

How Did I Lose My Innocence?

(and other poems struggling to acknowledge God in life)

By

Craig M. Szwed

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Introduction

This might also be euphemistically titled “The Seventh Arena: Life as an Action Figure.” Anyone engaged in life’s activities has to admit that there is a battle that every person faces between their flesh and spirit; between nature and conscience; between our own desires and the walk to which the LORD God calls each of us. For the non-Christian, this is revealed in Romans Chapter One in the Bible. For the Christian, this is the arena of the seventh chapter of the book of Romans: spiritual warfare may disrupt our natural plans or frustrate God’s plans for our betterment, depending on whether we heed God’s calling or neglect it, respectively.

While many might argue for fatalism, thinking that God dictates every detail of people’s lives, the daily battle that many people feel between our flesh and God’s Holy Spirit demonstrates that there is some degree of choice in virtually everything that we endeavor. The conflicts that we feel are the clash of natural rebellion against spiritual authority; battles over what and how to exercise our free will in tune with or out of the will of God.

While pouring over all my current manuscripts preparing for this book (collating poems that touch on varying degrees of spiritual life,) it became evident to me how often I must resort to the haven of faith, crying out to God in numerous ways in order to cope with life’s struggles, trials, blessings, temptations, joys, and sorrows. Some people may take offense at the bluntness of some of my writing. I would apologize, except for the fact that this is how I talk with God at times. I think that this honesty of expression is needed to help others recognize that prayer “without ceasing” is not a formal institution nor a formula, not a particular physical posture, but the honest outpouring of an attempt to include the Lord in every facet of one’s life, whether one is doing or thinking good stuff or bad stuff. What troubled child does not gain consolation and learning from sharing all things with a good, wise, and gracious parent?

Sin and its temptations do not last as long when one is able to pour out one’s heart and mind to the Savior in this manner. Even if one is plagued by a “favorite sin,” it holds far less sway in one’s life, and is much more easily judged by our own spirit and conscience, when we feel free to share their pangs with God’s Holy Ghost, before, during, and/or after our involvement in that sin. We also can experience greater humility and satisfaction with all of God’s blessings in our lives when we thankfully share our gratitude with Him. In that vein, I trust that these poems will be an encouragement to every soul to seek the living risen Christ of the Bible, who loves, redeems, strengthens, corrects, heals, reprimands, and overcomes all things in us appropriately for His glory and our own good. Hopefully, we learn to submit joyfully to His Holy Spirit and Word (which never contradict one another, providing an incorruptible standard for our lives.)

Whether your present situation in life is filled with joy or angst, may you find greater joy, peace, and encouragement for all of life’s ups and downs through what I have shared in these poems.

May the Self-existent God of Creation bless you and keep you.

Craig M. Szwed

Romans 7

“[1] Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? [2] For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. [3] So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. [4] Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. [5] For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. [6] But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. [7] What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. [8] But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. [9] For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. [10] And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. [11] For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. [12] Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. [13] Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. [14] For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. [15] For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. [16] If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. [17] Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [18] For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [25] I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

In Christ

We are the walkers; the searchers.
We point the way, and to the light:
your hope,
gathered and forging,
loving and lively,
pursuing anew your old worn path;
stepping out to touch , to feel
our past dreams here now.

Ours is now as was yours.
Ours seeks as you once sought-
step by step.

Into life's endeavors firmly we are nudged.
We remember, now, the paradoxes of growth.
We rethink today's crystalline hindsight,
and yesterday's ephemeral exciting blindnesses.

We are who we are.
We see, yet can only guess,
the true meanings of this ending.
But all the cloudiness and turmoil
can not mask our senses completely.
We feel in this end a birthing,
a new paradox for living:
a guide to good sowing and reaping.

Last Drunk

Tall, gray
cold, hard
faceless giants with hollow eyes.
No one's here,
but there's watching....
feel their grasp.
You can't SEE!!!
(run.)
RUN!!!
...all around...
which way out?
down a hole?
into oblivion?...
UP!
(a minute speck of blue...)
JUMP!!
reach for air!
Run!!
strangling nerves...
HELP! GOD!
nothing-----
in fear I refuse to hear Him.
(across the square... a phone!
ask the operator!)
"Sorry, this office opens at 9 A.M.....
This is a recording."
beephhmmmmmmmmmmmmmm-----
SLAM!
despairing wrath.
Withdraw your courage,
take another drink,
but there's no help there.....
burp....
wandering
lost
subdued.
Through that ring of glass
look deeper!
and deeper...
"are you there? (...there? ...there?")
no one cares,
no one knows...
stumble splash
retch
slime stench
self-pity.
(Where are the ones with badges?)
...getting colder...
numbness creeping stealthily
raping the life,
ebbing...

having ignored salvation.

In Quest Retrograde

Lost in time and space.
Lost between idea and ideal.
Self-emasculating ponderance
lends itself to fruitless dreaming
tempting and tearing a many
and confused faced being.
Overabundance of nothing.
Absence of everything,
with no needs
but wants.
Just thinking---
Just thinking---

Resolution is not a thing,
but elusive, evaporating:
a gray cloud
on a winter evening;
An unfilled spot
growing into a void,
while there is no planned substitute in action.

Ghost-like passions
are/were here--flitting, fleeting.
They will be alive.
This, as other times,
is alive with dead-ening
life...withdrawing out
into that which is not being
at all constant,
or consistent with
me and my thoughts...
is losing as well as lost.

That tragic figure
winding its way
in self-glorifying search,
which it denies:
Non-clarifying
Scathing
self-criticism, deepening
a martyred feeling which
is lost in ambivalence;
lost in time and space---
lost between idea and ideal.

In Meditational Test

The natural mind wanders on:
from darkness it comes,
and into darkness it proceeds.

Our false lights are devoured.
...the hungry deep strikes--
and Humanity quakes.

Thundering belly-laugh...
encompassing all...
God's waves and winds of caring
lash our gray mass,
to wrench us from our cortex;
to open our hearts and eyes.

Dear Kathy

I did not know your husband well,
but I saw his love in your eyes.

I did not know your husband well,
but I saw how your love had mellowed him.

I did not know your husband well,
but with your marriage he smiled much more.

I did not know your husband well,
but I saw him reach out in friendship.

I did not know your husband well,
but, Bless God for the love you gave to marry him.

I did not know your husband well,
but I know that you know you loved him well.

Cutting through a flood of words which-
I had thought to say to you,
Dear God! have mercy!
The sweet innocence of your grief-
Your childlike trust dashed upon death's doorstep,
Your aching sorrow pleading for an answer,
Your loving heart reeling from the blow...

"There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."
Jesus is the only One who truly knows your pain.

Solstice

In our plunge toward winter's abyss,
we pause,
hearts full, and eyes smiling.

Somewhere murmured, whispered,
we heard promises of rebirth.

For the sticky summer
end is near.

Leaves above me nudging,
whispering, restless,
sensing a different wind
coming to launch them
toward yet another destiny.

To Bethany and Rachel Webb

I know it is not always easy;
I know it is not always fun,
to follow your folks all over the world,
in the service of Jesus, God's Son.

When you see other kids full of mischief;
sin's fun tempts your heart fully sore;
it seems like you can't keep resisting,
remember Jesus promised you more.

Jesus promised He's there always with you.
Jesus promised He has felt all alone.
Jesus promised never, NEVER to leave you,
but to take you to stay in His home.

Jesus' home for you always shall be happy.
Jesus' home for you always will have love.
Jesus' home for you always will be filled with His Light.
You new home... by your faith in His Blood.

A Parent's Hope

A babe is born into this world,
God's gift of life come forth.
At whom the tempter's darts are hurled
to undermine his sense of worth.
Yet, even before these tiny fingers curled,
God gave His Best this child to redeem.
By grace one day,
God's Gift he will esteem.

Outing Clubs

All the clubs had planned so well
with meetings, phone calls, and cakes to sell.
Sacrifices plenty each one had made
day by day as their plans were laid.
Each tried so hard to do his best
that at journey's end they'd be able to rest.

Destination chosen, their vehicles loaded
they picked the easiest, broadest road.
The weather reports and Motorist's Aid
said everything would be fine that day.

The only hitch to a united start,
one troublesome family rocked the cart:
this family told that they had read
newspaper reports of a bridge out ahead.

"This can not be," the rest declared,
"for the reports we heard were truth, not snares."
The masses mocked the few who chose
the other route: that narrow road.

Then starting on their merry way
celebrating the trip and where they'd stay,
the masses rolled on, passing the time
by joking or eating, or sipping wine.

The radio kept saying that all was well,
"nothing new" was there to tell.

But now and then a sign some saw:
BRIDGE IS OUT AT TEN MILE DRAW.
After two or three such worded plaques
some family would think, and then turn back.

But on went the rest, drove by drove,
determined they had a convenient road.
They selected to hear the, "all is well!"
so their radios blared their siren sell.

For families who changed to the narrow road
the signs "Bridges Ahead Safe" gave assurance bold.

Down the broad road the scoffers cruised,
jockeying for position to stay amused;
each one hoping to get there first,
would languidly joke, or religiously curse.

Some heard warnings from passersby.

But most drivers were too drowsy,
the passengers too shy,
to turn from the danger,
though one or two did cry,
and wondered tearfully,
fearfully....
why none did heed,
"oh, why?"

Around one last turn,
on rushed the pack,
the leaders failed to see
death's gaping trap.
Crashing through the barricade,
and down,
all plunged into Ten Mile Draw to drown.

But those who'd turned back
to The Narrow Way,
reached the other side that day
to enjoy their rest, and peace assured:
so you can too, by trusting God's Word.

Filled it is truly with warnings and cures
to cleanse from sin's stain and dark allure;
to purchase us back
from damnation of sin:
by faith solely in Jesus,
Heaven you'll win.

Come!

If our bodies are not found,
nor those of millions,
and your dear heart grieves,
your eyes full of tears for loved ones gone,
remember all were told by prophets,
long ago,
Christ would come shed His blood,
a payment extreme, in love,
for each and all:
He would be the only Way,
the only Truth, and Price,
to wash away our sin, to set us free.

We needed willingly to turn from sin
and let Jesus enter in, to believe,
accept, receive,
our total trust on Him:
the only Payment for all sin.
Now body and spirit with Jesus we live,
forever, for His promise is kept
and we escaped damnation's net.
Worldly cares, or fears, or pride
have caused you to stray
from that simple path.
Please seek God's Christ with all your heart,
your mind, your very life,
lest this late hour leave you in the dark.

Not for safety! Not for drink!
Not for shelter! Not for bread!
Take no marks upon your hands, nor head,
else in the lake of fire with Satan
miserably you shall sink.
God's promises live on,
our missing bodies prove Him true.

Though all around you in sin, anger, or shame
many explain away in doubt
this miracle God has wrought before your eyes,
beware and heed His Word, you'll see,
as we're with Christ,
so you might be,
for you're the one who's missing
a joyous eternity.

