

**Ps.Ephraem Graecus**

**Threni, id est, Lamentationes gloriosissimae Virginis Matris Mariae  
super passione domini**

**The Lamentations of the most glorious Virgin Mother Mary on the  
Passion of the Lord.**

**CPG 4085<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This file was created by Roger Pearse and is placed in the public domain by the author.

## Introduction

This text was printed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Joseph Assemani among the Greek works attributed to Ephraem the Syrian. The text appears in volume 3 of the *Opera Graeca*, nearly all of which are spurious. Assemani gave a Latin text only, which he seems to have taken from G. Vossius. This translation appears to be modern – 16<sup>th</sup> century – rather than an ancient *versio*. A Greek text does exist, but was inaccessible to me.<sup>2</sup> Two papers by W. F. Bakker discuss the origins and nature of this text, which is metrical in nature, and actually belongs to the 15<sup>th</sup> or even 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> An excerpt from the final prayer with a loose English translation appears in later editions of the *Raccolta* and is found widely online.<sup>4</sup>

## English Translation<sup>5</sup>

Standing beside the Cross, the pure and immaculate virgin, beholding the Saviour suspended upon it, contemplating the most cruel wounds, and looking upon the nails, complaints, slappings, and scourges, with great lamentation and sorrowful cries cried out, saying: “My sweetest son, my dearest son, how do you bear this Cross? My son and my God, how do you endure the spittle, the nails, and the lance? How do you endure the blows, the mockery, the insults, and the contempt? How do you bear the crown of thorns, the purple robe, the sponge, the reed, gall, and vinegar? How do you hang, dead and stripped, on the wood, my son, you who cover the heavens with clouds? How did you endure thirst, you who are the creator of all things, and who created the seas and all the waters? How do you, innocent one, die among criminals and the impious? What have you done: or in what way, my son, could you offend the nation of the Hebrews? And why did those wicked and ungrateful men hang you upon the wood of the Cross? many of whom you healed, who were sick and infirm, or raised those who were dead to life, or strengthened those who were paralyzed, my most benevolent son: you who gave light to the blind from birth, O best Saviour; and restored the son of the widow to life, O life of all: you who saved the daughter of the Canaanite, and freed the Centurion's son from death. The sands of the desert, however plentiful, have their limit: but your miracles, my son, surpass all bounds entirely. You raised Lazarus, stinking, from the tomb: ‘Lazarus, come forth,’ you said, from the grave: and your voice drew him from the underworld, and you called back the breath of life to him.

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<sup>2</sup> M. I. Manouskas, “Ελληνικά ποιήματα για τή σταύρωση τοῦ Χριστοῦ”, in: *Mélanges Octave et Melpo Merlier*, II, Athens (1956), 49-60. Text on pp.65-9.

<sup>3</sup> Willem F. Bakker & Dia Mary L. Philippides, “[The lament of the virgin by Ephraem the Syrian](#)” in: *Enthymēsis Nikolaou M. Panagiōtakē*, (2000), 39-56; Wim F. Bakker, “‘Ephraem the Syrian's’ Φρηνο τη Φεοτόκου: What? When? Where? Why?” in: *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 29 (2005), 17-38.

<sup>4</sup> *The Raccolta: Prayers and Devotions Enriched with Indulgences* (1957), §371, pp.265-6: “Blessed Virgin, immaculate and pure, you are the sinless Mother of your Son, who is the mighty Lord of the universe. Since you are holy and inviolate, the hope of the hopeless and sinful, I sing your praises. I praise you as full of every grace, for you bore the God-Man. I venerate you; I invoke you and implore your aid. Holy and Immaculate Virgin, help me in every need that presses upon me and free me from all the temptations of the devil. Be my intercessor and advocate at the hour of death and judgment. Deliver me from the fire that is not extinguished and from the outer darkness. Make me worthy of the glory of your Son. O dearest and most kind Virgin Mother. You indeed are my most secure and only hope, for you are holy in the sight of God, to whom be honor and glory, majesty and power forever. Amen.”

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Roger Pearse, Ipswich 2024.

