

In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Quanto gaudio ac quali laetitia uos hodie cantare audio, fratres et sorores carissimi, quia duos hymnos a Peripatetico Palatino nostro saeculo duodecimo scriptos et a me nuper e codicibus collatos magna cum pietate magna cum pulchritudine modulamur. Quos hymnos, Heloissa abbatissa rogante, composuit Abaelardus non solum ad maiorem Dei gloriam sed etiam ad docendas ac instituendas sorores sanctissimae professionis in abbatia Paraclitensi. Enimuero Heloissa – quondam in saeculo Abaelardo cara, postea in Christo carissima – hunc magistrum doctissimum hortabatur ut hymnos et sermones et expositiones Sanctae Scripturae, uidelicet ἐξήγησιν quandam in librum Geneseos, necnon alia opera in usum sororum componeret; sed tamen, cum hi ipsi fetus Musarum usque ad tempora nostra sub Doctoris Scholastici nomine sint transmissi, non mihi dubium est quin Heloissa, femina clarissima atque omnibus rebus doctissima, cum eo laetans collaboraret et, per litteras saltem, disputando ac colloquendo eum de rebus tam diuiniorebus quam humanioribus sententias cogitationesque formantem ac fingentem adiuuaret.

In illo hymno, quem primum hodie cantamus, audimus filios et filias Dei incitari ad parandum thalamum et Sponsum salutandum quod adueniat ut Ecclesiam in matrimonium ducat. Apud dilectissimas

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With what great joy and with what gladness do I today hear you singing, my dear brothers and sisters, since we intone with great piety and beauty two hymns written in the twelfth century by the Peripatetic from Le Pallet [= Peter Abelard] that I have recently collated from the manuscripts. At the request of the abbess Heloise, Abelard wrote these hymns not only to the greater glory of God, but also for the teaching and instruction of the sisters of the Abbey of the Paraclete who had taken the veil. Indeed, Heloise – once among the laity dear to Abelard, later dearest to him in Christ – frequently urged this learned master to compose hymns, sermons, and treatises on the Holy Scriptures – in particular, his *Hexameron* – as well as other works for the use of her sisters. Yet, though these very fruits of the Muses have been transmitted to us under the name of *Doctor Scholasticus* [= Abelard], I have no doubt that Heloise, the brightest of women and learned in all things, took delight in collaborating with him and helped him – via an exchange of letters at the very least – to shape and to form his thoughts and opinions on affairs spiritual and temporal by argumentation and colloquy.

In the first hymn that we sing today, we hear of the sons and daughters of God being roused to prepare the bridal chamber and to greet the Bridegroom, since he comes to take the Church in marriage. For Heloise's beloved sisters, however, since each has already married

Heloissae sorores, autem, quia quaeque Christo iam nupsit, occasio potius fiebat in annuo festo Hypapanti ut quaeque soror conubium suum recordaretur et admoneretur ne instantis aduentus cum resurrectione iustorum obliuisceretur. Nempe scriptum est: *Vigilate itaque, quia nescitis diem, neque horam* [Matt. 25.13]. Abaelardus uero noster Heloissam sororesque appellat prudentes uirgines, quae secundum Matthaeum Dominum diligenter et assidue praestolentur, et eas hortatur – non solum in hoc festo sed etiam nocte dieque – ut, lampadibus aptatis, cum iubilo properare et Domino obuiam ire parent. Et pulchre et sapienter hoc dictum est, sed quanta est nobis, qui in academia una uersamur, significantia?

Nobis profecto colenda est sapientia, quae *fortiter et suauiter disponit omnia et nos docet uiam prudentiae* [cf. antiphon, 17 Dec.], ac, *qua pote quisque, in ea conterit arte diem* [cf. Propertius 2.1.46] ut dinoscendo speculando perscrutando mores opiniones et instituta hominum ac rationes causasque rerum naturalium subtilius comprehendamus et cognoscamus. Praeterea adulescentes etiam magno cum studio nobis instituendi ac conformandi sunt. Quibus rebus, ut mihi uidetur, a nobis diligenter ac perspicaciter insistitur; uix uero quisquam possit queri uim et uigorem discendi aut docendi Oxoniensibus deesse. Sed tamen, quae cum ita sint, ea, ut breuiter

Christ by taking the veil, it is rather the case that the annual celebration of Candlemas provides an opportunity for each sister to recall her own marriage to Christ and to be reminded not to forget the imminence of the Second Coming and the resurrection of the righteous. Assuredly is it written: *Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour* [Matt. 25.13]. Indeed, Abelard refers to Heloise and her sisters as wise virgins of the sort who, according to Matthew, carefully and attentively await the Lord, and he encourages them – not only on this feast-day, but constantly – that they might be ready joyously to hasten to meet the Lord. And well and wisely does he say so, but what is the relevance of this to those of us in the academy?