Pep Talk

It's ok to feel pain.
It's ok to admit things hurt.
It's ok to feel alone.
It's ok to know when you're lonely.
It's ok to admit you want to feel love.
It's ok to admit you want to feel loved.
It's ok to admit you want to be touched.
It's ok to let your feelings come and go.
It's ok to want things to be peaceful.
It's ok to feel your feelings.
It's ok to decide for yourself what to feel.
It's ok to think your thoughts.
It's ok to be you and not someone else.
It's ok to not meet everyone's needs.
It's ok to not live up to everyone's expectations.
It's ok to forgive others their mistakes.
It's ok to forgive yourself of your mistakes.
It's ok to let God be God.
It's ok to know you are not perfect.
It's ok to know that God loves you.
It's ok to know that you are not God.
It's ok to trust God for all things.
It's ok to accept love.
It's ok to love without condemnation.
It's ok to learn from the past.
It's ok to let the past go.
It's ok to love someone even when you disagree.
It's ok to love someone even when you feel hurt by them.
It's ok to let someone you love know when you feel hurt.
It's ok to let someone you love know your needs and desires.
It's ok if that someone can't meet all your needs and desires.
It's ok to love yourself as God loves you.
It's ok to love others as God loves them.
It's ok to love WITHOUT terms and conditions.
It's ok to think things other people seem not to understand.
It's ok to seek and grow when life feels bland.
It's ok to give others space as you need space.
It's ok to need passion toward you.
It's ok to need to be passionate with another.
It's ok to admit your ideas change.
It's ok to agree and disagree without taking it personally.
It's ok for others to think their own thoughts.
It's ok to KNOW it's time to change something in your life.
It's ok if people disagree with you.
It's ok if people don't like or accept you.
It's ok if people don't like/accept your ideas/beliefs.
It's ok if people don't like/accept your feelings/needs.

It's ok if they DO accept all these things.
It's ok to get excited about people/things you like.
It's ok to get excited about people/things you don't like.
It's ok to be you when you feel lonely.
It's ok to be you when you feel sad.
It's ok to be you whether you do good or bad.
It's ok to know the difference between good and bad.
It's ok to be you for you.
It's ok to be you when others don't want you to.
It's ok to be you even when you don't want to be.
It's ok to be you when you prefer to be a "people pleaser."
It's ok to be you when you feel like lashing out.
It's ok to defend yourself when it is appropriate.
It's ok to let defensiveness go when it is not appropriate.
It's ok to know the difference and exercise it.
It's ok to admit when you feel weak or helpless.
It's ok to admit when you feel threatened.
It's ok to let go of feelings you find hurtful.
It's ok to not store up resentments.
It's ok to let anger go.
It's ok to get angry at the right time.
It's ok to make/have friends.
It's ok to make/have friends others don't like
It's ok to not be able to control everything.
It's ok to not try to control people.
It's ok to not be great at everything you do.
It's ok to be able to do a few things well.
It's ok to live each day as your first and last.
It's ok to try to always be thankful to God.
It's ok to want to feel good about you and God.
It's ok to do good to others.
It's ok to give of your self without reservation.
It's ok to let God use you to heal.
It's ok to let God heal you.
It's ok to enjoy God's Creation.
It's ok to enjoy God's work as He uses you.
It's ok whether good or evil comes your way.
It's ok that your feelings don't always make sense.
It's ok to move on in your life when you have to.
It's ok to stand fast in life when you have to.
It's ok to know when things have to be corrected.
It's ok to say that things need to be corrected.
It's ok if you are the only one who believes this.
It's ok to not be able to change all things yourself.
It's ok to be courageous and change things you can.
It's ok to seek God's wisdom about change.
It's ok to admit that Jesus is really carrying the load.
It's ok to wait on Jesus for guidance.
It's ok that you are "but dust": God knows you.
It's ok that your life is only by God's grace.
It's ok that God's will is perfect in His Law
It's ok that His mercy grants you great latitude in your life.
It's ok that you do not wholly understand God's ways.

It's ok that He will complete the work He has begun in you.

Blessings

Throughout each day
there comes and goes,
a surge,
a whim,
an itchy nose,
a feeling raw which came before,
or joys that walked in through my door.

Through many a day
laments galore
have racked this bosom
with weeping sore,
and turned great frolic to shadowed doubt,
and turned great loves fully inside out.

Through trials grim
and fantasies spun,
each day begets another one,
when hope is full,
when love is kind,
when my heart its business minds.

I press on through each day I have,
to glory in blessing,
each one to grab,
to relish each thought, each joy,
each testing pain,
to cleanse and cool my fevered brain.

If heart responds to issues old
with tears, remorse,
and bitter soul,
lacking strength in self alone
I turn to God upon His Throne,
and know His love won't leave me cold.

Rise up and count, self of mine,
be not hasty, take your time
to weigh most precious a thing you do
as if searching out some rotten flu;
now cleanse your soul
and be made new.

Hearken now to counsels true,
weigh, dear self, advice to you.
Face up to what's been troubling you
and truth will find a way,
to lift that weight and set you free
to be now what you're made to be.

God's plan is not to mope and groan,
nor fancy yourself in life alone,
but draw upon His gracious love
to feed your spirit's starving child,
to yield to nourishment undefiled
which builds a healthy life.

A friend in pain may say "No more!"
A spouse may walk right out the door.
A boss may blast my every effort,
yet, truth in heart and mind and soul
reminds me now that I am whole
and free to do what must done.

Now weighing each touch upon my heart
to see if there's some place apart,
that needs to be addressed,
the adult in me does now confess
a space, a place, another face
wherein I need to mend.

I ran so long, so hard, so fast,
and hid within a broken glass
avoiding self and self alone.
Now tantrums' power will be dethroned
a wholesome balance is now to come
its peace and joy to rule this room.

Each day with Christ the war is won,
the victory sure, the conquering done.
Each day in hope and faith anew,
being thankful in what I see and do,
I find I learn and grow some more,
in blessings here from heaven's Door.

Dialogue of Hearts In Trial

Forty lashings would not have served
as deterrent to make us swerve,
our hearts were filled with friendship and our passion.

For in the heat and joy of chase,
we did not care for "saving face."
Our only care was feeling new found love.

We knew we reached past space and time,
that we had found a love sublime
joining us in beautiful tender fashion.

But swiftly strife's cruel blows did land.
Fear and frustration our bliss did strand,
undermining the joys that made us glow.

Came we so far only to fail,
as memory passing, or tear filled tale?
Must we now part and leave each other crashing?

I thought us honest, you and I,
trying to explore, not too shy.
Were conditions unspoken? a test I had to pass?

Were we too honest? or not enough?
our hearts too eager to be touched?
Shall we let history smash our hopes today?

God's mercy let us come together.
Surely storms we can, must, weather,
without losing anchor amid the roar.

We must accept each other's pains,
each to grow, relieve our strain;
to be ourselves, yet grow as two in one... true love.

To isolate our heart from love,
which God permitted from above,
is now to me a very awful waste.

Can there not be within us, Dear,
timely solution very near,
that our impatience hides in sinful doubt?

Feelings last best, even "burned,"
when nurtured, watered, gently turned,
as a gorgeous garden with flowers that need much care.

My sweetheart speaks our mutual need,

that we respect and learn to feed
upon the good things we cherish in each other.

In trust, can we now go beyond
hurdles to leap (and those not fond,
that love with us be practiced and be felt?

Let our desires be more than zings,
having real depth, body, wings,
to carry us through all joys and trials each day.

Has struggling hurt your ideal,
crushing the ardor you said you feel?
Do you fear that you are in a trap?

Should we put off our tender place?
our joys? our hopes? sweet devotion's embrace?
because our private battles feel so hard?

You said with me your love'd endure.
I believed you, and felt very sure,
that all things we shared would build fidelity.

But crossroads now we face in pain.
God, take doubt from hearts and brains,
to lead in truth and peace now, hand in hand.

In this brilliant time we've known,
we've touched in heart, so not alone.
Can not great affection bear truth in it as well?

Please don't toss love's gift away:
friendship in which we thought to stay.
Through your constancy God lifted when I was down.

For each moment we have shared,
I praise Christ in heart felt prayer,
and ask for unity in truth and enjoyment.

But, my Dear, if we must part,
go in blessing, love's true heart,
and let me know the path that you will take.

Need I say more upon this page?
I have God's peace. There is no rage.
From the joy and pain we've shared, now I will grow.

I wait on You, oh God, above.
I rest in Your unchanging love.
Yet, in this moment I occupy
my heart does yearn and ache and cry
to feel requited in my breast
to capture passion's tirelessness,
and feel life flow in me afresh.

Desire, though fleeting, is very alive
but much displaced from where it thrived.
I tried so hard to run my course,
but now my heart and throat are hoarse
from overreactions to unresolved
issues and trials that did evolve,
provoked, and provoking Your great Law.

Your mercy and your grace have brought
me now to a very vulnerable spot,
permitting me to act more clearly
on passing views once held leary,
wherein I took upon myself
to divide and hide for survival's wealth.
Now let Your healing be complete,
dear God, I learn to integrate.

Faith Is...

...looking past what I can see;
...hoping beyond what I dare;
...learning what I never could;
...feeling secure despite all things;
...trusting God for what I can not do;
...letting pain run its course;
...putting things where only God can touch them;
...reaching out where there is nothing;
...touching the untouchable;
...knowing I am loved by God;
...loving when I can not feel;
...moving when I can not go;
...testing the untestable;
...believing all things are for my good;
...forgiving the unforgivable;
...talking to God when I can not see Him;
...waiting for answers I fear will never come;
...working when there seems no reason;
...fighting for what seems hopeless;
...smiling when I weep inside;
...weeping to God when I feel alone;
...being thankful when things seem awful;
...being kind in spite of cruelty;
...giving in spite of poverty;
...sharing in spite of being covetous;
...living in spite of feeling dead;
...growing in spite of drought;
...permitting joy in the midst of sadness;
...standing when I have no strength;
...leaning when I can not bend;
...bowing when I fear to break;
...kneeling in prayer to God;
...passing to others the hope in Christ;
...dying to self to walk with God;
...expecting to see God work when I feel blind;
...acting on God's thoughts when I can't think.

Winter Oak Leaf

Late after the heaviest frost,
as snow lies upon the ground,
have you ever watched
an oak leaf twisting in the wind,
only lightly tethered,
upon its once fully supporting stem?

Round and round it spins---
back and forth it wobbles---
fighting wind and stem...

Its gibbet and each draft remind me
that it is dead to its old ways,
no longer a colorful adornment,
now longing to follow the winds of change,
longing for the breeze to lilt it gently to the earth,
longing for the solid ground beneath,
to return nourishment to the soil from whence it came.

Yet, one persistent thread
holds it dangling, rocking, spinning,
impeding its journey.
But, in God's own time
it will be free of that stem
to fulfill its new purpose,
and permit next Spring's bud to unfold.

