

Baby Varghese

Priest, professor, Malankara Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala, India

Address: PB. No. 98, Kottayam, Kerala, India – 686 001

E-mail: frbabyvarghese@asianetindia.com

Robe of Glory in the writings of Saint Ephrem

Among a wide range of imageries that St Ephrem used, that of 'clothing', a simple routine act of man in his daily life, describes the depth of the meaning of fall and restoration and the future glory of man. Early Syriac tradition used the clothing imagery to describe the mystery of incarnation as well as our union with Christ. The entire purpose of the incarnation is to re-clothe Adam with glory that he had lost. It is also the wedding Garment of which Christ spoke, which gives us the privilege to participate in the Eucharist, the feast of the Kingdom of God. In Syriac *shubho*, the word for glory, also means *praise*. Robe of glory, therefore, implies the restoration of our priestly dignity and the regaining of our liturgical vocation.

Keywords: Syriac liturgy, Syriac Patristics, spirituality, Sacramental theology, early Syriac Theology

Saint Ephrem's writings, both prose and poetry, represent one of the main sources for the study of the early Syriac liturgical traditions, especially the liturgical theology¹. He gained respect and authority as a poet theologian, saintly monk and doctor of the Church throughout the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Byzantine world, Russia, as well as the Latin West. Large number of the liturgical hymns of the Syriac Churches is the compositions of St Ephrem, especially those of the Festal Breviary and the Holy Week services of the Syrian Orthodox, East Syrian and Maronite Churches.

Most of the poetic works of St Ephrem were composed for liturgical use and were handed over to us as 'Prayer songs' with responses by the congregation. They were probably studied at the Schools of Edessa and later at Nisibis. However, the Syriac tradition regarded them primarily as liturgical texts rather than theological discourses. Their vocabulary, style and images were used again and again by later poets in their liturgical hymns. His hymns were copied, sometimes selected, re-ordered, combined and mixed, inserted or simply imitated for

¹ See Baby Varghese, "Saint Ephrem and Early Syriac Liturgical Traditions", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 56-1 (2012), 17-49; ID., "Saint Ephrem on the Fourth Century Funeral Rites", *THE HARP* XXII (2007, Kottayam), 177-182.

liturgical use². His writings and ideas inspired later authors of liturgical hymns and prayers.

The language of St Ephrem has been often qualified as ‘pictorial or symbolic’³. He uses the types that are popular among the Church fathers and imageries that are unique to the Syriac tradition. According to him, Scripture and the natural world are two witnesses to Christ. Everything around us is of significance and has the potential of being a pointer to Christ⁴. Thus he uses images drawn from everyday life. Each image reflects a particular aspect of God’s mysterious plan and works for the salvation of man. Creation, Fall, God’s work for the restoration of man and the glorious future condition of man are the main stages of the salvation history. St Ephrem’s meditations on God are focused on these stages. Among a wide range of imageries that St Ephrem uses, that of ‘clothing’, a simple routine act of man in his daily life, describes the depth of the meaning of fall and restoration and the future glory of man. He uses it to describe the meaning of sacraments as well as that of our life in Christ.

Re-entry into Paradise

Salvation of man in Christ, his new condition has been described in the early biblical and patristic tradition using a variety of images. One of the most popular among them is the re-entry into Paradise, which means restoration to his former glory. Before his fall, Adam lived in communion with God, and like the angels, his vocation was to worship God. He was created as a liturgical being, to live in doxological union with God. In the eighth hymn on *Paradise* St Ephrem writes:

“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 no 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, acquires speech to utter wisdom”⁵.

Life means communion with God realized in praise and adoration, and death signifies that man has ceased to be a liturgical being:

“While I live I will give praise, and not be as if I had no existence;
I will give praise during my lifetime, and will not be a dead man among the living.
For the man who stands idle is doubly dead,
The earth that fails to produce defrauds him who tills it”⁶.

² See S.Brock, “In search of St Ephrem”, *Patrimoine Syriaque XI, Actes du Colloque XI: Saint Ephrem. Un poète pour Notre temps* (CERO, Antélias, 2007), 11-25; here 19-20.

³ On the literary style of St Ephrem: S.Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World View of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Cistercian Publication, Kalamazoo, 1992; P. Tanios Bou Mansour, *La Pensée symbolique de Saint Ephrem le Syrien*, Kaslik, 1988; Kees den Biesen, *Simple and Bold. Ephrem’s Art of Symbolic Thought*, Gorgias Press, 2006.

⁴ S.Brock, “Poet as Theologian”, *Sobornost* 7-4 (1977), 243-250; here, p. 244.

⁵ *Hymns on Paradise* VIII, 8, Brock, p. 134; cfr. *Hymns on Nativity* 3:16:

⁶ *Hymns on Nisibis* 50:1, CSCO 240 SS 102 (1963), 68 (Syr). (tr. S.Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, 1992, p. 45

Adam's vocation was to have abundant life, which is the result of a genuine liturgical life. Thus Ephrem says that "corresponding to the extent of our love, we shall acquire, through praise, life that has no measure"⁷.

