

CHRISTIAN VERSES

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Note: each of the following poems takes a verse from one of the New Testament epistles and employs it as the conclusion of a poem that builds its rhythm and rhyme upon it.

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Blest are the dead who die in the Lord (Rev 14, 13)
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O Death, where is your sting (1 Cor 15, 55)
Now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6, 2)

If God Is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?
(Rom 8, 31)

Let rocks shake, shocks quake
Earth's full girth, and peaks fall;
Let gales squall, rail, brawl,
Clash and crash till skies break.

Let rains scud, plains flood,
Sheets of sleet beat fields bare;
Let pyres flare, fire's glare
Spread out red as spilt blood.

Let wealth fail, health pale,
Beast come feast on man's meat;
Let rogues cheat, hoax, beat,
Maim and lame the poor frail.

Let men thus fence us
Out, doubt, flout, abhor us—
If God is for us,
Who can be against us?

God Is Not Ashamed To Be Called Our God
(Heb 11, 16)

We seek through haze to find
A path back, now weak,

As far we stray
From the homeward way,

And eke out days half blind
Through the black and bleak,

But often trip
On a rocky strip;

We plod distraught, leg-lamed
And foot-galled, unshod,

And sometimes fall
From the load we haul—

Yet, God is not ashamed
To be called our God.

God Is Faithful
(1 Cor 1, 9)

Sun blaze is shapely source
 Of heat and light,
 A seat of vital force.
Yet hazy drape of cloud,
 Thick-napped or thin,
 May wrap us in its shroud.

Or moon, as wide ellipse
 Is run, might screen
 The sun in mean eclipse;
And noon will ride to night,
 Earth turn away
 And spurn the ray of sight.

The sun, though, waits until
 This pall, this cast,
 This fall have passed—thus will
A One-More-Great shine through,
 Unflawed, unscathed—
 For God is faithful too!

Draw Near To God,
And He Will Draw Near To You
(Jas 4, 8)

A prodigal,
Once son, now slopping swine,
Himself not full
But never asked to dine,
Could bear no more.
He rose to make his way
To father's door
In hopes to serve
As hireling there and say,
Undone:
"I don't deserve
For you to call me 'son.'"

His father spied
Him marching on his trek
With distant stride
And flew to kiss his neck,
As though on wings,
Then brought on his behalf
Robe, shoes, and rings,
And gave the nod
To slay the fatted calf—
So too,
Draw near to God
And he'll draw near to you.

Cast All Your Cares On Him
Who Cares For You
(1 Pt 5, 7)

A small, lost child
Feels beat
Of heart-gone-wild

Thump slow

And fright lift haze
To meet
The sun-filled gaze

His father bears—
No dim
But watchful view.

Just so,

Cast all your cares
On him
Who cares for you.

The Lord Knows Those Who Are His
(2 Tm 2, 19)

See the boat float on the wide tide
As the sea's breeze takes on force,
While it braves waves toward a host coast
Though a mist twist it off course,
Where no far star, where no art's charts,
Where no map's scraps mark a trail
Through the surge-scourge of a fell swell
Whose wind blows woes on the sail,
And whose swift drift will yet whip ship
On a shock-rock in mad spite
With its splash-crash on a reef's griefs,
So off-track wrack in mid-flight
Will not reach beach, nor the sand strand
Of its dear pier in the shoal,
But before shore, in a blink, sink,
Far from port, short of its goal.
Is man lost, tossed from this wreck-deck?
Though some may say that he is,
Is his fall all? . . . Is it so? —No,
The Lord knows those who are his.

Line 7: *fell swell* = cruel heaving of the sea

God's Gifts And His Call
Are Irrevocable
(Rom 11, 29)

God's call is a *gift*
Of us to ourselves:
It rifts us and delves
 Into deep-sunken vaults
 To raise us from far
—As true heart from false—
 To be all that we are.

God's gift is a *call*
To go beyond self,
To crawl from the shelf
 Of what merely has been,
 And walk through the door
 Of what can begin,
 To become ever more.

His gift is of being,
His call to become,
And freeing us from
 All our nothing for All
 Makes both of them full:
God's gift and his call
 Are irrevocable!

The Solid Foundation Of God Stands Firm
(2 Tm 2, 19)

Tuned voices are suited
To move like vines,
With harmony rooted
In deep bass lines,
Which stake the flow
In rhythmic pulsation
Of high and low,

As figure and image
In choice and scheme
Face off for tight scrimmage
To play where theme
Is field to ground
Poetic creation
Of sense in sound,

Or as on the staircase
From premise-tread
Thought-flight makes a fair case
And soars ahead
Until it climbs
—Negating negation—
Where reason rhymes.

As bass supports singing
And theme its verse,
Or premise the winging
Of thoughts diverse,
So, though in germ,
The solid foundation
Of God stands firm.

Line 20: *Negating negation* = overcoming the insufficiencies of previous positions (a Hegelian phrase)

God Calls To Being Things
That Had Not Been
(Rom 4, 17)

The white
 Of diamond light
From truth un-hued,
 Spring green
 Of emerald seen
In life renewed,
 And red
 Of garnet spread
Through love's soft tone
 Seem gems
 Of grace that stems
From hearts of stone
 Whose veins
 Are mined by pains
—God's call within—
 Which wrings
 To being things
That had not been.

God Gives The Growth
(1 Cor 3, 7)

It matters not
 Who tills the plot,
Who scatters seeds,
 Who kills the weeds,
 Who stakes
 The rows he rakes.

For let the plotter
 Stand and water,
Set to vine
 Your hand or mine,
 Or both—
God gives the growth.

God Is He Who Works In You
Both To Will And To Do
(Phil 2, 13)

The painter eyes
 A canvas spread;
 Feeling leads,
 Hand is led;
And beauty ties
 (Embodied soul!)
 Through such deeds
 Parts and whole.

May living be
 Love's work of art,
 Formed with skill,
 Taste, and heart,
When God is he
 Who works in you
 Both to will
 And to do.

He Who Began This Good Work In You
Will Carry It Through To Completion
(Phil 1, 6)

The Artist has fixed
On a frame set square
A canvas as bare
Preparation;
The pigments are mixed,
And, arranged with care,
Are brushes for their
Application.

His figure is drawn,
But is just sketched in
Enough to begin
Composition;
With color brushed on,
Not too thick or thin,
Rough outlines now win
Definition.

God's image in man
Will be rendered true,
With no line askew
Or deletion,
For He who began
This good work in you
Will carry it through
To completion.

Eye Has Not Seen
(1 Cor 2, 9)

High soars the keen
And clear-sighted bird—
Oh chart where he's cleaved
The broad open airs
That sprawl out above him.

Try then to glean
From spheres and stars whirred
The parts they have weaved
In laud-singing prayers
To call the soul's dove there.

Spy all this scene,
Oh hear and be stirred
By art far-perceived!
Applaud distant flares
From falconer's glove then!

Eye has not seen,
And ear has not heard;
No heart has conceived
What God now prepares
For all who will love him.

God Is Light—In Him There Is No Darkness
(1 Jn 1, 5)

Like Arctic sun at summer-
Solstice height,
Which does not set, newcomer
To the night,
But turns the dull nocturnal
Skies to bright,
While earth enjoys supernal
Beams of white
On all its polar starkness,
God is light—
In him there is no darkness.

May the Lord Direct Your Hearts
(2 Thess 3, 5)

Though our maps and charts
Have got
Every tiny niche
Of the ocean, air,
And land,
Not a sextant starts
To plot
The life-point to which
You have come and where
You stand.

Though the sun may rise
And set
In the east and west,
Though you sight a star
Up north,
Still no compass-eyes
See yet
How you now should best,
From the place you are,
Go forth.

