# Sixth North American Syriac Symposium: SYRIAC ENCOUNTERS

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In June 2011, an international group of scholars and students of Syriac studies met at Duke University in Durham, NC, for the sixth North American Syriac Symposium. The theme of this year's Symposium was "Syriac Encounters: encounters and interactions between individuals, generations, communities, traditions, ideas, languages, and religions." Dr. Lucas van Rompay of Duke University together with his students Dr. Kyle Smith, Maria Doerfler, and Emanuel Fiano organized the meeting. They selected the theme "Syriac Encounters" to highlight various kinds of diachronic and synchronic interaction and dialogue, formation of communal identity, construction of tradition, language contact, and religious conversation both within Syriac Christianity and between Syriac Christianity and other traditions, in particular Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and various forms of Western Christianity.

The committee organized a splendid symposium with participants from several countries and institutions. Many scholars reflected on how this meeting of the North American Syriac Symposium has grown since the initial Symposium held in 1991 at Brown University. Dr. Van Rompay posed the best joke of the Symposium, "how do you spell Duke in Syriac?" With kaph (Van Rompay) or qoph (Brock)? Van Rompay referred to it as a British-American spelling variant.

The Symposium also inaugurated the selection committee for the Nijmeh A. Kiraz Award for a best presentation by a student, and in consultation with the North American Supervisory Board the award was given to Mr. Jeffrey Wickes, a PhD candidate of the University of Notre Dame and student of Drs. Joseph Amar and Robin Darling Young.

George and Christine Kiraz of Gorgias Press commemorated the tenth-year anniversary of Gorgias Press with a celebration and a toast. The organizing committee also presented an exhibition of Syriac manuscripts and early printed books at Duke University's Biddle Rare Book Room in the Perkins Library.

Guests arrived on Sunday, June 26. Attendees were accommodated at the beautiful Duke Inn. The conference began with a splendid opening dinner at the Nasher Museum of Art. Dr. Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Brown University) presented the first plenary address on "Encountering Eve in Syriac Liturgical Tradition."

Monday, June 27, featured a wide range of shorter papers: Themes and Topics in Early Syriac Literature, Constructions and Reconstructions, Syriac Identity, Education, and Diaspora, Between the Roman Empire & Syriac Christianity, Surveying the Landscape of Ascetic Practice, Continuity and Canon in Syriac Literature, The World of Ephrem the Syrian, Monasticism in the Textual Tradition, Syriac Juridical Literature, Bardaisan in Context, Art and Architecture, The Liturgical Tradition, and a Study Session on Projects, Tools and Translations. Dr. Heleen-van den Berg (Leiden University) presented the morning Plenary Lecture on "Classical Syriac and the Syriac Churches: a 20th c. History." Dr. Riccardo Contini of the University of Naples, "L'Orientale" gave the afternoon plenary on "Aspects of Linguistic Thought in the Syriac Exegetical Tradition."

The conference continued on Tuesday, June 28, with a second day of stimulating talks and presentations. Sessions included Language, Script and Computational Models, Evagrius of Pontus and his Reception in Syriac, East-Syriac Ascetic Literature, The Letter of Mara Bar Serapion to his Son, The Acts of the Persian Martyrs, Biblical Language and Reading, Biblical Interpretation, Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Serug, Religious and Philosophical Interactions, Hagiography: Text and Genre, Syriac Christianity and Judaism, and Sixth & Seventh East Syriac Literature. Dr. Alison G. Salveson (University of Oxford) presented the morning Plenary Lecture on "Scholarship on the Margins: Biblical and Secular Learning in the Work of Jacob of Edessa." Dr. Amir Harrak (University of Toronto) presented the afternoon plenary lecture on "The Chronicle of Michael the Syrian: A Major World History and an Edition Project." The final day of papers and talks on Wednesday June 29 featured sessions on Constructions of the Other, Syriac Song, Christians and Muslims, Responses to the 'Other,' Literature of the Syriac Renaissance, and Turks and Mongols in Syriac Chronicles. Fr. Sidney Griffith (Catholic University of America) presented the final Plenary Lecture on

"What does Mecca have to do with Urhoy? Syriac Christianity, Isalmic Origins, and the Qu'ran: A Study in Intertextuality."

The symposium was a tremendous success thanks to the efforts of the organizing committee, and the proceedings will be published both in Hugoye and in a separate volume dedicated to the conference's proceedings. Below is a summary of the abstracts of the papers.

Nathanael Andrade, West Virginia University, "A Syriac Discourse on Romanness"

In the mid-third century CE, three notarized documents were issued by the civic administrations at Edessa or in the Middle Euphrates region (published with bibliography as P1-3 in Drijvers and Healey 1999: Appendix 1 and recently (in the case of P1-2) in Healey 2009: 252-75). These documents belong to a broader socio-political context induced by the Roman conquest of Osrhoene, and they reflect the Severan emperors' endeavors to integrate many inhabitants of the Middle Euphrates region into the civic frameworks of Greek city-states (poleis) or Roman colonies (coloniae). Yet, whereas most civic administrations in the region produced such documents in Greek, these three surviving documents were issued in Syriac. One such document (P1), which was produced at Edessa, embodies the radical cultural reformulations that Syrians implemented in response to Roman imperial pressure. While its use of Syriac Aramaic indicates the critical engagement that many Syrians maintained toward mainstream Greek and Roman classical culture, it also endows Edessa with the transliterated Greek and Latin titles of metropolis and colonia along with Roman dynastic epithets, and it documents the establishment of the duumvirate and imperial priesthood in Edessa's civic-cultic structure. Because other contemporary literary and epigraphic texts demonstrate that citizens of such coloniae conceived of their cities as Roman collectives, it must be stressed that Syrians' cultivation of "colonial" identities prompted them to conceive of their cultural performances as "Roman" even when they prioritized Near Eastern idioms over Italian ones. For such reasons, this document represents a broader process by which many third-century Syrians redefined Romanness in ways that embedded its performance in Aramaic speech, as opposed to Latin

and Greek. Syrians did not express their Romanness by passively adopting cultural symbols emanating from imperial centers such as Italy and Greece, but they did so by generating creative and new "Roman" expressions that integrated Near Eastern culture.

Naures Atto, Leiden University: "Challenging the Hostages' and Orphans' Dilemma"

Emigration to Western countries has engendered an identity crisis among Assyrians/Syriacs and transformed their traditional ethno-religious identity into a split subject, because they could no longer identify themselves with this form of identification. The empty and free space which emigration caused made it necessary to re-define the collective identity of their people—both conceptually and in the representation of a name. This presentation discussed the conclusion of Atto's PhD thesis which is the analysis of the identity discourses of Assyrian/Syriac elites in the European diaspora. For an explanation of these discourses, she studied the conditions of their emergence from a historical perspective. Although the context of study includes the geography both in the Middle East and in Europe in general, Atto has particularly focused on the case of Assyrians/Syriacs in Sweden for a more in-depth analysis. She has shown how the "name discussion" has resulted in a split within the ʿamo Suryoyo—represented by the Assyriska and Syrianska institutionalized ideologies. Within the antagonistic relationship between them, they have challenged each other's identity discourses, while continuing to attempt to find solutions for their perceived endangered position, which Atto has termed the Hostages' and Orphans' Dilemma.

Adam Becker, New York University, "Retrieving the Ruins of Nineveh: Archeology, Orientalizing Autoethnography, and the Idea of Syriac Literature"

Becker discussed how the East-Syrian engagement with Western archeology and Orientalism in the late nineteenth century contributed to the development of Assyrianism, the political and cultural philosophy that holds that the "Nestorians," and even all Syriac Christians, are descendants of the Assyrians of the ancient Near East. In response to what they learned from missionaries, the

East Syrians engaged in an autoethnographic localization of themselves both temporally and spatially as an ancient race. Mission publications, especially newspapers, reproduced ancient "oriental" themes and motifs that in fact mediated actual Near Eastern material through an imagined Orient, and this European notion of the ancient Orient served as a template for an innovative East-Syrian self-imagining. A number of people have pointed out that "Assyrian" is a retrieved identity based upon Western sources more than upon any kind of continuity of identity over several millennia. However, the actual mechanics of this process of cultural appropriation and renegotiation have not been closely examined. The East-Syrian engagement with Western scholarship occurred primarily through the East Syrians' contact with missionaries, whose projects of moral and religious reform helped to create a discursive framework in which Assyrian nationalist claims made sense. This paper suggested that related to the development of Assyrianism is the very notion of "Syriac literature" itself. Unlike the American mission, which had generally eschewed Classical Syriac literature, the Catholic and Anglican missions published Classical Syriac liturgical texts as well as early collections of Syriac literature. This contributed to a self-conscious reassessment of "Syriac literature" by local intellectuals, both West- and East-Syrian, and the development of a secular notion of literature that would contribute ultimately to the more recent phenomenon of "Syriac Studies."

George Bevan, Queen's University: "A Displaced Page in Nestorius' *Liber Heraclidis*"

In Book II.2 of the Liber Heraclidis Nestorius resumes his narration of ecclesiastical affairs with trial of Eutyches in 448 and the Second Council of Ephesus in the following year. A single page of the now lost Syriac manuscript (p. 479 in Paul Bedjan's edition), however, returns to the events of the Council of Ephesus in 431 which the exiled bishop had treated exclusively in earlier sections of the Liber. While the page is obviously displaced, it is unclear just where in the Liber it should be reinserted, and indeed whether it even should be. The passage is made all the more obscure by the translation that substitutes pronouns for many of the proper names. Illumination, however, comes from a Latin translation of a

Greek letter in the Collectio Casinensis from John of Antioch, written two years after the events. Suggested is a retranslation of the passage that attempts to make sense of the situation in light of the documentary evidence in the Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum.

Mark Bilby: University of Virginia / Point Loma Nazarene University: "Luke 23.39-43 in Early Syriac Reception"

Aphrahat mentions (quite briefly) this Lucan episode twice, yet he is the first interpreter in antiquity to clarify which brigand is on which side. Ephrem is the first Syriac interpreter to devote significant attention to the episode. He is also the first interpreter in antiquity to explore the idea of the brigand as a Second Adam figure in a thorough way. The Persian conquest of Nisibis provoked a new, self-representative trope: the brigand becomes a successful negotiator on the cross. In the six year of the Arian crisis in Edessa, Ephrem's brigand models the unquestioning simplicity of Nicaea's faith. A comparative analysis of his authentic hymns confirms the pseudonymity of a mini-collection of Syriac memrē on penitence (Beck's sermons 1.7, 1.8 and 3.4), two notable soghyatha on the brigand, as well as various Greek, Armenian, Arabic, and Georgic sermons. At the same time, this wide array of anonymous and pseudonymous literature confirms Ephrem's real and enormous influence on later interpreters. His themes even echo in the work of Nyssen, Chrysostom, and Asterius Ignotus, among others. The extended reflection in Diat. com. 20.22-26, extant only in Armenian, is not authentic to Ephrem, but rather a later (5th century?) compilation of sermonic themes. Thus it should not be used as a reliable witness for reconstructions of Luke 23.39-43 in the Syriac Diatessaron.

Monica Blanchard, The Catholic University of America: "Timothy, Metropolitan of Gargar (d.1143 or 1169) and the Monastic Founders of Scetis"

Timothy, Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Gargar (d. 1143 or 1169), composed several Syriac poems in the heptasyllabic and dodecasyllabic meters traditionally associated with Ephrem and Jacob of Serug. His memra on the death and assumption of the

Virgin Mary appears in the Liber Thesauri de Arte Poetica Syrorum of Gabriel Cardahi (Rome, 1875). Less well-known is his memra about Macarius, John the Little, Bishoi, Maximus and Dometius – none other than the monastic founders of Scetis or titular founders of the ancient monasteries of the Egyptian Wadi Natrun. The focus of this paper was twofold: briefly to introduce the extant poetry of this twelfth-century West Syrian writer; and then, to explore his memra on the Egyptian fathers as another Syriac source of information on and expression of interest in the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun.

