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THE EDITOR  
THE MORNING STAR  
NO. 39, FUSSELS LANE,  
COLOMBO-06,  
SRI LANKA.

# THE MORNING STAR

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Righteousness Exalteth A Nation But Sin is a Reproach to any people.

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## Bishop Jebanesan's 60th Birthday Workers'

### Stipend Endowment Contributions:

Dr. Leroy S. Rouncer, USA	Pounds 100.00
Batticaloa CSI Circuit	Rs.100,000.00
Mr. K.S. Tissairajah, Sydney, Australia	Rs.5,000.00
Mr. S.T. Thambyappah, Bramley, Kent, UK	Rs.10,000.00

## Wedding

### Russel Arnold - Sonali Samaraweera

The marriage of Russel Arnold, son of late Rajan Arnold and Padmini Arnold of Manipay and Sonali, daughter of Mr & Mrs D. Samaraweera of Dehiwala took place on Saturday the 29th of April 2000 at 4.30 p.m., at St. Mary's Church Dehiwala. The wedding was followed by a fellowship dinner at the Liberty Ball Room of Holiday Inn, Colombo. Russel Arnold is a member of the Sri Lanka Cricket Team and works for the Hatton National Bank. He is also a member of the C.S.I. Church, Colombo. Sonali works for Pacific Travels and is a member of the St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Dehiwala.

### Rev. R. John Selvam - Vimaladevi Sivarajah

The C.S.I. St. Thomas' Church, Konavil, Kilinochchi was the scene of a pretty wedding on Saturday the 6th of May 2000, at 10.00 a.m. when Rev. R. John Selvam son of late Mr Ratnam and Mrs. Ratnam and Pastor of the CSI Church, Konavil led to the altar Vimaladevi daughter of Mr & Mrs. Sivarajah of Murasumodai, Paranthan. The wedding was solemnized by the Rev. A. Jeyakumaran and the homily was preached by the Rev. S. Jeyanesan. The wedding was followed by a fellowship lunch at which about 300 persons from Viswamadhu and Konavil parishes participated.

### COLOMBO CHURCH ELDERS TAKE OVER RAJENDRAKULAM:

The Elders Fellowship of the Colombo Church and a few benefactors have decided to meet the expenses of conducting a Day Care Centre for the poor children of Rajendrakulam, a village about 8 km from Vavuniya.

This Centre was formerly opened on 31st March, 2000 by Mr. K.D. Arasaratnam, the President of the Elders Fellowship. At present there are 36 children between the ages of 2 and 5 attending this Centre.

Two KNH Trained teachers will be in-charge of the children. Mrs. Jesuthasan will supervise the centre daily. Rev. T. Jeyachandran will be over all charge of this Centre. On the opening day each child was presented with 2 sets of new uniforms. During the school day they will be supplied with milk food and other nourishment.

Ten members from the Elders Fellowship in Colombo attended this ceremony at Vavuniya.

## Bishops' Retreat:

The Bishops of the 21 Dioceses of the Church of South India will have their annual retreat at Masannagudi, Ooty on the 23rd, 24th & 25th of May 2000. Our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. S. Jebanesan is scheduled to leave for India for the retreat on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, 2000.

## Drift to West Jaffna

The schools in West Jaffna including Jaffna college and Uduvil have now become the abode for internally displaced persons. The children of the Diocesan orphanages are now accommodated at Harriet Winslow Pandateruppu and Levi Spaulding Vaddukoddai.

