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THE
CHRISTIAN POET;

OR,
SELECTIONS IN VERSE,

ON
SACRED SUBJECTS.

BY
JAMES MONTGOMERY,
AUTHOR OF "THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD," "SONGS OF ZION,"
"THE CHRISTIAN PSALMIST," &c.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

"If I were a nightingale, I would sing like a nightingale; but, since I am
a man, I will sing the praises of God." *Saying of a Heathen.*

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

“ THESE abilities are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed; and are of power to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility; to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God’s almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God’s true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man’s thoughts from within; all these things, with a solid and treatable smoothness, to paint out and describe:—Teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue, through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft

and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed,—that, whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they will *then* appear to all men easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed.”—MILTON, *on Church Government, Book II.*

The art, of which this is a true description, must be the highest of all arts, and require the greatest powers to excel in it. That art is Poetry, and the special subjects on which it is here exhibited as being most happily employed are almost all sacred. The writer of this splendid panegyric of the art, in which he himself equalled the most gifted of its adepts, was Milton, who, in his subsequent works, exemplified all the varieties of poetical illustration here enumerated, and justified his lofty estimate of the capabilities of verse, hallowed to divine themes, by the success with which he celebrated such, in *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes.* Yet we are continually told, that religious subjects are incapable of poetic treatment. Nothing can be more contrary to common sense; nothing is more unanswerably contradicted by matter of fact. There are only *four* long poems in the English language, that are often reprinted, and consequently better known and more read than any other similar compositions of equal bulk. *Three* of these are decidedly religious in their whole or their prevailing character,—*Paradise Lost, the Night Thoughts* and *The Task*: and of the fourth, *The Seasons*, it may be said, that one of its greatest

charms is the pure and elevated spirit of devotion which occasionally breathes out amidst the reveries of fancy and the descriptions of nature, as though the poet had sudden and transporting glimpses of the Creator himself through the perspective of his works; while the crowning Hymn of the whole is one of the most magnificent specimens of verse in any language, and only inferior to the inspired original in the Book of Psalms, of which it is for the most part a paraphrase. As much may be said of Pope's *Messiah*, which leaves all his original productions immeasurably behind it, in elevation of thought, affluence of imagery, beauty of diction, and fervency of spirit. Indeed this poem is only depreciated in the eyes of ordinary and prejudiced readers by that which constitutes its glory and supreme worth—that every sentiment and figure in it is taken directly from the prophecies of Isaiah; compared with which it is indeed but as the moon reflecting light borrowed from the sun; yet, considered in itself, it cannot be denied, that had Pope been the entire author of the poem just as it stands, (or with no other prototype than Virgil's *Pollio* before him) and drawn the whole from the treasures of his own imagination, he would have been the first poet in rank, to whom this country has given birth; for in the works of no other will be found so many and such transcendent excellences as are comprised in this small piece. It follows, that poetry of the highest order may be composed on sacred themes; and the fact, that three out of the only four long poems in English literature, which can be called popular, are at the same time religious—this fact ought forever to silence the

cuckoo note, which is echoed from one fool's mouth to another's (for many of the wise in this respect are fools,) that religion and poetry are incompatible; no man, in his right mind, who knows what both words mean, will ever admit the absurdity for a moment. It is true, that there is a great deal of religious verse, which, as poetry, is worthless; but it is equally true, that there is a great deal of genuine poetry associated with pure and undefiled religion. With men of the world, however, to whom religion is an abomination, all poetry associated with it *loses caste*, and becomes degraded beyond redemption by that which most exalts it in the esteem of those who really know what they judge.

But the prejudice alluded to is not confined to sceptics and profligates; many well meaning people, who never took the trouble to inquire any thing about the matter, in perfect simplicity believe this slander against the two most excellent gifts which God has conferred on intelligent and immortal man, upon the authority of Dr. Johnson. Let us see what that authority is. In his life of Waller occurs the following passage. "It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry; that they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to inquire why they have miscarried.

"Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem; and he who

has the happy power of arguing in verse will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of nature, the flowers of the spring and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide and the revolutions of the sky, and praise his Maker in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God. Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

“ The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression. Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful in the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those that repel the imagination; but religion must be shown as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already. From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and the elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable or tremendous, is comprised in

the name of the supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

“The employments of pious meditation are *faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication*. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, though the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the Judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

“Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.”

The more steadily we examine this dazzling passage, the more indistinct and obscure it becomes, and in the end it will be found to throw light upon a single point only of the subject,—a point on which there was no darkness before. It will be seen that *didactic, descriptive and narrative* poetry of a sacred

character, cannot be included in the proscription of "pious verse," which the critic seems to have meditated when he began to deliver his judgment, for, in the very outset, he is compelled to make exceptions in favour of the "happy power of arguing in verse," and to allow that just descriptions of the glory and goodness of God in creation may be poetical. The distinction which he makes between *subjects* of piety, and *motives* to piety, amounts to nothing, for *motives* to piety must be of the *nature* of piety, otherwise they would never incite to it:—the precepts and sanctions of the gospel might as well be denied to be any part of the gospel. Of *narrative* poetry of this kind he makes no mention, except it be implicated with the statement, that "the ideas of Christian Theology are too sacred for *fiction*;"—a sentiment more just than the admirers of Milton and Klopstock are willing to admit, without almost plenary indulgence in favour of those great but not infallible authorities.

The sum of Dr. Johnson's arguments amounts to this, that "contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical;" and in the sense in which he employs the words *poetry* and *poetical*, this may be readily admitted; but that sense is imperfect, for it is limited to the style, rather than comprehending the spirit, of poetry, a distinction quite as allowable as his own, between piety and motives to piety. He says, "the essence of poetry is invention;" his own romance of *Rasselas* is a poem, on this vague principle. Poetry must be *verse*, and all the ingenuity of man cannot supply a better definition. Every thing else that may be

