

save itself, or to find salvation anywhere apart from God, it is sterile; but if it can be abandoned to God, immediately it conceives by his power, although it may not know this, although the new holy life may be long in coming to birth. Out of the Chaos surrendered to God a new world, a holy world will certainly be raised, although not perhaps in one moment. The Mystery is now restored for all the world—the mystery of holy conception and birth, of true creation. ‘*Puer natus est nobis, filius datus est nobis.*’ If the Holy Child were given to us merely to worship there on the lap of the Blessed Virgin, that would hardly save us—that is not what the salvation of the world means. Our salvation lies in this, that now within our own nature—by a participation in the Mystery of Mary’s motherhood—divine birth can take place. Everywhere that mystery is available, everywhere the world can be filled with God.



TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

THEE God we praise. But to speak of this Godhead I dare not presume, for since I cannot prove, nor conceive thine hid works, that thou hast made in a creature, what should I say to the maker that is a creator? For all philosophers that have laboured in divers sentences, as in grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, all, they proved by reason in their faculties, till they came to one point, that was called, *prima causa*. And here they stood still and could proceed no further. And that first causer, they said, might well be called a God. And so we, to the same first causer of all things, we say: *Te Deum Laudamus*. ‘Thee God we praise’, that art so curious a maker of diversities of things. And *Te dominum confitemur*, ‘we knowledge thee’, a lord that of everything art so wise a disposer and so noble a keeper. And not only we with our wits praise God thus, but also *Te eternum patrem omnis terra veneratur!* ‘All the regions of the earth worship thee everlasting Father.’ In this name ‘earth’ we may understand three places, the first, the earth of living folk, that is the bliss of Heaven as David saith: *Credo videre bona Domini in terram viventium*: ‘I hope to see the goodness of our Lord in the

earth of quick people'. The second is the earth of dying folk, and that is this world here, where we all shall yield our bodies under the bitterness of death; and of this Holy Church saith: *Media vita in morte sumus*: 'In this middle life we be in death'. The third is the earth of horrible death that is called *terra mortis*. And this is the pit of hell, where life is dyingly and death livingly. And of this place Holy Church crieth to God that our souls come not there saying: *Libera me, Domine, de morte eterna*: 'Lord deliver me from everlasting death'.

All these earths be thy places and to thee they offer reverences, in token that our praising should be the stronger for them. And what quick folk are they that praise thee most? For sooth, *Omnes Angeli tibi, coeli et universae potestates*: All angels whose nature is incorruptible, all heavenly persons and their powers. These angels be set in nine orders and three hierarchies or estates and all these be called the sons of God. In the first hierarchy be Angels, Arch-angels and Virtues; and in the second, principalities, powers and dominations. In the third be Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. And all these at one; *incessabili voce proclamant*, crying, and saying in their bliss: *Sanctus, O Theos*, holy God in thyself, in thy angels and glorified souls. *Sanctus yskeyros*, strong Lord in heavenly creatures, as the moon, sun and stars, planets and winds. *Sanctus athanatos*, holy undeadly, against our bodily death, against our ghostly death and against the death of hell. And set above all these our imaginations, thou art, *Dominus dominantium*, Lord of Lords, *Deus deorum*, God of gods, and *Sabaoth*, mighty leader of hosts, and many more, and therefore thy high might is so unspeakable, I can not say. But *Pleni sunt coeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae*. 'Heavens and the earth be filled with thy might'; and that causeth that men gladly left their own wills to follow meekly thy will, as *gloriosus apostolorum chorus* whom thou madest sovereign preachers, that comforted people and kingdoms to thy law. Among whom *Te prophetarum laudibilis numerus*, as glorious forspeakers of thy worthy works that had insight of thy coming, some in sleeping, some in bodily images, some in childhood, some in age, some in their mother's womb, some in great travail, some in great anguish, [they] joyed in thee. And so, *Te martyrum candidatus laudet exercitus*. 'The white company of martyrs praise thee', offering to thee the red blood of their torments, the great studies in thy laws as did confessors, and the wilful cleanness in all their works, as holy virgins.

