

The Mardin Syrian Orthodox Press, Aleppo: A Review

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- [1] The Syrian Orthodox community in Aleppo has been strengthened, since the late nineteenth century, by large groups migrating from elsewhere to the city. One such group came, in 1924, from Urfa [Syr. ܐܘܪܗܐ], the former ar-Ruha, Urhoy [Syr. ܐܘܪܗܐ], or Edessa, which is now Sanliurfa, in north-western Mesopotamia (included since 1919 within the boundaries of Turkey). The members of this group are still known as 'Urfali.' Two areas on the far side of the railway line in the north-western part of the city are called after these twentieth-century immigrants: Hayy as-Suryan al-Qadimah [Ar. حي السريان القديمة] and Hayy as-Suryan al-Jadidah [Ar. حي السريان الجديدة]. The church in the elder of the two quarters is dedicated to St. George, as was one of the two churches which the community abandoned in Urfa; it contains a recent relief sculpture of King Abgar of Edessa [Syr. ܐܒܓܪ ܡܠܟܐ] receiving the letter and the miraculous self-portrait sent to him by Jesus. Another group of Syrians, which worships in the Cathedral Church of St. Ephraim, in Suleimaniye, Aleppo, traces its origins to the province of Mardin in north-eastern Mesopotamia, an area where there are still some Syrian Orthodox villages, in spite of the fact that it is presently a part of Turkey. Aleppo is a very clannish city and these two groups of Syrian Orthodox tend to emphasise their different origins. Each of the two defines its 'mentality' in contrast with that of the other. There is also a difference of language: the Urfali know Armenian and Turkish, or rather, a mixture between the two; they do not know Turoyo (an Aramaic dialect spoken by those who come from Qamishly and, more remotely, from Tur 'Abdin in the province of Mardin). There is a corresponding difference in the musical and liturgical traditions of the two main churches (a third, dedicated to the Mother of God, has recently been added in the New Syrian Quarter). The Metropolitan Bishop, whose father was from Yardo, near Midyat, and whose mother was from Diyarbakir, both a long way from Urfa, fosters the distinct identities of both groups in a spirit of brotherly unity.

- [2] Some confusion exists as to whether the Syrian Orthodox publishing house, which is near the Cathedral, is called Dar al-Raha [Ar. دار الرها] or Dar Mardin [Ar. دار ماردين], after Urfa or after Mardin.

Before 1995 it was called Dar al-Raha; in 1995 the two names existed side by side; but now Dar Mardin is the official name. It is rumoured that Dar al-Raha was felt to be an awkward name, politically. This is perhaps the only Christian publishing house in the Arab Republic of Syria, though many other Christian books are published in that country. The list of Dar Mardin includes, at the latest count (May 1997), 71 or 72 titles dated between 1980 and 1997, a period which begins in the second year of the reign of the present Metropolitan Bishop, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (abbreviated in what follows to GYI). Indeed, sixteen of these books (and at least two others not published by Dar Mardin) are the product of his own labours; and he has edited or written introductions, some of them important contributions in their own right, for many of the rest. This man is a tireless activist and an efficient manager. One might think, seeing the evidence of his literary efforts, that he takes refuge in his study from the world; but in actual fact he is a busy administrator, an active pastor and an inspirational preacher. He is closely involved with the world-wide ecumenical movement which has gained momentum over the last few years. He is also one of the moving spirits of local ecumenism; Aleppo may be unique, in that its Christian leaders have a scheduled monthly meeting to discuss ecumenical initiatives at every level. I have heard criticism of GYI for his “fanatical” attachment to the traditions of his own community; but he understands, perhaps better than his critics, the principle that a distinct consciousness of the way in which one is different from another is an essential precondition of mutual respect.

