



St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns On Paradise

St. Ephrem

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St Ephrem the Syrian's cycle of 15 Hymns on Paradise offers a fine example of Christian poetry, in which the author weaves a profound theological synthesis around a particular Biblical narrative. Centered on Genesis 2 and 3, he expresses his awareness of the sacramental character of the created world, and of the potential of everything in the created world to act as a witness and pointer to the creator. God's two witnesses, says Ephrem, are: 'Nature, through man's use of it, [and] Scripture, through his reading it.' In his writing, Ephrem posits an inherent link between the material and spiritual worlds. St Ephrem's mode of theological discussion is essentially Biblical and Semitic in character. He uses types and symbols to express connections or relationships to 'reveal' something that is otherwise 'hidden,' particularly expressing meanings between the Old Testament and the New, between this world and the heavenly, between the New Testament and the sacraments, and between the sacraments and the eschaton. Because his theology is not tied to a particular cultural or philosophical background, but operates by means of imagery and symbolism basic to all human experience, his theological vision expressed in his hymns has a freshness and immediacy today that few other theological works from the early Christian period can hope to achieve. the Holy Mountain. Hymns on Paradise is part of the POPULAR PATRISTIC SERIES.

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