Stephanie Bolz, University of Michigan: "A Jewish Adjuration Formula in Three Syriac Magic Bowls"

There are three parallel Syriac magic bowls written in the proto-Manichaean script, namely, AIT 32 and 33 and 120SY, that are addressed to different clients. This paper focuses on the adjuration formula present in each bowl which contains a cryptic reference to the divine name which is invoked along with accompanying references to the power the divinity has over the natural world. While most scholars now agree that Syriac script alone does not necessarily indicate a Christian origin, the religious origin of these texts is still debated. In addition to a Christian origin, a Manichaean, pagan or Jewish origin has been posited. While the arguments for the Jewish origin have generally focused on the reference to the Jewish system of divorce and R. Joshua bar Peraḥia, and the lack of definitively Christian concepts, scholars have not devoted significant attention to this adjuration formula. This paper argues that the formula does indeed contain an allusion to permutations of the divine name, either the tetragrammaton or 'I am that I am' or both, and the remainder of the adjuration formula has precedents elsewhere in Jewish literature. In addition to the seven known parallel bowls written in Babylonian Jewish Aramaic, variations of this particular adjuration formula containing the invocation of a name which either directly or indirectly refers to the Jewish God along with similar motifs implying the divinity's power over the natural world also occur in magical texts in Palestinian Jewish Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek as well as in some Hebrew piyyutim. The extent to which these parallels exist sheds light on

the question of the degree to which incantation formulas were transmitted and adapted throughout the Mediterranean world.

Aaron Butts, Yale University, "Taking the Temperature of Syriac: A Corpus Study of Greek Loanwords in Classical Syriac"

In a paper entitled 'Greek Words in Ephrem and Narsai: A Comparative Sampling' (ARAM 11-12 [1999-2000]: 439-449), Sebastian Brock showed that Narsai (d. ca. 500) made more frequent use of Greek loanwords than Ephrem (d. 373). Based on this, he argued that Greek-Syriac contact became more intense in the century after the death of Ephrem. In the conclusion to this paper, he further noted that '… the study of the attestation of Greek loanwords can serve, as it were, as a thermometer in order to gain some idea of the degree of hellenization that Syriac literary culture has undergone at different times in the course of its history' (p. 448). The current paper continues this line of research by presenting the results of a corpus study of Greek loanwords in select Syriac texts from the Odes of Solomon to Jacob of Edessa (d. 708). By adopting the methodology of corpus linguistics and increasing the number of samples, this study is able to provide more nuanced conclusions about the 'temperature' of Syriac at different time periods.

Alberto Camplani, La Sapienza: "Bardaisan's Cosmology and Psychology: The witnesses of Mani, Ephrem, and Theodore bar Konai and the Recent Scholarly Perspectives"

This paper explores some controversial issues concerning Bardaisan's cosmology and psychology through the analysis of Mani's fragments containing polemical remarks against Bardaisan's psychology, Ephrem's quotations from Bardesanite writings, and Theodore bar Konai's report about the thinker's cosmogony. A complex picture emerges in which it is possible to recognize the outlines of more than one author, in particular for what concerns the cosmology. Bardaisan's psychology is to be compared with that of other Christian thinkers on the fringes of orthodoxy, such as Tatian and Hermogenes. This composite image cannot easily be harmonized with the portraits of the thinker that have been offered

by modern scholarship, and in particular with the use of categories such as orthodoxy and heresy.

Thomas Carlson, Princeton University, "Syriac Patriarchs and Muslim Rulers in the Fifteenth Century"

In the century between Timur Lenk's conquests and the Ottoman takeover, power remained very local throughout eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. The region was ruled by a motley hodge-podge of nomadic Turkmen confederations and urban dynasties. The large Christian populations in the region were also divided between local patriarchates, with three (and then two) rival Syrian Orthodox patriarchates and two (and then three) Armenian catholicoi. This paper reconstructs the patriarchal successions for these multiple patriarchates and discusses how each interacted with their various Muslim rulers. Although the Church of the East subsequently became notorious for having a hereditary office of catholicos-patriarch beginning in the fifteenth century, in fact the practice of patriarchal nepotism which designated the current incumbent's nephew as successor was also practiced by some Syrian Orthodox, Armenian, and Albanian patriarchs in this period. Although both Syriac and Armenian sources classify the rulers of fifteenth-century eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq as either "persecutors" or "good for Christians," a detailed understanding of how the Christian hierarchy interacted with Muslim government requires moving beyond these superficial and often contradictory evaluations to examine the evidence, which makes clear that Christian patriarch and Muslim emir were in close contact, whether for cooperation or conflict. The Muslim rulers influenced patriarchal succession, provided a court of appeals for the bishops against their patriarch, and even attempted to re-write the lines of patriarchal jurisdictions. Patriarchs interceded with the governors on behalf of their flocks, and received patronage from Muslim monarchs. Christian leaders were not ignored in the policy decisions of the day, although not all attention was good attention. In sum, this paper moves beyond the facile and inaccurate generalizations of either persecution or peaceful co-existence to situate the Syriac patriarchates in the social context of the fifteenth-century Middle East.

J.F. Coakley, Cambridge University, "An Early Syriac Question Mark"

A special system of sentence punctuation appears in the Peshitta Bible, probably first in the New Testament. This system is not completely understood, but one punctuation mark has a function that can be made out more plainly than the rest. This is the mark known as zawga ʿelaya used for marking yes-or-no questions. The nature of this mark is clear from an examination of manuscripts in the British Library from the fifth and sixth centuries, although not from later Syriac works on punctuation, which apparently misunderstand it. A similar practice of marking yes-or-no questions in Greek manuscripts came along only much later.

Steve Cochrane, University of the Nations: "Re-assessment of Muslim views of Christian Monasteries, with Particular Reference to the Early 9th Century"

In the early 9th century, East Syrian monasteries were integral units of cultural cohesion and identity as well as mission centres for the onward spread of Christianity across Asia. In the Abbasid heartland, and particularly in Northern Mesopotamia, Muslims visited these monasteries for various reasons. This paper reflects on Muslim views of the monastery, from previous as well as the following centuries but with the 9th century as the contextual framework. Many of these views are particularly polemic, and this paper re-examines this to propose alternate views as well.

Alberto Camplani, University of Rome, "La Sapienza"

This paper focuses upon the information that both an-Nadim and al-Biruni give us about Mani's Book of mysteries, and his polemics against the psychology of Bardaisan and his disciples. To what extent are Bardaisan and the Bardesanites the real target of the words of Mani reported by al-Biruni, who accuses them of sustaining that the living soul remains in the corpse? Perhaps this expression must be understood not in the sense that they have admitted, as proposed by various streams of thought inside the Great Church, a close connection between soul and body in the tomb (hypnopsychia) until the resurrection, but in the sense that

they claimed: 1) that the soul has corporeal status, 2) that there is a relationship between soul and the astral universe, which is defined in Manichaean terms as "corpse", 3) that the soul remains inside the matter, the astral spheres, from the time of death, 4) that perhaps Paradise and the wedding chamber (gnon nuhra) are located in the astral spheres.

The school of Bardaisan sustains a purification of the world and matter, of the cosmos itself, just as in Manichaeism. In the latter, however, the light has to ascend physically and free itself from the carnal body also during its biological life, a body which is destined for eternal destruction and inactivity. In Bardaisan it is the entire universe that must be purified from darkness and disorder, which is not ontological: in this way the process of refining is inside the world.

To face this complex subject the paper discusses fragments by Mani and Diodore of Tarsus (inedited), Theodore bar Konai, Moses bar Kepha, Philoxenus. In addition Ephrem's writings against Bardaisan are taken into consideration, in particular for what concerns his opinions about the body, the soul, the intellect, and their resurrection, as well as the connection of these notions with the cosmological fragments about female entities: these give men the noetic life which was lost by Adam and was offered by Christ through his teaching.

In conclusion: al-Biruni and an-Nadim are witnesses to a Manichean polemic on the status of the soul in Bardesanism, the content of which largely escapes us, and can be rebuilt only in a conjectural way, comparing the fragments with what remains of Tatian and Hermogenes.

Riccardo Contini: Professor of Semitic Philology at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy. "Aspects of linguistic thought in the Syriac exegetical tradition"

As is often the case in the history of the language sciences, even in cultures which have given rise to their own native grammatical and lexicographical traditions, fertile strands of linguistic reflection have been developed within the context of other branches of learning, most frequently philosophy, logic, rhetoric, and the exegesis of sacred or canonical texts. The Syriac tradition of biblical exegesis and philology, within whose scholarly and educational context

Syriac native grammar and lexicography were actually developed, is a rich repository of remarks and information of linguistic import. Its traditional genres of both prose homilies or commentaries and different poetical compositions on biblical themes not infrequently dwell on topics relevant for the study of language: the way Hebrew proper names and the etiologies - and puns - provided for them in the Old Testament are handled, as well as the identification of the original language of mankind, the Babelic episode or the shibboleth incident, are all cases in point. Further topics are provided by biblical narratives concerning the knowledge of languages, bilingualism and interpreters, or the role of writing.

In the case of the East Syrian tradition of interpretation of the Old Testament, moreover, parallels can be traced with similar instances of the reflection on language matters developed in the Sasanian empire in the rabbinic and Zoroastrian schools for the exegesis of the respective sacred texts. Different instances of the treatment of themes relevant to the emergence of an incipient etymological and semantic thought in the Syriac exegetical literature shall be discussed in this paper. Contini also discussed the metalinguistic terminology there employed, compared with the one gradually established in native Syriac grammar.

Dinno, Khalid, University of Toronto, "The Turks and Mongols in the Contemporary Syriac Chronicles."

This paper considered the extant works of three renowned Medieval Syriac chroniclers: Michael I the Great (also called Michael the Syrian), Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, (1166-99); the author of the Anonymous Chronicle to AD 1234 (the Anonymous Chronicle, a Syrian Orthodox monk who lived at the time of the Crusades and personally witnessed Saladin's entry of Jerusalem in 1181; and the famous philosopher Bar 'Ebroyo (commonly known as Bar Hebraeus), a Syrian Orthodox Maphrian (1264-86). The period considered, from the early reign of the Seljuks in Persia and then in Asia Minor to the end of each chronicle, takes up a significant portion of each of these chronicles: nearly a quarter of Michael's Chronicle, half of the Anonymous Chronicle and two thirds of Bar Hebraeus' two chronicles. These chronicles have often been cited as important primary sources for reconstructing the history of the Seljuks and the Mongol Il-khanid rule.

The period from the 11th through 13th century was a remarkably eventful and violent one in the turbulent history of the Middle East, as it marked both the end of the long dominance of the Arabs in the heartland of Islam as well as the Byzantines, and the onset of different forms of Turkish rule: Saljuk and, subsequently, Ottoman. Thus, this period witnessed major events and a series of major invasions: the Seljuk Turks in the mid 11th century, the Crusaders from the late 11th to late 13th century, and the Mongols in the mid 13th century. They also witnessed a historic confrontation between Christendom and Islamic world during the campaigns of the crusades. These incursions from the East and West radically affected the religious, political and cultural climates of the Middle East throughout medieval period with a legacy that endured throughout the succeeding periods.

The Syrians therefore lived in an area that had witnessed the Islamic conquest and endured severe hardship under often tyrannical caliphs, sultans and local rulers. By reason of their habitat, the West Syrians, to whom all the medieval Syriac chronicles are known to belong, in addition to living under Byzantine and Crusade rules, were witness to, and lived through, waves of Turkish and Mongol invasions that occurred within the last three centuries of the Abbasid Caliphate and afterwards.

The chronicles under reference were written by men who shared the cultural and linguistic milieu of the Muslims in whose midst they lived as dhimmis who, although members of an officially tolerated non-Muslim religion, and therefore theoretically protected by the Muslim state, in reality wielded no political power. With no vested political interest and no protection from exterior major Christian powers (who generally considered them as heretics) the Syrian Christian chroniclers provide an outlook on events that is at variance from, and is independent of, their Muslim and European counterparts.

Syriac chronicles, being intrinsically influenced by theological and ecclesiastical considerations, viewed history with a purpose, driven by the need to show how the Divine Will directed human destiny. This theologically based view of historic events led most Syriac chroniclers to be pre-destinist about events, especially natural disasters and other tragedies.

Due to their differing circumstances, but also their individual personalities, the three chroniclers differed in their outlook and

perspective. Michael the Great devoted a considerable space in his chronicle to the theme in which he presents a theological treatise justifying the Turkish rule to his readers by demonstrating how God let them emerge from their distance homeland and delivered them to their "kingdom of men." The Anonymous Edessan, on the other hand, is more straightforward, adhering to the historical facts, focusing on dates, facts and figures. He reserved his sharpest criticism to the Mongols whose initial invasions he witnessed. Bar Hebraeus was interested as much in narratives of important facts as in anecdotes about rulers, philosophers, scholars and interesting ordinary people. Being witness to the invasion of the Mongols and living in their midst, his accounts and anecdotal descriptions of their rulers and personalities is most valuable. His keen interest in philosophy, scholarship and people in general makes his accounts particularly rich.