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His first series of publications was called ‘*Studia Syriaca*’ [Syr. **ܪܫܝܡܐ ܫܪܝܐܢܐ**; Ar. **دراسات سريانية**], in retrospect ‘*Studia Syriaca I*’ (A1), and contained 21 volumes dated between 1980 and 1986. To these have been added three unnumbered volumes (A2) all published in 1994. ‘*Studia Syriaca II*’ (A3) began with three volumes published in 1997. The second series (1987–1996) is entitled ‘*Syriac Patrimony*’ (B) and consists of 16 volumes. There is a concurrent third series (1991–1995), entitled ‘*Biblical Studies*’ (C), which consists of six volumes. GYI’s own books began by being listed partly under ‘*Syriac Studies*’ and partly under ‘*Other Books*’, but they are now listed as a separate category (D): 16 books. GYI has found time to write imaginatively and playfully for the younger members of his flock. Half of his total output falls into

this category. In the category 'Other Books' (E) there are nine publications. I shall list the titles of all these publications, translated into English, describe the books and, in some cases, make a brief appraisal of their content. My intention is to make known to scholars and other readers outside Syria the existence of these books, some of which they may find useful. Many of the books are translations into Arabic of books more readily accessible to European readers in other languages. Some of the books are little more than reprints or photographic reproductions, having said which, one of the latter is very precious: a reproduction of three catalogues written by hand, mainly in Syriac, by Mar Philoxenos Yuhannon Dolabani, describing the MSS in the libraries of various Syrian Orthodox monasteries, churches and families, including especially the libraries of St. Mark's, Jerusalem, and of Dayr al-Za'faran, Mardin. Many of the books from these two libraries are now in the library of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in Bab Tooma, Damascus. Of the remaining books, some are devotional and some laudatory; but there are also some original works of scholarship. Among these perhaps the most valuable are two studies of Syriac church music by Nuri Skandar and GYL.

[4] A1. STUDIA SYRIACA, FIRST SERIES (19.5 x 14 cm), all but one by Syrian Orthodox clergymen.

Vol 1 (1980) The Syrians and the Iconoclastic Controversy [Ar. السريان وحرب الأيقونات], by Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, in Arabic, 44 pages, illustrated.

Vol. 2 (1980) The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus [Ar. أهل الكهف في المصادر السريانية] [according to the Syriac sources], by Patriarch Ignatios Zakka I 'Iwas, in Arabic, 68 pages.

Vol. 3 (1980) The Epistolary Style of the Syrian Fathers [Ar. أدب الرسالة عند السريان], by Metropolitan Gregorios Paolos Behnam, in Arabic, 68 pages, reprint.

Vol. 4 (1980) The Aramaic Kingdoms [Ar. الممالك الآرامية], by Metropolitan Gregorios Saliba Shamoun, in Arabic, 108 pages, illustrated.

Vol. 5 (1981) The Resurrection in the Syrian Orthodox Concept [Ar. القيامة], [في مفهوم الكنيسة السريانية], by Metropolitan Severios Isaac Saka, in Arabic, 140 pages, reprint.

- Vol. 6 (1981) The Incarnation in the Syrian Orthodox Concept [Ar. عقيدة التجسد الإلهي في مفهوم كنيسة أنطاكية السريانية], by Patriarch Ignatios Zakka I 'Twas, in Arabic, 88 pages, reprint.
- Vol. 7 (1981) The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch at a Glance [Ar. كنيسة أنطاكية السريانية الأرثوذكسية عبر العصور], by Patriarch Ignatios Zakka I 'Twas, in Arabic and English, 62 pages and 25 pages respectively, illustrated, reprint.
- Vol. 8 (1982) The Shepherd and the Flock [Ar. الراعي والرعية], by Metropolitan Gregorios Saliba Shamoun, in Arabic, 132 pages.
- Vol. 9 (1982) The Holy Bible in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. الكتاب المقدس في كنيسة أنطاكية السريانية], by Metropolitan Severios Isaac Saka, in Arabic, 78 pages.
- Vol. 10 (1983) The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. السريان إيمان وحضارة], part 1, by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka, in Arabic, 262 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 11 (1983) The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. السريان إيمان وحضارة], part 2, by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka, in Arabic, 213 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 12 (1983) The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch at a Glance, a reprint of the English text of Vol. 7, 25 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 13 (1983) The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. السريان إيمان وحضارة], part 3, by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka, in Arabic, 457 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 14 (1983) The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. السريان إيمان وحضارة], part 4, by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka, in Arabic, 375 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 15 (1983) The History of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Ar. السريان إيمان وحضارة], part 5, Metropolitan Severios Isaac Saka, in Arabic, 324 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 16 (1984) The Journey Towards Easter [Ar. رحلة إلى الفصح], by Chorepiscopus Barsoum Y. Ayoub, in Arabic, 193 pages, illustrated.
- Vol. 17 (1984) Barhebraeus' Biography and Poems [Ar. يوحنا ابن العري حياته وشعره], Metropolitan Gregorios Paolos Behnam, in Arabic and Syriac, 133 pages, reprint.
- Vol. 18 (1984) The Syriac Words in the Arabic Dictionaries [Ar. الألفاظ السريانية في المعاجم العربية], part 1, by Patriarch Ignatios Afrem I Barsoum, 315 pages, reprint.

