

Sebastian P. Brock, *The Wisdom of St. Isaac of Nineveh*. (Texts From Christian Late Antiquity 1; Gorgias Press: Piscataway, NJ, 2006) Pp. xx + 42. Paperback, \$24.00.

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- [1] The third incarnation or edition of a small volume of verses of Isaac of Nineveh selected by Sebastian Brock is more than a reprinting, but an innovation in Syriac publishing. The first life of this selection originated in Kottayam, India, as a 1995 publication of the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute; the second included a longer introduction in an attractive edition by SLG Press, Fairacres, Oxford (1997, 1999). In this third Gorgias Press edition, the book continues being fleshed out with the longer introduction, an updated bibliography, and in particular a facing-page Syriac text. Another dimension is added with Brock's introduction being translated into Syriac by Raban Awgen Aydin—recently consecrated as Mar Polycarpus Eugene Aydin, Bishop of the Netherlands, Diocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church.
- [2] It is as much the concept of this text as its content that is significant. George Kiraz and Gorgias Press have initiated a new series of bilingual texts in order to make available edited texts and excellent English translations at low cost. Fittingly, Sebastian Brock's selection of Isaac of Nineveh is Volume One, a throwback to an older style of a selected reader for spiritual development and guidance.
- [3] Brock has chosen 153 sayings or *mélle* from the First and Second Parts of Isaac's works. The number, of course, is the count of the post-resurrection catch of fish by the disciples (John 21), utilized by other early Christian writers especially for similar collections of pithy sentences or chapters intended for memorization and meditation.
- [4] The introduction presents a thorough, yet concise, summary of what is known of Isaac's life and the longer story of his writings, emphasizing its wide spiritual influence first in Syriac, then in Greek and Russian spirituality. The journey of Isaac's works into the *Philokalia* are detailed, as well as the description of the traditional First Part, the rediscovery in the Bodleian Library of the Second Part, and a brief note on the even more recent discovery of the Third Part.

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