Only fools expect
That arts
Of the clock and rod
Be to *that* degree
Precise.
May the Lord direct
Your hearts
In the love of God
And the constancy
Of Christ!

The Breadth And The Length,
The Height and the Depth
Of Christ's Love
(Eph 3, 18)

Don't plot how broad is the plain,
But look and be awed
By all space;
Nor how long are streams, fed with rain,
But gauge the extremes
Of time's race.

Don't probe how tall are peak tops,
But heights at which all
Our hearts strain;
Neither sound how deep the sea drops,
But depths in which steep
The heart's pain.

From things below that have strength
But dimly to show
Those above,
May you grasp the breadth and the length,
The height and the depth,
Of Christ's love.

By His Stripes We Were Healed
(1 Pt 2, 24)

Let the spade
Pierce the soil,
Which from blade
Won't recoil,
 For earth,
Open wound
Taking grain,
Lies attuned,
In its pain,
 To birth.
Life from death,
Fruit from seed,
Height from depth,
Wealth from need
 And dearth—
As such types
Bear their yield,
By his stripes
We were healed.

For Me To Live Is Christ,
To Die Is Gain
(Phil 1, 21)

I would not fail
To sail
Were life shore-light
And death the deep,
Nor bide my time,
But climb,
Were life the height
And death the steep.

And were the call
That all
Be sacrificed
On slope or main,
So let it be
For me
To live is Christ,
To die is gain.

Line 12: *main* = the ocean

Fools For Christ
(1 Cor 4, 10)

May we learn both prayer and cross
In the school of Christ,

Then toss all care's concern
To the rule of Christ.

Let us spurn gold ware as dross
For the jewel of Christ,

Exhaust us, squarely turned
As a tool of Christ.

May we yearn to bear the cost
—Ridicule for Christ—

Not loss of the share we earn
As a fool for Christ!

What Once Was To Me A Great Gain
I Count As A Loss Now For Christ
(Phil 3, 7)

What treasures of gold from the earth—
Just rocks of a sort with the rest
 Some pickaxe has dug from the dirt!
And pleasures men hold at such worth
Our clocks say are short at their best:
 One tick ends the drug for the hurt.

Our giants of far-reaching fame
Stand strong on opinions of fools,
 Sand shifting in motions of flight;
And science, bright star in its aim,
Hailed long as the minion of schools,
 Goes drifting in oceans of night.

Wealth, pleasantness, note, expertise
(Past wants could not be yet more vain!),
 Amount to cheap dross too high-priced.
My present remote from all these,
What once was to me a great gain
 I count as a loss now for Christ.

Christ Was Not Both Yea And Nay:
His Way Was Always Yes
(2 Cor 1, 19)

Yes! Bless the earth, our core:

Our birth through pain,
Life's breath in tight distress,
Sure rest in death—and more:

Past plight as gain,
This night as fertile stress,
No less tomorrow's lot
As sorrow's prey!

Suffice it to profess
Such blessings—Christ was not
Both yea and nay:

His way was always yes!

The Lord Is The One Who Will Judge Me
(1 Cor 4, 4)

Let no other man prejudge me
To enhedge or dislodge me;
For not even I forejudge me,
Though I dredge me or dodge me.
My conscience has nothing to smudge me,
To begrudge or allege me;
Do not, for all that, misjudge me:
It will nudge me and fledge me.
Through sludge you may well, then, trudge me,
Blunt my edge or upstage me;
Such drudgery still won't budge me,
Nor unedge or enrage me,
For the Lord is the One who will judge me.

Christ Is The End Of The Law
(Rom 10, 4)

Christ is the end of the law:

Its ritual corpus and code
Is corpse for the worm to gnaw,
Dead letter, and dead-ended road.

But, immortal, its Decalogue-soul,
Though mortally framed, foresaw
In Christ moral summit and goal.

His spirit of love fulfills
Law's body and soul to draw
From the wellspring of mercy God wills.

Christ is the end of the law!

Where The Spirit Of The Lord Is,
There Is Liberty
(2 Cor 3, 17)

Loose the manacle,
The band on either hand:
The harsh, tyrannical
Hot flesh and law stone cold.
Break off the collar
Forged by sin to iron hold
As trammeled soul's enthraller.

Smash the biting shackle
Put on either foot:
Gaunt death, that preying jackal,
As the demon horde is—
Rise up free!
For where the Spirit of the Lord is,
There is liberty.

May God Encourage Your Hearts
(2 Thess 2, 17)

As ships that row from the bay
Will stall, if force
Of arm or of will
But fails,
Yet make their effortless way,
Held true to course,
If breezes should fill
Their sails,

So, as the Spirit imparts
His breath anew
To vigor we need
Upstirred,
May God encourage your hearts
And strengthen you
In every good deed
And word.

I Live No More;
Christ Is Living In Me
(Gal 2, 20)

Transfuse me new blood,
Largesse
Of the well to the weak,
And use the life-flood
To bless
And to swell a dry creek.

Transplant me a heart
Which will
—To spite death—carry on,
And grant that this part
Beat still
In each breath that is drawn.

Thus give me a store
Of twice
The thanksgiving to see
I live now no more,
For Christ
Will be living in me.

Those Baptized In Christ
Are Clothed With Him
(Gal 3, 27)

Come clothe your shame,

Elude
An eye too bold,

Fend off a cold
Too rude,

And grace your frame

With royal crown
And cape,

With alb and stole
Of priestly role,

Or drape
Of bridal gown,

Once every limb
Is spiced
With nard high-prized—

For those baptized
In Christ
Are clothed with him.

My Life Is Hidden Now
With Christ In God
(Col 3, 3)

My body they will fit
Inside
A box
And lay within a pit
To hide
With rocks,
And roots, and worms, beneath
A mound
With quilt
Of grass, and stone, and wreath
That's bound
To wilt.

Till then, I work, and eat,
And drink,
Each day,
And sleep, but first retreat
To think
And pray.
Important men may show
What wings
They preen;
My life is elsewhere, though,
In things
Unseen.

And thus when I am through
With task
And chore,
The day my debt falls due
I'll ask
No more
Than on a hillock's brow
A slice
Of sod:
My life is hidden now
With Christ
In God.

Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory
(Col 1, 27)

What is the mystery
Of Christ within?
Oh, could it be

Like wine inside the glass,
Or more like soul
In body's mass?

Like fields in light sun-shined,
Or as the true
Is in the mind?

Like buds in spring each year,
Or lover in
The one held dear?

Yes, yes! This last is *his*
Indwelling role:
The marvel is

—Divinely amatory—
Christ in you,
The hope of glory.

May The Name Of Jesus Christ Our Lord
Be Glorified In You And You In Him
(2 Thess 1, 12)

Deep floods of red,
Burnt orange, rose, and gold
Have mixed and run
This dawn
In daylight's wake—

Its paintbrush wed
To water's canvas, bold
Appears the sun
Upon
The clear-blue lake!

And as the flame
Of rainbowed sunburst poured
At dawn has dyed
That blue
From rim to rim,

So may the name
Of Jesus Christ our Lord
Be glorified
In you
And you in him.

God's Weakness Is Stronger Than Men
(1 Cor 1, 25)

How meek is the water,
Which, trodden, makes space;
How humble it tumbles
In seeking the lowliest place!

How weak is the water,
Which splatters when slapped!
Its course, though, has force
—Oblique, very often—but apt.

How sneakingly water
Methodically shaves
The limestone till time
And leakage have hollowed their caves!

What pique of the water
In rotting a keel,
In spalling cliff walls,
Or wreaking rust-havoc on steel!

