

**MISSIONARY  
HERO SERIES**

A giant of the faith, a chief corner to the church in India, and the right arm of all missionaries and church leaders in that nation.

**T. M.  
VARUGHESE**

*"Without Counting the Cost"*

**Douglas LeRoy**



# T. M. Varughese



**A Biography of T. M. Varughese, a national  
leader in the Church of God in India**

**by Douglas LeRoy**

**MISSIONARY HEROES SERIES**

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# CHAPTER 1



T. M. Varughese was born in Puthencavu, South India on May 7, 1898. His parents were members of the Greek Orthodox church and were devout Maronite Syrian Christians. It is believed in India that churches were established in Southern India by Saint Thomas nineteen hundred years ago about A. D. 52. However, through the years the Indians became Christians in name only. The Maronite Syrians believe in asceticism and do not believe in the Incarnation. They believe that Jesus is God but not man.

Varughese's father, a prominent businessman, had no male descendants. Although daughters had been born to the family, the parents prayed for a son. They promised God that they would dedicate the child to His work if their prayers were answered. As always, God heard the cry of those who sought Him and gave them a son. They carefully trained him; however, the promise to give him to the work of God was soon forgotten. After high school graduation, he was sent to college. Upon completing his college training, he was employed as a teacher at an English Girls High School in Kottayam. His parents were proud of his accomplishments, and

they encouraged him to secure a government job so that his salary would increase. 

Even though his parents had forgotten their vow to God, God had not forgotten. In 1918 Varughese attended a revival meeting conducted by a Protestant national minister. While he preached about the cross of Calvary, conviction seized Varughese, and he accepted Christ as his personal Saviour.

He continued to teach school and tried to live a Christian life while at the same time adhere to the Orthodox faith. He married a girl from another Orthodox family, and she never knew that he was considering the Protestant religion.

One day, after teaching, he went to his room with a troubled mind. He longed to be used of God, but he questioned: "If I leave the work as a teacher, I may not be able to support my wife and parents; if I do not leave, I will be displeasing my Lord. What am I to do?" While asleep that night, he received an answer from the Lord. It seemed as though an audible voice spoke, telling him to step out on faith without counting the cost. Awakened, he saw no one in the room. He knew that it was the voice of the Lord, and he decided to take action.

The following morning he went to see his school principal. She was a born-again Austrian lady. As he related the dream, she listened intently. Then, she said: "The Lord is definitely calling you for a work, but why don't you remain with the school and let us attempt to win every girl here to Jesus Christ?" Feeling that he must obey

her advice, he remained with the school. Two weeks later he had the same dream. While he was sleeping, he was awakened by a light in the room. Again the voice called him. Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulder and a voice said: "This is not the place for you to do your work. Step out without counting the cost and do my work."

Varughese arose and knelt before God in prayer. He dedicated himself to the Lord. Impulsively, he began to sing:



Where He leads me I will follow,  
Where He leads me I will follow,  
Where He leads me I will follow,  
I will go with Him, with Him, all the way.

I can hear my Saviour calling,  
I can hear my Saviour calling,  
I can hear my Saviour calling,  
Take thy cross and follow, follow me.

His decision was made. The next day, September 25, 1925, he gave his resignation to his principal. Within a few days he said good-bye to his crying students, and he left for an adventure with the Lord.

[MGM Ministries-Article Source: Missionary Heroes-A Biography of Pastor T M Varughese, a nation leader in the Church of God in India by Douglas LeRoy](#)

## CHAPTER 2



Returning to his home, he told his family of his conversion to Jesus Christ and of his call. Instead of finding a happy father, he found a heartsick one, though it was he who had given him to God. Becoming angry, he ordered Varughese to take his wife and child and leave his home. He moved to a rented house. Because his wife had not received the born-again experience, she felt compelled that her husband should take another job as a teacher in the village. But this was not God's plan for whom He had called to His service.