Hopeful

More did I seem to search each day,
ever looking as I continued to pray,
longing to find God's peace that endures
and leads to a life that is kind and pure.
Never before was I lastingly blessed
in heart or mind to be permanently impressed.
Eventful as my life had been,
lovers, wives, friends, and I
eager to please, or awfully shy,
investing a little, or a lot of self,
giving something new, or "off the shelf,"
had somehow missed the mark we sought,
rapidly falling from the heights we'd thought.
Abundant discussions did not uncover
very sound reasons to sustain passion's hover.
Entered then our minds and hearts, ...alas,
notions of panic, remorse, or the past,
answered old hopes with unencouraging sighs,
nudging from the peaks our wonderful highs;
going to depths of unexpected sorrow,
evincing a dread of the coming morrow,
like a sour rumor that wears patience thin,
instead of continued blessing, there came a great din.
Quickly then I resorted to emotion's withdrawal,
until I was contorted,
eviscerated, or emasculated by love's demise,
but striving to bounce back more supple, more wise.
Engaging in reevaluation of wealth,
of circumstance, and emotional health---
looking, then, to remove more old traps,
increase my joys, that my hands I might clap;
escape the false, the pains, the groans,
usher in hope of a dawn of God's own.

My Strength

My strength lies not in muscles large,
nor guns, nor wealth, nor tricks of wit,
but in the truth and care and love and wisdom
God hopes I learn each passing day,
through pain or sorrow, joy or play,
learning to trust in Him.

Researching

Something left behind,
often far down a hard road,
some turn to rediscover,
wondering what they saw or had.
If found again,
it may not be as thought,
but sometimes worse,
yet sometimes better,
by the grace of God.

Survival Walk

Dare I step beyond this pane,
to feel the biting wind;
to bear the blast of snow that drifts
across the plains so vast?

Dare I brave the scorching sun,
though frigid the wind may be?
Outside this pane the burning rays
would peel away my skin.

Dare I leave here, this short lived day,
with sun now going down;
to venture midst the eddying whiteness?
Would I quit, or walk all night?

Dare I stay within this pane's confines,
with short-lived warmth and food?
and all alone, the silence wails
for want of another's cheer.

Dare I walk the steps alone,
to cross the horizon's end,
to face the blast of issues past
that came as a storm renewed?

Dare I gird on these loins frail,
the courage to sally forth,
to test the cold-seared whitened plains,
a singular goal to reach?

Dare I take myself beyond the plane
of current comforts and trials,
a conqueror of all that would make me fall,
to rest only once the barrens are crossed?

Dare I choose a companion whose name is mine,
to traverse those many miles,
to walk with God and me alone,
to find life's warm full tide?

As darkness resentfully lingers,
trying to retard the coming day,
to cut the dull steel gray of this morning
God has set His torch to an overpowering blue flame.
Out over the sea He has wounded the metallic dark,
its white-hot edges almost dripping
where the flame has sliced through
the once solid flooding vapors overhead.
As I lie here early,
watching, waiting,
I hope He will burn through to me
that I may walk the land
in purest warming, comforting sunlight today.

A Meeting Place

All alone---
or so I feel---
can God really be near?
this vast expanse of emptiness,
this aching desire for comfort,
can He bear it?
Yet, is not this the very place
in feeling, time, and space,
and more, much more,
in which my Jesus,
the only Christ,
endured so long ago?
Are not these feelings really His,
as He waits for me to turn,
to say "Hello!" to my precious Lord,
that I not cause Him to feel spurned?

Day Before Us

Thank you, Lord
for this day before us.
I think that I begin to see---
how Maxfield Parrish tried to render
Your sunrise brush strokes
of whites and yellows and blues and pinks;
how El Greco worried over
the chiaroscuro of pensive clouds;
how Copley tried to capture Your expansive strength.

As this dawn approaches from the sea,
the veiled coastal waters are dressed in pure white lace,
yet, overhanging the land a sullen mass
of foreboding, only a spottily thinned blanket,
weakly moth-eaten,
revealing faint glimpses of palest light.

How awesome!
How dynamic Your painting of the dawn, oh, God!
that just offshore the clouds thin now
and burn white-hot and pink.
But, here, landlocked, we must wait Your decision
to reveal to us the direct light of day.
How finely the allegory is painted, as you say,
that we see in this life as through a dark mirror,
yet, we shall see clearly when we are with You.
Our day presses on as we watch,
waiting for Your Son,
as we see heavenly views near and far.

Out of Shape

As Jesus said, "the Spirit is willing,
but the flesh is weak...."

How swiftly this has come upon me
that my spirit says "Now!"

...but my body says "How?"

God,
the Creator:
Giver of life;
the Gracious:
Giver of cleansing;
the over-Maker:
Giver of peace;
the up-Lifter:
Giver of joy;
the Filler of Spirit:
Giver of true purpose;
the up-Taker:
Giver of hope.

Overcoming the Natural Man

It's not the Spirit of Christ which led,
but my selfish lustful heart instead.
In passion I thought I'd fall down dead,
but found I simply lost my head.

My heart was lost so many times
to twinkling eyes and vocal chimes,
to slender curves or voluptuous lines,
to waifish sighs or brazen rhymes.

My body made its chemicals display
their potent charms throughout such days,
masking all truth, but urging me play
the fool, that passion might the longer stay.

Where has the ancient passion gone
which spanned from dew until the dawn?
It lies within and lingers on---
'til Jesus Christ shall call me home.

Through the mist
I sense God's eye
and know that Christ
walks close beside.

He sees my life:
He sees my fears;
my strength and weakness;
joys and tears.

...and though I stumble
and sometimes fall,
I trust Him to carry me
now through it all.
I know my soul
He does not hate,
my faith in His blood
has entered Heaven's gate.

Fruitful Tree

From yonder tree
for sinners these
timber was lent
for a cross that bent
under burden strong
to right the wrong
that sin had caused
with deadly jaws.

The vileness inflicted
is now interdicted.
The bloody mess
by Love's caress
is our healing to be,
leaving clean and free,
souls that are sent
to give true vent
to the glorious song
God gave this throng
of the eternal laws
showing salvation was
never restricted
but always predicted
for the humble who confess
trusting Jesus' righteousness.

After Judgment

The rainbow came by the will of God.
He did not have to write that Law,
giving diffraction such colorful spread;
reminding me beautifully of Justice and Mercy:
a tender reproach to lead me Home.

Factory

walls high
windows closed
air stale
lights harsh
floor hard
doors few
work repetitive
noise surrounds.

But, I thank God I am alive!

A sparrow flying
from beam to beam high above me
may not live
to gain the open sky outside again,
yet I choose to stay,
until the end of this shift.

A branch, breaking from a tree to follow the storm, dies; but bending, and returning to its God-given place, lives on.

Though winds may blow seeds far from a plant, rooted in good soil they yield fruit in due season.

Cats purr where milk is poured. Of such is the wandering heart.

Feelings worn on one's cuff may be mistaken for after-dinner wipings of one's mouth.

Offense taken is more expensive than forgiveness given.

One's spirit hardens when stirred in the pot of bitterness.

Youth and wisdom walk hand in hand when the Lord Jesus Christ is a welcome chaperone.

Hurt feelings and dishonest questions both look for trouble.

A mint or self-restraint may quench the burning heart.

Anger on anger burns more than gasoline poured on a fire.

A caged mad dog chases no one.

Anger will be yielded to God when a person is humble.

Contentious spirits are like having lice: some have them, no one wants them, and someone else is to blame.

The joys of a louse are miseries to its host.

The freshest food comes from your own garden.

A dusty Bible and prayers unspoken to God yield dullness.

A well made basket and well raised children both bear life's burdens more easily.

Love and passion walk side by side only when in accord.

Love stands fast though feeling may stray.

Joy and happiness are distant cousins.

A child is only as feeble as its fear or hope.

Leadership, without repentance and faith toward God, is destitute of standards that will last.

The seed of rebellion grows in vile ground.

Where luxury or oppression are great, the hearts of the masses harden.

Starving dogs grow hungrier fighting over one scrap of food.

Many worry about what others get, yet none wants to be called greedy in his own desires.

House Call

Doctor of my soul,
You have healed and made me whole.
You are Gardener of my life,
continually pruning sin and strife.
As my Shepherd it is clear,
You protect, and also shear.
As Abiding Spirit, too,
You refresh me when I'm "blue."
Father Eternal, Savior of all,
You pick me up when down I fall.
Thou Self-existent and Everlasting,
onto You all cares I'm casting.
Thou Way and Life before me,
only You're our Open Door Key.
'Cause Your Love's forever true,
God in Christ, I surrender to You.

Do I Love God?

What thing have I now set on high,
denying that the LORD is nigh?
(of gems, or pets, or clothes, or food,
the things of only temporal good?)

What feeling did I elevate,
that to the Almighty I am ingrate?
(depression, elation, greed, or sorrow,
forgetting Jesus' Peace to borrow?)

What person have I held above
Christ's bleeding head that shows His Love?
(relative, royalty, flirt, or spouse?
where's my surrender and humility now?)

What monetary scheme or plan
is more important than Son of Man?
(to buy or sell, to cheat or steal,
to invest or spend, to give or deal?)

What speech? What tale? What book or gong
could sweeter be than His Spirit's song?
(of elocution, aria, or chant?
of symphony, or poetic rant?)

What hermitage, or crowd, or friend
could stay so close right to the end?

My sensuousness still seeks to play,
hoping to lead the rest astray.
God's Still Small Voice yet calls to me,
to turn me from some foolish spree.

Do I love God above all else?
My deeds in life will surely tell.

The Servant True has given His best.
He made no errors throughout the test.
When all on earth was finally done,
the death of Life, the Victory won
through Blood and Resurrection's power,
the glory of Ascension's hour,
all accomplished, all complete,
now laid on the altar at the Father's feet.

What? we ask, was Christ's reward?
Eternal glory He had deferred,
in coming down our souls to save;
to keep us from the eternal grave.
For no reward He chose to come,
but our fellowship, the war He won.
He gave up all He had above,
to show us here His Faithful Love.

For Jesus

Only You,
who love eternally...
Only You,
left heaven's glory...

Only You,
born of virginity...
Only You,
who lived life perfectly...
Only You,
told the whole story.

Only You,
exposed sin's perfidy...
Only You,
do all good fearlessly...

Only You,
who bore death's cross for me...
Only You,
who came to set me free...
Only You and You alone,
deserve all my thanks and praise,
for truly my salvation,
is only by Thy grace.

Bygones

An ache of an echo...

An echo of an ache...

We shout our loves in life, and continue on.
The daily labors attended, bearing us along.

For a while we forget the echo and the ache,
but, then comes the echo back again
to sting with past joys and regrets
the hearts we thought so neatly knit.

Does farther on our crossing cost less suffering,
when echo comes again?
Will years and toil abate the flush of heart and mind,
which ache at memory's disturbed recall?

Sweet Spirit Holy, truly bind the longings
left so far behind,
that withered they should truly be.
Now let them dry on Calvary's Tree.

Had Yorick's soul Light, by faith entrusted
in Jesus Christ, it had then burst
and deflated Hamlet's lamenting way,
who might have learned in peace to pray.

In Gratitude

Thank You, dear Jesus, what you've done for each,
to bring Your salvation as a sweet evening breeze.
Thanks for Your blood that washes one clean,
our new hope which You'll never demean.

Decisions, Decisions

Each soul redeemed
holds Christ esteemed.

Each soul who's lost
needs count the cost.

Each justified
is on Christ's side.

Each one unsaved
needs fear the grave.

