

Malpana Naoum Faiq

By Fred Aprim

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He is Naoum Elias Yakob Balakh, a spiritual father of Assyrianism in this century. He was born in February 1868 in the Assyrian town of Amid (Diyar Bakir) in Turkey. Later he added the title Faiq to his name, as this was a tradition in the Ottoman Empire to add titles because there were always many people carrying the same name. He attended the parish primary school. Then the secondary school of The Brotherhood Association of Ancient Syrians, he spent eight years there. He learned Aramaic, Arabic, Turkish, Persian languages, in addition to the church liturgy.

He started teaching in Diyar Bakir in 1888 and was asked to move to Hashas in al-Bashiriya, where he faced tremendous difficulties because everybody spoke Kurdish there.

He was ordained Deacon on October 16th, 1889. Traveled to al-Raha (Urhai / Edessa), taught there and studied the Assyrian treasures kept in the churches there.

Moved to Hasanmansour (Athyaman) to teach in the new school built for the fifty families living there.

Later he returned to Diyar Bakir and began teaching again in its schools for another four years.

He was then asked by the Patriarch Abd Al-Maseeh II to travel to Hama, Syria, to teach in the school there, so he did in 1896, but did not stay long and moved to Beirut, Lebanon then to Yafa and Jerusalem where he spent six months in Mar Marqus (Saint Mark) Monastery studying its treasures.

He returned to Diyar Bakir and for the third time gets back to teaching, then in 1905 moved to Mardin, to the al-Za'afaran Monastery and studied all those old books saved in its safe.

In 1908 he started "AL-Entibah" a religious association and in 1909 came the well-known magazine "Kukhwa d' Madinkha", both active and well known to our people.

He continued to preach about the necessity of schools, printing presses, and magazines as tools for survival and building nationalistic understanding in the youth. With the increasing of oppression against the Assyrians in 1911 he decided to immigrate to the USA, and so he did in 1912 with the help of his loyal friend Sanharib Balley, who wrote about him saying;

"Before Naoum Faiq many people came, but they all took from the Assyrian culture and translated it to other languages but he distinguished himself by translating from other languages to Assyrian, thus while others were exchanging our heritage he was adding to it."

In the United States he started the journal of "Beth Nahrain" in 1916. In 1921 he was asked to be the chief editor of the magazine "Huyada" published by the Chaldo-Assyrian National Association, which he did until it stopped, then he returned to issue Beth Nahrain again until his last days.

He wrote once in Turkish;
dashmi kaseldi uraklaremuz
damurdanmider boo kalblaremuz
yoksa gormiyor boo gozlaremuz

hamiyal kanlari jevelan etsen
toonuk qalbemez fighan aylasen
Asori ganchlar harr zeman daysen
ab bizim chakmadick hallar mi kaldı

jihana galali rahmi Mazarden
zikri vetan chukmaz asla qaterden
niazem happ booder Rabbi kaderden
sani gormayenja roohem almasen

which translates to;

Did our hearts become of stone
did our hearts become of iron
or did our eyes become blind

Let our red blood flow
let our silent hearts whine
let the Assyrian youth always say
oh, are there still any catastrophes which we haven't gone through yet

From the moment that we came to this world
from the womb till our grave we cannot keep our homeland out of our minds
the only thing I desire from the Lord
is that He will not take away my soul until I have seen you...homeland.

Naoum Faiq believed that the interest of the Assyrian nation should always be put ahead of personal interest. Yes, he was born poor, but because of his believes he lived poor and died poor, but what he left is wealth money cannot buy. He left an awakening in the Assyrian nation, a national awakening, which is taking roots in us as people of one origin with distinct heritage and culture and the right to shape our own destiny.

He passed away on February 5th, 1930, but forever he will be in our hearts.

Introduction to his books and researches

- 1- Syriac words in the Arabic language in Beth Nahrain.
 - 2- Syriac words in the Turkish language.
 - 3- Syriac words in the Persian language.
 - 4- Syriac words in the Armenian and Kurdish languages.
 - 5- Syriac words in English language.
 - 6- An Arabic-Syriac dictionary containing thousands of words.
 - 7- Dictionary of the Greek words used in Syriac language.
 - 8- A Bible dictionary in Syriac.
 - 9- Bible index in Syriac.
 - 10- A summary of Mathematics in Syriac.
 - 11- A summary in Geography in Syriac.
 - 12- A summary of the history and geography of Beth Nahrain.
 - 13- A History of the Syrian immigrants to America.
 - 14- The history of the Syriac schools of Urhai and Nasibin.
 - 15- A 1916 calendar.
 - 16- A Translation of Benjamin Franklin's speeches to Syriac.
 - 17- A Syriac translations of Rubaeyat Umar Al Khayam.
 - 18- A Collection of nationalistic songs in Syriac, Arabic and Turkish.
 - 19- A Turkish translation of the book Akheqar, the wise Assyrian.
 - 20- A book titled principles in reading Syriac.
 - 21- An extended treasures of compositions in Syriac.
- And many other books, translations and researches totaling 35.