

THE NAZARENE FROM GALILEE II
METRIC VERSE



“Circle of Angels” or “Celestial Rose,” by Gustav Doré

Peter C. Venable, M.Ed., LPC, LCAS
2220 Queenswood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27106
oelkers9@msn.com 336-760-2897
88 pages, 10,485 words

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AUTHOR AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OLDEST QUESTIONS

Quiddity

What can I know? What ought I do? What may I hope?
From quarks to quasars we wonder and quest.
The climb uphill stalls by life's inexorable slope;
Whether glutting thirst or at grief's arrest.

The questions can't be quashed or placed in quarantine.
They flow beneath the breastbone and sea foam;
They whisper from each quake and from each wringing dream.
They are the street signs leading us toward home.

Through life's quirks and quandaries and luminosities,
They rise under the pillow on the bed,
To quash easy solutions that lure and appease,
And flare across the ceiling overhead.

The Philosopher's Stone

The professor questioned, with thunderous peal
Is reality inside or outside the skull?
In thirty minutes I'll know what your wits reveals
By this test—and how sharp you are, or how dull.

(What I feel is real, but is what I feel, real?)
“Perception is reality,” I thought and wrote.
Later he asked, *Is this what you think, or feel?*
I left, shaking my head. I failed, and started to mope.

Driving toward home, my mind jellied and congealed.
At desk, I pondered this philosophical jam.
I grabbed my Bible for answers to my ordeal.
Christ's answer: *Before Abraham was, I AM* (John 8:58)

Light's Gravity

So what is ultimate reality?
Quantum waves; cosmic inflation?
Things bend and wave in relativity...
The soul?—destined for cessation?

Mind quests for a “theory of everything,”
But soul beats time in every mortal.
At its last tic, will Physics feel death's sting?
Does soul dust scatter in some dark portal?

Dark matter, dark energy: Physics' goal...
The Light of the world seeks the darkest soul.

The Only Watchmaker

The only watchmaker is the blind forces of physics.

—Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

From quarks to cosmos, things join, then scatter.
Men probe, dissect, and then pontificate:
From dust to dust. So, what do we matter?

Is there extraterrestrial chatter?
SETI seeks signals to corroborate
Patterns, that cannot come from dark matter.

All life began from chemical batter.
But every human being has the same fate
Since, ultimately, all life is matter.

Forensics collects and tests blood splatter
From a dead man, sprayed on a basement gate.
From dust to dust. So, what does he matter?

Palliative care begins—last hope shatters.
The oncologist does not forecast dates.
Does it, or does it not, really matter?

The rain beats down in relentless patter,
However early in life or how late.
From dust to dust, so what does it matter
Since ultimately, all life is matter?

The Absolute and Relative

The Absolute and Relative

Argue with repartee:

Ultimate One or Ground or Truth,
Or relativity?

Through the Hubble's stupendous view,
Ancient galaxies flee—
The Relative accelerates
Into infinity.

The Absolute stands fixed in place
And holds the master key,
Which science cannot shape the lens
For Relative to see.

So space has curves where matter bends;
Life lives in fixed degrees.
The Absolute spoke to the void—
And gave sanctuary.

Who am I?

Who is immeasurable?

Who was before the universe?

Who made the infinite full?

Who told darkness to disburse?

Who shaped DNA to link?

Who planted in bipeds a soul?

Who gave living water to drink?

Who offered to make them whole?

Who soothed grief and sorrow's ache?

Who quenched raging passions that burned?

Who healed the heart ready to break?

Who gave grace and care unearned?

Who invited peace from death?

Who prepared a place filled with light?

Who gave mortals eternal breath?

Who wanted to share delight?

Who showed the way on earth's dirt?

Who spread His arms on wooden frame?

Who had wounds that mended our hurts?

Who asks us to lift His Name?

Why Did He?

Ex nihilo. "Out of nothing."
 No particles. No void. No time.
 No universe made up of strings.
 No energy or numbers prime.
 No here, no there. Nothing, no place.
 What words describe infinite space?

In the beginning why did He
 Create the heavens and the earth?
 For some this is a mystery,
 His reason for this cosmic birth
 Some thirteen billion years ago.
 Did He hide this from us to know?

The laws of relativity,
 Galactic size to quantum waves,
 Of force and mass and energy,
 Nuclear heat and black hole graves....
 The question remains, "Why did He
 Make all in its complexity?"

On earth He made creatures that flew
 Or crawled or climbed or moved in swarms,
 And surely they all have value
 Since each of them are living forms.
 But are bacteria to apes
 Enough for Him, such living shapes?

You wanted more than living things.
 You wanted mortals as Your friend.
 You wanted one astonishing
 Above creatures, who could ascend.
 In Your image you made humans
 To think and act and be Your kin.

You view Your children with delight
 And whisper in our hearts Your voice.
 Reaching towards us, You wait, invite,
 And if we turn, You sing "Rejoice!"
 We can exist just second-best,
 Or we can soar close to Your breast.

The Answer Veiled

The answer then; the answer now
The answer for the epochs hence:
The answer men and women seek
The answer for malevolence

The answer for the oceans' rise
The answer for hurt and grieving
The answer to the graveyard bleak
The answer for hate and thieving

The answer God offered to change
Was not a politician's spell
Not the Higg's field or cut physique
Nor universe hid parallel.

The answer God offered to change
The hearts of darkness and worldly shine,
Was nailed on beams. God's wounds would speak
The answer veiled by supreme design.

THE REASON WHY

First Love

We loved him because he first loved us.

—1 John 4:19.

[Love] is an abyss of illumination, a fountain of fire, bubbling up to inflame the thirsty soul.

— St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

For the beauty of your face,
Body clothed in glowing lace.
For your touch, which since our birth,
Gave us faith and cosmic worth.
From your life we conquer death,
Safe beyond our final breath.

Your love, a fount of fire,
Your love, a blazing spire,
All of this, we are immersed.
The greatest gift? You loved us first.

(Kingdom Pen Magazine)

After Ecclesiastes

Futility, futility the Preacher cries.
Generation, generation toils and dies.
What's happened then will happen now, with wails and sighs.

The sun goes up; the sun goes down. The candle's lit
 And then it's out. Macbeth: *Life struts and frets*— No wit
 Or tears or heartfelt plea erase the last obit.

Life's a walking shadow? The way to dusty death?
A time to love then soon utter hate under breath?
 Futility of chasing wind and then, bequeath?

The Speaker's wrong. Macbeth may live a shadowed stage
 Where life is bankrupt and worth an idiot's wage
 And all there is sunrise, sunset, from age to age.

The eons come and go, my aging soul's hindsight.
 The way to dusty death is not the final rite.
 That empty tomb of soot is now eternal light.

Theotokos

— “God-bearer”, title of Mary, Eastern Orthodox Church

He whom the entire universe could not contain was contained within your womb, O Theotokos.

—Ancient hymn verse, third century

When it was the time to circumcise
On the eighth day, did you know, Mary?
After the blade pared, as Jesu cried,

Simeon held him—could you foresee
The words he spoke, a prophecy:
“How many would fall and many rise;

The thoughts of many hearts, opened to see;
A light revealed for Gentile eyes;
A sign that most shall scorn and despise?”

