



The Harp of the Spirit: Poems of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (Publications of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge) (Volume 1)

St Ephrem the Syrian

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THE HARP OF THE SPIRIT: POEMS OF ST EPHREM THE SYRIAN is the lead title in a new series on matters of major importance to the Orthodox Christian faith, published by the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge, under the imprint of Aquila/IOCS. St Ephrem the Syrian, who died in AD 373 in Edessa (modern-day Sanliurfa, south-eastern Turkey) in AD 373, has been judged comparable to Dante in stature as a religious poet and to the English Metaphysical poets for intellectual wit and paradox. His own brand of humane and humorous exposition of the mysteries of Christian doctrine is little-known in the West, yet remains a prime example for any modern Christian teacher of how to make the faith intelligible and attractive. This newly augmented collection of translations into English is by the world-renowned scholar of Syriac, Dr Sebastian Brock, formerly Reader at the Oriental Institute of the University of Oxford. The elegant precision of his versions captures the beauty and charm of the originals, which were intended to be sung by a congregation to popular melodies, with refrains. One poem added to this newly expanded collection demonstrates the unique quality of St Ephrem in expounding central doctrines of the faith. In it he compares the action of God becoming incarnated in the Man Jesus to a parrot-trainer who encourages a parrot to talk like a human by placing a mirror in its cage so it can see another parrot apparently speaking and thus learn to imitate it. God became Man so that human beings might learn to relate to Him as one of themselves and by imitation be lifted up to a divine plane of being. Razvan Porumb, Development Officer at the Cambridge Institute, says of this beautifully produced volume that every committed Orthodox Christian should have it by them. THE HARP OF THE SPIRIT is a delightful gift by which to mark an important occasion and a valuable present to any preacher seeking to refresh his or her addresses by a fresh infusion of the Spirit!

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