ܡܫܝܚܐ ܢܘܗܪܐ ܒܡܪܝܡ ܘܒܝܘܪܕܢܐ
Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan

ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܦܓܪ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܙܝܢܐ
ܒܟܠ ܫܒܚܐ: ܒܬ ܫܟܝܚܐ
ܒܝܕ ܒܝܥܩܘܒܐ ܥܡ ܫ̈ ܕܒܝܫܟ

This poem was extracted from Sebastian P. Brock & George A. Kiraz book of Select Poems of Ephrem the Syrian. The original text was scripted in Syriac with English translation; this version is in Aramaic with slight modification to the interpretation of English translation

ܒܟܠ ܕܒܘܪܕܢܐ	ܡܝܡܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܙܟܝܐ
When it is associated with [a source of light]	Light an eye becomes pure,
ܡܝܡܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ ܘܡܫܪܐ	ܡܝܥܒܕ ܕܢܝܢܗ ܕܙܟܝܐ
It shines with [the light that] provisions it,	it gleams with its brightness,
ܡܝܡܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ ܘܡܫܘܒܚ	ܡܝܟܬܪ ܕܫܦܝܪ ܕܫܦܝܪ
It becomes glorious with its splendor,	adorned by its beauty

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ܟܘܬܢܐ: ܒܪܝܟ ܗܘ ܒܪܝܗ ܕܢܗܝܪܐ
Refrain: Blessed is the Creator[1] of light!

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ܡܕܡܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܒܢܐ	ܢܗܝܪܐ ܕܥܠ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ
As thought on an eye	the Light settled in [Mary];
ܐܡܪܗ ܠܡܪܥܝܬܐ	ܡܫܟܚ ܠܡܪܥܝܬܐ
It polished[2] her min,	clarified her thought
ܘܒܢ ܠܡܕܡܟܬܐ	ܡܒܪܟ ܠܒܘܠܬܐ
and made pure her understanding,	causing her virginity to shine.

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ܒܗܝ ܕܡܥܡܕ ܐܬܐ ܒܡܝܐ	ܒܬܘܠܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܡܕܡ ܒܫܡܐ
The river in which He was baptized	conceived Him again symbolically;
ܒܛܢܐ ܕܡܝܐ ܪܛܝܒܐ	ܒܛܢܐ ܕܒܬܘܠܬܐ
the moist womb[3] of the water	conceived Him in purity,
ܒܟܝܪܐ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ	ܐܣܩܗ ܒܫܘܒܚܐ
bore Him in chastity,	made Him ascend in glory.

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ܒܛܢܐ ܕܡܝܐ ܙܟܝܐ	ܒܟ ܠܒܪܬܐ ܕܒܪܢܫܐ
In the pure womb of the river	you should recognize the Daughter of man

ܕܝܗܒܗ ܕܠܐ ܟܚܕ̈ ܗܝܠܕ̈ܗ ܘܕ̈ܐ
who conceived without any man, who gave birth without intercourse,

ܕ̈ܒܗ ܚܒܘܬ̈ܐ ܠܡܕ̈ܐ ܕܒܘܬ̈ܐ
who brought up, through a gift,[4] the Lord of that gift.

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ܕ̈ܡܐ ܟܗ ܒ̈ܘܕ̈ܐ ܕ̈ܡ̈ܐ
As the Daystar in His river, [Luke 1:78] the Bright One in His tomb,

ܒ̈ܘܝܗ ܚܒ ܦܗܕ̈ܐ ܒ̈ܘܒ̈ ܟܗ ܒ̈ܘܕ̈ܐ
He shone forth on the mountain top[5] and gave brightness too in the womb;

ܗ̈ܒ̈ܘܕ̈ ܚܗܘܟ̈ܗ ܗ̈ܒ̈ܘ̈ܕ̈ ܚܗܘܟ̈ܗ
He dazzled[6] as He went up [from the river], gave illumination at His ascension[7]

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ܘܒ̈ܐ ܕ̈ܟܚ̈ ܗܘ̈ܒ̈ ܒ ܒ̈ܕ ܚܦܒܟ ܗ̈ܐ ܟ̈ܗ
The brightness which Moses put on was wrapped on him from without, [Exod 34:29ff.]