claimed as essential to *good* poetry, is *not peculiar to it*, but may be associated, occasionally at least, with prose. Prose, on the other hand, cannot be changed into verse, without ceasing to be prose. It is true, according to common parlance, that poetry may be prosaic, that is, it may have the ordinary qualities of prose, though it be in metre; and prose may be poetical, that is, it may be invested with all the ordinary qualities of poetry, except metre. There is reason, as well as usage, in the conventional simplicity which distinguishes prose, and the conventional ornament which is allowed to verse; but gorgeous ornament is no more essential to verse, than naked simplicity is essential to prose. This, however, is a subject which cannot be discussed here; the assertion of the fact (and it cannot be contradicted) is sufficient to prove, that there must be, in the compass of human language, a style suitable for "contemplative piety" in verse as well as in prose; consequently, there may be devotional poetry, capable of animating the soul in its intercourse with God, and suitable for expressing its feelings, its fears, its hopes, and its desires. Of course, this species of poetry will not parade invention, for the purpose of "producing something unexpected, which surprises and delights;" it will not be "invested by fancy with decorations;" it will not attempt to exalt omnipotence, amplify infinity, or improve perfection; but, to "sentiments purely religious," it *will* give "the most simple expression," which will also be "the most sublime," and certainly not the less poetical, on that account. Its topics will be "few, and, being few," will be "universally known,"—an inestimable

advantage, in this kind of verse, because, if properly worded, (and more is not required) they will be instantly understood, and impressively felt, according to the predisposition of the reader's mind, in all their force and tenderness of meaning. If nothing can be poetry which is not elevated above pure prose, by "decorations of fancy, tropes, figures, and epithets," many of the finest passages, in the finest poems which the world has ever seen, must be outlawed, and branded with the ignominy of being prose. The severest critics allow tragedy to be the highest style of poetry; yet the noblest, the most impassioned, the most dramatic scenes are frequently distinguishable from prose only by the cadence of the verse, which, in this species of composition, is permitted to be so loose, that the diction, even when excellent, is sometimes scarcely distinguishable even by that. An example from Shakespeare will elucidate the paradox. *King Lear*, driven to madness by the ingratitude and cruelty of his two elder daughters, is found by Cordelia, his youngest, asleep on a bed, in a tent, in the French camp, after having passed the night in the open air, exposed to the fury of the elements during a dreadful thunder-storm. A Physician and attendants are watching over the sufferer; to whom Cordelia, accompanied by the Earl of Kent, enters. After some brief inquiries and answers, the Physician asks :

" So please your majesty,

That we may wake the king? He hath slept long.

Cord. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

Genl. Aye, Madam; in the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him.

Phys. Be by, good Madam, when we do awake him ;
I doubt not of his temperance.

Cord. Very well.

Phys. Please you draw near. Louder, the music there!

Cord. O my dear Father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms, that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

Kent. Kind and dear Princess!

Cord. Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face
To be exposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick, cross lightning? * * * * *
* * * * * Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire. And was't then fair, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? alack! alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.—He wakes; speak to him.

Phys. Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

Cord. How does my royal Lord? How fares your majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong to take me out of the grave:—
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire.

Cord. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know; when did you die?

Cord. Still, still, far wide!

Phys. He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.

Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair day-light!
I am mightily abused.—I should even die with pity
To see another thus.—I know not what to say.
I will not swear, these are my hands:—let's see,
I feel this pin prick.—Would I were assured
Of my condition!

Cord. O look upon me, Sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:—
Nay, Sir, you must not kneel.

Lear.

Pray do not mock me:

I am a very foolish, fond old man,
 Fourscore and upward ; and, to deal plainly,
 I fear, I am not in my perfect mind.
 Methinks, I should know you, and know this man ;
 Yet I am doubtful ; for I am mainly ignorant
 What place this is ; and all the skill I have
 Remembers not these garments ; nor knew I not
 Where I did lodge last night :—Do not laugh at me,
 For as I am a man, I think this Lady
 To be my child Cordelia.

Cord.

And so I am, I am !

It cannot be questioned, that the whole of this scene is poetry of the highest proof, and yet, except in the passage referring to the storm (in which the wonderful lines describing the lightning might have been struck out by the flash itself,) there is scarcely a phrase which could not have been employed in the plainest prose record of this identical conversation. Let the experiment be tried. Break up the rhythm, and mark the issue :—the same sentiments will remain, in nearly the same words, yet the latter, being differently collocated, and wanting the exquisite and inimitable cadence of such verse, as, perhaps, Shakespeare alone could write, the charm will be broken, and the pathos of the scene exceedingly subdued, though no mutilation could destroy it. Now, to construct devotional poetry, nothing more is necessary (at the same time nothing is more difficult) than to reduce the language and sentiments belonging to its few topics into verse, as unconstrained, and as finished, as the foregoing model of what is most perfect in art, yet most consonant to nature ; for, *there*, the verse is so natural, that it seems not to be verse at all, till curiously examined.

It is begging the question to say, that "man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer." *He is*; but what of that? he must follow the counsel of the prophet: "Take with you *words*, and turn unto the Lord: *say unto Him*, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." (Hosea, xiv. 2, 3.) Here is a prayer, dictated by the Spirit of God Himself, which is verse in the original, and ought to be rendered into verse, when it would appear to be poetry, not of the simplest, and severest, but of the loftiest and most embellished style:—"the calves of our lips;"—"Ashur shall not save us;"—"we will not ride upon horses;"—"neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." Are not these "tropes and figures;" and does poetry *here* "lose its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something better than itself?"

Our Critic says, "the employments of pious meditation are *faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication*."—He who denies that there can be a strain of poetry, suited to the expression of each of these, in the most perfect manner, without either extravagance or impiety, must be prepared to deny, that there is poetry in those very passages of the Psalms, in which, according to the judgment of all ages since they were written, there may be found the greatest sublimity, power and pathos. Take a single example of each.

Faith,—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."—Psalm xxiii.

Thanksgiving,—"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.—Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets, and sound of coronet, make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together."—Psalm xcvi.

Repentance,—"Have mercy upon me, O God; according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me.—Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to

hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.—Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.—The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”—Psalm li.

Supplication,—“Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.—For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.—Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.—O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.—Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”—Psalm lxxi.

It may be added, that these are *embellished* in the highest degree; the blue and purple and scarlet, and the fine-twined linen of the curtains of the ark; the holy garments, the mitre and breast-plate, set with jewels, of the High Priest; the clothing of wrought gold, and raiment of needle-work of the King's daughter, all-glorious within;—were not more precious in materials, ornamental in design, and beautiful in texture, than these exercises of “pious meditation;” these expressions of “Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance and Supplication,” which need only to be turned into metre as felicitous as the specimen afore

quoted, to be acknowledged by every intelligent reader, as poetry of the most perfect kind.

