



## I testi

Tratti dal libretto del cd *Cypriot Vespers* di Graindelavoix,  
Glossa, 2016, traduzione inglese di Jeannine De Landtsheer.

### *Arsala 'llah*

(tradizione maronita)

أرسل الله ابنه يسوع نوراً للأنا،  
حين ولدته مريم البتول حلم الأنا،  
أشرق نجمه بحدود فارس فأطل السلا،  
و أنار المجوس فحملوا إليه هدايا الإكرا،

هلل هلل هللوا

لك المجد يا من ظهر بأمه إنساناً يدوي  
باتحاد طبيعتين و مشيئتين في وحدة الأقبوي  
لك للآب و للروح القدس شكراً محتوي  
ثلاثة أقانيم إله واحد ليس بمقسوي

هلل هلل هللوا

God sent his only Son as a light for his people; he was made manifest through being concealed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. As Bethlehem had proclaimed, his star shone forth in Persia; through him lighting their way, the Magi have brought him their gifts.

Alleluia.

We worship you, perceived as a man by your mother, bringing together two natures and two characters in one single person. To you, your Father and your Holy Spirit, we give thanks, three persons, but one sole and indivisible God.

Alleluia.

### *O Sapientia*

(canto gregoriano)

O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodiisti,  
attingens a fine usque ad finem,  
fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia:  
veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,  
reaching from one end to the other,  
mightily and sweetly ordering all things:  
come and teach us the way of prudence.

### **Jean Hanelle** (ca. 1380 - ca. 1436)

*O Sapientia incarnata / Nos demoramur* (Ms Torino J.II.9)

I  
O Sapientia incarnata,  
mente seraphica contemplata,  
voce angelica nunciata,  
alvo almifica enutrita,  
a patre genita prodiisti,  
post patrem florida non fulcisti  
una, sed splendida comprobasti  
unius merita, cum fuisti  
cuntorum entium primus motor  
et ut celestium fabricator,  
sic et humilium contractator,  
actorum omnium terminator,  
cuncta qui nectis modo sublimi  
eaeque fortis iure suavi  
semper disponis ordine, primi  
velle resolvis atque supremi.  
Veni, benigne instrue mentes  
fervoris igne redde prudentes  
molesque frange usque prementes,  
nos tecum iunge diu morantes.

I  
O Wisdom incarnate,  
by seraphic mind contemplated,  
announced by the voice of the angel,  
nurtured by a fostering womb.  
Born from the Father, you appeared,  
you not only shone next to the Father,  
but also confirmed the splendid merits  
of that only One. For you were  
the prime mover of all that exists;  
you are both maker of all heavenly creatures  
and you govern all things on earth  
and set bounds to all actions.  
You join all things together in a sublime way  
and you cease not to order all things firmly  
according to your benign law, and reveal the will  
of Him who is first and sovereign over all that is.  
Come, full of benevolence, and teach our minds;  
by the fire of your passion make us wise;  
break the burdens still weighing upon us.  
Unite us with you, for we have waited long.

II  
Nos demoramur, benigne rector,  
et prestolamur, que tu, promissor,  
spondes, et famur quia transgressor  
egit ut remur fieri horror.  
Inde, gementes acre timemus  
ne deviantes nos pereamus,  
cum ignorantes, exerceamus  
que cupientes desideramus.  
Ergo, lux verax, fuga tenebras  
quas nodus tenax usque latebras  
limbique portas nobis acerbas  
dedit et minas ille superbas.  
Dum ergo fatum parentis primi  
tremimus, casum Plutonis diri,  
viam prudentum rogamus pii,  
voce silentum ne simus, veni.

*Bithleem estimazu*  
(tradizione greco-bizantina)

Βηθλεὲμ ἐτοιμάζου· εὐτρεπιζέσθω ἡ  
φάτνη· τὸ Σπήλαιον δεχέσθω, ἡ ἀλήθεια  
ἦλθεν· ἡ σκιά παρέδραμε· καὶ Θεὸς  
ἀνθρώποις, ἐκ Παρθένου πεφανέρωται,  
μορφωθείς τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς, καὶ θεώσας τὸ  
πρόσωπός. Διὸ Ἀδὰμ ἀνανεοῦται σὺν  
τῇ Εὐᾷ, κρίζοντες· Ἐπὶ γῆς εὐδοκία  
ἐπεφάνη, σῶσαι τὸ γένος ἡμῶν.