Maria Doerfler, Duke University, "Evagrian Asceticism in the Syriac Tradition: The case of Philoxenus of Mabbug's Letter to Patricius"

Philoxenus of Mabbug, the sixth-century Syrian Orthodox bishop and theologian, is perhaps best remembered as a champion of Miaphysite Christology. His Letter to Patricius, however, shows Philoxenus in a different capacity—one that has received little scholarly attention thus far—, namely that of a skillful exponent of Syriac asceticism. The letter's recipient, Patricius, was apparently an ascetic like Philoxenus himself, and had solicited the latter's advice on how to best extricate himself from the duties pressed upon him by members of his community that threatened to interfere with Patrichius' single-minded focus on spiritual contemplation. In his response, Philoxenus masterfully weaves together strands from several ascetic traditions, drawing upon the Egyptian desert monasticism, the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers, as well as upon indigenous Syriac sources. Notable among these is Evagrius of Pontus—a powerful influence upon Syriac asceticism during the sixth and subsequent centuries, as Sebastian Brock has rightly noted. The Letter thus paraphrases substantial portions Evagrius' ascetic corpus, particularly the Praktikos; indeed, Philoxenus concludes his correspondence with a direct quotation from Evagrius' writings—albeit without ever identifying the latter by

name. Philoxenus' reception of Evagrius is far from uncomplicated, however. While Evagrian themes suffuse the Letter, Philoxenus frequently uses Evagrius' dicta to make distinctly un-Evagrian points. This is the case most prominently when Philoxenus draws upon Evagrius to argue that Christians must fulfill the commandments—those of Moses as well as those of Christ—to achieve the spiritual purity that can aspire to true intellectual contemplation. This paper addressed the afterlife Evagrian asceticism enjoyed in Philoxenus' work, Philoxenus' deployment of Evagrius' teaching despite his apparent reluctance to identify his source, as well as Philoxenus' integration of Evagrius into his own, distinctive and distinctively Syriac Christian system of ascetic discourse.

Reyhan Durmaz, Central European University, "Reconstructing the Mount Athos of the East: Christian Hierotopy of Tur ʿAbdin in Late Antiquity"

Tur 'Abdin, a limestone plateau to the south of the Tigris basin in the southeast of modern Turkey, is an area in which Anti-Chalcedonian (later called the Syrian Orthodox) communities emerged in Late Antiquity. This faith found embodiment through numerous churches and monasteries adorning the landscape of the plateau, which has been referred to as a sacred milieu both by successive generations of believers and modern scholars. Thus, it is of fundamental importance to ask what Late Antique contemporaries perceived as a sacred space. With this question in mind, this paper analyzes textual sources about Tur ʿAbdin utilizing a hierotopical perspective. This method requires sacred spaces to be approached as products of deliberate human creativity. In this respect, concepts and perceptions regarding sacred landscapes and monuments shed light on the human creativity behind the process of transformation of Tur ʿAbdin into a Christian landscape. They were reflected through descriptions and metaphors used in the presentation of churches and monasteries, references to their spatial settings and locations, or any other type of reference to sacred spaces. The sacred spaces in question may be a building, a cave, or a topographical component of the landscape. An analysis of how they are presented in the text may help us to place ourselves in the mindset of the people in order to understand

how they perceived the transformation of Tur ʿAbdin with the coming of the Christian faith.

Rifaat Ebied, University of Sydney, "Dionysius Bar Salibi's Works in the Mingana Collection of Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts, with special emphasis on his Polemical Treatise Against the Muslims"

The rich collection of the Mingana Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts, preserved in Birmingham and Manchester, contains numerous valuable works by Dionysius bar Salibi, Metropolitan of Amid (d. 1171 AD) in a variety of fields: homilies, liturgical works, canon law, commentaries on classical and patristic texts, polemical treatises, theological works and biblical commentaries. Most of these works have not been edited, on the whole remaining un-translated as an entirety, and so rarely the subject of extended analysis by scholars in general and historians in particular. This paper presented a survey of these writings which have survived in the Mingana collection, together with an analysis of their contents and value, etc. Special emphasis is laid on Bar Salibi's Polemical Treatises, and in particular his Treatise Against the Muslims, which is fresh source for assessing the relationships between Christians and Muslims of the Levant in the 12th century. Part of the value of this seminal writing is that it distils the Syriac intellectual tradition of the first millennium and offers rare and illuminating insight into Christian-Muslim relations, not from the perspective of western Crusaders but from "within," from the frequently neglected viewpoint of the Oriental Orthodox tradition.

Paul Feghali, independent scholar, "The Book of Job in the Syriac Tradition and Particularly in Ishoʿdad of Merv"

While writing a commentary on Job in Arabic, Feghali especially noticed the fidelity of the Syriac biblical text to the Hebrew, except for some modifications where the author seems to be promoting a particular interpretation. For example, in Job 29:19 where it says tal (dew) in Hebrew (which may well correspond to talo in Syriac and drosos in Greek), the Syriac reads telolo (shadow). An entire tradition of commentary on Job is found in Syriac beginning with the text attributed to St. Ephrem, which is found in a catena, a series of passages compiled by Severus - a Syriac monk of the

mountain of Edessa - in 861, reaching the Anonymous Commentary and Theodorus Bar Koni, and finally arriving to Ishoʿdad of Merv.

Ishoʿdad of Merv explained the entirety of the Old and New Testaments. He borrowed from many authors who preceded him and whose works are no longer extant. His method consists of first quoting a biblical passage, then giving a literal explanation, i.e., historical (cross referencing passages from within the Old Testament), and finally providing specific moral applications and sometimes "incursions" into the New Testament to apply the biblical passage being scrutinized to Christ and the Church. The objectives of this paper were to show that Ishoʿdad's particular method of explaining the biblical passages was typical of the Syriac exegetical tradition which was in conformity with the Antiochene School of expounding the scriptures. Nonetheless, the Syriac exegetical tradition develops its proper method rooted in its own Semitic milieu.

Emanuel Fiano, Duke University, "The Syriac Version of the Passio Cypriani et Justinae"

The Martyrdom of Cyprian and Justina, along with the Conversion and the Confession of Cyprian, is part of a hagiographical cycle devoted to these two Antiochene figures. The legend, contained in the Conversion, must have existed already in the 4th century and presents us with a proto-Faustian plot. Cyprian, a pagan magician, received a concoction from a demon which was destined to make the Christian and chaste maiden Justina fall in love with his wealthy customer Aglaias. After seeing that Justina had repeatedly defeated the demons by the sign of the cross, Cyprian resolved to give up his sorceries and embraced the Christian faith, beginning an ecclesiastic career that would soon lead him to occupy the episcopal sea of Antioch. The Martyrdom contains the story of the glorious death of the two. Seized by the comes of the East, Entolmius, and miraculously surviving the torments of his soldiers, they were sent to Diocletian in Nicomedia, where they were beheaded along with a third martyr, Theoctistus. Untouched by the beasts to whom they were thrown, their bodies were taken to Rome and there buried by a certain Rufina. The text of the Martyrdom is attested in (among other languages) Greek, Latin,

Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic. The present paper is devoted to an examination of the Syriac version of the work in comparison to the other linguistic attestations, in an attempt to draw some conclusions about its textual history.

Simon Ford, University of Oxford, "'Chief of the Priests:' the Bishop in Eastern and Western Syriac Canon Law, AD 400 to 650"

Beginning in the fifth century, Syriac increasingly emerged as a regular language for the production and dissemination of ecclesiastical legislation in the East Syrian Church, within the Sassanid Empire, as well as in the anti-Chalcedonian Church, in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Although both traditions clearly descended from the Greek legislative corpus of the fourth and early fifth centuries, nonetheless their subsequent development—after AD 410 and 518 respectively—was marked, to a greater or lesser extent, by a divergence from the norms of imperial canon law. At the same time, despite their shared heritage and similar position as minority religions, the legal-administrative framework of each church may be seen to have developed to meet the expedients of its own social and political position, evolving in the process markedly different legislative approaches to church governance. Accordingly, this paper proposes to explore one facet of the divergence of these legislative traditions by examining the evolution of the episcopate—perhaps the fundamental office in the post-Nicene ecclesiastical hierarchy—in Eastern and Western Syriac canon law. In so doing, it is hoped that it also offer insight into the mechanisms by which both churches sought to adapt to their respective political milieu.

Erin Galgay, Duke University, "The Sacrifice of Cain in the Commentaries of Ephrem and Ambrose"

Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis contains an extensive exploration of the story of Cain and Abel. The biblical author's silence on why God rejects Cain's offering is a particularly intriguing aspect of the story, and Ephrem is clearly aware that the narrative risks portraying God's preference for Abel as arbitrary. Ephrem stresses that it was Cain's inward disposition and intentions, rather than the substance of his offering that led to

God's rebuff. In contrast to Marcionite characterizations of God in the book of Genesis as cruel and mercurial, Ephrem takes special care to highlight God's mercy and gentleness in correcting Cain. Ephrem imaginatively enters into the Genesis account by investigating the motivations of the biblical characters, and he pushes the reader to move beneath the surface meaning to access the truths about God conveyed through the narrative. Ephrem's exegetical approach lacks the allegorical maneuvers and intertextuality of another fourth century exegete, Ambrose of Milan. By placing Ephrem and Ambrose in conversation, their distinctive approaches to the exegetical project are highlighted. In De Cain et Abel, Ambrose focuses on the textual clues about the respective sacrifices of Cain and Abel. Ephrem's methodical commentary differs from Ambrose's work in tone and intention. The homiletic style of Ambrose emphasizes the models of virtues present in the text for his reader to imitate. The focus for Ephrem is to guide his readers to a correct understanding of the text, namely that God's mercy and providence define his interaction with humanity. By comparing and contrasting their methodologies of scriptural exegesis, as demonstrated in their reflection on this particular passage of Genesis, it becomes clearer how their doctrinal concerns shape their approach to the literal meaning of Scripture.

Nathan Gibson, The Catholic University of America, "Mountains and Plains: A Syriac Ascetic's Geographical Exegesis in the Memra On Solitaries"

One of the earliest eremitical texts arising from the Syriac-speaking milieu is a mēmrâ titled "On Solitaries, Mourners, and Wilderness Dwellers" (d-ʿal iḥidâyê w-abilê w-madbrâyê) (ed. in Paul Bedjan, Homiliae S. Isaaci Syri Antiocheni [Paris: Harrasowitz, 1903]). Through vivid analogies and scriptural allusions, this adamant treatise urges solitary ascetics (iḥidâyê) to continue a lifestyle of withdrawal. In contrast to the apparent life and teachings of earlier Syriac iḥidâyê, this text (approximately 5th cent. A.D.) emphasizes the ascetic's physical removal from social life, making geography an important dimension for scriptural exegesis. Two key factors are investigated that seem to have entered into this interpretation. First, a comparison of the physical geography of the area east of

Antioch with that of Palestine points to continuities and differences that likely contributed to distinctive connotations of "mountains" and "plains" in the writer's interpretation of Old Testament passages. In particular, a reference to David's battle with Goliath is explored. Second, the justifications for ascetic withdrawal in "On Solitaries" can be meaningfully read in parallel with Cappadocian readings of Hebrews 11, readings with which it may share an interpretive framework. Given the increasing contact at this time between Greek and Syriac interpreters, such a parallel raises the question whether geographic isolation—one of the features apparently distinguishing this new Syriac asceticism from the old—was a feature inherited at least partially from non-Syriac forms of asceticism. In any case, the interplay of physical geography with the formation of ascetic exegesis appears to have been key to the composition of this distinctly Syriac work.