At this time the first Pentecostal missionary to India, the Reverend Robert F. Cook, was living in Varughese's village. Cook, from Los Angeles, California, had landed on India's soil as a missionary in 1913. At first he ministered in Bangalore, a British civil and military station. He established several churches, led many persons to Christ, and witnessed many miracles. In 1920 he felt led of the Lord to conduct a revival in Kottayam, but Satan hindered and the meeting was unsuccessful. The next year he again felt compelled to conduct a revival. He constructed a pandal (brush arbor) of bamboos and plaited coconut leaves. It seated

500 people. He made announcements in the marketplace. Every night people were saved and on the last day of the campaign 700 persons attended. Cook leased a hut for five years in which to live and established a church. Little did Varughese and Cook know the plans God had for them.



One day Cook visited Varughese and asked him to teach his daughter, Blossom, to speak the Malayalam language, the language of the people of Travancore, now Kerala State. As he taught Blossom the language, his association with the Cook family became precious. She began to teach him biblical truths and led him into the doctrine of water baptism. As he examined the Word of God, he found that everything that she said was truth. Without any further consideration than with God's Word, he asked Brother Cook to baptize him in water. When the village people heard of his decision, they became wild and indignant. Fearing for his life, Brother Cook decided to erect at Mount Zion a tank for baptistry. He completed the project in three days. When the task was finished, Cook baptized him. Varughese became the first convert baptized in the new baptistry at Mount Zion.

God continued to bless his life. Within a short time his wife was converted and baptized in the same baptistry.

Soon, he and his wife were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and they united with Cook's Pentecostal



work. At this time Cook had thirty-six churches in his fellowship. For a while Varughese served as the office secretary in Kalliserry. Sensing the leading of God on Varughese's life, Cook appointed him as the field secretary. A post he held for forty-one years.



MGM Ministries-Article source: Missionary Heroes-A Biography of Pastor T M Varughese, a nation leader in the Church of God in India by Douglas LeRoy

## CHAPTER 3



Ever since Cook moved to Travancore State in 1922, he had a vision of a centrally located site for administration buildings and permanent missionary quarters. His facilities were located in Kalliserry, a village two miles from Chengannur in Central Travancore.

In 1927 the heavy monsoon rains caused water to rise to four feet on three sides of the rented Cook home. Their orphan girl, Mary, almost drowned. This experience caused Cook to seek more diligently for a new, permanent location.

Cook put out a fleece to God. He wanted a site on which to build that would not require cash for at least two years. He had admired a hill in Mulakuzha on the main central highway which belonged to a rich man. However, everyone had told him that it was unavailable.

One day a dentist, Dr. T. K. Abraham, brother of the rich man, visited the Cooks. While in conversation Cook mentioned his need of property. Abraham asked him to consider his brother's property. It was the hill that he had admired.

Cook and Varughese went to see the wealthy owner. He agreed to sell; however, they had no money for the promise payment, even though

the owner agreed to the terms of the fleecce. That day a check was received from the United States for the exact amount needed for the promise payment.



Some years before, the hill had been used as a place for Hindu worship. It had a small shrine on it, and the property was infested with snakes and demonic power. Cook dedicated the site to God and called it Mount Zion. Because Cook was not a national, Varughese assisted with the paper work and the guarantee for the property.

In June 1927, they began construction of a beautiful Bible school and headquarters building. The wood material was cut from timber cut down in the forests and floated down the river to a landing place at Chengannur. They were then hauled out of the water one at a time by an elephant and loaded on an ox cart for transporting them to Mount Zion. For climatic reasons the walls were built high and thick, so as to keep the interior somewhat cool and for good ventilation. Completed six months later, Mount Zion was the first Pentecostal school in South India.

The Bible school, office, and living quarters were initially located under one roof. Two rooms on the west end of the building were for dormitory space. Classes were held in the large living room and on the veranda. A shed was built for a dining room and a kitchen. The first year fifty students were enrolled.

