honour to be given to an American by the President of India. Although I wished to meet them personally I had to content with a telephone conversation owing to the shortage of time at my disposal.

Mr. Streeter Stuart and his wife Merle of Lexington, Mass; had been my guests in Trichur. Their eldest son Streeter Stuart Jr. was a preacher at a large Christian convention in Trichur. I was guest at their home during my trip to America in 1977. When I telephoned to them the Stuarts were out. Their daughter Twyla Stuart was home. She was a B. D. student at Princeton when I was doing my Th. D. studies at the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1967-68. It was nice to talk to friends, but at the same time sad that there was no time to visit them personally.

There were many others to whom I wanted to telephone, and to apologise for not visiting. One was Dr. Akbar Haqq in Minneapolis from whom I have a standing invitation. Another was Polly Reuling in the same town who had adopted Unny Mary from the Mar Thimotheus Memorial Orphanage, Kalathode, Trichur. There was no time for making these calls.

Another person I had to call was Miss Theresia Varghese, who is working at the World Bank in Washington D. C. She is the sister of my brother-in-law Dr. N. V. George. She is very active in many charitable activities all over the world and is a recipient of the Washingtonian Award in 1985, one of the rare honours an Asian could aspire to receive in America. Although I could not make the call that day I managed to call her before I returned from the U.S.A.

Dr. Davy Emmatty was another Church member from Trichur living in Ohio. I was guest in his house in Bowling Green, Ohio, in April 1977. But this time Dr. Davy and his wife Gracy came to the Cleveland airport to see me off. We were late to reach the airport. Hence I was able to meet them only for a few minutes. Even during the few minutes we were able to talk about our Church. I thank God that some of our

young people have got proper Sunday school training and have developed love for the church during our childhood so that even if our church is not available abroad where we work, our love and loyalty to the church does not diminish. It may not be true of our next generation. Several young people already feel alienated from the church. Perhaps their loyalty to Christ may find expression in some other forms, unintelligible to the older generation.

As I got back to Chicago, to be ready for the next day's Qurbana, our Assyrian friends were again at the airport to receive me. Although I had promised the previous evening at the time of leaving Chicago that I would definitely be back there the next evening I am not sure whether they were very sure about it. They were not happy to send me alone to my brother's house. I told them the previous evening at the airport that they need not worry to find a parking space for the car as they could return after dropping me as it was already check-in time for me to board the aircraft. Then they said, "No, no, we will not leave you. Perhaps the other party will kidnap you." I wondered how such distrust could produce unity. But sad to say, it is the same mutual distrust that engenders the arms race and threatens human existence.



Chapter 7

California & Missouri

On Monday 24 Sept. 1984, Patriarch Mar Adhai II, myself, and the Rev. Nestorius, accompanied by three lay leaders, left Chicago for San Francisco, California. The passengers in the aircraft began to take a special note of us. With our black gowns and headgears, the patriarch and I began to puzzle the fellow passengers. Although both of us were bearded men, the patriarch is an Assyrian by race and I am an Indian. Obviously Assyrians have a fair complexion than most of the Indians. Some passengers enquired about our identity.

We had to change the flight at Denver, Colorado. As we reached Denver, we thought that we had more than one hour to catch the connecting flight as the time at San Francisco was two hours faster than at Chicago. Still we

thought of finding out our exit gate and sit near there for one hour. But when we reached near our gate we realised that our aircraft was ready for take-off as all the passengers except five had already boarded. As our seats were confirmed they were waiting for us. Then only did we realise that we had travelled only half of our distance and therefore the time difference was only one hour at that halt. Hence the time at Denver was already 3 p. m. while the San-Francisco time was 2 p. m. as we had correctly calculated. Such details are recorded here to be useful for passengers who are not familiar with the time difference. In India we have only one time, whether in the South or in the North, in winter or in summer. But in Chicago it was 4 p. m. and in San Francisco it was only 2 p. m. and at the stop in Denver it was only 3 p. m.

We hurriedly boarded the flight and flew for two hours and as we reached San Francisco, we put our watch at 4 p. m. We were received at San Francisco airport by the Revd. Eshai Joseph and some Assyrian friends. We had to drive another hour to reach Ceres, near Modesto, where we were to stay at the house of Mr. Mike Purto. The word Mike stands for Melchesedek in the Bible instead of Michael, the angel. Assyrians were happy to receive the patriarch

and his team and we talked about the Church affairs in California.

On 25th September we went to the 20 acre farm of the Rev. Eshai Joseph. He had a lot of Assyrian books. I was interested more in his books than in his vegetables. He teaches Assyrian language in the Stanislaus State College. He is interested in preserving the language of his fathers. He was a priest in Iraq before he came to California about 25 years ago.

On 26th September we celebrated the Festival of the Cross. The Episcopal Church was open to us for service. Bishop Robert Mize, who formerly worked in Africa, is now working as an additional bishop in that Episcopal diocese. Rev. Tom Foster, Vicar of the Church, was kind enough to attend the service along with Bishop Mize. After Qurbana conducted by Mar Adhai in Assyrian language they joined us for breakfast in an Assyrian home. They were interested to know more about our Church.