Did you ponder, riding toward Galilee,
The last words of Simeon’s prophecy:
A sword will pierce your own soul. Crosswise.

Morning Star

First Cause breathed all worlds into being
(As orbiting lenses bring tiny spirals into seeing),
And shaped symmetry and tones to butterfly wings;
Poured living water from cloud-capped springs.

He sent a shimmering being one night
To grimy herders, soul-stricken with fright,
*About a birth this day in the city of David **
Hidden among sheep and lambs, goats and kids.
A Deliverer swaddled in a feeding-box bed;
a Hebrew infant resting his dear sweet head.
Above, an assembly chanted with single accord
*Glory to the Holy One, the highest Lord. **

Swiftly the sky turned dark, spotted with stars,
But one streamed ahead, from heights so far.
The herders left all and trekked to that beam...
Lost in the spectacle they had just seen:

A mystery so deep, so impossible to grasp;
A mystery so beautiful, so impossibly vast.

*Luke 2:11,14

Kenosis

Millennia ago, You came to dwell in Adam's frame,
To teach, to heal, to raise, to set the world of men aflame:
To set mankind aflame, to set mankind aflame,
And in this icy heart, to thaw and melt with lovely flame.

Millennia ago, You rode under the temple's gate
And whipped away the money-changers' greed, Your chosen fate:
To bear Your chosen fate, to bear Your chosen fate,
And in this shady heart, to fill with light and venerate.

Millennia ago, it took a cross to raise Your height
and to receive the Name of names to blaze away the night:
To blaze away the night, to blaze away the night,
And in this slothful heart, inspire strength to guide in light.

*My Spirit has rejoiced**

As you lay upon a nest of straw,
Contractions waxing in the night,
Cattles' soft moos—dogs licking their paws—
A ray bathes the entrance in starlight—

Do you smell hay, donkey breath and dung?
How the angel told you months ago
“The Spirit conceived” in you, so young?
That “the Most High will overshadow?”

As Joseph delivers your first son,
Cuts the cord, wipes off his tiny face
And light drenches straw from the morning sun:
Do you know you suckle the God of grace?

*Luke 1:47

The Insurrectionary

The Holy One—conceived in womb
(Whoever could have thought?)
Was birthed on straw for a bed room,
And mother's breast He sought.

Three decades passed. He had no place,
No home. He traveled wide
To feed and nurse the poor with grace—
And mend the heart's divide.

For thirty coins a man exchanged
His soul in darkness lost.
In candle light, those men arranged
The healer would be crossed.

Their jaws were bared, with teeth like horns.
“Crucify him!” they brayed
He gazed at them under His thorns,
Then marched in grim parade.

A Roman shoved, then pounded nails.
Mocking, all wagged their heads.
Amid His wrenching joints and wails
Guards guzzled as he bled.

“My God, my God! Forsaken me?
Have You not heard my cry?”
The Son of Man felt their fury—
Hung like sheepskin to dry.

In Potter's Field the grasses grow
Although the lot is lost.
The Place of Skull marks his grave blow,
Where death and life crisscrossed.

Abba's Anthem

This rabbi was the strangest man. He hardly wrote a line.
He spoke on hills, near streams, in ports with words of great design.

He asked "What profit can you gain to covet selfish goals?
What way of life can people claim who march with leather souls?"

He rubbed his spit on man's blind sight and said to wash them free.
The man rejoiced as night turned bright; the others would not see.

Arrested by a mob's death wish, accused by men in dark,
He had the court of a hooked fish thrown in a sea of sharks.

Some ponder now that ancient site, long after icons dull—
They raised him up, those men of might, to die upon a skull.

This Teacher's words, alive today, speak out from hearts and shelves.
The crime his judges had to slay? He made them see themselves.

Speechless

His face transfigured: blinding light!

Peter blundered

Let's build three Booths—

(Sense was sundered.)

This is My Son—listen to Him!

A Voice thundered.

Awestruck, they froze

In dazed blunder.

This is My Son—listen to Him!

Wisdom plundered:

They were speechless—

Stunned in wonder.

The Week the World Knows Well

This is the week the Christian knows.
This is the time of dreaded lows.
When angels weep, and demons lust
As palms curl brown in roadside dust.

This is the week when hate stood up.
This is the week He drank His cup.
Judas sold Light and Peter fell.
“Crucify him” the mob did yell.

This is the week when Pilate slayed.
This is the time a gibbet swayed.
The tomb is bare! Death’s angel fled!
Our souls will rise on Pascal bread!

Psalm 22

For thirty coins a man exchanged
His soul's eternal cost.
In candle light, the plan arranged;
The healer would be crossed.

The lion's jaws were opened wide.
"Crucify him!" They brayed
His mother swayed, then bowed and cried.
He marched in grim parade.

A Roman shoved, then pounded nails.
In scorn, they wagged their heads.
Amid His wrenching joints and wails,
Soldiers poked with spearheads.

"My God, my God! Forsaken me?
Have You not heard my cry?"
The Son of Man felt their fury,
Hung up by men to dry.

In Potter's Field the grasses grow
Although the place is lost.
The Place of Skull marks his deathblow,
Where death and life crisscrossed.

Wednesday 33 AD

Between the pageantry of psalms,
And washing of disciples' feet—
Cursing of the fruitless fig tree—
Betrayal slinking through a street—

Nothing is known. Nothing is known
Of this spring day. Where did He teach?
On temple steps? On Olive's slopes?
Warnings to heed? Figures of speech?

How could they know, what was to come?
That soldiers would gamble with dice?
No Spirit would soothe His parched lips?
This Son of Man, God's sacrifice?

The *Praetorium*

The Nazarene stood
Before the cyclops' eye,
In the shade of the Judgment Seat's hood,
Under the bloodshot sky.

The cyclops winked, asked
"You, a king? What is truth?"
He hoped he would learn this "truth" at last,
This puzzle since his youth.

"For this I was born?"
The cyclops shook his head.
Swaying, tilting, held straight, battered, worn:
"Here is your King," he said.

The Cyrenian

My ancestors spread the blood of lambs
 Over their archways and on door jams.
 The Death Angel freed us from Pharaoh's sway.
 We crossed the Red sea with wives and rams.

. . .

I rode a ship from my home Cyrene,
 Weary of bread and salted sardines
 From Joppa I trudged to Jerusalem:
 The Passover feast amid spring green.

The solders flanked three scourged, bleeding souls.
 One with a wreath of thorns? Roman trolls!
 Why do they yell "Crucify? Crucify?"
 Like scarecrows, to hang on crossbeam poles?

The man fell under his blood-soaked beam.
 "You there," the soldier yelled with a scream,
 "Pick it up and bring it to the Skull."
 I lugged it. His blood made me unclean.

I saw them wilt on that that murky day.
 He looked at me, and then passed away.
 Scoffers sneered and left. I stared, sick at heart.
 Could this Son of Man be so displayed?