- Vol. 19 (1984) The Syriac Words in the Arabic Dictionaries [Ar. الألفاظ السريانية في المعاجم العربية], part 2, by Patriarch Ignatios Afrem I Barsoum, 531 pages, reprint.
- Vol. 20 (1985) The Divine Economy [Ar. التدبير الإلهي], by Jacob, Bishop of Edessa, translated into Arabic by Metropolitan Militios Barnaba, in Syriac and Arabic, 238 pages.
- Vol. 21 (1986) The History of the Aramaeans [Ar. تَشمس آرام شمّس العرب], by 'Abdel-Hadi Nasri, in Arabic, 286 pages, illustrated.

[5] A2. SYRIAC STUDIES, NOT IN SERIES (24 x 17 cm)

1. A Tour With Scattered Syriac Manuscripts [Ar. جولة مع مخطوطات سريانية مبعثرة] [a collection of historical and archaeological essays], by Yusif al-Qas 'Abdul-Ahad al-Bahzani, in Arabic, 152 pages.
2. The Church of Saint Symeon the Stylite [Ar. كنيسة مار سمعان العمودي], by 'Abdallah Hajjar, in Arabic, 274 pages, illustrated.
3. Syriac Dialogue [Ar. الحوار السرياني]: the first non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition, translated into Arabic by Marcel al-Khoury Taraqqi, 437 pages, with two colour plates of the signing, by Catholicos-Patriarch Dinkha IV (for the Assyrian Church of the East) and Pope John Paul II (for the Roman Catholic Church), of a common christological declaration, November 1994.

[6] A3. STUDIA SYRIACA, SECOND SERIES (19.5 x 14 cm)

- Vol. 1 (1997) The Armenian-Syriac Cultural Relations [Ar. العلاقات الثقافية الأرمنية - السريانية], by Levon der Bedrosian, a native of Aleppo and President of the Armenian Republic, translated in Arabic by Boghos Sarajian, 253 pages.
- Vol. 2 (1997) Syriac Literature [Ar. طاقات سريانية], by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka, in Arabic, 172 pages.
- Vol. 3 (1997) I centri culturali della Chiesa Siro-Ortodossa d'Antiochia [Ar. المراكز الثقافية السريانية], by Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, in Arabic and Italian, 236 pages.
- Vol. 4 (1997) The Syriac Churches: their Origins and Roots [Ar. السريان أصالة], by Gregorios Georgios Shahin, in Arabic, reprint, with a new introduction by GYI, 249 pages.

[7] B. THE SYRIAC PATRIMONY (17 x 14 cm.)

- Vol. 1 (1987) is a reprint, with one new colour plate, of the second edition (Homs, 1945) of *The Scattered Pearls* [Ar. اللؤلؤ المنثور في تاريخ العلوم والآداب السريانية] (560 pages, one b/w plate), the famous Arabic History of Syriac Scholarship and Literature by Patriarch Ignatios Afram I Barsom; reprinted again by the Mardin Syrian Orthodox Press in 1996, though without reference to this series.
- Vol. 2 (1988) is an unauthorised translation into Arabic (423 pages, 44 plates, three in colour), of J. B. Segal's well-known *Edessa, 'the blessed city'* [Ar. الرها المدينة المباركة] (Oxford 1970), with covers showing a mosaic of Orpheus from Edessa.
- Vol. 3 (1988), *The Voice of Nineveh and of Aram* [Ar. أصوت نينوى وآرام], is an Arabic biography (180 pages, ten b/w plates) of Metropolitan Gregorios Bulus Behnam, of Baghdad and Busra, by Metropolitan Severios Ishaq Saka.
- Vol. 4 (1990) is *The Six Days* [Ar. الأيام الستة; Gr. Hexameron], a Syriac book on the creation the world, written about A.D. 700 by Jacob of Edessa and translated into Arabic (206 pages) by Metropolitan Gregorios Saliba Shamoun. GYI's Introduction (26 pages) discusses Jacob's life and work.
- Vol. 5 (1992) is the *Beth Gazzo* [Syr. & Ar. بيت كازو], the "Store" of Syrian Orthodox Church music, as sung by the Patriarch Ignatius Jacob III according to the tradition of Mardin (the Saffron Monastery), with musical notation by Nuri Skandar (572 pages). The first 97 pages of the book, comprising the Arabic Introduction, on Syriac music, by GYI (74 pages), the Arabic Preface by Nuri Skandar (14 pages) and the poetically phrased Syriac Forward (4 pages) by Ghattas M. Alyas (in that order) was reprinted, with a few notated examples, as a separate book in 1996 (also by the Mardin Syrian Orthodox Press), as was the whole book, this time without reference to the series. I understand that Nuri Skandar has all but finished preparing a similar volume in which the tradition of Urfa is recorded, but that the production of this book has run into problems. The importance of recording an oral tradition in all its regional forms cannot be overstated. To record only one is to suggest that it is authoritative, which is inexact and which may impoverish the tradition. The Syrian Orthodox community in Aleppo is fortunate indeed—*sua si bona norint*—to have among them a man capable of recording their tradition as it should be recorded: Nuri Skandar. He should be given every kind of financial support and editorial liberty in doing so.