Jan van Ginkel, Leiden University, "A New Manuscript of Job of Edessa's Book of Treasures under the Spotlight"

This paper gives some further information on a "new" manuscript of Job of Edessa's Book of Treasures (817?). Job was one of the early translators of the Abbasid translation movement, which made Greek philosophical material available in Arabic, stimulating the development of early Islamic philosophy. His work reflects some of the early debates of Arabic philosophers and is widely used by scholars in early Arabic philosophy—less, sadly, by students of Syriac. It was up until recently only known from a manuscript made for Mingana in 1930. Thanks to the help of Hidemi Takahashi, van Ginkel located a second copy of the Vorlage used by Mingana's scribe. This copy was produced in 1905 and contains the folio that was subsequently lost before 1930. In addition he highlights the merits of the new manuscript as far as the textual transmission of the Book of Treasures is concerned. Although the new copy stays close to the copy of Mingana, many scribal errors in Mingana's copy (especially cases of homeoteleuton) make this new manuscript an important witness for this text. In addition the colophons provide some interesting insights in the transmission of this text, including the involvement of Mar Dionysios ʿAbd al-Nur Aslan, bishop of Kharput, Homs and Diyarbakir at the beginning

of the twentieth century. Some further comments on the life and work of this intriguing man complete the paper.

Mary Hansbury, Independent Scholar, "Love as an Exegetical Principle in Jacob of Serug"

Jacob emphasizes love in relation to Scripture. Faith as indicated by Ephrem is never neglected. But there is in Jacob's Letters and mimre an insistence on the power of love as an exegetical principle. It does not seem to be simply formulaic or even only an aspect of cognition. Rather it is intrinsic to his Soteriology which underlies his understanding of Scripture.

Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Encountering Eve in the Syriac Tradition"

The figure of Eve held enormous significance for ancient Christianity, and no less so in Syriac. In terms familiar to the broader Christian tradition, Syriac biblical commentaries and theological treatises tended to vilify Eve as the source of human woe because of her role in the biblical events of Genesis 3. Such depictions often linked Eve to common political, social and cultural views that women were inherently inferior to men. By contrast, Syriac liturgical poetry provided a different sense of Eve's presence and meaning for the Christian faithful. In chanted verse homilies and sung hymns, Eve was presented relationally to the whole of humanity, in terms that allowed for dynamic and compassionate interaction in Christian ritual piety. Liturgically, Eve was included in both the sorrowing losses and the joyful hopes of human life. Amidst the familiar cycles of congregational church life – unlike the exclusive tomes of learned men - Eve held a singularly complicated place at the heart of Syriac devotion.

Kristian Heal, Brigham Young University, "Rewriting, Appropriation and Influence in Early Syriac Literature"

Literary influence in classical Syriac literature may be seen at work in the delicate absorption of Ephrem in the works of Jacob of Serug and the Julian Romance. However, many authors were not as sensitive in the handling of their sources, preferring instead to

encapsulate, extract, abridge, or otherwise appropriate texts and passages as their own, or for their own purposes. In many cases new texts would be made from old simply by rewriting them—occasionally transforming prose into verse, or rewriting a memra found in one metre into another. This paper examines several examples of this later type of "influence," including some drawn from the varied corpus of Syriac texts treating the Old Testament patriarch Joseph. These particular examples are placed within the context of the broader phenomenon of rewriting and appropriation in early Syriac literature, with a view to extending the discussion of literary influence in this particular tradition.

Andy Hilkens, Ghent University, "There are Turks, and then there are Turks: The description of the Turks (Book XIV) in the Chronicle of Michael the Great and its Armenian counterparts"

The Chronicle of Michael the Syrian (1116-1199) is of the greatest accomplishments of Syriac historiography. The importance of Michael's work was already acknowledged by the Armenian Catholicos Constantine I (1221–1267), who commissioned an Armenian translation. Barely 50 years after the completion of the original, not one, but two Armenian adaptations had been produced by the Armenian scholar Vardan Arewelc'i and a Syrian physician and priest called Isho'. Unfortunately, in spite of their literary (and historical) importance, these two independent Armenian versions have barely received any scholarly attention. This paper presents a comparative analysis between the original and the two adapted Armenian forms of a fascinating part of Michael's Chronicle: Book XIV, which is a description of the Turks. This gives insight into the methodology of the translators/adaptors and into the ways in which they interpreted Michael's presentation of the Turks. This comparative study concludes (among other things) that the translators identified at least some of these Turks with the Khazars, that the shorter Armenian text generally remained more faithful to the original, and that Vardan and/or Isho' were clearly more familiar with the traditions concerning the mythical Alexander the Great than Michael.

Dennis Hou, independent scholar, "The Flying Dolphin in the Mirror: Simon of Taibutheh's Medico-Mystical Laughter"

While the gift of tears features prominently in Syriac mysticism, the spiritual function of laughter appears less clear. Laughter as mockery of the self-contradictions of sin appears in the ascetical writings of Simon of Taibutheh, which, together with his integration of soul and body, stands in remarkable continuity with the Hebrew sapiential tradition. However, a more positive type of laughter may be suggested by the notion of wonder in relation to the last stage of mystical union. In particular, Simon employs fantastical imagery to describe the ascent of the soul in a kind of apophatic performance of the redemptive failure of language. At the same time, the soul that tastes the "new world" is said to experience this world as though it were alien to it. The world with which one experiences this process of defamiliarization is primarily the self. Thus Simon arrestingly describes the work of the Spirit on the soul that knows itself as a mirror. When we stand outside of ourselves, we behold at once a ridiculous sinner and--with a silent laugh of joy--the ecstatic fancies of grace.

Tala Jarjour, New York University Abu Dhabi: "Syriac Chant as Music in Culture"

The study of Syriac chant has traditionally belonged to the field of musicology. However, as a scholarly quest that seeks to understand a living and dynamic tradition, Syriac chant studies would better benefit from—and contribute to—ethnomusicology, particularly in being an endeavour to study music in culture. This paper presents a brief overview of existing approaches to Syriac studies and proposes some ways forward. This undertaking is significant now as an increasing number of Suryanis are taking their ecclesiastical tradition to the academe, and since this occurs alongside a growing international scholarly interest in Syriac Christianity. Accordingly, this paper aims to propose beneficial ways for academic "meddling" within an as yet largely understudied musical tradition.

Jaisy Joseph, Harvard University, "The Clash of Worldviews on the Malabar Coast"

This papers analyzed the encounter between 16th century Portuguese colonizers with the so-called Thomas Christians of the Indian Malabar coast, an ancient Christian community that traces its lineage back to the mission of the apostle Thomas to India in 52 CE and who were supported by the ecclesiastical and liturgical relationship with the East Syrian Patriarch from at least the 5th century onwards. In particular, the paper focuses on the Synod of Diamper (1599), which is often regarded as the turning point in the history of the Thomas Christians because it marks the fulfillment of colonial desires to force this Indian community into conformity with Western Christianity. The paper first examines the socio-historical forces that led to the synod through an analysis of the different worldviews and power dynamics between the Thomas Christians, Portuguese colonizers, and the East Syrian bishops. Second, the paper examined specific acts and decrees of the synod, including the ecclesial reforms concerning Nestorius, the Law of Thomas, and the East Syrian patriarchy. Finally, the paper concluded by addressing the 1653 revolt of the Thomas Christians against the Synod of Diamper.

Mar Emmanuel Joseph, Assyrian Church of the East, "Monastic Dress in a Memra Attributed to John bar Penkāyē"

John bar Penkāyē is best known for his famous Rēš Mellē, composed before the end of the seventh century A.D. Scholars know from the Index of Biblical and Ecclesiastical Writings by Abdishoʿ of Nisibis (1298 A.D.) that John had other works. Regrettably, apart from a few surviving memrē, all of these other works are now lost. This paper discussed the memra entitled A Beneficial Hymn of Mār John bar Penkāyē. If the authenticity of this hymn is assumed—the title attributes it to him—then one finds ample and important information about his Sitz im Leben. The hymn informs us about how John dressed as a monk, and this probably applies to the rest of the monks in his monastic community and to other monasteries within the Church of the East. The hymn also provides us with details about the way of life in John's monastery, including regulations on prayers, vigils, fasts, eating, and the stages of learning. The focus of this paper, however, was on John's monastic dress. Contemporary monastic works of

the Church of the East were consulted for purposes of comparison.

Nestor Kavvadas, Universität Tübingen, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät: "... and We Do Not Turn aside from the Way of the Interpreter". Joseph Hazzaya's Tractate on Divine Providence: Argumentative Strategies and Literary Sources"

This paper presents—for the first time—the major lines of argument in an unpublished tractate by the late-eighth-century East Syriac mystic Joseph Hazzaya, dealing mainly with divine providence (in: ms. Alqosh 237). Its main sources (Theodore of Mopsuestia and Isaac of Nineveh) were also discussed. This tractate argues for the controversial doctrine of universal salvation, which had already been championed a century earlier by Isaac of Nineveh, who supported his argument with citations from Theodore of Mopsuestia. Inasmuch as he avoids formulating the doctrine of universal salvation expressis verbis, Joseph is more cautious in this tractate, though he leaves no doubt about his stance. Drawing heavily upon Isaac of Nineveh, Joseph here attempts to demonstrate at length that the aforementioned doctrine is the only possible conclusion one can draw from Theodore's pedagogical understanding of the history of creation and salvation.

Grigory Kessel, Philipps University, Marburg, "Syriac Monastic Anthologies.Presentation of a Research Project"

The overwhelming part of Syriac monastic literature including translations of Greek patristic writings is preserved solely in anthologies. Quite a number of these texts are no longer extant elsewhere. Neither has a thorough exploration of these anthologies been carried out nor has it been investigated how many of them are still in existence. The information provided by catalogues (if there are any) often lacks accuracy. Some spot checks in recent research have brought to light some hitherto unknown texts and authors. In order to recover otherwise lost texts as well as to understand which processes of reception and transmission the texts included into anthologies underwent it is of crucial importance to get a better knowledge of how the genre of anthologies "functioned" in the Syriac tradition. Therefore the present project is conceived to

pursue two interrelated research objectives: first, a detailed description of form and content of some 127 Syriac manuscripts will be established; second, the collected data will serve as the basis for a study into the particularities of the history of monastic anthologies. The following issues were raised: possible interrelation between different anthologies, development of their form and content, transmission and reception of the texts included, historico-sociological aspects of the ways anthologies were produced. For the first time, a systematic study will address both topics. Since the anthologies stem from different Syriac ecclesiastical traditions (the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Church of the East, and the Rum Orthodox Church) the project will contribute to our knowledge of interdenominational exchange of texts and ideas as well as to the cultural history of Christianity in the Middle East.

George Kiraz, Beth Mardutho: "Remarks on the Graphotactics of Old Syriac"

This paper examines the graphotactic development of the Old Syriac script. It provides a graphotactically-motivated edition of the oldest Syriac inscription from AD 6, indicating graph joining and the spacing between graphs. The main claim of the paper is that Old Syriac writing was less cursive in the first century than the second, and that the second century was less cursive than the third. Indeed, a number of graphemes, which are dual-joining in Classical Syriac, were right-joining in Old Syriac. The resulting data also help in confirming the dating of the earliest inscription, and in settling at least one disputed reading.

Robert Kitchen, Knox-Metropolitan United Church, Regina, Saskatchewan, "A Poetic Life: Vita of Jacob of Serug by Sa'id bar Sabuni"

Nestled quietly in the library of the Church of the Forty Martyrs, Mardin, surrounded by volumes of the collected mēmrē of Jacob of Serug, is a manuscript (CFMM 00162, digitally copied by Hill Museum & Manuscript Library) of the Life of Jacob of Serug by Saʿid bar Sabuni (d. 1095). Little if anything is known about the author. Fittingly, it is composed in Jacob's characteristic twelve-

syllable meter, employing several acrostic schemas praising the work of Jacob as well as providing some details of his life and literary works. In addition to providing a historical addendum to the current research on the corpus of Jacob of Serug, this work presents a unique reception history as well as theological reflection upon this same corpus and author, reputedly at a distance of five centuries in a very different ecclesiastical and political environment.