Life in the Paradise

Paradise was a sanctuary and Adam was placed there to 'minister' in the presence of God. Ephrem gives a very interesting interpretation to God's commandment to Adam. The access to the Tree of Life was withheld means that Adam was not permitted to "enter the innermost Tabernacle" (i.e. a direct vision of God). He had to minister in the "outer Tabernacle" (i.e. Paradise) and God expected that he would "prove pleasing in his service" there:

"God did not permit Adam to enter that innermost Tabernacle;
This was withheld, so that he might prove pleasing
in his service (ܟܘܢܘܢܐܘܬܐ) of that outer Tabernacle; like a priest with
fragrant incense,
Adam's keeping of the Commandment was to be his censer;
Then he might enter before the Hidden One, into that hidden
Tabernacle"⁸.

Elsewhere, St Ephrem says that when Adam was created, he was awake and was "anointed with splendor".⁹ He was awake means that he had an angelic life, for the Syriac word 'râ (ܠܘܚܘܬܐ) used here means "angel or watcher".¹⁰ The splendor, with which Adam was anointed apparently, signifies his priestly dignity.

In heaven, the angels unceasingly praise God. Christ has granted us the condition similar to that of the angels:

"When the Lord came down to earth to mortals, he created them again new creation; like the angels mingling within them Fire and Spirit, so that in a hidden manner, they too might be of Fire and Spirit".¹¹

According to St Ephrem worship is the sole activity of the angels. Angels are "clothed in rays of glory".¹² Their glory consists of their doxological union with God, for they unceasingly sing: "Holy" to God. Thus in a dialogue poem between Mary and the Angel, the latter [angel] exhorts:

"Cry out Holy, Holy, Holy, just as our heavenly legions do, adding nothing else, for we have nothing besides this 'Holy'; this is all we utter concerning your Son".¹³

The heavenly beings take delight in the praise and they are sustained by it:

"To the voices of the celestial beings, to the melody of the spiritual,
To the Seraphs with their chants, to the Cherubs with their wings:

⁷ *Hymns on Nisibis* 50:5, *ibid.* P. 45.

⁸ *Hymn on the Paradise* III, 16, CSCO 174 SS 78 (1957), 12 (Syr). Tr. S.Brock, 96. Cfr. VII, 8. Tr.Brock, p 111.

⁹ Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* II, 12. (Eng tr. E.G.Mathews and J.P.Amar, in *St Ephrem the Syrian, Select Prose Works*, The Father of the Church, Vol. 91 (Washington DC, 1994), p.105.

¹⁰ Cfr. R.Murray, « The Origin of Aramaic 'ir' *Orientalia* 53 (1984), 303-317.

¹¹ *Hymns on Faith* X, 9, quoted in Brock, *Luminous Eye*, p. 105.

¹² *Hymns on the Church* 36:9 ; Brock, *Bride of Light*, p. 29.

¹³ *Dialogue between Mary and Angel*, 47, Brock, *Bride of Light*, p. 117.

To all their lovely music there is no comparison here below.
 Their delight is in the praise, which they render,
 Each one receiving rich sustenance through his lyre.
 Make us worthy to take delight, along with them, in cries of
 ‘Hosanna’.¹⁴

The inhabitants of Paradise do not need any material food, for prayer sustains them:

“Who has ever beheld gatherings of people whose sustenance is the giving of praise?”
 Their raiment is light, their countenance full of radiance;
 As they ruminate on the abundance of His gift
 there burst forth from their mouths springs of wisdom;
 Tranquility reign over their thought, truth over their knowledge,
 Reverence over their enquiry, and love over their offering of praise”.¹⁵

Paradise is “the summit of all blessings”,¹⁶ and “the Garden of Splendors”;¹⁷ the “table of the Kingdom” that has been prepared there.¹⁸

Christ has made us to re-enter Paradise and has united us with the heavenly beings, which is a union in praising God, an idea often appears in the liturgical texts. His priestly dignity has been restored to him and once again he was made worthy of praising God:

“Let Heaven and angels give thanks on high, let earth rejoice in the Virgin; let both sides, as they exult, give praise to the Son of their Lord. Let both sides be mingled in praise, both angels and humanity, to the Son who has restored peace between them, when between them there had been anger and disruption”.¹⁹

‘Anger and disruption’ means, as a result of the fall, man became incapable of worshipping the true God. He went astray and followed false worship and Christ set him free from it:

“Creatures were worshipped since the worshipper was foolish. He worshiped everything so that the One they did not worship came down [and] compassion broke the yoke that enslaved the universe. Blessed is He Who released our yoke!”²⁰

The goal of incarnation was to institute the true worship of God and thus to show an example of a life pleasing to God:

“Error blinded humankind that we should worship creatures.
 Fellow-servants were worshipped, and the Lord of the universe was denied.

¹⁴ *Hymns on Paradise* XIV, 9, Brock, p. 178-179 ; cfr. *Hymn XI*, 2 , Brock, p. 154.

¹⁵ *Hymns on Paradise* IX, 28, Brock, p. 146.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* V,5, Brock, p. 104,

¹⁷ *Ibid* V,14, Brock, p.107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* XI, 15; Brock, p. 159.

