



MIQRA

from the land of letters

SERAMPORE COLLEGE (UNIVERSITY) * CONVOCATION * 7 FEBRUARY 2015

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION should impart social justice and virtue:



Serampore College (University)

In 1818, the Serampore College was established in the Danish settlement of Serampore by the pioneer Christian missionaries, William Carey (1761-1834), Joshua Marshman (1768-1837) and William Ward (1869-1823), for the instruction of Indian youth in Christianity and the sciences. In 1827, the College was incorporated by the Royal Charter granted by His Danish Majesty King Frederick the Sixth with University powers under the control of an independent Council. The President of the Council is the Master of the College. The final authority in all matters related to the College was bestowed in the Master and the Council of Serampore College. The main intension of the King, and the Founding fathers, was the promotion of piety and learning, particularly among the Christian population of India, though open to all people without any distinction in castes and creeds. In 1919, the Governing Body of the College – Council, Faculty, and Senate, was reconstituted in accordance with the provisions of the Serampore College Act.

Officers of the Senate: Rt. Rev Dr. John S. Sadananda (Master), Mrs. Hilda Peacock (Vice Master), Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos (President), Prof. Dr. Lalitluangliana Khiangte (Convener), Rev. Dr. Ivy Singh (Treasurer), Rev. Dr. Santanu K. Patro (Registrar)

Kottayam



Kottayam, the land of letters (*Akshara nagari*) is bordered by the Western Ghats on the east and the Vembanad Lake and paddy fields of Kuttanad on the west. Panoramic backwater stretches, lush paddy fields, highlands, hills and hillocks, extensive rubber plantations, places associated with many legends and a totally literate people have given Kottayam District the enviable title, the land of letters, legends, latex and lakes.



Catholicos Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II

Kottayam: In the pluralistic context of India, Theological Education should help creating a new humanity which impart social justice and virtues that give sanctity to life, says Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, the head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He reflected this in the commemoration speech of the Convocation of the Senate of Serampore University in the Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam. From the speech of the Catholicos:

“The original vision of Serampore by the founding fathers Carey, Marshman and Ward combined theory and practice in an admirable way. For them, knowledge was to be at the service of the people. They did not limit it to a small circle of believers but addressed the whole society in the dissemination of knowledge. The connection they established between knowledge and experience belongs to the genuine tradition of the Church. It follows that whatever theological study

and research we do should ultimately be in the service of the pastoral care of our people. We have the original model in the ministry of Jesus Christ our lord, whose teachings and acts of healing, his prayer and meditation, his suffering, death and resurrection were all for the sake of this “world that God so loved”.

Our mother land India is probably experiencing a major change in the self-understanding of our nation. The secular character of our country which recognized the value of all religions and diverse spiritualities and the constitutional freedom of religion, conscience and so on,

growth or power-building of their churches. We are together in the Household of God and nobody can threaten to send us out from our own house.

A genuine friendship and collaboration is needed among the Seminaries in the Serampore family for our joint Christian witness in the present context. Church should return to the original Indian identity and authenticity of our faith in Christ Jesus and to our commitment to justice and compassion of the kingdom of God. There are so much inequality and injustice in our society, particularly the centuries old suffering of Dalits, Adivasis and women and all those



H. H. Catholicos Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II delivering the commoration message. 7th Feb. 2015. 9.00 a.m.

seem to be challenged by communal forces. I think the tiny population of Christians in India of less than 2.5% is not a threat to anybody. On the contrary Christians are supposed to be at the service of the nation out of genuine love and compassion for the people, not for quantitative

poor who are socially and economically marginalized in a globalized economy. Empowering these people is a major task on our hand. But we need to enlist the genuine collaboration of our neighbors of other faiths in carrying out this task of building a new humanity and new nation.”

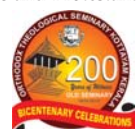
Malankara Orthodox Church

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is an Apostolic Church founded in India in A.D. 52 by the Apostle, St. Thomas. The term *Malankara* refers to the geographical region of present-day Kerala in southwestern India where St. Thomas first preached. At least from the fourth century the Indian Church entered into a close relationship with the Persian or East Syrian Church. From the Persians, the Indians inherited East Syrian language

and liturgies and gradually came to be known as Syrian Christians. The Church entered into a new phase of its history by the establishment of the Catholicate in 1912. The supreme spiritual head of the Church and apostolic successor to the Throne of St. Thomas is His Holiness the Catholicos of the East whose headquarters is in Kottayam. At present the Church is using the West Syrian liturgy. The faith of the Church is that which was established by the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (A.D. 325), Constantinople (A.D. 381) and Ephesus (A.D. 431). The Church is in communion with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches namely, Antiochene, Alexandrian, Armenian, Eritrean and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. The Church is in good ecumenical relationship with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. At present the Church has over 2 million faithful with 30 dioceses all over the world