But how have you now died, my sweetest son, and yet the most magnanimous God? My heart fails me as I behold you affixed to the Cross, my most loving son, nailed and covered with wounds. O impious Jews, murderers of Christ, hostile to God, and ungrateful to your Creator. Did He not Himself feed you with manna in the desert? Did he not, through Moses, divide the sea: and lead you into the promised land? But you, O wicked people, and denier of Christ, return evil for good; for good deeds and blessings, you return evils and hostile acts: poison for manna; and instead of water, returning vinegar: for those most wicked men have given you a most bitter draught to drink, my son. Five thousand men you fed with five loaves: and you filled Judaea itself with your preachings, my beloved son. But where now is your splendour and excellence, my son? where is that beauty of yours now? And how are you now extinguished on the Cross, my son and my God? The sun darkened its light, and became something different from itself. The bright moon was turned into darkness: the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened, and the veil of the temple itself was torn in two. Those created things acknowledged their Creator and maker: and those perverse and wretched Hebrews shut their ears and closed their eyes, so that they would not see the Sun that never sets, my son.

O Gabriel, Archangel and minister of God. O Archangel Gabriel, act now and defend the case. Where is now that "Hail," O Angel? Where is that blessed "Hail" which you said to me, O messenger? Where now is that joy and blessing, with which you told me: "Blessed are you among women"? But why did you not reveal the pain and the sacrifice that I was about to receive for the sake of my dearest son, while you did signify to me that great joy which I perceived from the beginning? I was in continuous tribulations and groanings: and I always endured the immense envy of the Jews, and the ingratitude of perverse vagabonds and transgressors. O admirable Simeon: behold now the sword with which you foretold that my heart should be pierced. Behold the sword: behold the wound, my son and my God. Your death has pierced my heart: my bowels are torn apart: my light is obscured; and a dreadful sword has passed through my breast. I behold your awe-inspiring passion, my son and my God. I see your undeserved death: and I cannot help. Where now is your form and beauty, my son? Have mercy now on your desolate and bereaved mother, my son. Have mercy on Mary, cast down and abandoned, O beloved one. Have mercy, most merciful son: and comfort me. Look upon my tears, my son; attend to my sighs and groans, and open your mouth. Comfort me, my son. For I have absolutely no where to lay my head. I have no other relative left, not father or mother, brother nor sister, who might give me comfort. You are my father, you are my brother, you are my son. You are my life and spirit, my hope and protection. You are my consolation and my origin. You are my Lord and my God: you are my creator and my maker.

Mourn with me now, all you disciples of the Lord: who behold my sorrows and the deepest wounds of my heart. Lie down for me now, O most sacred Cross and blessed wood: that I may kiss the wounds of my beloved son, and of my God, and the salvation of my own son: that I may embrace the body of my son, and his sweet mouth, and eyes and face, his hands and feet, and kiss away the most wicked murder. Lie down, venerable cross, lie down. Great is your glory, O distinguished Cross: great is your grace, and immense is your strength and power. O holy and blessed tree: on which your innocent God and Creator, like a thief and criminal, was stretched out.

My son, my sweetest and dearest son, I honour those afflictions of yours: I adore and worship your mercy and your magnanimity. I revere the lance, the wound, the shaft, the nails, the sponge, the slappings, mockings and insults, the gall and vinegar, the spitting, the punchings, and the whippings,

my sweetest son. But since all these things, by the grace of your creation, it pleased you to endure; your disgrace, my son, has become the glory of all: and your death has become Life to the whole world. Truly, rise again, as soon as possible, my son and my God, just as you foretold me: so that the whole world may be saved. You have crushed and trampled death and destruction by your death: so that greater joy may shine upon me, your humble mother, and that all your beloved may rejoice with me: but let all your enemies be put to shame and confounded.

But now we praise you, O pure and immaculate and likewise blessed Virgin, blameless mother of your great Son and God of the universe, inviolate and holy, the hope of the despairing and guilty. We bless you with the fullest thanks, who gave birth to Christ, God and man: we all prostrate ourselves before you: we all invoke you, and we implore your help. Deliver us, O holy and undefiled Virgin, from every necessity that falls upon us, and from all the temptations of the devil. Be our intercessor and advocate at the hour of death and judgment: and deliver us from the unquenchable fire of the future, and from the outer darkness: and make us worthy of the glory of your Son, O sweetest and most gracious Virgin and mother. Indeed, you alone are our safest and holiest hope of Christians with God. To whom be glory and honour, splendour and power, forever and ever. Amen.