¹⁹ *Dialogue between Mary and the Angel*, 52-53, Brock, *Bride of Light*, p. 118.

²⁰ *Hymns on Nativity* 22:4, McVey, p. 180. Elsewhere Ephrem says that fall means slavery to Satan who has deprived the mouths of men from singing praise: (Satan claims) “ Thus have I deprived their senses from doing anything good, their eyes from reading, their mouths from singing praise, their minds from learning”. S.Brock, *Garland of Hymns*, p. 88.

The Worshipful came down to birth and gathered worship to Himself.
 Blessed is He Who is worshiped by all!
 The All-Knowing saw that we worshipped creatures,
 He put on a created body to catch us by habit, to draw us by a created
 body toward the Creator. Blessed is He Who contrived to draw us [to
 Him]”.²¹

God expelled Adam from the Paradise in order to give him an opportunity to repent and to make him aware of his former glory.²² God wanted that we should supplicate to regain our lost inheritance and dignity:

“The Good One in His love wished to discipline us from doing wrong,
 And so we had to leave Paradise with its bridal chamber of glory;
 He made us live with the wild beasts which caused sorrow,
 So that we might see how little our honour had become,
 And so would supplicate Him and beg to return to our inheritance”.²³

In fact the goal of prayer is to return to our former glorious condition:

“We should learn from Daniel, who prayed
 That he might come up from Babylon to the land of promise;
 Babylon is the likeness of this earth, full of curse.
 God gave us this type which He depicted so that we too
 might pray that we return to our dwelling in Eden.
 Blessed is He who brings us forth through grace to our goal”.²⁴

Fall and expulsion from Paradise caused disruption of human relationships (Adam accuses Eve and Cain turned against Abel). God became man in order to bring humanity back to God as one community.²⁵ Worship enables man to become one community with God.

Adam and the Robe of Glory

Early Syriac tradition used the clothing imagery to describe the mystery of incarnation,²⁶ as well as our union with Christ. St Paul speaks of our renewed state as “putting on Christ” (*Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14*). Following this line, Syriac patristic tradition often used the imagery of robe of glory to illustrate the glorious condition to which the Christians are made worthy. It is in fact based on a rabbinic

²¹*Hymns on Nativity* 22:15-16, McVey, p. 182.

²²See *Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis*, Section II, 24-34; CSCO 152, SS 71 (1955), pp. 40-45 (Syr); Eng. Tr. in *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 91, pp. 115-122.

²³*Hymns on Paradise* XIII, 10; Brock, p. 172. This idea has been developed in his *Commentary on Genesis II*, 24-34.

²⁴*Hymns on Paradise* XIV, 4, Brock, p. 176-177.

²⁵*Hymns on Nativity* 2:6: “Ruler of all Creation, Who was sent for the sake of the sheep that was lost and had gone astray, to bring it to the sheepecote and have it entered in”. McVey, p. 77.

²⁶See S. Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a means of Theological expression in Syriac tradition”, in Margot Schmidt (ed), *Typus Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, Eichstätter Beiträge, Band 4 (Regensburg, 1982), 11-40. Here, pp. 15-18. See also, A.Kowalski, “Rivestiti di gloria: Adamo ed Eva nel comment di S.Efrem a Gen 2,25”, *Cristianesimo nella storia* (Bologna) 3 (1982), pp. 41-60.

interpretation of Genesis 3:21.²⁷ According to St Ephrem, Christ humbled Himself and ‘put on Adam’ in order to clothe him with glory:

“He [was] wrapped [in] swaddling clothes in baseness, but they offered Him gifts.

He put on the garments of youth, and helps emerged from them.

He put on the water of baptism, and rays flashed out from it.

He put on linen garments in death, and triumphs were shown by them.

With His humiliations [came] His exaltations. Blessed is He Who joins His glory to His suffering!

All these are changes that the Compassionate One shed and put on when He contrived to put on Adam the glory that he had shed.

He wrapped swaddling clothes with his leaves and put on garments instead of his skins.

He was baptized for [Adam’s] wrong doing and embalmed for his death. He rose and raised him up in glory. Blessed is He Who came down, put on [body] and ascended!”²⁸

The imagery of garment of glory/skin has been inspired by a particular interpretation of Genesis 3:21.²⁹ The Hebrew and Peshitta as well as ancient versions read: “And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin”. However, the Hebrew words for skin (רִיבּוֹת) and light (אֵשׁ) are very similar. The famous Rabbi Meir (first century AD) had a manuscript of Genesis which actually read “garments of light”. The Aramaic Targum translated the phrase by “garment of honour (or glory)”, very similar to the “robe of glory” often found in Syriac sources. Genesis 3:21 presupposes the time *after* the Fall, but by the beginning of the Christian era, some Jewish sources understood it to refer to the time *prior* to the Fall:[The Lord God *had* made... garments of glory’]. The Syriac writers seem to have not followed this interpretation of the time reference. However the idea that Adam was clothed with glory was apparently familiar to the Syriac translator of Psalm 8:6 (*Quoted below*).³⁰

Robe of glory and the divinization

Christ’s humility glorified Him (*Phil. 2:5-11*), and consequently the humanity that He assumed also was glorified. Thus St Ephrem says that, by His incarnation, Christ clothed us with “a robe of glory”.³¹ In fact the imagery of the robe of glory refers to the divinization of man effected by incarnation, an idea popular in Syriac and Greek patristic traditions.