After a few months of classes the noise was unbelievable. The Eastern custom is to eat, study, think, and whisper out loud. For this reason, the quarters were too small. A chapel was constructed

to serve also as a dormitory and classrooms.

After Cook's departure from the field the school was inactive until Dora Myers reactivated the school in 1951. Today, Mount Zion contains a memorial church to Sister Myers, Cook's home, chapel, dormitories, a new dining hall, and a publishing house. Twenty-five young men currently study at the Bible school.

A school for young ladies is located at Kumbanad. About forty students attend.

## CHAPTER 4



The days grew dark for Cook and his church. Several churches left the fellowship and started their own group. There was no financial aid from any source. Cook had to recall his children from school, since he could not pay their fees. One by one the church leaders forsook Cook; however, Varughese remained loyal and faithful.

While in prayer one day, God impressed Cook with the benefits that could be derived from an affiliation with a church. It could help safeguard the work from the wiles of the devil.

One day a lace merchant gave Cook a card bearing the name of J. H. Ingram. On seeing the name, the Spirit at once witnessed to Cook: "Here is your help." He invited Ingram to speak about the Church of God.



Ingram had gone to India in April, 1936, to visit John Manoah, an aged Indian missionary formerly with the United Church of South India. He had made contact with the Church of God after reading the *Evangel*, and the church had supported him for about a year. Manoah had a church and orphanage, chiefly for the oppressed and depressed classes in the Nilgiris.

Ingram was provided housing in a beautiful

missionary rest home in Ootacamund. Two of the guests were Robert and Bertha Cook. While the Cooks were at the rest home, a lace merchant visited them. During the conversation he took Ingram's card out and asked if they knew him.

After Ingram explained the teachings of the Church of God to Cook, Cook invited him to speak to his ministers.

After riding two hundred and forty miles Cook and Ingram arrived in North Travancore and were met by Field Secretary Varughese. He had arranged for a representative meeting at one of the principal stations.

After the Lord set his approval upon the services, they unanimously agreed to unite with the Church of God.

Then, the men traveled to Mount Zion. Another crowd of forty convention delegates met them. Ingram outlined the teachings and government of the Church of God. They all agreed to join the Church of God. Some of the delegates testified that they had been praying for this for a long time. They were sure that it was God's will.

During the meetings that followed people walked for miles to hear Ingram preach. People of high and low castes sought God. Marvelous spiritual things happened.

At the time of the union Cook had established 63 mission stations. There were 43 pastors, 2,537 members, and the Mount Zion Bible Institute. The property was valued at \$13,134.00

After the union Satan tried to hinder the work in every possible way, but God graciously brought

the church through every situation.

Varughese was delighted with the union. He felt that it offered financial and personnel assistance to make the church grow rapidly. During the next few years many missionaries from North America came to help.

In 1938 the World Missions Board sent Hoyle and Mildred Case to help with the work, but because of World War II they were forced to return after four years. But as a result of their effort, they left four new churches.

Travel was difficult for Varughese. He traveled by ox cart and bicycles to the village churches. He rode all over South India on his two wheeler preaching the gospel. Sometimes he had to cycle 32 miles through the forest to reach preaching stations. He conducted healing campaigns, revival services, and tarrying meetings. He established Sunday schools and trained church leaders.

In Variapulam he established a Sunday school with 44 students. Within a few weeks he baptized 61 in water. After one teaching session a twelve-year-old boy cried out: "I am lost. Pray for me to be saved." Such was the effectiveness of his proclamation of the Word of God.

In March 1947, C. E. and Ellen French went to India as missionaries. They arrived during a turbulent and transitional period. Although Cook had become aged and in need of a successor, when the time actually came for such preparations to be made, he found it difficult to relinquish, or even to share, the reins. It was Cook's desire to continue his work until he died and then to be buried on Mount Zion. This time of stress affected

the work of the church.



At first Cook would not aapt French. French lived with Varughese in his small home for more than a month while his family remained in Kodaikanal. Through the understanding of Varughese, French, and Paul Cook, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, God guided the church and kept it together.

