

The two sides gaze on each other
in amazement,
the works of each side, revealed,
serve to admonish the other.

30. May my sins not be revealed
to my brethren on that day,
—yet by this we show
how contemptible we are, Lord;
if our sins are revealed to You,
from whom can we hide them?
I have made shame
an idol for myself;
grant me, Lord, to fear You,
for You are mighty.
May I feel shame and self-reproach
before You, for You are gentle.
31. A man's neighbor has become his god:
every moment he seeks to please him;
if he does wrong, he feels shame before him,
if he does him an injury, he is afraid;
or if he does him some good,
then he has spoiled that good by his thirst for
praise.
Such a man has become an abject slave
in all these ways.
The Good One gave us freedom,
but we have reduced this to slavery.
May we exchange, for Your lordship,
this overlord we have made for ourselves!

HYMN VIII

St Ephrem takes comfort from the last minute repentance of the Good Thief, but this leads him on to a quandary concerning the relationship of the soul to the body in Paradise. Although he finds himself unable to offer any way out of the problems raised by Christ's words, "this day you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), St Ephrem is quite clear in his mind that the soul cannot enter Paradise without the body, and so the righteous cannot in fact enter Paradise until the final Resurrection, when the body and soul will eventually be reunited; in the meantime the disembodied souls await the Resurrection just outside the boundary of Paradise in a state that other Syriac writers describe as "the sleep of the soul."

1. There came to my ear
from the Scripture which had been read
a word that caused me joy
on the subject of the Thief;¹
it gave comfort to my soul
amidst the multitude of its vices,
telling how He had compassion on the Thief.
O may He bring me too
into that Garden at the sound of whose name
I am overwhelmed by joy;
my mind bursts its reins
as it goes forth to contemplate Him.

RESPONSE: Hold me worthy that we may become
heirs in Your kingdom.

2. I behold a dwelling there
and a tabernacle of light,

¹Luke 23:39-43.

a voice proclaiming
 "Blessed is the Thief
 who has freely received
 the keys to Paradise."
 I imagined that he was already there,
 but then I considered
 how the soul cannot
 have perception of Paradise
 without its mate, the body,
 its instrument and lyre.

3. In this place of joys
 anguish seized me
 as I realized that it is not profitable
 to delve into hidden things.
 With respect to the Thief
 a dilemma beset me:
 if the soul were able
 to see and to hear
 without its body,
 why then is it confined therein?
 And if the body is no longer alive,
 why should the soul be put to death with it?

4. That the soul cannot see
 without the body's frame,
 the body itself persuades,
 since if the body becomes blind
 the soul is blind in it,
 groping about with it;
 see how each looks
 and attests to the other,
 how the body has need of the soul
 in order to live,
 and the soul too requires the body
 in order to see and to hear.

5. If the body grows deaf,
 the soul does too,
 and it grows delirious
 when the body reels with sickness.
 Though the soul exists
 of itself and for itself,
 yet without its companion
 it lacks true existence;
 it fully resembles an embryo
 still in the womb,
 whose existence is as yet
 bereft of word or thought.

6. If the soul, while in the body,
 resembles an embryo
 and is unable to know
 either itself or its companion,
 how much more feeble will it then be
 once it has left the body,
 no longer possessing on its own
 the senses
 which are able to serve
 as tools for it to use.
 For it is through the senses of its companion
 that it shines forth and becomes evident.

7. That blessed abode
 is in no way deficient,
 for that place is complete and perfected
 in every way,
 and the soul cannot
 enter there alone,
 for in such a state it is in everything
 deficient—
 in sensation and consciousness;
 but on the day of Resurrection

the body, with all its senses,
will enter in as well, once it has been made perfect.

8. When the hand of the Creator
fashioned and formed the body
so that it might sing hymns
to its Maker,
this lyre was silent
and had not voice,
until at last
He breathed into it
the soul which sang therein.
Thus the strings acquired sound,
and the soul, by means of the body,
acquired speech to utter wisdom.
9. When Adam
was in all things complete,
then the Lord took him
and placed him in Paradise.
The soul could not enter there
of itself and for itself,
but together they entered,
body and soul,
pure and perfect to that perfect place—
and together they left it, once they had become
sullied.
From all this we should learn
that at the Resurrection they will enter again
together.
10. Adam was heedless
as guardian of Paradise,
for the crafty thief
stealthily entered;

leaving aside the fruit
—which most men would covet—
he stole instead
the Garden's inhabitant!
Adam's Lord came out to seek him;
He entered Sheol and found him there,
then led and brought him out
to set him once more in Paradise.

11. Thus in the delightful mansions
on the borders of Paradise
do the souls of the just
and righteous reside,
awaiting there
the bodies they love,
so that, at the opening
of the Garden's gate,
both bodies and souls might proclaim,
amidst Hosannas,
"Blessed is He who has brought Adam from Sheol
and returned him to Paradise in the company of
many."²

HYMN IX

St Ephrem now turns to the joys of Paradise which the righteous will experience at the Resurrection; these can only be described by means of both analogy and contrast with life on earth. Just as air is essential for all life here, so too in Paradise is it the spiritual counterpart of air which sustains all transfigured existence there (throughout this hymn one should recall that in Syriac the term *ruha* means both "wind" and "spirit/Spirit"). In order to appreciate the spiritual beauty

²cf Matt. 27:52.