*O Clavis David*  
(canto gregoriano)

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel;  
qui aperis, et nemo claudit;  
claudis, et nemo aperit:  
veni, et educ vincitum de domo carceris,  
sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

**Jean Hanelle**  
*O Clavis David aurea / Quis igitur aperiet* (Ms Torino J. II.9)

I  
O Clavis David aurea  
et sceptrum Israeliticum  
adaperiens sydera  
per baculum propheticum,  
nulli tam grandis opera  
qui possit tuum abditum  
noticia tam prospera  
sibi tenere subditum.  
Nemo claudit cum aperis,  
nemo cum claudis aperit,  
nemo negat si asseris,  
omnis, cum iubes, obedit.  
Veni cito, si iusseris,  
cor desolatum defuit,  
succurre, precor, miseris  
quibus reatus obfuit,  
vinctos de domo carceris  
educ ad lucem presperam,

II  
We linger, benevolent Ruler,  
awaiting the promises you made,  
and say that a transgressor has caused  
(so we think) something dreadful to arise.  
Hence, moaning we live in nagging anxiety  
that we go astray and perish  
by ignorantly pursuing  
what we are longing for.  
Chase, then, the darkness, o true light,  
the recesses which that tenacious fetter  
has enforced on us; chase the pitiless gates  
of hell and its disdainful threats.  
Trembling because of the fate  
of the first of men, the hazard of cruel Pluto,  
we piously ask for the way of the wise men.  
Come and let us not be silent.

Bethlehem, prepare yourself, let be made ready the crib for  
its use and the grotto to receive the Lord! Now, the flawless  
reality approaches, the shadow of the law has been driven  
away: by being born of a virgin, God made himself shown to  
humankind, by taking our form and by exalting the nature  
thus taken. With Eve, the reawakened Adam cried out:  
God's benevolence has appeared on earth for the salvation  
of the human race.

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel;  
you open and no one can shut;  
you shut and no one can open:  
come and lead the prisoners from the prison house,  
those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

I  
O golden Key of David  
and scepter of the Israelites,  
opening the heavens  
with your prophetic staff.  
None has such great power,  
none such a fortunate knowledge,  
that he is able to keep your secrets  
hidden in his heart.  
No one closes what you open,  
no one opens what you close.  
No one denies what you assure,  
everyone obeys your commands.  
Come quickly: upon your command  
the desolate heart will no longer be forlorn.  
Come and help, I beg you, the unfortunate  
who have been hurt by sinfulness.  
Lead the vanquished from the house  
of captivity to the blissful light,

quos primi culpa sceleris  
viam immersit deviam.  
Ut sedeant in tenebris  
prodant antiquam patriam,  
ergo nos ab illecebris,  
clavis, reduc in propriam,  
quos mors in umbris continet.

II  
Quis igitur aperiet,  
vinctos solvet ligamine,  
quis declamantes audiet  
ut revincantur carcere?  
Sola clavis davitica  
que tecta cuncta reserat,  
Israel, domus inclita,  
ut victoriam referat.  
Defractis Ditis postibus  
portas attollet principum,  
et mute factis hostibus,  
franget ianuas demonum.  
Sedentes tunc in tenebris  
et in mortis caligine  
vincla remittent demonis  
sine iuris examine.  
Veni, tu clavis optima  
et carceratos libera.

*O Oriens*  
(canto gregoriano)

O Oriens,  
splendor lucis aeternae, et sol iustitiae:  
veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris,  
et umbra mortis.