Epiphany

The Galilean stood. The prefect smirked:
See it to yourselves, as he showed his back.
They clothed him in a purple cloak, and jerked
Him to the crowd, who mocked in fierce attack:

Smitten by God! Suspended in display,
Temple monarchs wagged their heads and shrieked jeers.
His scruffy friends watched some distance away.
Drowsy soldiers drank and belched between sneers.

Gloomy clouds roared in and smothered the sun.
Sirocco wind blew and swirled dust around.
A woman groaned and wept for her first son.
It is finished. His head drooped to the ground.

The centurion stared and shook his head.
Truly this man was innocent, he said.

Empty

He lay stone still, wrapped in a sheet,
 In pitch behind a boulder door.
 If eyes could see, His hands and feet
 And side, bled drops upon the floor.

His heart stopped cold and breathing ceased.
 From heart and soul His spirit fled.
 His human life was gone, released.
 He did not sleep—he was stone dead.

Salome, Mary of Magdalene
 After sunrise, came to the tomb.
 They stared into this empty scene . . .
 There was no body in the gloom.

They told His men, who shook their heads.
The massive stone was rolled away?
The wrappings folded by His bed?
 An angel said, *He rose today?*

Behind locked doors, they hid in fear
Who moved the stone? A women's tale?
How could He rise so nailed and speared?
 Then suddenly, alive but pale,

His face had lines from wrapping bands;
 His punctures ringed where blood had dried.
Peace be to you! He showed his hands,
 And feet, and side—then smiled wide.

He left the earth. His spirit reigns
 From highest peaks to dungeon cells.
 My rocky heart is strewn with chains—
 Lord cast them out, and in there dwell.

Roll Away the Stone

When the horizon looks bleary;
The woes and wars makes you teary;
Take heart! The Holy One shines clear.
Roll away the stone aside the tomb.

When titan thrones makes you weary;
Broken pledges make you leery;
Take heart! The Lamb of life is here.
Roll away the stone, into spring's bloom.

When hope feels empty and eerie;
Day by day, shows dark and dreary;
Take heart! The Healer's hand is near.
Roll away the stone, into Love's womb.

(Kingdom Pen Magazine)

Welcome Happy Morning

In the garden's break of day,
Women walked their dismal way.
Myrrh and spices they did bring,
Feeling anguish at Death's sting.
Dawn's pink light was all around,
And to the tomb they were bound.

The gates of Death opened wide;
The massive stone, pushed aside.
They stood, awestruck. An angel said,
He has been raised from the dead.
In Galilee is where He went.
There, His words rose like sweet scent:

I said I'd rise on the third day;
Suffering was the Father's way.
He took bread and offered it.
He pointed to the spear's slit.
Thomas, put your finger here.
My Lord, My God, he said, sincere.

The Enemy's reign was done.
Eternal life, Christ has won.
How could I dare fear the grave?
His promise is, He shall save.
My faith is lean, I agree.
Give me the strength to *Follow Me.*

Forty Days

In Jerusalem, they shuddered and hid behind a locked door
The evening of the first day's week—stricken by their dear friend's gore.
Someone pounded, pounded, pounded, and one shaking, turned the key
And two burst in, flailing their arms. One got down on bended knee:
The Lord rose and walked toward Emmaus with Cleopas and me!

They stared and one beat at his breast. *I saw the stone pushed aside.*
The head cloth was folded, and the linin bloody from His side.
Catching their breath, too dazed to speak, they pondered in candlelight.
Peace be to you! Their hearts fixed still. One swooned at this ghostly sight.
Do you have anything to eat? He saw fish and took a bite.

For forty days and forty nights He opened their childlike minds
To what the Father promised, and men's wily words, which blinds.
Do you love me? He asked the son of John. *Yes Lord, you know I love you.*
Jesus said *Feed my lambs*, which startled this Galilean Jew.
Lord, you know all things, Peter replied, *you know my love is true.*

Fiftieth Day after Passover

—*Pentékosté* from *pénte*, “five”

The Spirit of Truth poured out that day,
with wind and celestial flame,
To teach, remind us of all He did:
the Roman cross was why He came,
To rise from death and tell amazed friends,
from tombs they too shall soon appear.
The Twelve heard wind and saw His fire,
blaze and fill their hearts’ atmosphere.
Pray for Holy Spirit desire—
the gift of Christ, with joy proclaim.

A Most Mischievous Superstition

—Tactius, Annals, book 15, chapter 44.

He readied his table, grabbed and dipped
His pen, then began a new chapter in candlelight.
Nero had them naked and whipped,
called Christians by the populace. Such a sight.
A class hated for their abominations.
He studied the candle's swaying flame—
So much to write before evening was done.

It all began with someone with the name
Christus . . . suffered the extreme penalty . . .
at the hands of Pontius Pilatus' decree.

He pondered Rome's sacred Pantheon,
Then inked *a most mischievous superstition . . .*
They pleaded guilty, even to their last breaths—
Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths.

Some were burnt to serve as nightly illumination.

He paused, pondered *what madness caused their veneration?*

Christus Resurrexit

Christus Resurrexit - "Christ is risen," the Paschal Greeting, also known as the Easter Acclamation, is an Easter custom among Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Eastern Catholic Christians.

That Galilean, for subverting, slain—
 A cipher history barely cited.
The Nazarene sect, The Romans complained.
They claimed their Christus rose and was sighted.

Twenty-one centuries of birth and death...
 Easter dawn, all people are invited:
 Breathe deeply *Christus*' everlasting breath.

AΩ

Redeeming the Lost

Sing out my soul, celebrate! Easter's eternal feast.
 The Son of Man, Son of God, routed the serpent beast.
 Sing out my soul, reverberate! That death and the grave
 Vanish like haze this morning: He rose and called to save
 All souls: so, luxuriate: the lost, the last, the least!

AΩ

Pax Christi

Good Friday is over, its requiem.
 Your sacred soul, piercéd by hate—
 We celebrate each Passover.
 What death and darkness? You obliterate!

Saturday: Bradford Pears and Dogwoods bloom;
 Serenades of songbirds resonate.
 The hour of nails, of bloody gloom
 Is dead. Your sacred heart:

I contemplate.

Gospels' Razor

Among competing hypotheses that predict equally well, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected.

—William Occam (1287-1347), English Franciscan friar, scholastic philosopher, and theologian.

Jesus the Nazarene

Nailed to cross beams.

That Sunday empty tomb

Rose in spring bloom.

They saw him eat fish and bread

And where he bled.

“Go into the world and preach

My Father’s feast.”

AΩ

The Passover Plot (Reprise)

Twenty centuries have come and gone
 Since the Nazarene, from Galilee,
 Condemned under Roman pantheon,
 Was smitten by men’s ferocity.
 History cannot disprove this is true.

But I admit, I am at such a loss:
 What lunacy could human minds construe,
 That Almighty God was nailed to a cross?

EXORATIONS

Navigation

North Star gleams on the canvas of night;
Day Star beacons in the heart's dim light.

Polaris led sailors at night on sea;
Christos shines the way with luminosity.

ΑΩ

Battlefield

*But in your hearts sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord, **
So voices singing fill spaces with light.
The chambers shall ring in harmonious accord.

But in the distance is heard a marauding horde
Of shrikes and clawing that shred through the night.
But in your hearts sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord.