In 1947 the World Missions Board felt that because of Brother Cook's age and health, he and his wife should return to the States. This was a difficult thing for them to accept leaving the country and people they had loved and won to Christ. His son Paul was appointed overseer until 1948, when he also returned to the States.

It was a trying time for Varughese. He loved Cook like a father. He did not want to see him leave, yet he knew it was best for Cook and for the Church of God in India.

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# CHAPTER 5



In 1950, Miss Dora Myers, a teacher from Lee College, felt the call of God to India. Through her efforts, the Bible School was reorganized, and the work began to thrive again. With Varughese's help new buildings were added.

In 1952 the Frenches returned to their homeland on furlough, where they recuperated from illnesses and fatigue.

On April 12, 1952, William Pospisil and his wife arrived in India to succeed the Frenches. Pospisil, a former Catholic, had been serving as overseer of Montana. Pospisil and Varughese united their efforts and moved into new areas in the Kerala and Tamil field. With the help of other Indian ministries they enlarged the work in the Telugu and Hindi areas.

In 1953 a Bible School was opened in the Tamil field. Again, Varughese and the other church leaders felt the buffetings of Satan. One man brought a lawsuit against the church and tried to secure one of the buildings. At one time Varughese was arrested and placed under the custody of the police. The church prayed and two months later he was released.

At last the decision came from the courts that

the building lawfully belonged to the Church of God. Now, the Kakinada Bible School is continuing in the same building. The school is located in an attractive center of the city and speaks well for the Church of God in India and of the power of God.



In 1954 Howard and Lucille Turner went to India. New missions were then developed in the northern area. James Reesor and Darrell Lindsey also provided missionary assistance for the growth of the work.

The work of the Church of God in India now extends from the Central to the South and from the East to the West. As of May, 1989 there were 805 churches, 122 missions, 763 ministers, 51,059 members, and 4 Bible Schools. The work is divided into six areas: Tamil Nadu (Madras), Kerala Division, Kerala State, Andhra, Central, and North.

Varughese was instrumental in the establishing of three of the Bible Schools and in the growth of the church in Kerala (Travancore), which has over 300 churches.

Varughese loved people, and they knew it. He would chastise people, and then embrace them. He didn't hold grudges. He had a forgiving spirit.

He was an excellent storyteller and teacher. His illustrations were lively and clear. His messages became powerful truths as he illustrated them by everyday events.

His excellent voice attracted people. He sang well and spoke forcefully. He also authored a book on Christian martyrs.



# CHAPTER 6



Even though Varughese had to curtail many of his activities in recent years, he pastored the church at Mulakuzha until his death and was constantly being called on to minister to other churches and to solemnize marriages. Overseers sought his counsel for God had given him great wisdom. M. V. Chacko, overseer of the State of Kerala, commented: "He is like a father to me as well as to thousands of young people in India. I often seek his advice, particularly in administrative matters. He is a well advanced administrator. He is an inspiration for all our people in Kerala."

Even in his late eighties, he continued to reach out to others. He traveled by train for two days and two nights on second class (just a wooden seat, pillow and sheet) to North India to preach the Gospel.

He also made a trip to the Persian Gulf area to visit the Indian community employed in the oil fields. He preached many times and organized two churches during his visit.

During his ministry he invaded three new major areas for the church. He preached thousands of sermons, organized almost 300 churches and baptized several thousand new converts. He

held the Asian record for the most years of unbroken ministry. Varughese is a "Giant of the Faith."



He and his wife Saramma have two boys and three girls. His eldest boy is paralyzed and confined to a bed. His second son, George, is employed in Abu Dhabi and is the sole support of the family.

Varughese writes: "let me state clearly—I am not a retired minister, but I am only a retired Field Secretary. I will occupy till Jesus comes. I am praying for the Lord to keep me strong in body so that I can work for Him in these last midnight hours. I can say with thanksgiving that I am not sick. I still use my old motorcycle to travel for the work of the church. I pastor, preach revivals, counsel, and teach."