Naomi Koltun-Fromm, Haverford College, "Early Syriac Fathers on Jerusalem"

In this paper Koltun-Fromm explores the representation of Jerusalem in the early Syriac Christian writings. This paper explored how the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE is remembered and idealized. In the early Greek Christian writings Jerusalem is often discussed in reference to its destruction and thus its destruction is seen as just punishment to the Jews for not becoming Christians. With the advent of Constantine's Christian empire, and the building of a New Jerusalem as a specifically Christian town, attitudes towards the physical city of Jerusalem, and understandings of its place within Christian iconography and theology changed in the Greco-Roman Christian world. She explores the relevance of Constantine's Jerusalem to Syriac Christian understandings of Jerusalem both as symbol and as city. The fourth-century Aphrahat, though writing well after Constantine's ascension to the throne, dwells on the impossibility of Jerusalem's restoration and on the Jews' inability to return there in two of his demonstrations. The Narration of Simon bar Sabbaʿe, a fifth century text, relates a narrative of Persian Jews flocking to Jerusalem called by false messiahs in the time of Julian. They are massacred by Shapur II before they even cross the border. This paper asked how much of this rhetoric reflects inherited theological stands on Jerusalem and the Jews, and how much reflects a different cultural, social and political situation vis-à-vis Jews and Jerusalem from Christians in the Persian empire.

Adam Lehto, University of Toronto, "The Natural World in John of Apamea's Dialogues with Thomas"

The six Dialogues with Thomas attributed to John of Apamea represent the work of a Syriac author writing in the early stages of the resurgent synthesis of Greek and Syriac traditions in the fifth century. In his only long speech, the figure of Thomas opens the dialogue by asking his adopted master, Mar John, to explain the nature of Christian hope by taking him beyond the limited knowledge of the Greek intellectual tradition, which is based on merely physical considerations. The focus of this presentation is on the role that the natural world (including the embodied existence of humans) plays in the ensuing dialogue. Comparisons are made to John's predecessor Ephrem.

Saadi Al-Malih, General Director of Syriac Culture and Arts, Ministry of Culture - Kurdistan Regional Government, "The Impact of Syriac Education and Media on Classical Syriac Language Development in Iraqi Kurdistan"

Adam McCollum, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Saint John's University, "Poetized Hagiography: The Martyrdoms of Jacob of Bēth Lapaṭ and Tahmazgard in Story and Song"

We are fortunate to possess a number of hagiographical texts in multiple languages and text forms, and we sometimes have a saint's story in both narrative and poetic form. Such is the case with two martyrs of fifth-century Sasanian Persia: Jacob of Bēth Lapaṭ ("Intercisus"), who was killed in 421 CE under Vahram V, and Tahmazgard, the converted Sasanian official, who was killed under Yazdgard II (r. 439-457). The thirteenth-century Church of the East author Gewargis Warda celebrated and commemorated the heroic stories of these two martyrs in poems, each around forty stanzas long, but the martyrs are also the subjects of prose texts, Jacob in his own story, and Tahmazgard near the end of that on the martyrs of Karka d-Bēth Slokh. This paper aims to answer the question: How does literary form affect the shape, in terms of language and of event, of a hagiographical story? Put more directly, what do we take away from the different versions of these stories, and how do they present their content to us? The paper addresses questions of similarity or difference in the events themselves of the stories, as well as the language (vocabulary) used to tell those

stories. In addition, possible direct dependence of the two versions of each martyrdom story is investigated.

Tom McGlothlin, Duke University, "Is Aphrahat's Demonstration on the Resurrection against Bardaisan? Contextualizing Demonstration 8"

In Demonstration 8, Aphrahat defends the resurrection of the body against philosophical and exegetical objections. In presenting these objections, he ascribes them to opponents whom he polemically—and, for the first set of ten Demonstrations, uncharacteristically—insults as "foolish," "ignorant," "stubborn," and "childish of mind." He does not, however, name them. This study seeks to identify Aphrahat's opponents by building a profile of the position on the resurrection implied by his arguments. The opponent who emerges accepts the authority of both Old and New Testaments, denies the resurrection of the body by pointing to the dissolution of the body after death, privileges a heavenly or spiritual body over an "earthly" body, appeals to Adam's long life after his transgression as proof that his punishment was not bodily death (and therefore that salvation is not resurrection of the body), and argues for a resurrection of the non-physical part of a person to reward or punishment immediately after death. This profile fits the position and arguments ascribed to Bardaisan by fourth-century sources such as Ephrem and the Adamantius Dialogue. (Since this study is interested in the fourth-century profile of Bardaisan, these sources' reliability as witnesses to the historical Bardaisan's thought is irrelevant.) This study also offers some suggestions on why Aphrahat does not name his opponents and some observations on the unique role Aphrahat gives to soul-sleep in his response to them.

Kathleen McVey, Princeton Theological Seminary, "Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Revisiting the Letter of Mara bar Serapion to His Son"

At the 5th Symposium Syriacum of 1988 in Leuven/Louvain McVey presented a paper questioning the accuracy of the 1st c. Stoic attribution of the Syriac Letter of Mara bar Serapion to his Son, a work that had received little attention since Cureton's

publication of the text and English translation in 1855. Although there was little interest in this purportedly early Syriac work at that time, the picture has changed dramatically since then. Contemporary Christian apologists have found in this little document an important non-Christian attestation of the existence of Jesus and his movement. New Testament scholars have added Mara bar Serapion to the likes of Suetonius, Pliny the Younger and Tacitus as a pagan witness to the earliest Christianity. Several scholars have now revisited the questions of date and authenticity of the Letter—arguing on grammatical, literary and theological grounds for datings that range between the first and sixth or seventh century and for Christian or pagan authorship—without reaching a scholarly consensus. McVey persists in "looking this gift horse in the mouth"—that is, rather than viewing it as a unique Syriac addition to the sparse "pagan" testimonies to the Christian movement, she continues to see it as a deliberately antiquarian work, composed for apologetic purposes. This paper considers this little piece in the context of second-century Christian apologetic literature and the Second Sophistic, both Syriac and Greek.

Alessandro Mengozzi, Università degli Studi di Torino, "The Book of Khamis bar Qardahe: Preliminary Remarks on the History of the Text"

Khamis bar Qardaḥe appears to have been a younger contemporary of Barhebraeus. David Taylor (in H.G.B. Teule et al. (eds.), The Syriac Renaissance, 2010: 47-48) convincingly argues that his "wine songs" may have been composed in the last decades of the 13th century at the court-camp of the Mongols in Ala Dagh. Various collections of liturgical hymns (ʿonyatha) and poems (mushḥatha) are preserved in mss. from the 14th to the 19th centuries as a comprehensive Kthabha d-Khamis ("Book of Khamis"), often among works by other late hymnographers. The manuscript transmission presents a high degree of variation in the number and order of the texts. An edition of the Book of Khamis has recently appeared in Iraq (Sh.I. Khadbshaba (ed.), Khamis bar Qardahe: Memre w-mushhata, Nuhadra 2002), based on three manuscripts. However, no detailed study of the extant witnesses has been published so far. A first attempt to describe the history of

the text and its transmission is proposed here, based on a survey of the available manuscripts.

Mark Meyer, Capital Bible Seminary, "Genitive Constructions in the Peshitta of Exodus"

This paper discusses the use of the genitive construction in Peshitta Exodus. The three primary Aramaic genitive constructions are presented according to their distribution in translating the construct phrase in Hebrew: the construct phrase, the genitive adjunct phrase with d-, and the genitive phrase with d- anticipated by a possessive suffix on the head noun. Primary factors influencing the selection of one genitive construction over another were discussed. Important similarities and differences between five Aramaic dialects in the use of genitive constructions in Exodus were also presented. The five Aramaic dialects to be discussed are: Targum Onkelos, Syriac Peshitta, three corpora of the Palestinian Targum (Cairo Geniza fragments, Targum Neofiti I, and the Fragment Targums), Samaritan Targum, and Fragments of a Christian Palestinian Aramaic translation of Exodus.

David Michelson, University of Alabama, Instrumenta Workshop: The Syriac Reference Portal

An international team of scholars has begun work on a new online reference resource for the study of Syriac authors, texts, manuscripts, and historical research. The Syriac Reference Portal is designed to meet the needs of a variety of academic users ranging from specialists in Syriac and related fields to students and the general public.

Specifically, the Syriac Reference Portal will bring together in an information hub the following resources:

-an ontology or classification system for Syriac studies

-a multi-lingual authority file for standardizing references to Syriac authors, texts, and place names

-an online encyclopedia

-a gazetteer of maps and geographic information related to Syriac studies

-a classified bibliography

The above resources will be available in the first generation of the Portal. In later development, we will open these resources up for collaborative augmentation and annotation by scholars around the globe. In subsequent rounds of development, we will continue adding to the hub by linking additional digital content to the hub - for example, the electronic journal of Syriac studies, Hugoye, and the electronic corpus of Syriac literature being prepared at Brigham Young University. We will also add new tools such as a prosopographical component and, ultimately, the long-desired goal of a union catalogue for Syriac manuscripts. Please see http://syriac.ua.edu/

Yifat Monnickendam, Johns Hopkins University, "The Sources of the Syro-Roman Lawbook"

The Syro-Roman Lawbook is the general name given to several Syriac compositions genealogically linked to each other, but different in editing, wording, and level of adaptation. They were compiled and edited in the fifth and sixth centuries CE and, as reflected in its name, the Syro-Roman Lawbook is influenced by both Roman and Semitic law. It is attributed to Constantine, and though large parts of it are most probably translations from Latin or Greek, it also preserves Semitic legal traditions which differ or even contradict basic concepts in Roman law. Because of the tight connections between the Syro-Roman Lawbook and Roman law, and the sparse evidence of Roman influence on earlier Syriac sources, many of the laws in the Syro-Roman Lawbook are perceived as the earliest evidence of Roman law in Syriac literature. However, the writings of Ephrem the Syrian, of the fourth century CE, reveal new evidence of Roman law in early Syriac literature. This paper explored two betrothal customs mentioned in the Syro-Roman Lawbook. Both customs were aimed at strengthening the status of betrothal and correlate with the Roman conception of betrothal, which saw betrothal as a mere promise, which could be strengthened, and contradict the Semitic concept which saw betrothal as almost marriage. Both customs are found in Ephrem's writings and partially in earlier Greek patristic literature. Though similar customs could also be found in the Hammurabi Laws as well as in other early codices, their appearance in Ephrem's writings, in the fourth century, is most likely a result of Roman

influence. This example reveals and exemplifies the early influence of Roman law on Syriac Christianity, earlier than the time of the Syro-Roman Lawbook, and sheds new light on the sources of the Syro-Roman Lawbook.

Robert Morehouse, The Catholic University of America, "A Common Enemy: Theological Deviance in Bar Daysan's Book of the Laws of Countries and Ephrem's Hymns against Heresies and Prose Refutations"

The Book of the Laws of Countries (BLC), produced by a disciple of Bar Daysan, portrays a dialogue between Bar Daysan and his students which shows the clearest insight into the views and values of Bar Daysan and his followers from their own perspective, but largely as they are posited against a doubter's position. It is our best insight into third century Edessan Christianity. Ephraem of Nisibis is certainly our best evidence for Northern Mesopotamian Christianity in the fourth century. Of course Ephraem holds Bar Daysan and his followers to be heretics and posits them as his absentee interlocutors in a number of his heresiographical works. For this reason, it is quite provocative to find that the BLC has a great deal in common not only with the themes discussed in Ephraem's polemical writings, but with the approach to those themes as well. Specifically, Ephraem's polemics share much thematically with the BLC's portrayal of an erroneous approach to theological reflection. This paper explores these parallels through the philological evidence in these texts with the aim of contributing to the study of the connections between the Edessene Christian world of Bar Daysan and that of Ephraem.

Craig Morrison, Pontifical Biblical Institute, "When Judas Thomas the Apostle Prays: Intercessory Prayer in Early Syriac Literature"

Almost every time the apostle Judas Thomas speaks in the Acts of Thomas, he prays. His character stands in sharp contrast to the apostle Addai who, in the Doctrina Addai, is a teacher rather than an intercessor (Addai makes several speeches but never prays). This paper considered the intercessory prayers that Judas Thomas utters in the Acts of Thomas in order to reveal their structure, their narrative frame and their function within the narrative.

Yonathan Moss, Yale University, "Moses bar Kepha and Saadia Gaon: The Syriac Background for Saadia's Philosophy and Exegesis"

The pioneering contributions of Saadia Gaon (d. Bagdad, 942 CE) in the realms of philosophy, Hebrew grammar, biblical translation, and exegesis left a permanent mark on medieval Jewish culture. Scholarship has usually contextualized Saadia within contemporary Muslim Kalam but some attention has also been given to his attitude towards Christianity. However, previous studies on the matter have used almost exclusively Greek and Latin sources. No attempt has been made to determine Saadia's relationship to the Syriac traditions, those forms of Christianity with which he would have come into personal contact. This paper seeks to address this void.