“He gave us divinity; we gave Him humanity”.³²

It is reminiscent of the words of St Athanasius:

²⁷ The examples of this metaphor are also found in Jewish sources: Gershom G.Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, (New York, 1960), 56-64.

²⁸ *Hymns on Nativity* 23, 12-13. McVey, p. 189-190.

²⁹ See S.Brock, *Introduction to Hymns on Paradise*, p 67-68.

³⁰ I owe this information to S.Brock, *ibid*. The idea appears in *the Hymns on Paradise* VIII, 5 (Brock, p 120); IX, 28 (p. 146); XIV, 8 (p. 178).

³¹ *Hymn on Nativity* 5:4: The Lord of David and Son of David hid his glory in swaddling clothes. His swaddling clothes gave a robe of glory to human beings” (McVey, p. 106).

³² *Hymn on Faith* 5:17.

“The Word of God became human that we might become divine”.³³
Again St Ephrem says:

“..Grace clothed itself in his likeness in order to bring him to the likeness of itself”.³⁴ Or

“He descended and became one of us that we might become heavenly”.³⁵

The imprint of Deity has been put on humanity:

“Today the Deity imprinted (*tba*) itself on humanity, so that humanity might also be cut into the seal of Deity”.³⁶

“Thanks be to the One Who sent His Heir to draw us toward Himself by Him and make us heirs with Him”.³⁷

According to Ephrem, the entire purpose of incarnation is to re-clothe Adam with the glory that he had lost:

“All these are the changes that the Compassionate One shed and put on when He contrived to put on Adam the glory that he had lost”.³⁸

Mary is the prototype of the divinization and therefore she had put on the glory of the Son of God, and indeed the robe of glory:

“In her virginity, Eve put on leaves of shame. Your mother put on, in her virginity, the garment of glory that suffices all”.³⁹

Our glorious condition or rather the ‘robe of glory’ is granted to us in baptism.⁴⁰

Following the Pauline imagery of ‘putting on Christ in baptism’, Aphrahat says that that this clothing and garment of glory with which we are clothed is Christ Himself. [“He is the garment and the robe of glory which all the victorious ones put on”].⁴¹ St Ephrem speaks of the Spirit as our robe [of glory]:

“You put on our visible body; let us put on your hidden power. Our body became Your garment; Your Spirit became our robe”.⁴²

Incarnation has made us bearers of Christ (*Christophores*) as well as of the Spirit (*pneumatophores*).⁴³

³³St Athanasius, *On Incarnation*, 54.

³⁴*Hymn on Paradise* XI, 6, tr.Brock, SVTS, p. 156.

³⁵*Hymns on Nativity* 3:16; McVey, p. 87.

³⁶*Hymns on Nativity* 1:99; McVey p. 74. On Ephrem's use of *tb'* and its derivatives, cfr. E.Beck, “Bildtheologie”; esp. Pp.254-58.

³⁷*Hymns on Nativity* 3:12, McVey, p. 86.

³⁸*Hymns on Nativity* 23:13; McVey, p. 190.

³⁹*Hymns on Nativity* 17:4, McVey, p. 154. On Mary: see S.Brock, “Mary in Syriac Tradition”, in A.Stacpoole, (ed), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, Slough, 1982, pp. 182-191.

⁴⁰See Brock, “Clothing Metaphors..”, p. 18ff.

⁴¹Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 14:39, Kuriakose Valavanolickal (tr), *Aphrahat : Demonstrations* Vol.II, SEERI, 2005 [Moran 'Etho 24], p.96.

⁴²*Hymns on Nativity* 22:39, McVey, p. 185. In a *Sedro* of the Holy Week (*Holy Friday, Sutoro*), the garment of glory is identified as the Holy Spirit: “You had put on the scarlet of robe, with the humiliation and the mocking of the Jews, in order to clothe us with the Holy Spirit from whom we were stripped off in the woods by the jealousy of the serpent”. B.Varghese (tr), *Promioun-Sedro of the Holy Week*, MOC, Kottayam, 2013, 2nd Impression, p. 128.

⁴³See the Introduction by S.Brock: St Ephrem the Syrian: *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 66-72; 72-74 (on divinization).

Ephrem often speaks of Paradise as a place of fragrance,⁴⁴ an idea found also in Jewish source⁴⁵ and reminiscent of Psalm 45:9 (“All your garments are fragrant with Myrrh and aloes and Cassia” – *Peshitta*). The Holy Spirit is the life-giving fragrance of Paradise,⁴⁶ which is nourishing and life giving.⁴⁷ The worship that its inhabitants offer to God might be the fragrance of Paradise (cfr. *Rev.* 5:8; 8:3-5).⁴⁸ It is a place of delight and joy and the inhabitants never weary in their service of God.⁴⁹

Robe of glory as robe/mantle of Praise

The idea of the robe of glory refers to the original condition of Adam before his fall.