Unique force of water!
Unfathomed, though, when
—As grace that will brace us—
God's weakness is stronger than men.

Line 15: *spalling* = breaking up by chipping

Seek The Higher Gifts
(1 Cor 12, 31)

O favors
That this stout tree savors!
What depths the roots
It shoots must tap,
What pith, new ring
Each spring, and sap,
What breadth of limbs
It trims with leaves,
What heights of space
And grace its crown achieves!

O blessings
Clothed in leaf-knit dressings!
What song of plumes,
What blooms, what bough-
Ripe fruit, what shade
Fresh-laid! Yet how
This tree still stands
With hands it lifts
Toward Heaven's peak—
Thus seek the higher gifts!

Fan Into Flame
The Gift Of God Within You
(2 Tm 1, 6)

Grey ash and burnt coal
Grow colder in bed,
While veiling
The flash of a soul
Asmolder, not dead
But ailing:

No sickness to death,
But sleep of a spark
In cinder—
Heat quickening breath
May sweep yet to bark
And tinder.

With poker to rouse
And billows to blow
The kindling,
What stoker can drowse
On pillows when glow
Goes dwindling?

No man with his aim
Can drift off or nod—
Continue
To fan into flame
The gift of our God
Within you.

A New Creation
(2 Cor 5, 17)

Clay
Dried out and cracked,
As through privation,
Lay
Ill-formed and lacked
A sure foundation,

Till
The Sculptor showed
Its ruined station
Skill
That keeps the mode
Of due formation.

Wet,
Made soft, and pressed,
It knew mutation,
Yet
Was graced and blessed
By pure donation.

See
This medium
Of true salvation:
We
In Christ become
A new creation!

By God's Favor I Am What I Am
(1 Cor 15, 10)

Treed Zachaeus, once down,
 Stood tall from greed-small,
 When lifted by Christ;
Magdalene was made clean,
 Enticed
By pure gift of white gown,
 When called from her fall.

Nicodemus with Christ
 Turned night into light
 As candle for flame;
Peter wept and then crept
 In shame
From his scandal, un-viced,
 Contrite for his flight.

The Good Thief left his fraud
 And damning-sin sham:
 Death-braver who grew
 Imparadised with Christ—
 So too,
By the favor of God,
 I am what I am.

Line 4: *Magdalene* should be pronounced to rhyme with "clean."

God Did Not Give You
A Spirit Of Fear
(2 Tm 1, 7)

The stormwinds amassing
A cloudbank snuff out
Like a candle
The stars first peeping in sight
And moon hardly passing
Horizons of doubt . . .
Oh the scandal
That blinds the fresh eyes of night!

What waits for those walking
Where eyesight is lame:
A path luring
Blind feet to a pit and spike?
Wild animals stalking
Their civilized game?
Or thieves touring
The streets for a chance to strike?

The nighttime you live through
May well last a year—
Do not cower,
Though darkness exact its toll,
For God did not give you
A spirit of fear
But of power,
Of love, and of self-control.

Let No One Despise You
(Ti 2, 15)

You diamond ardor and pressure
Of Fatherly love have sired
In the earth,
What beauty is fresher
Or yet more desired
Than your worth,
A weight
Which no carat
Could rate,
Should jeweler dare it?

You treasure the Son who is risen
Has mined from the dreary pit
Of his grave
On quitting his prison,
What candle once lit
Ever gave
Forth light
Of so gleaming
A white
As you are now beaming?

You jewel to cut and to polish,
The Spirit will work first with blade,
Then with saw,
Then lap, to abolish
Each trace that has stayed
From a flaw
Or scratch—
What has assets
To match
The wealth of your facets?

God's child, precious stone of his choosing,
Uncommon—no, rare—no, unique
In the style
You have of diffusing
His light, who would speak
To revile,
Condemn,
Or misprize you?
O gem!
Let no one despise you.

Line 24: *lap* = a rotating disk for polishing a gem

In The Name Of The Lord

(Col 3, 17)

As diplomats go
To speak for the king
 With offers of peace
 In the hand,
And messengers know
Whose tidings they bring
 Of captives' release
 Through the land;

As harbingers too
Will go to precede
 The king once his claim
 Is restored,
 Whatever you do
In word or in deed,
 Do all in the name
 Of the Lord.

Guard What Has Been Entrusted To You
(1 Tm 6, 20)

Its springs and its gears
Are offspring of love and of craft,
This pocketwatch—raft
That's sailed on the stream of the years
From father to son—
An heirloom in jewels and gold,
Its face from of old
Both present and presence in one.

As classic to hold and pass on,
By two paradigms
It measures both time and the times
(Which come and are gone)
As time-tested things do the new.
In this it's akin
To faith—may you guard what has been
Entrusted to you.

We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight
(2 Cor 5, 6)

O cane,
Come tap the way
And smite
This lane,
Where blind men stray,
With light.

Come, dog,
Shred earth and sky's
Thick night
Of fog,
As eye-tooth plies
Its bite.

And friend,
With joint-bent arm
Held tight,
Come bend
Our steps from harm
And fright.

Let hawks
Have eyes to plot
Their flight—
Man walks
By faith and not
By sight.

Stanza 2: the image intended is that of a seeing-eye dog.

The Just By Faith Shall Live
(Rom 1, 17)

Though hands of faith appear
To cling to empty air,
A thing unseen may bear
Demands for eye and ear:
Mere winds bend oak-tree wills;
They spin the strong-armed mills
And grind their stony grist
To bread-expectant flour;
They spread wide sails with power
To find a port long missed.

The act of faith thus seems
Like taking breath afresh,
Awaking weary flesh
That lacked its vital streams.
It sends the lifeblood food
To tend a heart renewed,
As trust breathes in to give
Fresh drafts of life and out
To waft away stale doubt.
The just by faith, then, live.

Faith Without Works Is Dead
(Jas 2, 19)

A divorce to unlight the stout
 Of body and soul,
The source of warm light snuffed out
 In emberless coal,
A force lost in fight and rout . . .

Such is dying, which leaves behind
 A hollowed-out shell,
One lying, bereaved, confined
 To box as pine cell,
Left drying as heaved-off rind

—This, the fate that now lurks ahead
 When love has grown cold
(As weight that ease shirks in dread),
 When hope is not bold,
When faith, without works, is dead.

Rejoice in Hope
(Rom 12, 12)

With him
Of strain-worn limb
 Who's sowed the earth,
And her
Whose load will stir
 Till pain of birth;

With one
Who toils in sun
 Toward rest in store,
And each
Hard pressed to reach
 Home soil and door;

With all
Who hoist and hall
 By gear and rope
And seek
To near the peak,
 Rejoice in hope!

Hoping Against Hope
(Rom 4, 18)

Will the burnt sand
Of mind's land
Túrn lúsh
In faith's blind gush?

Can the soul's trees
In keen freeze
Hóld stóut
For hope's green sprout?

Must the heart's room,
As dead womb,
Thwárt séeds
Of love-bred deeds?

Oh, though warmth, trust,
May fall, rust,
Árm hópe
Against all hope!

We Love Him Because He First Loved Us
(1 Jn 4, 19)

Loud echoes sound
From facing mountain wall,

Then fail.

Young toddlers bound
To hear far parent call,

Then trail.

Calm lake replies
As mirror to sun rays;

Wind blows.

One lover's eyes
Reflect the other's gaze,

Then close.

Response may dim,
Turn minus from a plus,

Like those—

Yet, we love him
Because he first loved us.

