

IN MEMORIAM

DAVID J. LANE (1935-2005)

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BETH MARDUTHO: THE SYRIAC INSTITUTE

[1] Just a few weeks back, the community of Syriac scholarship heard about the untimely death of one of its foremost scholars, David John Lane. David had arrived in India on January 5 on a routine visit to the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI). On January 10, he had a cardiac arrest and was admitted to the hospital; he passed away at 9:50 PM. David Lane’s autobiography, which he prepared for SEERI, is found below. He will be remembered by all of us for his scholarship, but also for his interest in Syriac not only as an academic subject, but as a living heritage.

[2] The funeral service took place at 2:30 pm on Friday, January 14, at the church situated in the SEERI campus and the burial followed at the cemetery of the Malankara Catholic Church at Kalathipady near Kottayam. The service was presided over by Mar Cleemis of Tiruvalla (Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, and SEERI’s President), Thomas Mor Themotheos (Syrian Orthodox Church), and Thomas Mar Koorilose (Syro-Malankara Catholic Church). Fr. M.P. George of the Malankara Orthodox Seminary led the chanting in Syriac and in Malayalam. Other priests, mostly David’s students, from the various other traditions took part. The service was attended by ca. 200 people.

[3] It is only fitting that Fr. David received burial rites according to the West Syriac rite of the Order of Burial of Priests. His body was vested with the priestly garments. The service concluded with the traditional *zuyyoho*, a farewell ceremony exclusive to deacons and priests. The body was carried by priests to the altar and placed facing East. A priest represented Fr. David in chanting “*Phush bashlom*—Farewell, O holy altar.” The rest of the priests responded, “*zel bashlom*, Depart in peace, O honorable priest.” The farewell continued,

- Farewell, O holy Church.
- Depart in peace, O modest priest.

- Farewell, O holy bishops.
- Depart in peace, O pious priest.
- Farewell, O heads of the churches.
- Depart in peace, our beloved father.
- Farewell, O heads of the monasteries.
- Depart in peace, our blessed father.
- Farewell, O noble priests.
- Depart in peace, O venerable priest.

The priests then carried Fr. David to the entrance of the church where his body was placed facing West. The priest representing Fr. David chanted,

- Farewell, O modest deacons.
- Depart in peace, O faithful priest.
- Farewell, O clergy.
- Depart in peace, our just father.
- Farewell, O beloved ones and friends.
- Depart in peace, our righteous father.

Fr. David's body was then taken to the North side of the church to say his farewell to all dwellers.

- Farewell, O monastery and its dwellers.
- Depart in peace, O teacher of truth.
- Farewell, O city and its inhabitants.
- Depart in peace, O eminent priest.
- Farewell, O fellow mortals.
- Depart in peace, O ascetic father.

Finally, Fr. David's body was taken to the South side of the church for his final farewell.

- Farewell, O Church and its children.
 - Depart in peace, O preacher of truth.
 - Give me peace and may you live in peace. This peace [that you give me] is henceforth forever.
 - Depart in peace, O brother and beloved one.
- May our Lord receive you in the blessed mansions.
 May Christ, Who took you away, make us worthy to see you in the new life that will shine forth from heaven. Glory to you, O Jesus our Savior, in Whose hands is death and Whose will is life.¹

[4]

David left many unfinished works behind. His *opus magnum*, the edition and translation of Shubkhalmaran's *Book of Gifts*, which will

¹ The Syriac text is taken from *Book of the Order for the Burial of the Clergy According to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, tr. by Archdeacon Murad Saliba Barsom, 2003, pp. 121-124.

be published in CSCO, is not yet at the proof stage. The proofs will be corrected by Andrea Schmidt. David had also almost finished writing an introduction to a forthcoming facsimile edition of the East Syriac *Hudra* based on the Thrissur manuscript of 1598. It is hoped that his writings can be recovered.

- [5] It is our obligation to dedicate this issue of *Hugoye* in memory of David John Lane, scholar, *malphono*, mentor, and friend to many of us. It only remains for us to say, *zel bashlom, malphono tarqo*.

DAVID JOHN LANE (1935-2005), AN AUTO BIOGRAPHY

- [1] David Lane was born in 1935, in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, into a family in which grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncle were all school-teachers.² Wartime and family circumstances led him to being educated at 9 different schools before going to Hurstpierpoint College, a Church of England boarding school for ‘the middle class,’ where a vocation to the priesthood was identified and nurtured. After two years’ army service with the Royal Signals, which took him to Egypt for a year, he went to Magdalen College, Oxford, to read Theology. Encouraged by one of Britain’s leading Hebrew scholars, Sir Godfrey Driver, he went on to read a second undergraduate degree, Oriental Studies (Hebrew with Aramaic and Syriac). He learned Syriac under L.H. Brockington, the reviser of the much-used Robinson’s *Syriac Grammar*. Of great value for his work in New Testament and Syriac was being introduced to *Mishnah* and Jewish medieval commentaries by Dr. David Patterson, later the founder and Director of Oxford’s Centre for Hebrew Post-Biblical Studies.

