

## Second Symposium Syro-Arabicum

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- [1] The second Symposium Syro-Arabicum (17–19 September 1998), successor of the first symposium held in Kaslik in September 1995, was organised by the CEDRAC, the formerly independent research institute in Christian Arabic Studies (Director: Fr. Samir Khalil Samir), which, now, has established more institutional links with the Université St. Joseph in Beirut. Father Selim Abou, rector of the USJ, opened the symposium, stressing the importance of Christian Arabic Studies especially from the point of view of their relevance for the present situation of the Christians in the Middle East. All sessions took place in the nice and quiet monastery of Sayyidat al-Bi'r, not far from the Lebanese capital.
- [2] As a matter of fact, only a limited part of this congress was devoted to Syriac Studies, starting the first day with three contributions in the field of exegesis: A. Juckel, on the Harklean Version of the New Testament; M. Accad, about the Islamic context of the later Syriac Fathers when reinterpreting the New Testament, and A. Chahwan (already in the field of Christian Arabic Studies), with a study about the concept of Judaism in the Psalm Commentary of b. al-Tayyib. Funeral practices of the Maronites were discussed by R. Jabre Mouawad; H. Teule dealt with the ascetical work of John Nâqar (Edessa, 8th cent.), whereas P. Sfeir presented some of the Syriac mss. in the collection of the Library of Bkerké. L. Van Rompay discussed the Syriac inscriptions of the recently discovered wall-paintings in Dayr as-Suryân. And finally, the influence of Al-Ghazâlî on Bar Hebraeus' Ethicon was the subject matter of Hanna Khadra's contribution.
- [3] The remaining conferences were devoted to Art (Wall paintings in Dayr as-Suryân by K. Innemee; Medieval frescos by N. Helou and the Melkite Iconographical School of Jerusalem by L. Hosri) and to many different aspects of Christian Arabic Literature. Of special interest for Syriac scholars are probably the contributions by S.M. Edris (Comparative Study between Johannes b. al-Ma'dani and Avicenna), S. Khalil Samir (the influence of al-Qiftî on the Mukhtasar Tarîkh ad-Duwal of Ibn al-'Ibri) and S. Cabrol (The Anbârîs-s, a family of Nestorian kuttâb under the first Abbasids)

- [4] Among the other CA authors discussed during this conference, one should mention especially the Maronite Patriarch Estephan Duwayhî (1630–1704), with contributions about his theology, and his historiographical and theological writings. The interest in the work of Duwayhi resulted in the creation of a research group around the work of the Maronite Patriarch; Ray Jabre Mouawad will act as the first coordinator.
- [5] One of the reasons for organizing a “Symposium Syro-Arabicum” in Lebanon, in addition to the already classical “Symposia Syriaca” followed, since 1980, by the “Conferences on Christian Arabic Studies” which took place in European countries, was the absence—for various reasons (financial, political...)—of Middle Eastern Scholars. This 2nd Symposium Syriacum was indeed an excellent occasion to meet Lebanese scholars working in various domains of CA and whose publications are not always easily accessible or known to western readers. Unfortunately, this time, the participation of western scholars was rather limited which made that this conference was almost the opposite of the Symposium Syriacum. Apparently, most western scholars preferred Birmingham or Kerala or were, who knows, somewhat tired of the increasing number of congresses.
- [6] Our thanks are due to Father Samir Khalil Samir and his collaborators for the perfect organization of the congress and to Ray Moawad Jabre for the pleasant and interesting excursion to the Qaddisha Valley and the old Maronite Patriarchal See of Qannubin. The papers will be published in *Parole de l'Orient*. The next symposium will take place in in the year 2001.