

## Preview

Melanchthon After Luther:

From Mouthpiece for The Reformation to Praeceptor of All Germany

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### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

#### The Michaelmas Episode

This is a lark. Consider this another break from all the high octane theorizing about rhetoric and dialectic. And it is prompted by an inquiry from Melanchthon's granddaughter, Martha, about a hymn he wrote ("[Herr Gott, Dich loben alle wir](#)") which she considers "the most beautiful thing I've ever heard." He quickly demurs, then recounts for all at table the most beautiful thing *he's* ever experienced: A "magical" vespers, in Tübingen, where he visited a few months prior, during Advent, and heard a plainchant ensemble from Serbia that moved him beyond words. Why this interlude? Why now? As I wrote, I started listening to a lot of Serbian plainchant and fell in love with it! It is the most melodic, beautiful, angelic liturgical music I can imagine. As I researched it, I found out that there was in fact, because of an Ottoman invasion, a number of Serbian refugees who relocated to Slovenian lands. This chapter highlights the more imaginative aspect of the proposed work. It is not all heavy lifting and getting down in the weeds (it does not aspire to be a scholarly tome). Hence, there are myriad imaginative threads woven into the fabric of this tapestry, er, book.

Philipp and Katharina Melancthon are at table, hosting their usual handful of students, least of whom among them is yours truly, Martin Chemnitz. I have been living in Melanchthonhaus since the beginning of this school term, hoping to earn a place on the faculty of literary studies. Granddaughters, Martha and Sabina, are dining with us this evening (Anna and Katharena were invited to make plans for the upcoming Weihnachtsmarkt that would launch in a month's time. The youth of Saint Mary's purposed to raise money for the Community Chest by selling knitted scarves and caps. Young Albert was playing ball with his friend Johann, across the way and down three doors. Following adventures in the nearby orchard and a game of kickball, he had gotten himself invited for supper.) Joining us this blustery evening we find Philipp's stalwart friend, Joachim Camerarius and their mutual acquaintance, Paul Eber, who were passing through Wittenberg, on the Sunday before Reformation and had only just decided to tarry in Wittenberg until Reformation Sunday. Magister intended to have them guest lecture in his homiletics class. "Let us pray." All heads are bowed, hands folded.

O almighty, merciful God, gracious Heavenly Father, Thou hast once again protected me this night by Thy Holy Angels. For blessed rest and divine protection I give Thee thanks and praise. Let all my doings this day be pleasing to Thee, and for the sake of Thy Beloved Son, forgive me all my sins. Govern by Thy Holy Spirit all my efforts, heart, soul, mind, and strength. May all my words and works this day be well pleasing to Thee. As I teach my dear students, grant O Lord that I may glorify Thee and walk uprightly before Thee. May I also walk as light in this dark, evil, and perverted world. I yearn and long for that heavenly home Thou hast, being forgiven my sins, prepared for me; a mansion purchased and won for me by Christ my Savior. Help me, keep me, save me, O Blessed Lord. Bless and save my children and grandchildren. We thank Thee for Thy bountiful goodness, especially do we give thanks for the meal, and O Lord, Give us neither poverty nor riches; feed us with the food that is our portion, lest we be full and deny You and say, "Who is Yahweh?" or lest we be impoverished and steal, profaning the Name of God. +Amen+

Foremost on all their minds was the passing, just one year ago, of their erstwhile friend and lawyer, Justus Jonas.<sup>1</sup> "Ach," Brother Joachim looked at the floor and shook his head, "first his son drowns in the Saale and then his little Käthe dies in childbirth, then his Magdalena!" Camerarius asked, "How can one even support 13 children on a pastor's salary?" It was a legitimate, if not untimely, question. No one ventured an answer. We all just took a moment to remember him and pray for his loved ones. "Perhaps," I ventured, "something can be done? Is there any extra in the Community Chest?" We all looked at each other, continued eating our stew and answered my query with an awkward silence. "Maybe the parish at Halle would do something? or Coburg?" It had been a tough, drought-plagued harvest. Money was tight; troubles abounded. Someone mentioned what a blessing it was that that the new Geneva Psalter included Melancthon's hymn, "Lord God, We all to Thee Give Praise."