Assuredly we are occupied with the cultivation of wisdom, which *mightily and sweetly orders all things and teaches us the way of prudence* [cf. antiphon, 17 Dec.], and *each of us occupies our days with the skill in which we are able* [cf. Propertius 2.1.46] in order that we may more precisely grasp and understand the customs, views, and habits of humanity and the reasons and causes of the natural world through discernment, observation, and examination. Besides these things, young people too are taught and educated by us with considerable zeal. As it seems to me, these tasks are undertaken by us with care and perspicacity; indeed, there is scarce anyone who can complain that vitality and rigour are wanting from the teaching and learning that takes place at Oxford. Yet, though the state of affairs is such, these undertakings are not, to put it briefly, sufficient. *You are*

exponam, non sufficiunt. *Vos estis sal terrae; uos estis lux mundi: non accendunt lucernam et ponunt eam sub modio, sed super candelabrum, ut luceat omnibus. Sic luceat lux uestra coram hominibus, ut uideant opera uestra bona et glorificent Patrem uestrum qui in caelis est* [Matt. 5.13–16]. Vt prudentes uirgines non solum lampades aptauere sed etiam *oleum in uasis cum lampadibus* acceperere et condidere [Matt. 25.4], sic nos prudentiam doctrinam ac rectitudinem paramus, et, quamquam hodie non Domino occurrimus, cotidie moliri debemus populum eius illuminare cum splendore luminis sapientiae, uidelicet Verbi, quod est *lux uera quae illuminat omnem hominem uenientem in hunc mundum* [John 1.9].

Fortasse credimus illi indefatigabili indagatori rerum naturalium qui nos uersibus perlucidis admonet:

nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere  
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,  
despicere unde queas alios passimque uidere  
errare atque uiam palantis quaerere uitae,  
certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,  
noctes atque dies niti praestante labore  
ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.

[Lucr. *De rerum natura* 2.7–13]

*the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world: no one lights a lamp and places it under the bushel basket but on the lampstand that it may give light to all. In the same way, let your light shine before mankind, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven* [Matt. 5.13–16]. As the wise virgins not only prepared their lamps, but took and stored up *flasks of oil with their lamps* [Matt. 25.4], so we make ready with discretion, learning and rectitude, and, though we do not this day rush out to meet the Lord, we ought every day to strive to illumine his people with the bright light of wisdom, that is of the Word, which is *the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world* [John 1.9].

Perhaps we believe that tireless investigator of the natural world who advises us with pellucid verse:

Nothing is sweeter than to inhabit the lofty precincts  
serene, well-fortified by the teachings of the wise,  
from where one is able to look down toward others and to see  
them everywhere straying and wandering about looking for life's path,  
vying with their talents and striving in their precedence,  
struggling day and night with surpassing toil  
to reach the height of wealth and to gain power.

[Lucr. *De rerum natura* 2.7–13]

Num uelimus sapientiam ac doctrinam colere ut eae nobismet ipsis solis discipulisque nostris prosint? Immo uero sumus commilitones sanctae matris ecclesiae hic in terra militantis: *induamur igitur arma lucis*, ut dicit Apostolus [Rom. 13.12] *quia est nobis colluctatio aduersus principes et potestates, aduersus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum* [Ephes. 6.12]. Enimuero inter eos qui potestatem gerunt in rebus tam publicis quam priuatis, in causis tam ecclesiasticis quam saecularibus sunt nonnulli qui *usque abutantur patientia nostra* communique salute [cf. Cic. *Cat.* 1.1]. *Nolite timere!* [Luke 2.10] Nam *habemus exemplum et praecepta cum prophetarum atque apostolorum* [Isid. *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 1.6] tum Annae prophetissae, quae *Domino*, uidelicet Verbo, *confitebatur et loquebatur de illo omnibus* [Luke 2.38]. Dominus uero noster iniquitates saeculi sui ad quas homines mouebantur cum uoce prophetica praedicabat; ita nos etiam oportet in diem eadem cum uoce et castigare eos qui faciunt ut alii patiantur et efficere ut laborantibus succurratur.

Hodie uidimus, quasi tot Phaethontes, quemadmodum *cunctis e partibus orbis terrarum accendatur*, quae *pabula canescant* et *quantae cum frondibus urantur arbores* [cf. Ov. *Met.* 2.212, 227]; hodie

mirantur sub aqua lucos urbesque domosque  
Nereides, siluasque tenent delphines et altis

But should we want the wisdom and learning that we cultivate to benefit us and our charges alone? No, indeed, for we are fellow soldiers of holy mother church militant here on earth: *let us therefore put on the armour of light*, as St Paul says [Rom. 13.12], since *we are confronted with a collective struggle against the leaders and powers, against the rulers of the world in these dark times* [Ephes. 6.12]. For, in truth, among those who occupy positions of authority in the public and private spheres, both in ecclesial and lay matters, there are several who *constantly abuse our patience* and the common weal [cf. Cic. *Cat.* 1.1]. *Be not afraid!* [Luke 2.10] *We have the example and pattern both of the prophets and apostles* [Isid. *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 1.6] and of the prophetess Anna, who *confessed the Lord*, that is the Word, *and spoke to all about him* [Luke 2.38]. Our Lord, indeed, made known with prophetic voice the iniquities of his age to which men were moved; so too, it behoves us daily with that same voice both to chastise those who bring suffering to others, and to ensure that those who struggle are succoured.