Ps 8:6 (*Peshitta*): “You created humanity a little less than the angels, in honour and glory did You clothe him”. (*Heb*: ‘crown him’).

Psalm 139:6 (*Peshitta*) suggests that when Adam was created, God granted him priestly dignity by laying his hands on him:

ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ, ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ: “You fashioned me and placed your hand on me”. However, the Syrian Orthodox Breviary gives this versicle before a hymn that speaks of the priestly vocation of Adam: You fashioned me and placed your hand upon me. On Friday in the beginning God created Adam from the dust and breathed on him the spirit and gave him speech, that he might sing praise to him, and give thanks to his Creator”.⁵⁰

Several passages of the *Peshitta* Old Testament refer to the glorious condition of the righteous/saints in term of putting on glory:

Ps. 132:10: “Your priests shall put on righteousness and your saints glory”.

Ps. 132:16: “Her priests I will clothe with salvation and her saints glory”.

In Isaiah 52:1, the garment of glory has been identified as “garment of praise” (52:1), or “mantle of praise” (62:3) and also as “garment of salvation” and “mantle of righteousness”.

“Wake up, wake up O Zion, put on the garment of praise (ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐܘܢܐ), O Jerusalem the Holy City! (52:1)”.

“grant to those who mourn in Zion.....the mantle of praise (ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐܘܢܐ) instead of faint spirit” (62:3).

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation (ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐܘܢܐ), he has covered me with the robe of righteousness (ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐ ܐܘܘܪܘܢܐܘܢܐ).

⁴⁴Hymns on Paradise II, 8 ; IV, 7 ; VV, 10 ; IX, 6; XI, 13; 14; cfr. *Odes of Solomon* 11:15-16; 2 *Enoch* 8:1-7.

⁴⁵Cfr. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York 2005), p.37.

⁴⁶*Hymns on Paradise* XI, 14. Brock p. 159. Ephrem says that on the day of Pentecost ‘the scent of the Paradise’ (that is Holy Spirit) poured forth its perfume.

⁴⁷*Hymns on Paradise* IX, 17 : “Instead of bread, it is the very fragrance of Paradise that gives nourishment; instead of liquid, this life-giving breeze does service: (Brock, p. 142).

⁴⁸Cfr. *Hymns on Faith* 20 :11 ; tr. Sebastian Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, p. 34-35.

⁴⁹*Hymns on Paradise* IX, 7, Brock, p. 138.

⁵⁰Friday Evening, *Qolo, Awsar Slavoto: The Book of Common Prayer*, p.723-25.

In fact Isaiah 61:10 presents it in terms of the wedding garments. Thus in the comments attributed to St Ephrem (on Is 61:10), *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord* is referred to the Eucharist, and then on *because he has clothed me with the garments of salvation*, the Commentator (Ephrem?) proceeds:

“that is, the robe of glory of baptism, for that is in truth the garment of salvation and the shining robe of glory. *And he has made me like a glorious bridegroom*, by absolution, *and like a bride adorned with the beauty of all nations*. Further the ornaments which beautify the Church are these: innocence, purity, chastity....”⁵¹

Ben Sirah (50:11) speaks of the robe of glory as the priestly dress of Simon the high priest [*Putting on the robe of holiness and clothed in the robe of honour, he went up to receive glory*]-Peshitta].

In the book of Daniel it is presented as the angelic dress [10:5; 12:7]:

Daniel saw the angel as a “man clothed in honor”; [ܐܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ, ܐܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ, ܐܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ]. This is probably implied in Isaiah 43:7, which says that Israel was created for the glory (ܥܘܠܐ) of Yahweh.

This rendering seems to have influenced St John’s vision of the Church in the Book of Revelation, where Church is presented as a community that praises God (ch 7: 9-12 etc) having put on white garments.

Glory (*shubho*) in Syriac often means praise rather than ‘splendour’. This is implied in *Psalms* 45:9-17 (Peshitta), seen as a prophesy on the Church and the Mother of God), which has been given an interpretation in terms of liturgy. [This passage is chanted/sung in *quqliun* of the Mother of God—cycle of hymns- at the conclusion of all canonical prayers and sacramental celebration]:

“The princess stood in glory (ܥܘܠܐ) (with praise: as Malayalam renders it), the queen at your right hand. O the one who is in a vestment of gold from Ophir, listen my daughter and see and incline you ear. And forget your people and the house of your father, that the King may desire your beauty. Worship him, for he is your Lord, O daughter of Sur, adore him (*Ps* 45:9-12).

“The virgins, your companions will be led behind you; with joy and gladness they will go and enter the temple of the king” (*Ps* 45:14-15).

Here the glory is certainly related to ‘worship’.⁵²

However, mantle of praise is reminiscent of ‘the sacrifice of praise’

(ܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ): [*Psalms* 107:22 Peshitta] and *Psalms* 118:15 [ܐܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ: voice of praise/glory and salvation in the tents of the righteous], as well as *1 Cor.* 15:53-54 [“putting on incorruptibility”].