"Opa," young Martha asked, "we sang your hymn for Michael and All Angels, yes?" "Yes, my dear." Martha's big brown eyes lit up and her cheeks flushed somewhat for the realization she had commanded the floor without intending to. That was fine, as I mentioned: Things had gotten awkward. "Opa, when we speak of 'angels and archangels and all the company of heaven' what does this mean? In our Michaelmas devotion we pray God appoints his angels to 'help and defend us here on earth' even as they serve and

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will find here a very helpful biographical sketch of Jonas Justus:  
<https://reformation500.csl.edu/justus-jonas/>

worship our Father in Heaven. What does this mean? How do they serve and defend us? Could they not have defended brother Jonas from the evil that befell his family?"

"Martha, these are most excellent questions, and quite profound. I will do my best to answer." In all grandfatherly pride, patience, and care, Magister Melanchthon gathered his thoughts and replied, "Let us begin by considering the office and work of Michael. What sort of angel is Michael?" "An Archangel," Martha shot back. This much she knew. Quickly came her follow up: "So, what is an 'Archangel'?" "Well, dear heart, in the 'company of heaven' there are ranks of angels, correct?" "Yes. This much is clear." "Archangels are of the highest rank, as their title implies. Michael is mentioned in *Daniel* 12, where he is portrayed as the commander of the heavenly forces that protect Israel from the evil foes. In *Revelation* Michael and his cohort do battle with Lucifer and his evil minions, driving them from heaven. Yes?" "Yes, I remember the story. But Evil was not defeated entirely in that battle, was it?" "No, not at all. As we all know, King Jesus, when he shed his blood on the Cross at Calvary, defeated, once for all, sin, death, and the devil." "So, grandfather, why did the angels, er, uh . . . why did they have to do battle in the first place?" "Ach, I see you have an appetite this evening for more than bread and meat! Meine Liebs chon, if we are to mine the depths of scripture so deeply, I think a preliminary meditation will serve us well; put us in a frame of mind to receive more powerfully what riches God has in store. Let us recite, responsively, by half verse, *Psalms* 19: 7-14." "From memory, Opa?" she flushed a second time (one suspects, both from apprehension and from anticipation!) now her brown eyes were filled with both, her brow furrowed and her mouth agape. Magister said nothing, but rather lowered his head and looked her in the eye, with an ever-so-slight smile. His confidence in her shone clearly. He began; she did the response.

<sup>7</sup> **The law of the Lord is perfect**, converting the soul:

**the testimony of the Lord is sure**, making wise the simple.

**<sup>8</sup> The statutes of the Lord are right**, rejoicing the heart:  
**the commandment of the Lord is pure**, enlightening the eyes.

**<sup>9</sup> The fear of the Lord is clean**, enduring for ever:  
**the judgments of the Lord are true** and righteous altogether.

"Together now!"

**<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:**  
**sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.**

"Call and response"

**<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is thy servant warned:** and in keeping of them there is great reward.

**<sup>12</sup> Who can understand his errors?** cleanse thou me from secret faults.

**<sup>13</sup> Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;** let them not have dominion over me:  
**then shall I be upright**, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

"And together we conclude"

**<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.**

We all applauded, for the benefit of the girl's satisfaction in her piety. "Yes, Martha, well done. Please note, how God's Holy Word gives us strength to resist sin and, as you just stated, *the Lord* is our strength and redeemer." "Yes, I see. So how do the angels also protect from sin and every evil?" Magister hesitated, calculating, I should think, whether or not to take the obvious turn, at the expense of seeming self-indulgent or even self-promoting. He apparently decided, given present company, it was safe to proceed, despite the risk. (He was increasingly resolute in his desire to "become nothing," as he put it; to avoid elevating himself, even at his own table . . . even in the eyes of his own grandchildren.) "The hymn I wrote, that you mentioned at the outset, the one they included in the 1551 edition of Geneva's Psalter . . ." "You know, Brother Justice's response to my little hymn was very enthusiastic! In fact, he was the first to incorporate it into the Michaelmas festival over in Halle." "Oh! That is a wonderful story!" Brother Camerarius mentioned how welcomed and lovely were the stew and brotchen and cheese, and nodded toward his stein, indicating he'd like a second helping of Katie Luther's beer. Catharina got up, took the mug, and walked over to the scullery muttering to herself, more-or-less, "There's no accounting for taste, I guess." All smirked at each

other. Some things never change!<sup>2</sup> Now Martha, rather sheepishly redirected, “Opa, I’ve been thinking a lot about Angels and Archangels and the Host of Heaven and Spiritual battles. What are Archangels and how do they differ from regular Angels and are the spiritual battles literal or figurative? If we are ‘delivered from the evil one’ and we have myriad angels protecting us, how can evil befall us, still?”