It is, after all, only in the simplest, humblest, closest acts of personal communion with the Father of Spirits, that Dr. Johnson (when all his own allowances and exceptions are made,) has deemed poetry incompatible with piety; and his objection even here is one, which will be unhesitatingly admitted by those who most sincerely and strenuously contend against his dogma;—for when his meaning is followed to its only tangible point, it merely rejects splendid diction, subtle arguments, fantastic trappings and extravagant figures from devotional exercises; and that these *should* be excluded from them, in prose as well as in verse, all men in their right senses agree: but so long as verse is capable of expressing the sentiments of *Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication*, in pure language and harmonious numbers, with the liberty of employing scriptural illustrations, there must be, and there is, a style of poetry suited for “contemplative piety,” and proper to be used in “the intercourse between God and the human soul.”

It has already been shown, that all the eloquent dictation above-quoted, affects neither argumentative, descriptive nor narrative poetry on sacred themes, as exemplified in the great works of Milton, Young and Cowper. That man has neither ear, nor heart, nor imagination to know true poetry, or to enjoy its sweetest and sublimest influences, who can doubt the poetical supremacy (if the phrase may be allowed,) of such passages as the Song of the Angels in the third, and the morning-Hymn of our first

Parents in the Fifth Book of *Paradise Lost*; the first part of the Ninth Book of the *Night Thoughts*; and the anticipation of millennial blessedness in the Sixth Book of the *Task*; yet these are on sacred subjects, and these are religious poetry. The same may be fearlessly affirmed concerning many other portions of the same poems, which, notwithstanding their religious bias, are ranked by unbelievers themselves, among the noblest efforts of intellect and imagination combined, which modern times can produce, and which have been rarely equalled in the most illustrious ages of antiquity.

It is, however, acknowledged without reserve, that rich as our native tongue is found in every other species of poetry, it is deficient in this. The reasons have been more particularly insisted upon, in the preface to the *Christian Psalmist*, and it is unnecessary to expatiate on them here; the sum of the whole is simply this,—and let who will be offended, the fact cannot be disproved,—that our good poets have seldom been good Christians, and our good Christians have seldom been good poets. Those of the latter class who have attempted to write verse have not succeeded from want of skill in the art, even when they were otherwise richly endowed with intellectual qualifications; such were Bishop Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter, of whose performances (though they may be considered as failures,) some specimens worthy of their great talents will be found in this volume. Among the former class, Waller and Prior may be mentioned. It was on occasion of reviewing Waller's *Divine Poems*, written in his old age, after having spent his

youth and manhood in sheer vanity, or in that vexation of spirit which haunts ambition, whether prosperous or disappointed,—that Dr. Johnson uttered the oracular denunciation of “pious poetry,” already noticed. But Waller was at best a feeble writer, though none of his contemporaries commanded more admiration; and to honour him with such a magnificent execution for his petty offences in this way, was indeed “to break a butterfly upon a wheel.”—Prior was a sprightly author, of the same class with Waller,—a little more facetious, a little less affected, but quite as artificial,—and his *Salomon* was the very kind of elaborate and verbose composition, which he himself would probably have admired as little as any body, had it been written by another man. In Chalmers’ farrago of “English Poets,” there are several long poems on sacred or scriptural subjects, particularly by Blackmore, Boyce, Harte, Broome, W. Thompson, Henry Brooke, Christopher Smart, &c. &c. Though it may be granted, that every one of these has considerable merit, and might well repay the patient perusal of a reader, who would honestly take the pains to do justice to them,—yet, to have filled the pages of such a volume as the present, with extracts from these, or any other of the larger labours of mediocrity, would have been no recommendation of the work to the public, but a positive hinderance to that extensive circulation and proportionate usefulness, which may fairly be anticipated in favour of a selection of smaller, livelier, and more diversified articles, in almost every species of verse, that can be adapted to the conveyance of religious sentiments. It is in vain to reprint what nobody

will read. From no disrespect, therefore, to the memory of the authors above-named have their compositions been wholly passed over, or sparingly gleaned, in the present case; but from the perfect conviction, that a volume of sacred Poetry might be made up of materials, not only calculated to be more popular, but intrinsically more valuable, both as regarded its poetry and its piety.

Such a volume has been compiled; and the Editor cannot fear to present it to the public, as a literary treasure, for the excellence of the greater portion of its contents, not less than as a literary curiosity for the rarity of at least one half of the pieces contained in it, and which are almost as little known to the reading as to the religious public. As he has neither personal interest nor vanity to gratify by the assertion, he will unhesitatingly add, that it would be difficult, among the countless miscellanies in verse, with which the press has been teeming for two centuries past, to name one, which, in the same compass, comprehends more of genuine and even exalted poetry, than will be traced in the following pages by every competent judge, though comparatively few quotations are offered from our more illustrious writers, and the selections are confined to specimens of what Dr. Johnson denominates "pious poetry;" a phrase of itself sufficient to disgust "men of taste." By the latter, so far as they are men of the world only, the book may be contemned, because in plain truth they do not understand the subject-matter of it; but by "men of taste," so far as they are men of piety, its admirable and diversified merits will be duly appreciated, and the critic's dogma, that "poetical de-

votion cannot often please," will be confuted by their personal experience of true devotional pleasure, not in reading only, but in self-application of the devout sentiments expressed in many of these compositions, in their own exercises of "contemplative piety," and the intercourse between God and their own souls.

If a knowledge of religion, as the chief concern of beings created for glory, honour, and immortality, were only as common as a taste for *genuine poetry*, (which, after all, is sufficiently rare) it would be found that there is already much more *genuine devotional poetry* in our language than is generally imagined, and it requires no extraordinary sagacity to say, that there would soon be much more. Our great authors, unhappily, have too often wanted the inspiration of piety, and religious poetry has been held in contempt by many learned, and wise, and elegant minds, because religion itself was either perfectly indifferent, troublesomely intrusive, or absolutely hateful to them. An undevout poet, pretending to write devotional verse, is like Anna Seward turning into rhyme the prose translations of Horace, furnished to her by a scholar; and fondly thinking that she had power to give English life to an original thus twice dead to herself. Religious poetry, however, in one very peculiar way, is a test of poetic talent. A middling poet, without piety, sinks below his own mediocrity whenever he attempts it; whereas a writer of comparatively inferior skill, when rapt and elevated by the love of God in his heart, becomes exalted and inspired in proportion. Many of the finest strains of poesy truly divine, contained in this volume, were the productions of

persons, who, on every other theme, were but humble versifiers. So neglectful of religion, have many of our chief Poets been, that it cannot be discovered from their writings whether they were of any religion at all;—except that it may be fairly presumed they were professing *Christians*, because they made no profession whatever; for had they been *Jews*, *Turks*, or *Pagans*, they would have shown some tokens of reverence for their faith, if not openly gloried in it, and made its records and legends the themes of their most animated compositions. *What God* is intended in the last line of the “Elegy written in a Country Church-yard?”