### Jean Hanelle

*Lucis eterne splendor / Veni splendor mirabilis* (Ms Torino J.II.9)

I  
Lucis eterne splendor,  
qui ortus es sol iusticie,  
patris mirande decor,  
noster fautor amicitie,  
dubius ne sis memor  
veteris nostre nequicie,  
summe te rabbi precor:  
dimitte culpam versutie.  
Nam digne quis te querere  
suis possit operibus,  
quis te valet acquirere  
propriis suis opibus?  
Datum est nobis credere,  
quo ligna velut ignibus  
ardemus, inde serere  
conamur virtutibus.  
Quos mortis umbra continet,  
veni, splendor et adiuva,  
quos tenebrarum possidet  
locus horrendus libera,  
mirra, incensum offeret  
nostra anima gratifera,

those whom the guilt of original sin  
has directed to the wrong path  
so that they dwell in darkness  
and have betrayed their ancient land.  
Hence lead us, O Key,  
whom death holds in her dark grip,  
from those enticements back to our true the land.

II  
Who then will open the gates  
and set the vanquished free from their shackles?  
Who will hear their weeping  
and free them from their prison?  
Only the Key of David,  
who unlocks all houses,  
so that the renowned House of Israel  
will be victorious.  
Once the doors of Dis<sup>1</sup> have been broken down,  
Israel will raise up the gates of the Princes.  
After imposing silence on the enemy,  
he will break down the doors of the demons.  
Whoever is then dwelling in darkness  
and in the mist of death,  
will shed the chains of Satan  
without any thinking of right.  
Come then, O Key without equal,  
to release the prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> Pluto, the god of the Underworld, hence the Hell.

O Morning Star,  
splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:  
Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death.

I  
O splendour of the eternal light,  
which arose as the Sun of righteousness,  
wonderful beauty of the Father,  
who fosters our friendship,  
do not be mindful  
of our former wickedness.  
Supreme teacher, I beg you:  
please forgive our former deceitfulness.  
For who can worthily find you  
through his own efforts?  
Who is able to reach you  
with his own resources?  
We were given to believe that we,  
like wood in the fire glow,  
burn and then try to sow  
through our own virtues;  
come, splendour, and help all  
who are enclosed by the shadow of death.  
Release all those who are held in  
that horrifying abode of darkness.  
Our grateful souls will offer you  
myrrh and incense

cum illa dies afferet  
cum animabus corpora,  
tunc spes omnis desinet.

II  
Veni, splendor mirabilis,  
et obsitos caligine  
tuis involve radiis,  
tuo corruses lumine.  
Libera nos subsidiis,  
formasti quos ymagine  
plena fecisti gratiis  
tua similitudine.  
Horrore mortis tegimur  
spissis umbrarum nubibus,  
ardore mentis coquimur  
diris Parcarum sortibus,  
fervore cordis fallimur  
scissis terrarum molibus,  
stridore dentis quatimur  
miris penarum oribus.  
O ergo, lucis claritas,  
funde potenter radios;  
o summa, veni, bonitas,  
salva fidem ter noxios.

on that day, when the bodies will be  
reunited with their souls,  
then all hope will cease.

II  
Come, amazing splendor;  
enfold with your rays  
and illumine with your light  
those shrouded in darkness.  
Free us with your support,  
whom you configured to your image  
and filled with the grace  
of your good will.  
We are threatened by the horror of death  
and thick clouds of darkness,  
consumed by the fire of our mind,  
by the dire allotments of the Fates.<sup>2</sup>  
We are deceived by the passion of our heart,  
now that the burdens of Earth are torn asunder;  
we are shaken by the gnashing of teeth  
from horrible mouths condemned to punishments.  
Hence let your rays, bright light,  
shine in abundance upon us.  
Come, paragon of goodness,  
and rescue the faith of us, archsinners.

<sup>2</sup> In Roman mythology the three Parcae (the Fates) held the spindle that contained the thread of human life. When the third of the Fates, Atropos, cut the thread, one's life was over.

*I parthenos simeron*  
(tradizione greco-bizantina)

Η παρθένος σήμερον, τὸν προαιώνιον  
Λόγον, ἐν σπηλαίῳ ἔρχεται, ἀποτεκεῖν  
ἀπορρήτως. Χόρευε ἡ οἰκουμένη  
ἀκουτισθεῖσα· δόξασον μετὰ Ἀγγέλων  
καὶ τῶν Ποιμένων, βουληθέντα  
ἐποφθῆναι, παιδίον νέον, τὸν πρὸ  
αἰώνων Θεόν.