Take heart! The throng seems louder than an ocean's roar
And towers above Himalayas' height,
But chambers still ring in harmonious accord.

The deepest abyss should not be left unexplored.
The Light of the world scares darkness to flight.
So in your hearts sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord.

Let the words of His mouth be your keenest sword
And dice their lies smaller than the widow's mite.
The chambers shall ring in harmonious accord.

He warned not to leave the heart empty and ignored,
Or legions return in hideous sight.
So in your hearts sanctify Jesus Christ as Lord;
Your chambers shall ring in harmonious accord

*1 Pet 3:15

Glenis' Spirit

—Inspired by Glenis Redmond

I shout with wind that blows out stars.
I shout with wind that bares sandbars.
The wind roars back and grinds down peaks.
The wind roars back and sears my cheeks.
I blow back wind that echoes wide.
I blow back wind that halts the tide.
The wind hums back and strokes my head.
The wind hums back and cools my bed.
I whisper wind that sheathes a knife.
I whisper wind that soothes a life.
The wind breathes back: I'll raise your soul.
The wind breathes back: I'll fill you whole.
I breathe Breath in—I breathe wind out.
When breath is gone—I have no doubt
My breath will sing—my spirit shouts.

Of One Being?

My mind can barely grasp the trinity—
How is the Holy One, arm in arm, three?
This truly dims me with perplexity.

Beyond Hubble's lens is this mystery;
Beyond what this aging eye probes to see.
(The sound eye can view You—in purity.)

Let my prying mind cease its scrutiny.
The way light shafts, through that midwinter tree:
With pure heart, I see in simplicity.

Every Morning

The day begins in possibility—
Eternity arches before sunset.
The mountains peer in the remote Blue Ridge;
The sky is drawing me in its blue net.

Do Cherubim and Seraphim wing high
Over the peaking clouds from east to west?
There hosts of darkness, and throngs of angels,
Unnoticed, war from the abyss to crest?

Invisibility may blesséd
As the sun soars in its trajectory.
As I step out, and lock the door, today:
What has God planned in His directory?

Sound-shocked

My world reverbs with blaring noise:
The radio blares; singers groan.
The news deafens with shots and moans.
Emma, with soup spoon, bangs her toys.

At 5 AM or 10 at night
I retreat to my screen-in deck.
Gazing outside at upper specks
Sparkling in their boundless heights,

As darkness guards this sacred calm
And damp seeps through to touch my face:
God's voice breathes through this holy space
And soothes my soul with quiet balm.

Already and Not Yet

“Thy Kingdom come?” Tomorrow eve?
As lightning comes from east to west?
The eons pass,
Not yet, not yet—
And cynics smirk and jest.

Today’s the day and only day
The Kingdom is already here—
A vagrant waits
Holding a sign—
It is not far but near.

Doorjamb Shadow

Gentle knocks are sounding
Outside the bolted door.
A guest has come, obliged to wait—
Never, never pounding.

There is no door outside,
No key lock on the door.
Each day the guest steps to the mat,
At the door's great divide.

Unbolt and breach the door?
Or hope the guest will leave?
Who knows which meal will be the last?
Who hears the voice no more?

Healing Winds Conferences

2013

Geese and ducks called at daybreak
 As mist wetted one's eyes.
 Across a vast and still lake,
 Mountains' foggy skies.

We gathered to pray and sing
 In sanctuary rooms,
 To let loose all shadowing
 And hiding us in gloom.

The Word uttered flew like flares
 And singed us with sparks,
 Consuming fears and cares,
 Which are human birthmarks.

Some laughed—some wept—some were stilled
 As their hearts ignited,
 And incandescent, were filled
 With light, so excited!

We left the sanctified place
 And traveled to our homes.
 Each of us are blazed in grace:
 Let's light up Christ's shalom.

AΩ

2015

Over Junaluska, the mist
 Could not hide the Holy One's face:
 The Lord emptied Himself and kissed
 Each soul—and soothed their hurts with grace.

The world, the flesh, and the devil
 Were cast away, some desert place.
 We prayed and sang in joyful revel,
 Held by the Lamb, in sacred space.

Veni Sancta Spiritus

—Ln. Come Holy Spirit

Fluttering over as a white-winged dove,
Spirit hovers from worlds above—

Hoping to alight in my dusky soul
And mend my core from rift to whole.

Come Holy Spirit, rippling light;
Lift my soul in feathery flight.

AΩ

To the Holy One

You are immaculately pure:
In You there is nothing impure.
Faultless, spotless, flawless, stainless—
In Your chaste beams, I shall fluoresce.
From Your light, help me not obscure,
And twist my will from No to Yes.

AΩ

Uplifted

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom then shall I fear? *
In You, today is a new creation...
Ice storm passed—sky clear.

At the feeder, birds feast in ovation
And sing sunbeam cheer.
I lift my soul in adoration:
My Christ—you are here.

*Psalm 27

Via Negativia

—Inspired by St. Dionysius the Areopagite.

Sacred incomprehensibility!
 We grope at mortal inability
 To know—by mind—Your veiled tranquility.

For words define, describe what is finite.
 What prattle outlines You, who's infinite?
 Circle the sun? We who peer through moonlight?

Divine darkness: eclipse our babbling speech.
 Show us how silence stills a midnight beach,
 So we can feel—unthinking—what You teach.

AΩ

*Blessed be the Lord**

Blessed be the Lord . . .
 Who out of nothingness sparked all.
 Your laws of physics move in designed accord—
 From orbiting worlds to arcing snowballs.

All my soul . . .
 You pull me from the shades of the pit,
 From spiraling down despair's black hole
 Where soul and spirit strain and split.

And all that is within me . . .
 My darkness cannot comprehend Your light.
 You give me hope through eternity.
 You soar above heaven's invisible height.

Bless His Holy Name . . .
 You gave us your all and became a slave,
 To be mounted (a billboard) on a Roman frame,
 And redeem me from the lie of the grave.

*Ps. 103:1

A Banquet

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."

—Ex. 3:14

I AM arrived into a prison camp
Saturday afternoon,
Among a row of draped picnic tables,
The twentieth of June.

Hamburgers and hotdogs and vinegar-coleslaw;
Iced tea and grape snow cones;
The inmates stacked their plates higher than wide
As bands played gospel tones.

Volunteers dished out banana pudding,
The last of lemonade
And then the feast was done. The inmates groaned
Under Sycamore shade.

I AM sent volunteers that steamy day;
Inexhaustibly there.
The Son of Man wore new food service gloves,
Incarnate everywhere.

ADVENT TO EPIPHANY

Immaculate Conception

Ponder the miraculous laws of gravity,
 Bending space-time's invisible mesh—
 Then in each December's lyrical Advent,
 Hold memory clear and fresh
 How eons ago, the Father of lights
 Illumined a maiden. A greater miracle:
 The Word became flesh.

AΩ

Messiah

Pianissimo to Fortissimo,
 Diminuendo into crescendo,
 Handel's ink, deep from his mind's reservoir
 Note by note by note—began to flow.