“Well I should think, Dear Heart, that my own composition, that I derived from the Latin when you were not yet ten years old? “You remember when I worked on that, no?” “Oh, yes, Opa! I think that hymn is wonderful, but I must confess, I never really understood the imagery, nor the severity of the battle it depicted! I think I approached it more as an exercise in Latin translation than anything else. Perhaps as an appropriate addition to our Michaelmas celebration . . . but I was thinking as a school girl. Now I have more questions, and of a different sort.”

“And well you should, dear one,” replied Oma, glancing at Opa in deference.” “Well, Martha, that hymn is designed to answer precisely the sorts of questions you raise tonight: What role do angels play in the struggle believers face regarding evil and temptation? And I am delighted you ask these questions! It is very natural for a young lady your age to be wondering about how she might achieve victory over such evils and temptations! To remain chaste and pure.” Magister tapped the tip of his nose with the tip of his pointer finger, indicating that he was considering how best to treat the topic, again, without engaging in self-aggrandizement. “My darling girl, why don’t we continue in the same vein as before: You recite it for our guests and I will elaborate its meaning by way of answering your question about angels. This could be fun! You go through the hymn a verse at a time, I will provide commentary. She began in her best schoolgirl recitation, sing/song voice --<sup>3</sup>

“Lord God, we all to thee give praise, Thanksgivings meet to Thee we raise,

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<sup>2</sup> Katie Luther and Catharina Melancthon apparently had issues; didn't get along.

<sup>3</sup> The tune is the very familiar "Common Doxology"!

That angel hosts Thou didst create around Thy glorious throne to wait.”

“Well begun!” exclaimed the proud Opa. “No real mystery here. Yes?” “No, Opa. Quite clear . . .”

They shine with light and heavenly grace and constantly behold Thy face;

They heed Thy voice, they know it well, in godly wisdom they excel.

“Continue, please”. . .

They never rest nor sleep as we; Their whole delight is but to be

with Thee, Lord Jesus, and to keep Thy little flock, Thy lambs and sheep.

“So, Martha, you see, the first charge of the angels who ‘wait at the throne of God, for orders regarding the protection of God’s flock, His lambs, is to be vigilant. Go on . . .”

The ancient Dragon is their foe; His envy and his wrath they know.

It always is his aim and pride Thy Christian people to divide.

“I amplify here, for the equipping of God’s people, how the Evil One seeks first and foremost to divide us!

This is increasingly important to me, I might add, given how many divisions have arisen in our midst in these last days.”

“Yes indeed!” exclaimed Camerarius, “the more your poor Opa labors, the more divisions arise among the Reformers. Sad, sad goes on.” Martha glanced at her grandfather, grasping for the first time a measure of the weight with which her Opa had to deal on a daily basis. Magister nodded that she continue. Martha took a breath, closed her eyes, and recited the next line.

As he of old deceived the world and into sin and death has hurled,

so now he subtly lies in wait to ruin school and Church and State.

“Surely this is clear?”

“Yes, Opa. This is why he is referred to as ‘the god of this world.’”

“Indeed.”

“But why would God allow it?”

“The answer to that question requires much more time and thought than would be prudent to attempt at this meal. Good manners dictate that we attend to the *gemütlichkeit*.<sup>4</sup> But I will take a moment to answer, in a preliminary way, that God’s ways are not our ways; they are higher than our poor ability to understand. However, if you think about it, we would not know goodness if there were no evil in the world by which to understand The Good. And, besides, the battle for our souls is clearly elucidated in God’s Word, and suffice it to say that He appoints his Holy Angels to protect us from all harm and danger, in partial fulfillment of his Fatherly Divine Goodness and Mercy.”

“I understand.”

A roaring lion, round he goes, no halt nor rest he ever knows;  
He seeks the Christians to devour and slay them by his dreadful power.

