

Christianity in Iraq VI: Synopsis

From its earliest days, Christian education in Iraq has been determined by political events. The 'School of Edessa' emerged following the flight of Christian refugees *circa* 363 C.E. when the Romans ceded Nisibis to the Sassanids. A century later, political turmoil saw re-location to Nisibis and the creation of its famous school. This move transmitted Hellenistic learning (also biblical exegesis and other traditional subjects) into Mesopotamia and provided the springboard for the founding of several other 'schools' including one at the Sassanid capital.

The intellectual activities of Christians came to the fore under Islam. Hira, a major centre of the Church of the East, was the birthplace of Hunain ibn Ishaq, the most renowned of all Christian translators of Greek philosophy. In their transmission of Greek works via Syriac into Arabic during the 'Abbasid period, Syriac scholars not only realized the Hellenistic tradition within Mesopotamia, but also made a seminal contribution to the scientific achievements of the Muslims.

In the medieval period, education was largely conducted via traditional avenues within the monasteries. However the 19th century witnessed the establishment of schools, a by-product of European influence, a trend that continued after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Jesuit institution was the most outstanding, giving Iraqis of all denominations access to the latest learning and scholarship. This was curtailed when the Ba'ath party ordered the closure of all private schools in 1974. However the twenty-first century has seen a burgeoning of institutions, epitomized by the foundation of Babel College in 1990. The vicissitudes that have beset Iraq since 2003 have caused its relocation to Erbil in northern Iraq, but this move, following well-established precedents, has kept alive the ancient tradition of 'schools'.

PROGRAMME

Morning Session. [10.30 A.M. – 1.00 P.M.]

The morning session will consist of four papers exploring historic aspects of education.

Prof. Adam Becker (New York, USA)
The School of Nisibis and the development of scholastic culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia

Dr. Philip Wood (Oxford and SOAS)
The competitive patronage of education: Nisibis, Ctesiphon and their rivals in the 'Chronicle of Seert'.

Dr. Isabel Toral-Niedhof (Berlin, Germany)
Hira as a centre of education.

Dr. Dan King (Cardiff, Wales)
The transmission of Greek philosophical works via Syriac to Arabic in 'Abbasid Iraq.

Afternoon Session. [2.00 – 4.30 P.M.]

The afternoon session investigates the rise of Christian schools in Iraq in the 19th -20th centuries, challenges faced during the Ba'athist régime, and the changes brought about by events, not only after the 1st Gulf War but post-2003. Education in the diaspora will also be discussed by representatives of the various Syriac Churches in Iraq. It is hoped that several of the clergy in Iraq, including the erstwhile director of Babel College, will be able to join the day.

Confirmed speakers include:

Dr. Joe Seferta (Birmingham)
A Survey of Education in Iraq: from 1970 to the Present: Challenge and Change.

Christianity in Iraq VI: Application Form

NAME(S):

ADDRESS:

Day time tel.no.

e-mail address:

Please circle fee enclosed

Full	£30.00
BISI Member	£24.00
AECA Member	£24.00
Student	£12.00*

*Please send proof of student status.

Includes lunch, tea/coffee.

Do you require disabled access? Yes/No

Please send this form with your remittance by Tuesday April 21st

(cheques payable to Dr. Erica Hunter):
Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter,
Centre of Eastern and Orthodox Christianity,
Dept. for the Study of Religion,
School of Oriental and African Studies,
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
LONDON WC1H 0XG

You can also register and pay on-line at
www.easternchristianity.com

For **further details**, please write to the above address or contact by e-mail.

e-mail: eh9@soas.ac.uk

www.easternchristianity.com

CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ VI

SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2009

Enquiries to:

Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter
*Centre of Eastern and Orthodox
Christianity*
**Dept. for the Study of Religions
SOAS**
**Thornhaugh St.
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG**

E-mail: eh9@soas.ac.uk

For further details visit:

www.easternchristianity.com

*Centre of Eastern and Orthodox
Christianity*

**DEPT for the STUDY of RELIGIONS
SCHOOL of ORIENTAL and
AFRICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY of LONDON**
in conjunction with

**The British Institute for the Study of Iraq
&
The Anglican and Eastern Churches
Association**

Presents

**CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ
VI**

A seminar day on
Christian education in Iraq

SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2009

to be held at

The Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre

**SCHOOL of ORIENTAL and
AFRICAN STUDIES
Thornhaugh St., Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG**