

Introduction

Efrem Yildiz is a native of Silopi, Turkey. After a secondary education in Germany, he studied at the University Pontificia Urbaniana, in Rome, where he earned a *Licence* in Philosophy and, three years later, a *Licence* in Theology. In 1997, he was awarded a Doctorate in Biblical Theology from this well-established institution. As a member of the Faculty of Theology of the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, in Spain, Dr. Yildiz has taught such subjects as Old and Biblical Aramaic, the Old Testament, and Biblical Literature.

Dr. Yildiz's has an impressive array of languages in his repertoire, including the major ones from western Europe, and the classical ones, such as Biblical Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on "*La 'Teoria' Biblica battesimale secondo Mar Teodoro l'Interprete*," so that his JAAS article plows familiar ground. In several articles previously-published, he has focused on one aspect or another of Theodore's work. Here, in "*The Literary Activity and Biblican Exegesis of Mar Theodorus the 'Interpreter'*," we believe that Dr. Yildiz's insightful *tour d'horizon* will appeal to lay reader and specialized scholar alike.

Theodore of Mopsuestia "*dedicated himself to his studies over a period of fifty years*," a feat all the more remarkable considering Dr. Yildiz's comment that "*Theodore never refused the request of anyone and his pen never touched any Scriptural writing without giving a perfect explanation*." Clearly this is a figure whose importance cannot be overestimated.

In an earlier JAAS article ("*The Church of the East and Theodore of Mopsuestia*," Volume X, No. 1, 1996, pp.14-18), Chorbishop Michael J. Birnie noted that over the centuries the Church of the East had been an uncritical defender of Theodore. But Birnie continued with the following observation: "*Modern scholarship has sought, with scientific disinterestedness, to re-evaluate the person of Theodore and to credit the significance of his contributions to the ultimate resolution arrived at in Chalcedon. In light of these studies and their (more or less) dispassionate conclusions, the Church of the East is prepared to join, in a spirit of ecumenism, the discussion of Theodore and his work. So long as bitterness and rancor are denied a place in the scholarly forum, and honest inquiry continues, the church is prepared to participate in the discussion insofar as it is able to make a contribution*." The article by Professor Yildiz is surely a step toward that vision.

In JAAS Volume XI, No.2, Dorothea Weltecke wrote about another giant, namely, Michael the Great, a Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of the 12th century. Now comes **Abdulmesih BarAbraham** who praises Weltecke's effort, while adding to our knowledge of this fabled figure. A native of Midyat/Tur-Abdin, in Turkey, Mr. BarAbraham received both his secondary and university education in Germany. He is a successful computer scientist with a long list of technical and research papers to his credit, but his accomplishments go well beyond this technical expertise. Fluent in German, English, and Turkish, and passably fluent

in Syriac and Arabic, he is an avid student of his people's history as well as a perceptive commentator on modern Assyrian affairs. He has published a number of essays and op-ed pieces in various Assyrian magazines. We are pleased to present Mr. BarAbraham's comments, and also proud to note he is an honorary board member of this Journal.

It has been five years since **Dr. Zomaya S. Solomon** began his article contributions to JAAS. It has been nearly that long since he wrote "*A Basic Sentence Structure in Assyrian Aramaic*" (JAAS Volume VIII, No.1, 1994), the first in a series of explanatory essays dissecting the modern Assyrian language in all its grammatic permutations. With the current "*Pronouns and Pronominal Elements in Assyrian Aramaic*", the author provides yet another piece for the mosaic that is our language. By reason of his career accomplishments, we readily associate Dr. Solomon's scholarship to Semitic Languages, and the breadth of his talents is perhaps underappreciated. Beyond languages, he has studied Archeology as well as Middle East ancient history. Perhaps as interesting, Dr. Solomon has written a number of poems both in Classical and in Spoken Aramaic, and these are no doubt destined for eventual publication. JAAS is fortunate to be associated with Dr. Solomon, both for his scholarly contributions and for his valued participation as a member of the Journal editorial board.

Dr. Michael Fuller and Neathery Fuller (M.A.) are both anthropologists by education. Both teach in the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, St. Louis Community College, Missouri. With archaeology their foremost interest, this husband and wife team has conducted field work in Greece, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. regarding the latter, they have participated in a series of excavations in the northeast region of Syria for eleven consecutive summers. In the process, they have acquired a working knowledge of the dialect spoken in that area.

The northeast region of Syria, the venue of the study presented here, has historically attracted the interest of a wide range of archaeologists, usually representing world reknown universities and museums. It is a credit to the Fullers, whose excavation work is supported exclusively by private foundations, that they have established an impressive program in field archeology by sheer force of their commitment. It is certainly a mark of their achievement that of the many Community colleges which exist in the U.S., theirs is the only one privileged to offer such a program.

One of the obvious outcomes of their work is that it generates valuable information contributing to the painstaking reconstruction of life in this area in early times, including of course that of the early Christians. We know that in the years ahead the Fullers will develop a great deal more knowledge about this past.

The paper reprinted here was first presented by the Fullers last December, at the annual meeting of the *Archaeological Institute of America*.

Gladys Warda, who is new to these pages, is a teacher of mathematics at the University of Uruguay. She is a native and life-long resident of

Montevideo. Her father is from the Tiyari tribe of Assyrians, and emigrated there several decades ago. Her U.S.-born mother traveled to South America to teach English. Although Ms Warda did not learn modern Assyrian, she is very capable in Italian and French (which she studied), as well English and her own native Spanish.

To review a book in English when it exists only in another language in effect requires its 'translation'. While a full and formal English translation of Annibale **Bugnini's La Chiesa in Iran** would certainly be welcome, we are not aware of any current effort to accomplish such a project. We had hoped to offer a review of this work quite some time ago, but it has not been easy to find an individual literate in Italian, and willing to tackle the task. Understandably, we are especially grateful to Ms Warda for her commendable work, which represents both a synopsis as well as some analytical comments.

Articles on Bar Hebraeus and Michael the Great, in this JAAS issue and in the previous one, simply reaffirm the truism that scholarly writings of Christian clerics are critical to an understanding of our culture. Literary contributions inspired from varied confessional attitudes contain their own inspirational value. But more than this, the sparks they strike promiscuously eventually join to provide cumulative illumination. Father Bugnini is very much such a spark. Regardless of the differences which are likely to arise in the detail of his laborious study, we are indebted to him for undertaking it, and we are equally indebted to Ms Warda for making it accessible to us.

F.S.