During our stay at Mike Purto, I was assigned to the room which has a large bed filled with water. It was my first experience to sleep on water. I was all the time suspicious that there will be a flood if my bed begins to

leak when there is the heavy weight of my body on the bed. Realising my hesitation, Mike Purto assured me that he had been sleeping on that water filled bed for many years and it never failed him, nor did it ever leak. Ofcourse he knew how to swim and I do not know to swim if the room floods during my sleep, so I thought humorously!

There are a lot of activities for the Assyrians in California. There is a television studio and a radio station. There are a lot of senior Assyrians living in California. Chicago has the largest Assyrian population in the U. S. A. The second concentration of Assyrians is in California.

Deacon Keena Yonan, one of the old deacons of our Church living in Keyes, near Modesto, wanted to meet me in person. We had corresponded for many years. He had bought Assyrian books from Mar Narsai Press and we had corresponded about the possible unity of the two groups of our Church. I very much wanted to meet him. Unfortunately I was late to arrive back in the place of our stay on both occasions when he came to see me inspite of his busy harvest season.

Yacoub Yacoub was another friend whom I had visited in 1977. He is the son of the maternal

uncle of the late Mar Thoma Darmo Patriarch. Yacoub is running a restaurant. We went to meet him but missed the directions. Finally we gave up the plan to visit him. In a hurried trip of two days it was not easy to meet all the friends. Moreover I was not alone. Many Assyrians had come to meet the Patriarch. And I could not be away making my separate plans.

We had a sumptuous dinner in the house of one of our active members on Sept. 25. I think his name is Benyamin. My memory which is said to be reasonably good, sometimes fails me to recall the names of people and places. I saw a swimming pool in his backyard with very good facilities including a separate massaging pool where water comes at high pressure to rub our body. I did not get inside the swimming pool as I do not know to swim.

Dr. Sargon Dadeesho M. S., Ph. D. came to that house as we were finishing our dinner. I had seen the photo of Dr. Dadeesho, who is the editor of Beth Nahrain magazine. He runs an Assyrian television station too. As he speaks English fluently, I was happy to meet him. Because of our common interest in journalism, we had a lot to talk about. I was aware that he belonged to Gregorian calendar group. Still

during the brief meeting, our conversation was cordial. As I was leaving California the next day, I could not expect to see him again on this trip.

The brother of Mar Daniel Yacob, the bishop from Iraq living in California, came to us. Later in Nov. 1985 I received letter from the Patriarch Mar Adhai II of Bagdad that Mar Daniel Yacob, Bishop in California has joined our group, leaving the new Calendar group headed by the Patriarch Mar Dinha. Mar Daniel about whom I had briefly mentioned in Chapter one of this book was a bishop (episcopa) in Iraq. In recent years he was living in California with his brother. Bishop Daniel belongs to the *Tiari* tribe, the same as that of Patriarch Mar Adhai. I wanted to meet Mar Daniel. But it was not proper for me to ask for our meeting, as I did not know whether it will be interpreted as conspiracy.

Nevertheless, after I left California on 26 September 1984, I heard that Mar Adhai and Mar Daniel met. Although Mar Adhai had thought of the possibility of Mar Daniel joining hands with Mar Adhai and our group, I was not sure of it. Because Mar Daniel was made bishop in Iraq to prevent Assyrians of the *Tiari* tribe

joining Mar Adhai, the first prelate of the *Tiari* tribe. Thus Mar Daniel, the first bishop of the new Calendar people to come from the *Tiari* tribe, joined hands with Mar Adhai, the very prelate he was expected to oppose. Man proposes, God disposes.

While returning from San Francisco to Chicago on 26 Sept., I was invited by my sister Leela to stop at their place for one day. Since I was to fly back to India from Chicago on 28th Sept., I had just less than one day to spare.

26th Sept. is the festival of the Cross according to the Julian Calendar. The Catholic Chaldeans who observe the Gregorian Calendar celebrate it on 13 September, 13 days earlier, which is the difference between these two Calendars in this century and the next century. When we reach the 22nd century the gap will be 14 days instead of 13 days. So our descendants in the 22nd century will observe this festival - if these two Calendars are still observed at that time - on 27 Sept.

From Modesto, Rev. Eshai Joseph drove me to San Francisco. I offered to go by bus as it was not necessary for him to take the trouble to drive to San Francisco for 3 hours and back just

for me. He thought just like some of our people in India that it is below the dignity of a bishop to travel by bus.