Accept Each Other
As Christ Has Accepted You
(Rom 15, 7)

If Christ accepted us,
Like maiden rains that bed
With dust, where streams had sped;

And we accept a brother,
As merging currents face
Each other and embrace;

And he has raised his eyes
To Christ, like river mist
Whose rise the clouds have kissed;

Then we accept the Lord,
In circling love, to be
Outpoured in Christ, our sea,

Returning sacrifice
For him and his, for thus
Has Christ accepted us.

Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Upbuilds
(1 Cor 8, 2)

Can you measure and map the globe,
Its peaks and its plains,
Its rocks and its caves,
Its rivers and lakes; or probe
The seas and the waves,
The tides and the rains;
Observe all that runs,
That swims, and that flies;
Chart planets and suns,
And star-studded skies?

Can you fathom what thing is man,
His body and soul,
His birth and his death,
His cities and states; or scan
His height and his depth:
His tomes and his scrolls,
His language and lore,
His history's deeds,
His science, his store
Of myths, and his creeds?

So what if you can? Why care?
For what will you earn?
Your name in a book?
Your statue upon the square?
Just stand back and look:
How much can you learn?
One drop that the cup
Of the ocean has spilled!
Mere knowledge puffs up,
But love will upbuild.

Love Covers A Multitude Of Sins

(1 Pt 4, 8)

Lawns blanket
A churchyard bed
Of earth

And flank it
To fix the dead
A berth

Where, hidden,
Their flesh-rot lies
So near,

Forbidden
To prying eyes. . .
And here,

The lover's
Similitude
Begins—

Love covers
A multitude
Of sins.

Let Us Not Love In Word And In Tongue,
But In Deed And In Truth
(1 Jn 3, 18)

Like wine that must age
And meat that must cure,
Or green wood that must season,
The wise are proved sage,
The good are proved pure,
When time's test gives a reason.
Thus, rising above
The whims of the young
And the passions of youth,
Come, let us not love
In word and in tongue,
But in deed and in truth.

Owe No Debt To Anyone
Except To Love One Another
(Rom 13, 8)

If you—unfed—
Must beg fish, bread, or egg,
With thanks-filled palms,
Then, live by alms men give.

Ask loans, but wait
Till need is great—not greed;
Repay them lest
Relief should nest a thief.

Buy all you must,
But pay what's just, and lay
On payable
Accounts the full amounts.

What's owed apart
From purse, let heart disburse,
And owe no debt
Above the debt of love.

Greet One Another With A Holy Kiss
(Rom 16, 16)

Command
And run
Of soldiers—brass and boot—
Raise hand
Or gun
And, as they pass, salute.

Because
A friend
Will come the way they go,
Folks pause,
Extend
A hand, and say hello.

In wonder,
Lovers
(Stewards of our race)
Twine under
Covers,
Locked in love's embrace.

But meet
Christ's brother,
Sister, souls for bliss,
And greet
Each other
With a holy kiss.

Speak The Truth In Love
(Eph 4, 15)

Since fire and heat
May shed their light
Or blind our sight,
Warm hands and feet
Or char and reek,
Be hearth or pyre—
With tongues of fire
Oh, let us speak,
 God-Flaming-Dove,
 Your truth in love.

May God Account You
Worthy Of His Call
(2 Thess 1, 11)

With unmarked card,
Unloaded dice,
 Love tries
Its luck; ill-starred
Or charmed, its price
 Is still
Well risked—the pot
Of gold romance
 Describes
Is won, though, not
By games of chance,
 But will.

How know what bet
To place and beat
 The odds
Of loss and debt,
And yet not cheat
 At all?
Stake that amount
Laid down in love
 Like God's—
May He account
You worthy of
 His call!

One God And One Father Of All
(Eph 4, 4-6)

Is limb to the body
As plant to plantation?
As pebble to wadi
Is man to the village?
Is city to nation
As clod in the tillage?
The country to planet
As unit to legions?
As speckle in granite
The sun to the sky?
The stars to vast regions
As glowworms in dirt where they lie?

Each part is a penny
The whole has entreaured,
Much richer through many;
One melody draws them
As notes it has measured—
Oh come, microcosm,
Oh cosmos, insphere it;
Let be without schism
One body, one Spirit,
One Lord, hope, and call,
One faith and baptism,
One God and one Father of all!

All Things To All Men
(1 Cor 9, 22)

May we be, each:
 To the blind—sight,
 The dumb—speech,

The deaf—ear,
 And the weak—might;
 To the sad—cheer,

The starved—bread,
 The parched—pool,
 And the tired—bed;

To the cold—heat,
 The scorched—cool,
 The lame—feet,

And the sick—health;
 To the wronged—right,
 The poor—wealth,

The pained—balm,
 And the lost—light;
 To the vexed—calm,

The fierce—peace,
 The crushed—wings,
 And the grieved—ease;

And as Christ, then,
 Be all things
 To all men.

Earthen Vessels

(2 Cor 4, 7)

With wine and oil wash pure
The wound still oozing;
Spread salve and balm's liqueur
On gash and bruising;
Pour myrrh and aloe-cure
God makes by using
Life's mortar and the press
Of Love's strong pestles.
Soothe each who in distress
Yet strives and wrestles,
With treasure we possess
In earthen vessels!

Carry Each Other's Burdens
And Thus Fulfill The Law Of Christ
(Gal 6, 2)

The earth is a steady
Base
For each with limbs
To walk or stand,
The water a ready
Brace
For all that swims
Or sails from land,
The air an upbearing
Stay
For what has wings
To flap and soar—
The world has this caring
Way
With all the things
It holds in store.

So pace off the planet,
Sound
The sea, and brave
The blue to fly;
But learn from the granite
Ground,
The wafting wave,
The staying sky,
To travel a brother's
Road,
Uphill, downhill,
As one enticed
To carry another's
Load
And thus fulfill
The law of Christ.

The Lord Is Near
(Phil 4, 5)

When those appear
With whom you dare
To share
A smile or tear,

Whose words you hear
By bread of care
You bear,
Or wine of cheer,

Then persevere
To life's far shore,
At oar
With comrade ear,

For treading clear
'Cross waves that roar,
Once more
The Lord is near.

Rejoice With Those Who Rejoice,
Weep With Those Who Weep
(Rom 12, 15)

A lake, so pure of tint
Its depths are sure, appears
A sun with quick-eyed glint,
A cloud with thick-lid tears.

It now absorbs wept rain,
And now the orb-flashed rays;
It chills to know cloud-pain
And warms to show sun-gaze.

As lakes, on top, may buoy
Us up, yet drop down deep,
Rejoice with those who joy,
And weep with those who weep.

If One Member Suffers

(1 Cor 12, 26)

Gash

His face or flail

His head; beat

His sides or lash

His back; nail

His hands and feet,

The *man* knows rack.

Rake

His skin and split

His flesh; crush

His bone and break

His limb; slit

The veins that gush,

You torture *him*.

Thus

Christ's body yet

Must ache, till

Not one of us

Will fall—let

One suffer ill,

We suffer all.

Remember Those In Bonds
As Bound With Them
(Heb 13, 3)

We make a chain:
Each link, hung lank,
Joins two,
As flesh of our flesh,
And, raked through strain
Of clink and clank,
Holds true.

But take this point:
Just clip a clasp
You know
Is bone of our bone,
You break a joint—
Thus, grip its grasp,
For so

Each member grows
More fond, one found
Condemned.
As part of our heart,
Remember those
In bonds as bound
With them.

Be Imitators Of God
(Eph 5, 1)

Let forgers go print
And paint,
False-coiners come mint
Their wealth,
The hypocrite sham
The saint,
The charlatan scam
On health.

The sharpers may deal
And dice,
The plagiarist steal
In prose,
The swindler collect
His price,
Imposters affect
Their pose.