- Vol. 6 (1992), *The Lighthouse of Syrian Antioch* [Ar. منارة أنطاكية السريانية] (xxvii + 201 pages, one b/w plate), is a collection of studies in Arabic on the history and archaeology of Syriac Christianity, by Patriarch Ignatios Afram I Barsom. GYI's Introduction includes a brief account of the life and times of the author and of his many publications.
- Vol. 7 (1993) is a collection of 19 Syriac *mimre* [Ar. مختارات من قصائد مار يعقوب] (verse homilies) written about A.D. 500 by Jacob of Serugh and translated into Arabic (350 pages) by Metropolitan Militios Barnaba. In an appendix I shall give the first lines of the 19 *mimre* in Syriac (one page of the Syriac original of each *mimro* is reproduced before its Arabic translation). GYI's Introduction (pp. 7–21) covers Jacob's biography and his works and ends with some bibliographical references.
- Vols. 8, 9 and 10 (1994) are the three parts of a handwritten mainly Syriac catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts in the well-known Syrian Orthodox monastery of St. Mark, in the Old City of Jerusalem [Ar. فهرس المخطوطات السريانية في دير مار مرقس] (vol. 8) and of St. Ananias, known as *Der ez-Za'faran*, Mardin [Ar. فهرس المخطوطات السريانية في دير الزعفران] (vol. 9), as well as in various churches, monasteries and private houses [Ar. فهرس مخطوطات سريانية] (vol. 10). It was compiled by Bishop Philoxenos Yuhannon Dolabani (1885–1969), whose life and works are appraised by GYI in the Introduction. Many of the manuscripts described in the first two catalogues are now at the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in Bab Tooma, Damascus, and will soon be moved to a new library in Ma'arat Sayyidnaya. Dolabani's work underlies that of the Patriarch Afram Barsom, whose catalogue of the manuscripts in the patriarchal library of Homs (now Damascus) has recently been published in a French translation (*Parole de l'Orient* 19 [1994] 555–661). Dolabani's Catalogue fills three weighty tomes (469 + 395 + 488 = 1352 pages, not including the thrice-repeated Introduction of 51 pages). There are two or three b/w illustrations in each volume, including one of GYI, as a boy, with Dolabani and Rabban 'Allaf in Mardin, which suggests that Dolabani may have inspired him with his love of scholarship and his industry. This publication, which was made possible by the encouragement of Walter Selb and Hubert Kaufhold, and by a subsidy from the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna, ought be purchased by all libraries which aspire to enable scholars to pursue research in Syriac.

- Vols. 11 and 12 (1994) are reprints, respectively, of the Syriac-Arabic dictionary, *Al-Lubab* [Ar. اللباب: قاموس سرياني عربي], by Father Jebrail Qardahi (Beirut, 1891), and the Arabic-Syriac dictionary by Father Mikhael Murad (died in 1952). The date of the latter is not given. The two volumes contain, respectively, 1356 and 752 pages, with 3 b/w plates in the first and one in the second.
- Vol. 13 (1996) is *The Candelabra of the Sanctuary* [Ar. منارة الأقداس], a Syriac book by Gregorios Yuhannon Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286), translated into Arabic (885 pages) by Bishop Dionysios Behnam Jejjawi. This is an encyclopaedic work in twelve parts covering knowledge, the nature of the universe, theology, the Incarnation, the angels, the priesthood, the demons, the soul, free will, the Resurrection, the Last Judgement and Paradise.
- Vols. 14, 15 and 16 (1996), with, respectively, 446, 469 and 479 pages, contain the Syriac History of Michael I [Ar. تاريخ ميخائيل الكبير ج 1، 2، 3], Syrian Orthodox Patriarch from 1166 to 1199, in a new Arabic translation, made from Chabot's edition, by Metropolitan Gregorios Saliba Shamoun.