From San Francisco I enquired whether I could fly to Columbia airport which is the nearest to Jefferson city, the capital of Missouri State. Although Jefferson city is the seat of the Governor of the State, it is not a big city. Flights are not frequent. The airport is small. I think the population is small also. I was told that my flight would reach St. Louis, Missouri at 9.16 p. m. and the flight from St. Louis to Columbia leaves at 9.15 p. m. It is just one minute before my flight is scheduled to arrive. If it is the other way round and I was to arrive at 9.15 p. m. and the last flight was to depart at 9.16 p. m. I would have insisted that I should take the risk and rush within one minute. Ofcourse the airlines would not have allowed me to take such a risk. Even if it were like that I would not have made it on that day. As we were coming closer to St. Louis, one of the passengers in our flight got a heart attack.

I remembered that in July 1983, as I was flying to Paris from Bombay enroute to Amsterdam, the Very Rev. C. G. David, sitting next to me, had a heart attack. And as I was praying

that we would be able to admit him to the hospital when we arrived in Paris five hours later, the Rev. David breathed his last and we had to leave the dead body in Paris as we changed the plane to Amsterdam.

As it was an emergency in this flight, and it would take nearly one hour more to get St. Louis, the captain asked on the public address system whether there was any doctor among the passengers on board. Fortunately there was one young doctor, a Negro, who volunteered his services to attend to the heart patient. As he realised that delaying medical attention of an intensive nature was dangerous, he recommended that we make an emergency landing and transfer the patient to the nearest hospital.

As we made the emergency landing I saw one ambulance ready in front of that aircraft with a stretcher and after a few minutes brought back the stretcher empty. Then I realised that they used the stretcher just to transfer the patient from our aircraft to a helicopter that came to the back of our aircraft to transport the sick passenger to the hospital.

This emergency landing delayed our journey by more than half an hour. Some of the passengers lost their supper which was being served

at the time of the heart attack of this passenger. The coffee got cold after half an hour. The hostesses apologised for the cancellation of the supper for the remaining passengers. To compensate for this inconvenience they decided to serve liquor free to passengers. Usually only First Class passengers were entitled to receive free liquor. But since some passengers did not get their supper the hostesses gave each one a small bottle of liquor.

It was such a tiny bottle, may be of one ounce or less, that I did not know what it was. The young man who sat next to me realised that I was not familiar with small bottles, and explained to me that it was some liquor. I forget the name of the brand of that brandy as I am a total stranger in that field. Realising my embarrassment in holding that forbidden fruit in my hand, he offered to present it to his girl friend as he was going to meet her at the airport. He told me that he was not much of a religious man. As I parted with that tiny bottle of poisonous liquid -I think all liquor is poisonous to some extent- I used the opportunity to preach against the evils of drinking liquor.

Finally our flight reached St. Louis after 10.30 p. m., more than one hour after the

scheduled time of arrival. So it was not the difference of one minute between the arrival of my flight and the departure of the final flight to Columbia airport of Jefferson city. My sister had telephoned to the St. Louis airport and known that the last flight to their area was to leave St. Louis one minute prior to the scheduled arrival of my flight into St. Louis at 9.16 p.m. Therefore they decided to drive me down in the car.

Although late to arrive I was happy to meet my sister Leela, her husband Professor Alexandar V. Alex and their son Saji and daughter Asha. Asha had grown taller than her mother and I was confused for a split second who the daughter was and who the mother. Since the sister's son Saji is now studying in the Medical school in St. Louis, we left him in his hostel. I recalled that when I first went to America in 1966, sister and her husband came with Saji who was a small boy to meet me. At that time Asha was not even born. Now Saji has grown up and is studying to become a doctor, instead of kindergarten where he was studying in 1966. This made me feel older.

It took more than three hours to reach Jefferson city. When we passed midnight, I as

well as my brother - in - law began to feel sleepy. Then we stopped for coffee. I was worried whether Dr. Alex will doze off. My sister offered to drive the car for a change. But like most male drivers he thought that he was a safer driver than his wife. Since I never learned to drive I felt helpless at this time. Finally Dr. Alex himself completed the three hour drive. Although I am a non-stop conversationalist and I had a lot to tell them; my visit to them was for less than a day; I also felt tired as the time was nearly 2 a.m. when we reached home. I preferred sleep to food at that late hour.



Chapter 8

End of the Journey

On 27 Sept. 84 I was back in Chicago airport alone. The urgent business ahead of me was to re-confirm my ticket to return to India. Although the Assyrian friends who were at the airport to receive me were willing to help me, the counter had been closed as it was 9 p. m. The last staff member at the counter was leaving and we pleaded with her to stay for me one moment to re-confirm my reservation. She said that she was helpless as the computers had been shut for the night. She asked us to come the next morning to the airport to confirm my return reservation.

When we telephoned the next morning to re-confirm my return reservations already made a week ago, I was disappointed to hear that the computer does not show any reservation for me.

I frantically called another office. Then I was told that unless we re-confirm our reservation 3 days prior to the journey, the reservations are erased from the computer. There was no time left for another booking. I called several airlines and all are fully booked. My return journey will have to be postponed. The delay for my return will be at least one week. I was deeply disappointed. I had already told good-bye to the Patriarch in California. My desire was to leave as scheduled by me earlier. Seat was available only upto New-York. Then I have no chance of catching a flight to London, then to Amsterdam, then to Delhi, then to Bombay and then to Cochin. This meant I have to travel by five different different planes and there was no room in any of these five flights.