## Female student's body found in gunny bag:

The body of a female student of Ramanathan Academy of Fine Arts was found on the Dairy Road, Kondavil in the morning of Friday 5th May, 2000. The body was identified as that of a female student of Varathapallai, Point Pedro. (courtesy Virakesari of 09/5/2000)

## Prize winning books of North East Provinces for the year 1998:

The Assistant Director of the Provincial Cultural Affairs Department has announced the following as Prize winning books for the year 1998:

### National (Historical)

"Vanniar Thillakam" by V. Subramaniam

### National (Social)

"Colombo Lodge" by K. Gunarajah

### Short Story

"A night in the rainy season" by Thamaraichelvi

### Poetry

"Vadakeruthal" by V. Pathmanathan

### Poetry

"Epic of Jaffna" by Pandit K. Sachchithananthan

### Poetry

"Manidar sikkal" by Muthurathakrishnan

### Children Literature

"Thissai Mariya Pathaikal" by S. Rameswaran

### Religion

"An anthology of praise" by A.K. Erambamoorthy

### Research

"The traditional dramas" by Prof. S. Mounaguru

"International Memorial Days" by U.S. Aliyar

Other books winning prizes are:

"Pulavar Mani" by P. Vijayaratnam

"South Indian Sasthira

Nadanangal" by V. Sivasamy

"Thamilarin Pa Vadivangal" by Prof. A. Shanmugathas

"Arujuna Thabas" by Velmuru

## THREE DEACONS ORDAINED PRESBYTERS:

Three Deacons of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India namely Rev. D. Paul Suresh, Rev. V.S. Pathmathayalan and Rev. R. John Selvam were ordained Ministers of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India at a solemn service on Sunday, 14th May, 2000 at the CSI Church Wellawatta, Colombo 06.

Rev. D. Paul Suresh was born in 1971 to Mr. Manasai Devarajah and Mrs. Devarajah of Usan. He had his education at Usan Ramanathan Maha Vidyalaya.

Rev. V.S. Pathmathayalan was born in 1971 to the late S. Velupillai and Mrs. Velupillai of Karainagar. He had his education at Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai.

Rev. R. John Selvam was born in 1970 at Varuthalaivilan, Tellippalai to the late Ratnam and Mrs Ratnam. He had his education at Manipay Memorial English School.

The three deacons who were ordained on the 14th, were students of the Christian Theological Seminary, Maruthanamadam from 1991 to 1995 and were ordained as deacons of the Diocese in the year 1997.

The candidates were presented by the Rev. J. Gnanapragasam, Area Minister, Wanni. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, Secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka. He preached on the text:

"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther. Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy fathers house shall be destroyed and who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this."

Esther: 4: 13-14

Along with the Bishop the following Pastors laid their hands on the Ordinands: Rev. A. Jeyakumaran, Rev. P.R. Navendranugoolan, Rev. T. Jeyachandran, Rev. Antony Saverimuthu, Rev. J. Gnanapragasam, Rev. Earl P. Solomons, Rev. E.N. Lawrence and Rev. D.S. Mathiaparanam.

A fellowship tea was given by the CSI Church, Colombo for all those who participated in the Service of Ordination.

## FAREWELL TO ASSISTANT PASTOR:

Brother Azariah Soundararaj, Assistant Pastor Colombo was accorded a farewell by the members of the Colombo Church on Sunday the 7th of May 2000. The farewell function was presided over by the Rev. P.R. Navendranugoolan, Worker in Charge, CSI Church Colombo.

Mr. A. Gnanathan spoke on behalf of the Colombo Church. Mrs. K.S. Tissairajah the Assistant Treasurer of the Colombo Church made a presentation on behalf of the parish. Brother Azariah Soundararaj in his reply said that he was an old student of Jaffna College and Christian Theological Seminary, Maruthanamadam. He remembered with much gratitude his teachers and the Rev. Dr. D.S. Thiagarajah who was the Principal of the Seminary when he was the student at Maruthanamadam. He said the one year period in Colombo gave him confidence to serve in any parish in Sri Lanka. The Bishop who was present at the function made a few concluding remarks and pronounced benediction.

## MEETING WITH US AMBASSADOR:

Our Bishop and the Project Director of the Diocese, Mr. N.S.P. Thampoe met His Excellency Shaun E. Donnelly, the Ambassador for United States in Sri Lanka and Mr. Kevin D. McGlothlin, Political Officer of the Embassy of the United States of America at the US Embassy on Friday the 5th May, 2000. In the discussions held, the US Officers were urged to help find a lasting solution to the ethnic problem of our country.