Chief Minister Sri. Oommen Chandy Inaugurating the Symphony of Art, Culture and Theology. 6th Feb. 2015



The Old Seminary: Celebrating its Bicentenary

When the Portuguese Colonisers under spiritual obligation to Rome imposed massive Latinisation on the ancient St. Thomas Christian Community in the South, a major contingent resisted the imposition. This community took a decision in 1809 to build seminaries for the training of clergy and it was materialized in 1815 by Pulikkottil Ittoop Ramban (later Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius I) who founded the Seminary in Kottayam. His efforts were magnanimously supported by the then British administrative 'Resident' Col. John Munroe and the Travancore Royal Family. The starting of the Seminary in the quadrangular edifice also marked simultaneously the following events also taking place on the campus: the starting of English education, the beginning of the first arts and science residential college, the starting of the first foreign language study centre, the initiatives for bible translation into Malayalam and the first attempts for printing and publishing Christian literature in Malayalam. The



Rev. Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian, Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam

quadrangular building (Nalukettu) which housed all the above, became popularly known as "Old Seminary". It was known originally as *Padithveedu, Cottayam College, Syrian Seminary and Syrian College*. Two hundred years made the Seminary a heritage venue of historic turning points in the denominational history of the St. Thomas Christians, and transformed the campus as one of the full fledged, leading centres of theological education in India under the banner "the Orthodox Theological Seminary". Since 1965 it is affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College for BD, MTh and DTh programmes. 2015, is therefore, the golden jubilee year of the affiliation to the Serampore University.

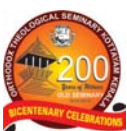


200 Years of Witness

The Orthodox Theological Seminary, (*Cottayam College, Syrian Seminary, Pazhaya Seminary*.) completes 200 years of witness to knowledge and truth. For many reasons, it holds a unique place among the educational institutions in Kerala and India. It has and continues to render various monumental services to people at large and Christian denominations in particular. Starting up as a centre to educate and mould-up clergies of the ancient St. Thomas Christians of India, it eventually became the cradle and headquarters of more than four Christian denominations of the Thomas Christians during the last 200 years as each of them carefully glance back.

Faculty 2015: Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian (Principal), Dr. Mathews Mar Severios (Visiting Professor), Dr. Mathews Mar Thimothios (Visiting Professor), Dr. Zacharias Mar Aprem (Visiting Professor), Rev. Fr. Dr. T. J. Joshua (Professor Emeritus), Fr. Dr. K. M. George (Professor Emeritus), Dn. Dr. K.A. George (Professor Emeritus), Very Rev. Dr. M.S. Yuhanon Ramban, Fr. Dr. T. I. Varghese, Fr. Dr. Baby Varghese, Fr. Dr. O. Thomas, Fr. Dr. Johns Abraham Konat, Fr. Dr. M.P. George, Fr. Dr. Reji Mathew, Fr. Dr. Abraham Oommen, Fr. Jacob Mathew, Fr. John Thomas Karingattil, Fr. Mathews John, Fr. Saji Amayil, Fr. Thomas Varghese, Fr. Dr. Jose John, Fr. Abraham Thomas, Fr. Dr. Ninan K. George, Fr. K. V. Alias, Prof. K. C. George, Fr. M.C. Kuriakose (Manager, Old Seminary), Fr. K. M. Zachariah (P.R.O)

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Relocating Theological Education in the Marginalized Context

Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchala

In a marginalized and marginalizing socio-economic context, with members mostly of the marginalised groups, Indian churches cannot continue to exist with identities and expressions formulated in contexts that are completely different. Ecclesiological formulations that we have inherited were formulated within the background of the

expose the shallowness of its claims to the alternative community that the Church is called out to be. Furthermore, any pursuit of inter-church unity without attempting inclusivity and justice internally is a mere charade.



originating community's structural, functional expressions and options and therefore, not automatically relevant to the people elsewhere, particularly to the people of India whose context and experience are significantly different. There has not been any consistent reflection on Indian ecclesiology recently.

Most of the Indian churches operate through structures and institutions that centralize and wield enormous power and bestow great privileges on those who manage to occupy them. But a majority of their members are socially, economically and politically disempowered communities. Poverty, unemployment, denial of health and educational opportunities, atrocities, violation of their dignity are the daily experiences that they share with other vulnerable communities.