[8] C. BIBLICAL STUDIES (19.5 x 14 cm.)

- Vols. 1, 2 and 3 (1991) are an Introduction to the New Testament in Arabic by Dr. Maurice Tawdoros, who teaches New Testament Theology at the Coptic Theological Seminary in Cairo.
- Vol. 4 (1991), in Arabic, contains Part I of the same author's Theological and Linguistic Studies in the New Testament.
- Vol. 5 (1991) contains the same author's Theological and Linguistic Notes on the Words of the Gospel According to St. Matthew, likewise in Arabic. (In the absence of a volume specifically marked as Part II of the previous entry, this may perhaps be taken as Part II.)
- Vol. 6 (1995), by the same Arabic author, bears the title *Logos: The Interpretation of 'The Word' in the New Testament*.
- All these books, which have 319 + 203 + 211 + 166 + 201 + 291 = 1391 pages in all, were edited by GYI. This Syrian Orthodox Bishop evidently feels quite happy about publishing a Coptic theologian; indeed, in spite of the cultural differences, these two Oriental Orthodox Churches have remained close, with only short periods of disunity, throughout their history.

[9] D. BOOKS BY MAR GREGORIOS YOHANNA IBRAHIM

i. On the Faith

- a. In the series 'God with us' [Ar. الله معنا] (in Arabic; 24 x 17 cm.):

- 1- Emmanuel [Ar. عمانوئيل], the front showing, against the background of a green cross, a colour illustration of a picture of the Presentation in the Temple from a Syriac manuscript; a children's book with many games and pictures to colour in (71 pages).
 - 2- Good Hope [Ar. الرجاء الصالح], the front showing, against the background of a red cross, a colour illustration of the Cross as the Tree of Life with the Syriac inscription 'Look at him and hope in him!' Like the previous (71 pages).
 - 3- The Lamb of God [Ar. حمل الله], the front showing, against the background of a yellow cross, a colour illustration of the Resurrection (Harrowing of Hell) from a Syriac manuscript. Like the previous (71 pages).
 - 4- The Good Shepherd [Ar. الراعي الصالح], the front showing, against the background of a light blue cross, a colour illustration of the Descent from the Cross from a Syriac manuscript. Like the previous (71 pages).
- b. Prayer books (16.5 x 12 cm.):
- 1- The Believer's Friend [Ar. رفيق المؤمن]: The Order of Service of Holy Communion and Spiritual Hymns, Syriac and Arabic, 394 pages.
 - 2- Pray for us! [Ar. صلوا لأجلنا] Prayers (196 pages), including the Eucharistic Liturgy in Syriac with an Arabic translation facing it. The front shows a colour illustration of a page of a Syriac Gospel-book showing the Agony in the Garden and the Arrest of Jesus.
 - 3- Canonical Prayers [Syr. ܐܪܬܐ ܡܪܝܬܐ], in Syriac, on a single, folded card.
- c. Jesus, in Arabic, with pictures (24 x 17 cm.):
- 1- The Life of Jesus [Ar. حياة يسوع]. A children's book, with drawings suitable for colouring in (64 pages).
 - 2- Jesus Our Friend [Ar. يشوع حَبْرَن]. Like the previous, bound at the shorter side (48 pages).
 - 3- Jesus Our Hope [Ar. يشوع سَبْرَن]. Like the previous (48 pages).
- ii. History, Biography and Musicology (in Arabic):
- 1- The Syrians and the Iconoclastic Controversy = A1.1.
 - 2- The Glory of the Syrians [Ar. مجد السريان]: Mar Ignatius Afram I Barsom (1887–1957): biography and bibliography, 115 pages, including 24 pages of illustrations. (24 x 17 cm)