## 25 YEARS IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:

Rev. Sellathurai Jeyanesan and Rev. Annappah Jeyakumaran have completed 25 years as Pastors in the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. Rev. S. Jeyanesan is now serving as Area Minister, Batticaloa and Rev. A. Jeyakumaran as Principal, Minor Seminary in the Vanni Region.



## APPRECIATION

## REV. S.M. JACOB.....

Swaminathan Masillamoni Jacob was born on 8. 7. 26 in Nagercoil, South India. He was the only son of a teacher, Paul S. Jacob, after six daughters. The family moved to Sri Lanka where his father became a dedicated Evangelist in the Hill Country.

Rajala Jacob, as he was called then, and now, by friends; had his early education in Holy Cross School, Kalutara; Highlands College, Hatton and at Wesley College, Colombo. He had offered Sinhala as his second language in school. This, in later life proved to be a great asset to his ministry in the church across the entire island of Sri Lanka.

**1951 - 1975.** After his B.D. at the United Theological College in 1951 he served in the Colombo South circuit, (a predominantly Sinhalese area), and in Hatton, where he married Joyce in October 1955. He moved on to the Eastern Province, where his children Shanthakumar (1956) and Shanthini (1958) were born.

He obtained his M.Th. at the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1965 and returned to Sri Lanka and served the Methodist Church in many circuits in Colombo, the Eastern Province and in the Central Province.

Where ever he served he left his stamp of faith on the people he served and his skill as administrator on the outreach of the church. When in Kottaimunai, he helped to build a new Manse, a new Church Hall and made plans for an Eastern Technical Institute, a joint venture with the Jesuits to provide vocational

training for young men. He was Secretary of the Methodist Conference in Sri Lanka, while in charge of the Tamil Methodist circuit in Moor Road, Colombo from 1972 to 1975 when he was invited to come to Britain as part of the World Church in Britain Program.

**1975 - 1981:** He was a Circuit Minister in Hammersmith, Brentford and Hounslow till 1981 before he returned to Sri Lanka. A man of vision and commitment dedicated to place the interest of the Church above his personal interests, and claims of friendship, class or race, he was respected and honored wherever he served.

It was during his stay in London, that he understood the needs of a small Tamil Christian congregation originally from Sri Lanka, which since 1972 was striving to create a worshipping Tamil community in London. We were longing for fellowship, warmth and pastoral care. He offered us his service as Honorary Minister. We became the London Tamil Christian Congregation (LTCC) at Putney. As more refugees started coming after 1977, many smaller worshipping groups sprang up in and around London. He always encouraged us to be inclusive and supportive of all such groups. Many of us in this congregation were accustomed to the C.S.I. tradition in Sri Lanka. We also have members from Anglican, Methodist and Baptist backgrounds. In a sense we had started an Ecumenical congregation by encouraging our members to attend their local churches on the other three Sundays when we did not have a Tamil service. Rev. Jacob was

greatly appreciated for his pastoral care and his encouragement of our vision as world citizens, getting us involved with the World Church activities here in U.K. There was an air of Christian solidarity and a sense of belonging to the one world church as a congregation. He helped us to develop a structure as a congregation, drew up a Constitution, with an Administrative and Executive Council of lay members.

**1981 - 1983:** In Sri Lanka, on the Partners in Mission Program of the Methodist Church, he continued as Circuit Minister and as Area Secretary of the Sri Lankan Methodist Church. He was fully alive to the social issues in Sri Lanka. His trilingual skills, his personal faith and high dedication, integrity and broad vision endeared him to all who knew him. Through his ministry in Sri Lanka, he helped build four new Manses, one new Church, a new Deaconess's Quarters and renovate the Evangelist's Quarters in Pottuvil. It is ironic that he and his family were themselves victims of communal riots in 1983. The Manse was burnt, all possessions lost and with only minutes to spare, they escaped to be with and help Refugees at Methodist College.