Wise men go aping
Their art
—Without its draping
Of fraud—
Impersonators
At heart
As imitators
of God!

The Temple Of God Is Holy,
And You Are That Temple
(1 Cor 3, 17)

This ceiling, this floor, these walls
Have brought men to kneeling,
Bowed head,
And hands wed,
Where the healing in store enthralls
Deep thought and high feeling.

Tradition's great vaults of blessing,
Thanksgiving, petition,
And praise
Have shed rays
Of contrition for faults, confessing,
And gifts of remission,

Where over a monk and his candles
(God's owl and dawn's hoper)
Shines might
Of wine-light
On one soberly drunk in sandals
And cowl as love's prober,

And simple heart-laud is slowly
Said through by a wimple-
Robed nun
And crown won—
Oh, the temple of God is holy,
And *you* are that temple!

Line 14: *God's owl and dawn's hoper* = the monk as keeping nighttime vigil

Line 20: *wimple* = the headdress worn by some nuns

Now You Are Light In The Lord,
So Live As Children Of Light
(Eph 5, 8)

One same were the burning and bush
That flared unconsumed in the flame,
Still big in the pith the sap-push,
Still twined the thick leaves on each twig,
Where, nigh in red sweep and green swoosh,
Live heat revealed the Most High.

Just *so* do grace-flamings afford
A love that will never burn low;
The sap of life-streams is restored
From truth that your roots ever tap.
What light you are now in the Lord!
So live as children of light.

Keep Yourself Pure
(1 Tm 5, 22)

Imagine a work, not on paper,
 But parchment, papyrus, or such,
 Where codex or scroll bears the touch
Of quill or of reed at a taper—
 A mind's portraiture
In capitals, uncials, or cursive,
 Or Caroline minuscule script,
 Whose ink, once the nib had been dipped,
Remained unerased by subversive,
 Sly time's signature:
No errors of scribes in the cloister,
 No yellow and crumble of age,
 No nibbles of mice on the page,
No rotting or mildew from moisture
 And rude temperature.
Imagine this book's precious fitness
 As elder according to time,
 Still fresh as a youth in his prime;
Imagine yourself such a witness,
 And keep yourself pure.

Line 3: *codex*= an ancient manuscript text in book form
Lines 4-5: various styles of manuscript lettering

Be An Example To All Believers
(1 Tm 4, 12)

The score sets the timing,
The heart-beat, the breathing,
Of notes in their flow,
Some fast and some slow,
Now falling, now climbing,
Subsiding or seething,

As fixed or erratic
The melody (twinner
Of notes in a scale)
Goes forging a trail
By steps now chromatic,
Now major, now minor,

While—voices all weaving
In choral invention—
The harmony gains
Through dissonant strains
To climax, relieving
The build-up of tension.

The score in its beauty
Is read and restated
By each who performs,
Translating its norms,
So freedom and duty
Are perfectly mated.

Tight pattern, yet ample
For all its receivers,
A score they may play,
Each one in his way . . .
Be thus an example
To all the believers.

The Body Is For The Lord
(1 Cor 6, 13)

This body is dust—no more—
A mortal clodding of clay,
And scarcely worth
The crust of earth
To which it returns one day.

But clay can be wet, rack-shaped,
And scraped for baking as bricks
Of sun-burnt cast,
Which, set, stand fast—
Firm rock from a muddy mix.

Such bricks are laid slowly to temple,
Each simply picked to embody
(When humbly bound)
The holy ground,
For *no* earthen block is haughty.

Then body is dust no more!
But court that God has restored
In flesh and bone
Since—just his own—
The body is for the Lord.

It Is Now The Hour
For You To Wake From Sleep
(Rom 13, 11)

Dull mind! Awake!
 Disperse your blinded daze.
Cold will! Forsake
 This curst damp chill and haze.
Faint heart! Come rout
 Strange dreams and startled fright.
Dark urge! Crush out
 This steaming surge of night.
Arise to shower
 Of dew from twilight's deep:
Now breaks the hour
 For you to wake from sleep!

God Loves A Cheerful Giver
(2 Cor 9, 7)

Light lifts
Our each endeavor,
 Crib to grave,
 And ever gave
Sun-gifts
To fool and clever.

Clouds sieve
Their rains to favor
 Saints and knaves—
 What laver-waves
They give
As streams to savor!

Pure doves
Are sun-filled Livers,
 Rain-shed lives
 Whose river thrives—
God loves
Such cheerful givers.

Line 10: *laver* = a washing or a fountain basin

A Little Yeast Will Leaven
All The Dough
(1 Cor 5, 6)

Proud yeast has gone
To ferment
In my bread,
Like rot, upon
Interment
Of the dead;
And puff of gas
Goes filling
Up its share
Of rising mass
By drilling
Holes of air.

Lord, grind my grain
To flour;
Mix and knead
And bake it plain;
Empower
Poor, bare feed
As pure bread-feast
From Heaven,
For I know
But little yeast
Will leaven
All the dough.

A Thorn In The Side
(2 Cor 12, 7)

To connect
With earth and food source
Root-feet are deep sunk

As, erect,
There carries life's force
Stem-body's long trunk.

To collect
Sun-strength as it grows
Leaf-hands open wide,

To protect
Humility's rose—
A thorn in the side.

Humble Yourselves In The Sight Of The Lord,
And He Shall Lift You Up
(Jas 4, 10)

One searches his shelves
For a morsel he's stored,
A crust on which to sup;

With thanks for his fare,
He can savor things small,
Well satisfied with such.

One greedily delves
Into bounty of board
And wine to fill the cup;

Enjoying no share
In his hunger for all,
Unsatisfied with much.

So, humble yourselves
In the sight of the Lord,
And he shall lift you up.

God Resists The Proud
But Gives Grace To The Humble
(Jas 4, 6; 1 Pt 5, 5)

Deep valley is blooming
To paint an impressionist scene,
Where flowers have dotted the green
And life is resuming,

While mountain's high summit
Wears jewels of ice on a crown
Of rock that lies barren and brown—
Loose boulders will plummet

When thunderings rumble
And crack of quick lightning is loud,
For God has resisted the proud
But graces the humble.

Be Fast To Hear But Slow To Speak
And Slow To Wrath
(Jas 1, 19)

As feet race past
When road lies clear

But, wary, toe
Steep slope to peak

And heel, just so,
Sharp-falling path,

Be fast to hear
But slow to speak
And slow to wrath.

Don't Let The Sun
Set On Your Wrath
(Eph 4, 26)

Lightning may strike,
Torching alike
 Members and trunk,
Smiting to root,
Scorching to soot,
 Embers, and funk.

Cinders burn dark—
Won't just a spark
 Threaten the path
Tinder-woods run?
Don't let the sun
 Set on your wrath!

Let Us Run With Patience The Race
(Heb 12, 1)

It is time
 For starting
 The way,
Paschal day
 For parting,
 To climb
The skull hill
 Of testing—
 No stop
Till the top,
 No resting,
 Until
(At nail's pace)
 Our stations
 Are done:
Let us run
 With patience
 The race.

Run To Win
(1 Cor 9, 24)

Oh hail
This race!
For all
Of snail-
Like pace
Can crawl
Where one
More fleet
Has pressed,
And none
Must beat
The rest
Since each,
Though fast
Or not,
Will reach
At last
His lot,
His fill,
His part.
They lose
Who will
Not start,
Or choose
To quit
Half-way
To end.
Don't sit
Or stray,
Then, friend,
Before
You're done:
Begin
Once more,
And run
To win!

Forgetting What Is Behind
And Reaching For What Is Ahead
(Phil 3, 13)

I bear the road of years
In flesh and bones—
The groans,
The sighs, the tears
Of sprain and cramp,
In heat and sweat of strain
Or cold and damp.

