

The Apology of the Symbol and the Discovery of the Mystery in a New Vision. Professor Sebastian Brock and a Different Kind of Theology

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Abstract

Professor Sebastian Brock's passion for the work "*Yesterday and today Syriac Fathers and writers*" (the title of the last of his books translated in Romanian) is in fact, a synthesis of all what the author has to offer to our present theology. In its depth, we might find the lively reality of an authentic Christian faith, born from the most inner and profound religious feelings. Biographical elements are combined with literary and theological ones of Christ lovers. Starting with Bardesanes, the first great Christian thinker of the Syriac, then Aphrahat, the Persian and St. Ephrem, also Narsai, Jacob of Serugh or Bar Hebraeus, Oxford Syriacist's masterpiece presents the reality of Christian life differently. Throughout this subject argumentation, historically based, Prof. Sebastian Brock reaches the climax through the translation of an impressive number of texts of the Syriac Fathers and writers. At this point, he manages to illustrate aspects of a millennium and a half of Christian literature (from *Bardesanes*, to "*The history of Rabban Sauma and Yahballaha III*"). Thus, Sebastian Brock marks the main theological and stylistic boundaries of Syriac literature, reflecting on the doctrinal, biblical, moral, liturgical, canonical law, ascetic, mystical, parable or Syriac fable tradition. The updated bibliography focused on Syriac literature and theology follows. This is the way in which the thinking of the great British Orientalist finds its expression and is generously shared and equally understood by the ordinary reader who is certainly attracted by the beauty of the text.

With the help of these genuine patristic pearls brought together in terms of history bibliography and doctrine, Sebastian Brock confirms once more the treasure of the Syriac Christian

tradition. It lasts for centuries and we must discuss about it especially today, when the Christian land, crossed by the Tigris and Euphrates, bathes in the blood of martyrs, under absurd pressure in the name of a more absurd motivation. War seems to have been successful in eliminating many of today's reliquary traces of the Syriac Christian tradition. However, the work of the Divine Word remains untouched, and preserving its liveliness and usefulness carries the Parents' legacy "from Qatar to Tokyo" from Asia to Europe, from east to west.

Professor Sebastian Brock's theology awakens our awareness and urges to extract the significance of the first centuries of Christian pedagogy. With the help of his numerous translations, the British author reveals the creative and generative power of God's Word, which enlightens even the darkest corners of our existence. This is the reason why, today more than ever, bearing both in our mind and heart the afflictions of our Christian brothers in Syria, the Churchman seeks to find strong roots. Prof. Sebastian Brock can certainly provide this coordinates due to his multi-faceted thinking, generously shared with those who want to discover and deepen the depths "*of a different theology*."