Churches have often remained silent on issues of injustice and stayed away from holding powers accountable by opting to bind the wounds of the victims, to safeguard their institutional interests. When abuse of power, especially against the marginalized communities and the socio-cultural legitimization of that abuse is endemic, we need to ask whether there is anything fundamentally wrong with the ecclesiological trappings that explain the indifference or calculated responses of the churches. How can the Church call itself a fellowship (*koinonia*) while organizing its life as a hierarchical community? It is quite the same as a hierarchical caste community? The sins and scandals of discrimination and exclusion of many within the Church - the indigenous peoples, Dalits, and other oppressed groups, people living with disabilities, the migrants and refugees, etc.,

The Church is not merely a community that gives an identity and a sense of belonging, but a called community, called to be open, just, inclusive and progressive, embracing the excluded and remembering the dismembered. In response to their experience of community which is unjust, exclusive and hierarchical, the marginalised people want the Church to be an alternative to the marginalising world. The Indian church cannot exist as a community, one among many religious communities, but as a community that works together as a moral ferment to rebuild better expressions of community that are beyond caste, religious, regional and linguistic boundaries giving one another a sense of warmth, fellowship and solidarity. This is the alternative that the *oikos* of God (the household of God) can offer to the caste-ridden and now presently market-driven individualistic culture.

This implies a re-location of theological education, and an intentional attempt to do theology from "from below", reading history and interpreting the texts and contexts from the perspective of those who are pushed to the underside and their visions of a new world, the coming reign of God - of justice, dignity and life for all. The credibility of theological education, therefore, depends on its ability to enable this process - to be constantly on the move, open to change, discerning change, in order that we may not only stay relevant but also play a creative part in shaping the Church and through that the contexts in which it is placed, in ways that make sense to the lost, the least and the last.



Relocating Theological Education

The term “re-locating” in the title evokes a lot of things, both old and new. The Latin *locus* meaning place, space, spot, region, a literary passage, topic, context etc is the root for local and It reminds one of the discussion on the *locus theologicus* or in plural *Loci Theologici* of Melancthon in the 16th century to John Millbank, Robert Schreiter and others in the 21st century. In the medieval scholastic understanding everything under the sun can be the locus of theology. This is still true since any context or a combination of multiple contexts can be the locus of theology today. In our universe everything has its own place or location. Relocating suggests leaving the old place and finding a new one. We may also use the old metaphor of planting and replanting though it applies mostly to plants. When Dr. Deenabandhu wants to relocate theological education from its classical or conventional soil to a marginalizing context, he is clearly making a value judgment. The old locus, the centre, the mainstream is no more congenial for theological education. One has to take it to the margins where our triumphalist notions of God, power and hegemony should be thoroughly redefined



Fr. Dr. K. M. George, Director, Sopana Academy

been exploring and exploiting the geophysical macro world, the *sihoola prapancha*, reaching out to the end of the world wearing three-piece suits, preaching to all nations in deafening pitches silencing their cultures, and also unabashedly poaching in God’s garden” as all men desire to do”, while losing all sensitivity to the finer shades, the *sookshma* dimension of reality. In a missionary hibernation we can possibly stop this reaching, preaching and poaching, and review in the light of the life-giving Gospel of Jesus the mission story of the last 500 years or so.

The concept of *Mission* does not automatically generate the idea of self-sacrifice or self-effacing or kenosis or letting the other grow in the spirit of John the Baptist who said: *He must increase and I must decrease*. Our theological education seems to have taught us that, *Mission* is something to be ‘accomplished’. It is succeeding, achieving, grabbing, possessing, defeating, and power-consolidating. For us the word *witness* appears to be weak in the context of a conquering mighty. We should not however, forget that *witness (martyria)* semantically suggests the eventuality of martyrdom. It is becoming increasingly true in our country, it seems. Christian faith will be forced to bear witness in many unanticipated ways even outside of foreseeable margins. It would be good to prepare theological education and ministry in this direction.

Deenabandhu rightly wishes to change the word *mission* because of its heavy colonial baggage. My humble suggestion is that we may go beyond simply changing the word; the whole concept should be pulled down. At the least our “missiology” should enter a long voluntary hibernation. During the missiological hibernation Christians can dream dreams and traverse the profound inner recesses of human faith and consciousness, and discover deep sources of life-giving streams from within (Jn.7:38) . We have too long

Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer, (Secretary, BTESSC)



Calling to re-locate theological education in the context of the margin, challenges us to repent from our Western, colonized theological mindset. It also demands a methodology *from below*. It means, the insights gained from our commitment to the struggle of the marginalized-Dalit, Minjung, Tribal/Adivasi, Women and the rural people for their justice and human dignity. We are called to study the Bible, our contemporary stories, our religious stories together to discover the spiritual resources for peace, justice, community life and wholeness of life.