**1984 - 1991:** Back in U.K., the Methodist Church Overseas Division, appointed him Area Secretary for Asia and the Pacific. He made many trips abroad to these churches, led a Peace mission to Fiji at the time of the coup, and continued to be honorary minister to the LTCC. He compiled a bilingual Book of Prayers, with the Order of Service for all Christian Sacraments. This was

uniquely designed to meet our needs as a people using both Tamil and English during our worship.

**1991 - 1996:** Once more in Sri Lanka, based at the Moor Road Church, he built a new Manse. Sensitive to the needs of displaced people, he prioritized the building of a hostel for schoolgirls in Hatton and a larger hostel for young working girls, both of which he completed before retirement.

**1997 - 2000 :** Officially in retirement in London, he continued to preach in various Methodist circuits and gave much of his time supporting the LTCC through many of its growing problems. We now have the second and third generation of Sri Lanka Tamil Christians, with a growing need to nurture the Youth and Children. Young families were conscious of the lack of spiritual support and pastoral care, as we were still continuing with one service a month.

We are fortunate that in the last year, one of his old Sunday school students from Batticaloa, now serving in the Baptist church here, Rev. Barnabas Alexander, has with Rev. Jacob's blessing and guidance been appointed honorary Minister of the LTCC. Rev. S.M. Jacob had been formally recognized as Honorary Minister Emeritus of the LTCC from 1999. He prepared the last batch of children for confirmation in October 99, appointed Prayer Group Fellowships in and around London with Rev. Barnabas and preached at our Watchnight Service as we greeted the New Millennium in church.

Despite his declining health, he would continue to do as much as possible for the Methodist Church and the LTCC. We were indeed blessed to have had in him a caring, disciplined, concerned, providing and foresighted Minister, who trained us to be disciplined, searching and honest with ourselves. We thank God for this loyal and faithful follower of Jesus Christ who taught us the faith and by example showed us the need to be faithful to a higher calling and service in our time. He succumbed to his failing health, which caused a fracture of his thighbone in January. He accepted his death with calm courage and dignity. He died peacefully on 27th February 2000, at the Middlesex Hospital, London surrounded by his family in prayer around him. A well attended service of Thanksgiving before, and a Fellowship meal after his committal rites at St. Marylebourne's Cemetery, were held at Wesley's Chapel in London on 6th March 2000.

Chandra Sethurajan  
London Tamil Christian  
Congregation

## FRANK PUSHPANAYAGAM:

The sudden demise of Frank Pushpanayagam was a sad loss to his friends and relations. He touched the hearts of those he came in contact with, with his humour and simple life-style. Frank Pushpanayagam hailed from a respectable Jaffna family.

He was the second brother of three loving sisters. His elder brother predeceased him. He was educated at the Jaffna College, where he excelled in studies as well as in literary and extra curricular activities.

After leaving college he secured employment at the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). It is here that I first met him three decades ago.

Upon leaving the NCHE he pursued his career at various establishments, such as the Agrarian Research and Training Institute, Family Planning Association, Red Barna, and lastly at the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation.

Frank, when I first met him was unable to speak a word of Sinhala but by sheer perseverance learned the language and during the latter part of his life spoke fluent Sinhala.

Frank was attached to the SLBC from his young days as a radio artiste and regularly took part in Tamil radio dramas. With the introduction of the electronic media in Sri Lanka he was automatically absorbed into the TV media. Frank was a very popular actor and he performed various roles in Sinhala and Tamil tele-dramas. He will be remembered for the fatherly roles he played in some ethnic based dramas.

Frank Pushpanayagam was a peace loving and affable person. He and his family were not affected by the communal violence in 1983, but for precautionary reasons stayed at the refugee camp at Bambalapitiya. Frank had jolly personality. Most of his friends will remember him as a cheerful and lively person. He had an amazing sense of humour. He would make his friends shriek with laughter by relating all sorts of amusing incidents. Even though I am a Buddhist, during our long period of friendship, I found him to be a religious person. He always believed in God for his existence. May be Frank neglected his health. I fail to understand how he gave up this fight for life so easily and so soon. Life is unfair to some.