Rebirth

The Dissipate
could hardly wait
for titillate
that would inflate
feeling profligate
to instigate
lust neonate,
helping deteriorate
to a degenerate,
not elevate
one single pate
above a sewer grate.

But, God is great!
An Anticipate
of not too late
repentant state
from fleshly spate,
to true salvate.

Some Young She

Used to puzzle me, she did.
Enthralled I was with beauty,
and in the gentle way she walked.
I was chasing shadows.
She lived and spoke in light.
Then, aging showed that being young
was family higher than I knew.

With passing years we both grew old,
yet, she was kept in grace, as young,
and in the peace that comes to some,
for she was washed in Jesus' blood,
and therefore of the eternal sum.
By seeing Life in some young she,
God called me to His rest and peace.
And now in Jesus Christ I'm blessed.

Peeling Bananas

What freak of chance is this?
Multiplied a hundred times,
in one plant alone,
and by the acre, more,
rank upon rank,
a growth coordinated stem
to support lush fruity succulence;
a fine protective jacket
parting simply in my grasp;
a tripartite nourishing meat
mimicking our triune Godhead;
seeds carefully hidden deep inside
giving time to ripen, later to spread;
a complex of chemicals in harmony,
of benefit to young and old alike.
What chance has made this complexity
safe to be eaten by a greater complexity?

Time does not create, but wear away.
Raw power does not order, but disperse.
Law is given, not accidental.
How then come I and this fruit
to bear existence in common,
but by Design alone?

Decoding

As whirling gears align and mesh
to drive a productive process;
as electronic keys match,
unlock, sort, and spew data,
so flashes the impending thought,
shocking awake to divulge
lines forming from words,
with feelings fleshing out the form.

A turn of phrase,
a play on words or types,
the tracing, curling line of ink
to link the think
with the untouchable part of me.

In this does poetry go
where none but God alone can reach,
not even the love of a tender peach,
neither the "Love of Three Oranges,"
nor that vomitous stream of consciousness
thinking as popularity would have it,
rather, cut as by a surgeon skilled
with eye acute,
to pass away the needless, and the waste,
and render victorious a message trimmed:
decoded from the mind and heart,
reciphered, reshaped, reviewed, resent,
stronger than the original flying bits
which puzzled me before I wrote.

Rules of the Game

If worldly winning were the goal,
and not how Jesus played the game,
then all life's hope would be ever lost,
and our sin be left untamed.

empty nest

selfishness,
crowds out
God's wealth

Focus, Christian!

Sense the great hole,
that seems vaster than space,
with no sides, no bottom,
no night, and no day.
Whoever goes in---
has turned back from God's grace;
the things that we send there,
their steps never retrace.

Sense the great void,
emptier than darkest night,
that devours all earthly passions
irrespective of art or height;
that swallows every idol,
and yet remains stark.
Without God's protection---
we'd drop in,
perish,
as oceans can drown a lark.

Sense the whorling vacuum,
gasping for a sinner's life.
Pace, but step not into,
next its hot and deadly strife.
Were it not for Jesus' presence
from our head down to our toes,
we'd have surely borne its fire,
in that place the lost dead know.

Defeated Satan still does mock us,
though he knows he's headed there;
knows he's bound for eternal fires,
but his madness does not care.
Now for us, instead of hell fire,
starving dark and gnashing teeth,
we have God's divine redemption,
in His loving Light to feast.

Thank God for His Christ's salvation,
faith alone in His shed blood.
Grace, we trust, is all sufficient,
safe from the peril where once we stood.
Thank God now that He is greater,
than that chasm stalking by,
through His judgment and His mercy,
comes His gift of eternal Life.

We need not fear, though Satan mocks us,
trying to distract from godly ways,
but with God's sweet Promise in us,

let faith work eternal praise.

The love of the flesh pays little and costs much.
God's love paid all and cost us nothing.

Nets and Goals

I saw two birds entrapped one day.
Their pitiful cries I heard.
How came they then to be so caught,
those beautiful plaintive birds?

I saw the netting round about,
and bushes with berries full.
What little hole among these thousands,
within their tails they pulled?

Their cries of panic were not remorse
for damage nor theft of food,
but lamenting, "Why am I caught?!"
the typical howl of fools.

Forth and back, "Alarm! Alarm!"
They cried, and flitting went.
But, stuffed so full of fruit they were,
their stomachs had freedom spent.

In time, out came the berry man,
and seeing the great alarm,
he lifted the net and chased them off,
before they suffered harm.

But with the sun again today,
they repeated their invasion.
For birds heed mostly stomachs' rule,
and bowed to the berries' persuasion.

So trapped again the foolish birds,
by stomach and by net,
will this time sole judgment rule?
or mercy a new day set?

Bound are we, too, by sin's allure,
if we haven't Christ inside.
But with His Holy Presence here,
temptation we can override.

Shopping Coupon

Cost and value:
too dear? or shallow?
soul? or comfort?
grace? or sin's wart?
What's the price
to keep me nice?
Christ paid all,
that I not fall.

Birdsfoot Trefoil

Nothing seems to pamper these grounds,
as much as you---
these hard graveled industrial lawns,
and salted roadsides.
We have constructed on paper
seeming dead spaces,
lots and strips of death in life.

But, in love of the Creator,
your finely formed petals turn aloft,
face-like;
your roots enmesh the stones,
even in an arid August;
you nurse upon the dew,
and protect these broken parcels,
ensuring the sterility does not descend
within inches of the ground,
beautifying in velvety yellow blaze,
my lunchtime walk
outside the factory walls.

Sensationalism!

The tabloid said a person could...
"SURVIVE ANYTHING!"

Survive anything?!
yes-
...one way or another.

Survive anything?
yes-
...all preferences aside.

Survive anything?
yes-
...the human spirit lives forever.

Survive anything?
yes---
even hell's searing smother.

But there,
sensation's always the same,
...and missing eternal life.

Retorts

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He created me in His image,
and draws me to Him.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He opens my heart and eyes to Him,
and gave Himself as Christ for me.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He helped me accept Him as Jesus,
and cares enough to live in me.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He takes on Him my every care.
He gives me joy! He gives me grace!

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He answers wisely my every prayer,
daily providing for my need.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so !
He gives me work that pleases Him.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so !
He loves me beyond my heartaches:
teaching, correcting, uplifting, humbling.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!
He made me part of His family,
promising a home, with Him to stay.

Who do I think I am?
Somebody?
God thinks so!

Old Address

The cry, ancient among us:
"Lend me your rears!"
twisted from the familial,
bears hard on society's blind side,
to alter natural "preferences,"
a sad disruption
of God's intricate,
yet simple design.

Viewpoint

Some used to call them buttocks,
what others call helicopters,
these double-winged maple tree seeds.
It all depends on what you want to see in life.
Some see in Jesus only a man;
some only a prophet.
Others see God in the flesh: Emmanuel.

Beside Him

Many days
factory noises
intrude.
My thoughts
at work,
broken,
return to John:
he could not
talk,
or hear.
We wrote
notes,
trying to learn
from each other.
They couldn't
lay him off:
he died first.
Now he hears everything!
I'll be there
one day.

Self-defeat

Throwing ourselves
on the sullied razor wire
of emotionalism,
and incontinent fantasy,
we wonder, entangled,
gaping at bleeding gashes,
leaking our pent up dreams,
to no avail.
Our planned bombardments
go off in our pockets:
unpinned grenades, forgotten,
untossed for lack of clear objective.

Last Hope In Season

The trees have withering borne
the paucity of Summer rains so longed for,
with leaf edges crisping brown,
falling early these past months.
Yet now, Fall rains in abundance,
as the outpouring of God's Spirit
brings a repentant sinner rebirth,
relieve the drought,
wash away the brown out,
soften brittle windy rattlings,
flush the last dying green,
and set ablaze each thinning membrane,
uniquely incendiary,
with Autumn fire patterns,
colors, textures, excitement,
as a Christian neonate's fervor,
eager to please the Father of creation,
to fulfill purposeful change
of old nature to new,
a glory,
and giving God glory,
in brilliant focus,
as through the Son of Love.

Lost Sheep He Calls Us

Though made by God,
we are not in Him,
without repentance, and,
faith in the Christ of God,
prompting His Spirit's
washing,
placing,
sealing us back in God,
giving us gracious service,
eternal security in His family,
His peace.

Bleating of Sheep

From among the sharp thorns
and crevasses of old,
lost and hurt souls
cry out, wounded and cold.

Despite every yearning,
desire, and pain,
Holy Spirit power,
can revive and restrain.

We ask Christ to fill us,
that our lives show God strong.
Now, Jesus, our Savior,
guide us away from all wrong.

Fill, Oh Israel

Fill, oh Israel,
between Euphrates and Nile,
from South to North, the borders,
wherein the Eternal One has set a space for you:
the Self-Existent's stroke of genius,
pure testimony to the likes of Man,
of promises made to ancient Abraham:
your place, and your survival.
Only now, it's two eons past,
since Christ forespoke your fig tree budding,
before Rome cast down God's house.
True believers welcome your budding, your gathering,
though politicians hate your very name.
The season fast approaches:
Jacob's Trouble swiftly comes
to try you, tempering, removing dross,
refining beyond all trials past:
soon, the gravest thinning of your ranks.
With vanquished heathen lust
will Armageddon's valley run
at bridle depth,
a river red and wet a hundred miles.
Your one true God supreme, alone,
Messiah in truth prevails,
parting Olivet that you may hide therein,
your final third, the remnant,
His pride, and soon, also, His bride.

You Say You Are In The Light

Will you not come
brighten this shadowed moment,
and in your tolerant cheer
bear this mortal tongue,
with its litany of solitary pains,
so common to others, also?

Has your compassion strength
to withstand intolerant barrage,
felt, but aimed at no one in particular;
to overcome infantile aches and yearnings
that plague, infective of other moments
and places, simply looking, waiting
for the One who can relieve all griefs
and comfort even beyond the trial,
that may next be yours?

I Saw God Move Today

He turned me in a fitful dream,
to surrender a dread disease, to peace.

He showed my hands still work,
despite pain and age they bear.

He pointed, dependability:
I squinted, as sun and clouds played tag,
withdrawing across the sky of day.

He snuggled me close, warm.
I rested undisturbed,
then heard His timely call to leave for work.

He eased me through each moment.
His Spirit's voice in conscience, hymn,
and Scripture marking time,
to test the measure of trial, and thanksgiving
therein and beyond.

Beyond

Beyond the chilling tremors,
the aching wrenching pains,
the soaked fevers of hallucidity,
the stabbing, seeking, death-like incursions;
beyond all that
that wears heart and mind and soul
onion skin
thin,
exhausting all reasonable effort of patience,
that brings one's sense of helplessness
to new frontiers;
beyond all that
thrives a welcome rest,
a helping hand of comfort,
a peace beyond any other,
incomprehensible,
but for the living of its tenderness,
the singular touch
of God's hand,
open to all who are willing
to look and go beyond this world,
to His Christ,
who by His stripes
has borne all ill for us.

Anniversaries

Some hold joy;
some sorrow.

We see the past;
our Savior, tomorrow.

