

Introduction

This publication is grateful to its supporters, far-flung but loyal. To each of them we apologize for the delay in the present issue. We assure one and all that we have not been dawdling. Instead, we have busy reorganizing in order to streamline our effort. The recent delay has created a time lag which we propose to rectify. Customarily, our issues are published at a six-month interval. We expect to send out the next issue sooner than that, thereby bringing us back to our normal schedule.

We hope your patience will be rewarded. We are pleased to lead off this edition with **Dr. Heleen Murre-van den Berg's** article on "*The Missionaries' Assistants*", which addresses the role played by Assyrians in the development of written "Urmia Aramaic." Dr Murre-van den Berg is known personally to Assyrian communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Readers from the Chicago area will remember the lecture she delivered under the auspices of three groups, including the Assyrian Academic Society. More recently, at the Syriac Symposium, Uppsala University, Sweden, she spoke on "*Alqosh and Urmia as Centers of Neo-Syria Writing*." The author's doctoral thesis at Leiden University (to be published soon) was titled "*From a Spoken to a Written Language: The Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century*."

Mr. **Yoab Benjamin's** "*Assyrians in Middle America*" is an informed survey of the Chicago Assyrian community, barely over one hundred years old. The first Assyrian immigrants to the U.S. landed in New York and New Jersey, but it would not be long before employment opportunities in the Midwest proved a great magnet. Such places as Flint (Michigan) and Gary (Indiana) offered work in manufacturing plants, though Chicago became the principal Assyrian destination. Today, a clear majority of all U.S. Assyrians live in this metropolitan area. The Assyrians of Chicago represent the largest Assyrian community in the diaspora, and it is there especially that one can learn about the successes and failures of the Assyrian American community. As for Mr. Benjamin, he has been a frequent and valuable contributor to this publication. The present topic once again demonstrates the breadth of his interests.

Mr. **Zomaya Solomon** is a JAAS Contributing Editor whose work has regularly appeared in the Journal. Taken together, his essays on the Modern Assyrian language constitute a significant body of work,

containing both theory and detail rarely found elsewhere. In this latest effort, the author tackles the complex subject of “*Verbs, Tenses and Particles.*” Although formally retired from a successful career in teaching languages, Mr. Solomon pursues several other projects which tend to harmonize well with his JAAS work. Among other, Mr. Solomon is Vice-Chairman of **Aramaic Bible Translation, Inc**, an organization seeking to advance “*the spiritual and moral well-being of the Aramaic speaking communities, particularly the Assyrians ...*”.

In “*The East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology*”, **Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie** submits that in its use of “exchanges of predicates”, the official prayers and anthems of the Church of the East speak of a single subject in the person of Christ. As he did with his two previous Journal contributions, Father Birnie’s brief but searching essay challenges too easy a stereotype of this ancient institution.

We close this issue by reproducing one of the messages received by the Journal on the occasion of its 10th anniversary.

F.S.