Those who miss Frank mostly will be the members of his family, his beloved wife Rance, daughter Sumangali and son Virendran to whom he was warmly attached, as few men are to their families. Frank loved life and lived it to the fullest.

May he rest in peace.

Friend

## Obituary:

## Mrs. K.E. Mathiapparanam

We are sorry to record the death of Mrs. K.E. Mathiapparanam which took place on Saturday the 13th May 2000 at her residence in Dehiwala.

Mr. K.E. Mathiapparanam husband of Mrs. Rosie Mathiapparanam, was the Head of the Department of Tamil, Jaffna College during the Principalship of Rev. John Bicknell, Mr. K.A. Selliah and Mr. S.V. Balasingam.

Mrs. Rosie Mathiapparanam (nee Nathaniel) was the mother of the late Thilagan, Rev. Seelan, Selvi, Selvan and Arul. The funeral took place at A.E. Raymond Funeral Parlor on Tuesday, 16th May at 5.00 p.m.



## EDITORIAL

..... but the Greatest of these is CHARITY

Two Thousand years ago St. Paul the supreme servant and interpreter of Christ wrote:

"And now abideth faith hope charity these three, but the greatest of these is charity" 1 Cor. 13:13

King Asoka after crushing the Kalingas in a gruesome war about 300 years before Christ declared, "Love triumphs over every thing; love is a greatest force in this world". After this war King Asoka embraced Buddhism, gave up his policy of territorial aggrandizement and began the propagation of Buddhism in Asia.

Charity is the greatest need in this country. Unfortunately what we see is hatred mounting every day - hatred among various linguistic and religious groups.

At this crucial hour the words of Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Thera, Secretary, Amarapura Nikaya have brought sunshine into the hearts of many Sri Lankans. In an interview with Lynn Ockersz published in the Ceylon Daily News of 16. 5. 2000 Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Thera says:

"The ordinary people suffer tremendously on account of this conflict. It is a sin to ignore their heart-cry. All communities are suffering immense hardships in the North-East. Our heart goes out to them".

Obviously Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Thera is not carried away by the frenzy and fear psychosis that are pervading the whole Island. He has given some valuable suggestions for the solution of the national problems. Following are his words:

"Hard feelings should be overcome through talks. One problem with a military solution is that it never eliminates hostility in the vanquished. Suppressed hatred towards the victor in the vanquished, usually resurfaces after a military solution is imposed".

The Thera was also very critical about the part played by peace players in Sri Lanka. He seems disillusioned with the outcome of their performances:

"The craving for publicity on the part of some peace players has damaged many a negotiation process in the past. After all, peace negotiations should be conducted with the purest of intentions and not for publicity and fame it affords the participants".

If only Sri Lanka had more Buddhist Monks of this calibre and category of Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Thera, many of our problems would have been solved without foreign assistance.

In conclusion this scholarly Monk says:

"All Tamils of the country shouldn't be considered terrorists. Communities should aspire towards living in peace and brotherhood. It was his hope that we would be able to step into twenty first century in harmony and amity".

Let us thank God for  
Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Thera  
and for his words of wisdom.

## STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

The National Christian Council (NCC) calls upon the Sri Lankan political leadership and all political forces in the country to exercise wisdom and foresight in the aftermath of the fall of the Elephant pass military base. As the fighting spreads towards areas with larger concentrations of civilians the prospect of more wasteful loss of lives among young Sri Lankans in the opposing forces and among civilians looms large. The NCC which has consistently deplored the loss of life and limb in the protracted conflict calls upon the parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and to act in a manner that will ensure that loss of life remains at a minimum.

Since we believe that a negotiated political settlement is the only means by which the conflict can be ended the question is whether such negotiations are conducted sooner rather than later after more deaths, destruction and despair. In the words of Nelson Mandela, in a speech at Trinity College, Dublin in 12th April, 2000.

"Our starting point then is that where parties are locked in conflict, peace is to be found through compromises based on the recognition that their common

CHURCH  
IN THE ROUND

*Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1999) is one of the recent books that caught my attention, especially at a time we have entered into a new century which also happens to be a new millennium. This book is a fitting testimony by Phyllis Trible, a noted feminist theologian to the great contribution of Letty Russell, a renowned feminist theologian who has retired in the recent past.