Shepherd's Call

Grandmother, Grandmother,
your babies, and babies' babies, babied,
your days nearing doneness,
will you yet wrest God's good Word,
twisting, tempting,
confounding heaven's holy intent,
that the living liberty of God
might not, in love, bolster and bless your soul?

Refuse religiosity.
His Holy Spirit speaks, that you
might seek first salvations' niche,
without which your faltering frigate will dash,
leaving this life,
inexorably bent to the infernal,
having audience of, but not gained, haven,
in repentant reception,
the Living Efficacy, Emmanuel:
Christ Jesus, Counselor,
Judge, and Jury, too.

All plans and pains ever, cast.
All pleasures derived, disdained.
The final moment mummified,
in mind acute, alone,
when Deity of His Nature is despised
by, and
before your eyes--- the victors rise ebullient,
and Emmanuel's eternal face takes form.
Be not aghast of "God with us,"
lest His fold be secured at last,
without your presence.

On Suicide

There have been thoughts,
polka-dotted plagues,
swiss cheese ventilations
of heart and mind:
the end of this now mortal line
cutoff---
in Hemmingway-esque chime.
But, I go to God in time,
His time,
no, not before.
For I have heard and seen,
too many times for chance,
a broken rope,
a failed shot,
too many friends interdicting the blot
that some have sought
in suicide
to wrest from life and God,
judgment---
but in the end were blessed,
embarrassed,
with one more day, and more,
on careful reconsideration,
with life abundant.

Conviction and Pardon

What have I done my God, my Lord?
What have I done my King,
that You should need in love to come
Your salvation in blood to bring?

A stain, a blemish, was here before
I knew its horrid depth.
Your Holy Spirit's voice I shunned.
In dark, my spirit slept.

Then slowly grace did wonders work
its light upon my soul;
did guide me then to let You in.
Now Jesus has made me whole.

Frontier

When wolves call,
do I hear it openly echoed,
or muted in evergreen,
and think of food and fellowship?

When wolves call,
do I shrink to hide,
though safety is no issue,
and wood is piled high by the fire?

When wolves call,
do I run to join the hunt,
the sport,
the dog days
of supremacy's fall to slaughter?

When wolves call,
do I know their loping trail,
their follies, their play,
their sadness when a pup has died?

When wolves call,
dwell I yet in romance,
yet in ignorance of their place among us,
or in thankfulness to God,
when wolves call?

Virtue Tested

Modesty has turned away
from longing looks
that went astray,
condemning sin
and passion's play,
upstaging infidelity.

Daybreak

Daughter of darkness,
mist veiled bride
of diurnal orthodoxy,
contractually courted, wed,
God will test your dowry.

Cabbage Moths And Years

Double helixed
skyward chasings---

Offspring recycle,
devour
earthbound fruition---

New life springs ahead.

A Father's Peace

In her womanhood,
the sooner I let go
my daughter's hand,
and trust
that God is faithful...
Grand!
...the sooner she may grow,
for surely God desires blessings
to bestow,
on one who seeks His truth,
and fellowship, and plan.

Connecticut December

God's softened pinks
and yellow tans
across these barren hills
seem grand,
enough to mingle
tears of thanks
causing heart to tingle,
as rank on rank
the rays of light
fan-like spread
cutting cloudy darkness,
and human dread.

Four Hot Muggy Days

August in May,
a welcome respite
for some,
from storm ice
and snows,
...but not for me....

I miss clean
fresh snow, crisp,
hiding the death of fall.

I do not like
this clinging
overly intimate air,
that sucks, to a wrinkled pucker,
the energy from my flesh;
burns the skin in stagnant sweat,
and eyes,
apart from ragged breath.
The closeline dampness
hangs me out,
but not to dry,
an untidy household chore,
to one who likes cool dry air.

Bless God! It's good...
that plants like jungle weather,
or we'd soon go hungry...
...and I DO like to eat.

This weather will pass,
as an hour neglected
on a busy road.
It will change,
being not so stuck,
as one's damp underwear
in a hot car by the roadside.

Fat Lady's Dance

In stiffening breeze,
majestic oaks
stand and rustle;
birches, lithe,
simper and bow,
tremulous.
But, this large white pine,
full, rich, abundant,
gracefully waves,
conducting herself,
the air, with passion,
soft and easy on the eyes,
as her narcotic sighs
draw me,
yearning,
amid the passing storm,
for one more passing glance
at her dance of praise
before the LORD.

Compassion

God lets it rain outside,
for days,
drenching, misting,
misting, drenching:
a sympathetic patter
echoing my inner tears;
sinking deeply
between the roots of consciousness;
soaking by His Spirit,
to leave no thirst unquenched.

Light Sensitive

The sun is gone.
Its departing heat,
abandoning my skin,
now draws behind
the wagon load of night.
But God's hand,
through your cheek
touching mine,
displaces the dark
with light of greater strength.

Be Still, Me

The world spins on, beneath my feet,
no matter which way I turn,
and God is there to challenge, or greet,
and comfort though all does churn.

No Small Pox

The itch
begged,
whined,
groveled,
cursed,
to be scratched,
though weeping heart,
and skin, foreknew
its abbreviate-pleasure crater
only God could fix.

Taste of Victory

In black she sat,
tightly adorned,
bruiseless,
though dog-collared,
pierced, ringed, chained;
her baby fat ripening
fast,
peeking through the accents;
a short-cropped princess,
self-crowned peachy orange.

Was she trying to shock?
to cry out for love?
Only she and God know.
But, her beauty still showed,
bursting through unconsciously;
stood to attention,
called to duty:
the moment that she stretched,
and yawned,
her camouflage failed,
her beauty won.

sinful eyes, no fear
eager now, chattel paying
oarless boatman's wage

(originally released 2001: american haiku CD)

Near Bethesda's Pool

Raging, racing fires
raise blood to boil,
and ferment.
Hormonal conflagration strives,
to ash and rubble,
to reduce me.
But, living water
steadily applies
hydraulic remission
to smoldering, glowing
incursions
that searingly madden
the most earnest
natural resolve.
Soaking,
with Spirit and love,
the blazing urge
to plunge in hedonist's headlong release,
that would bottom
the shallow end;
dead end for the dive
flesh yearns to take,
Christ bids, "Up!"
"Walk away!"
with grace,
and peace renewed."

What is this loneliness,
that it should bother me?
Why is it afraid to be alone?
Thinking to be unnoticed,
it comes tunneling.
Disruptive,
it furrows and mounds
the placid turf of one's life,
as a burrowing mole
in search of juicy grubs,
where none lie waiting.
Where does it draw its strength,
but from delusion or doubt?
Can it be that once again
I have been tripped,
to lie face down
in its tangle-footed hillocks,
bound to keep it company
for a while,
til the LORD raise me up,
to walk at peace with Him?

Stepping Back To See Design

How many miles still lie between
these inches keeping us apart?
What electric spark could jump
and bridge this gap from heart to heart?
What intense and careful plan
has put us face to face here now,
to prove our mettle and reserve?
Now Christ more character endows.
Were we but as the fish that swim,
how quick the tender fry might grow;
or elephants upon vast plains,
courting mates in time so slow.
But here we find a greater call,
enduring flesh, resisting itch.
Though other things may come to mind,
we wait upon God's fabric stitch.

How soon we turn our backs on Him,
and wander as the drifting leaves.
Many are times we try to work,
increasing our respective ease.

Loving Christ, yet barely so,
today is all we have to walk
on hallowed ground, our lives should show
now is the hour, let us not balk.

All His blood has set us free.
Rarely, though, we've truly borne
desires that match His painful tree.
Every natural desire we've worn
lays heavy unless given to Thee.
Lonely are our lives, unless,
enlivened by Holy Referee.

Saving Grace

Oh! Jesus! What exotic pains!
that come and go,
where I should not,
that Thou hast borne,
alone,
for me,
in waking life and dying tree.
The cross I bear is naught,
compared to Thine.
Yet, day to day
this flesh is tested,
spared.
And, how I weep and howl,
naturally, and find
this flesh deserting Thee.
I thank Thee for each twinge acute,
that shakes me, leaf, and branch,
and root, to call on Thee,
remembering all thou bore,
because in sin I fall, swiftly,
away,
and think it joy, and peace,
and play, when inwardly I boil,
and laborous sin turns fruitless toil;
when ecstasy loses innocence,
finding its rest in waste long spent.
What sufferings! then, Thou took
for me,
that sullied pangs and groans,
I may, before Thy throne,
for Thy blood's sake,
cast all today.

A Fine Art

See the blues that drag you down?
Viewing them through the blood of Christ
gives a loving, purple glow
of royal, exquisite, gentle strokes;
sin's aches washed out; eternal life;
a brand new song from beyond the strife.

May the lights of all God's heavens
increase the hope you bear,
reminding you of all He's done,
in every trial and care.

Along this road of sin and woe,
many will pass away,
belonging not to Christ alone,
refusing to accept His way.

Of course, God gives us every chance,
against our natural side,
desiring that we look to Him.
His wounds, His blood, we need abide.

Upon the cross He finished all,
removing forever sin's stain.
So, now, each of us may turn
to Jesus Christ, and heaven gain.

Battles

Why do you marvel now, my friend,
that after all these years
of walking with the LORD our God,
you just now see my tears,
and frailties, sins, and falling down,
as if you never read
the battles Christ and Paul both had,
between the heart and head?
Just because our Jesus Christ
has made His home in me,
does not mean my flesh ne'er sins,
though one day that shall be.
You've heard and watched me day by day.
Your heart, o'er me, now grieves.
We have talked and laughed and prayed.
You think I have deceived.
Between the Spirit and the flesh
the battles yet rage on,
and are fought each hour we face,
night, day, and dusk to dawn.
If I have failed before your eyes
to do all that God said,
then surely such a life as mine
is why Christ's blood was shed.
So do not disappointed be,
that I have flesh like yours,
for God is working yet, my friend,
His Holy Spirit chores.
God's Spirit cleanses, teaches, saves,
and makes all things anew.
So as our faith abides in Christ,
us, both, He will take through.

new friendship blessing
kindness poured upon one's soul
wagging dogs may cringe

Waiting For Takeout

What eyes were those, engaging,
that sought for hope, for love,
within my eyes, my soul?
for a love I could not give?
In truth, it was not me she sought,
but then, she didn't know, herself.
And, lest the LORD and others grieve
for loss of faithfulness, and face,
my incontinence blushed, within,
as aching sighs poured silently down
my empty halls of remorseless lust.
There upon the bar I gave,
amid finished meals and bottles,
delivered of their temporary benefits,
I gave God's gift to womanhood.
It was not me, myself, but Christ:
her only hope of love,
true consolation for that longing look,
behind the searching gentle eyes and smile.
Though we passed as strangers,
yet, God cleared the way,
that she might partake
His Son's eternal life and feast,
far better than short-lived takeout meals.
The door behind me closed,
as she read on in eagerness,
of just desserts and redemptive bliss.
Oh! Blessed thought that God does care
to choose any time and place
to share His graciousness.