“Now this is, if I am correct, where your central question lies: Namely, can the Evil One do the Christian actual harm? If God protects us, how can the Devil do us harm?” “Yes, Opa. That is it, indeed. When Brother Henry was killed in the lowlands, when he set out to bring the Gospel to that land, and was murdered for his troubles . . .”

“Oh, my dear, it is no easy task, understanding the mysterious ways of God. It is true, we are protected from all evil. But sometimes, as the scripture says, a grain of corn must die within the ground before it bears fruit. We are to take up our cross daily and follow him. Christ suffered and was murdered first, but then He

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<sup>4</sup> A splendid German word that doesn't translate conveniently into a single English word, but indicates, a deeply cultural combination of coziness, warm welcoming, social acceptance based on common communion, and peace of mind.

rose from the dead and is now the firstfruits of the resurrection, for poor brother Henry, but also for us all. Yes, the way of the cross is a way of death. But God resurrected Jesus, and we too will raise to eternal life." Martha paused to ponder, but only very briefly. She would return to meditate on these words as she fell asleep, very soon. She concluded.

But watchful is the angel band that follows Christ on every hand  
to guard His people where they go and break the counsel of the Foe.  
For this, now and in days to be, our praise shall rise, O Lord, to Thee,  
Whom all the angel hosts adore with grateful songs forevermore.

Sensing, perhaps, that things might just get too "heavy" for dinnertime conversation, Doctor Eber, discreetly walked over to his satchel, hanging on the hook near the hearth, and removed a single sheet of parchment. As she finished, with no little sense of ceremony, he recounted for Martha's benefit how he had been moved, a couple years back, to translate her grandfather's Latin poem into German, naming it, "Herr Gott, Dich loben alle wir."<sup>5</sup> "Thank you so much!" she replied, giving voice to her appreciation. "I think this is the most lovely hymn there is . . . or *ever can be!*"

"I am so flattered and pleased, Martha," said Magister, giving her a little hug, "that you appreciate those humble verses of mine," patting her on the shoulder. "But I must say, not long ago, when I visited Tübingen, I heard a work of wonder, infinitely more beautiful and praiseworthy than my composition." "I don't see how it is possible!" Magister blushed a little, but soldiered on . . .

"Do you remember how, on my return from Tübingen, how glowingly I spoke of the vesper service in the cathedral there? I think this may be a great time to tell you all about it. It was quite something!"

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<sup>5</sup> [Herr Gott, Dich loben alle wir](#) is the German name given to the Hymn (in 1554). That title is a link to the page where the history of the hymn is published at [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org). include it in the footnote.

## A Magical Vespers

"Primoz Trubar is a *giant* of a man, from Slovenia. You're familiar with Trubar, no?" All the brothers nodded but said nothing. Clearly, Magister's tone, and the hushed yet intense timbre of his voice indicated we were in for a most excellent story; nobody wished to disturb the moment. "He is also a giant in God's Kingdom for the way he works tirelessly, spreading the gospel throughout Slovenia. We have many brothers in Slovenia who confess Luther on salvation through faith alone, by grace alone, from scripture alone.<sup>6</sup> Anyway, the Turks ravaged some Serbians who escaped with their lives to Novo Mesto ("New Town" he explained) in Slovenia. Those displaced Christians first took refuge in Sevnica Castle, in the famous Lutheran Cellar there, in fact, then were moved not far down the road to Novo Mesto and were touring with Brother Primoz to raise monies to help build a proper church back in Sevnica. They have a very interesting and heartwarming story. In fact, I'm sure they would have many a story to tell, Martha, about the intervention of angels on their behalf . . . but also, on the other hand, tails of woe at the hand of the Turk. They had a hard life, but in the tribulation, God is faithful!

Anyway, this band of Serbs and Slovenians came to spend Christmas and Epiphany in Tübingen to strengthen ties with us, to make Germany aware of what God is doing in Slovenia, and to raise support for their church building project. It is their "Great Vespers" that I must describe to you. It was so beautiful, moving, and transported one so effectually to the heavenly realms, describing its affect may be difficult. There are only so many words one can muster when describing such an encounter with the heavenly realm. But I always enjoy the attempt at putting into words the ineffable!<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to "Lutherans in Slovenia," Primoz Trubar was the key Reformation figure in Slovenia at Melanchthon's time. (Born in 1508) He was a big man (6'4") He was very prolific and worked to standardize Slovenian language for dissemination of the Gospel. The Serbian Orthodox church experienced a diaspora in 1540 because the Ottoman Empire over ran them. (Interesting note: Melania Trump was born in Novo Mesto and raised in Sevnica.)

