

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Second Syriac Symposium in Germany
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- [1] From 14th to 16th July 2000 the “Second Symposium on the History, Theology, and Liturgy of the Syriac Churches” was held in the “Leucorea” (from the 16th to 19th centuries one of the oldest and most famous universities of Europe) in Lutherstadt Wittenberg (Germany), where Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon taught. The symposium (organized by A. Heinz, M. Tamcke, J. Tubach, and H. Suermann) is intended to convene scholars who are working with Syriac sources and who are interested in the past and present of the Syriac churches. The subject of Syriac studies is represented in its full breadth of literary genres and epochs.
- [2] The sessions were opened by two papers on Ephrem Syrus. M. Schmidt spoke about conceptual parallels between “Ephraem Syrus und Hildegard von Bingen.” C. Lange discussed the relative antiquity and textual priority of the Armenian versus the Syriac version of the commentary on the Diatessaron on the basis of three texts concerning baptism (“Zum Taufverständnis im syrischen Diatessaron-Kommentar”). D. Boumajnov studied the traces of Melito’s “De anima et corpore” in later sources (“Die Fortschreibung von ‘De anima et corpore’ des hl. Melito von Sardes in syrischer und koptischer Überlieferung”). F. Mali discussed the quotations of a work called “De symbolica theologia” by Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita in Sergius of Resh’aina’s works (“Hat es die Schrift ‘De symbolica theologia’ von Dionysius Ps.-Areopagita gegeben? Anmerkungen zu den Nachrichten des Sergius von Resh’aina über Dionysius Ps.-Areopagita”). T. Hainthaler read her paper on Christology at the end of the 6th century (“Eine christologische Kontroverse Ende des 6. Jahrhunderts unter den Antichalcedoniern des Patriarchats Antiochien”). M. Westert-hoff presented the first results of a major study on the use of the Pauline epistles in the Liber Graduum (“Die Paulus-Rezeption im Liber Graduum”). P. Nagel presented the bilingual (Syriac/English) Synopsis of the Old-Syriac Version of the Gospels prepared at the University of Bonn. The project enters its final stage of typesetting

and proofreading (“Synopsis der altsyrischen Version der Evangelien Matthäus, Markus, Lukas—Vorstellung eines Projektes am orientalischen Seminar der Universität Bonn”).

- [3] W. Hage discussed arguments in favor of the authenticity of the Chronicle of Arbela (“Synodicon Orientale und Chronik von Arbela”) against the assertion that the text was actually composed by its editor, A. Mingana. This lecture introduced a series of papers on historiography: J. Rist discussed the so-called ecclesiastical history of Zacharias Rhetor (“Die sogenannte Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor: Überlieferung, Inhalt, theologische Bedeutung”). M. Kohlbacher read a paper on the reception of the legend of pope Silvester and Constantine’s baptism in eastern Christianity (“Die Taufe Konstantins und ihr geheimer Held. Anmerkungen zur Rezeption der Silvester-Legende bei Jakob von Batnan [BHO 1070 syr., 1071 arab.]”). H. Younansardaroud discussed the legend of Behnam (“Behnam und Sarah”). J. van Ginkel presented the tradition of Jacob of Edessa in Michael Syrus’s chronicle (“Jakob von Edessa in Michael Syrus’ Chronographie”). K.-P. Todt discussed the ecclesiastical history of the patriarch Athanasios III. Dabbas and its historical background (“Die kurzgefaßte Geschichte [Synopsis] der griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchen von Antiocheia des Patriarchen Athanasios III. Dabbas [1647–1724]: Entstehung, Quellen, historischer Gehalt”). C. Walbiner read his paper on the early Arabic printing and the Syriac churches (“Die syrischen Kirchen und die arabischen Frühdrucke”) leading to the papers on the 19th and 20th centuries: F. Heyer on the Russian-Orthodox Church in Urmia (“Die russisch-orthodoxe Kirche in Urmia”), H. Anschutz (“Die Auswirkungen der Aktivitäten abendländischer Missionare, Kirchen, Wissenschaftler und Hilfsorganisationen auf die Gegenwartslage der ostsyrischen Christen”) and B. Harb (“Die Auswanderung von christlichen Jungakademikern aus dem Libanon und ihre Folgen”), who also presented two of their films on the Christians in the middle east. H. Hollerweger presented a sample of his collection of slides of the *evangelitaria* in use in present day Tur Abdin.