Teacher's Vale

"It'll not," she thought,
"be a gravy train."
But, still she suffered so much pain.
She did not seek "a piece of cake."
No, her mistake
was heeding leaders who were not,
with mendacious tripe, bureaucra-hype,
that swamped the urgencies to right
the wrongs, and so descended
scholastic night
and terrors growing day by day,
'round her and cohort in the fray.
You know the children really ought
to've had a chance at what she taught,
but poor support, meetings galore,
swine interventions, and retorts,
told the LORD, "Away! Away!"
...and curricular mandates did impair,
leaving her barely time to pray
that some small soul might learn his fill
of right, and so escape the stinking swill.
Her tenure stolen, her road completed,
just by God's grace, she's not defeated.

If we mix with holy faith,
superstition's entangling ways,
we find corrupted on the ground,
carrion droppings soon abound.
No matter then bright blessings sent,
when joined to superstitious vent,
proposing luck a help to you,
we void the benefit of truth.

Adopted Children

Slow and slinking
shadows come and go
before the face of night
inspects the weary fruit of day,
and calls its stars and denizens,
to come collect the dew of doubt and fear
that swept across the superstitious mind
proclaiming omens of a darker side,
that all too late recalled the hope
and joy which lie abundantly afoot
in easy reach, though folded
into battered, layered shades, tinted
invisibilities, and retinal incursions
streaming to make up the lacking
stimuli that not so long ago
titillated rods and cones with solar bliss.
Now the few short hours have grown
to eons beaten into foil thin spreads
enveloping consciousness and dreaded
extensions of breathing toil exclaiming
virtuous embroiled looks and sighs
that part for no one on this earth
when passions run amok,
consenting, blessing every vile thought
of pleasant feeling burned into
waking space and frame,
enlivening pictures thought unseen,
now walking, playing, holding tight
the passing flesh addicted
to itself, a bondage long addressed
in Royal blood that Christ did pour
so lovingly out upon our souls,
by faith enlightened, drawn to be
the next of kin of the Living God.

Beyond This World

Remember there are things,
that float on soft white wings,
above our heads so high,
mere specks up in the sky,
that move in nature's course,
for better or for worse,
as on their way they press,
God sees their every stress.
So as we look above,
and thank God for His love,
His daily care for us,
in spite of worldly fuss,
let sorrows soon depart,
and heaviness of heart,
and let us swift rejoice,
to Him now lift our voice.

Fear not either tears or rain,
for both do wash things clean again,
and sunny hearts and skies will soon
illumine and warm our present swoon.

Christ, My Sabbath

How many times the days went quickly by.
How many times unto the LORD I cried.
How many tears have washed this face again.
How many faces have I had before the end?

What gracious love has caught my eye,
overcome my sin, not passed me by!
Such merciful care deserves my best.
Now, in Jesus, I submit and rest.

Whistle Stop

I'm glad God knows this place.

I wait.

A little shed,
a few boards
accompany me.
Time creeps on,
like the dog painfully limping beyond the tracks.

The train has not pulled in.
"On time" is not the issue.
My ears ache,
straining to hear that wailing distant promise of your arrival.

We sigh, the country wind and I.
It mocks me.
So teased am I,
it imitates your whispers far away.
Platform boards and shoes squeak,
consorting with field mice,
in rustic sympathy,
pleading for your swift and safe return.

And now, at last,
tears have crept into my eyes,
that, were others looking on,
would think the wind had stung,
but no! I know I heard that mournful sound,
that fills and comforts heartache,
that soon within your arms
I will be tightly bound.

Looking Up

Millions of people busy, around,
and family members, to whom I'm bound,
yet, where in all this hustling rush,
is there time for me, a time of hush,
or time to snuggle close and bare
my heart and mind, to find repair.
You say to me you love and care,
but are so very occupied,
though you'd lament, then, if I died,
longing for my shadow gone,
which shared our bed from two til dawn,
no longer able to eat your food,
or help with chores, or do you good.
How could it be that I'm focused wrong,
when Christ still fills my heart with song,
and shows me how to walk His way,
that I not in temptation stray?
...except that now the pain's still clear,
a Job-like trial for us both here.
The flesh still only wants its way,
and mourns its death from day to day.
But, over all its cries there rings,
the redemption song my spirit sings.

Points of Light

Is it any wonder,
stars shine so well at night?
When all about is darkness,
enthraling is their light.

Yet, now I speak of loneliness,
and the awe it stirs, you see,
that even though I know God's love,
I wish you here with me.

So wherein lies the darkness?
It's surely not in God,
nor in your fondly lit up eyes,
I envision, and I laud.

I think the darkness nearer still:
my beating natural heart,
lingering in its selfish state,
an earthly fleshly part.

Should we, yet, worry about
old tendencies to sin?
The glories of Christ still shine above,
and keep my soul, within.

Then let us speak from light to light,
abiding in God's great love.
In honesty now, we know our hearts,
let's rejoice in His holy nudge.

There's always much to learn and do,
in love, and truth, and Spirit.
And by His grace He carries us on,
teaching us how to share it.

Let this friendship grow day by day,
beyond worldly care or blame.
What love we share in truth He will use,
for His glory and His fame.

That Voice

I think I'd know that voice,
no matter where I went,
no matter what the distance:
as wood thrush echoes reverberating clearly,
the evening song, warm, watery,
deepening the awe of softening, ending day;
as mountain stream chorus,
about tumbled stones, and roots,
and limbs, cool music
to the hiker with a thirst,
declaring its presence
hills and trees away, beckoning;
as boisterous surf roiling, leaping,
broadcasting its bountiful expanse
and abundance, far beyond
the engrained dunes crunching under foot;
as timely breeze stirring leaves
to hush out all other sounds,
its bold soft force insisting,
urging contemplation
of the peace and joy of God;
as baby laughing,
turning up withered mouths,
hardened hearts, and downcast eyes,
to smiles and mirth renewing.
Yes, I'd know your voice,
anytime, anywhere,
no matter what the distance,
no matter where I went.

On Seasonal Religiosity

If I commit whoredom,
shall I feel no shame?
Even before God's judgment seat,
shan't I blush
when He shows my idols
with which I have lain,
or bowed my foolish head;
to which I sent too many souls,
and prospered them as death itself?
How swift I foul my holy days:
I turn to self and fun,
substituting pagan arts,
when Christ needs reign supreme.
I've nailed their very symbols
to His tabernacle door:
presenting, now, resurrection rabbits,
so I play the whore, again.

Lord, I pray thee, turn me back,
correct such rottenness.
Restore me, Lord, to walk in truth,
for, in Jesus Christ, my soul You've blessed.

what path we now take
God has made the way before
our constructs will fall

(originally released 2001: american haiku CD)

doctrines of soul sleep
not of God's eternal plan
wet cement turns hard

(originally released 2001: american haiku CD)

All the money in the world won't help,
nor all the hugs and kisses, too.
When God the Father calls us to Him,
only Jesus' blood will do.

Jesus, now, before thy tree,
the cross you bore at Calvary,
the cause, you came to set us free,
that all my sin you washed from me,
by Holy Spirit power, the shame
is now destroyed, in Jesus' name
and blood, in holiness that came,
corrupted souls to full reclaim
eternal blessing at His feet,
for God doth everyone entreat
to not neglect salvation sweet,
that every soul be clean and neat,
not needing bear the pain of Hell,
but that all things with each be well,
despite death's fast approaching bell,
we swift be saved, and others tell.
Thank you, that, the war You've won,
that life's much more than daily fun.
All glory be to God the Son.
In Him it's finished, truly done.

Word Studies

God's truth, knowledge, love are higher than all our study.
God studies our sense of love, truth, and knowledge.
God knows if we study and love in truth.
God loves our true study of knowledge.

Study love in truth to know God.
Study God in truth to know love.
Love truth in God to know how to study.
Love truth to study God.
Love God to study truth.
Know God to love truth.
Know truth to love God.
True love knows God.
True love studies God.
True study loves God.

God communicates
life's too short to neglect Christ
summer vines entwine

birch tree seeds in pool
fruitfulness appearing waste
God makes no mistakes

(originally released 2001: american haiku CD)

Lingering Death

You must have loved your career,
once.
It's not that I can't forgive them,
or haven't forgiven,
and tried to move along---
but, to watch your dying agonies,
day after day,
for all these years,
your tortured body, mind, spirit,
as others abuse your good will,
...and you lie there,
as a pimpstick-beaten whore,
your money-maker bleeding raw,
thinking somehow, being killed,
you can control the outcomes.
You are not God, nor martyr,
though I am certain, on Judgment Day
many shall have to answer
for vile treatment of you.
Your vanity they hooked, I fear.
You swallowed their baiting,
and now --- and now I wait
to see the outcomes
of your non-frontations
turned within.
So you finished your tour,
yet think of returning for more:
a dualist refusing to duel.
My tears are dried,
my anger wilted,
and still the Holy Spirit pleads, as I,
an end to this earthly madness.

Siblings (Phileo)

Where is the girl in the pretty dress?
I miss her voice, I must confess.
Where is the music of her laugh?
I don't know if she knows, by half,
the walks I'd like to take with her,
and talks that I wish would occur.
Where went our vision, shyly shared?
Where the hours of unfettered care?
For now the busy-ness and strain,
her days and hours truly drain,
and who am I to ever claim
that anything else could be so plain,
but that her duty she does well,
and by God's grace her works still tell
her faith and faithfulness for sure
honor God and husband, and endure.
So press I on now day to day
and in my love, my heart doth pray,
that God sustain and keep my dear,
my sister whom He leads on here.
How sweet the lingering taste of dreams,
that hung 'tween heaven and earth it seems,
that caught a moment's slim delight,
to lift my heart and turn back fright,
that made me feel as men are wont,
when burdens weigh and make us gaunt,
when striving bears its special curse,
and wounded hearts need tender nurse.
So fret not now for all these words,
my guess is that your heart has heard,
and measures these few mortal sighs,
and though a tear may grace your eye,
yet, on you'll press with what is good,
and quick forget that I've been rude
in pouring all my long lament
and aging passions' aching vent.
To family, and godly works,
to proper plans, and in the church,
your rightful place you'll still retain,
for in Christ's grace you do remain.
Now my sister, you know my all,
and as we answer Jesus' call,
holding hands and hearts aloft,
though things in life our lives do toss,
together for each other's love,
by God's good pleasure from above,
submitting now all things to Him,
our every feeling, doubt, or whim,

we can still love and smile and laugh,
knowing that when this life is past,
our hope is always set in Christ,
our only choice and sacrifice.
So learning still, by His great love,
together rejoicing, we look above.
This now I close and place, you see,
at Jesus' cross, and near to thee.