Now years of road are past
—The rocks, the hills,
The spills—
And I at last,
To find my thread,
Forget what lies behind
And reach ahead.

I Did Not Run In Vain
(Phil 2, 16)

I've tripped and slipped
 And scarcely rose to go;
I've stopped and dropped,
 With no more strength to spend;
I've strayed and stayed
 On some diverging lane,
Lost track, turned back,
 And often, Lord. When, though,
My ways—and days—
 At last have reached an end,
Then, may I say:
 "I did not run in vain!"

Fight The Good Fight
(1 Tm 1, 18)

Lord, light me with light,
Incite my weak sight
 To see;
Ignite from this night
One mite of your might
 In me.
Hold tight one contrite
Whose fright once took flight
 And ran:
Don't slight one so slight,
But knight me your knight,
 A man
To smite as I might
And right what unright
 I can.
Despite people's spite
—The bite of hate's blight—
 Those few
Delight in their plight
Who fight the good fight
 For you!

Draw Your Strength From The Lord
(Eph 6, 10)

The general looks to his horde,
The soldier his sword,
Ship captains their canons aboard,
And victors reward,
Imposing their terms of accord.

They die. And the field is restored
By showers downpoured
And all earth and sun may afford,
Without having warred—
So too draw your strength from the Lord.

Stand Your Ground
(Eph 6, 13)

Earth quakes under
Horse-hoof thunder;
Storm winds rise
In battle cries.
Rains of arrows
Strike bone marrows;
Lightnings flash
In swords that clash.
Gullies gushing
Blood go rushing
Through our fields
Of limbs and shields.
Help me seeing
Others fleeing,
God, all round,
To stand my ground.

Stand Fast in the Lord

(Phil 4, 1)

When the land slides
In rock tides
From the steep sides
To the plain,
Or the earth quakes
And, tense, aches
Till the ground breaks
From the strain;

When in quick sand
With no stand
That the firm land
May afford,
Till at long last
It's all past,
May you stand fast
In the Lord.

Fear and Trembling
(Phil 2, 12)

From this to that ridge
 The bridge
 Of transition
 Lies narrow and crumbling,
While mountain sides forge
 A gorge
 Of perdition
 For anyone stumbling.

Each step that one takes
 There makes
 The impression
 Of risking and gambling
But steady the gate
 And rate
 Of progression,
 Not slacking, then scrambling,

And guard from a fall
 Your call
 And vocation.
 Then, neither dissembling
Nor slipping in doubt,
 Work out
 Your salvation
 In fear and in trembling.

Be Patient Under Trial
(Rom 12, 12)

The sea deploys
Its tide like boys
War-tried till men,
And brings it then
In rings of ranks
As hounding flanks
To pound the island banks.

But cliffs there rise
From beach to skies,
And each withstands
The scourging bands
Of surge that raves,
Whose lash it braves
In crash of spite and waves.

No eye-for-eye,
This meek reply
Of cheek long-turned!
Oh, if you're spurned,
In cliff-like style
As stationed isle,
Be patient under trial.

Be Patient Till The Coming Of The Lord
(Jas 5, 7)

We growers wait
For vine to bear spring shoot
On trellis grate
And blooms to follow suit,
For clustered shapes
Of summer fruit,
For fall to pick life's grapes.

Must, crushed from these,
Ferments in vats we fill
And, racked from lees,
Will age in barrels still,
And then—reward!
Be patient till
The coming of the Lord.

Line 8: *Must* = unfermented grape juice

Line 10: *racked from lees* = drawn off from the sediments

With The Lord A Thousand Years
Are Like A Single Day
(2 Pt 3, 8)

Come plop
The daring oar
In seas unknown,
With muscles pulling strong
From brink
Of careful shore
Toward distant zone,
Though pilgrimage is long.

But stop
When, months aboard,
End still appears
A thousand miles away,
And think
That with the Lord
A thousand years
Are like a single day.

I Can Do All Things
In Him Who Strengthens Me
(Phil 4, 13)

My tide may ebb or flow,
 My moon may wax or wane,
 My sun may rise or set.
Who breaks my web or no,
 Unknots or ties my net,
 Pulls taut or slacks my chain,
He only heightens, deepens,
 Broadens, lengthens me—
 For if the road life brings
Yet levels out or steepens,
 I can do all things
 In Him who strengthens me.

Blest Is The One Who Endures Temptation.

(Jas 1, 12)

The summer wafts hot,
With dry air in its sighing,
 Parching the ground
 Where roots are all bound
And fixing a lot
Which an oak must find trying.

As autumn flies forth
And its currents come lashing,
 Branches are whipped
 And leafage is stripped
By gales from the north
As the oak takes a thrashing.

The winter blows sleet,
Which will glaze at its breathing;
 Twigs are snapped off
 If breezes but cough,
And ice forms a sheet
To crack limbs in its sheathing.

The seasons are run
Until springtime's rotation.
 Trials are past:
 The oak has held fast,
And blest is the one
Who endures his temptation.

Peace Beyond All Understanding

(Phil 4, 7)

Come, come through rain
And lightning flashing,
Thunder cracking, hail
Of raging force;
Let hurricane
And cyclone crashing
Set their whirlwind gale
A maddened course;

And learn what bond
Of trust withstanding
Tempests of all kinds
Has yet sufficed—
God's peace beyond
All understanding
Guards your hearts and minds
In Jesus Christ.

Those The Lord Loves He Chastens
(Heb 12, 6)

Old brick will get sorted
From rubble
And picked to come aid
Wall trouble
Then, gleaned as supported
Supporter,
Be cleaned, in rough gloves,
Of mortar
With blows of tool blade
By masons—
So, those the Lord loves
He chastens.

God Will Not Test You
Past Your Strength
(1 Cor 10, 13)

If fate has dared arrest you
But, before
Your trial, judged and pressed you,
No more free,
To prison—ponder lest you
Rot at length:

The cell that has possessed you
Has a door;
The lock that has distressed you
Has a key;
And God will never test you
Past your strength.

Not Just To Believe
But Also To Suffer For Him
(Phil 1, 29)

As any good father would lunge
Through river or flame
To rescue his son
And perish before he would tire,
So Jesus began with a plunge
In Jordan but came,
Before he was done,
To find himself baptized by fire.

His font and his flame, being two,
Have christened you twice,
With waters you leave
For trials of mind and of limb;
Thus God has now granted to you
On behalf of his Christ
Not just to believe
But also to suffer for him.

Share In The Suffering
As A Good Soldier
Of Jesus Christ
(2 Tm 2, 3)

God's infantry fights in the trench
Of the trodden,
The ground down below,
Through grime and slick slime
Of Earth, its nude noise, and stark stench
Of dirt sodden
With blood and sweat-flow.

Christ's cross makes the pack for their backs'
Bent positions,
While blind bullet-blows
Drive nails to impale
Stretched hands and sore feet in their tracks.
Their munitions
Are love for their foes.

Each bears any burdens he has
Yet to shoulder
Of such sacrifice
And gains by his pains—
Thus, share in their sufferings as
A good soldier
Of Jesus, the Christ.

May I Never Boast Except In The Cross
Of Our Lord Jesus Christ
(Gal 6, 14)

Is wealth not a ship
And never the port?
Not the race, but a horse?
Nor power a whip
Or wind of the sort
That can drive one off course?

Is honor not pay
That seldom is owed
To the one who gets paid?
And fame not a play
Of echoes whose mode
Is to thunder and fade?

Is strength not a frame
Whose canvas will shrink
And its paint crack with age,
Nor beauty the same
As words in black ink
That will grey on the page?