“The bosom of his father and his God!”

Search every fragment of the writings of the celebrated author, and it will be difficult to answer this question, simple as it is, from them; from the Elegy itself it would be impossible, except that the God of the “*youth* to fortune and to fame unknown” is meant; and that this may have been the true God, must be inferred from his worshipper having been buried “in a country Church-yard.” There is indeed a couplet like the following, in the body of the poem:

“And many a *holy* text around she strews
To teach the rustic moralist to die!”—

but, throughout the whole there is not a single allusion to “an hereafter,” except what may be inferred, by courtesy, from the concluding line already mentioned. After the couplet above quoted, the Poet leaves his “rustic moralist to die,” and very pathetically refers to the natural unwillingness of the

humblest individual to be forgotten, and the "longing, lingering, look," which even the miserable cast behind, on leaving "the warm precincts of the cheerful day;" but hope, nor fear, doubt, nor faith, concerning a *future* state, seems ever to have touched the poet's apprehensions, exquisitely affected as he must have been with all that interests "mortal man," in the composition of these unrivalled stanzas; unrivalled truly they are, though there is not an idea in them, beyond the Church-yard, in which they are said to have been written. No doubt this deficiency may be vindicated by phlegmatic sceptics and puling sentimentalists, who will cordially agree to reprobate what, in their esteem, would have been contrary to good manners; but is it right, is it consistent, in a "Christian Poet," to be thus "ashamed of the gospel of Christ," by which "life and immortality were brought to light," on occasions, when it ought to be his glory to acknowledge it, at the peril of his reputation? These remarks are not made, to throw obloquy on the name of an author, who has justly acquired a greater reputation than almost any other, by literary remains, so few and small as his are; they have been introduced here to show with what meditated precaution piety is shunned by Christian Poets, who, like Gray, seem to be absolutely possessed by the mythology, not only of the Greeks and Romans, but even of the Goths and Vandals.

The ingredients of the present Volume, are certainly of a very different character from the foregoing master-piece of moralizing; yet, brilliant as were the talents of the writer of the "Elegy," there are many

passages among these, by inferior hands, on the very subject which he has so studiously evaded, that would not have been unworthy of his own pen, and which unequivocally demonstrate the possibility of combining poetry and piety, "to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns—what in religion is most holy and sublime;" and, consequently, most repulsive to the formalist, not less than to the scerner. These compositions are selected from the writings of a great number of persons, living at different periods, many of whom were not authors by profession, but men of rank or eminence in their age, whose deeds and sufferings have been recorded in the history of their country, and who are, to this day, as nobles, statesmen, warriors, philosophers, or patriots, enrolled among "British Worthies." Exact chronological succession, from various circumstances, could not be preserved in all the particular arrangements, but it has been so generally observed, that the progress of our native language, and the varying style of our national poetry, may be clearly marked by the attentive reader. One irregularity requires explanation; no uniform system of orthography has been adopted. The articles were collected from a multitude of publications, old and new; and the mode of spelling, as found in each copy, was followed in the transcript. Had the Editor been able to recur, in every instance, to the original works of the various authors, he would certainly have preferred to accommodate the reprints to the primitive texts; because, whatever advantage, in point of more easy perusal, may be gained by modernizing the obsolete, and even anomalous, orthography of past centuries,—there is a natural re-

paguance in the mind sincerely attached to our ancient literature, against any desecration of its relics that can be avoided. Indeed there are reasons, connected with the finest associations of good feeling and pure taste, which forbid such disfigurement of what is not only excellent in itself, but rendered venerable by circumstances which connect *it*, and thereby connect *ourselves* with beings, and times, and usages gone by forever. But the original works of many of the writers here assembled, are of extreme rarity, and specimens only could be obtained where they happened to be scattered through miscellanies; in almost every one of which a different plan (or rather no plan at all) in regard to antique spelling was observed. The reader, after a little practice, will experience no serious hindrance in the most uncouth of the following pages, and he will occasionally find the benefit of exploded forms of spelling, in discovering to him certain delicate shades of meaning in words, which would betray no such hidden beauty in the shapes through which he is wont to recognize them. Besides this, the cadence, the emphasis and the beauty of the verse, not unfrequently depend on the different tone, in which the reader, at first sight, would pronounce syllables in their old fashioned redundance of letters. An entirely modernized system of spelling, would have shewn away much of the characteristic gravity of our vernacular tongue in the old time. On this topic, however, there will be conflicting sentiments: the Editor, without pertinacious attachment to his own, can only say, that he has adopted the plan, which circumstances and not choice imposed upon him.

No apology can be necessary for the adoption in such a work, of some ancient poems, which, to the unpractised reader, may appear so rough in style and harsh in metre, on a first perusal, that he may be disheartened from even attempting to read others of a similarly forbidding aspect. He may safely take the Editor's assurance, that not one of these stumbling-blocks have been introduced as mere subjects of curiosity. Every piece has some peculiar merit or interest of its own, and will repay the little effort of attention which may be required to understand it. Who would think his time misemployed in conning over eleven dull lines by Anne Collins, (page 221), for the sake of meeting in the twelfth an original and brilliant emanation of fancy? Can the very humble stanzas, which Anne Askewe made and sung in Newgate, while waiting for her crown of martyrdom, be read without emotions more deep and affecting, than far more powerful poetry would awaken on a subject of fictitious woe? Can any of the Prison Poems, in this volume,—Sir Thomas More's, Sir Walter Raleigh's, Sir Thomas Overbury's, Sir Francis Wortley's, George Wither's, John Bunyan's,—can any of these be read with ordinary sympathy, such as the verses themselves, if written under other circumstances, would have excited? Surely not; the situation of the unfortunate beings, who thus confessed on the rack of personal and mental torture, or in the immediate prospect of eternity, give intense and overwhelming interest to lines, which have no extraordinary poetic fervour to recommend them. With what strange curiosity do we look even on animals driven to the slaughter, which we should