- 3- Syriac Music [Ar. الموسيقى السريانية], 74 pages, with appendixes. (24 x 17 cm) [Originally published as the introduction to B.5, above: The Beth Gazzo with musical notation.]
- 4- A Man of God [Ar. رجل الله]: Mar Dionysios Georgios al-Qas Behnam: his life and times, 134 pages, including 32 pages of illustrations. (24 x 17 cm)

[10] OTHER BOOKS (mostly 24 x 17 cm)

- 1- The Last Caravan [Ar. القافلة الأخيرة], by Yusif Nameq [an eyewitness's account of the emigration of the Syrian Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants from Urfa to Aleppo in 1924], in Arabic, 76 pages, about 130 illustrations, of which the first ten or so are photomontages, recreating from the author's memory (he was six or seven at the time), in the absence of authentic photographs, the scenes of emigration: the wagon-trains leaving Urfa; the people crossing the Euphrates at Jerablus and waiting for the train to Aleppo on the other side; the tents which the French gave at Aleppo, in which they stayed for two years, hoping that the French would recover Urfa; the makeshift chapel which they constructed after that and worshipped in for six years. From the time at which the church of St. George in the Old Syrian Quarter was built onwards, the photographs are authentic.
- 2- Azakh [Ar. آرخ]: [Great] Events and [Great] Men, by Yusif Jebrail al-Qas and Elias Haddaya, in Arabic, 207 pages.
- 3- Laments [Syr. أحزان]: [poetic] impulses and inquiries, by Ghattas Muqsi Elias, in Syriac, with Arabic preface by GYI, 7 + 98 pages.
- 4- Arabism and Islam [Ar. العربوية والإسلام], by George Jabur, in Arabic, 206 pages.
- 5- The Vienna Dialogue [Ar. برو أوريني]: Five Pro Oriente Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy, Booklet No. 1: Communiqués and Joint Documents, translated into Arabic by Michel Azraq, 201 pages.
- 6- The Vienna Dialogue [Ar. برو أوريني]: Five Pro Oriente Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy, Booklet No. 2: Summaries of the Papers, translated into Arabic by Fa'iz Iskandar, 151 pages.
- 7- The Spiritual Treasure [Ar. التحفة الروحية]: On Canonical Prayer, by Patriarch Ignatius Afram I Barsoum, in Arabic and Syriac, 232 pages, republished. (13.5 x 10 cm)

- 8- Waking visions: [poetic] impulses and inquiries, by Ghattas (Denho) Muqsi Elias, in Syriac, with an Arabic preface by GYI, 10 + 86 pages. (19.5 x 14 cm)

[11] These lists do not cover all of Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim's publishing activities; I have seen an Arabic leaflet on the Russian Orthodox Church [Ar. الكنيسة الروسية الأرثوذكسية] (Aleppo, no date; 24 pages) and an Arabic biography of the Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I 'Iwas, entitled 'Nur wa Ata' [Ar. نور وعطاء] (Aleppo, 1981; 199 pages). Nor do they quite exhaust the repertoire of the Mardin Syrian Orthodox Press; I have seen a scientific book on mushrooms [Ar. الفطر الزراعي] (!) in Arabic by two Muslims with Ph.D.s in Agriculture (Aleppo, 1992), which bears the imprint of Dar al-Raha. But they are sufficient to give an impression both of the quantity and of the nature of the publications which bear this imprint and this exceptionally active bishop's editorial stamp of approval.

[12] The above books include works on a wide range of subjects in the fields of Archaeology (A2.1,2; B.6), Biography (A1.17; B.3; D.ii.2,4), Catechism (D.i.a.1–4,c.1–3), Ecumenism (A2.3; E.5,6), History (A1.1,4,7,11–15,21; A2.1; A3.2; B.2,6,14–16; E.1,2,4,10), the History of Literature (A3.1; B.1), Literature (A1.2; B.4,14–16), Lexicography (A1.18,19; B.11,12), Musicology (B.5; D.ii.3), New Testament Studies (C.1–6), Philology (B.8–10; C.4–6), Philosophy (B.13; E.4), Poetry (A1.17; B.7; E.3,9), Prayer (A1.16; D.i.b.1–3), and Theology (A1.5,6,8,20; B.13; C.6; E.7).