On that day the virgin made herself ready in a grotto,  
ineffably, to give birth to the Word from before the  
centuries. At this news, the whole world, singing and  
dancing, gives worship along with Angels and Shepherds,  
to he who deigned to become a newborn babe, the God from  
before the world began.

*O rex gentium*  
(canto gregoriano)

O Rex gentium, et desideratus earum,  
lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum:  
veni, et salva hominem,  
quem de limo formasti.

O King of the nations, and their desire,  
the cornerstone making both one:  
come and save the human race,  
which you fashioned from clay.

**Jean Hanelle**

*O rex virtutum gloria / Quis possit digne exprimere* (Ms Torino  
J.II.9)

I  
O Rex, virtutum gloria,  
desideratus gentium,  
lapis ductus in angula,  
incognitus amentium,  
aule celestis incola,  
spes et dilectus fortium,  
veni festinus, immola  
corpus nobis dominicum.

I  
O King, glory of all virtues,  
desired of nations,  
stone used as corner stone,  
unknown to the insane.  
Occupant of the heavenly palace,  
hope and love of the brave:  
come hastily and immolate  
the body of the Lord for us.

Qui utraque unum facis  
tui ordinis virtute,  
qui creatum orbem alis  
eternali probitate,  
expectantes diu colis  
paternali caritate,  
nos esurientes velis  
pascere sacietate.  
Quem de limo tu formasti,  
veni et salva hominem  
quem de nichilo creasti,  
redempturus per virginem;  
dele crimen prothoplasti  
a quo eximi neminem,  
recto iure voluisti,  
nisi puram et immunem  
per quam carnem liberasti.

II  
Quis possit digne exprimere  
sacre rei misterium?  
Qua via comprehendere  
quis possit puerperium,  
ut se possit inserere  
in aliam matris alveum,  
sine reatus scelere,  
quo nobis datur vinculum?  
Sine peccato originis,  
nasciturus ex virgine,  
veni, benignus premiis,  
libera nos voragine,  
tui terrore fulminis  
infice quos in flumine  
Flegetontis inveneris,  
desistat diro turbine.  
Quos tu creasti redime,  
qui sedemus in tenebris  
et nos sperantes suscipe,  
purgemur a miseriis.

*Alyawma youlado mina lbatoul*  
(tradizione arabo-bizantina)

اليوم يولد من البتول الضابط الخليفة بأسرها في قبضته  
الذي بجوهره غير ملموس يدرج في الأقمشة كطفل  
الإله الذي ثبت السماوات قديماً منذ البدء يتكبر في مذود  
الذي أمطر للشعب مناً في القفر يقتدي من الثديين لبناً  
ختن البيعة يستدعي المجوس وابن العذراء يستقبل منهم الهدايا  
نسجد لميلادك أيها المسيح  
فأرنا ظهورك الإلهي

*O Emanuel*  
(canto gregoriano)

O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster,  
expectatio Gentium, et Salvator earum:  
veni ad salvandum nos, Domine, Deus noster.

You turned both into one  
by virtue of your command  
you who feeds the world you created  
with eternal goodness.  
And cherishes people full of expectation  
with your paternal affection,  
may you feed us, your hungry people,  
until we are satisfied.  
Come and rescue mankind  
whom you have formed from clay,  
whom you have created out of nothing  
to be redeemed through the Virgin.  
Clear the crime of the first creation,  
from which you have rightly wanted that  
none should be exempted,  
unless that pure and undefiled Virgin  
by whom you have freed the flesh.

II  
Who can worthily express  
so holy a mystery?  
How can anyone understand  
that she gave birth to the child?  
How could it enclose itself  
in the nourishing womb of its mother,  
without the stain of the sin  
that keeps us shackled?  
He will be born of the Virgin  
without original sin.  
Come, most generous in your rewards,  
deliver us from the deep abyss.  
Inflict with the fear of your lightning  
those whom you find in Phlegethon.<sup>3</sup>  
Bring the horrific maelstrom  
to a standstill.  
Redeem us, whom you have created,  
who dwell in darkness.  
Include us, full of hope in your love  
and let us be purged of our misery.