"I love the Church of God, and I want to die as a good soldier, fighting for the sound doctrines which our church teaches and bringing many souls to the Lord."

In 1980 former Asian Superintendent Lovell R. Cary interviewed Varughese at his home. Toward the end of the interview Varughese told Cary: "My life has touched people all over India. God has been faithful. However, I believe the greatest days are ahead. I believe that the Church of God is going up and up till Jesus comes. He is coming soon. I would like to see Jesus in my lifetime."

Brother Varughese died in the morning of June 5, 1985, and was buried in the afternoon at Mt. Zion Cemetery. He had succumbed to high



blood pressure and sugar diabetes.



The Church of God in India will always bear the imprint of T. M. Varughese, a godly and sainted man; a man who followed Jesus without counting the cost.

# CHAPTER 7



Although India occupies only 2.4 percent of the world's land area, it supports 16 percent of the world's population (1989 est. 833,422,000). Only China has a larger population. Over 40 percent of Indians are younger than 15 years old. About 80 percent of the people live in more than 550,000 villages and the remainder in more than 200 towns and cities. India is the seventh largest country in the world in land area, roughly one-third the size of the United States. India has 582.4 persons per square mile compared to 65.3 persons per square mile in the U.S.

The Indus Valley civilization dates back over 5,000 years. From about 500 B.C., Aryana speaking Sanekrit merged with Dravidians (natives) to create the classical Indian society. Arab, Turk, and Afghan Muslims ruled successively from the 8th to the 18th centuries. Portuguese and Dutch traders came, but the English ended up with political control. After World War I, the nationalist movement was led by Mahatma Gandhi who advocated civil disobedience to bring about change. In 1947, Gandhi's activities led to the partitioning of the peninsula into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The partition brought about religious riots, killings and mass migrations. Gandhi



attempted to stop the religious violence, but on January 30, 1948, was assassinated. Two years later, India became a parliamentary republic in the British Commonwealth. The parliament has two houses: the Lok Sabha (House of the People), and the Rajya Sabha (Council of State). The President is the chief of state and the Prime Minister is the head of the government. India has 22 states and nine union territories.

The Indian economy is predominantly agricultural. It ranks first in the world in the production of peanuts and pulses, second in rice and cheese, third in tobacco, fourth in wheat, cotton, milk and butter, and fifth in sugarcane and rubber. It is rich in natural resources and manpower. India is not self-sufficient in food-stuffs and is occasionally affected by shortages.

The majestic Himalaya mountains form India's northern border. The Ganges plain below is fertile. Below that is the Decca plateau. About half of the country is cultivated and one-fourth is forested. The climate varies from tropical in the South to near arctic cold in the northern mountains. The three basic seasons are March-May (hot and dry), June-September (hot and rainy), October-February (cool).

There are more than 1600 languages and dialects in India, 24 with more than 1 million speakers. There are 14 official languages. Hindi, spoken by 30% of the people, is the national language. English is spoken widely in government and business.

The Indian people are religious, family-oriented, and philosophical, with a strong belief in simple

material comforts and rich spiritual accomplishments. Physical purity and refinement of spirit are highly valued.



The basic social unit is the family; it takes precedence over the individual. In most families, aunts, uncles, and other families live together. The elderly are respected and are taken care of in their old age by their sons. Traditional families are large, with at least six children. Modern, urban families are smaller, with 2-4 children.

Traditional marriages are still arranged by the parents, with the consent of the bride and the groom. Marriage is very sacred and is for eternity. Dates and divorces are rare. In fact, India's divorce rate is the seventh lowest in the world. For an Indian woman, chastity is the most treasured virtue of womanhood.

Women in India usually wear *sarees*, long, colorful dresses. Men generally wear Western-style clothing.

