



Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

Volume 27 | Number 2

Article 3

January 2007

New Book Features Work of Poet, Theologian

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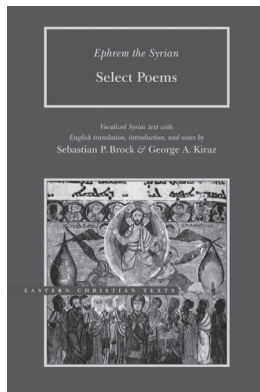
Recommended Citation

Peterson, Daniel C. (2007) "New Book Features Work of Poet, Theologian," *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship*: Vol. 27: No. 2, Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol27/iss2/3>

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New Book Features Work of Poet, Theologian



The Maxwell Institute's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative has released the newest book in its Eastern Christian Texts series, a bilingual Syriac/English edition of *Select Poems* of Ephrem the Syrian. From the second to the eighth century AD, when Arabic supplanted it, Syriac was a


major literary language across the Middle East; it is essentially a Christian form of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, the original apostles, and the first Jewish Christians.

St. Ephrem, who died in AD 373 in Edessa (anciently a major city, located in modern-day Turkey) while caring for victims of a plague, is the most important poet and theologian of the Syriac Christian tradition. The author of numerous homilies and commentaries as well, he has sometimes been called the "Harp of the Spirit" because of the many hymns he composed. His writing was so popular and his name so honored that, for centuries after his death, other authors wrote hundreds of works that were attributed to him.

The twenty texts contained in this volume offer a broad and varied introduction to Ephrem's poetry

and have been deliberately arranged according to the outline of the saint's concept of salvation history, commencing with Paradise and continuing through the mortal ministry of Jesus into the life of the Christian church as Ephrem knew it. They bear such titles as "On Human Language about God," "Mary and Eve as the World's Two Eyes," "On the Fall," "Christ, the New Passover Lamb," "A Disputation between Death and Satan," and "Joy at the Resurrection."

The editors and translators of Ephrem's *Select Poems* are Sebastian P. Brock and George A. Kiraz. Until his retirement in 2003, Dr. Brock was Reader in Syriac Studies at the University of Oxford, in England, and he is generally regarded as the premiere Syriac scholar in the West. Dr. Kiraz, a native speaker of Syriac and a former student of Dr. Brock who earned his PhD from Cambridge University, is the founder and director of Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute and the president of Gorgias Press.

Readers of *Select Poems* will find it a fascinating window into a form of Christianity that was nearer in time, in space, and in language to the primitive church than the denominations with which we in the West are typically familiar. St. Ephrem's hymns express an early and vibrant form of the Christian faith that was still flourishing in its original Middle Eastern home. 

By Daniel C. Peterson

Director and editor in chief of the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative

Contributions Sought for Completion of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley

The scholars and staff at the Maxwell Institute have energetically set the goal of finishing the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley within the next three years. March 27, 2010, will be the 100th anniversary of Hugh Nibley's birthday, and we would like to have the approximately 20-volume set completed by that date. Under the direction of John W. Welch, general editor of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, various supplemental electronic releases and a series of conferences in 2010 focusing on the lasting legacies of Nibley's scholarship are also planned.

Brother Nibley left several boxes of complicated, unpublished manuscripts that will result in the publication of at least one additional volume. Numerous articles that have been published elsewhere will appear in the remaining volumes of the Collected Works.

Editorial work has already begun on Brother Nibley's final manuscript, *One Eternal Round*, which is being coauthored and prepared for publication by Professor Michael Rhodes and illustrated by Michael Lyon. *One Eternal Round* is the culmination of Nibley's lifelong research on the Book of Abraham and the facsimiles, particularly Facsimile 2, the hypocephalus. This manuscript covers a wide range of topics that illuminate our understanding

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