To transfer from one airline to another is not permitted for concessional tickets like the one I had purchased i.e. the London-Amsterdam-Delhi - Bombay - Cochin ticket. Permission would be required from the Raptis Transport services in Holland if I was to change into Thai Airlines, where there were chances for a seat in London - Delhi sector of my journey. But it would take three days to get a reply from Holland for such a request. I was not willing

to wait a single day, "I shall take the risk" I will be stand - bye passenger for all the five flights. "It is not as easy as it sounds. I told my Chicago Church members: "I will leave Chicago today. Tomorrow I am in London and Amsterdam and the next day in Cochin and finally in Trichur." It was a firm and bold decision, but not a very wise one.

On Friday 28th September 1984 I took off from O'Hare airport in Chicago ending my ten days American visit. I managed to get a place in Chicago-London direct flight. There was not much delay in the Customs or immigration. Most of the Americans travel to London as if it was a domestic flight. I was looking for the usual immigration and Customs formalities of 2 or 3 hours. But before I realised I was already inside the aircraft, a few minutes after I had reached the airport. Such an easy check-in was appreciated by me. I needed such an easy treatment after the frantic telephone calls for reservation a few hours earlier.

Although I felt relaxed after the aircraft had taken off from Chicago, I had to face disappointment in London. Transit passengers could easily change over to another aircraft. But once my reservation was gone owing

to my failure to re-confirm, it was not possible for me to be in the transit lounge. I had to get out with my luggage and to go to the enquiry counter to request for a seat to Amsterdam in the flight I had booked earlier. I was advised to book for the following week on the pretence that I was a stand-bye passenger for that flight.

As it was always possible to have a last - minute cancellation, I stood near the check - in counter. I was refused a seat. As my impression is that women are more religious and a lady will be considerate to the request of a bishop for a seat, I requested a lady staff member. But I was sadly mistaken that line. She was stubborn "I told you to reserve for the next week. There is no chance for you today" was her verdict. Finally I thought in my helplessness that a man is more likely to help another man.

As soon as I approached the man, he said that he could give me a seat. But Since I had no visa in Holland, what would I do in Holland if there was no seat in the flight from Amsterdam to Delhi. The lady came to the man and told that it was great risk to send me to Amsterdam as there was no seat in the flight from Amsterdam to Delhi. Then I said that I was a stand - bye. The man opened my passport and saw a

Dutch visa valid until Nov. 84. So he told his friend that there was visa in my passport. I did not contradict him. I knew that my visa was valid upto Nov. 84. But it was for single entry only and I had used it already two weeks earlier. Therefore my visa which he was examining was good for nothing. Perhaps he knew it and pretended it otherwise to avoid protest from the lady who advised against taking such a risk.

The baggage conveyer belt had been closed. Hence there was no possibility to send my baggage. "The flight is about to leave. The baggage cannot go" was the last objection the lady raised. The man came to my rescue. He said that I could carry it on my own. I ran with my own baggage. But I could not climb up the steps with my suitcase in one hand and the brief case in the other. The man who helped me sent his assistant with me to carry the suitcase with a sticker "RUSH" on it and carry it straight to the baggage room of the aircraft. I cast a grateful glance to the friend in need.

I was thirsty. I was sweating. The blood sugar that had gone as low as 80 (the normal is between 60 and 100) at the beginning of the journey about 4 weeks ago had shot up. A week later in India my blood was tested. It had gone up

from 80 to 212. I am told that sugar in the food, obesity of the body and lack of physical exercise may cause sugar diabetes, but tension and mental stress aggravate it.

If getting into the flight to Amsterdam was a hurdle, the end of that flight was just risk. I was aware that my single entry visa was no more useful to me. As all the computers in Chicago and London showed that there was no vacant seat in the flight from Amsterdam to Delhi, my 'stand-bye' trick will not work in Amsterdam. The immigration authorities could arrest me for entering Holland without visa. As the connecting flight was full, I would have to wait for a minimum of 3 days to get the next flight of the KLM.

My own rashness was questioned by myself, was it a right decision to come to Amsterdam, after realising that there was no seat in that flight? Could I not have stayed with Mr. Eshaya Chemmani in London or with my sister in Rugby rather than be a law-breaker in Amsterdam? In England I could stay without visa being a Commonwealth citizen. Ofcourse food and lodging would be no problem in Amsterdam also, because I was likely to be state guest in prison for entering the country with a valid visa.

With a silent prayer I went to a counter near the transit lounge and showed my ticket and requested for a seat as I was travelling as a stand-bye passenger, as my reservation was not re-confirmed. She told me not to worry. She would give me the boarding card, I could just walk into my aircraft. She will arrange to transfer my baggage. I thanked for her special consideration. As for a passenger without valid visa, I told her that I would have been in trouble with the immigration authorities. But the shock struck when she gave me the boarding card and the baggage claim slip, telling me, "You will need it to collect your baggage at Munich!"