have disregarded had we seen them grazing in the field! Who can turn away his eyes from a criminal led to execution, yet who can fix them on his amazed and bewildered countenance? The "common place" of the gallows, his "last dying speech and confession," though consisting of a few hurried, broken words, which almost every felon repeats, and hardly understands their meaning himself while he utters them, may produce feelings which all the breath of eloquence, from lips not about to be shut forever, would fail to awaken. But a good man struggling with adversity, which even the heathen deemed a spectacle worthy of the Gods to contemplate with admiration, becomes an oracle in his agony; and to know how he looked, and spoke, and felt, for the last time, does literally elevate and purify the soul by terror,—terror in which just so much compassion is mingled as to identify him with ourselves in sensibility to suffering, while we are identified with him in exaltation of mind above the infirmity of pain and the fear of death. No eccentricity or perversity of taste, manifested in literary effusions under such circumstances, can destroy the force of nature, or render her voice unintelligible in them, though speaking a strange language, provided it be the language of the times, and not the affected style of the individual, assumed to express sentiments equally affected. For instance;—though the following stanzas are full of quaint conceits, and as mechanically artificial in their structure as a piece of inlaid cabinet-work, yet that must be a hard heart which is not softened by a perusal, after the touching pre-

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amble of Sir Henry Wotton, among whose papers they were found :—

“ By Chidick Tychborn, being young, and then in the Tower, the night before his execution.”

“ My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,
My feast of joy is but a dish of pain,
My crop of corn is but a field of tares,
And all my good is but vain hope of gain,
The day is past, and yet I saw no sun;
And now I live, and now my life is done !

“ The spring is past, and yet it hath not sprung,
The fruit is dead, and yet the leaves are green,
My youth is gone, and yet I am but young,
I saw the world, and yet I was not seen,
My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun;
And now I live, and now my life is done.

“ I sought my death, and found it in my room,
I look'd for life, and saw it was a shade,
I trod the earth, and knew it was my tomb,
And now I die, and now I am but made,
The glass is full, and now my glass is run;
And now I live, and now my life is done.”

If the cold critic will not allow the burthen—the last line, repeated in each stanza,—to redeem the errors of the whole, let him return to the preamble, and mark the two simple words “ *being young,*” followed by “ the night before his execution,” and if he be yet unmoved, nothing surely would move him except being placed in the same condemnation as the unfortunate youth, who thus employed some of his last moments. These indeed had been better spent in solemnly preparing for the future, than ingeniously bewailing the past; for it must be confessed that

these are not the sentiments of a "Christian Poet." They have been introduced here for the purpose of showing, how much of the pleasure which we derive from poetry depends upon contingent circumstances, which confer on the writer or the subject, a peculiar, local, personal, or temporary, interest and importance.

Such interest and importance belong to all the subjects of the present Volume, for all the writers are dead. These thoughts, then, of the departed, expressed in their own words, and brought to our ears in the very sounds with which they uttered them, and affecting our hearts even more than they affected their own, by the consideration that they are no longer living voices, but voices from beyond the tomb, from invisible beings, somewhere in existence at this moment,—these thoughts, thus awfully associated, will prove noble, strengthening, and instructive exercises of mind, for us to read and to understand; for the application required to comprehend them duly, will heighten the enjoyment of the poetry *when* it is thus understood; the obscurity and difficulty, not arising from the defects of the composition, but from the unacquaintedness of the reader with the models in vogue, when the author wrote. These specimens of "pious verse" will not be idle amusements for a few spare-minutes,—yet for the delight of spare-minutes they are peculiarly adapted. They will not glide over a vacant mind, as sing-song verse is wont to do, like quicksilver over a smooth table, in glittering, minute and unconnected globules, hastily vanishing away, or when detained, not to be moulded into any fixed shape. They will rather supply tasks and themes for meditation; tasks, such

as the eagle sets her young when she is teaching them to fly; themes, such as are vouchsafed to inspired poets, in their happiest moods. Nor can the inexpert reader be aware till he has tried, how much the old language improves upon familiarity; and how the productions of the old poets, like dried spices, give out their sweetness the more, the more they are handled. The fine gold may have become dim, and the fashion of the plate may be antiquated, but the material is fine gold still, and the workmanship as perfect as it came from the tool of the artist; nor is it barbarous, except to eyes that cannot see it as it was intended to be seen, in connection with the whole state of human society and human intellect at the time. Changes have taken place, within the last century, in the style of religious poetry, which formerly was too much assimilated to the character of Solomon's Song,—a portion of Scripture often paraphrased, and, it may be added, always unhappily. In judging of our poets of the middle age, from Elizabeth to James the second, we are bound to make the same allowances which we do naturally, in reading the works of our divines of the same period, who, with many extravagances, have left monuments of genius and piety in prose, unexcelled by later theologians, in powerful argument, splendid eloquence, and learned illustration. With such a preparation of mind, the reader, sitting down to this Volume, will find every page improve to his taste, in proportion as his taste improves, to relish what is most rare and exquisite in our language,—the union of poetry with piety, in the works of men distinguished, in their generation, for eminence in the one

or the other of these, and frequently for pre-eminence in both. It is, however, greatly to be lamented, that the heterogeneous compositions of the most popular of the Authors, even in the present muster-roll, (with few exceptions) cannot be indiscriminately recommended. Few, indeed, of the poets of our Christian country, previous to the era of Cowper, have left such transcripts of their wayward minds, as would be deemed altogether unexceptionable, even by men of the world, who had no particular reverence for vital Christianity, in the present day. So far, at least, has the indirect influence of our holy religion purified popular literature, within the last forty years; few books, which are not notoriously profligate, now contain such indelicacies as contaminate the pages of some of our most celebrated moralists in rhyme, of former ages. The fact is cursorily mentioned, lest the inexperienced reader should imagine, that every writer, from whose remains a page or two has been adopted here, was a "Christian Poet." With the personal characters of those Writers, the Editor had nothing to do in this case. His object was to present to the public a Volume of miscellanies in verse, which, when candidly estimated, might be fairly called "Christian Poetry;" for though every piece (much more every line) may not be directly devotional, he thinks, that there is not one which might not have been written by a Christian Poet, or which may not, in some degree, tend to edify or delight a Christian reader. Of course, the Editor cannot be presumed to approve of every sentiment or phrase in such a multitude of extracts from the works of writers, themselves so much at

variance on minor points of Christian doctrine. What is here given, is given, not as the word of God, but as the word of man, and consequently no more infallible in sentiment than it can be expected to be faultless in phrase. They who read for profit will find profit in reading; others, if they be so inclined, may discover errors and imperfections enough to gratify their taste, though not to compensate them for the loss of time, which had been better spent in seeking better things.