- [2] From there he went as a student for priesthood to the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield (just a few miles from his birthplace). While there he won, by examination, the Oxford University Hall-Houghton Syriac Prize. Instead of completing a second year at Mirfield, he was asked by the Community of the Resurrection to go to their seminary, Codrington College, Barbados, West Indies. There he found himself teaching New Testament and Greek, and

² This autobiography was prepared by David Lane for the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI), Kottayam, where he had been engaged in academic work when he passed away. This was submitted for publication in *Hugoye* by Rev. Fr. Jacob Thekeparampil of SEERI.

later being Director of Studies. He was made a deacon in Barbados, May 1962, and ordained priest in December that year.

[3] In 1965 he returned to the UK, and for a year was assistant priest in a parish in Oxford. Then he went to Pembroke College Oxford as Associate Chaplain, and was awarded the Kennicott Hebrew Fellowship. This enabled him to begin work on the Peshitta of the Old Testament, again with encouragement of Sir Godfrey Driver. It also began a very fruitful association with the Peshitta Institute in Leiden, then directed by Professor P.A.H. de Boer. Incidentally while at Pembroke he had the chance of teaching Syriac to a slim young Indian, Deacon George, who stayed with the Cowley Fathers. That Deacon George is now Geevarghese Mar Ivanios. 1967 saw Lane as a tutor at St. Stephen's House, an Anglican seminary in Oxford, where he continued University teaching in elementary Hebrew, tutored theology students from many colleges, and continued work on Peshitta *Qobeleth*. He retained a connection with Pembroke College as its Lecturer in Theology.

[4] In 1971 Lane was invited to go as an Assistant Professor in Near Eastern Studies in the University of Toronto. This began a major period of Syriac activity: for the Leiden Peshitta *Qobeleth* had been finished, and a revision of John Emerton's *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Song of Songs* followed, to be joined by work on *Leviticus*. For two summers he was a Visiting Professor at the Peshitta Institute, assisting with the edition of Genesis and Exodus, and with *I and II Kings*. *The Leviticus* work produced the Leiden Peshitta edition of that book, and a monograph which took Peshitta studies out of simple text criticism of the Old Testament into the wider field Syriac church history and liturgy, suggesting the theme of the second Leiden Peshitta Symposium, '*The Peshitta as Translation*.' His published work to this point enabled Oxford University to award him the degree of Bachelor of Divinity: in Oxford this degree (based on publications) is of a higher standard than, and senior to, a D.Phil. In 1976 came his first participation in the *Symposium Syriacum* at Chantilly, also Dr. Jacob Thekeparampil's first, though it was at the 1980 Symposium at Goslar that they first properly met. At Goslar, too, he was among the group of Syriac scholars whom the Indian bishops approached with the idea of SEERI.

[5] Although a tenured Associate Professor, in 1983 Lane accepted an invitation to join the staff of his old seminary, the College of the

Resurrection. There he became Director of Studies, then Vice-Principal, and in 1990 Principal. He was also an Honorary Lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Leeds. With the encouragement of the Community of the Resurrection, of which he is an Oblate member, he completed his work on the Peshitta, and then began work on Syriac Fathers, especially *Shubhalmaran*, 7th century metropolitan of Kirkuk. Participation in the European *Symposia* continued, and from 1990 participation in the SEERI *Symposia* also. Articles and book reviews were asked for and produced, but the most important Syriac activity was his increasing involvement with SEERI when its Director invited him to come as a guest Professor for the Syriac MA classes recently begun at SEERI under the aegis of Mahatma Gandhi University.

[6] In fact, since retirement from the College of the Resurrection in 1997 Lane's whole time has been given to Syriac affairs, so that this, his 70th year, sees the publication in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO)* of the two volumes (Syriac text and English version) of Shubhalmaran's *Book of Gifts*, a notable addition to the range of Syriac ascetic writings currently available. More recently there has been work on Jacob of Sarug's verse homilies. However, through the years there has been time for priestly activity in the way of taking services and preaching, and for associations with parishes in Toronto and Cambridge. There has also been some little time for interests in railways and gardening: his photographs of British steam railways have appeared in journals and in books on railway history; literary interests led him to be President of the Sir Walter Scott Club of Toronto. He is currently on both the local and national committees of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, with a special interest in the alpine crevice plants known as *auriculas* their leaves are like the little ears of bears. They are small and beautiful in detail, and bred by humans: appropriate for someone whose early interest was in textual variants and the taxonomy of manuscripts.

[7] [David Lane passed away on Sunday, the 9th Jan. 2005 during his visit to SEERI (St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute), Kottayam, Kerala, India.]