<sup>7</sup> There is no historical record of such a happening, but it seems quite plausible, to this author at least, given the historical facts of the Serbian diaspora to Slovenia.

As I understand it, the Serbian chant form relies heavily on the use of the Dorian mode, which is neither too bright nor too dark. And the Dorian scale, with its slightly flattened seventh note, gives the melody a sense of openness and humility. The very repetition of the phrase "Lord, have mercy" pulsed like a heartbeat, a continuous prayer that rises and falls like waves on an eternal sea. Ach! Their melodic purity, united in heavenly harmony, is at once an expression of deep yearning and of complete surrender. The juxtaposition of soprano call and alto response is an invention in keeping with the angelic timbre of the phrasing. And the droning of the Tenor and Bass . . . ." Magister got lost in the recollection of the heavenly experience.

"I think perhaps its beauty lies in the combination of its 8-note modal structure, along with a carefully constructed juxtaposition of a deep, resonant sound from the male voices and the mellifluous staccato counterpoints of the soprano lead (which at strategic moments, creating a divine crescendo, is accompanied by an alto voice weaving harmonies that waft amongst the lower and upper notes like so much incense.) It has a uniquely other-worldly and meditative quality. Like no other liturgy I have encountered, it draws me into a sense of quiet reverence and peaceful reflection. It was so transcendent I had to look down at my pew to make sure I wasn't levitating!! Ha! (Looking around, and realizing he may have gotten too technical too soon, he pivoted to a more analogical mode, utilizing imagery to move rather than instruct.)

"It was just before twilight, a sliver of amber flame illumined the chapel windows, filling the sanctuary with light of the most heavenly hues imaginable; blue, red, gold and violet, gliding from pillars to transept, to altar and disappearing as pillars of smoke wafted heavenward, conjuring memories of stories from the wilderness journey. Smoke from the altar candles mingled with that of incense. There was a holy hush. No one spoke. Rather, we all knelt and prayed silently, confessing before God; waiting. The Serbian Kantorei of Sevnica/Novo Mesto initiated a meditation, in keeping with the "holy hush," very quietly, then

building. It was a chant with call and response about God being with us.<sup>8</sup> It was a sort of proclamation. Then the bishop stepped up to the lectern commenced the office of vespers. The Words of Institution, (Opa punctuated each division of the liturgy, then gave a strategic pause so we could all picture the happening in our mind's eye,) the Agnus Dei, then the Sacrament of the Altar. The plain chant of the Serbian Ladychoir of Sevnica Castle moves me now, (he ran his hand over the raised hairs on his arm to underscore his being moved by the recollection,) even to recollect such heavenly pleasure on earth . . . and the music moved me . . . nay, transported me. During the course of this exquisite three-hour service I heard The Magi: Kings of Persia, Aposticha, prior to communion, from The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostum, "The Hymn of the Cherubim," Kyrie Eleison and Angus Dei! Then, while we approached The Lord's Table (at which time they sang, a capella, in most exquisite and sublime harmony, "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent" all woven into The Great Vespers, the experience concluded with a Great Doxology which actually bled into a Serbian piece entitled "S Nami Bog" ("God is with us.") Serving as a benediction, that piece was constituted of a singular, tubular bell-tone, droning, one beat per measure, interwoven with a single alto and soprano duet like a fine Spanish silver brocade; pure, unadorned yet still sublime. Nobody spoke for some time. We departed in silence because to denigrate the proceedings with the ugliness of language from this sphere would have seemed like an impiety.<sup>9</sup>

"So we just moved clumsily into the crisp evening, regaining our balance, our equilibrium, grounded as it is in this space and time. The narthex served, it seemed, as a virtual portal to the physical world. Conversation returned, after a bit, but only after a contemplative and solemn few steps, suggested intuitively by the profundity of the occasion. Even then, the conversation amounted to no more than marginally cogent, effusive praise for what had just taken place. Hildegard's *Symphonia*, with its rich blend

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<sup>8</sup> This description is inspired by "S Nami Bog" by Divna Ljubojevic and Melodi.