Across the world: voices, stings and horns play
 In December's perennial bouquet.
 Beauty for the ears—melodious sounds—
 The Messiah flowers this winter's day.

(Calvary Cross)

AΩ

Lessons and Carols

From *Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree*—
In the Bleak Midwinter plea:
 "What can I give, poor as I am?"
 I give my voice, so joyfully.

Lully, lullay, lully, lullay . . .
 Herod rages and still shall slay.
 But in a stall, with sheep and lambs,
 We sing in bliss, Bethlehem's way.

Anno Domini

In this world that spins too fast—
 Where news glorifies carnage vast—
 As bullets plunge their startled mark—
 Mad bombers set yet one more blast;

Voices carol “Emmanuel”—
 Pine scent enchants with zesty spell.
 Eons ago, swaddled in flesh,
 The Almighty came to earth to dwell.

AΩ

Cristes Maesse

Of reds and whites and blues,
 Of winter’s frosty hues,
 Diamonds sparkle on crests of snow;
 The landscape cheers in glow.

For those with wintery hearts,
 Life shoots icicle darts.
 The world is smeared in shades of grey;
 Advent is bleak each day.

The Master grieves with you,
 At home or in a pew.
 Though hours drag dreadfully slow,
 The Spirit’s sap still flows.

(Calvary Cross)

AΩ

First Snow Epiphany

Mounds of fluff layer evergreen spires,
 As Black Throated Finches flutter about.
 A squirrel skitters on telephone wire
 And water is frozen in gutter spouts.

The mood is devout—this baptism of snow
 Appears late this year, Magi’s gift of ice
 And priceless flakes adorn with diamond show.
 A peek of Paradise? Only you know.

Lifted Up

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
 Whom then shall I fear?*

In You: today is a new creation...
 Ice storm passed—sky clear.

At the feeder, birds feast in ovation
 And sing sunbeam cheer.
 I lift up my soul in adoration;
*My Christ—you are here. *Psalm 27*

AΩ

The Voice

Jesus said, “My sheep hear My Voice.”
 —John 10:27

Sing out my soul, the glory sung from old—
 Sing out to infinity...
 Sing to eternity.
 Sing out my soul, with spirit in my voice.

Sing out my soul, though human love grows cold.
 Sing in adversity—
 Through life’s ferocity.
 Sing out my soul, in anguish still rejoice.

Sing out my soul, against Satan’s stronghold.
 Sing in iniquity,
 Through all fatality.
 Sing out my soul, with all my heart and voice.

Agnus Dei in the Kitchen*Sanctus, sanctu, sanctus...*

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Cardinal—red fluff on snowy spruce

Or Rutter's Requiem—both exquisite.

Benedictus, Deus...

You grace all those under Your Name:

Eli, a banker; Sarah, a recluse:

The Lamb of God, for you—and me—He came.

ΑΩ

Lux Aeterna

“Light eternal” from a sunless zone.

“Light eternal” from a crystal throne.

We pray “Dear Light of light,

Lift us into your height”

Where voices sing mellifluous tones.

Requiem in Pace

“Rest in peace” in endless elation.

“Rest in peace” in the Savior's nation.

For all who thirst shall rise—

Behold with unveiled eyes—

And sing in ceaseless acclamation.

(Inspired by “Lux Aeterna,” John Rutter's *Requiem*.)

SKULLDUGGERY

Old Nick's Joke

To the world, Satan is a joke—
 A creature of mythology,
 Rising from liturgical smoke,
 Credible as astrology.

Satan—and Zeus and Jupiter,
 Earth Mother and hammer-held Thor—
 A projection of fangs and fur.
 (The “beast” schoolboys’ killed with gore.)

The Rover views landscapes of Mars.
 A man beheads for all to see.
 No answer comes from silent stars.
 Old Nick loves anonymity.

AΩ

Chicanery over Millennia

*If you are God's Son, he said,
 Worship me. The world I grant.
 Command this stone, become bread
 Jump—angels will guard your head.*

Into an angel of light
 He transforms himself, and them.
 He casts his shadow so bright:
 He colors their darkness white.

Masquerading

*Satan himself masquerades
As an angel of light, **

Flaunting a golden charade,
To lure what's shady, as bright.

It takes a discerning eye
To spot luminous sin—

He's crafty, cunning and sly,
To gloss our darkness within,

And spell what is dark as light.

* 2 Cor. 11:14

ΑΩ

Dead Atheists Society

Scoff on: Voltaire, Rousseau, and Marx;
Nietzsche, Russell, Hoffer and Rand:
"This god, this one word: I," Rand said.
Their God is king in fairy-land!

(The Teacher said of human life
"All is a chasing of the wind.")
There is no God! Hallow the Self.
The Prince of darkness danced and grinned.

ΑΩ

The Mask

Sin wears a cherubic mask
And beams forth paradise.
"Come in, recline, and bask."
The discerning eye looks twice:
The gate shuts into a vice.

Prisoners

Prisoners of darkness, with shaded eyes,
 Though rayed with sun from noonday light—
 Without the Spirit's lamp, to glorify,
 They view the world as ebonite.

AΩ

Spirit of Truth or Father of lies?

The Enemy's tongue is slick and sly—
 He stretches the truth and shrinks the lie.
 I miss the mark, what to avow or deny,
 And shade the truth and shine the lie—
 Or seek the Spirit of Truth as guide.

AΩ

Not Me

I am insulted—you presume “Repent?”
 As if I'm under Sin's dominion?
 To resist its evanescent scent,
 I wed my couch, dreamily content
 And view my shows in oblivion.

AΩ

A Postmodernism Anachronism

What is this force, theologians name sin?
 They say the world winks at it—and grins.
 It cuts through the surface, a dorsal fin
 But hides underneath, hunting deep within.

My smart phone rings—my identical twin.
 I'm a good man and have no stock in sin;
 A moral man with no cause for chagrin.
 So, what is circling under my skin?

FEAR AND FAITH

Epic-gram

What we live by, we might die by.
Let dying, dethrone unbelief:
The soul must turn, or ossify—
And close in anguish or relief.

Simply

. . . simply to the cross I cling.
—Augustus M. Toplady, *Rock of Ages*

Regret shades yesterday;
Fear foreshadows the morn.
The hour awaits the way I must cross:
How tempting! The route worn.

To act or not to act?
I give this scrutiny.
I sip this cup and cease to wonder why.
My compass bends its knee.

My heart quickens its pace,
And sounds like pounding drums.
My hands reach up to grasp and cling, until
Tomorrow's hour comes.

Miracle or More?

“God remains real no matter what you feel”
He said, sincere with loving touch.
“Whether you pray as you walk, lean, or kneel,
Let Jesus’ hand be what you clutch.”

When in the season of torment or grief
*I go east, but he is not there.**
Or west. Or north. Or south. Where is relief?
God, walk me up from this nightmare!

The hall clock ticks and ticks and ticks all night.
My prayers bounce off the ceiling,
As doubt in the dark hides faith in the light.
His water of life? Congealing?

I pray to change what I feel and this test—
I feel you have forsaken me.
Pull out the thorn piercing deep in my breast
Or clasp my hand, so fatherly.

*Job 23:8

You who are Weary

...you who are weary and burdened...

