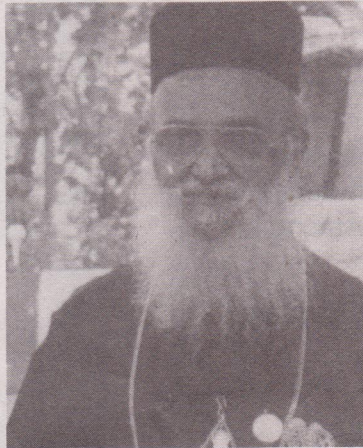


Dr. Curian Kaniampampil Corepiscopo : a Scholar for Universities and the Universal Church

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It is through SEERI (St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute) that I became acquainted with Very Rev. Dr. Curian Kaniampampil Corepiscopo. Before that we did not know each other at all. When SEERI was in *fieri* it was necessary to have a list of experts in Syriac languages from the various Churches in Kerala sharing a common Syriac heritage. The name of this eminent Syriac scholar was communicated to me by his own students and admirers among whom are priests, bishops and educators. Thus, it was an honour for SEERI to include him in our catalogue of renowned experts. In this connection, I discovered that he was serving for nearly 40 years in the Universities in Kerala in various capacities like Member, Chairman of the Board of Studies in Syriac, Board of Question Setters and Examiners for Syriac in Kerala University, M.G. University and Calicut University. I also came to know that he was associated with the first eminent Syriac scholar Rev. Dr. P.T. Geevarghese (who later became Archbishop Mar Ivanios) who was instrumental in raising Syriac into a language of study in the Madras University at first and later in the Kerala University. This enabled interested candidates to study and secure degrees in Syriac like "Malpan". It won't be an exaggeration to state here that the Corepiscopo continued this mission in the University circles in the capacities mentioned above. In the name of SEERI, which is now the only centre for postgraduate education in Syriac in India, I acknowledge gratefully the service he did as a Question Paper Setter for the Master's Degree examination of M.G. University and lately as the Chairman and Expert of the Doctoral Committee constituted by the M.G. University to interview the applicants for the Doctoral programme in Syriac of the University.

His expertise in Syriac language and literature is so profound that SEERI was prompted to organise a day to honour a few persons of eminence in Syriac scholarship and to confer on them honorary degrees



like "Malpan" and the title "Sophar" exclusively to the Corepiscopo. SEERI was honoured also to be instrumental in securing for this "real Suryoyo" the "ARAM" prize from the ARAM Society in Sweden dedicated to promote Syriac scholarship the world over.

His services in the academic circles followed as a result of his original commitment and dedicated work in and for the Church in which he is a prominent priest. He began his literary career already when he was a teenager and a high school student with his translation of Syriac hymns into Malayalam verses, the first such attempt ever by anyone. Later he translated several liturgical texts used for worship in his Church. Among these are: The burial service, prayers dedicated to honour Mary the Mother of Jesus and many others dedicated to various saints. This service was extended also to the competent authorities of the other Churches, for example, the Mar Thoma Church and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

He is still in a position to offer translations from Syriac which are precise, reliable and suitable for ready to use for all occasions in every Church of Syriac heritage. In doing this, he is a living example of ecumenism and a model and inspiration for all who strive to get across sectarian boundaries and serve humanity at large. His expertise is not restricted to ecclesiastical or liturgical literature in Syriac but also to several other fields in Syriac literature such as history, biographies, theological treatise running into numerous volumes etc. He is the author of several Syriac grammars the first one on elementary level produced when he was yet in his teens. The latest in this series, entitled ***Syriac in six months***, has recently been published by SEERI. His peak achievement in the field of grammar and lexicography would be the ***Concise Syriac-English Dictionary*** at present in the press for immediate publication by SEERI. This will certainly associate his name with the best

lexicographers such as: R. Payne Smith, C. Brockelmann, Kalapurackal Andreos Malpan, Dr. Emmanuel Thelliyil etc.

He has to his credit the translation of the whole ***Pshitha Bible*** into Malayalam done, all by himself and published in a beautiful single volume not too long ago. While expressing appreciation and admiration for this monumental achievement, His Beatitude the Syrian Patriarch compared the author to no less a person than ***St. Jerome*** himself.

In the history of biblical literature, nobody ever rendered an entire gospel in verse. Corepiscopo Curian Kaniampampil, whose mother tongue is not Syriac, has rendered the entire gospel of St. Mathew in Syriac verse. SEERI was privileged to publish this in its ***Moran Etho*** series. Among his works yet to be published are:

1. Syriac translation of the poem "Cain the Murderer" by Byron.
2. The Proverbs - in Malayalam verse.
3. A small Syriac drama entitled: Joseph.

These too, we hope, will be made available to interested readers without delay.

In his old age his hand is not steady even to hold a cup of coffee. But his pen is still steady in his fingers even at the age of 90. He considers this as a particular blessing of God. He communicates through the pen. He has demonstrated his commitment to the promotion of Syriac scholarship, by instituting a scholarship fund in SEERI to award a prize each year for the most outstanding student of Syriac.

Born at Kanjiramattom in a prominent Syrian Christian family, the Corepiscopo was promoted in his Syriac studies by the hierarchy and H.H. the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church. For decades now he has been resident at Tiruvalla actively engaged in his academic pursuits along with his priestly ministry to a most appreciative congregation. His endeavour has always been to disseminate and promote Syriac studies rather than to proclaim his own extraordinary personal expertise in the field. His love of Syriac prompted him to name his own daughters: ***Shlomo & Shaino***.

May he continue to flourish like the verdant tree planted near the pool under the shadow of which birds from far and near find shelter.