

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

ANDREW PALMER

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES  
UNITED KINGDOM

[1] In December 1997, as reported in the first issue of *Hugoye*, a number of scholars, from different branches of learning, met together at my invitation in the School of Oriental and African Studies in the Centre of London, which has become, over the last five years, a centre for Oriental Christian encounter and study. The subject of our papers was the influence of Saint Ephraim the Syrian. A selection of the papers delivered there, and in addition, one or two which were not, in fact, delivered at that time, will be published in this special issue of *Hugoye* and the next.

[2] The present issue contains the following papers: Andrew Palmer, A Single Human Being Divided in Himself: Ephraim the Syrian, the Man in the Middle; Hannah Hunt, The tears of the sinful woman: A theology of redemption in Saint Ephraim and his Followers; David Taylor, St. Ephraim's Influence On The Greeks; Sidney Griffith, A Spiritual Father for the Whole Church; Alain Desreumaux, Saint Ephraim in Christian Palestinian Aramaic; Zaga Gavrilovic, Saint Ephraim's Thought and Imagery as an Inspiration to Byzantine Artists; Jane Stevenson, Saint Ephraim in Seventh-Century Canterbury; Gordon Wakefield, John Wesley and Saint Ephraim.

[3] These papers are ordered chronologically, beginning with Ephraim's own life. After that comes a study of his theology and its influence in his own Syriac tradition. Then a paper on the relationship between Ephraim and Greek Christians. Sidney Griffith's keynote paper sums up the whole conference, but it has

something original to say about the *sermo asceticus*, a partly Ephremic, partly embroidered discourse composed in Greek which was translated into all the languages of mediaeval Christianity, except for Syriac. There follows a short paper, showing that even the Aramaic-speaking Melkite Christians of Palestine translated Ephraim (or Pseudo-Ephraim) from the Greek and honoured him highly. Zaga Gavrilovoc traces the influence of Ephraim on Byzantine art as far as Serbia, while Jane Stevenson shows that the Greek Ephraim—and perhaps even parts of the Syriac Ephraim—reached England with Theodore of Tarsus, when he came as Archbishop to Canterbury. Finally, Gordon Wakefield shows how much Saint Ephraim appealed to the spiritual minds of John Wesley and his brother Charles, the hymn-writer, founders of the Methodist Movement. It was John Wesley who called Ephraim ‘the most awakening of all the ancients.’

- [4] Attached to this collection of papers is a recording made at the conference, the first performance of a teaching-song by Ephraim in a metrical English translation to a modern melody, expressed in sacred movement with accompaniment on the Celtic Harp.

- [5] The next issue of *Hugoye* (Vol. 2, No. 1) will contain other papers presented at the conference and accepted for publication.