—Mt. 11:28

Ice-packing a surgical slit...
 Seconds sludge with glacial speed.
 Whether I stand, groan on, or sit—
 I fear the wound will split and bleed.

He asks for prayer for his wife;
 A tumor swells on her liver.
 And I dare moan, about my life?
 Ashamed, I began to shiver.

Sometimes He moves a mountain—miracle!
 The praise we feel is almost lyrical.
 Sometimes the cup of suffering remains;
 In dying some waste in anguish and pains.

Either healing or heaven is the end;
 Let grace and faith remind us of our Friend,
 As hope and life seep out one's veins:
*Worthy is the lamb who was slain.**

*Rev. 5:12

Refuge

These are the words of the Lord: the heavens are My throne and the earth My footstool.

—Isaiah 66:1

What metaphor, image or simile
Grasps the vastness of His veracity?
Whether below Europa's massive ice,
Sublime charm of an alpine edelweiss,
White-capped waves cresting on wintery seas,

The Unmoved Mover hides in secrecy,
Beyond deduction and infinity.
When wonder bursts, as shock and dread attack
And beams of hope dusk into shades of black,
*All who are weary and worn, come to Me.**

*Mt. 11:28

Lent

How can words, so commonplace,
Begin to hymn His courting grace?

Reels of homes and buildings falling;
Refugee moms, weeping, calling...
To men of every race and land:
When shall you bind your bloody hands?

Men need a miracle today.
Men pitch this world in disarray.
What shall it take for hate to cease?
When shall we stop, and seek His peace?

Help us to turn. Heal wounded parts.
Pour love of Christ into our hearts.

I Hope So

—last poem and phrase, *Steal Away*, Shelby Stephenson

Life brings such joy, our hearts quiver;
Then comes deep cold—we gasp, shiver.
Time's edge cuts all, in its broad swath,
As bubbles burst from shoreline froth.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“Look through the clouds, stormy and grey;
The depressed place, the weary vale—
Come unto me, you weak and frail.”

Arrears

I am stretched between who I am
And in Christ, who I should be:
A tug-of-war—me and the Lamb—
I vie, I strain, relentlessly.

It seems, dear Lord, you watch and stand
When I awake on any day.
How shall I follow your command?
Will I obey or skip astray?

“The peace of God, it is no peace...”*
I am—but never pay my debt.
What I owe You, how could I cease
To give enough, and end regret?

*Lyrics by William Alexander Percy, hymn “They cast their nets in Galilee...”

Ancient of Days

From a back porch, I spot a herd of deer,
Does and fawns browsing in afternoon light.
Some stag flashes antlers—points bony spears.

Spooked, they jump the rail fence and disappear.
Absently, I scratch a mosquito bite
And spy a crow preen like a buccaneer.

It wings and fades in autumn atmosphere.
I ponder *What is there beyond my sight?*
On the sill, her Snake Plant has spots of blight.
As I pour over my life, my career,

Veins bulging on my hands, my speeding years,
I lift my eyes to sapphire skies—so bright—
Secure not to fear, but welcome tonight,
To behold constellations' chandeliers.

Seraphic Fire

I'm thirsty for seraphic flame
To brand my soul with holy Name—
The constellations cannot frame.

My conviction is granite thick
But at times smokes, like rhetoric—
A glow from a smoldering wick.

My love for You feels dim and tame.
Send into me a fiery prick,
So I can light Your fervent flame.

Something New

This is the word of the Lord...forget the former things, and do not dwell on the past. I am about to do something new. Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

—Is. 43:16, 18-19

The past is like a specter,
That shadows from behind—
Whether from lust's sweet nectar,
Addiction's lonely grind.

Whatever the heinous sin,
The shame buried inside:
Admit the pain and chagrin,
The grief of soul that died.

He is a new creation—
The soul He shall renew.
Cease all of Sin's sedation
And see Him shine in you.

“THE LAST ENEMY...”

Ode to Old

When you can see beauty
In an old woman's face:
Beneath graying hair,
Of youth Time left no trace;

Her jowls hang like figs
And eyes have cloudy hue.
With bony hands she knits;
Her veins pulse richest blue.

I once sat on her knee
And rode in rocking chair,
Watching her antique face,
Fixed in museum air.

When you can see beauty
In an old woman's face,
Lovelier than that Grecian urn:
Your eyes can kiss her cheeks through grace.

Cataracts

Time obliterates when word arrives—
That beloved one has left.
In grief's tumult, Certainty splinters,
And falls in gloomiest cleft.

Then more are less: plaque makes its fatal block—
The slick spot on the road's bend—
The phantom force commits his dark deed—
So many wakes to attend.

A soul, stunned numb, exhausted and blank,
Gropes to grasp with senseless cries,
Praying and pleading through muzzled days,
To ask again and again, "Why?"

When Silence Sways

Oh God, you seem so far, far away—
Farther than Hubble's Deep Field,
Under our ceiling, the Milky Way,
Or what Higgs boson reveals.

When devil winds fuel wild fires
Or floods fill our homes' doorways...
When men plot deeds of dark desire
And blast their innocent prey...

When melanoma strikes baby Jan...
Accidents maim on highways...
Were these, my God, your predestined plans?
Are you there? What should we pray?

When silence sways, we feel cast away.
Dear Jesus—come—take our hands.
When life looks bleak as quarries of clay,
Help us glimpse God's Promised Land.

Fragility

“I am” based on Belief:
 The force which shapes and drives my life.
 It’s stored in my brain’s golden sheath,
 With edge keen as a knife.

But when life decrees grief,
 That blade shatters like falling ice;
 The sheath is stolen by that thief
 And what is left, I splice.

AΩ

Gravity

Wrists and ankles chained: temporal
 And eternal stretch time,
 From the heart to the pectoral—
 Thin as a train over a dime.

A stroke or car—aim at their marks
 At me or you tonight:
 Disintegrate in waves and quarks;
 Or live forever in bloom or in blight.

Inevitability

The heart is more than valve and vein;
It's there the soul feels deepest pain,
When death's sickle has cruelly slain.

When pulse is stilled, a face pales cold.
No touch or kindest word consoled
The moment when life's end is told.

The funeral wake? It was a daze.
The coffin glares; I could not gaze.
I was elsewhere in floral haze.

Was that my dear beneath a grave?
My home is now a grotto cave
Where sorrow pounds wave after wave.

The empty pot rests on the sill
And in the yard: a rusting grill.
Even in June I feel a chill.

My Lord, you hung in Pilate's hell
For three hours, then bid farewell.
My days? Drag on, cast in grief's spell.

At my dear's grave, I swoon and weep
As shadows wake and start to creep.
The silence is too vast, too deep.

I build a shrine inside my heart,
Where memories reside and start
To flow that death can't keep apart.

I must take off grief's dark costume
And step outside that empty tomb.
Fill up the pot so flowers bloom.

My Lord felt lost, nailed to a beam
So long ago, it seems a dream—
How life goes on, flows like a stream

To vanish in an ocean wide,
Impervious to wind or tide,
And I shall join my dearest's side.