Following these lines of interpretation, St Ephrem says that the garment of glory that we put on in baptism is the symbol of our future glorious condition that we will attain in the final resurrection. Thus in his 36th Hymn on the Church, St Ephrem says that we will become like sun, having no luminary to light:

⁵¹Quoted by Robert Murray, *Symbols*, p.139. cfr. Lamy II, 183.

⁵²In fact Jacob of Serugh (6th century) says that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary when she was praying.

Cfr. Mary Hansbury (tr), *Jacob of Serugh: On the Mother of God*, St Vladimir Seminary Press, New York, 1998, Homily I, pp.27-28. See also *Awsar Slawoto I: Book of Common Prayer*, (SEERI, Kottayam, 2006): Wednesday Morning: “While Mary was standing in prayer and making supplication, an angel of fire descended beside her, clothed in flame, and said to her...”, (p. 547).

So too, at the resurrection, the righteous are the light,
 For their clothing is splendor, their garment brightness
 They become their own light, providing it themselves”.⁵³

The liturgical texts often speak of the future glorious condition of the departed
in terms of the garment of glory/praise.

Thus in the Weekly Breviary (Tuesday 9th hour, we find:

“You shall be clothed in a garment of glory (ܠܘܒܘܫܐ ܕܘܢܘܪܐ) and shall
 sing praise before him”.⁵⁴

“May they be clothed with glory and honour (ܠܘܒܘܫܘܢ ܕܘܢܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܢܘܪܐ) and
 enter with You the bridal chamber and offer praise to You”.⁵⁵

By putting on robe of glory, the Holy Spirit has become our garment.⁵⁶ In fact,
 worship is a gift of the Spirit (cfr. *John 4: 23-24; Rom. 8:26-27*) and the sign of His
 presence. Thus St Ephrem writes:

“Come all you mouths, pour out and become a type of water and well
 of voices; let the Spirit of truth come! Let Her sing praise in all of us to
 the Father Who redeemed us by His Child”.⁵⁷

As the baptized are clothed in robe of glory (praise), their life in Paradise con-
 sists of praise. Our poet narrates his experience of the paradise:

“I gave praise as far as I was able and was on the point of departing
 When, from the midst of Paradise, there came a sudden thunderous
 Sound, like the blare of trumpets in some camp,
 A voice crying ‘holy’ thrice over (*Is. 6:3*).

Thus I knew that the divinity received praise in Paradise;
 I had supposed it was empty, but I learn otherwise from the
 thunderous sound”.⁵⁸

Shouts of Hosanna and Alleluia makes it “a harbour of joys and a
 haven of pleasures”.⁵⁹

Life of the redeemed is characterized by worship. Thus St Ephrem says that
 inside the Ark of Noah, a type of salvation and therefore of the Church, all sang
 praises. After having spoken of the praises that the Church offers on the feast of
 Resurrection, Ephrem says:

“It was in similar wise that in the Ark all voices cried out:
 Outside the Ark were fearsome waves, but inside, lovely voices;
 Tongues, all in pairs, uttered together in chaste fashion,
 Thus serving as a type of our festival now when unmarried girls and
 boys sing together in innocence praise to the Lord of that Ark”.⁶⁰

⁵³ Brock, *Bride of Light*, p. 30. Likewise, the wicked will “put on the garment of all their sins,
 clothing full of stain”. *Hymn on Church 36:12*, Brock, *Bride of Light*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 453.

⁵⁵ Wednesday Night Third Qauma, Qolo, *ibid.* p. 517

⁵⁶ Cfr *Hymns on Nativity 22:39*, McVey, p 185, quoted above. In a hymn of the Syrian Orthodox
 Funeral liturgy we find: “As the lilies of the field put on the dress not woven by human
 hands, in the resurrection the righteous put on the garment that the Holy Spirit has woven
 for the children of Adam”. Fr.B.Varghese (tr), *Funeral Liturgy*, (Kottayam, 2012), p. 40.

⁵⁷ *Hymns on Nativity 22:41*, McVey, p. 186. Here St Ephrem follows an Early Syriac tradition
 which spoke of the Holy Spirit in feminine imageries.

⁵⁸ *Hymns on Paradise V, 11*, Brock, p. 106.

⁵⁹ *Hymns on Paradise XI, 2*, Brock, p. 154.

⁶⁰ *Hymns on the Resurrection, 2: 4*, in S.Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit, Studies supplementary to*

Robe of glory and the Eucharist:

St Ephrem prays that he may be made worthy of the table of the diligent set in Paradise.⁶¹ Robe of praise/glory provides a distinctive identity to those who are united to Christ in baptism. They have been granted access to the Tree of Life and to the ‘Medicine of Life’, as well as to sing praise to the Creator:

“The assembly of the saints bears resemblance to Paradise:
As it each day is plucked the fruit of Him who gives life to all;
In it my brethren, is trodden the cluster of grapes, to be the Medicine
of Life.