The notices respecting Authors are brief; and no more is said of any than seemed necessary to enable the reader to appreciate the quotations. Of the greatest names, it would have been irrelevant to speak, either in praise or disparagement; the object of the Editor not being criticism. It was not deemed expedient to include extracts from the works of any living writer; though these pages might have been greatly enriched thereby. The present volume has been several years in contemplation. It was projected in the summer of 1823, when the "*Christian Psalmist*," to which it was intended as a companion, was undertaken. This date, and the whole contents of the Book, will show that no rivalry of meritorious publications, in some respects similar, which have anticipated it from the press, was intended.

J. M.

SHEFFIELD, May, 1827.

RICHARD BAXTER.

BORN 1615. DIED 1691.

This eminent minister of the gospel, though author of some of the most popular treatises on sacred subjects, is scarcely known by one in a hundred of his admirers as a writer in verse; yet there is a little volume of "*Poetical Fragments*" by him, inestimable for its piety, and far above mediocrity in many passages of its poetry. The longest piece, entitled "*Love breathing thanks and praise,*" contains his spiritual auto-biography, from the earliest impressions made upon his conscience by divine truth, to the breaking out of the civil war between Charles I. and the Parliament. In this, and indeed in all the other minor pieces, he speaks the language of a minute self-observer, and tells the experience of his own heart in strains, which never lack fervency, nor indeed eloquence, however unapt in the art of turning tuneful periods in rhyme the author may occasionally be found. A great portion of this volume well merits republication, as the annexed examples will prove. He that is not powerfully affected by some of these—whatever be his taste in polite literature—may fear that he has neither part nor lot in a matter of infinitely surpassing interest even to himself.

God renewing Man in his own Image.

WHEN man from holy love, turn'd to a lye,
 Thy image lost, became thine enemy;
 O what a seal did love and wisdom find
 To re-imprint thine image on man's mind!
 Thou sent'st the signet from thine own right hand,
 Made man for them that had themselves unman'd.
 The' eternal Son, who in thy bosom dwelt;
 Essential burning love, men's hearts to melt:
 Thy lively image; he that knew thy mind:
 Fit to illuminate and heal the blind.
 With love's great office thou didst Him adorn,
 Redeemer of the helpless and forlorn:
 On love's chief work and message He was sent;
 Our flesh He took, our pain He underwent;
 Thy pardoning, saving love to man did preach;
 The reconciler stood up in the breach;

The uncreated image of thy love,
 By his assumption, and the Holy Dove,
 On his own flesh thy image first imprest;
 And by that stamp renews it on the rest.
 Love was his nature, doctrine, life and breath;
 Love flamed in his sufferings and death:
 Thus love thine image, love on man doth print:
 This coin, thy Son, thy Word and Spirit mint.
 He that will have it true, must have it here;
 Though love prepare its way by grief and fear:
 Yea, oft by these expresseth its desire;
 They are sincere when kindled by its fire.
 These are love's methods, passing tongue and pen;
 Wonders and joys, to angels, and to men.

Mourning over Hard-heartedness.

LONG was I sadly questioning thy grace,
 Because thy Spirit's steps I could not trace.
 The difference is so great 'twixt heaven and hell,
 That those must differ much who there must dwell.
 I fear'd the change which raised my soul no higher,
 Would not suffice to save me from hell fire;
 But above all, I thought so hard a heart
 Could not among the living have a part;
 I thought thy Son would never heal my sore,
 Unless my tears and sorrow had been more.
 I wonder'd at my great stupidity,
 That could not weep when I deserved to dye;
 I wonder'd things so great as heaven and hell,
 Did on my heart with no more feeling dwell;
 That words which such amazing things import,
 Did not sink deeper, and my soul transport;
 That things of everlasting consequence
 Did not affect me with a deeper sense;
 And that a soul, so near its final doom,
 Could give these worldly trifles any room;
 That on these shadows I could cast an eye,
 While death and judgment, heaven and hell stood by.

I wonder'd when my odious sin was named,
 I was no more confounded and ashamed.
 Many a time I beg'd a tender heart,
 And never pray'd so much for joy, as smart;
 I could have kiss'd the place where I did kneel,
 If what my tongue had spoke, my heart could feel.
 These were my cries, when I to Thee did speak,
 O that this heart of stone might melt or break!
 These were my groans, this was my daily breath,
 O save me from hard-heartedness and death!
 This was the title which I used to take,—
 Senseless, hard-hearted wretch, that cannot wake!
 But as thy wisdom gives in fittest measure;
 Not all at once; 'tis meet we wait thy leisure.
 I thought that things unseen should pierce and melt,
 With as great passion as things seen and felt;
 But now I find it is their proper part,
 To be most valued, to be next the heart,
 To be the highest interest of the soul;
 There to command, and all things else cowntroul.

What shall I render unto the Lord?

O HAD I all my powers at command!
 As readily as tongue, or foot, or hand!
 My eyes should empty first the serious store,
 Because I love so good a God no more;
 And next some of the florid blood should spend,
 Because the God of love I did offend;
 The rest should serve for oyl unto love's fire,
 Wasting in restless vehement desire.
 At every mention of thy blessed name,
 My ravish'd soul should mount up in love's flame;
 Each sermon should Elias' chariot be,
 To carry up my longing heart to Thee;
 The saints' assemblies I would make more bright,
 Where many heaven-aspiring flames unite;
 And when my Lord's love-sufferings I read,
 My pierced and love-wounded heart should bleed.