ܒ̈ܘܐ ܕ̈ܚܘ̈ܒ̈ ܗ̈ܐ ܟ̈ܗ ܒ ܟ̈ܗ ܟ̈ܚ̈ ܗܘ̈ܐ
the river in which [Christ] was baptized put on Light from within,

ܦ̈ܟܐ ܕ̈ܥܐ ܟ̈ܟ̈ܗ ܒ ܟ̈ܗ ܝ̈ܘ̈ܕ̈ܗ ܗ̈ܐ
[Mary's] body, in which He resided, was made gleaming from within.

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ܗ̈ܒ̈ܟ ܕ̈ܝ̈ܘ̈ܕ̈ܗ ܗ̈ܘ̈ܒ̈ ܚ̈ܝ̈ܥܚܗ̈ܣ̈ܐ
Just gleamed Moses with the [divine] glory

ܕ̈ܗ̈ܘ̈ܦ̈ ܣ̈ܐ ܒ̈ܟܒ̈ܟ ܚ̈ܦ̈ ܚ̈ܒ ܝ̈ܘ̈ܕ̈ܗ
because he saw briefly, the splendor[8], how much more should

ܦ̈ܟܐ ܕ̈ܥܕ̈ ܗ̈ܐ ܟ̈ܗ ܗ̈ܒ̈ܐ ܕ̈ܚܘ̈ܒ̈ ܗ̈ܐ ܟ̈ܗ
the body wherein [Christ] resided gleam, and the river which He was baptized?

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ܘܒ̈ܐ ܕ̈ܟܚ̈ ܗܘ̈ܒ̈ ܦ̈ܢ̈ ܚ̈ܟ̈ܗ ܕ̈ܚܕ̈ܐ
The brightness that the stammering Moses put on in the wilderness [Exod 4:10]

ܕ̈ܝ̈ܣ̈ܥ̈ ܚ̈ܟ̈ܗ ܕ̈ܒ̈ܕ̈ܗ ܟ̈ ܒ̈ܗ̈ܐ ܟ̈ܣ̈ܚ̈ܘ̈ ܕ̈ ܒ̈ ܚ̈ ܟ̈ ܒ̈ ܚ̈ ܟ̈ ܒ̈ ܚ̈ ܟ

ܚܕܐ ܕܝܟܝܬ ܕܝܟ ܡܝܢ ܥܝܢܝ ܕܢܗܪܐ
Like the supernal beings whose eyes need no
ܫܬܐ ܠܒܪܝܬ ܢܗܪܐ ܕܬܬܚܙܝ ܢܗܪܐ
other light, since their pupils
ܡܙܕܝܢ ܗܘܠܝܩ ܠܒܫܝܢ ܕܝܩܪܐ ܕܣܒܪ
flow with light, and they are clothed in rays of glory

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ܐܝ ܟܝ ܫܡܫܐ ܢܦܩ ܢܗܪܐ ܕܠܐ ܐܦ ܒܢܗܪܐ
For if the sun, without using light,
ܕܦܪܫ ܠܝܠܝܐ ܕܠܐ ܟܝ ܫܡܫܐ ܨܒܐ ܢܗܪܐ
chases out darkness - for the sun needs
ܢܗܪܐ ܒܠܟ ܒܗܝܐ ܕܚܙܝܢܗ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܗܘ ܡܨܕܪ ܕܢܗܝܪ
no luminary for light, seeing it is the source of [its own] rays -

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ܗܟܢ ܒܩܝܡܬܐ ܕܙܕܝܩܐ ܐܝܟ ܠܒܫ ܢܗܝܪ
So too at the Resurrection the righteous are light,
ܐܬܪܗܛ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܒܘܫܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ ܘܫܦܪ
for their clothing I ssplendor, their garments brightness:
ܐܝܟ ܕܗܘ ܢܗܘ ܢܗܪܐ ܕܢܗܪܐ ܒܢܗܪܐ
they become their own light through the [source of] light.