To know is to peep
Through keyholes too small
For their rooms to be known;
To act is to reap
One grain out of all
The ripe wheat to be mown.

The least and the most,
This gain and that loss,
Are life-ends that are spliced—
May I never boast
Except in the Cross
Of our Lord Jesus Christ!

As You Share In The Sufferings of Christ,
May You Share In His Consolation
(2 Cor 1, 7)

In the squeeze,
 The first breath, the first cries,
The ill-ease
 Of cold air and light glaring,
 One born must mourn
Mother-pain
 Of gut-push, tensing thighs,
And the strain
 Of shrill screams and tearing.

But when bathed,
 Patted dry, and then placed
Warmly swathed
 At the breast, the one swaddled,
 Though small, knows all
The great bliss
 That a mother can taste
In her kiss
 Of a child close-coddled.

As travail
 Of a birth has sufficed
To unveil
 Such a wondrous creation,
 So too with you—
As you share
 In the sufferings of Christ,
May you share
 In his consolation.

Let Those Who Think They Stand Upright
Beware Lest They Fall
(1 Cor 10, 12)

Tree rows here drink
Moist land, warm light,
Fresh air,
Sun-blessed and tall;

Each grows to link
Branch-hands in bright
Leaf-wear
That's dressed them all.

As snows, axe-chink,
Firebrand, or blight
They bear
May test trunk-wall,

Suppose some sink,
Unmanned of height,
Felled there,
With crest asprawl:

Rot goes to stink
This grand-laid site,
Now heir
To festering pall.

None *chose* to shrink
Its band knit tight,
Root-snare
Where tressed vines crawl—

Let those who think
They stand upright
Beware,
Then, lest they fall.

Harden Not Your Heart
(Heb 3, 7)

A constant water drop
—So slight
A drip at play
Alone—
Upon one spot nonstop
May smite
And chip away
A stone.

What years it takes! And life
Goes by,
For still there ticks
The clock;
But here land bakes that's rife
And dry
With fill of bricks
And rock.

Survey anew, and clear
This choice-
Laid garden plot,
Each part:
Today, if you should hear
God's voice,
Then harden not
Your heart.

The Good I Will, I Do Not Do;
The Bad I Do Not Will, Though— *That* I Do
(Rom 7, 19)

When Sin was sown in thought
 (That grudge-ground quick
 To root a wrong half-sought),
 I, child, fell sick.

As Sin grew soon to word
 (Now spite-spiked head)
 And judged and jeered and slurred,
 I, boy, then bled.

When Sin was seen in deed
 At last (lust, pride,
 And greed, as grain from seed),
 I, man, had died.

O Wretch! The good I will,
 I do not do;
 The bad I do not will,
 Though— *that* I do!

Every Mouth Is Silenced
(Rom 3, 19)

O God, what can I claim
That might excuse my blame?

"It wasn't wrong"?
It was.
"An urge too strong"?
It wasn't.

Or "I knew not"?
I should.
"But I forgot"?
I shouldn't.

"Rage has no mind"?
It must.
Or "Fear will bind"?
It mustn't.

"But others do it"?
So?
"They drove me to it"?
No.

My mouth is silenced—God,
Forgive my sin, my fraud.

The Wages of Sin is Death
(Rom 6, 23)

Sin's soldier takes his arms and task:
A casque of tricks and trumps well played,
A blade for gouging greed to wield;
His shield, a puffed-up pride's self-quest,
His breastplate, human heart turned brute;
And boots that speed when spurred to wrong.

Three-pronged, the fight is fought: without,
His bout with licit law; within,
He dins out conscience-cries; above,
He shoves off gifts of grace. But say,
What pay is there for those who rage
To wage such war? —No wage but death.

A God, Not Of Confusion, But Of Peace
(1 Cor 14, 33)

This heart in its prime,
Pulsing, yet sickly,
 Beats high and low,
 And whether too slow,
Whether too quickly,
 Out of time.

This gaze that would shine,
Straining and troubled
 As light is lost,
 Falls, straight-eyed or crossed,
Single or doubled,
 Out of line.

These feet that so race
—Never arriving—
 Run back and forth,
 Both southbound and north,
Aimlessly striving,
 Out of pace.

Lord, heal my caprice,
Blinded delusion,
 And steps so flawed,
 For you are a God,
Not of confusion,
 But of peace.

There Is No Condemnation Now
For Those Who Are In Christ Jesus
(Rom 8, 1)

Your accusation,
 Lawyer, drop.
O witness, stop
 Incrimination.
Jury, halt
 Deliberation.
Stay damnation,
 Judge, for fault,
And grant probation:
 Mine, hers, his—
In Christ there *is*
 No condemnation!

If Our Hearts Condemn Us,
God Is Greater Than Our Hearts
(1 Jn 3, 20)

Maligners may defame us
As they slander
Us with smears,
Deriders try to shame us
As they pander
To cheap sneers.

Detractors may disdain us,
Gossip babble
Do its worst,
And swearers come profane us
As a rabble
Damned and cursed.

So let them all contemn us,
Let the hater
Shoot his darts,
But if our *hearts* condemn us,
God is greater
Than our hearts.

Forgive As The Lord
Has Forgiven You
(Col 3, 13)

Cool showers descend
And are quenching all.
Rain,
 Pour;
 Deign
 More,
Till drought is at end
With your drenching fall.

Then riverbanks burst
With reviving rains.
Fill,
 Rush,
 Spill,
 Gush—
Turn deserts of thirst
Into thriving plains.

With pardon outpoured,
You have thriven too.
Go,
 Spout;
 Flow
 Out!
Forgive as the Lord
Has forgiven you.

Persevere In Prayer
(Rom 12, 12)

When springs from mountain depths
Have leapt forth, fountains sing,
As sounds of mumbling bubbles
Double, tumbling down.

And fleeing peaks, they flow,
Run slow or streak as, free,
They go to seek the sea.

Thus may my soul upswell
And well forth whole to pray;
Thus bend its course of laud
Towards God, its source and end;
Then, care and fear dispersed,
Immersed in sheer grace there,
Still persevere in prayer!

Pray Without Ceasing

(1 Thess 5, 17)

Earth circles two centers
 (One axis, one star),
 Askant on a bar
Through orbits it enters—
 One pole therefore follows
 The sun, and one flees:
 In light, one side sees;
 In darkness, one wallows.

Let prayer be the axis
 About which my soul
 Revolves, with each pole
Towards God, as light waxes
 All round it, increasing
 Each time it is spun
 Round Him as its sun
 To pray without ceasing!

Sing Praise To The Lord With All Your Heart
(Eph 5, 19)

What bird in sport,
Dawn-fresh and pert,
Will not convert
To trilled support
A counterpart
Who lilts with counterpointing art?

Should sunlight court
Them or desert
Them, they assert
Their sung retort
And flit and dart
About the tuneful course they chart.

They thus exhort
Us and alert
Both joy and hurt
Of every sort
To voice their part—
Sing praise to God with all your heart!

In Every Thing Give Thanks
(1 Thess 5, 18)

If caught when fleeing
A mad advance
By tides of chance,
Come stand upon
The ground of being
As Nature's gift,
Till floods too swift
Have gone.

And even falling
Beneath their grasp
To sink, come clasp
The chance at hand
As proffered calling,
God's gift of Grace,
Which makes a place
To stand.

What nomenclature
Would ever claim
That it could name
Such gifts? What ranks
With blessings Nature
And Grace both bring?
In every thing
Give thanks!