This paper began with a comment of Saadia's on the versions of Genesis current among his Christian contemporaries. This comment makes most sense if taken as referring to the two versions current among contemporary West Syrians: the Peshitta and the Syro-Hexapla. The rest of this paper was dedicated to some striking parallels between Saadia and his older contemporary, the West Syrian Moses bar Kepha (d. 903). The study of two works by the influential Mesopotamian bishop, 'On Paradise' and 'On the Resurrection' (both still in manuscript) reveals very close, in some cases almost verbatim, parallels with Saadia's 'Commentary on Genesis' and his 'Book of Beliefs and Opinions.' Rather than trying to trace the precise channels of influence that would have produced these parallels, he uses their very existence as evidence for close links between Jews and Christians in Abbasid Mesopotamia. He points out instances in which the study of Saadia and Bar Kepha in tandem allows them to mutually illuminate one another. Bar Kepha's scholastic, elaborative writing style helps elucidate some enigmatic issues in Saadia and our fuller knowledge of Saadia's social-historical circumstances can shed light on the mostly obscure social conditions of Bar Kepha's literary activity.

Heleen Murre van den Berg, Leiden University, "Classical Syriac and the Syriac Churches: A Twentieth-Century History"

At the end of the nineteenth century many observers of the Syriac churches, the Syriac Orthodox, the Church of the East and their Catholic counterparts, may have thought that Classical Syriac, the language of ritual, hymns and literature, would soon be declared a dead language. The growing popularity of standardized vernacular forms such as Urmia Aramaic, or the increasing importance of Modern Standard Arabic or Ottoman Turkish, may well have ushered in the end of the active use of Classical Syriac. This was all the more likely because the Syriac churches had always been open to the inclusion of other languages into the liturgy, most prominently Arabic that by 1900 was part of the liturgy in many of the Syriac parishes, especially in those of the Catholic tradition. The First World War, with its devastating effect on the Syriac communities of Eastern Anatolia and Northwestern Persia, seemed to hasten this decline of Classical Syriac.

However, already before the war, the mood appears to have changed, and scholars, especially from the Syriac Orthodox Church, started to pay increasing attention to Classical Syriac. Rather than deterring these scholars, the war and its consequences spurred a widespread attempt to "revive Classical Syriac", not only to have it known better by the lay community, but even to have it spoken and written by all. These first attempts were mostly limited to the Syriac Orthodox of Tur Abdin, Syria and Jerusalem, and seem to have had very little influence on the larger lay population. Nevertheless, these constituted a crucial link in the process that made Classical Syriac one of the most powerful symbols of the 'Syriac' Churches, a term that in its mostly scholarly usage presupposes the key role of this language in describing these churches.

This paper shows not only the outlines of this process of the re-interpretation of the role of Classical Syriac from the first initiatives in the early twentieth century to the curricula of the schools in North-Iraq in the 1990s, but also analyzes these developments in the context of the wider history of these churches, with its debates about national and ecclesiastical identities, the search for international recognition of the genocide of 1915, and the growing uncertainties about the future of Christianity in the Middle East.

Jincy Othottil Ulahannan, SEERI, Kottayam, "India Liturgical Theology of St. Mary in the East Syriac Perspective"

This paper briefly summarizes the author's Ph.D. thesis. The Church praises Mary immediately after the feast of the Nativity of our Lord because she gave birth to Christ the Saviour. It is the most important commemoration among the three commemorations of the Virgin Mary in the liturgical year of the Church of the East. A short introduction draws attention to the significance of the 16th-century manuscript at the base of the present study and to the contents of this ms. Two other mss are used for the critical edition. This is followed by a translation and a description of the differences between the ms. and the printed Hudra, which contains the text of the Liturgy of the Hours for the entire year. The following chapter explains the structure and gives a textual analysis of the prayers for the liturgical hours of this commemoration. In order to understand the titles and names attributed to Mary, the next chapter is organized on the basis of the main themes of these titles, such as divine motherhood, virginity, fulfillment of prophecy, the Church and Mary, Mary and the Eucharist, and Mary and Eve. The last chapter describes how the liturgical appropriation of the prayer of Mary contributes to the development, in the East Syriac theological tradition, of Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology, and Mariology. Mary's divine motherhood and virginity are the main reasons for giving her an important position in the Church. The same titles or names are attributed to Mary in both East and West Syriac traditions, except the crucial and controversial title of 'Mother of God'. The Church of the East venerates Mary without using the term Theotokos but with other terms that display the same level of honour. Moreover, this Church celebrates Mary not only as the mother of Christ but also as the mother of the mystical body of Christ, the Church; as such, she is also the mother of the believers.

Steven Payne, Harvard University, "The 'Anticipated Resurrection': John of Dalyatha and Biblical Interpretation in the East Syriac Ascetic Tradition"

This paper examines the interpretation of the Scriptures in the mystical writings of John of Dalyatha (ca. 690-780 CE), particularly focusing on the author's interaction with the letters attributed to the Apostle Paul and the visionary accounts in the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Bible. Though considerable work is being done in the field of early Syriac biblical interpretation, there is a substantial desideratum when it comes to the biblical interpretation of the Syriac ascetics of the Church of the East during its monastic flourishing, 7th-9th. Multiple times throughout the writings of both John of Dalyatha and other east Syriac mystics of this period, e.g., Isaac of Nineveh (died c. 700), we read of the great benefits they ascribe to the constant study of and meditation on the Scriptures. How, though, do they interpret the Scriptures in this practice, and how does this encounter shape their subsequent mysticism and asceticism? Moreover, how do such varying influences on the East Syriac tradition as Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428) and Evagrius of Pontus (345-399) inform this practice? This paper aims to make a tentative approach towards answering these questions by examining John of Dalyatha's encounter with particular Scriptures in both his Letters and his Discourses.

Andrew Platt, The Catholic University of America, "The Testing of God: Mar Babai the Great on Divine Impassibility"

This paper investigates the thought of one of the Church of the East's greatest minds, Mar Babai the Great, particularly a chapter from his Book of the Union titled "On the Crucifixion of Christ", in which Babai most clearly discusses the question of the suffering of Christ and how this affected his divinity. This is in order to assess the claims of modern defenders of orthodoxy, such as Paul Gavrilyuk, that "It was precisely the allegation that Cyril did away with Divine Impassibility that became a battle cry of the Oriental Party, which supported Nestorius". Key passages were assessed which display a dyophysite Christology as well as some which clearly demonstrate a more balanced approach. This paper shows that in many ways Babai was rather a kindred spirit to modern defenders of orthodoxy than an enemy, in that he was seeking to maintain the distinction between divine and human while permitting for the miracle that was, as he put it, the conjunction (naqqiphutha) of God and Man.

Ute Possekel, Gordon College, "Christological Debates in Ninth-Century Harran: Leo of Harran and Eliya the Bishop"

In the eighth and ninth centuries, Christological questions once again were discussed controversially among Syriac-speaking Christians. Under increasing pressure to define and defend their beliefs in Abbasid times, Christians not only sought to justify their faith for their Muslim rulers and neighbors, they also began to debate with one another foundational dogmatic questions, in particular the true nature of Christ. In northern Mesopotamia, such controversies took place between representatives of the Melkite and Miaphysite communities, both in person and in writing. The city of Harran, only a short distance to the south of Edessa, was a stronghold of the Melkite church. Here not only the famous bishop Theodore Abu Qurra was active, but also a certain Leo, syncellos to the bishop of Harran. During a personal encounter in Harran, Leo and a certain Eliya debated Christological matters. After their conversation, Eliya apparently converted from a Chalcedonian to a miaphysite position. Soon thereafter, Leo sent to Eliya a letter—from which unfortunately only a few fragments remain—in which he requested Eliya to make known his reasons for this change and outlined his own theological views. Eliya replied at length. This paper investigates their correspondence and analyzes the theological arguments made by each author. The paper also attempts to situate their debate within the larger social and political context of northern Mesopotamian Christianity in the early ninth century.

Ilaria Ramelli, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan
"The Possible Origin of the Addai Legend"

The Syriac narrative the Teaching of Addai, a historical novel of the genre of the "apocryphal Acts of Apostles," tells the story of the first evangelization of Edessa by the apostle Addai. He was sent to Edessa by Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, healed Abgar, the king of Edessa, and other people, and preached the Gospel before all the inhabitants. The result was the conversion of both the king and all the Edessan people to Christianity. In the narrative frame, two exchanges of letters are included, one between Abgar and

Jesus, a blatant forgery, and another, much shorter, between Abgar and Tiberius. The latter, also present in the Armenian version of the narrative, contains interesting historical details. They perfectly fit in the historical, military, and political situation of the mid-thirties of the first century CE, when Tiberius was engaging in clever maneuvers in the Near East against the Parthians. This paper argues that the Abgar-Tiberius correspondence did not come down through the same tradition as the spurious Abgar-Jesus correspondence, and that its source probably was early enough to be well-informed about the details of Tiberius' reign. This correspondence might even derive – through a fictional adaptation – from a historical exchange, dictated by political (not religious) motives, from which the legend of Abgar's conversion arose later on, probably in the Severan age, when the Addai legend may have been first written down in a literary work, which Ramelli characterizes as a source of first extant account of the Addai-Abgar story: that of Eusebius of Caesarea (early fourth century CE).

David Rensberger, independent scholar, "The Grammar of the Letter of Mara bar Serapion and Other Early Syriac Texts"

The Letter of Mara bar Serapion has been assigned dates ranging from the late first century (which would make it the oldest preserved Syriac literary text) to the fourth century or later. In certain grammatical characteristics, Mara exhibits features that seem compatible with an early date. These include the use of the absolute state; very limited use of the preposition l- to mark the direct object; no use at all of the existence marker ʾîth as a copula; and very limited use of hwa as an auxiliary verb with participles and perfect-tense verbs. This paper briefly describes the phenomena as they appear in Mara's Letter, and then compare Mara's usages with those of Bardaisan and the Old Syriac inscriptions collected by Drijvers and Healey. The results should sustain the judgment that the language of the Letter is compatible with a first- or second-century dating, and is unlikely to reflect a date as late as the fourth century.

Alberto Rigolio, Oxford University, "From 'Socrates and Xanthippe' to 'Socrates and His Wife': Ignorance or Deliberate Modification in Syriac Translations of Greek Secular Literature?"

Although often overlooked, Greek secular literature seems to have played an important role in the education of early Syriac writers. Recent scholarship has pointed out that knowledge of Greek secular literature is often attested in early Syriac authors, in a number of works commonly classified as 'popular philosophy' as well as in some of the subjects of the early mosaics from Osrohene.

In this perspective one cannot avoid considering the Syriac translations of Greek literary works by Ps.-Isocrates (Ad Demonicum), Plutarch (De cohibenda ira, De capienda ex inimicis utilitate and the ps.-Plutarchean Peri Askeseos), Lucian (De calumnia) and Themistius (De Amicitia and De virtute), which may have been produced as early as the fifth century. The short treatises were primarily designed as morally edifying works and they are mostly constituted by series of precepts and of exempla, while Themistius' *De virtute* contains also explicit references to philosophy.

Scholars such as Ryssel, Baumstark and Wickham have adopted contrasting opinions about these works. A most problematic aspect is how to interpret the omissions and modifications that emerge by comparing these translations with the Greek originals, where extant. Indeed, in Syriac translation (i) the references to paganism have been 'Christianised,' (ii) a number of exempla are omitted and, (iii) where extant, the proper names of Greek historical or mythological figures are generalized and rendered with formulas such as 'a certain philosopher' and 'a certain king.'

Baumstark's hypothesis of later scribal intervention on initially literal translations is not persuasive and can be dismissed on a wider manuscript analysis. So, was it ignorance of Greek mythology and history that drove the translators to skip or radically modify entire exempla drawn from Greek literature? Probably not, as a number of passages show that the translators had a good knowledge of Greek language and culture. Also, examination reveals that a regular pattern emerges, namely that censorship affects Greek mythology more often than Greek history. This suggests that the changes are the result of a deliberate choice in view of the destination of the translations, possibly a religious scholastic environment.