<sup>9</sup> I'd never seen Magister get quite so worked up! I guess explaining the ineffable trumps gemütlichkeit.

of antiphon and plainchant was brought up by brother Magnus. I responded, only partly in jest as I recall, 'if only we'd been gifted with the lingua ignota!<sup>10</sup> Heh! Heh, heh . . . Then perhaps we could adequately describe its beauty; its divinity . . .'" Becoming rather too animated, Magister stood, hands raised heavenward, eyes closed, head wagging side to side, whether for rhetorical effect or in actual ecstasy, I could not tell, he spoke, barely audible, 'Thus we savored the beauty and grandeur of that magical vespers service!"

"Opa! Opa!"

Martha had to bring her Opa back down to terra firma (Oma may have even nudged him a little, under the table.) "May we have dessert now? I've cleaned my plate!" Oma answered, and was already cutting the pear tart she had cooling on the window sill, "Yes, meine liebchen!" Oma set the warm and delicious tart before Opa and one in front of Martha. She said as she glided between counters and drawers and guests, delivering plates of pear tart with forks, wresting control from Opa (in keeping with her vocation, of course,) in a firm but not stern voice, more by way of reminder than rebuke, "When we're finished, we need to wash up and get ready for prayers. We have a big day at school tomorrow. Anna, could you go fetch your brother. He won't be happy if he misses out on this tart!" "Yes'm."

Opa caught himself (or rather, caught a whiff of the tart!) and dropped cold his fanciful recollection! Shushing ever so slightly he bowed his head, folded his hands and said, "Let us pray."

Lord God, Heavenly Father, for these gifts which we have received from Thy bountiful goodness, we give Thee thanks and pray that they nourish us for service to our neighbor. Give us neither poverty nor riches; feed us with the food that is our portion, lest we be full

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<sup>10</sup> An "unknown language" Hildegard invented and documented while having visions. (See Higley, [2007], pp. 21 & 2.

and deny You and say, 'Who is Yahweh?' or lest we be impoverished and steal, profaning the Name of our God. Amen.

"Can one of you little Christians tell me where in scripture we find those last lines of the prayer?"

"Opa, it is from the Proverb for today! Proverb 30!" "Yes, Jakob! Well done!" Jakob had lunged in the door, just in time to pray, not realizing they had company. Anna hadn't said anything about company. Oma just looked over at the basin on the counter, with the wash water. Jakob got the message, headed for the basin and tucked in his shirt and straightened his thick brown hair, as Magister exclaimed, "Let's eat!"

### **After the "Michaelmas Episode"**

That evening, after Oma and the children were all fast asleep, shortly after midnight, Philipp was awakened by a sound. He immediately recognized the steady, heavenly, muted, distant thrum of the Agnus Dei he'd experienced in the magical vespers at Tübingen<sup>11</sup> The enchanting, mellifluous, modal harmony with its single, syncopated tubular bell percussion, blending angelic strains of droning instrumentation and solo soprano virtuosity were soooo captivating. Yessss. He remembered it now. He was transported right back to the Magical Vespers. He savored it. Now wide awake, he could no longer remain in bed. He crept downstairs, quietly as he could, stoked the fire, put the tea kettle on and took up his pen and paper. He would wait upon the Lord. He would meditate on beauty, truth, and goodness. This Agnus Dei would be the vehicle by which he would access . . . "Those Serbian chant tones are other worldly," he thought. "Nay, 'other worldly' cannot begin to describe their beauty. I love them so much," he thought, pondered, waited. The fire was by now licking the top of the scullery fireplace, sending his shadow dancing behind and above him, like David dancing before the Lord. He poured his tea, sipped pensively, and remembered some more,

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<sup>11</sup> This paragraph was inspired by The Trio Mediæval's "A Worcester Ladymass: Agnus Dei" on Pandora, accessed very early morning 10 Sept 25.

meditating on his love for the Serbian chant that had so moved his soul. The lady choir quietly, deliberately elongating and stressing each multiplied syllable, reverently chanting "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem." (Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.) He could somehow smell the incense, in his mind's eye; wafting heavenward past the beautiful stained glass and the black and gilt-trimmed altar; the filigreed statuary and fixtures. The smoke disappeared into the darkness, far above the candlelight, through some portal to the heavenlies. Philipp lay down his writing instrument; transfixed. "I surmise that it is the drone modality that imitates the music of the spheres." This most certainly has something to do with the transporting of the soul to the heavenly realms, he thought. He pondered this hypothesis for a long minute.