Indian meals are wholesome, mostly prepared from scratch. Breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner are served daily. Coffee and tea are served with breakfast and at snacktime, and water is commonly served with all meals. Wheat bread (*roti*) is the staple food in the north and rice in the south. Curry (eggs, fish, meat, or vegetables in a spicy sauce) is popular. Hindus eat no beef, and Muslims, no pork. Vegetarianism is almost universal in India. After meals, beetle leaves and nuts are commonly served to aid in digestion.

When invited for a meal, it is customary to bring sweets, flowers or fruits for the host family.






Orthodox Muslim women are usually kept from the view of men outside their families. Women often stay out of the conversation and usually do not wear any footwear inside their homes, and visitors should remove their shoes when entering a home.

India is the birthplace of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism and is the adopted homeland of Zoroastrianism. About 79% of the people are Hindu. About 12% of the people are Moslems and about 3% are Christians.

A typical Sunday morning in a Church of God in India would look like this:

7:30- 8:30	Sunday School
10:00-11:00	Prayer
11:00- 1:30	Music
	Testimonies by all members
	Children Dedication
	Sermon

The minister also leads the people each Sunday in reading from the Psalms. They read responsively. It is like singing together. The Psalms reading and singing provides much encouragement for the people.

The annual Church of God convention is a highlight in each state. Notices about the meeting are published five to six months in advance of the meeting. Thousands attend the meetings. The meetings are conducted under a pandal. The people bring a mat or a paper and sit on the ground. A small platform is provided for the

preacher. The people sit patiently and reverently. They shout praises to God by bouncing up and down from their seated position. Two sermons are presented each night. People come to hear the Word of God. Some preachers cannot exhort for 2 or 3 hours so two preachers are provided to do the preaching.

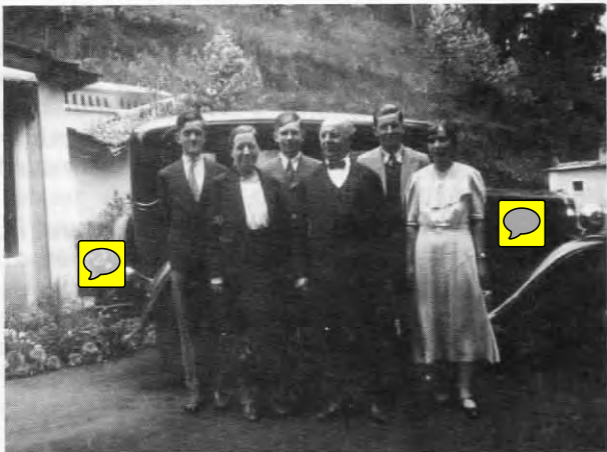
The minister does not wear shoes in the pulpit, because, like Moses, he stands on holy ground. An offering is received between the two sermons. In the early days the people did not give because they expected the Missions Department to handle their financial needs. As they were taught biblical stewardship, they began to give. Now, they tithe and give to missions in every service.

Christianity affects the total lives of people. This has been especially true in Kerala State where the Church of God started and is the strongest. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India. They also have the best sanitary conditions.

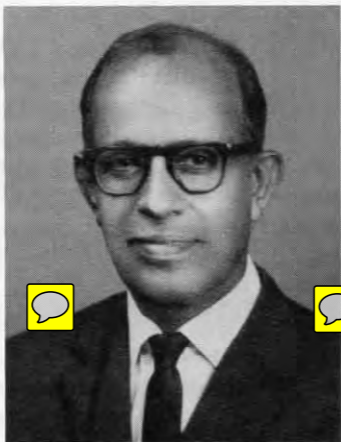
Women play a vital role in the Church of God in India. They are faithful housewives and church helpers. Many serve as Bible women. These women who choose celibacy devote themselves to the work of God. They visit other women in twos and share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

India is a land of color and contrast. It provides a ready harvest field for the Church of God. Thank God for men like T. M. Varughese who labored faithfully in the vineyard.