<sup>3</sup> One of the rivers enclosing the Underworld in Greek and Roman mythology.

Today is born of a virgin, he who holds the whole world in his hands, he, who nothing may affect, is lain in swaddling clothes like a babe; God, the creator of the heavens, is to be found lying in a manger; he, who made manna rain down on his people in the desert, is fed by his mother's milk. We worship your birth, O Christ! For that reason, reveal to us your divine Manifestation!

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver,  
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:  
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

**Jean Hanelle**

*O Emanuel rex noster / Magne virtutum conditor (Ms Torino J.II.9)*

I

O Emanuel, rex noster,  
gentium expectatio,  
o salvator et legifer,  
fessorum exhortatio,  
fidelium salutifer,  
o tuorum salvator  
o inclite vexillifer,  
hostium pavefactio.  
Sane languentes propere,  
ne languore deficiant;  
lacrimas nostras apprime  
sicca, ne magis defluant;  
promissiones relege  
et cito nobis affluant;  
errantes pedes revehe  
ne prepediti decidunt.  
Infelix hostis corruat  
et tu veni redimere  
quos ille nodis alligat.  
Tu iube manu solvere,  
penam quam ille preparat  
velis, pie, destruere,  
ne Tartarus absorbeat  
quos tu iussisti vivere:  
veni, antequam rapiat.

II

Magne virtutum conditor,  
Emanuel rectissime,  
firme potentum domitor,  
Deus noster doctissime,  
alte celorum ianitor,  
mandator invictissime,  
summe iustorum portitor,  
donator clementissime.  
Virga silentum diligens,  
et tremor infernalium,  
panis et potus refovens,  
corona supernalium,  
habitaculum redolens,  
domus cara fidelium,  
gloria indeficiens  
ad alta properantium.  
Veni salvare, Domine,  
diu qui expectavimus,  
coperi nos de lumine  
quod diu perquisivimus.

I

O Emmanuel, our King,  
hope of the Gentiles,  
o Savior and legislator,  
stimulant of the weary,  
bringer of salvation to those who believe.  
O Saviour of your people,  
o glorious standard-bearer,  
source of panic to the enemy:  
make haste to heal the depressed,  
that they do not succumb to their lethargy.  
But first, stem our tears,  
that they stop flowing.  
Fulfill your promises  
and may we soon be flooded by them.  
Bring back our errant feet,  
that we stumble not and fall.  
May our enemy perish without success;  
and you come to set us free;  
order him to loose the knots  
of the hands he entangled and bound.  
May you mercifully undo  
the punishment that he is plotting,  
so that those you wished to live  
are not gulped down by Tartarus.  
Come, before he drags them away.

II

Mighty creator of virtues,  
Emanuel, paragon of righteousness,  
mighty vanquisher of the powerful,  
our most learned God,  
exalted guardian of heaven,  
invincible guarantor,  
exalted messenger of the just,  
most generous benefactor.  
Wand that loves silence  
and terror of the underworld,  
refreshing food and drink,  
crown of those who dwell above.  
Fragrant home,  
house dear to the faithful,  
unfailing fame  
of those who hasten to their heavenly home.  
Come and save us, Lord,  
who have long awaited you.  
Cover us with the light  
that we have long sought.

*Simeron ghennate ek Parthenou*  
(tradizione greco-bizantina)

Σήμερον γεννᾶται ἐκ Παρθένου, ὁ δρακί  
τὴν πᾶσαν ἔχων κτίσιον

Ῥάκει καθάπερ βροτὸς σπαργανοῦται,  
ὁ τῆ οὐσία ἀναφής.  
Θεὸς ἐν φάτνῃ ἀνακλίνεται, ὁ  
στερεώσας τοὺς οὐρανοὺς πάλαι κατ'  
ἀρχάς.  
Ἐκ μαζῶν γάλα τρέφεται, ὁ ἐν τῇ  
ἐρήμῳ Μάννα ὀμβρίσας τῷ Λαῷ.  
Μάγους προσκαλεῖται, ὁ Νυμφίος τῆς  
Ἐκκλησίας.  
Δῶρα τούτων αἶρει, ὁ Υἱὸς τῆς  
Παρθένου.  
Προσκυνοῦμέν σου τὴν Γένναν Χριστέ.  
Δεῖξον ἡμῖν καὶ τὰ θεῖά σου Θεοφάνεια.