Love should enforce each word when I do pray;
 A flaming heart I'd on thy altar lay:
 When halving hypocrites give Thee a part,
 Love should present my *whole*, though *broken* heart;
 When in thy word I read love's mysteries,
 There I would sweetly feed my greedy eyes;
 Each sacrament should be an eucharist;
 There heart with heart, and love with love should twist.
 My friends and I would in our daily walk
 Of love's delights and entertainments talk;
 My working love should others' love excite:
 In love I'd be a burning shining light.
 Love through the lanthorn of my flesh should shine:
 Who heard me speak, should hear that I am thine.
 My daily love should rise before the sun,
 And it in speed and constancy out-run;
 Love as my life should fill up all my days;
 Desire should be my pulse; my breath thy praise;
 And I would wind up all the strings as high
 As blessed Paul was in his extasy.
 Heavenly love should all my words indite,
 And be the soul and sense of all I write;
 My heart of love's delight should sweetly think,
 I'd write with flaming fire instead of ink:
 And yet thy holy day should be my best,
 In it my thirsty soul should taste of rest;
 My daily food should increase to a feast. }
 O my dear God! how precious is thy love?
 O could I mount thus to the flames above.

Fear growing into Love.

FEAR is the soil that cherisheth the seed,
 The nursery in which heaven's plants do breed;
 God first in nature finds self-love, and there
 He takes advantage to implant his fear.
 With some the time is long before the earth
 Disclose her young one by a springy birth;
 When heaven doth make our winter sharp and long,
 The seed of love lies hid, or seems but young;

But when God makes it spring-time, his approach
 Takes from the barren soul its great reproach ;
 When heaven's reviving smiles and raies appear,
 Then love begins to spring up above fear ;
 And if sin hinder not by cursed shade,
 It quickly shoots up to a youthful blade ;
 And when heaven's warmer beams and dews succeed,
 That's ripen'd fruit which e'en now was but seed :
 Yet doth not flowering, fruitful love forget
 Her nursing fear, there still her root is set,
 In humble self-denyal under-trod,
 While flower and fruit are growing up to God.

True and False Preachers.

THIS call'd me out to work while it was day,
 And warn poor souls to turn without delay ;
 Resolving speedily thy word to preach,
 With Ambrose, I at once did learn and teach :
 Still thinking I had little time to live,
 My fervent heart to win men's souls did strive ;
 I preach'd, as never sure to preach again,
 And as a dying man to dying men !
 O how should preachers men's repenting crave,
 Who see how near the church is to the grave ?
 And see that while we preach and hear, we dye,
 Rapt by swift time to vast eternity !
 What statues, or what hypocrites are they,
 Who between sleep and wake do preach and pray,
 As if they feared wakening the dead,
 Or were but lighting sinners to their bed !
 Who speak of heaven and hell as on a stage,
 And make the pulpit but a parrot's cage ;
 Who teach as men that care not much who learns,
 And preach in jest to men that sin in earns.*
 Surely God's messenger, if any man,
 Should speak with all the seriousness he can ;

* In earnest.

Who treateth in the name of the Most High,
 About the matters of eternity;
 Who must prevail with sinners now or never,
 As those that must be saved now, if ever;
 When sinners' endless joy or misery,
 On the success of his endeavours lie.
 Though God be free, He works by instruments,
 And wisely fitteth them to his intents.
 A proud, unhumbled preacher is unmeet
 To lay proud sinners humbled at Christ's feet;
 So are the blind to tell men what God saith,
 And faithless men to propagate the faith;
 The dead are unfit means to raise the dead,
 And enemies to give the children bread;
 And utter strangers to the life to come,
 Are not the best conductors to our home:
 They that yet never learn'd to live and dye,
 Will scarcely teach it others feelingly;
 Or if they should preach others to salvation,
 Unhappy men that preach their own damnation!

Forsaking all for Christ.

[From "*the Resolution*," in which the author counts the cost of following Christ through good report and evil report.]

MUST I be driven from my books?
 From house, and goods, and dearest friends?
 One of thy sweet and gracious looks,
 For more than this will make amends.
 The world's thy book: there I can read,
 Thy power, wisdom, and thy love;
 And thence ascend by faith, and feed
 Upon the better things above.

As for my house, it was my tent,
 While there I waited on thy flock:
 That work is done; that time is spent:
 There neither was my home nor stock.
 Would I in all my journey have
 Still the same inn and furniture?

Or ease and pleasant dwellings crave,
Forgetting what thy saints endure?

My Lord had taught me how to want
A place wherein to put my head:
While He is mine, I'll be content,
To beg or lack my daily bread.
Heaven is my roof, earth is my floor;
Thy love can keep me dry and warm:
Christ and thy bounty are my store;
Thy angels guard me from all harm.

As for my friends, they are not lost:
The several vessels of thy fleet,
Though parted now, by tempests tost,
Shall safely in the haven meet.
Still we are centred all in Thee;
Members tho' distant, of one head;
In the same family we be,
By the same faith and Spirit led.

Before thy throne we daily meet,
As joynt petitioners to Thee:
In spirit we each other greet,
And shall again each other see.
The heavenly hosts, world without end,
Shall be my company above;
And Thou my best and surest friend,
Who shall divide me from thy love?

Must I forsake the soil and air,
Where first I drew my vital breath?
That way may be as near and fair;
Thence I may come to Thee by death.
All countries are my Father's lands;
Thy Son, thy love doth shine on all;
We may in all lift up pure hands,
And with acceptance on Thee call.

What if in prison I must dwell,
May I not there converse with Thee?
Save me from sin, thy wrath, and hell,
Call me thy child; and I am free.

No walls or bars can keep Thee out ;
 None can confine a holy soul ;
 The streets of heaven it walks about ;
 None can its liberty controul.

Must I feel sicknesses and smart,
 And spend my days and nights in pain?
 Yet if thy love refresh my heart,
 I need not overmuch complain.
 This flesh hath drawn my soul to sin ;
 If it must smart, thy will be done ;
 O fill me with thy joys within,
 And then I'll let it grieve alone !

I know my flesh must turn to dust,
 My parted soul must come to Thee,
 And undergo thy judgment just,
 And in the endless world must be.
 In this there's most of fear and joy,
 Because there's most of sin and grace,
 Sin will this mortal frame destroy,
 But Christ will bring me to thy face.

Shall I draw back and fear the end
 Of all my sorrows, tears and pain?
 To which my life and labours tend,
 Without which all had been in vain?
 Can I for ever be content
 Without true happiness and rest?
 Is earth become so excellent,
 That I should take it for my best?

Or can I think of finding here
 That which my soul so long had sought?
 Should I refuse those joys through fear,
 Which bounteous love so dearly bought?
 All that doth taste of heaven is good ;
 When heavenly light doth me inform,
 When heavenly life stirs in my blood,
 When heavenly love my heart doth warm.

