

## Contemplating the Music of Heaven

I imagine a multitude  
of angelic choirs,  
vast in number,  
each dedicated to contemplating  
and exalting specific attributes  
of the Most High God.  
One for His Holiness.  
Another for His Splendor.  
One for His Goodness.  
Another for His Power.  
Yet all of them sing  
of His infinite Love.

Each angel,  
a master musician,  
is capable of producing  
any sound he wishes,  
effortlessly and without limitation.  
His melody flows directly  
from his endless contemplation  
of the Triune God.

For this reason,  
their songs are improvised  
and without score,  
always evolving  
and never monotonous.  
Though spontaneous,  
these masterpieces  
are so exquisitely refined  
they seem as if rehearsed  
for an eternity.

While masterful musicians,  
these translucent virtuosos  
show hints of neither  
crass showmanship,  
nor vain pride in their art.  
Their only intention  
is to glorify their Maker  
by musically expressing  
the expanding love and admiration  
of their contemplating hearts.

When one angel begins to see  
some previously undiscovered facet  
of the infinitely transcendent  
and incomprehensible Godhead,  
his heart leaps,  
inspiring him to sing a new song.  
The new melody emerges,  
harmonizing perfectly  
with the surging chorus.

The rest of the angels,  
all of whom are united  
in heart and mind,  
react with delight  
to the new counter melody,  
rejoicing to see this new facet  
of the diamond they behold,  
with wing-covered faces.

Filled with awe  
and immense pleasure,  
the seraphic choirs  
spontaneously compose  
a new movement  
to their symphony of praise.  
So the unimaginably beautiful music  
morphs from glory to glory;  
as does the dance,  
like a slowly flowing river of lava,  
or like the ever-changing visual masterpiece  
of the sky,

What mortal can hear  
these inaudible songs  
while still on earth?  
Only the pure in heart,  
who, through perfected faith,  
can also see the invisible God.

But where does that leave  
impoverished souls like mine?  
I long to join the angelic choruses,  
but I am little in faith,  
and my many sins render me  
both blind and deaf.

O, the depths of His mercy!  
Christ wills to open both eye and ear!  
I see Him now,  
but dimly,  
as through a dark glass.

In the night sky  
my flesh perceives  
only delicately twinkling candles,  
while my mind's eye ponders  
the roaring blaze of distant suns.

In like manner,  
I am learning  
to faintly hear the music  
of His dwelling place.

As our spiritual vision  
improves by grace,  
through heartfelt contemplative prayer  
and the maturation of faith and love,  
so, too, may our spiritual ears  
gradually learn to hear  
increasingly distinct melodies  
of the heart.

I would like to attempt  
the impossible,  
to describe the indescribable symphonies  
which no ear has heard,  
including my own.

What absurdity!

Why should I try to succeed  
when failure is assured?  
I'm a lovesick fool,  
intoxicated by the thought  
of the Most High King!

A man in love  
feels as if he can fly,  
while he most certainly can not.  
And the inebriated  
believes himself invincible,  
though, in fact,  
he may be thrown to the ground

by the slightest foe.

So I am deliriously full  
of some inexplicable hope  
that the infantile observations  
of this babe in Christ  
who has barely learned to crawl,  
let alone speak or write,  
may inspire a few souls  
to turn their spiritual eyes and ears heavenward  
in order to contemplate His Majesty  
and join the unending hymns of praise.

If one soul should be moved  
to lift his heart and mind  
in adoring praise  
of our magnificent God and Lord,  
my ink will have been well spent.  
And if a thousand others  
scorn me for my folly,  
so be it.  
Perhaps their scorn will scour away  
another layer of filth  
from the tarnished lens of my heart.

You may think me a fool,  
but not a fool who is to be pitied.  
For what reasonable person  
would pity a man  
who is truly happy?

Yes!

Happiness moves me to write,  
for I would like the entire world  
to learn of this secret river of joy,  
which is the contemplation  
of God Himself.