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ܫܘܙܒ ܢܦܫ ܒܝܘܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܢܬܠܒܫ ܚܛܝܐ
Save me, [Lord], on that day when the wicked put on
ܠܒܘܫܐ ܕܟܠ ܣܡܐ ܘܡܬܐ ܚܫܘܟܐ ܕܟܠ ܚܛܗܝܗܘܢ
the garment of full stains, cloak of all [their] marks [of sin]
ܕܡܢܗ ܡܨܕܪ ܠܗܘ ܕܡܬܐ ܘܥܠ ܚܫܘܟܐ ܘܥܢܝܐ
where springs up fro them darkness and torment,

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ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܓܘܫܡܐ ܡܬܚܫ ܒܟܝܢܐ ܕܚܘܫܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܚܘܫ
just as from the body [in times] of sickness
ܘܚܪܝܪ ܘܡܪܪ ܟܐܒܐ ܘܚܫ ܘܫܘܛ ܕܢܬܚܙܐ
there spring up bitter pain,[10] suffering, and fever,
ܘܠܟܦܐ ܕܢܬܩܢ ܒܗ ܠܚܛܝܗ ܘܠܩܛܪܐ ܕܢܬܝܣܪ ܒܗ
as fetter for its wrongdoing and a rod to chastise it.

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ܐܠܗܐ ܛܒܐ ܕܡܟܝܢ ܠܢ ܠܢܘܗܪܐ ܕܝܘܡܐ
O Good One, who has prepared for us the sun by day

ܘܒܠܝܐ ܗܘܕ̈ܐ ܡܢ ܟܘܟܒ̈ܐ ܙܩ̈ܝܦܐ
and by night the moon with the candelabra of stars,

ܒܨܒܝܢ ܚܝܠܟ ܗܘ ܘܢܚܬ ܠܝ ܗܘ ܫܦܝܪ̈ܐ
through Your grace, [may] Your glorious comfort reach me.

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ܐܘܕ̈ܝ ܠܡܪܝܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ̈ܐ ܗܘ ܕܒܗ ܡܬܚܙܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ̈ܐ
Give thanks to the Creator of light because in it is depicted

ܢܫܒܚ ܠܒܢܝܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ̈ܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܢܩ̈ܝ̈ܐ
The heavenly Light; give praise to the Maker

ܗܘ ܕܡܬܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ̈ܐ ܕܦܪܩܢ̈ܐ ܕܢܗܝܪ̈ܐ ܕܝܠܗ
Of light because it is a symbol of the light of our Savior!

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1. *Creator: The manuscript has ܒܪܝ but for metrical reasons this needs to be corrected to ܒܪܝܐ*
2. *Polished: ܫܦܪ The verb is often used in connection with the polishing of mirrors (which were of metal in antiquity and so needed to be kept in a high state of polish in order to be effective).*
3. *Womb: Elsewhere Ephrem speaks of the three wombs that Christ entered: Mary's, that of the Jordan, and that of Sheol. This imagery is preserved in several of the Syriac baptismal services where the font is described as a womb that gives birth to spiritual children.*
4. *gift: Probably Ephrem has in mind the figt of milk flowing in the breasts of Mary, a virgin. The wording is reminiscent of Odes of Solomon 35:5-6: "Like a child carried by its mother, He gave me milk, the dew of the Lord, and I was brought up by His gift, and found rest in His perfection." It seems unlikely, however, that Ephrem knew the Odes of Solomon.*
5. *Mountain top: It is (perhaps deliberately) unclear whether this referes to the Tranfiguration or to the Ascension.*
6. *dazzled: Ephrem probably has in mind the early tradition that at Christ's baptism there appeared above or in the Jordan either light (so some Old Latin manuscripts of the Gospels) or fire (so first in Justin Martyr). In Syriac tradition it is fire that is more commonly referred to, and thisis depicted visually in the famous illuminated Rabbula Gospels, dated 586 CE. For a discussion of this tradition going back to th eDiatessaron, see Petersen 1994, 14-20.*
7. *ascension: this could, alternatively, be taken as referring to Christ's*
8. *splendor: Lit. "exaltation".*
9. *served as a sun ܫܡܫ The double translation is intended to bring out the double entendre (to hear – what was not intended to hear).*
10. *bitter pain ܡܪܪܬܐ This form is not attested in the dictionaries; probably the text should be corrected to ܡܪܪܐ.*

Note: Fetter – a chain or shackle placed on the feet.