

Egypt: may he redeem us from the yoke of sin. Already the light of his appearing—the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light⁴—is prefigured in the glow of the bush that burned but was not consumed, in the lightning of his hidden countenance on the mountain.

O Radix Jesse. 'O Root of Jesse, standing for an ensigu of the people,⁵ before whom kings are silent,⁶ and whom the nations implore: 'Come, deliver us and do not tarry!' The Son of David is coming into his temple. He is the flower, the Virgin Mother is the branch. And it is here that Isaias speaks of the seven gifts that rest upon him. There were seven days of creation: seven days now of waiting for the new creation, engraced with the seven gifts of his Holy Spirit. The world is still, looking to the birth that will bring re-birth to all creation.

O Clavis David. 'O Key of David and Sceptre of the House of Israel, opening where none may close, closing where none may open: Come, bring forth the prisoners from the prison-house where they sit in darkness and in the shadow of death'.⁸ Christ is the key who will unlock the new Temple that is his incarnation: the six-sided symbol which the Jews called the Key of David, God's buckler, is too the star that will shine over Bethlehem. The time of captivity is at an end: the labyrinth is opened and the way of redemption made plain. The Holy Child brings to their fulfilment all the types and shadows of the years of waiting.

O Oriens. 'O Day-spring,⁹ splendour of eternal light¹⁰ and Sun of Righteousness:¹¹ Come, enlighten those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death'. *Fiat lux!* The light of creation cleaves the chaos: now, 'Behold a Man, The Orient is his name'¹² as Zacharias had foretold. 'He shall build a temple to the Lord'; the temple of a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth filled with the light of his coming. So, too, another Zacharias will declare: 'Such is the merciful kindness of our God, which has bidden him come to us, like a dawning (Orient) from on high, to give light to those who live in darkness, in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace'.¹³

O Rex gentium. 'O King of the nations and their desire,¹⁴ O corner-stone making of twain one: Come, save man, created out of the dust'. He springs from the house of Israel, but he is Lord of all, the answer to the longing of unnumbered peoples hidden in the darkness of paganism, unchosen until now. He is the reconciler; 'He is our bond of peace', says St Paul, 'he has made the two nations one, breaking down the wall that was a barrier between us, the enmity there was between us, in his own mortal nature'.¹⁵ No one is exempt from the power of his coming: all men that ever were or ever shall be are established on the rock of his dominion.

4 Isai. ix. 2. 5 Isai. xi. 10. 6 Isai. lii. 15. 7 Apoc. iii. 7. 8 Isai. xlii. 7

9 Luke i. 78, 79. 10 Wisdom vii. 26. 11 Mal. iv. 2. 12 Zach. vi. 12.

13 Luke i. 78, 79. 14 Aggeus ii. 8. 15 Ephes. ii. 14, 15.

May all men ever more and more acknowledge his power, may they be built up as living temples from the corner-stone of his love.

O *Emmanuel*. 'O God-with-us, our King and our Law-giver, the Expectation and Salvation of all peoples:¹⁶ Come, save us, our Lord and our God'. The cycle is complete. He, the eternal Wisdom, the consummation of prophecy, the hope of all peoples, is coming to *dwell* amongst us. Not remotely, but intimately, in our own nature; for the Word is to become flesh, and henceforth 'we are limbs of his body; flesh and bone we belong to him'.¹⁷

So it is that we can echo the words of Moses and Aaron, 'In the evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you forth out of the land of Egypt',¹⁸ for here is the new deliverance. No longer from afar, in fear and trembling under the whip of the Law: near now, in our human nature, for 'he has been through every trial, fashioned as we are, only sinless. Let us come boldly, then, before the throne of grace, to meet with mercy, and win that grace which will help us in our needs'.¹⁹

The naming of Christ begins with Wisdom and ends with *Emmanuel*, his dwelling with and in us. He is the one Christ, eternal, the Messiah, the Lord. But at Bethlehem, in the crib, we see him bereft of power, helpless in the arms of his Mother. But here indeed is his majesty most plainly seen, his wisdom revealed, for

*Beatus Auctor saeculi
Servile corpus induit:
Ut carne carnem liberans,
Ne perderet quos condidit.*²⁰

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY NAME

BY

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CHRISTIAN worship began with the bestowal of a Name. It ends with the adoration of that Name. When the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mother what her little son should be called he started a devotion that has run like a red thread through all the worship of the Church and seems destined to last while time shall last and till time shall be no more. One surmises if among the things the wondering shepherds and the adoring magi asked was the name by which he should be called, and if the Virgin Mother in her graciousness entrusted to them that high secret which they carried so joyously back with them as they returned to their own fields or their own country by another way. Anyway, eight days after he was

¹⁶ Gen. xlix. 10. ¹⁷ Ephes. v. 30. ¹⁸ Exod. xvi. 6. ¹⁹ Hebr. iv. 15, 16.

²⁰ 'The blessed Creator of the world assumed the body of a servant, so that, redeeming flesh through his own flesh, he might not lose those whom he created'. (From Lauds hymn for Christmastide.)