How beautiful He is,  
this invisible God!  
How lovely is the light  
of the knowledge of Him!  
O, let me gaze upon His beauty!  
Let me dwell in the courts of His Temple  
all the days of my life!

Let Your face shine on me, O God,  
and my soul will be radiant  
with unspeakable joy.  
Send forth Your Spirit,  
that my eyes may see  
and my ears may hear.

Free my fettered heart,  
and let it soar on the two wings  
of faith and love.  
Let this little songbird sing again,  
for that is what he was designed to do;  
and he is never happier  
than when he is immersed  
in loving praise,  
basking in the warming rays  
of the Morning Sun.

But, alas, a gloomy reality  
looms like a dark cloud!  
Apart from Your Spirit  
I can do nothing.

I am as a corpse,  
without sight,  
without hearing,  
and without the slightest capacity  
to feel anything.

My heart died with Adam,  
entombed in darkness,  
and the saddest proof of this  
are the countless hours  
I have spent in this world  
without the slightest breath  
of love for You,  
my God,  
who are lovely in every sense,  
and altogether adorable!

But you have awakened  
both faith and love,  
through the death and rising  
of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ!

O, beautiful Savior,

You have entirely won my heart,  
wooing it with the sweet serenade  
which You silently intoned  
from the wood of the cross,  
that ladder reaching  
all the way up  
to the window of my soul.

Such a love song!  
How can I help but sing my part  
in this soaring aria?  
For while I have never heard it before,  
I know this enchanting solo  
is meant to be a duet.  
Deep calls to deep,  
and Love begets love.  
So the song,  
which knows no ending,  
begins.

Listen.  
The faint murmuring of a harp.  
The Spirit enables me to play it,  
yet my hands are still,  
as is the drum of my ear.  
Ascending and descending,  
the whisper soft tones roll,  
like undulating waves  
on a calmed sea.

Gratitude.  
Love.  
Gratitude.  
Love.  
The waves surge  
and slowly crescendo.

Praise.  
Adoration.  
Praise.  
Adoration.  
The harpist begs  
the ready choirs to assist him.

Strike the cymbals!  
Sound the trumpets!

O, lift your voices with me,  
all you saints and angels!  
My heart is small,  
but His mercies are great,  
so how can I, left alone,  
worthily praise  
so high a King?

The train of His robe  
is filling this temple,  
pressing on the four walls  
of my little heart.  
Expand, my heart, expand!  
Make room for the King of glory!

“Expand I will”,  
my heart says,  
but this outward pressure  
makes me fear  
that I shall explode!  
What shall become of me  
if I see Him more clearly  
from the cleft of this Rock,  
where I am deeply hidden  
within Love’s most eloquent wound?

If I see His face,  
you, my companion, may die.  
I’ll forget to perform  
my earthly function  
and fly away to embrace Him,  
my Ultimate Love,  
who was lifted high upon the tree  
then exalted above the clouds  
to His Father’s right hand.

O, be not afraid,  
my heart, to expand,  
for God who supports you is strong.  
He knows your limitation  
and has commanded His angels  
to bear you up  
on their tender wings.

Fly with them, my soul,  
high above the beating

of this timid heart of flesh.  
Beyond feeling.  
Beyond comprehension.

You are free to fly  
to the very thresholds of glory,  
uniting yourself through contemplation  
with all the billions  
of adoring hearts,  
who cry out to become  
His vast, expanding Heaven,  
His Dwelling Place,  
and His Exalted Throne.

O, let the whole earth  
be filled with His glory!  
And the farthest reaches of the universe  
with His praise!  
Alleluia!

May every heart adore Him!  
Yes, may every heart adore Him!  
How willingly the angels  
echo their response.  
With a million reverberations,  
the new song dances  
and leaps from wall to wall  
of the temple hidden within.