King of the Hill's Progression

Look at me, up here on high,
on this huge pile of stuff and lives,
which I have trod to gain this view,
deftly using even you.
The Devil, world, and flesh rejoiced,
in such as I who made the choice
to put aside all else in life,
for worldly gain through every strife.
My panorama awesome stands,
sweeping broadly across all lands.
Yet, no one ever told me how
to live alone, as I do now.
I've trust for none, and love for few.
My days collect the premiums due,
on wagered notes, both short and long.
Why in my heart is there no song,
no mirth, no joy for all I've won
(upon my chest I feel a ton,)
though this epitome still reigns
o'er hearts and minds of mortal strains?
Their god of practicality,
the wealth's done naught to set me free,
as it's been mine for days and years,
and yet it only brings more fears.
Why am I now more paranoid,
than youth who longs to fill a void,
or place his mark on earthly ball,
as once I dreamed I'd have it all?
But, now the gains of this earth fade,
before impinging deathly shade,
and reexamination wise,
bids search past earth, beyond the skies.
Some stranger told me once to look,
within God's Word, His holy book,
that Bible truth would fears assuage,
and cleanse from guilt at any age.
I had no use for things like that,
in passing years, as I grew fat.
Now I see my vision flawed,
that all the time the Mighty God
was watching each and every step.
With flesh fast losing earthly grip,
self-justification now seems lean,
my failure's not just counting beans,
but neglecting One who gave me breath,
who walks with me to brink of death.
I here acknowledge all He did
in Jesus, to gain my eternal bid.
For in these parting moments swift,

Christ, my Lord and Savior, lifts
and comforts the remnant of this life,
to guide my soul past death, short strife,
the only self that remains beyond,
when flesh and bone, and wealth, are gone,
and Judgment Seat, of His, I face.
I now trust nothing but His grace.
In this humility, He tells me rise,
to sit with Him beyond the skies,
and though, for sin, creation will burn,
from me, He promised, He never will turn.

Mercies

What would you say,
if my face came,
though miles away,
upon that lane,
as homeward bound,
that to your mind,
would you then frown,
I came behind,
as fresh the day,
the kindest words,
when we did say,
that each had heard,
in many whiles,
in honesty,
and shared our smiles?

No phony plea
did pass our lips,
the meal consumed,
not sirloin tips,
might be resumed,
if trust be there,
to love as friends,
and if we care,
without all ends,
beyond all things.
To heal our hearts
shall Freedom ring,
though now apart?

Thank God, the hour
of blessing shared
in touching showers,
and souls repaired.

You hate me,
yet I must love you:
“For God so loved the world...”

Many birds around that tree,
a crow has perched
with refuse free:
two stale crusts of day old bread
that cause loud squawks,
turn avian heads.
With other crows eyeing, spying about,
the first shuffles pieces
crotch to crotch, in and out.
First to the scene, possession taken fast,
a lot of firm pecking
yields crumbs of hardtack.
Tired of distractions, attention all frayed,
a mouthful of biscuits,
with black wings, flies away.
Firmly grasping desires, hard though they be,
with patience and wisdom,
God's grace will guide thee.

En Vacance

With coral talcum of the Gulf, and
feathered tans and browns pecking up
God's provision, He paints
another baby-blue and pink end
to daily reflections and accents.
Where do the bitterns, cormorants,
pelicans, sandpipers, ring-necked and
mourning doves, and frigate-birds
begin and end... and the egrets...
between the bits of irridescent shells
and irridescence tipped waves on bay and sea?
Now laughs and cries of tearless gulls
slip through mangrove hands and knees,
as peering bright-eyed grackles
sweet talk each other, dining.
Waving to God the whole time,
pointy dancing rich green shining
razor-edged lashes,
with wind-tossed moiré-filtered light,
palms and palmettos praise Him,
gently skyward reaching.
As shadows close the sunny spaces,
driving back the light,
and bright waters turn muddy brown,
a lone russet-necked wader
strikes fast
that one last minnow of the day.

Bee Keeper

If we taste honey,
shall we not desire more?
But, who shall tend the hives,
to endure the stings of harvest,
that further sweetness we enjoy?
What little, now, we see or know
beyond this physicality,
even God's most astute disciples
discerning, barely, the truer realm,
where mercy reigns with God, supreme.
His Spirit watches, cleanses,
mends our hungry lives, feeding,
keeping famine from our souls.
Appetite can never satisfy,
and costs so many worker bees,
but, Christ has worked and taken all our stings.
Our fingers, now, we may dip,
and to our mouths apply
that golden moisture, sweet and strong,
for truest love's gone to greatest length,
and purest patience triumph bought,
in spite of all our just desserts.
In appetite we seek for more,
and holy grace has full secured
God's sweetest life to taste,
with Him, and with each other.

Marathon

How long and hard must heartache run,
to win its lonely marathon,
to find relief from tearful stress,
and loose the breathless bound up chest?
How much fearful sweat must stain
the fading garb that still remains,
sheets and towels sopping wet,
and extruding brow of fret?
No second wind, yet, wants to come,
to pour its balm into that wound,
to comfort stride, the cramps of pain,
to bolster strength for the finish lane.
So, pounding step by step along,
no joyful thought, but mournful song
in time with thudding footfalls sore,
the broken heart is keeping score,
and pulses on, despite the way.
Each beat, each step, each breath does pray.
Though awkwardly running town to town,
or getting up when fallen down,
this steeplechase through testing fire
burns out the fat, and leaves desire
for God's respite to swiftly show
our path through Christ to heaven's glow.
The finish, there, at home, at last,
all self, all lust, all suffering past,
with peace and joy and love all close,
eternally praising Jesus most.

“Dis” Passion

Could that be slang?
...another way to personalize
one’s productive seething sentiment?
...or was it care-less,
a sterilizing attitude,
missing the point of affect?
I cannot survive the latter,
the death-grip that throttles all,
good, as well as, evil.
Distances and needs, small or great,
are relative matters of willingness,
describing, shaping, admitting
one’s participation in other’s lives:
our decisions, for which
we shall give account to God.
How can I help others,
if I do not love them?
How can I love others,
if I do not help them?
So let “dis” passion’s slang ring out!
Better to live amid tears and joys,
than to suffocate and deny
God’s gifts and calling.
Oh! Bless God for His discernment
to complete the tasks at hand,
...filled with “dis” passion!

Tempering The Season

Winter was passed by its own death,
by greens, by flowerings,
by wetnesses of springtime excitements
coursing urgently through vessels of life.
Passing lives, new births, histories,
written in Earth and Heaven,
proclaim Winter gone, again,
as creatures around us call
and sing their forceful desires
for living intimacy and union.
They declare fertile feelings,
honest intents, and passion
to transmit the gift of life
to one more generation.
I wonder, amid my own urges,
how long the LORD of all
would have me sing and wait,
before you join me, to share,
ecstatically, the bliss of Spring,
beside the gentle sounds of waters
(much slower than my pulse;)
beneath the stars of God
(His brilliant angels
watching over us in our agony.)
Should I strive to make a bed,
to guess His liking and yours?
When it is time, perfect time,
when He and you are ready,
then God will prepare our nest,
our passion, our joy, our rest.
We desire, but need not, to spring ahead,
for we cannot out-run Spring or God.

A Sailor's Prayer (Transference)

Dear God in heaven!
My Savior!
This frigid storm is blasting,
and icebergs tearing to pieces,
the sinking ship I'm on!
Is it a sin to hope myself lifted,
before the hull is crushed;
to be placed in a strong new vessel,
with clean sheets, making way,
holding fast to the wind?
Is it a sin, if I am drowning and freezing,
to yearn,
for shelter and fiery warmth?
Must I first--
go down with this vessel,
broken, soaked, cold, pounded,
to float on scraps of mast, or box, or thwart,
before I am to be rescued?
And You answer me, graciously,
quietly, through the maelstrom,
"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."
I am at Thy mercy, LORD,
so in Thy love I trust and rest.

Electric Life

Every time the switch is thrown,
I jump another yard,
blessing God, He gets me through
all landings, soft and hard.

On Hearing Coleridge's Poetry Read

Col'ridge, now, you seem the rotter,
plaguing modern sons and daughters,
centuries since the verse you writ,
denouncing war, forewarning pit,
proclaiming God's most wondrous works,
and shame of what we each may shirk.
Humanity cycles once again,
from self-esteem to lowly pen.
We curse God's King, who troubled by.
We praise our works, and poison sky,
spewing far and wide our dregs,
denying, yet, the poor still beg
to glean the scraps beneath our feet,
our trampled dainties that were meat,
that could yet nourish many more,
on this and every teeming shore.
But, tight to self we guard the loot,
and friendless starving pest would shoot.
Technology bedazzles eyes,
yet, underneath remaining lies
our sinful bent that swiftly strikes
family, blessings, and what's right;
that prideful creature rearing head,
striving to keep us living dead,
as severed worm, to squirm and writhe,
in unrequited passion's slide,
whose willful deviations score
our hearts and minds until we're sore,
drenched in burning agonies,
without relief of holy breeze.
Such wayward fools we prove to be,
to cling, despite God's gravity,
to faulty heartache's restless curse.
Samuel! Samuel! Your words still lurk,
vexing, mocking the long dark stain,
that dares not bide in calm refrain.
Should we not heed your phrased lines,
and learn from follies past, behind,
from years of youthful manic waste;
not come to wisdom, prayerful, chaste?
Shan't we surpass the realm of sin,
now let God's Spirit fill to brim
the cup of life, and let it run
and overflow with God the Son?

Pay Now, Pay Later

Florence, Pisa, Venice,
Notable names, historical Italy,
travels there soon reveal
a greater need for VISA and repentance.

Blessing For Robyn

Oh! Nice to see you, yes, it was.
Minutes flew faster than a dove.
Work's ambiance desired much,
but, your smile's enlightening touch
made coming in a joy, today.
May God bless you, I truly pray,
and keep you from each vile alarm,
all snuggled safe within His arms,
and angels flashing swords about
keep pangs of deadly sin without.
Now fly to godly bosom's rest;
rejoice when you have done your best,
belaying fears and doubts, now gone,
abiding strength in Christ alone.
My working day is just begun,
and now you shortly trundle home.
Pray list to heav'nly music swell
that lightens hearts and keeps from hell,
as Holy Script, God seeks our good
and gives us peace through Jesus' blood.

Dear Johns

...just one more trick to turn,
before those wedding bells,
and grace,
will set me free from you---
no longer to fret about sicknesses,
or issues of fertility;
no longer the flaming fearful excitements,
nor strangers' looks,
all too familiar, devouring,
probing prods, hurrying hands,
knowing not my real name,
acquainted only with the flesh I tendered,
that I gave you on this stage of worldly gain,
exchanged for your paltry sums.
May God help you, too, cease to dance performances
of lust and loneliness, despair and depravity,
despotic hungry mutual inspections,
fearful checkings for signs of infections,
viewing self externally
(such out-of-body experiences resented bitterly,)
waiting for heart, mind, and soul
to come as one to God for peace,
for mercy, for cleansing,
long overdue.

All, that was before this last contract,
I abandon.

Now, I embrace love, hope, trust.
I declare and spurn the former works
(God is my witness,)
that I need not dread
those who came before, like you,
who partook of this weak old bed.
For he, whom I wed, knows the path
this, my weary back, has slid.
I could not hide that from him,
lest greedy historians try to seize
advantage of the weakness that is gone;
lest some portray a paucity, a moral lack,
wantonness, debauchery disclosed,
along with nakedness and woe.

Foul spirit, fly! Away!
The cleansing Christ does bid you flee!!!
The commanding Sovreign, you must obey,
whose blood has paid for even me,
and for even this, this last pecuniary repose.

My mind wanders away,
from all too practiced banter, and heated noises,
as wedding bells plead notably.

Now pass! Now pass, mortal glut
and nevermore bestow, this way,
those torrid agonies and waste!