The serpent is crippled and bound by the curse,
While Eve’s mouth is sealed with a silence that is beneficial
But it also serves once again as a harp to sing praises of her Creator”.⁶²

Thus the robe of glory is same as the ‘wedding garment’ (*Math 22:11-12*). [In the Peshitta version ‘wedding garment’ (ܐܘܪܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐܢܐ) can also mean garment of feast/banquet]. Robe glory has made us worthy of participating in Eucharist, the wedding feast of Christ. Bride is the symbol of both the Church and the individual soul. In the opening stanza of the 14th *Hymn on Faith*, St. Ephrem speaks of the ‘wedding feast of praise’ and Christ is invited to be present in it:

“I have invited You, Lord, to a wedding feast of song,
But the wine – the utterance of praise- at our feast has failed.
You are the guest who filled the jars with good wine,
fill my mouth with your praise.

The wine that was in the jars was akin and related to
This eloquent Wine that gives birth to praise,
Seeing that wine too gave birth to praise
From those who drank it and beheld the wonder.

You who are so just, if at a wedding feast not Your own
You filled six jars with good wine,
Do You at this wedding feast fill, not the jars,
But the ten thousand ears with its sweetness.

Jesus, You were invited to a wedding feast of others,
Here is Your own pure and fair wedding feast: gladden Your
rejuvenated people,
For Your guests too, O Lord, need
Your songs: let Your harp utter.

The soul is Your bride, the body Your bridal chamber,
Your guests are the senses and the thoughts.
And if a single body is a wedding feast for You,
How great is Your banquet for the whole Church!”.⁶³

Sobornost, No. 4 (1983), p. 74.

⁶¹*Hymns on Paradise* V, 15, Brock, p. 107.

⁶²*Hymns on Paradise* VI, 8, Brock, p. 111.

⁶³*Hymns on Faith* 14:1-5. Tr. S.Brock, *Luminous Eye*, p. 124-125. Jacob of Serugh (+521) speaks of ‘sober inebriation’ caused by the new wine, that is praise: “The new wine whose colour and fragrance is from Golgotha; He gave as a drink for men and women to praise. The

In the Hymn on Fasting (4:7), St Ephrem identifies the ‘wedding garment (or bridal adornment) of the Church as ‘fasting, prayer and watching’:

“Blessed be the King, who has adorned his holy Church with fasting, prayer and watching”.⁶⁴

The imagery of betrothal is certainly inspired by the Gospel parables on the Kingdom of God. It implies a relationship of love and adoration between Christ and the Church (New Testament exegetes often fail to notice this meaning of the image of the Church as the Bride of Christ). Thus he says:

“The body gives thanks to You because You created it as an abode for Yourself,
The soul worships You because You betrothed it at Your coming”.⁶⁵

Conclusion:

Robe of glory/praise is part of the ‘verbal iconography’ that St Ephrem uses. It is in a sense, in continuity with the vocabulary of the Bible and is part of the Biblical exegetical tradition of the early Church. The imageries that the fathers of the Church use, refer to the New condition of man redeemed by Christ. They refer to our future glorious life, when we will be restored to our pre-lapsarian condition, in which we will be sustained by the grace of God. The robe of glory refers to our distinctive identity as the citizens of the heavenly Kingdom. In fact a robe is the symbol of joy, honour, new identity and dignity. Robe of glory indicates our future life in the presence of God where ‘God will wipe away every tear from our eyes’ (*cf. Revelation 7:17*). Robe of glory implies the restoration of our priestly dignity and the regaining of the liturgical vocation. This verbal icon serves to indicate our new life with all its spiritual as well as ontological significance.

References

Syriac works of St Ephrem quoted in this article:

Beck E. *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena I*, CSCO 218/219, Scriptores Syri 92/93, Louvain, 1961; *Carmina Nisibena II*, CSCO 240/241; SS. 102/103, Louvain, 1963.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem.. Hymnen de Ecclesia*, CSCO 198/199. SS. 84/85, Louvain, 1960.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem.. Hymnen de Fide*, CSCO 154/155; SS 73/74, Louvain, 19655.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem.. Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, CSCO 186/187; SS. 82/83, Louvain, 1958.

fountain of melodies which, behold, has been passed down to all mouths; with his songs he has intoxicated the earth to mediate on him”. J.P.Amar (ed), *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Jacob of Serugh*, (PO 47-fasc. 209, 1995), lines 24-25.

⁶⁴ *Hymnen de Ieiunio 4:7*, CSCO 246, Syr. 106, p.11.

⁶⁵ *Hymns on Heresies #:10*; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, p. 3:10. Individual soul as well as the Church are identified as the Bride of Christ. Church as the Bride of Christ is a more frequent theme in St Ephrem. Fullest treatment of this theme is in Hymns on Resurrection 3:1-7. Cfr. Robert Murray, *Symbols*, ch.V.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem... Hymnen de Paradiso und contra Julianum*, CSCO 174/175; SS 78/79, Louvain, 1957.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem.... Paschahymnen (DE azymis, de Crucifixione, de Resurrectione)*, CSCO 248/249; SS 108/109, Louvain, 1964.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem...Hymnen contra Haereses*, CSCO 169/170; SS 76/77, Louvain, 1957.