About seven years ago, Letty M. Russell, drawing from her 35 years of experience, wrote in her *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999) stated that if the church is to remain alive and to do more than perpetuate itself as we move into the next century, it must change. It must reorder, reorient and rearrange itself through acts of reflection and repentance. The model for such a change suggested by Russell is "a common table for hospitality and conversion". It is a roundtable that invites all regardless of any difference that could normally keep people apart. However, there is regard for the outcast and the marginalized for inclusion!

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is having its 11th General Assembly in Tomohon, Indonesia from June 1-6 on the theme "Time for Fullness of Life for All". It is time, not in a chronological sense but in a kairological aspect. The Asian continent is facing quite a lot of problems. Everywhere people are longing for a meaningful existence. People are struggling hard for their voices to be heard. They strive hard to maintain their identities. However, the voices from the margin always remain in the margin. The church has a vital role to play in the context of oppression, marginalization and deprivation. Russell holds the view that those who hold power in the church should "choose the margin as a way of standing in solidarity with those who are oppressed and working for justice" (page 26). The goal of this choice, Russell puts forward, is not to promote marginalization over centralization, rather for elimination of both centre and margin through "redemptive table talk". This vision for elimination of both centre and margin, in fact, both receives and awaits actualization in Christ, "the One who is at the center of life in the church but dwells on the margin where he lived and died" (page 27).

John says that Jesus came that people may have life in its abundance (10.10). The fullness, Jesus referred to here is by way of laying down his own life for the sake of the sheep. Giving up or laying down image is the supreme example Jesus portrays for the affirmation of life in its abundance. The Church needs to look at itself seriously and reevaluate itself at this critical juncture. Listening to the voices of the margin is not an act of charity, rather it is an action toward effecting justice in human relations. Juan Segundo of Uruguay said, "The world should not be the way it is." We are called upon to develop a simultaneous commitment to God and to those created in the image of God, the human beings.

The church needs to go around, says Russell. For this she suggests the image of the spiral in contrast to that circle. Going around is not to repeat the conversation and to come back to the same place but rather to change ways in which one thinks and acts. This "spiraling process" helps one to critique all kinds of domination and discrimination and in that process makes one move beyond to a level of awareness that engenders redemptive actions.

Church in the round is open to all. It needs to look into the biblical narratives to listen to the peoples' voices unheard of and to discern their presence unnoticed hitherto. Thus, when one talks about "Time for Fullness of Life for All," he or she cannot forget that it is also a call for repentance and conversion of all of us.

Thaya Thisgarajah.

interests are more important than their differences. In particular the shared benefits of peace and stability far outweigh short-term interests that each may derive from continuing conflict and tension".

We believe that bloody battle for the rest of the Jaffna Peninsula is not in the interests of any of the communities of Sri Lanka. We call upon the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to engage in immediate talks leading to a cessation of hostilities and the commencement of serious, bona fide negotiations leading to a political settlement of the ethnic conflict.

Rev. Roy Rebeira, Chairperson of NCC and President of the Dutch Reformed Church

Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando, Bishop of Colombo

Rt. Rev. Andrew Kumarage, Bishop of Kurunegala

Rev. Duleep Fernando, President of the Methodist Church

Rt. Rev. S. Jebanesan, Bishop of the Church of South India Jaffna Diocese

Rev. Dr. W.G. Wickremasinghe, President of the Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya

Colonel Keith Wylie, Territorial Commander, Salvation Army

Rev. George Stephen, Moderator, Presbytery of Lanka.



## THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE BILL 2000.

The Christian Marriage Bill 2000 will be presented in the Indian Parliament soon. The Christian marriages in India were regulated by two very old enactments, viz: The Christian Marriage Act 1872 and the Christian Divorce Act 1869. Since they were very old laws, the Christian Community in India had drawn up the drafts of four Bills relating to marriage, divorce, adoption and succession about six years ago. The present Government in India has clubbed two of these draft Bills, those relating to marriage and divorce. The Christian Marriage Bill 2000, according to Church leaders has either left out crucial clauses or altered them so as to control the freedom entitled with the church.