"To Munich?" I asked in surprise. "Yes, are you not going to Munich now?" she queried. Then I remembered that I had earlier purchased my ticket via Munich. But, because of a sudden call to Chicago and the difficulty to obtain a German visa without proper invitation and sponsoring letter, I had given up my plan to visit Munich. Still the travel Agent in India did not omit Munich from the ticket as it was not easy to change it at that time and I could claim a refund after the trip, for the unused ticket.

Since I did not have German visa, I told her that I could not go to Munich. Germany is

perhaps more stricter than Holland regarding visa to Indians. Hence I told her "I would not go to Germany. What I requested for was a seat in Delhi flight." After looking at the chart for the flight going to Delhi she said, "Okay, I will give you boarding card to Delhi. But you have to go to Munich for collecting your baggage. Because your baggage has already gone to Munich. It is too late to transfer it now." This statement did not change my mind. I was willing to give up my baggage. I have come from Chicago in order to reach Delhi and finally Trichur as scheduled before my departure from India. Baggage was not important. After realising that I was going to Delhi with or without baggage, she telephoned for identifying my baggage and transferring it to the flight going to Delhi.

FR. E. R. Hambye was standing near the boarding area. I had said good-bye to him in Amsterdam two weeks earlier. We started talking non-stop as usual. As we moved to enter the aircraft, a Hindu swami with a beard like mine was stopped at the security check. But fortunately I got through the security without much problem. But after the security check I was asked to wait. May be that lady was searching for my baggage to be transferred from Munich flight to Delhi flight.

At Delhi airport, I was happy to come out through the green channel. Then I was worried how to get a seat to Cochin. As I looked around I was glad to see DR. C. J. George who is the retired Chief Medical Officer in Indian Airlines travelling in the flight from Delhi to Cochin. His son who is an engineer in the Indian Airlines managed to get me a seat upto Bombay.

Finally at Bombay Dr. C. J. George tried to get a seat for me in the flight to Cochin along with him and his wife Anna. As it is not easy to get a seat in Bombay I began to lose hope. But Dr. George kept on repeating his plea. Finally the boarding card was in my hands. I was thirsty again. I drank two bottles of soft drink. Still I was thirsty. Yes, my diabetes has increased which took several months to bring to normal as it is now.

The lesson I learned was not to take stand-by flights especially five flights in succession within two days. It worked once. It may not work again!



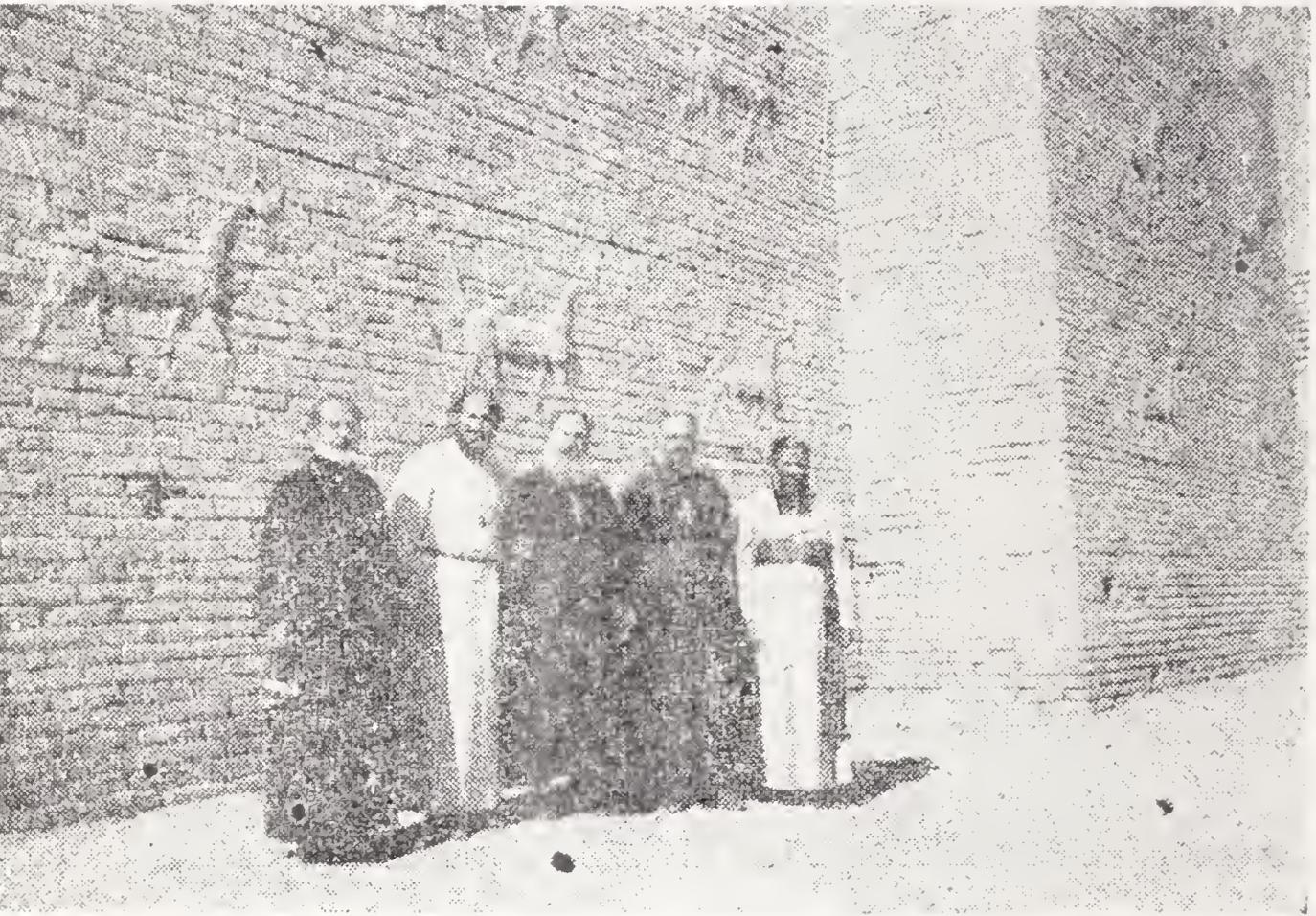
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27	9	Moslim	Muslim
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47	11	Husseim	Hussein
52	13	Psizeot	Pugeot
55	15	airways	Airways
61	21	the airport	, the airport
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88	1	Shorts	sports
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90	15	Confrence	Conference
„	26	Golar	Goslar
95	20	Londen	London
„	26	Oosterheseelen	Oosterhesselen
96	14	Oosteahesselem	Oosterhesselen
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104	26	Shakespear	Shakespeare
124	6	100	62
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FROM BAGDAD TO CHICAGO



