

## PROF. JULIUS ASSFALG (1919–2001)



Prof. Julius Assfalg  
during the II Symposium Syriacum in Chantilly, 1976  
(Picture taken by Prof. Dr. Dr. Hubert Kaufhold.)

- [1] Julius Assfalg passed away suddenly on 12 January 2001 at the age of 81. Assfalg was born in Hohenaschau, Bavaria, on November 6, 1919, and studied philosophy, theology and oriental languages in Freising and Eichstaett. He served in the German army during World War II and became a prisoner of war in France. In 1946, he continued his studies at the University of Munich, where he specialised in the field of Christian Oriental studies, especially under the guidance of Wilhelm Hengstenberg (philology of the Christian East) and Anton Spitaler (Semitic languages). The subject of his doctoral thesis in 1950 on the Arabic liturgical manual of the Coptic Church called “The Order of the Priesthood” was given to him by Georg Graf, the well-known scholar of Christian Arabic studies. After his “Habilitation” in 1961, consisting of the edition of the Old Georgian text of the Minor Prophets, he started his

academic teaching of the Christian Oriental languages at the University of Munich, which he continued even after his official retirement in 1985 until his untimely death.

- [2] Famous are his catalogues of the Syriac, Armenian and Georgian manuscripts in Germany (1962–63). The whole field of Eastern Christian Studies was presented in *Kleines Wörterbuch des Christlichen Orients*, which he edited in Wiesbaden in 1975, and of which a French and a Polish translation was published in 1991 and 1998, respectively. Many contributions by him in the field of Christian Oriental studies appeared in various German reference books and encyclopedias. A *Festschrift* was offered to him at his 70th birthday: *Lingua restituta orientalis. Festgabe für Julius Assfalg*, edited by Regine Schulz and Manfred Gurg, Wiesbaden 1990. Colleagues and pupils presented him at his 65th and 80th birthday *Festschriften*, which circulate privately.

- [3] Special mention must be made of his work for the periodical *Oriens Christianus* of which he was co-editor from 1965 until his death, and editor-in-chief for 15 years.

- [4] Hundreds of students have a memory of Julius Assfalg as a very inspired, affable and cordial teacher, especially of Syriac language and literature. A great many of his colleagues and pupils were present at his burial in his native village Aschau on January 19, 2001. At his grave a Syriac priest chanted parts from the *teshmeshto* “service” of the departed for the peace of his soul.

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