—And as all these joy before thee by continual praising in the high church of glory, likewise to our power *Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur ecclesia*: thee praise, by all the world, the fighting church on earth, as labourers, craftsmen, merchants, knights, judges, kings, religious, low curates and high prelates—all we say: thou art three persons and one God. And *Patrem immensae maiestatis*, ‘Father of the high majesty’, thou hadst with thee everlastingly, *Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium*, ‘an only Son, worshipful and true’; and of two cometh the same God in power majesty and evenhood, that our faith calleth *Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum*, ‘an holy and a comfortable Spirit’. But for as much as nature loveth most that thing that has most likeness to itself, as it showeth by every beast that hath life, on the same wise we see more verily before the Father and the Holy Ghost, [our] likeness and similitude in the Lord Jesus, and in manifold goodness and benefits thou hast tenderly cherished us; therefore by way of praising to thee specially we say, *Tu rex gloriae Christe*: ‘thou Christ art King of glory’, and not a king new begun as earthly kings, as mortal be in earth, but *Tu patris sempiternus es filius*: ‘thou art the everlasting Son of the Father’ that begat thee without beginning of time or ending. And also thou art the son of the maiden Mary, of her made man and born in a gracious time for us all. This great benefit was done of thee for no merit of angels, neither man, but only of thy great charity and benign gentleness that thou hadst towards us. Wherefore to open to us the virtue of thy love, *Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti virginis uterum*: ‘to deliver man from danger that he brought himself in, thou loathedst not the virgin’s womb’, to be closed in so little a place, whom before, heavens and earth might not hold; as Holy Church rehearseth in great commendation of thy mother Mary, saying: *Quem caeli capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti*. And in that manhood, Lord, after many passions, as hunger, cold, thirst, awaiting of death by Herod, in young age, another time at the hill, when they proposed to cast thee down, and so to have broken thy neck, another time to have slain thee with stones and many other perils, thou didst choose a death and a time according thereto, although it were most shameful, it were yet for us most necessary. And in that benign passion, *Tu, devicto mortis aculeo aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum*, the prick of death overcome and dissevering made between thy blissful soul and body, then at first thou openedst to

all peoples believing, the kingdom of heavens, that before was straitly shut; and after thy resurrection to present our nature with worship to thy Father, and from thence at end of the world, *Judex crederis esse venturus*: thou art believed to be a judge over us all. Glad may we be that the highest judge of the King's Bench in heaven is in our clothing, great homeliness may we have with him that keepeth so cleanly our king without corruption and is our advocate and shall be our judge. But yet I dread some-what, because the office of a justice is to be dreaded, and we oft have fouled and spotted our clothes, lest he should be highly grieved; therefore ere the time of judgment come, *Te ergo quaesumus famulis tuis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti*: We, thy servants, beseech thee to help us in our tribulations that with thy dear blood hath bought us, for in this world is short reward, in purgatory is sharp reward, in hell is cursed reward and desperate; And therefore, above all these places, *Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari*: ordain that our reward may be with thy saints in everlasting joy. And though we pray this generally, as the order of charity asketh, for all the people of the world, yet, good Lord, have a more special and merciful eye to Christian religion, as we cry and say, *Salvum fac populum tuum domine et benedic hereditati tuae*: Make thy people safe, for they come nearest to thine heritage of heaven, granting to it thy blessing and with thy foregoing grace. *Rege eos et extolle illos usque in aeternum*: govern them and extol them, till they may come to thee that yet be tarried with bodily sickness and worldly grievances, notwithstanding in their loves and desires, with joyful weepings they say to thee only, *Per singulos dies benedicimus te*: Lord 'by all days, we bless thee' whatsoever thou sendest to us, be it weal or woe, gladness or heaviness; with one intention *Laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi*, we praise thy name Jesu, at end of our prayer as heartily, as sharply as we did at the beginning. And because we ought every day to be ready for thy counsel and because our nature is feeble and weak and inclined much to sin, we pray thee, *Dignare domine die isto sine peccato nos custodire*. This day, that is, the last day, that we have awaited, to keep us from sin deadly, and specially sloth. And what keeping is it that we desire? whether it be earthly riches, continual health, favour of fleshly friendships?—nay Lord, nay, all this is false at need, but we desire thy mercy while we live. And therefore we say, *Miserere nostri Domine*, and thy mercy when we be

passed forth from this rotten body, saying eftsoons, *Miserere nostri*. And also thy mercy for all that be in pains of purgatory and long have abided thy mercies, in the name of whom we pray thee, as for their means, *Fiat misericordia tua domine super nos quemadmodum speravimus in te*, let thy mercy be made upon us as thy coming was for us, and as we trust verily in thee; and whoever hopeth best in thee or best doeth, thinketh or worketh for the love of thee, among them meekly, Lord, I set myself, and say with them, *In te Domine speravi*: 'in thee Lord I have hoped'. All this is in my own manner, and fain I would I could do better. But good Lord, there as I am insufficient, amend me, chastise me, scourge me here in this life so that, *non confundar in aeternum*: 'that I be not shamed nor lost without end'. Amen.

This little meditation, courteous Father almighty, vouchsafe to receive with a benign cheer, that I, simple and wretched creature offer to thy majesty, beseeching Lord, that as I have manfully asked thy mercy, that I may have that mercy, and make in me a meek spirit in thought, word and deed, that if heaviness come of any cause inward or outward, blessed Saviour, *Da nobis auxilium de tribulatione*, grant me help and strength for that tribulation, so that I may evermore turn again unto thee, rest in thee, desire every person's welfare for the worship of thee, so that all we as thy chosen children, with one will, may ever be ready to sing and say with heart and mouth, *Te Deum laudamus*. Amen.

—Ms. Bodl. 423, fol. 161. (C.K.)