## Latin Text<sup>6</sup>

Stans juxta Crucem pura et immaculata virgo, Salvatoremque in ea suspensum cernens, dirissimas plagas perpendens, et clavos, querimonias, alapas, flagellaque prospiciens, magno cum planctu, lamentisque dolore plenis exclamabat, dicens: Mi fili dulcissime, fili mi carissime, quo modo Crucem istam portas? Mi fili, et mi Deus, quo pacto sputa, clavos, et lanceam suffers? quo pacto colaphos, irrisiones, injurias, ac contumelias pateris? quo pacto coronam spineam, vestemque purpuream, spongiam, arundinem, fel et acetum sustines? Quomodo in ligno pendes mortuus, ac denudatus, fili, qui coelum nubibus tegis? Quomodo sitim tulisti: qui universorum es conditor, quique maria et aquas omnes creasti? Quomodo innocens, in medio flagitiosorum et impiorum moreris? Quid fecisti: aut in quo Hebraeorum gentem, fili mi, offendere potuisti? Et cur scelerati simul atque ingrati illi, te in ligno Crucis suspenderunt? quorum claudos, et languentes plurimos sanasti, mortuos ad vitam revocasti, paralyticum consolidasti, mi fili benignissime: quique a nativitate caecum illuminasti, Salvator optime; et viduae filium vitae reddidisti, o vita universorum: qui Chananaeae filiam servasti, et Centurionis filium a morte liberasti. Arena quantumcumque numerosa, suam habet mensuram: at tua, mi fili, miracula omnem plane modum superant. Lazarum a monumento suscitasti foetidum: Lazare mi, inquires, exi de sepulcro foras: et tua eum vox traxit ab inferis, et ad vitales revocasti auras. At tu quomodo jam occideris, mi fili dulcissime, idemque magnanime Deus? Deficit mihi animus, dum te Cruci suffixum intueor, conclavatumque ac plagis plenum, amantissime fili. O Judaei impii, Christique interfectores, in Deum iniqui, et in Creatorem vestrum ingrati. Numquid in eremo ipse vos manna aluit? Numquid per Moysen, mare diremit: et in terram promissionis vos traduxit? Verum tu, popule nequam, et abnegator Christi, pro beneficiis maleficia; pro bonis et commodis, mala atque contraria rependis: fel, pro manna; et pro aqua, acetum reponens: potione enim amarissima, te potaverunt iniquissimi illi, mi fili. Quinque hominum millia, quinque pavisti panibus: et ipsam Judaeam tuis implevisti praedicationibus, dilectissime fili. Sed ubi modo species atque pulchritudo tua, mi fili? ubi tuus ille nunc decor? Et quomodo in Cruce jam extinctus es, fili mi, et

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<sup>6</sup> The Latin text is taken from Joseph S. Assemani, *Sancti patris nostri Ephraem Syri Opera Omnia quae extant graece, syriace, latine; in sex tomos distributa*. Romae, 1732-1746; Opera graeca, vol. 3, p.574-5.