How many guiltless creatures die,
 To be a feast or food to me,

Who love their lives as well as I;
 And hath not God more right to me?
 Must I be privileged alone?
 Or no man die until he please?
 And God deposed from his throne,
 And humane generation cease?

Though all the reasons I can see,
 Why I should willingly submit,
 And comfortably come to Thee;
 My God, Thou must accomplish it.
 The love which fill'd up all my daies,
 Will not forsake me to the end;
 This broken body Thou wilt raise,
 My spirit I to Thee commend.

Faith amidst Trials.

I TURN'D my back on worldly toys,
 And set my face towards glory's shore;
 Where Thou hast promised highest joys,
 And blessedness for ever more.
 I took my leave of sin and earth;
 What I had loved, I now did hate;
 Ashamed of my former birth,
 I gave my life a newer date.

But since that time, how I am tost!
 Afraid of every storm and wave,
 Almost concluding I am lost,
 As if Thou wouldst not help and save.
 If I look out beyond thine ark,
 Nothing but raging floods I see;
 On this side heaven all's deep and dark,
 But I look further unto Thee.

Spare Lord, and pity thy poor dust,
 That fled into thy ark for peace;
 O cause my soul on Thee to trust!
 And do not my distress increase.

O keep up life and peace within,
 If I must feel thy chastening rod!
 Yet kill not me, but kill my sin;
 And let me know, Thou art my God.

Why art thou, fainting soul, cast down?
 And thus disquieted with fears?
 Art thou not passing to thy crown,
 Through storms of pain, and floods of tears?
 Fear not, O thou of little faith!
 Art thou not in thy Saviour's hand?
 Remember what his promise saith;
 Life and death are at his command.

To Him I did my self entrust,
 When first I did for heaven embark,
 And He hath proved kind and just;
 Still I am with Him in his ark.
 Couldst thou expect to see no seas?
 Nor feel no tossing wind or wave?
 It is enough that from all these
 Thy faithful pilot will thee save.

Lord, let me not my covenant break;
 Once I did all to Thee resign;
 Only the words of comfort speak,
 And tell my soul that I am thine.
 It is no death when souls depart,
 If Thou depart not from the soul:
 Fill with thy love my fainting heart,
 And I'll not fading flesh condole.

My God, my love, my hope, my life!
 Shall I be loath to see thy face?
 As if this world of sin and strife,
 Were for my soul a better place?
 O give my soul some sweet foretast
 Of that which I shall shortly see!
 Let faith and love cry to the last,
 Come, Lord, I trust my self with Thee.

Resignation.

LORD, it belongs not to my care,
 Whether I die or live;
 To love and serve Thee is my share,
 And this thy grace must give.
 If life be long, I will be glad,
 That I may long obey:
 If short; yet why should I be sad,
 That shall have the same pay?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
 Than He went through before;
 He that into God's kingdom comes,
 Must enter by this door.
 Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet,
 Thy blessed face to see;
 For if thy work on earth be sweet,
 What will thy glory be?

Then I shall end my sad complaints,
 And weary, sinful daies;
 And joyn with the triumphant saints,
 That sing Jehovah's praise.
 My knowledge of that life is small,
 The eye of faith is dim;
 But 'tis enough that Christ knows all;
 And I shall be with Him.

The Believer's reply to Death's threatenings.

I KNEW that from my birth
 I was a mortal man;
 My frailty is confest;
 I knew my flesh was earth,
 My life was but a span,
 And here is not my rest.
 If thou canst say no more,
 All this I knew before,
 And yet thy threats defie;
 Have I long sought in pain,

And would I not obtain
Joyful eternity?

O feeble thing!
How canst thou conquer Christ,
And make his promise void?
First overcome my King,
And his command resist,
By whom thou art employ'd:
First win the world above,
And conquer endless love,
And then I'll be thy slave;
Kill an immortal soul,
And we will all condole,
And fear a darksome grave.

'Tis Christ that doth thee send,
To bring about his end;
And Him thou must obey;
He is my dearest friend,
And doth no harm intend,
In calling me away.
And why should he fear ill,
Whom love itself doth kill?
And numbereth with the blest?
Why should not death fulfil
His good all-ruling WILL,
My SPRING, my GUIDE, my REST?

The Exit.

My soul, go boldly forth,
Forsake this sinful earth;
What hath it been to thee
But pain and sorrow;
And think'st thou it will be
Better to-morrow?

Why art thou for delay?
Thou cam'st not here to stay:
What tak'st thou for thy part,
But heavenly pleasure;

Where then should be thy heart,
But where's thy treasure?

Thy God, thy head's above,
There is the world of love,
Mansions there purchased are,
By Christ's own merit,
For these He doth prepare
Thee by his Spirit.

Jerusalem above,
Glorious in light and love,
Is mother of us all;
Who shall enjoy them?
The wicked hell-ward fall;
Sin will destroy them.

O blessed company,
Where all in harmony,
Jehovah's praises sing,
Still without ceasing;
And all obey their King,
With perfect pleasing.

What joy must there needs be,
Where all God's glory see;
Feeling God's vital love,
Which still is burning;
And flaming God-ward move,
Full love returning.

Hath mercy made life sweet:
And is it kind and meet,
Thus to draw back from God,
Who doth protect thee?
Look then for his sharp rod,
Next to correct thee.

Lord Jesus, take my spirit:
I trust thy love and merit:
Take home this wandering sheep,
For Thou hast sought it:
This soul in safety keep,
For Thou hast bought it.

The Valediction.

MAN walks in a vain shew,
 They know, yet will not know,
 Sit still when they should go,
 But run for shadows:
 While they might taste and know
 The living streams that flow,
 And crop the flowers that grow
 In Christ's sweet meadows.
 Life's better slept away,
 Than as they use it;
 In sin and drunken play,
 Vain men abuse it.

They dig for hell beneath,
 They labour hard for death,
 Run themselves out of breath
 To overtake it.
 Hell is not had for nought,
 Damnation's dearly bought,
 And with great labour sought,
 They'll not forsake it.
 Their souls are Satan's fee,
 He'll not abate it;
 Grace is refused that's free,
 Mad sinners hate it.

Is this the world men choose,
 For which they heaven refuse,
 And Christ and grace abuse,
 And not receive it?
 Shall I not guilty be
 Of this in some degree,
 If hence God would me free,
 And I'd not leave it?
 My soul, from Sodom flee,
 Lest wrath there find thee;
 Thy refuge-rest is nigh,
 Look not behind thee.