Eric Ringger, Department of Computer Science, Brigham Young University, "Computational Models of Syriac and How to Train Them"

Ringger discussed the development of computational models of Syriac for the purpose of facilitating the morphological annotation of the entire Syriac Electronic Corpus. He and his team employ a novel comprehensive model for the morphological analysis of Syriac, with possible wider applicability. Ringger also discussed how to acquire labeled data to train such models. First, they define a probabilistic morphological analyzer using a data-driven approach for Syriac in order to facilitate the creation of an annotated corpus. As an under-resourced language, Syriac has few available language tools such as morphological analyzers. The method requires no resources other than labeled examples. They also address the question of how to acquire examples to train such models. They introduce CCASH (Cost-Conscious Annotation Supervised by Humans), an extensible web application framework for cost-efficient annotation. CCASH provides a framework in which cost-efficient annotation methods such as automatic pre-annotation and Active Learning (AL) can be explored via user studies and afterwards applied to large annotation projects. Being a web application framework, CCASH offers secure centralized data and annotation storage and facilitates collaboration among multiple annotations. It records timing information about each annotation and provides facilities for recording custom statistics. The CCASH framework is being presently employed in a user study to evaluate novel annotation strategies are used to facilitate the annotation of the Syriac Electronic Corpus.

Stephen Ryan, Dominican House of Studies, "The Numbers Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi"

This paper provided an introduction to Dionysius Bar Salibi's Commentary on the Book of Numbers (twelfth century) and a study of two passages, the first drawn from Numbers 12 (Miriam and Aaron's Complaint) and the second from Numbers 24 (Balaam's Fourth Oracle). The commentary has not yet been edited and for the purposes of this paper a working text based on four manuscripts (Paris Syr 66, A.D. 1354; Harvard Syr 130, A.D. 1888;

Mingana 152, A.D. 1891; John Rylands Syr 37, A.D. 1911) is utilized. Particular attention is given to Bar Salibi's use of earlier Greek and Syriac sources (e.g., Ishoʿdad of Merv), his exegetical method (distinct factual and spiritual commentaries), and the question of the significance of the commentary as a repository of earlier Syriac exegetical traditions.

Jeanne-Nicole Saint-Laurent, St. Michael's College, "Bones in Bags: Relic Theft and Donation in Syriac Hagiography"

This paper examines episodes of relic theft and transport in Syriac hagiography. These episodes reveal moments of crises and competition for the communities who wrote these texts. In particular this paper analyzed the "Life of Febronia of Nisibis," the "Life of Theodute," and the "Longer Life of Jacob Baradaeus" to illustrate the underpinning conflicts that these episodes of relic theft and transport reveal. These legends correspond to the crises facing the Non-Chalcedonians in the wake of their struggles to obtain legitimacy in the face of Byzantine Chalcedonian world and the advent of Islam. They also show shifts in policies of monastic communities concerning relic practices, donation, and transport. The need for regulation demonstrates the popularity of the practice.

Christine Shepardson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, "Meaningful Meetings: Constructing Linguistic Difference in and around Late Antique Antioch"

This paper examines the rhetorical constructions of linguistic difference in and around Antioch in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, nuancing our understanding of Antioch as a Greek-speaking city surrounded by a rural Syriac-speaking population, and our interpretation of rhetorical claims of "barbarous speech." John Chrysostom comments that those who "flowed into us from the country" (Cat. 8.1) on the occasion of martyrs' festivals spoke in a "barbarous tongue" and had "a way of speaking distinct from our own" (Cat. 8.2), that they were "a people foreign to us in language" (De statuis 19.2), a phrase traditionally interpreted to refer to Syriac. Nevertheless, Chrysostom and others also demonstrate that there was regular productive interaction between those who lived

in Antioch's city and in the surrounding countryside, not only during markets and festivals, but also in meetings with ascetics who lived in the mountains overlooking Antioch and in the mountainous valley between Antioch and Beroea, one of whom Theodoret describes as "understanding some few phrases of Greek speech" and speaking "in a semi-barbarous tongue" (HR, 8.2), and another as speaking "in the Syriac language" (HR, 13.7). Such rhetorical claims deploy linguistic markers to construct difference, demonstrably exaggerating the degree to which language barriers actually prevented meaningful communication. This paper examines these Antiochene descriptions in light of other educated Greek-speakers' criticisms of the barbarous language of their less educated Greek-speaking neighbors elsewhere in the Empire. Examining the rhetoric with which educated Greek Antiochenes describe the language of their rural neighbors suggests a more sophisticated view of the linguistic and social topography of late antique Antioch and its surroundings, of the blurry margins of the Syriac-speaking world, and of the power dynamics surrounding these authors' strong rhetoric of linguistic difference.

Rima Smine, Leiden University, "The Tomb of King Abgar: the appropriation of a Sidmara Sarcophagus on a Syriac Rug"

Syriac material culture is further enhanced in the appearance of a rug with a Syriac inscription. The rug is divided into two sections. The upper part has a figural representation with two registers of different proportions. The larger one has the image of a man and woman presenting offerings, while the lower one has images of cherubs involved in different games against wild beasts. The lower part of the rug is covered by a Syriac inscription identifying the above image as that of the tomb of King Abgar. For Roman art historians, the image is a clear replica of the lateral side of a sarcophagus, presently in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. This sarcophagus is part of a series of sarcophagi discovered in Sidmara, Turkey, by the end of the 19th/early-20th century. These sarcophagi are mostly dated to the 2nd and 3d century AD and are elaborately decorated. The inscription identifies the image as that of the tomb of King Abgar, king of Edessa. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the reasons for duplicating a Roman sarcophagus on a rug and identifying the deceased as the first

Syriac King. The Syriac inscription might carry implications as to the history of the Syriac community in the early 20th century, at the time the sarcophagi were discovered.

Kyle Smith, University of Toronto, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia, Reconsidered"

This paper reexamines the thesis that Christians of fourth-century Persia were persecuted as a result of Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Particular attention was paid to the harmonization of the two martyr acts of Simon bar Sabbaʿe that has resulted in a mid-fifth-century text (Simon's History, the later of the two martyr acts) being read as an historical narrative of the mid-fourth century. Other martyr acts that mention "Constantine", "Caesar", or "Rome" are also addressed to ultimately argue that the mid-fourth-century persecution of Shapur II, if there was such a thing, cannot be understood through the traditional lens of a religio-political binary between Christian Rome and Zoroastrian Persia.

Charles Stang, Harvard University, "Evagrius' Grammatology: Writing in the "Great Letter"

Like his other great work of mystical theology, the Kephalaia Gnostika, Evagrius' Great Letter survives only in Syriac translation. In this short but dense letter, Evagrius gives a remarkably lucid account of the apokatastasis or "restoration of all things"—an eschatology of universal salvation he inherits from Origen. The first part of this paper charts how Evagrius innovates on this Origenist inheritance. But the paper focuses on a different but related issue, namely how Evagrius, in attempting to characterize how God relates to restored minds at the apokatastasis pantôn, delivers a surprising meditation on the practice of writing, a meditation that is embedded in a letter to an unnamed addressee. He begins by reflecting on the writing he is doing in the very letter, and then shifts to consider how creation itself should understood as a love letter from God to us, fallen minds. Both of these forms of writing—our own to each other and God's to us in the form of creation—turn out, rather surprisingly, to be fallen forms of writing, that is, writing that is predicated on distance and mediation. The implication is that scripture, as we have it, is also this fallen form of

writing, since it too, like creation, is a letter written to fallen minds. All this leads Evagrius to develop his own account of a protological and eschatological understanding of writing—what Stang calls his "grammatology"—in which the restored minds are quite literally the letters that God writes into existence. On this model, God is the writer and we the restored minds are not the recipient of some new text, but in fact are this very text.

Columba Stewart, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library/Saint John's University, "Rabbula of Edessa: An 'Observable Moment' in the Development of Syriac Monasticism?"

Rabbula, fifth-century bishop of Edessa, is famous for his legislation for clergy, bnay/bnāt qyāmā, and monks. These texts, frequently copied in the manuscript tradition and published several times in modern scholarship, are unusual in two respects: they cover the gamut of ecclesiastical roles and are unusually detailed in their prescriptions. This paper addresses three principal questions: 1. how helpful can Rabbula's legislation be in understanding the development of Syriac asceticism in the late fourth and early fifth centuries? 2. how were these texts used by later copyists and readers in the Syriac tradition? 3. how have modern scholars understood their significance?

Hidemi Takahashi, The University of Tokyo, "Barhebraeus, Cream of Wisdom, Books of First Philosophy and Theology: Preliminary Observations"

The section on metaphysics in Barhebraeus' major philosophical work, the Cream of Wisdom, like much of the rest of this work, is modeled, in the first place, on the corresponding section of Ibn Sīnā's Kitāb al-shifā'. As is already suggested, however, by the division of the section into two "books", dealing, respectively, with "First Philosophy" (ܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ, philosophia prima) and "Taheology" (ܠܐܠܗܝܬ, theologia), it is not simply a summary of the corresponding part of the Shifā'. An attempt is made in this paper to show where Barhebraeus departs from his Avicennian model and to determine what the likely sources are that he drew upon in addition to the Shifā' in composing this section.

Shawqi Talia, The Catholic University of America, "DILILLOL: Neo-Aramaic Lullabies from Christian Mesopotamia"

Lullabies are as ancient as man himself. The purpose of a sung lullaby is to sooth the child into sleep. A large part of Neo-Aramaic literature of Christian Mesopotamia (Iraq) is composed of lullabies, which may be classified as "Children's literature". While such literature is not specifically meant for children to read or recite, it is nonetheless "Children's literature" because its subject is children. Moreover, these lullabies are the first "literary experience" for the child who listens to them. Traditionally, lullabies of the Christian communities of Mesopotamia are called zummarta, "song", though conventionally they are designated by the more common title of DILILLOL and NANNI. These lullabies are usually sung by the female in the family, the mother or the sister of the child. Unlike other lullabies, such as those of Western literature, they follow very characteristic poetic conventions. Rather than invocations to the mother's love for her son/daughter, in these lullabies we witness petitions to the local saints, martyrs, shrines and biblical figures to protect and preserve the child. In doing so, the mother becomes a secondary subject: she is only the singer and the reciter. Here is a typical couplet: Natairukh Mar Matte, mar daqnakhwara / w Mar Bihnan w Khathe Sara ("May Mar Matte, with the white beard, protect you / May Mar Bihnan and Marti Sara, his sister, protect you"). Thus these lullabies become a "historical tapestry" of the saints, shrines and martyrs of the various Christian communities of Mesopotamia, which may be specific to a certain village, or common to all the villages. Hence, each lullaby also becomes a Dirge on the trials and tribulations of the various Christian communities and an invocation of the past meant to allow to bear the present. This paper looks at the purpose of this "tapestry" and its development, including a brief discussion of the saints, martyrs and shrines enumerated in a specific lullaby.

Herman Teule, Catholic University Leuven, "The Theme of Language in Christian-Muslim Discussions"

In studies on the discussions between Christians and Muslims most attention goes to an analysis of fundamental theological themes such as Trinity, the Incarnation, the authority of Scripture or the

Crucifixion, or of more practical themes such as the direction of prayer, the veneration of icons or the manner of fasting. A not yet well studied theme is that of language, which in different ways played a role in Muslim-Christian discussions varying from the rejection of Arabic as an inferior language (compared to a more refined and sophisticated Syriac) to the appropriation of Arabic as fundamentally belonging to Christian culture or as constituting a common ground between the members of both religions. In this presentation the views of some Christian authors from the ninth till the twelfth centuries is discussed and compared.

Abraham Jacob Thekkeparambil, St.Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, Simon according to St. Ephrem"

This paper analyzes the main works of St. Ephrem in order to depict Simon the Apostle among the twelve. It starts with Ephrem's interpretation of the name Shemʿon. Thekkeparambil expose the various imageries of Simon found in Ephrem. By way of conclusion Ephrem's picture of Simon is compared with other Syriac writers'.

Sujit Thomas, Union Theological Seminary, "Relationship between Humility and Voluntary Poverty in the Early Syriac Christian Writings"

For the Early Syrian Christians Christ was the one who emptied himself for the sake of others. Christians were called to emulate this humility (makkikutha). In that process of imitation of Christ, the disciple also takes up the call to poverty. Syrian Christianity thus presents a distinct approach to wealth and poverty in the Early Christian discourse. This inextricable relationship between humility and voluntary poverty can be seen in Odes of Solomon, Doctrine of Addai, Acts of Thomas, Book of Steps, Aphrahat, and Syriac hagiographies.