Make haste! Make haste,
oh, Groom of God, to reconcile and receive
this often damaged virginity,
and let holy healing balm employed
sufficient be, to cross the chasm,
new life infusing into me,
for wedding bells, both near and far,
by God's grace, I hear and see!

God, help me now, bestow my arts,
on him I hold so dear to heart,
for whom my past's but a working tale
for idle gossipers who pale
at truest love's forgiving light,
while they abide in hurtful night,
mindless of God's pardon sure,
to all who yearn the past were pure.
Christ has become my hope of late,
He who is Keeper, LORD, and Gate.
For Jesus finally helped me hear
salvation's call and priceless cheer.
My past is over. The tricks are done,
and now in Christ my victory's won.
Though all you, Johns, who came at me
saw just a whore, God set me free!!!
You never cared for my state in life,
but, blessed God made me a wife!
Now I bless God, for evermore,
and no more need I play the whore.
So, now, with bells, I exit right,
and leave you, Johns, to find God's Light.

Daring Joy

Daring is not always loud;
revealed in flashy brilliance.
Jesus knows and gives you grace,
opening hearts, minds, doors,
yearnings turning into smiles,
averting, with kind looks, despair,
nullifying fears, exhaustion, doubts,
touching softly the aches, in lives
overthrown by lengthening shadows:
necrotic incursions, lesions,
eroding confidence and strength.
Lustrous gifts you pour out,
love with great intensity,
expressive soothing tenderness,
despite odds and appearances.
Every one who comes to seek
may walk in that comfort
afforded by your loving heart,
refreshed in Christ, giving,
clearly offering your gem-tears, again,
adding friendship's light,
identified in Spirit, truth, and eyes,
declaring kindness' theme.
Always may you be blessed, in turn, by God.

Coloring

From darkness to light
(for darkness has no hue.)
we are translated by God's hand,
(not from nothingness,
but from His foreknowledge.)
into this temporary world,
to grow, for His glory,
rainbow splendrous, tinted,
gradations of masterful expression:
from seminal pallidness,
ruddy ovulations,
blushes, flushes,
tangled variegated forestries, pressed,
and glistening transparencies, overlaid,
the Designer's dreams revealed:
genetically diffused and bare primaries,
the mixed palette champions one-ness,
in the big picture, being human.
For His pleasure,
and to all who would share His view,
the liberty of His artistry to blend
is recognized a well refined portrait:
His choices and applications,
from palette to foundation, touch and stroke,
by hair, by limb, by vessel,
by bone, by skin, by fluid,
by organ, by family, by nation,
He layers, raising the whole in colors,
loving, atom by atom, molecule by molecule,
despite our dark contrariness,
for God is holy, love, and light,
and, love and light stir colors.
So, we must be drawn and come to Him,
from darkness to His light
(for darkness has no hue.)

[Inspired by the book "Maroon" by Danielle Legros Georges.]

Laundry Line Afternoon

How sweet!
and rare---
two hours spent
beneath maple leaves,
wobbling green,
sparkled between,
lightly breezed,
rocking,
strung out,
entwined in faith,
resting, dozing,
hammocked, slung
between poles,
God's hands,
heaven and earth.

HA! HA!

It's funny to relax,
laugh-able, to trust
good laughs,
in grace abiding,
light and wind
playing too,
in my audience:
sensational parts,
freshening, airing,
to bleach away
the smell and stain of trials.

At Jodi's Place

God has not given up,
amid the chatter,
between orders,
boasts, races, laments,
bravado, and showmanship.
Tattooed, indelible,
for any willing to see,
hearts knit, giving,
whether the door is
open or closed
(in spite of other doctrines, strayed,)
still God calls,
and shows with every meal served,
a glimpse of mercy practiced,
to "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Carly! Carly!
Beware! Beware!
Tonight-mites bite!
Tonight-mites bite!
The little nips and chunks they take
deface our lacquered dreams.
No satin sheets,
no fragrance rare
can overcome, nor pain remove,
once fanged bites
make hopes to leak,
through porous fantasy...
yearning, yearning, yearning,
still we wish for what might be.

Carly! Carly!
Beware! Beware!
Tonight-mites bite!
Tonight-mites bite!
God's perspective alone can free.
Tonight-mites bite!
Tonight-mites bite!

(Inspired by Carly Simon's song "Anticipation.")

For Larna

Through glistening eyes the heart speaks true,
that you love us, and we love you.
Though shared tears fall, as summer rain,
God's Spirit comforts with gentle refrain.

Even sin's darkness is terrified,
and seeks refuge for its own loathsome bleakness,
when minuscule loneliness creeps onto the scene,
dragging, flailing, broken limbs and entrails,
leaking cries and streak-ed heartache,
consuming all in its path,
spewing half-digested jetsom
(not the ambergris of which perfume is made.)
There is naught, but Christ,
to tame, to heal, to fill
so vacuous a lurking presence.

Perspective On Your Illness

A hot sharp knife burns clean.
A cold sharp knife, shocking, numbs.
But, this tepid dull blade,
twisting, gouging, hacking my heart,
yields an eternally cursed scream,
that only God can really hear,
or understand, or touch,
or comfort, or bring to true peace,
for He alone shed all His blood,
and finished that loneliest race,
far worse than our travail.

The Lemon

Like the lemon I squeeze,
wringing,
wringing to burst its cells,
dripping benefits into my tea,
vaporizing its odors,
that I may partake
the fullness of its pleasures,
my sourness,
my tartness,
my natural structure
must be thoroughly bruised,
that God, also,
may find me a blessing to Him.

How did I lose my innocence?
Was it failing to pray,
or go to church meeting,
or watching death tear at my spouse?
Was it two divorces,
or marrying three times?
Was it lusting after money,
or desiring many women?
Was it going to war,
or being afraid to go?
Was it turning away someone needy,
or contemplating suicide?
Was it toying with drugs, booze, or porn?
Did angry thoughts or words do it,
or deceitful self-interest?
Maybe it was wanting too much.
Maybe it was my overactive imagination.
Maybe it was due to autoeroticism.
How does one lose such a treasure,
and not know how, or when?
What great occasion was it?!
I found no record, no memorial,
no assassins' holiday
marking the dead or the deed.
There's not even an echo of a death-rattle.
No small shred, nor molecule, remains
of that once existent gift from God.
So, I looked to Christ, and asked.
To my amazement, He replied!
He told me that He knew the place, the time,
the essence of the matter, and detail.
He said it was recorded in His book,
to be reviewed before His throne,
that very first, most awful, time...
that I said, "No," to God.

I was astounded, horrified,
that He should note that little thing!
But yet, so plain to see,
way back as a tiny child
my rebellion, in sin, bound me.
Although I'd thought my way was best,
it did not set me free.
I knew right then I had no hope,
and so, repenting, did plainly weep.
God put His hand upon my head;
murmured, "My poor lost little sheep."
He showed me then how all do turn
from innocence, one day,
straying each upon strange paths,
not heeding His warnings or way.

But then He moved His Spirit Great,
touching my contrite heart,
and as I turned to seek His face,
for repentance came a clean new start.
Though lost was original innocence,
now I'm not dead in sin:
the moment I made peace in Christ,
His promises cleansed within.
What once did blot God's record book,
Christ's blood, away, has washed,
and Satan's accusations sharp,
for Jesus' sake, now, are quashed.

Night Flight

From way up here it's hard to tell,
where stars begin and earthlings dwell,
with clouds above, below, between,
all pierced by moving sparkling scenes.
Chase, I, sun and time; go West.
One day, I shall, in God's light, rest.

Thank You, David and Joan

Forty years have, melting, gone,
and yet, the work seems far from done.
Though God has strained and poured your lives,
in other vessels your love abides.
Now many lights around you glow,
along life's path, as miracles, show,
despite the fleeting cares around,
God's Holy Word remains your ground.
You've let Christ reach right through your hands
to all souls here, and other lands,
that each might find true peace, as you,
and in God's love gain life anew.
Our Savior holds the thread of life,
for each of you, husband and wife.
So, on that Rock of faith rejoice,
and make to Him a joyful noise
for caring daily and using you
to minister in love, through years that flew,
full occupied with blessings or woes,
you've helped us all, Christ's way you chose.

(Presented to the Ferreros, October 13, 2002: celebrating their 40 years of biblical Christian evangelistic ministry at Mansfield Christian Fellowship, Mansfield Depot, Connecticut.)

Meeting Children

Those little eyes,
that peer, so shy,
that yearn to ask
for reasons why
they can not, yet,
for they've just met,
trust your smile,
and love, to get.
They want to snuggle
close and huddled,
warm by you,
but stay befuddled,
until you make,
and ice do break,
a fool of self,
their measuring stake.
Then warming fast,
with love to last,
their tiny arms
around you cast,
secure each one,
through tears or fun,
day by day,
'til race is run.

Espresso

Rushing splashes, flashes,
I see clearly in my mind's eye,
but, can not catch nor keep up with
the programmed determination of this express train
eagerly plunging toward Firenze.
Let me stop, to touch, to smell, to study,
for one moment, one hour,
glorious, glowing, orange poppies beside the way,
in fields, on sidings. But, no.
Schedules must be met.
We ride together, you and I,
this swift express,
and I can not keep up with nor catch
my thoughts, my feelings,
flicking by,
carried along by the schedule,
constant switchings,
the motivations of unseen forces,
and the all too goal-oriented business at hand,
and over which we have no control.
We can't even jump off this train,
to land in fields of glowing poppies,
but have to wait for the Station Master's welcome,
at the end of the line.

Waiting For A Friend's Decision
(On The Brink Of Redemption)

What joy to hear my friend now looks
to find God's peace within God's Book;
and sits to talk of God's one plan
to redeem from sin each child of man;
to accept Jesus' cleansing blood,
that wholly purging holy flood;
at eternal life that starts here anew,
with purpose, and a joy that's true.
Oh, friend, dear friend, I prayed and prayed.
Now, may I not for you dismay.
My hope is built on God's own work,
assured that He will never shirk,
when earnest soul cries from sin's pain,
the Holy Spirit makes it plain,
our desperate need to trust Jesus,
and let Him live in us in love.
Will you choose faith in Christ, friend? Sing!
beneath God's blessed healing wings.
I praise You, LORD, that, in Your hands,
souls trusting Jesus will ne'er be damned.

Facing Cain's Work

In aging frames passing by,
the light is --- just perfect ---
on closed dark tired eyes,
hollow, hallowed
in thin-skinned heads, three,
genetically, skeletally human,
masked in death, harmlessly snuggled.
Quiet sallow complexionless shadows
hint their earthly heartaches
laid to sodden rest in nameless trenches,
at odd angles, beautifully, horribly
composed, and about to decompose,
this fatherless, motherless, childless,
non-family testimony, gruesomely related,
as if in bed, starving
in wintry bloodless-cold sleep;
as if hoping that their closeness
will push away the guilty deeds they've borne
of all who turned their backs on them...
as these quiet ones, still, only cry out
to be loved in truth.
I almost know, and confess, their names.
Oh! God! Help me not turn my back
on any You call my neighbors!

[Written after viewing World War II film footage of liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp.]

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