Beck E. *Des hl.Ephraem...Hymnen de Iejunio*, CSCO 246/247; SS 106/107, Louvain, 1964).

Tonneau R.M., *Sancti Ephraeam Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commenatrii*, CSCO 152/153; SS 71-72, Louvain, 1955.

Translations of the Works of St Ephrem, Related sources and studies:

Amar Joseph P. *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Serugh*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 47-fasc 209, 1995.

Amar Joseph P. Perspectives on the Eucharist in Saint Ephrem the Syrian. *Worship*, 1987, no 61-5, pp. 441-454.

Awsar slawoto 1: The Book of Common Prayer, SEERI, Kottayam, 2005.

Biesen K. *Simple and Bold: Ephrem's Art of Symbolic Thought*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway, New Jersey, 2006.

Bou Mansour T. *La Pensée symbolique de Saint Ephrem le Syrien*, Kaslik, 1988.

Brock S. *A Garland of Hymns from the Early Church*, St Athanasius Coptic Publishing Center, Mclean, Virginia, 1989.

Brock S. *Bride of Light. Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches*, Moran 'Etho 6, SEERI, Kottayam, 1994.

Brock S. Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition, in M. Schmid (ed), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen in Mittelalter*, Eichstätter Beiträge 4, Eichstätt, 1982, pp. 11-40.

Brock S. Mary in Syriac Tradition, in A. Stacpoole (ed), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, Slough, 1982, pp. 182-191.

Brock S. *Saint Ephrem. Hymns on Paradise*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1990.

Brock S. *The Harp of the Spirit. Eighteen Poems of Saint Ephrem* (2nd enlarged ed), Studies Supplementary to Sobornost no 4, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, Oxford, 1983.

Brock S. *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Cistercian Publication, Kalamazoo, 1992.

Brock S. The Poet as Theologian. *Sobornost*, 1977, no 7:4, pp. 243-250.

Brock S. *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, 1987.

Brock S. World and Sacrament in the Writings of the Syrian Fathers", *Sobornost*. 1974, no 6:10, pp. 687-696.

Griffith Sydney H. 'Spirit in the Bread; Fire in the Wine': The Eucharist as 'Living Medicine' in the Thought of Ephraem the Syrian, *Modern Theology*, 1999, no 15-2, pp. 225-246.

Hansbury M. *Jacob of Serugh. On the Mother of God*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1998.

Heschel A. J. *The Sabbath*, New York, 2005.

Koonammakkal T. *The Theology of Divine Names in the Genuine Works of Ephrem*. Moran 'Etho 40, SEERI, Kottayam, 2015.

Kowalski A. 'Rivesti di gloria'. Adamo ed Eva nel comment di S.Efrem a Gen 2, 25. *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 1982, no 3, pp. 41-60.

Lamy, T.J. S. *Ephraem. Hymni et Sermones*, 4 Vols, Mecheln, 1882-1902.

Mathews E.G., & J.P. AMAR, *St Ephrem the Syrian: Select Prose Works*, The Fathers of the Church, vol 91, Washington DC, 1994.

Mcvey, Kathleen E. *Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns*. The classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, New York, 1989.

Murray R. The Origin of Aramaic 'ir', *Orientalia*, 1984, no 53, pp. 303-317.

Murray R. *The Symbols of the Church and the Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*. Cambridge, 1977.

Valavanolickal K. *Aphrahat. Demonstrations*. 2 vols., Moran Etho 23-24, Kottayam, 2005 [vol 1: Dem. 1-10; vol 2: Dem 11-13].

Varghese B. *Funeral Liturgy*, MOC Publications, Kottayam, 2012

Varghese B. *Promioun-Sedro of the Holy Week*, MOC Publications, Kottayam, 2013, 2nd Imp.

Varghese B. Saint Ephrem and the Early Syriac Liturgical Traditions. *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 2012, no 56-1, pp, 17-49.

Varghese B. *Saint Ephrem and the Fourth Century Funeral Rites. The harp 23*, Kottayam, 2007, pp. 177-182.

Варгезе Баби

священник, профессор, Маланкарская ортодоксальная семинария,
Коттаям, Керала, Индия

Address: PB № 98, Коттаям, Керала, Индия – 686 001

E-mail: frbabyvarghese@asianetindia.com

Одеяние славы в творениях преподобного Ефрема Сирина

Среди широкого спектра образов, которые использовал святой Ефрем, одежда имеет простейшее значение для человека в его повседневной жизни, но вместе с тем она описывает глубину падения, обещает восстановление и будущую славу человека. Ранняя сирийская традиция использовала образ одежды, чтобы описать тайну воплощения, а также наш союз со Христом. Вся цель воплощения состоит в том, чтобы вернуть человеку славу Адама, которую он потерял. В то же время она также свадебная одежда, о которой говорил Христос, что дает привилегию участвовать в евхаристии как в празднике царства Божьего. В сирийском *шубхо* слово славы также означает похвалу. Таким образом, одеяние славы подразумевает восстановление нашего священнического достоинства и дарование нам богослужебного призвания.

Ключевые слова: сирийская литургия, сирийская патристика, духовность, сакраментальное богословие, раннее сирийское богословие.