What's this I hear?  
O, how can it be?  
The exalted cherubim  
follow my lead?  
Am I now the choirmaster  
of the Heavenly Hosts?  
Wretched sinner,  
how vain your imaginations!

Hush.  
Be still, my accuser.  
The angels are pleased  
to praise their Lord,  
even at my behest.  
How lovingly they stoop  
to help the feeble.  
How ready their wings



to lift the lame.

But how can such a squeaking voice  
rise beyond the clouds?  
And how can my embarrassing intonation,  
first sharp,  
then flat,  
harmonize with the Immaculate?

Ah, but there is a way!  
A new man is hidden  
with Christ in the Heavens,  
and somehow he knows how to sing  
the eternal songs.

Now I see him.  
Now I don't.  
Again he appears,  
but not high above me.  
He is deep within,  
hidden behind the veil.

That little man is a delight to behold,  
so uninhibited in his love,  
so ecstatic in his praise.  
Leaping like a gazelle,  
eternally young,  
he dances with all his might  
before his God,  
while the trees of the field  
clap their hands.

He bows low in worship,  
giving no thought  
to the disparaging glances of onlookers.

Look.  
Now I see him  
seated at table.  
Famished, he gorges himself  
upon the feast set before him,  
but he keeps looking up from the banquet  
with the eyes of a grateful beggar.

I see the little man again.  
Finished with his dinner,

he sits  
silently gazing  
at his beloved Lord and God.  
Transfixed,  
his broad smile and adoring eyes  
fill me with wonder.

What do you see, little man,  
that makes you so entirely happy?  
What beauty  
holds your gaze so intently?  
Your adoring eyes  
tell a secret.  
They serve as a mirror,  
enabling me to ponder  
the inexpressibly beautiful God  
whom you apparently now behold.

O, new creation,  
what a joy to see your hidden potential!  
Even brief and passing glimpses  
cause my heart to race.  
And your faintest whispers  
fill me with longing  
to join you  
in the courts of the Most High.

But where are you today,  
my dear little friend?  
I cannot see you at all.

Listen.  
I hear him singing.  
But how can he be me?  
His pitch is perfect,  
and his range knows no limits.  
His song soars with the angels,  
and his heart is a golden harp.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!  
Yes, let all that is in me  
bless His Holy Name!  
You certainly have my permission,  
dear little friend.  
Why do you even ask?  
Run up Mount Zion,

and worship God as you desire.

I'll pause from my laborious climbing  
and try not to disturb you.

I only ask  
for a few little peaks  
into your intimate communion.

How soothing it is for me, my soul,  
to hear you praise our Lord.  
You beckon me to join you  
in the house of our God.

From time to time,  
with increasing frequency,  
I try to rouse  
my sluggish body to join you,  
giving to God  
the fruit of my unworthy lips  
and the bending  
of my stiff knees.

How long, O Lord?  
How long?  
How I wish I could possess  
in the body  
what the new man possesses  
in high places.  
O, that my heart and flesh  
could praise you eternally  
without my many sins  
always weighing me down.

I try.  
I fail.  
Time and again.  
And if I make any progress  
up the mountain,  
it is a clumsy climb.

For this, too, I will praise You, O God!  
Yes, I will praise You!  
In Your mercy, You are teaching me,  
O patient and loving Father,  
to look with hopeful longing  
for the Resurrection  
promised by Your Son.

Then I shall see You  
face to face  
and praise You  
with unblemished and immortal lips.

Grant, O delightful Lord,  
my prayer of prayers,  
that I might adore You forever.  
And may death's fearful sting  
be soothed by this hopeful balm.

So may it be, my gracious God.  
Hide me in the wounds  
of Your dear Son.  
And through His precious blood  
grant me every grace required  
to complete my long journey  
to that Heavenly Jerusalem.

Enlighten the path of my feet,  
O Light without shadows,  
as I travel this road to Zion,  
ever singing and making melody  
in the deepest core of my heart.

Amen.