Mar Adhai Patriarch introduces Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan to the Minister of Awkaf & Religious Affairs Mr. Abdulla Fad el at Bagdad Iraq in Feb. 1984.



Visit to Babylon on 18 Feb. 1984. Mar Narsai, Mar Poulouse, Mar Thoma, Mar Adhai and Mar Aprem.

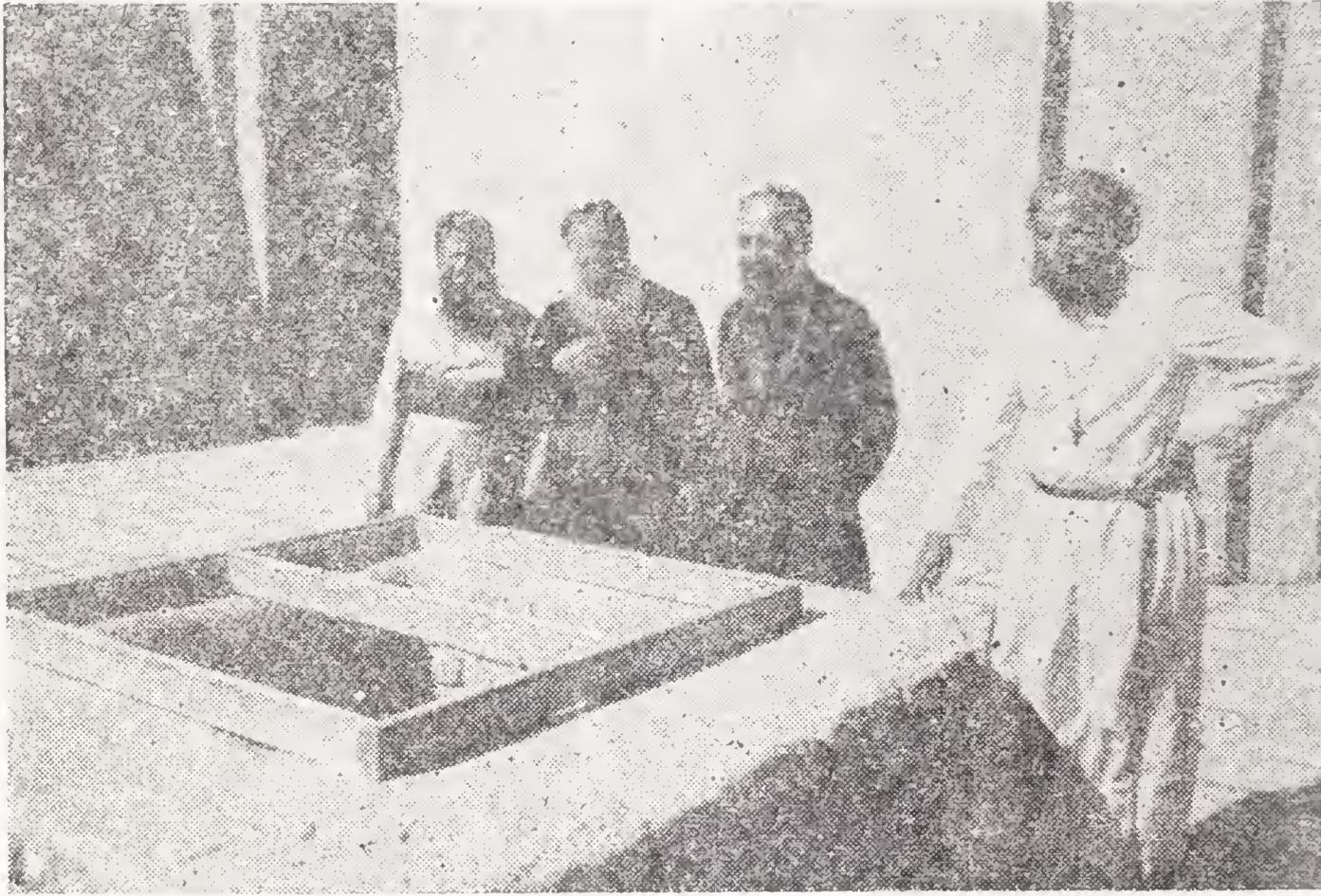


Prelates of the Church of the East

Photo taken outside the Patriarchate Palace in Bagdad in Feb. 1984.

Left to Right standing: Mar Thoma Geevarghese, Mar Poulouse Episcopa, Mar Sargis Episcopa, Mar Narsai Thoma.

Sitting: Mar Geevarghese Sliwa, Patriarch Mar Adhai and Mar Aprem.



Inside Babylon Temple. Near the well where the royal bride used to throw a coin backward.

Mar Aprem, Mar Thoma, Mar Adhai, and Mar Poulouse. 18 Feb. 1984.