Deus meus? Sol suum obscuravit lumen, et a se alius factus est. Lucida luna in tenebras versa est: petrae scissae sunt, et monumenta aperta, ipsumque templi velum in duas partes discissum est. Creaturae illae suum agnoverunt Creatorem, atque opificem : et perversi isti, ac miseri Hebraei suas obturarunt aures, clausuruntque oculos, ne Solem nullo unquam tempore occidentem adspicerent, mi fili. O Gabriel Archangele, et minister Dei. O Gabriel Archangele, age jam, et tuere caussam. Ubi illud nunc Ave, o Angele? Ubi Ave illud benedictum, quod ad me dixisti, o nuncie? Ubi modo illa laetitia, ac benedictio, qua dixisti mihi: Benedicta tu in mulieribus? Quorsum vero dolorem, et victimam, quam dilectissimi filii mei nomine acceptura eram, non patefecisti: dum magnum illud mihi gaudium, quod ab initio percepi, significasti? In continuis tribulationibus, atque gemitibus fui: semperque immensam Judaeorum invidiam, et perversorum erronum ac transgressorum ingratitude sustinui. O Simeon admirande: ecce jam gladius, quo cor meum trajiciendum praedixisti. Ecce gladium: ecce vulnus, mi fili, et Deus meus. Mors tua, cor meum subiit: disrupta sunt mea viscera: lumen meum obscuratum est; pectusque meum dirus gladius pertransiit. Tremendam tuam passionem intueor, fili mi, et Deus meus. Immeritam mortem tuam cerno: nec succurrere queo. Ubi modo forma tua, ac decor, mi fili? Miserere jam desolatae, atque orbatae matris, mi fili. Miserere dejectae ac derelictae Mariae, o dulcissime. Miserere, pientissime fili: et me consolare. Respice, mi fili, lacrymas meas: attende suspiria mea ac gemitus, et os tuum aperi. Solatium mihi praebe, mi fili. Non enim habeo prorsus, ubi vel caput reclinem. Non alius mihi supereft cognatus, pater vel mater, frater aut soror, qui animum mihi reddant. Tu mihi es pater, tu frater, tu filius. Tu mihi vita, et spiritus, spes, atque protectio. Tu mea es consolatio, et creatio. Tu Dominus meus, et Deus meus: tu creator, et opifex meus. Plangite jam mecum, cunctae discipulae Domini: quae dolores meos, et profundissima cordis mei vulnera adspicitis. Tu mihi, jam Crux sanctissima, lignumque benedictum decumbe: ut dilectissimi filii mei, ac Dei mei plagas exosculer, propriumque filium salutem: ut filii mei corpus amplectar, et os suavissimum, oculosque ac faciem, manus atque pedes, et caedem iniquissimam deosculer. Decumbe, crux veneranda, decumbe. Eximia, o Crux, tua est gloria: magna tua gratia, immensaque vis tua atque potentia. O lignum sanctum, ac benedictum: in quo Deus tuus atque Creator innocens, instar latronis et nocentis, expansus est.

Mi fili, fili mi suavissime atque carissime, honoro tuas illas afflictiones: colo et adoro misericordiam, et magnanimitatem tuam. Veneror lanceam, vulnus, arundinem, clavos, spongiam, alapas, irrisiones atque opprobria, fel et acetum, sputa, colaphos, et verbera, mi fili dulcissime. Sed quoniam cuncta illa, creaturae tuae gratia, perpeti placuit; ignominia tua, mi fili, gloria cunctis facta est: tuaque mors toti mundo Vita evasit. Verum enimvero, resurge quamprimum, mi fili, et Deus, sicut praedixisti mihi: ut totus mundus salvus fiat. Mortem atque interitum tua morte protrivisti ac conculcasti: ut gaudium majus mihi humili matri tuae affulgeat, mecumque laetentur cuncti dilecti tui: erubescant autem, et confundantur quicumque tui inimici.

Sed te, jam nos, o pura et immaculata, eademque benedicta Virgo, magni filii tui, universorumque Dei mater inculpata, integra, et sacrosantissima, desperantium atque reorum spes, collaudamus. Tibi, ut gratia plenissimae benedicimus, quae Christum genuisti Deum et hominem: omnes tibi procidimus: omnes te invocamus, et auxilium tuum imploramus. Eripe nos, o Virgo sancta, atque intemerata, a quacumque necessitate ingruente, et a cunctis tentationibus diaboli. Nostra conciliatrix, et advocata in hora mortis, atque iudicii esto: nosque a futuro inextinguibili igne, et tenebris exterioribus libera : et Filii tui nos gloria dignare, o Virgo, et mater dulcissima, ac

clementissima. Tu siquidem unica apud Deum Christianorum spes nostra es securissima, et sanctissima. Cui gloria et honor, decus atque imperium, in sempiterna secula seculorum. Amen.