*Hodie Christus natus est*  
(canto gregoriano)

Hodie Christus natus est:  
hodie Salvator apparuit:  
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,  
laetantur Archangeli  
hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:  
gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Alleluia.

### Jean Hanelle

*Hodie puer nascitur / Homo mortalis firmiter* (Ms Torino J. II.9)

I  
Hodie puer nascitur  
ante secula genitus;  
agnus tener depromitur,  
carne mortali conditus,  
matre intacta ducitur,  
luce quam fecit candidus,  
qui previdetur, colitur,  
quo non videtur splendidus.  
Splendor in nubem funditur,  
nec a sole divellitur;  
splendor in nube conditur,  
nec a nube minuitur;  
nubes eodem alitur,  
nec alimentum sumitur;  
nubes interdum patitur,  
nec ille splendor pungitur.  
In carne verbum seritur  
unione fortissima,  
qua caro verbum creditur  
ratione firmissima,  
et verbum non deseritur  
a carne solidissima,  
nec unquam caro linquitur  
a luce potentissima,  
inest qui splendor tessuti  
alma cum semper anima.

II  
Homo mortalis, firmiter  
carni cum heret anima,

On that day was born of the Virgin, he, who in his hands  
holds the whole earthly creation, is swathed in swaddling  
clothes; he, who by his very essence is the elusive God; in a  
crib lies, he who strengthened the heavens at the dawn of  
time; he is fed at the breast, he who made the manna rain  
down on his people in the desert; the Bridegroom of the  
Church, he caused the Magi to make their way; he accepts  
their presents, the Son of the Virgin. O Christ, we bow down  
before your Nativity, reveal to us your divine Manifestation.

Today Christ is born:  
today the Savior appeared:  
today on Earth the Angels sing,  
archangels rejoice:  
today the righteous rejoice, saying:  
glory to God in the highest.  
Alleluia.

I  
Today a child is born  
conceived before all time.  
The delicate lamb is brought forth,  
born with mortal flesh.  
He springs from a Virgin Mother, out of the light  
that he, the radiant one, made shine.  
He is predicted and honored,  
no more radiant being was ever seen.  
His brilliance is diffused into a cloud,  
without being separated from the sun;  
his brilliance is diffused into a cloud,  
yet without being diminished by that cloud.  
The cloud is fed through him,  
but the brightness does not feed on the cloud.  
While the cloud is tolerated,  
it does not affect the glow.  
The word was sown in the flesh  
in a very close union,  
by which the flesh is believed to be the word  
with very solid reasoning.  
And the word is not abandoned  
by the unyielding flesh,  
nor will the flesh ever be deserted  
by that most powerful light.  
Its brilliance is interwoven  
with the ever soothing soul.

II  
Man is mortal, although the soul  
is strongly linked to the flesh,

humana passibiliter  
coniuncta sunt hec infima,  
duo creata duplici  
natura reddunt unicum,  
cum gratia multiplici  
separandarum partium  
sed increata tertia  
talem confecit hominem,  
qualem superna gratia  
ubivis fecit neminem.  
Nam splendor carni additus  
et anime mirabilem  
perpetuum divinitus,  
sibi assumpsit hominem.  
Ergo, si caro linquitur  
ab anima passibili,  
mortuus homo creditur  
tantum natura duplici.

and everything human is connected  
in suffering with everything on earth.  
Thus two creatures with dual  
nature make a single being,  
with the multiple grace  
of separable parts.  
But the third, uncreated being,  
has made a man in such a way  
as no one, anywhere, has ever  
been created by divine grace.  
For brilliance added to the flesh  
and to the soul  
by divine agency has created  
an everlasting man.  
Hence, when the sensitive soul  
leaves the flesh,  
it is believed that man is dead,  
but only in as far as regards its dual nature.