VOX POPULI

Rev. Helmut Grimmman



The best thing to happen is to be with leaders who encourage (even challenge) young people to move on, and who do this in a friendly and caring manner. In my eyes, this is exactly what theological education is about. (During convocation address)

Rt. Rev. Dr. John S. Sadananda, (Master, Serampore University)



The active interaction between the history of faith and the contemporary situation provides the focus of our theological education which combines exposure, reflection and critical study that is sensitive to the context and ecumenical in a wider sense.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, (President, Senate of Serampore College)



Theological education is an inevitable tool in inter-relating the divine and human. In the process of learning the person is enlightened at the same time the eyes will be opened to see the ‘other’ in a different perspective, more closely as a fellow - human - being. In the Indian society, this appeal of ‘Knowing the other’ is significant; one is equipped to lead the people of God to be agents of transformation and newness to all God’s people.

Rev. Dr. Santanu Kumar Patro, (Registrar, Serampore University)



Theology must become prophetic, contextual and politically engaging in order to transform the church and society.

Prof. Dr. Lalitluangliana Khiangte, (Principal, Serampore College)



Theological education must have connection with people in the spirit of service. Grass root people have to be encouraged with unceasing love and concern and that will be the real relevance of theological education.

Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, (General Secretary, NCCI)



In contemporary times, people’s spirituality gets easily influenced by media propaganda. Similarly people’s religiosity gets quickly by emotional, communal perspectives and actions. This is the importance of informed, mature, edifying, liberating and transforming theological education.

Rev Dr. A. Wati Longchar



Theological education has to be practical oriented, that constantly challenge the establish order and strive towards a world of inclusion and justice.

Dr. Jayanthi Richard, (Women’s Christian College, Chennai)



Theological education has to play a strong role in the task of building communities with the specific task of fulfilling the vision of Christ.

Rev Dr. Limatula Longkumer



Theological education must help both the students and teachers to engage critically in the emerging issues in Indian society. So it must be rooted in contextual realities.

Rev. Fr. Dr. Bijesh Philip, (Principal, St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Nagpur)



Theologizing is to help the believers to deepen their faith; peace and harmony should also be accepted as an extremely important objective of theological formation.

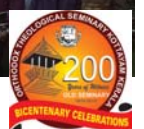
Rev. Richard E. A. Rodgers, (Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur)



Theological foundation helps as to relate our faith with those around us and gives as the tools to assess the context in which we live, therefore theological education helps us to relate to, and to help us present our witness and mission.



200 years of witness: Vedayana 2015, 20th January 2015





CONVOCATION SPEAKER

Rev. Robins Philpo Lepcha



Rev. Helmut Grimmismann
Secretary for Asia & Deputy Director
Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Lower
Saxony (ELM).



(HOD, Chaplaincy,
CMC, Vellore,
Tamil Nadu)

Now, almost all the theological graduates are interested only in Teaching Ministry. So I suggest to incorporate more praxis oriented theological education. The theological education also should emphasize on Economic and political realities of the modern changing Indian scenario.

SENATE OF SERAMPORE COLLEGE
(UNIVERSITY)

**SENATE CENTRE FOR EXTENSION AND
PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH (SCEPTRE)**

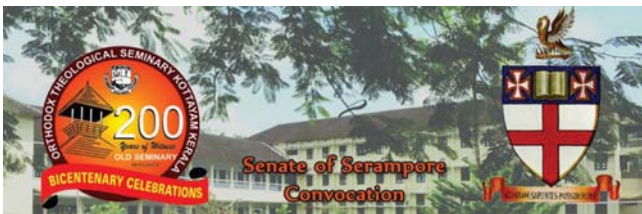


The Senate of Serampore College (University) offers the following degree courses through extension programme:

- Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip.C.S) 2-4 years
- Bachelor of Christian Studies (B.C.S) 4-7 years
- Master of Christian Studies (M.C.S) 3-5 years
- Doctor of Ministry (D. Min) 3-5 years

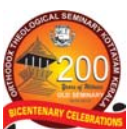
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Website: www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in**



St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Nagpur

The history and destiny of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church weighs much on its theological seminaries. The inception of the STOTS happened on 14 September 1995 in the St. Thomas Ashram at Bhilai. On 25 September 1996 the Seminary was officially inaugurated. On 7th July 1999 the Seminary was shifted to Nagpur. This Seminary focuses on the pastoral requirements of parishes in North India as well as to the mission front of the Malankara Orthodox Church.



Principal, Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian. Printed and Published by Fr. John Thomas Karingattil, on behalf of Serampore Convocation, OTS, Publicity & Media Committee. Reports: Fr. Benjamin OIC, Dn. Tijo Manalel, Jobin Varghese, Job Sam Mathew. Photograph: Lijin T. Jose. 7th February 2015. 3.00 p.m.