All Scripture Has Been Inspired By God
(2 Tm 3, 16)

The notes are the flute's,
The breath is the flutist's,
As chords are the lute's
And fingers the lutist's—
One music, one art,
From two parts combined,
An impartible whole,
Airs touching the heart,
Refreshing the mind,
Uplifting the soul.

So, men fingered quill,
Inbreathed by the Spirit
In mind and in will.
For ears that can hear it,
Its heights are sublime,
Its depths are akin,
Its ranges as broad,
The Timeless in time:
All Scripture has been
Inspired by God.

The Word Of The Lord Endures Forever
(1 Pt 1, 22)

All breath-drawing things
Will gasp death rattles
The day they must
Return to dust,
And kingdoms of kings
All brave such battles.

The sun will grow cold,
Its flames extinguished,
Dawn lose its fight
With depth of night,
The earth have its hold
On life relinquished.

This cosmos, explored
By staunch endeavor,
May fall, decay,
And pass away—
The Word of the Lord
Endures forever.

God's Word Is Sharper
Than A Two-Edged Sword
(Heb 4, 12)

True words, well-uttered,
Are
A surgeon's knife,
Yet mar
No soul with muttered
Scar,
But save its life—
A point no carper
Can
By wit afford
To man:
God's word is sharper
Than
A two-edged sword.

The Word of God
Has Not Been Bound
(2 Tm 2, 9)

Apostles stood the chain
In prison chill and cold;
No walls, though, could restrain
What stillness told.

And martyrs gave their lives
In bodies violence broke;
When tongues had braved men's knives,
Then silence spoke.

Now prophets slain by kings
As threat of riot peaks
Still voice a pain that rings,
For quiet speaks.

Such cries have stirred abroad
And, like a shot, resound
Because the word of God
Has not been bound.

May The Word Of Christ
Dwell Richly In You
(Col 3, 16)

As the word we hear
Is fathering seed,
So a heart sincere
Is mothering womb:
When the open heed,
Conception takes place
Of a faith to bloom
In actions of grace.

But the faith conceived
Is mother in part,
As the word believed
Is father then twice:
For a new-born heart
Is child of the two—
May the word of Christ
Dwell richly in you.

Be Doers Of The Word, Not Only Hearers
(Jas 1, 22)

What reason
For delay
With roads not taken?
For treason
Done midway
On trip forsaken?

If traveling
Cannot hit
The journey's ending,
Unraveling
Footsteps knit
In past ascending?

Pursuers
Undeterred,
Not distant jeerers,
Be doers
Of the word,
Not only hearers.

A Letter Of Christ
(2 Cor 3, 3)

Once the Law of the Lord,
Engraved into stone,
Was saved as one's own
And hung stored
At the hand
And brow, where it now
Was a freeing, not fettering, band.

Then the Gospel of Christ,
Whose shape we all link
To paper and ink,
Was side sliced
And blood let
To effuse the good news
And write off for debtors their debt.

Now the Spirit of God
Has stirred and imparts
The Word to your hearts
In strokes broad
Yet precise:
As a page from our Sage,
You thus are a letter of Christ.

Proclaim The Word
(2 Tm 4, 2)

Haze-grays gone, long-drawn rays
To spawn day's dawn blaze on,
As ponds grazed daze swan-gaze.
Sky's phase betrays sun rise:
One spies run dyes—surprise
Stunned eyes prize and none wise
Shuns, none flies, though sighs swoon
Till strewn sky soon cries boon
Of nigh, high noon.

But cloud-
Browed height, crowd-proud site, shrouds
Lightning-crack's frightening wracks,
Whose brash ax-lash, -thwack, -thrash,
Racks, whacks, hacks asunder,
Plunders, and bodes thunder's
Smash-crash, wondrous backlash
That goads-under insane
Drain of strain-stowed rain's load.

As day's break makes ray's glare
Declare sun mounts, bolts' jolts
Announce cloud's loud-dinned splash,
So begin: flare, flash, in
Season, out of season,
In-wards, without-wards, heard,
Unheard, but flame-bestirred,
Proclaim God's word!

Let Us Labor To Enter Into God's Rest
(Heb 4, 11)

Toil, a stouter
Bread-winner,
Farmer or clerk,
As both inner
And outer
Man make the work:
The painstaker
Though aching,
Does what he can,
For by making
Its maker,
Work makes the man.

So, grow older
But stronger
(Sweat is no loss!),
All the longer
To shoulder
Part of the Cross.
And no stinter,
But braver,
Each when hard-pressed,
Let us labor
To enter
Into God's rest.

The Worker Is Worth His Wages

(1 Tm 5, 18)

If the lowly
—The widow, the orphan, the stranger—
Cry out to the Lord of hosts
That he witness their plight and danger,
Will the Holy
Who blazes on high to behold it
Not blast the proud man who boasts,
Since his prophets of fire foretold it?

He who duly
Will swelter for justice and mercy
Sweats righteously with the Lord
Through the heat of all controversy,
And then truly,
In ways unforeseen by Greek sages,
Is virtue its own reward,
And the worker is worth his wages.

The Hardworking Farmer
Will Reap The First Fruits
(2 Tm 2, 6)

His sword made a ploughshare,
The soldier of peace
Bears arms to his farm's
New-found battleground:
In sweat of his brow there
He toils without cease.

A pasture for cattle
Is now his new front;
Trench-rows that he hoes
Make wars of farm chores;
His weapons of battle
Are mattocks worn blunt.

His quiver and arrow
Are burlap-weave sack
And seed for each need,
His main baggage train
A balanced wheelbarrow
That keeps to its track.

His former battalion
Of soldiers is now
Farm hands that work lands
Earth grants for his plants,
His chariot's stallion
A workhorse at plow.

He wears as his armor
Torn gloves and old boots
And shows by his clothes
The scope of his hope:
The hardworking farmer
Will reap the first fruits.

If We Endure,
We Too Shall Reign With Him
(2 Tm 2, 12)

Stay fast!
As bridge of stone
Upbears the weight
While burdens last,
Make flesh and bone
Stand straight.

Hold out!
As wall of rock
Resists attack
Remaining stout
At each new shock,
Don't crack.

Keep on!
As millstone turns
To grind its grist
And toils from dawn
Till sunset burns,
Persist.

Be sure
Through every strain
Of mind and limb:
If we endure,
We too shall reign
With Him.

Blest Are The Dead
Who Die In The Lord
(Rev 14, 13)

Like those at first light
Who trudge
Through the loam

As, plowing, they drudge
Till night
Brings them home,

Where, resting, they lie
In bed
Till restored,

So blest are the dead
Who die
In the Lord.

God Will Wipe Away
All Tears From Our Eyes
(Rev 7, 17; Rev 21, 4)

Seed falls to dirt and clay
And presently dies.

Sun sheds its healing ray
On ground where it lies.

There, grain will sprout one day,
New life will arise.

But first the sky turns grey,
Rain falls—and then dries.

God, too, will wipe away
All tears from our eyes.

O Death, Where Is Your Sting?
(1 Cor 15, 55)

Mount this back,
 This hackney jade,
This jaded hack,
 O Death
 Of Hell's brigade.

Hug my mane,
 Speed hoofs and shanks.
Give bit and rein,
 O Death,
 And spur my flanks.

Goad me thus
 To Christ, come wing
His Pegasus—
 O Death,
 Where is your sting?

Now Is The Day Of Salvation
(2 Cor 6, 2)

Let yesterday stick in the tomb
With dust of the earth—
An open and shut
Recollection.
Tomorrow may kick in the womb
As thrust at a birth;
Its hoping is but
A projection.

Today is a morning, a spring,
Wind chime, and bird song,
All sounding a May
Invitation,
And yet what a warning they bring
That time is not long,
For now is the day
Of salvation.