[13] The greatest quantity of publications concerns the history of the Syrian Orthodox community. There can be no doubt of the value of the whole list in building up the Syrian Orthodox community's sense of identity and in giving it intellectual content. It may also serve to bind the Urfa people and the Mardin people closer together. Even if the enormous stress on national-historical, theological and linguistic particularism militates against the dissolution of the frontiers between this group and others in the city of Aleppo, the ecumenical publications may well contribute to the development of the ecumenical movement in the Arab world. The manuscript catalogues and the translation of the History of Michael the Syrian are global milestones in Syriac scholarship—a 'must' for every library where Syriac Studies are taken seriously. It

is striking how many of the books are written by Syrian Orthodox bishops and patriarchs.

- [14] There are, of course, gaps; and I am sure that we can look forward to future publications in these neglected areas. Considering, on the one hand, the fame of the Syrian churches in Late Antiquity for their witness to the ability of women to take part both in the diaconal and pastoral activities and in the teaching ministry of the Church, and, on the other hand, the abundance of gifted and dynamic women in the Alepine Syrian Orthodox community, an obvious book to choose for translation would be Brock and Harvey's *Syrian Women in Late Antiquity*. Now that Jacob of Serugh's encomium on Saint Ephraim has been newly edited and translated in the *Patrologia Orientalis*, it might well be translated into Arabic. This is the poem that contains the memorable verses:

*The aim of all his teaching was a world renewed:
a world where men and women both have equal rights.*

Of course it should be translated from the original Syriac. It would be good to show that it is not only the Catholics and the Protestants who find active roles for women in the teaching ministry of the Church.

- [15] Another neglected area is that of liturgical history. I was witness to a beautiful celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of St. George in the Old Syrian Quarter of Aleppo, in which the whole congregation joined in singing parts of the service, recited as a body a form of confession which is recited elsewhere individually to a priest, and received Holy Communion, which in some parts of the Orthodox Churches is only received two or three times a year, or once every forty days. The Metropolitan remarked on this in his sermon and said that he favoured innovations which actually brought the Church closer to its own origins: bringing in the old anew. A close reading of Saint Ephrem, by Sebastian Brock, has shown that at least some people received Holy Communion daily in the fourth-century churches of Mesopotamia; and this finding, contained in his book, *The Luminous Eye*, has been translated into Arabic and published by Metropolitan Athanasius Yeshue, of America and Canada, in 1984. Another candidate for translation into Arabic is Erich Renhart's recent book, *Das syrische Bema* [*The Syrian Bema*] (Graz, 1995). This book brings the archaeology of the Aleppo region into dialogue with research into the early

forms of eastern Christian liturgies and raises questions which others are now engaged in answering, questions concerning the exact functions and the symbolic meaning of the platform which is found in the middle of the nave in some ancient churches, the ruins of which can easily be visited from Aleppo, such as Daret 'Azzeh, Qalb Lozeh, or Ar-Rusafa. If answers to these questions can be found, they may give a new (or rather restore the ancient) relevance to many of the words in Syrian Orthodox hymns. Those hymns, after all, were composed for use in the Late Antique churches which exhibit this feature. At that point, the Syrian Orthodox might feel ready for reforms in church architecture, bringing in the old anew. A comparable reform in the Roman Catholic Church has been the reintroduction of the westward-facing altar. I am not advocating a westward-facing altar in Syrian Orthodox churches; but I am advocating a debate on the reintroduction of the bema in some cases, in the light of recent and continuing scholarship. This debate would need to be informed by publications such as the one I have suggested.

[16]

Finally, I would advocate the publication of the Syriac texts which are translated in the series. If this were done in companion volumes, then readers could compare the translation with the original. The Arabic version of selected *mimre* [Syr. ܡܡܪܐ] of Jacob of Serugh, by Bishop Militios Barnaba (B.7), would be the better for the inclusion of the whole Syriac text of each *mimro* translated, not just the first page, a deficiency which has been regretted by local readers. Parallel texts of the Western Classics are a publishing success and can be found on the shelves of many people of average education in Europe; but only a few expensive or unobtainable books contain Syriac texts in parallel with their translations. Besides the usefulness of an affordable parallel Syriac text and translation, there is the fact that Syria possesses great manuscript resources in this field which have been insufficiently tapped. If Syrian Orthodox scholars of the calibre of Dolabani (see B.8–10) could rediscover the strict discipline of critical edition, a tradition practised in the sixth to eighth centuries by scholars such as Thomas of Harqel and Jacob of Edessa (see B.4), but very largely left to Western scholars at the present, they could themselves edit texts which are lying unread in their libraries and by this act of love redeem them, as Hannah and Elizabeth were redeemed, from their shameful barrenness. Again, either subsidies are needed to release those

qualified from other essential tasks, or else, perhaps, the Church could exploit its own resources more effectively, the great scholars (who are often the bishops) delegating, as GYI does delegate, many essential tasks to others, in order to be free to give their community, and the global community, the benefit of their scholarship. It would be good if future generations were able to write of Syrian Orthodox bishops today what GYI has written of Barsawm: that he is 'The Glory of the Syrians' (D.ii.2).