- [4] As a contribution to the fields of archeology and epigraphy, K. Fitschen discussed the reading and emendations of a bilingual (Greek and Syriac) building inscription (presently covered by a layer of concrete) in Qalat Siman (“Die zweisprachige Bauinschrift

aus dem 10. Jahrhundert auf Qalat Siman im Kontext der byzantinisch-syrischen Kirchengeschichte”).

- [5] Several papers were read on topics related to the history of Liturgy. C. Leonhard discussed the interpretation of baptism according to the *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae* (“Die Interpretation der Taufe nach der *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*”). B. Schmitz explained the symbolism of the ring and the crown in the liturgy of wedding (“Ring und Krone—vergleichende Untersuchung zur Symbolik in der antiochenischen Trauungsliturgie”). M. Vidalis presented his studies on “The Post-Sanctus Prayer in the Dionysius Areopagita Syriac Liturgy.” D. Winkler reported on the progress of the ecumenical consultations organized by Pro Oriente (“Sakramente in der syrischen Tradition. Zur vierten *Pro Oriente* Konsultation [Syriac Dialogue] im Februar/März 2000”).

- [6] Five papers were read on the later medieval Syriac writers. Regarding Bar Hebraeus: K. Pinggéra (“Bar Hebraeus’ Buch der Taube — einige Beobachtungen”) and H. Takahashi on the Islamic sources of Bar Hebraeus (“Barhebraeus und seine islamischen Quellen. Tegrath teghratha und al-Gazzalis Maqasid al-falasifa”). W. Baum read a paper (based on his recent book) on the myth of the priest and king John which arose in the time of the Crusades (“Der Mythos vom Priesterkönig Johannes und die syrische Christenheit”). D. Weltecke analyzed the social history of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the 12th century (“Viele erfuhren eine Minderung ihres Glaubens’. Zur Sozialgeschichte der syrisch-orthodoxen im 12. Jahrhundert”). G. Rabo reported on his collection and new findings regarding the manuscript tradition of Dionysius Bar Salibi’s works (“Dionysius bar Salibi [†1171] und sein literarisches Lebenswerk”).

- [7] Three papers dealt with the tradition of the Syriac churches from the perspectives of sociology and musicology. C. Lambert read her paper on the beliefs of Syriac Christians who are living in Germany in magic, the power of amulets, etc., and their memories of methods of healing in their former homeland of Tur Abdin (“Böser Blick und Magie. Volksglauben syrisch-orthodoxer Christen in der Migration”). R. Randhofer compared musical patterns of the west-Syriac liturgy with elements of Jewish cantillation of Biblical texts (“Zu den ‘takhshfotho’ der Totenfeier im westsyrischen Ritus”). A. Takhsh reported on her study of the

position of the Syriac women in Germany and the promising initiatives and movements in Northern Iraq (“Assyrische Frauen zwischen Tradition und Moderne”).

- [8] The broad variety of topics treated and methods used together with the active participation of members of the Syriac Churches who could rely on their own personal experience and cultural background in addition to their academic learning made the symposium an important experience for all participants. Most of the papers are going to be published in the conference volume. M. Tamcke could present the publication of the first symposium, which was held two years ago: M. Tamcke and A. Heinz (Ed.) 2000, *Zu Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen. Ausgewählte Vorträge des deutschen Syrologen-Symposiums vom 2.–4. Oktober 1998 in Hermannsburg*. Münster/Hamburg/London: LIT-Verlag (Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 9) ISBN 3-8258-3906-0. The next symposium will be held in 2002 in Bamberg.