"Thank you, O God, for Your profound love. You loved us so that you sent your only begotten son, though we deserved wrath, death, and hellfire. Make me worthy of that love, O Heavenly Father. Yea, let me participate in that love, to the extent my frail and sinful personage can handle it. I know you are the Giver of all good gifts, so I pray Thee, allow me to taste a portion of that great love. Give me a portion of the bliss experienced by Hildegard! Please, O Lord, let me participate in the divine somehow, without making it an idol."

Hmmm . . . this last thought was jarring. He sipped slowly and allowed the *nous*<sup>12</sup> now circulating in his soul (lulled as it was by the combined hypnotic effects of the deep sense of satisfaction derived from the

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<sup>12</sup> *Nous* (intuition) the reader will recall, is one of five intellectual virtues referred to in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and also *Nicomachean Ethics*. When one has "tapped" the source of knowledge, inspiration, "The Muses," the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one can, loosely speaking, be said to have participated in *nous*. (Plato even suggests, in his *Phaedrus*, that such an experience is marked by speaking in dithyrambs!) My mentor, John Angus Campbell, used to celebrate, after an exceptionally satisfying and fruitful grad seminar, when "revealed wisdom" seemed to flow freely, that we had partaken of "The Nous." I asked once what he meant and he replied, with a distant look in his electric blue/gray eyes, head cocked to the right, eyebrows raised, brow furrowed, that his students will remember well, that divine wisdom, granted by the Holy Ghost, by means of a well-educated, but also, sanctified intellect and imagination, manifested in the vocation of *the*

events of the day, the late hour, the crackling, magical light emanating from the fireplace, the memory and imagination focused so as to amplify the effect of being transported back to that cathedral in Tübingen. This, he realized from long experience, was the way to access the Divine Mind, and he was doing his best to heed the call heavenward . . . waiting quietly, meditating on what crumbs were given, without overthinking. It was a balancing act.

Suddenly, he was gripped by the idea that our human loves become idols when we mistake them for what they are; we conflate them with those loves whose satisfaction is found in God alone. Natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so, but can become . . . can become forms of . . . hatred.<sup>13</sup> He jotted down the thought. Committed, out of thankfulness for the insight, and out of responsibility to the Truth, to mull over, formulate coherent theses, inferences, and conclusions, complete, then teach to his students, the notion that Natural loves transform into hatred and demonic perversions, when not brought to the altar of the Creator's Love that jealously demands first place in the hearts of all creatures. Yes, he loves liturgy, and chant song, and the experience, itself, of being moved in his soul by what enters through the ear. But it must not be made an idol. Loving these inventions from the human experience, heavenly as they are, can result in making them a worship, in and of themselves. Just like the love between husband and wife. To love that experience, apart from the parameters imposed by God's Law and the virtue derived therefrom, it becomes . . . Yes. This is a good distinction; true, abiding, salutary. I shall have to cogitate on th . . . he yawned and smacked his lips, taking a deep breath. Turning, he saw the over stuffed chair in the corner, plopped down, pulled the quilt over himself, realizing it would be better to catnap here, avoiding the creaking stairway back up to Oma, then get up in an hour or two and

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*teacher*. His point being, sometimes learning just "clicks," insights combine with book learning in synergistic waves of, well, *nous*. You know those times? Times when one is "visited by wisdom" as you wait in quietude, perhaps sipping tea in front of a crackling fire.

<sup>13</sup> The author borrowed this thought from C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves*, pp. 152-55.

check back in with the Holy Spirit to see if there are any further insights to be gleaned. "Let all mortal flesh keep silence . . ." Philipp's barely conscious mind drifted back to "King of Kings yet born of Mary . . ." He would then prepare his notes for lecture first thing in the morning, maybe spend a few moments on that manuscr . . . His own self for Heavenly food." Just before his heavy eyelids closed, from his peripheral vision, he spied that confounded mouse sauntering along the far wall. He hadn't even bothered to scurry! His beady-black, gleaming eyes had a glint of mockery in them. He'll get hisszzzzz . . . (gentle snoring)