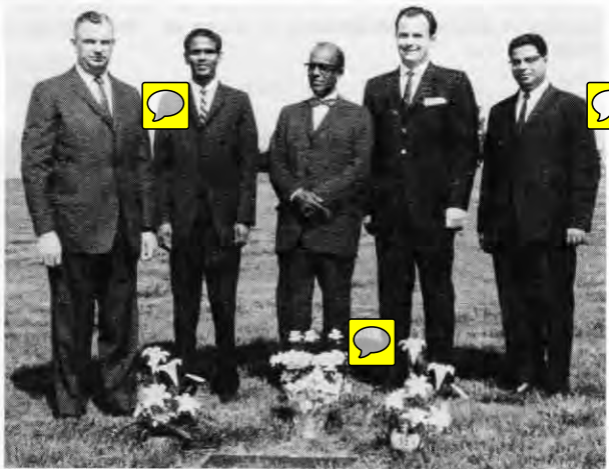
***Robert F. Cook, founder of the Church of God in India, and his family. The picture was taken 1938. Left to right: son, Paul; wife, Bertha; son, Alex; R. F. Cook; son, George; and daughter, Blossom.***



***T. M. Varughese, October 1962.***



***T. M. Varughese, front row with dark shirt, with Brother and Sister Pospisil, to his left, and students of the Mount Zion Bible School.***

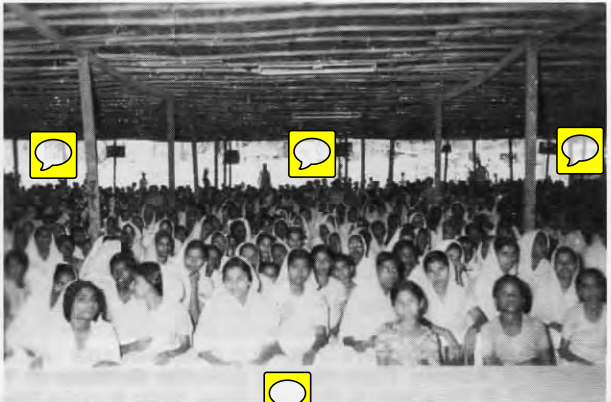


***T. M. Varughese at the grave of Robert F. Cook, June 1962. Left to right: L. H. Aultman, World Missions Executive Secretary; M. V. Chacko; T. M. Varughese; C. Raymond Spain, World Missions Field Representative; and M. I. Joseph.***

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***Located in Bombay, this structure is known as "The Gateway to India."***



***A typical congregation at the Kerala convention.***



***T. M. Varughese, holding baby, bids goodbye to relatives prior to leaving for one of his visits to the Church of God in the United States.***



***A field of Hindu gods in Tamil.***



***The India Executive Council, December 1963. Right to left: William Pospisil, T. M. Varughese and Harold Turner.***

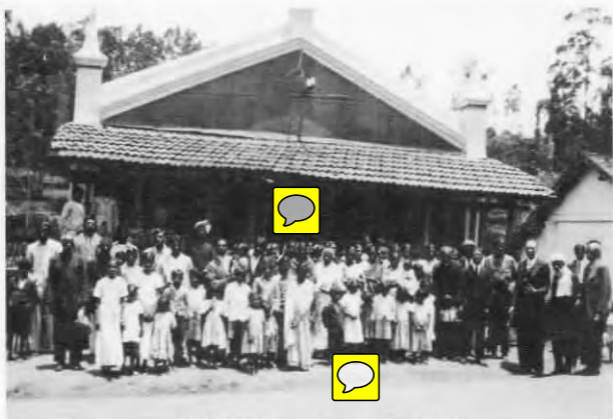


***T. M. Varughese, right, welcomes P. A. V. Samuel as the new Field Secretary in 1966.***



***Rev. and Mrs. T. M. Varughese***

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*J. H. Ingram, standing to the right, visiting with Robert F. Cook, circa 1936.*



*The grave stone of a beloved brother and minister in the Church of God.*