Beyond Dark Energy

Unheard, somewhere, light years away
Beyond Hubble's deep field sight—
Hosts of children frolic and sing,
But parents only see night.

Multitudes of babies and boys
And girls, are joined hand to hand—
Their innocent faces beam joy
In moms' and daddies' dreamland.

Amanda died in a refugee camp . . .
Sue breathed her last at St. Jude's . . .
Asthma stole Ty at a water-slide park . . .
Sue shot through, from a blood feud . . .

Their moms and dads are crucified
By aching and stabbing pain—
The months and years just dull the wounds,
Their hearts can barely contain.

But cherub faces bloom bliss and delight!
They play all day in carefree bliss,
Until time arrives, when they turn and see
Their moms and dads, who lift and kiss.

Though I Sit

...thought I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be my light.

—Micah 7:8

To talk the talk and walk the walk
Goes deeper than belief—
For life is brittle as a stalk
In nature's grim motif.

My friend's dear son, found on a track,
Was dead as dead could be.
He took his life? Died from attack?
His heart just stopped, set free?

My faith tells me, hang on belief
In Him with concrete trust...
But mine is like a withered sheaf
That joggers' grind to dust.

What can be said to lull his soul?
Should I offer a hymn?
What could fill up his lifelong hole,
And empty space so grim?

The Master groaned, began to weep,
Told them to move the stone.
Out of the darkness dank and bleak,
Death fell far from its throne:

"Come forth." A son left death's regime.
My friend's son's life was brief,
Who now haunts in memory's stream
Filled up with tears of grief.

The hands of God soothe down relief
Eons ago, today:
Though death gloats like a slinking thief,
That son shall dance one day.

Soma Pneumatikon

Listen! Here is a mystery.
For flesh and blood cannot discern;
God's plan will reign in history.
His trumpet blasts our last sojourn.

The Son of Man rides on the clouds
Like lightning from the east to west.
Archangel's voice shall cry aloud
And gather those into Christ's breast.

Imperishable you shall rise,
Like light, at sunrise, night sets free.
Immortal as the Kingdom's sky,
You'll walk across a crystal sea.

The grave will feast as bodies sleep
From skin to bones under earth's crust.
But who, O Death, who can you reap?
For you, O Death, are made of dust.

The "sting of death" is but a lie.
The first Adam gave us the key
To lose bondage and let fear die:
For He gave us the victory!

In the Twinkling of an Eye
—1 Corinthians 15

When cheeks sag and wrinkles furrow faces,
When knees twinge and stomachs stretch and swell,
Or grief stabs and time no way erases,
We lose count of all hellos and farewells.

Grim as this is, a million souls graying,
Eating and drinking, buying and selling,
Healing and killing, owing and paying—
Death ends their day with no foretelling.

Eons ago, a man knew of such things
And wrote about what he had heard and seen.
What you sow, dies, and becomes as seedlings;
God gives each seed a body as He gleans.

There are bodies of the sun and of the stars
And of the moon. They each have their glory.
(We must add galaxies filled with pulsars,
As we glimpse the universe's story).

This ancient man peeked into worlds unknown.
In or out of body, he never knew;
Heard unspeakable words the Spirit sown
About life to come. He gave this preview:

“Rising incorruptible, the body
Shall crest in glory and cosmic power.
Soaring imperishable, spirit free,
Splashing within luminescent showers.

Behold, I tell you a mystery:
We shall all be changed with the trumpet's blast,
As immortality ends history
And death is swallowed up in victory.

Eastertide

In Flanders Fields those rows—Auschwitz ditch graves—
Gulag mounds below snow—lost souls heaved in caves—
MRSA steals a child—one too many pills—
A bullet rips through flesh—hypothermic chill—

The end? Such spearing grief—the bare seat and bed—
The memories that haunt—the future, all dread?
There is one hope for all—everlasting spring—
The balm from Death's cruel sting—the eternal King.

From Roman nails and wood—from limestone-sculpt tomb—
The Holy One rose up—to open spring bloom—
Death forever vanquished—past the sky's blue sea—
He holds the key to life—for eternity—

(Kingdom Pen Magazine)

And When from Death I'm Free . . .
—American folk hymn verse

Beyond my sixtieth year
Shingles drop from the roof.
The foundation has some cracks.
Weathered façade wears proof.

When in the late afternoon
As evening shadows fall,
Birds glide to roost under boughs;
Sun sets—once and for all.

When I breathe my curfew breath,
I know who holds life's key—
Because He rose triumph,
I'll live eternally.

ΑΩ

Song line from Apple Festival

“Can't no grave hold my body down—”
Not then, not now, nor age begun:
When Almighty God's trumpet sounds¹
His own shall rise from terra's ground,
For He said, “Let the thirsty come.”²

¹ 1 Thess. 4:16, ² Rev.22:17

APOCALYPTIC

Mysterium Tremendum

—Rudolf Otto, central concepts in his *The Idea of the Holy*

When at the ocean's vast expanse,
 I could barely discern with glance,
 The mammoth storm front drowned the sun;
 Light sank into oblivion.
 Two miles up the dark clouds came
 As lightning pierced with white-hot flame.
 I pondered well mortality,
 Beneath the storm's ferocity.

But here is calm. I lay, looked deep
 At stars so wide, so far, so steep
 Their hidden planets spin, revolve.
 I felt my bookish mind dissolve.
 Our solar home? A little dot
 In this galaxy's backyard plot.
 Between the stars, the coldest space
 Fills me with dread and chills my face.

I lay awestruck in awesome stare,
 Felt eternity's awful glare.
 Submerged beneath colossal night,
 I am a ghost clothed in moonlight.
 The universe moves in ballet.
 My veiny hands, uplifted, pray
 Not to infinite space and death,
 But to Yahweh's life-giving breath.

God looks down from heaven upon us all,
—Psalm 53:2

Viewer: hush and gaze into the night sky:
The Zodiac immeasurably high
The Milky Way, galactic home
Leo and Pisces' canopy dome

Jupiter and Mars in vertical plane
The crescent moon circling in its lane
White-capped clouds breaking without sound
The viewer mute and left spell-bound:

Immortal, invisible is the One
Behind and beyond every planet and sun
Who walked on dirt, beckoned with voice:
I am the bread of life. Come feed. Rejoice.

The Plunge

From the Yukon, cold swatches came
And through the South it raged,
Glazing houses in icy frame.

Peering out an icicle cage
A frost giant blew sleet
And shivering war he waged.

Cold prickled through socks to feet.
We crunched on frozen grass
With boots heavy as concrete.

A ditch deep as a crevasse
Beckoned us to draw near,
As branches shattered like glass.

We trudged to an ocean pier,
Looked down at the frothy mass
And felt our lives disappear.

Who can stand against His cold?

—Psalm 147:18

From northern heights He blusters cutting cold.
Tempestuous winds, unrolled and unrolled

Tumbling clouds, scattering snow and sleet,
And on the windows they beat and they beat.

Mountains and valleys heard the wind howl
And its freezing breath warned of its prowl.

The blizzard's blast hid all in blinding white
As windblown snow obscured horizon sight.

He sends out His word and quiets the storm.
All is still—so still—and begins to warm.