The practice hitherto has been that if a Christian wanted to marry a non-Christian, the marriage could be solemnized in the Church. Under the terms of the new Bill church marriages can be conducted only when both partners are Christians. Mixed couples therefore will have to get married under the special marriage act. Severe restrictions have been imposed on priests performing marriages with such stringent penalties for violation that they could be used as a lever to harass or victimize priests.

Christian Women's groups however see in it the promise of gender justice long denied by the reigning patriarchal order. They have organized seminars and demonstrations to expedite the passing of this Bill in Parliament.

A Tribute

**MRS K.E. MATHIAPARANAM (ROSIE - nee NATHANIEL)**

Tribute paid by Bishop Jebanesan at the A.E Raymonds funeral parlour on Tuesday 16th May 2000

Today is a day of thanksgiving. We have assembled here to thank God for a rich and long life that had touched many people in Jaffna and Colombo by showing concern and affection. My mind goes back to Jaffna College of the 50's and the 60's. At that time there was no University in Jaffna. Jaffna College was the highest seat of learning. There were stalwarts in various fields to give leadership to the community. The Heads of Departments of Jaffna College were the "Professors" of various disciplines in Jaffna.

The wives of these teachers played a vital role in building up the ethos and the cultural milieu of the community. Mrs. Mathiaparanam was probably the last of these people to depart from this world. With her demise the old

Bible Reflection at the

### ECLOF ASIA REGIONAL WORKSHOP

Pegasus Reef Hotel Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, March 31, 2000

Bible Text: Isaiah 11:1 - 9

The pictorial scene from the Book of Isaiah read for us today, is a powerful picture which depicts God's kingdom. This picture, when visualized in our mind's eye seems a beautiful one, but when examined minutely, we see the picture making some unrealistic assumptions. Isaiah prophesies that "that the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat ..... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of God."

This picture by Isaiah envisioning God's kingdom, (although unrealistic in the present context) is exciting. We see in it the very essence of God's purpose for the world, the essence of the prophecies of old and the very essence of Jesus' teachings and his lifestyle.

In this picture one sees the following.....

There exists harmony - where nature and humanity are in harmony with each other. Animals and human beings live without fear of each other.

There exists fearlessness and a sense of security - for it is clearly stated "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain"

There is no dominion of one over the other and as a result there is self-dignity.

This picture which exudes a sense of harmony and unity despite its elements of diversity teaches us that God's kingdom does not require sameness/similarity in the characters which occupy it. In fact it is the diversity of its different components and characters which enriches God's kingdom.

There exists sharing and caring and an interdependence in the function of these beings - human beings and nature.

New relationships are portrayed and with it a rejection of the old. The wolf and the lamb, the leopard and goat, the calf and the young lion, the cow and the bear, the infant and the cobra, the child and the asp.

There emerges an overall upheaval and a turning over of the norm, traditions and routine. Newness enters the scene.

Models of leadership here have changed: - "a little child leads" and there are no power structures. Qualities needed for leadership are not power and domination anymore but childlike simplicity and humility. There is a breaking of barriers and the rejection of traditional vying between people and animals and nature. Traditional prejudices have been won over with love. Such a unity is possible. Isaiah says, "through the knowledge of God"

This new thinking, new relationships and the reversal of roles are spoken of through Genesis to the end of the New Testament. Isaiah 43:19 says "see I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I'm making a way in the desert." In chapter 42, he says "See the former things have taken place and new things I declare - before they spring into being I announce them to you."

This newness is referred to even in the last chapter of Revelation (Rev. 21): "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth .... I am making everything new."

Boys of Jaffna College have lost a very significant link with the past.