Tenny Thomas, Union Theological Seminary, "'Healing Through the Mysteries of the Eucharist' in Ephrem the Syrian"

This paper analyzes the madrashe "The Mysteries of the Eucharist" in which Ephrem considers the Eucharistic Mysteries and connects

these with the theme of healing. In Ephrem's writings a constant epithet for the Eucharist is "living medicine" or "medicine of life" (sam ḥayye). Ephrem draws insistent attention to the physical reality of Christ's body, which he calls the "Treasury of Healing." He speaks of the Eucharistic body of Christ as able to cure and restore those who receive it. The healing, which results from proximity to the physical body of Jesus, is present in the Eucharist, which likewise has the power to heal and preserve those who come in physical contact with it. In his madrashe on Faith, Ephrem explains that if John the Baptist held even Christ's sandal straps in awe, how can he hope to approach Christ's very body? Ephrem takes refuge in the example of the woman who gained healing just through touching Christ's garment—which in another sense is indeed his body, being the garment of his divinity. The hidden power that lay in Christ's garment is also present in the Bread and the Wine, consecrated by the fire of the Spirit. This paper also looks at Ephrem's notion of salvation history as a process of healing. For Ephrem the fall brought humankind into a state of suffering and pain. Ephrem portrays Jesus as the Medicine of life in the light of incarnation. At the last supper, Jesus Christ offered Himself in the form of bread and wine as against the poison offered by the Evil One. Thus, bread and wine (his body and blood) became the medicine of life. Christ's healing ministry has not ceased with Him, but continues with His disciples and the sacraments of the Church through priesthood.

Saju Varghese, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, India, "A Codicological Survey of the Liturgical Manuscripts of the Orthodox Theological Seminary"

The Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, India of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church possesses nearly two hundred Syriac manuscripts. Although the library is one of the largest collections of Syriac manuscripts in Asia, its holdings have not been widely known in the scholarly community. The manuscripts include a variety of liturgical offices as well as other types of literature. The Orthodox Theological Seminary collection contains mostly 19th- and 20th-century manuscripts and is currently being digitized and catalogued. This paper summarizes the results of a thesis being completed at the seminary, including a complete

check-list of the manuscripts as well as a detailed catalogue of a select number of liturgical manuscripts

Cynthia Villagomez, Winston-Salem State University, "The Presence and Representation of Black Africans in Syriac Literature and Culture"

The scholarship on ancient views on race, and in particular, on Black Africans in the ancient and medieval worlds and in Holy Scripture has greatly advanced in recent years due to the insightful works of African American and Jewish scholars who have examined the tensions between positive and negative images of Black Africans held by Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the ancient and medieval Near East. Unfortunately, most of these works have left out the Syriac evidence as crucial for understanding the complicated, variegated relationship between the actual physical presence of Black Africans among Near Eastern populations, and the treatment of Black Africans by members of these populations, particularly in the context of religious behavior and practice. This paper argues that the Syriac literary and material culture evidence on Black Africans among Syriac Christians from late antiquity to the nineteenth century must not be ignored if scholars are to develop a clearer historical picture. This paper demonstrates that scholars in Syriac and Eastern Christian Studies have already made important strides in teasing out significantly positive images of Black Africans in Syriac literature and culture as they are represented in texts such as the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and the religious cult honoring Mar Musa the Ethiopian at Deir Mar Musa in Syria. This evidence is compared to positive images found in the West Syriac historical such as the Zuqnin Chronicle. A key historical figure is examined is Anastasius the Kushite (eighth century), a pious monk in the Zuqnin Monastery. The long-term positive view of Black Africans, particularly within the Syrian Orthodox milieu, is explained as a consequence of deeply ingrained historical memory of Axumite power in Arabia, and the intimate liturgical and ecclesiastical relations between Christian communities in Syria and Ethiopia.

Joel Walker, University of Washington, "The Diver's Quest: Pearl Imagery in East-Syrian Monastic Tradition"

Although the importance of pearl imagery in early Syriac literature has long been recognized and often discussed, few scholars have commented on the prominence and versatility of pearl imagery in East-Syrian monastic literature. Brian Colless's The Wisdom of the Pearlers (Cistercian Publications, 2008) acknowledges this continuity in the title of his valuable anthology of Syriac ascetic literature, but his notes provide only an introductory discussion of the relevant imagery. As the only gem created by a living animal (the oyster), pearls held a central place in the traditions of personal adornment in the late antique Middle East, particularly for royal and sub-royal elites. East-Syrian writers living in the Sasanian and early Islamic Near East were conversant not only with this royal imagery, but also with a variety of early Christian literature that presented the pearl as a key symbol for faith (in the tradition of Ephrem), the soul, and chastity. East-Syrian writers engaged in a fruitful dialogue with this earlier pearl imagery, including those authors (pseudo-Macarius, for example) who sometimes lumped pearls with other jewels as vanities worthy only of prostitutes. Most interesting of all, East-Syrian writers expanded and complicated the image of the Christian ascetic as a pearl diver—a trend that reflected these writers' greater familiarity with the folklore of pearl diving. These same writers belonged, after all, to a Church that was actively involved in mercantile and missionary expansion into the principal pearl-diving regions of the late antique world: the central Persian Gulf and South India. This paper focuses on the pearl imagery of East-Syrian ascetics writing in Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran during the seventh and eighth centuries CE, especially Shubhalmaran of Kirkuk, Isaac of Nineveh, and John of Dalyatha.

James E. Walters, Princeton Theological Seminary, "Creating a 'People from among the Peoples': Aphrahat and the Construction of Christian Orthodoxy"

While roughly half of Aphrahat's twenty-three Demonstrations are written "against the Jews," previous scholars have offered various explanations for Aphrahat's relationship with a Jewish community. While some have objected, most scholars have concluded that Aphrahat was confronting issues that resulted from the interactions

of his community with a real Jewish community. However, one option that has yet to be fully explored is the possibility that Aphrahat wrote his polemical demonstrations against competing expressions of Christianity and used "the Jews" as a rhetorical opponent in an attempt to invalidate Christian practices that appear to be "Jewish." Christianity in the early Syriac tradition was notoriously diverse, and there is evidence that several diverse communities claiming to be Christian survived into and beyond the fourth century. Against this background, Aphrahat's Demonstrations can be understood as an attempt to construct a uniform and "orthodox" expression of Christianity that excluded other expressions. This paper attempts to identify intra-Christian arguments in Aphrahat's writings and analyze the ways in which Aphrahat uses "the Jews" as a rhetorical opponent in his arguments.

Lev Weitz, Princeton University, "Kinship, Law, and Exegetical Tradition, or: Why Can't an East Syrian Marry Her Cousin?"

In the early ninth century, the East Syrian patriarch Timothy I promulgated a communal law prohibiting marriages between cousins. A deacon of Hira questioned this prohibition (which likely conflicted with social practice in many East Syrian communities) in a letter to Timothy's successor Ishoʿ bar Nun, who was quick to rescind the stricture. Ishoʿ bar Nun's concerns were not the exigencies of local custom, however; from his point of view, Timothy's new law was irreconcilable with scripture and East Syrian exegetical tradition. Timothy had arrived at his ban on cousin marriage by a method of legal reasoning, basing it analogically on other kinship prohibitions. Ishoʿ bar Nun, however, knew a tradition from Theodore of Mopsuestia that read the genealogical passage of Genesis 11:26-29 in a way that rendered Abraham and Sarah cousins, rather than uncle and niece as in Jewish exegesis, and thereby absolved them of what he saw as an unlawful uncle-niece marriage. For Ishoʿ bar Nun, Timothy's attempt to make East Syrian family law more systematically consistent by banning cousin marriage did no more than implicate the biblical patriarchs in a second incestuous marriage after exegetes had gone to lengths to explain them out of a first. This dispute over cousin marriage in medieval East Syrian legal texts

represents a small but meaningful jockeying effort to establish the authoritative sources from which communal law should be drawn. Where Timothy based his prohibition of cousin marriage on personal ecclesiastical authority and a method of analogical reasoning, Isho'barnun maintained that any new laws on Christian marital practice had to be in line with God's allowances in scripture and exegetical authorities' understandings thereof. Isho' bar Nun's response to Timothy's law thus articulated a particular conception of the degrees to which received tradition and specialists' reasoning should shape communal regulations and inform the practices of the faithful.

Linda Wheatley-Irving, Central European University, "Pesqin Monastery in its Euphrates landscape setting"

In one of the few narratives of monastic founding not connected to a saint's vita, Michael the Great describes the founding of Pesqin Monastery on the banks of the Euphrates at the end of the 11th century (IV, 585 = III, 181, transl.). Its founders consisted of prominent monks from Mor Abhai and Mor Barsawmo monasteries. The narrative notes approvingly that the monastery's first two leaders had a rule that they would not own "fields, vines or beehives" and would not ask anyone for anything. So how did the monastery support itself? One cannot be certain, but based on Corona satellite images, archaeologists' photos, modern travelers' narratives, and a range of medieval Arabic sources, a study of Pesqin Monastery's landscape setting suggests that it had options that would not have been available to Mor Abhai Monastery, its neighbor to the south.

Jeffrey Wickes, University of Notre Dame, The Poetics of Self-Presentation in Ephrem's Hymns on Faith"

Ephrem's Hymns on Faith (HdF) represent his largest authentic hymn cycle, and, arguably, the most consistent articulation of his frequently noted "symbolic theology." Nevertheless, the hymns have yet to be translated into English, and their contents remain a relatively unknown quantity in English speaking scholarship. This paper examines one aspect of this eighty-six hymn corpus, namely, the way in which Ephrem presents himself rhetorically (as poet and

as author) in the HdF. The paper proceeds in three parts. The first part identifies and organizes the passages where Ephrem speaks of himself. Wickes suggests that a survey of these passages (for example, the openings six stanzas of hymn 10; hymns 21, 25, and 81-86) yields some basic insights: first, Ephrem nearly always speaks of himself in a stylized manner, typically through petitions for inspiration or poetic guidance; second, within these stylized allusions to self, Ephrem usually refers to himself metaphorically (for example, in hymn 10 he aligns himself with scriptural characters; in hymn 21 he identifies himself as "lyre"). This paper suggests that identifying these characteristics can help us better place Ephrem within a broad poetic context. Following from this, the second part of the paper situates this literary self-presentation within this broader poetic context, placing Ephrem's self-presentation alongside examples from pseudepigraphical literature (especially the Odes of Solomon), as well as the Greek hymnic traditions (for example, the Homeric hymns). Finally, having attempted to trace a broad hymnic context for Ephrem based on his poetic representation of self, Wickes concludes by suggesting that this stylized and metaphoric representation of self forms an unstudied part of the means by which Ephrem articulates his symbolic theology.

Jack Yakoub, Syriac Orthodox Church, "Forms and Characteristics of the Syriac Monasticism: A Comparative Perspective between Syriac and Egyptian Monks"

This paper considers the origins of Syriac monasticism and its emergence as a movement of religious and spiritual veneration. It considers the early form of monasticism in relation to the developing Syriac religious culture and associated early Syriac literature. It also provides assessment of the diverse forms of monastic practice in view of the anchoretic movements and forms of monasticism (stationary, stylitic, etc.) with reference to the main characteristics of a monk's life and devotion, rites of veneration, and canonic rituals by type, region, and conviction. The paper also briefly considers the shift from anchoretic to coenobitic monastic practices in the Syriac Church and includes an assessment of the key elements which have spurred many hermits and monks to adopt coenobitc practices. It also underlines how coenobitism has

become a movement and monks could exert free will and right to choice in defining themselves as anchorites and coenobites. It also considers the corresponding position within the Coptic Church. The paper concludes with examples of famous Syriac monks, brief quotes from literature, and highlights of the merging between the Syriac monastic past and current Syriac church life.

Robin Young, University of Notre Dame, "Problems in the Syriac Translation of the Letters of Evagrius"

The Letters of Evagrius of Pontus survive in a Syriac version and in an incomplete Armenian version apparently translated from the Syriac. Fragments of the Greek original remain, but these are few. The importance of the letters for the thought of Evagrius is undisputed; Guillaumont called them "the workshop of his thought." This paper explores the degree to which the translated letters may reflect, not the thought of Evagrius himself, working in late-fourth-century Egypt, but the needs of the community for which the Syriac was intended—in other words, whether the translated letters are actually adaptations made for the needs of a later, and distant, audience.