Today, as if we were so many Phaethons, we see how *every part of the world is ablaze*, which *crops grow pale with drought*, and how many *trees are burnt up along with their foliage* [cf. Ov. *Met.* 2.212, 227]; today  
the Nereids wonder at the groves, cities, and homes  
under the waters; dolphins occupy the forests and dart

incursant ramis agitataque robora pulsant.

nat lupus inter oues, fuluos uehit unda leones.

[Ov. *Met.* 1.301–4]

Quid faciendum nobis perscrutatoribus? In hac patria nostra – lacrimabile dictu – *potentes non depositi sunt de sede nec humiles exaltati*; uidimus etiam *esurientes sine bonis et diuites diuitiores fieri* [cf. Luke 1.52–3]. Quid faciendum? Nempe multi sunt apud palatium de Westmonasterio qui nihil suscipiendum putare uideantur. Sed, ne solum istos qui in rebus publicis ac saecularibus uersentur a me uituperari opinemini, perpendamus quasdam sententias principum sanctae matris ecclesiae. Enimuero quidam egregie contendunt conubii societatem duobus quorumlibet sexuum hominibus inter se amantibus fieri non licere. Quid inhumanitatis! Quantam ignorantiam unius Trinitatis ac trinae Vnitatis quae est caritas superabundanter effusa in totam creaturam! Scitor igitur iterum iterumque quid nobis faciendum sit.

*Nihil, uero, est illi principi deo qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati. Quas autem ciuitates cum proceres non conseruant, non adiuuant, non augent* [cf. Cic. *Resp.* 6.13], est necesse nobis qui

among lofty branches and strike the oaks against which they knock.

The wolf swims among sheep and the wave carries tawny lions.

[Ov. *Met.* 1.301–4]

What are we, thinkers, to do? In our own country – a sad-making thing to say – *the mighty have not been put down from their seat, nor the humble and meek exalted*; we even see *the hungry lacking in good things and the rich* become richer [cf. Luke 1.52–3]. What are we to do? To be sure, there are many at the Palace of Westminster who seem to think nothing is to be done. But, lest you reckon that I censure only those occupied with the affairs of state and the secular, let us consider certain opinions among the princes of holy mother church. Indeed, some of them egregiously maintain that the good estate of marriage is not to be permitted to any two lovingly-committed people regardless of gender. What inhumanity! What ignorance of the one Trinity and the threefold Unity that is the superabundant outpouring of love over all creation! Again and again, then, I ask, ‘What are we to do?’

Truly, *to that chief deity who rules over the whole universe, nothing is more pleasing that takes place on earth than the assemblies and gatherings of men justly held in common*. But when the leaders of *these states* neither *preserve, nor help, nor increase* them [cf. Cic. *Resp.* 6.13], it falls to those of us who nurture wisdom and truth and cultivate the *fruits of the Spirit* both to cry aloud with prophetic voice, and to

sapientiam ac ueritatem fouemus et *fructus Spiritus* colimus et clamare cum uoce prophetica et conculcatis subsidio esse cum operibus *caritatis, gaudii, pacis, patientiae, benignitatis, bonitatis, mansuetudinis, fidei, modestiae, continentiae, castitatis*, ut nos hortatur Apostolus [cf. Galat. 5.22–3].

*State ergo, sorores et fratres carissimi, succincti lumbos uestros in ueritate, et induti lorica iustitiae, et calceati pedes in praeparatione Euangelii pacis, in omnibus sumentes scutum fidei, et galeam salutis assumite, et gladium spiritus quod est uerbum Dei* [Ephes. 6.14–17]. Cum Heloissa sororibusque, cum Anna prophetissa confiteamur hodie Domino et populum eius cum lampadibus sapientiae illuminemus, ne βιβλιακοὶ χαρακῖται ἀπείριτα δηρίωντες | Μουσέων ἐν ταλάρῳ esse uideamur [Timo *apud* Athenaeum 1.22d]. *Expectate illum, quia ueniens ueniet, et non tardabit* [cf. Habak. 2.3].

Deo Patri, Filio, et Spiritui Sancto sit gloria et magnificentia, imperium et potestas, et nunc et in omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.

bring help to the downtrodden with the works of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, faith, modesty, continence, and self-restraint*, as St Paul encourages us [cf. Galat. 5.22–3].

*Stand ready then, my dear sisters and brothers, and gird your waist in truth; fasten on the breastplate of justice and put on to your feet that with which you may proclaim the Gospel of peace; with all of these, take up the shield of faith, assume the helmet of salvation, and grasp the sword of the Spirit that is the Word of God* [Ephes. 6.14–17]. With Heloise and her sisters, with Anna the prophetess, let us this day confess the Lord and let us illumine his people with the light of wisdom, lest we seem to be *cloistered papyrus-obsessives ceaselessly squabbling in the birdcage of the Muses* [Timo *apud* Athenaeum 1.22d]. *Wait for him, because surely as he comes he will come, and he will not tarry* [cf. Habak. 2.3].

To God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever and ever. Amen.