When I was a student at Jaffna College, in the late 50s, Mr. K.E. Mathiaparanam was the Warden of the Chelliah Hostel. He also held a special post at the time and was the Head of the Department of Tamil. In that capacity he was the Patron of the Tamil society. Mr. Mathiaparanam was a very strict Orthodox Christian, but he was also a very kind hearted and efficient teacher. Mrs. Mathiaparanam played her part beautifully as the wife of this great Guru. We used to go to her house during school hours to listen to some radio programs on Tamil Literature. Mrs. Mathiaparanam would switch on the radio, get the correct meter for us and then she would serve tea. She had great love for friends of her sons. She knew every thing about her husband's students and helped them in whatever way possible. It was like a Guru-Shiyya set up where the student found the home of the teacher as his temporary abode.

Mr. Mathiaparanam had many problems as warden of Chelliah Hostel. There were students from various parts of Sri Lanka. Boys from the Islands in the North, Muslims from the East and Sinhalese from South. Mr. Mathiaparanam became a legend as warden of the Chelliah hostel. But Mrs. Mathiaparanam was able to manage the students with tact and patience. Some times she would walk into the hostel, when the husband was not present. She was able to bring peace between the mischievous students and the strict warden.

Mr. Mathiaparanam belonged to the Assembly of God church. Even though they were living in the midst of congregational Christians, they were highly respected because of their rigorous discipline and strong faith. After their retirement the Mathiaporanams moved to Kadduduai, their native town and from there to Colombo. Mr. Mathiaparanam passed away about 20 years ago. At that time Tamil Scholars including Luxmana Iyer came and paid his tribute to his Guru and Mentor. After the death of her husband Mrs. Mathiaparanam continued the ministry. Even though she was sick and confined to the wheel chair, she would call her friends and speak to them, very often encouraging them by word and prayer. God gave her a long life. We thank God for this life which brightened the hearts of many people in the church and outside.

Isaiah's picture of God's reign on earth governs the whole creation and encompasses the whole of human community, not merely the church. We see this in the fact that Jesus interacted not only with his community but also with other communities: The believer community which continued Jesus' mission, had to be constantly reminded that the Kingdom encompassed all humanity. Isaiah thus when he poetically, lyrically presents this picture - solidly plants it in the secular world ..... but what is the reality of the world today .....

We would have seen or heard of the cartoon which depicts the reality of the world today in Isaiah's terms and his language:

Just above the caption reading "the leopard lies down with the lamb" the cartoon is drawn thus - the leopard lies down with the lamb - the only difference is that the lamb lies inside the leopard's tummy!

This is the reality of the secular world today. War ravages many parts of the world, ranging from ethnic tensions to bloody wars waged - ironically sometimes in the name of peace, in the name of justice and even in the name of unity. Some are religious wars fought for religious supremacy. The division between the rich and the poor widens daily, the world economic order oppresses human beings. Violence escalates and with it suicide rates - with women and children as its primary victims. Hunger, malnutrition and death of children with curable diseases remind us of the negligence and indifference of human beings to another's pain and suffering.

Our life, as an Ecumenical body is meant to be a living out of the values projected in Isaiah's vision, not with feelings of superiority but through the "knowledge of God" referred to by Isaiah. If there is to be a realisation of God's intention for the world, what are the changes that need to take place around us

A breaking down of barriers that exist in society so that prejudices are no longer existent.

A rejection of societal, cultural, practices which restrict the full freedom of individuals.

Promotion of a society in which there is fearlessness and a sense of security given to each human being.

Rejection of hierarchical models of leadership, dominance and practice which oppress those forced to the bottom.

A constant questioning of deep in-built, traditional prejudices which prevent "reaching out" and reaching across barriers, prejudices.

A cultivation of a community of men and women each supporting and interdependent on the other without feelings of superiority of one over the other, even as Christ urged in the community of followers he had - both women and men. The practice of roles and values which are positive, caring, creative and humane by all human beings.

The prophet Micah gives us a brief "wrap up" of Isaiah's beautiful picture (Micah 4:3-4) when he proclaims:

"And they shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and shall live in peace and unafraid. And into ploughshares turn their sword, nations shall learn war no more."