After the Clergy Council on 17 Feb. 1984. Supper
at the Patriarchate.

Bishops, priests and deacons (without beard and
cassock).



Waiting for the Minister of Awqaf at his office in Bagdad in Feb. 1984. Latin Archbishop Polose of Iraq, Mr. George Dinkha of Iraqi Airways, Patriarch Mar Adhai, Mar Aprem Metropolitan and Mar Poulouse Episcopa.



Patriarch Mar Adhai and Dr. Mar Aprem talking with the Minister of Awkaf & Religious Affairs Mr. Abdulla Fadhal in Bagdad in Feb. 1984.



Visit of the Chaldean Patriarch to Mar Adhai II
Photo taken in Feb. 1984.

Mar Aprem Metropolitan, Mar Adhai Patriarch
and Mar Poulouse Sheikhu Patriarch of the
Chaldeans (Catholic).



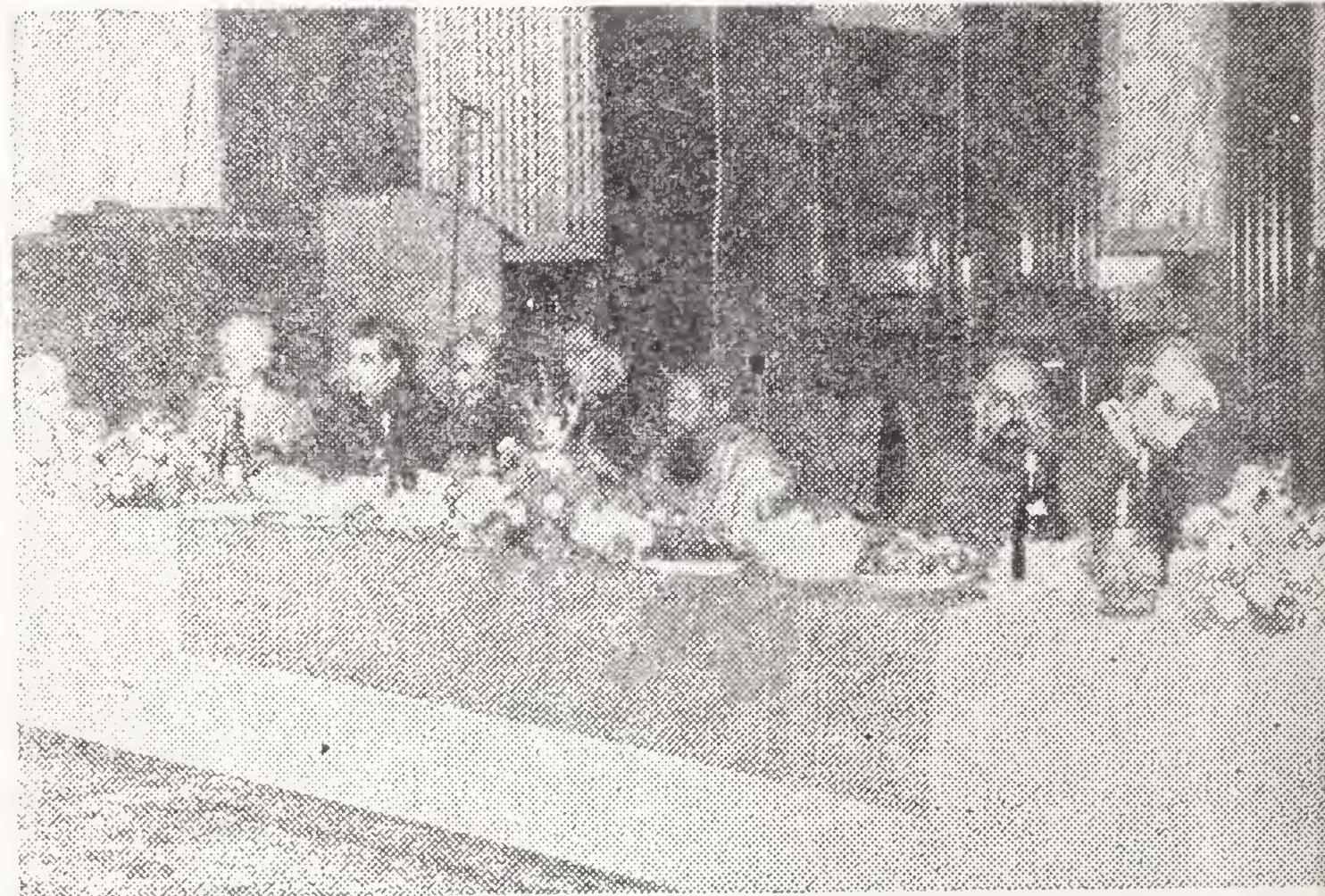
Mar Aprem with Assyrians in Stockholm, Sweden
in Sept. 1983.