The trees shagged in ice exalt as they drip
And all creatures stir from shivering grip.

He blows with His wind and the waters flow;
We're carried outward in spring's under-tow.

. . . *the sun will be darkened* . . .

—Mk. 13:24

We peer through the TV pane
At refugees in flight
From men with brutal reign

Who shoot and kill, with disdain,
With gasoline, ignite...
And Evil goes insane.

One cries out to God in vain;
One praises God outright—
As history refrains.

Of men's hearts—who can explain?
A blazing gorge, alight,
Burning through deepest pain.

Eons ago, one was slain
As afternoon turned night
And in a tomb was lain.

God lifted Him up, again,
So He became men's light
And washed away hate's stain.

In Our Darkest Gethsemanes

In our darkest Gethsemanes,
When we feel the Tempter's power,
We flounder for the Master's key—
Seems locked within this dreadful hour.

So easy to blame Beelzebub's beast
That skulks out there, with crosshairs sight.
So pointless to knead the soul's rising yeast,
Or fear the darkness beyond torchlight.

Night's fierce powers have fled their feast.
What stone? waved aside. He stepped into day.
Beneath His feet, grovels the beast—
In our Gethsemanes, He beams the way.

Unsound Eye

Holy, Father, Light of all light;
Prophets sing of hope and dread,
When tasting all the Good Book said.
In the morning star: delight!—
Amid the darkness, He gleams bright.

This age's time is storming near:
A thermal apocalypse
Will broil with smoky eclipse.
Crops will wilt from charring shears
As tides submerge coasts, wharfs, and piers.

The Cyclopes yawns in rich array,
While outside the vineyard crusts,
And is crushed by volcanic dust.
He sips his chilled Cabernet
And cheers as lions claw their prey.

The prophets knew this grand design
Was not fate or tossing dice:
The Cyclopes' breath melts polar ice
And lolls in his golden shrine—
And sneers at thoughts of One divine.

This generation shall see all,
But those with two eyes shall see,
The Lion racing shadowy
Through this terrestrial ball—
And listen for His final call.

Who Is Worthy?

Who is worthy to break the seals of the scroll?
No one dared to speak—not even a single soul.
Only the Lamb at Passover, who was slain,
Who once was stretched taut over Armageddon's plain.

Twenty-four elders fell beneath His scarred feet,
Tossing their golden crowns before the Judgment-seat,
Four creatures surrounded Him, each with six wings:
All sing *You are worthy; You created all things.*

The Lamb took the scroll from the One's mighty hand.
Thousands sang under an arcing emerald band:
Praise and honor, power and glory, and might
To the Lamb, and Him on the throne . . . in sunless light.

Revelation Abridged

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, said He;
Who is, who was, who is to come, eternally.
I hold the keys of death and hell.
Write down now what I shall foretell.”*

*To the churches, I know what unveils and what blinds.
I am the searcher of men’s hearts and of their minds.
I shall give to each one of you
According to your deeds, what’s due.*

*From seals of falling stars to plagues of seven bowls,
The ocean turned to blood and the sun burned skin like coals.
The Rider’s name: Faithful and True—
Armies of heaven followed in view.*

*The evil two were thrown alive in sulfur flames.
The Evil One, thrown in the Pit, was bound in chains.
I saw a new heaven and earth.
All the thirsty came for new birth.*

(Kingdom Pen Magazine)

Perennial Plea

In ocean pastures, Life springs and abounds.
Nature breeds and decays.
Their voices resound in myriad sounds
Ceaselessly, through nights and days.

The Uncaused Cause sparked time, eons ago,
Up to this present day—
Who watches over how Life comes and goes
And weeps as men war and slay.

The Father of lights has a better plan
For men to cease their rage.
Whatever their creed, their class, or their clan:
Only Christ ends wars they wage.

Trisagion

—“Thrice Holy,” a standard hymn of the Divine Liturgy.

Holy is God the Father, creator of all.

Holy is God the Father, grieved at Adam’s fall.

Holy is God the Father: beckons with His call.

Holy is the Lamb of God, who drank deep sin’s stain.

Holy is the Lamb of God, who willed to be slain.

Holy is the Lamb of God: who forever reigns.

Holy is the Spirit wise, who helps when we are weak.

Holy is the Spirit wise, who guides when life is bleak.

Holy is the Spirit wise: who enheartens as He speaks.

ΑΩ

Postscript

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Spain, 16th century (metric)

Teach us, good lord, to serve as you deserve;

To give you our all, not count the cost;

To fight, not heed the wounds with full reserve;

To toil and not seek for rest those lost;

To labor and not ask for a reward;

Knowing we do your will in full accord

Through God our strength and Jesus Chris our Lord.

AUTHOR AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I retired as an addiction and mental health counselor and volunteer at a local prison camp and jail, church food pantry, and lead vesper's services at a senior citizens home. I sing in a choir and in the Mozart's Club's annual Messiah. I am graced with a happy marriage, a fine daughter and son-in-law, and strive to honor God the Father, God the Son and God Holy Spirit.

This is my second volume of poems; the first by the same title comprises free verse poems.

My fascination with rhyme and meter began in college, absorbing Donne, Milton, Blake, *et al.* In addition, no doubt due to singing in choirs over decades, I found (and find) lyrics in anthems, and especially hymns, mesmerizing. How delightful it is to read aloud or sing their lyrics, and appreciate the creative ways composers rhymed and metered their works. William Cowper and Emily Dickenson are exquisite and inspired me.

Jesus often spoke poetically in his native language, Aramaic, and certainly was fluent in Hebrew. His teachings were rich in metaphors, similes, paradoxes, parables, hyperbole, idiom, proverbs, irony, puns, probably articulated in Aramaic meter and rhythm. A favorite of mine: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Luke 18:25). Christ was a poet, a creator and a maker. He was the Word who spoke "Lazarus, come forth" and the dead man became alive. Words are cells that become organisms, and the poem grows into a living body. May these inspire you accordingly.

Numerous people have acted as spiritual transformers in my life. They are incarnations, avatars, images of God and archetypes of what it means to be human.

I thank the following whose lives have enhanced my own: my parents, Paul and Jan Venable and my Uncle Joe Venable. Christine, my wife, is as much a gift today as she was when God matched us in 1979 when we "happened" to attend a church supper (coincidences are God's way of keeping Himself anonymous). My daughter Jessica is flourishing and I pray someday she and husband Daniel will discover the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and follow Christ, and their daughter Emma.

Thanks to the many clients who gave to me and allowed me to pass on the spirit of their recovery to others. Maple Springs United Methodist Church is my final church home. Appreciations offered to many clergy, co-workers, and clients who deflated my ego.

Many authors and their books have shaped my beliefs, knowledge, and understanding. I have read numerous books by early Christian Fathers and Mothers on monasticism and asceticism, and many contemporary Christian books. Their writings jarred my complacency and enabled me to apprehend the deceptiveness of my sin and vices, and glimpse true humility. The Bible? I cannot stand in the same Bible twice.

I give eternal thanks to our Holy Father, Holy Son and Holy Spirit and how they inspired the authors of the Old Testament and New Testament—and this writer.