- [17] The Mardin Press has been refused ISBN and ISSN numbers, because it is in Syria; for this reason, and perhaps for others (Syria is justly famous for the thorough approach of its governmental bureaucracy), distribution is a problem. The only way, at present, to obtain the books is to write to the Press direct. The postal address is as follows:

Mardin Publishing House
P.O. Box 4194 — Aleppo — Syria
Telex 331850 NAHRIN SY
Fax 00963-21-642260
Telephone 00963-21-642210

- [18] Considering the lack of abundant resources, the books are well produced and reasonably well bound, although I imagine that the bindings of the dictionaries will not last long if they are used frequently and left open. Where reprints are concerned, attention should be paid to documenting the publication history of the book reprinted. The proof-reading of western languages in notes and bibliographies in all the series leaves much to be desired: perhaps western scholars could offer their services? It is a pity that a volume finished in every other way should be rough-and-ready in this respect. The publisher's catalogue should give the date of each volume and of any reprint; sometimes more detail is needed, if the reader of the catalogue is to come away with some idea of what is in the book. For example, "Pro Oriente, Book I" is not much help, particularly in Arabic transcription.

- [19] A review must contain some constructive criticisms and a review of a young publishing house's output should contain some suggestions for future initiatives. The abiding impression received by this reviewer is one of intellectual vigour and artistic sensibility, allied to a desire to feed the imagination and so foster innovation in the spirit of the tradition. The driving force behind the enterprise is Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, who seems determined to keep

his tradition alive and kicking. His evident commitment to ecumenism coexists with a proper pride in his own Church's historical identity, something which, as the Roman Catholic Church has admitted in the Second Vatican Council and the Agreement of Balamand, was only partially affirmed, and thereby partially negated, by the incorporation of oriental traditions and identities in the Roman Catholic Church. If some aspects of the production of some of the books is open to criticism, the other side of this coin is the efficiency of this publishing house in making texts available to its readers. 71 books in seventeen years, even if some of them are only reprints, is not bad for a Press with a tiny staff (at present, just Claudia 'Ido, Roula Syriani and Ruba Shahin) in a country where there are many obstacles to efficiency. The Mardin Syrian Orthodox Press and its indefatigable chief deserve to be warmly congratulated.

[20] Contents of B.7 : Selected *mimre* of Jacob of Serugh (first line of each *mimro*):

- 1 - كَيْفَ حَقَّقُوا لَنَا مَعَهُ هَذَا؟ هَسْ.
- 2 - أَلَيْسَ هَذَا هَاجِسًا وَحْدًا؟
- 3 - أَلَيْسَ هَذَا حَقًّا، إِيَّاهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 4 - مَعَهُ قَلِيلًا، أَلَيْسَ حَقًّا؟ هَسْ، وَحْدًا؟
- 5 - لَا مُعْصَلًا مَعَهُ، مَعَهُ مَعَهُ.
- 6 - مَجْزَأًا مَعَهُ، وَلَا مُعْصَلًا مَعَهُ.
- 7 - أَلَيْسَ مَعَهُ، وَفِيهِ مَعَهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 8 - تَحْدًا وَبِئْسَ وَفِيهِ، مَعَهُ.
- 9 - حَبَالًا لِمَا هُوَ، وَفِيهِ؟ هَسْ.
- 10 - تَحْدًا وَبِئْسَ، أَلَيْسَ مَعَهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 11 - هَسْ، أَلَيْسَ مَعَهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 12 - مُعْصَلًا، هَسْ، أَلَيْسَ مَعَهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 13 - هَسْ، مَعَهُ، هَسْ، مَعَهُ؟ هَسْ.
- 14 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 15 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 16 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 17 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 18 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 19 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.
- 20 - هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ، هَسْ.