Indian group after the service at the Assyrian House, Ealing, London, England on 16 Sept. 1984. Left to Right 1. Mr. Callan, 2. Dr. J. C. Philips, 3. Mrs susan, 4. Dr. O. R. Timothy, 5. Mar Aprem, 6. Mrs. Dr. Molly Timothy, 7. Sheena George, 8. Honey George, 9. Varkey George. Photo taken by Dr. N. V. George.



Reception at O'Hare airport in Chicago on 18 Sept. 85. Two children present a boque of flowers to Mar Aprem. Rev. Nestorius of Bagdad is seen on the side of the Metropolitan.



Dinner at Dankhaus; Chicago on 23 Sept. 84 in honour of Patriarch Mar Adhai and Mar Aprem. Left to Right 1. Mr. Oraham Yacoub, Secretary of St. Odisho Church Committee. 2. Deacon Geevarghese Benjamin Malpan, 3. Rev. Goliath, 4. Rev. Nestorius, 5. Fr. Bikoma, 6. Mar Aprem, 7. Patriarch Mar Adhai, 8. Archdeacon Sadok de Mar Shimum.

**Descriptions of the picture in
the next three pages**

13. Patriarch Mar Adhai and Patriarch Mar Dinha at lunch on 19 Sept. 84 in Chicago.

14. Patriarch Mar Dinha, accompanied by Mar Aprim Khamis Episcopa and other leaders arrive at the place where Patriarch Mar Adhai and Mar Aprem were residing in Chicago on 19 Sept. 84.

15. Four prelates of the Church of the East in Chicago on 19 Sept. 84. Left to Right Dr. Mar Aprem Metropolitan from India, Patriarch Mar Dinha, Patriarch Mar Dinha, and Mar Aprim Khamis Episcopa of the U. S. A.







TO BE PUBLISHED IN 1986 & '87

26. Behold the Cross of Calvary in 100 Languages
27. Syriac MSS in Trichur
28. Canon Law of Mar Abdisho
29. Mar Abdisho Thondanatt: A Biography
30. Saint Ephrem, the Syrian
31. Radio Songs & Prayers
32. Advanced Aramaic
33. Sermons from the Gospels
34. Sermons from the Epistles
35. Voices of the East
36. Assyrian Fathers
37. Bishop's Jokes Again

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem (formerly George Mookken) was born in Trichur, Kerala, India, in June '40. Educated in India, England and America, he specialised in the field of Church History. He was the president of the Church History Association of India.

Since 1968 he is the head of the Church of the East in India with his headquarters in Trichur. He is active in several religious and social organizations, all over India.

The author has read papers in academic conferences such as Symposium Syriacum in Goslar, West Germany in September 1980 and Holland in September 1984, and International Congress on Oriental Canon Law in Freiburg, West Germany in September, 1983.

His biography appears in the *International Who's Who of Intellectuals*, Vol. 6 Cambridge, The *International Directory of Distinguished Leadership*, First Edition, U. S. A. and others.

He was given 'Men of Achievement' Award of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England in 1984 and the 'Medal of Merit' of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre, Venice for his cultural and ecumenical achievements. His 26th book "Behold the Cross of Calvary in 100 languages" is scheduled to be released in April 1986.